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Leisure in Urban China

General Patterns Based on a Nationwide Survey

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Abstract

This paper examines national-level leisure time availability and participation patterns among urban residents of China. The findings show that Mainland Chinese enjoy relatively little leisure time and that strong contrasts exist in regional distribution of free time availability. People of all ages, genders, and incomes show a general preference for passive/media and other home-based activities while displaying low participation rates in exercise. Regional comparisons show that residents of the Northeast are busiest and engage most frequently in home-based activities while people in the West have more leisure time and engage in social activities most frequently. Differences in leisure time availability and leisure participation based on gender, age and income are also explored.

Keywords: *leisure time; leisure activity; Mainland China*

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As the second largest and one of the most rapidly growing economies in the world, China's economic development has been a remarkable success. A number of changes in government policies introduced in the last two decades, including a 5-day work week and annual three week-long vacations, have led to a significant increase in leisure time availability for Chinese residents (Yin, 2005) and to the development of leisure infrastructure (Dong, Li, & Kim, 2013). Moreover, over the past two decades, individual disposable income has grown significantly in China, while globalization and Western cultural influences have led to an increased demand for Western goods, including those related to leisure and travel (Liang & Walker, 2011). Under such favorable conditions, a large portion of the Mainland Chinese population has developed an interest in pursuing higher quality and a greater variety of leisure activities (Dong et al., 2013). Dong et al. described this as a "contemporary popular culture that is steeped in consumerism" (p. 281) and argued that it creates a climate of "exciting new opportunities" and "terrifying new pressures" for the Chinese society at the time of cultural and economic transition.

These trends have triggered a renewed interest among Chinese and foreign scholars in the leisure experiences of the Chinese population. While the literature on leisure behavior among Chinese immigrants in the U.S. and Canada is quite extensive (e.g., Spiers & Walker, 2009; Walker, Halpenny, & Deng, 2011; Walker, Halpenny, Spiers, & Deng, 2011), empirical studies on the leisure patterns among the Mainland Chinese are only developing. The literature has shown that despite recent economic developments, and due to the influence of Confucianism and Taoism, the value of leisure has been generally less recognized in China than in North America (Li, 2009; Walker, Deng, & Chapman, 2007; Walker & Wang, 2008). Most scholars have also observed that Mainland Chinese primarily engage in passive activities and place less emphasis on physical activity (e.g., Freysinger & Chen, 1993; Jim & Chen, 2009; Lee & Zhang, 2010). It has been suggested that because the philosophical traditions of Confucianism and Taoism have a strong influence on Chinese society (Gong, 1998; Schutte & Ciarlante, 1998), Mainland Chinese are not necessarily free to pursue leisure activities of their choice, but must consider family or social obligations first and use quiet and solitary activities (e.g., learning) as a justification to engage in leisure (Ap, 2002). Time available for leisure and leisure participation patterns among the Chinese vary based on people's demographic characteristics such as gender and age. For instance, Jim and Chen (2009) found that middle-age respondents spent more time on work activities and taking care of their families, while younger people were able to allocate more time to leisure. Studies by Wang, Zhang, and Gong (1999) and by Wang, Liu, and Xu (2003) indicated that although men and women enjoy roughly equal amounts of leisure time, their leisure preferences differ. In Wang's et al. (2003) study, female residents of Shanghai, Tianjin, and Harbin engaged more frequently in activities related to self-improvement and community service than their male counterparts. The existing research also shows that residents of urban areas in China face constraints on leisure, such as overwork, lack of free time, lack of money, lack of partners, and family responsibilities (Dong & Chick, 2012; Zheng & Zhu, 2006). Moreover, Mainland Chinese students were found to be more intra- and interpersonally constrained than their Canadian counterparts (Walker, Jackson, & Deng, 2007, 2008).

Unfortunately, the majority of the existing studies on leisure behavior of the Mainland Chinese have been based on small samples, had only local or regional focus, and were quite narrow in scope. This exploratory study aims to address these limitations by taking advantage of a large scale, country-wide survey ("Survey of the Chinese Economic Life" [SCEL]) to explore leisure behaviors of Chinese residents. The specific objectives of this study were (a) to examine national-level leisure time availability and leisure participation patterns among Chinese urban

residents; (b) to explore regional differences in leisure time availability and leisure participation patterns among Chinese urban residents; and (c) to examine demographic differences (based on gender, age, and income) in leisure time availability and leisure participation patterns among urban Chinese population.

Methods

The data for this study were obtained from the Survey of the Chinese Economic Life (SCEL) covering all 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities of Mainland China. The survey was designed by the Peking University, Beijing International Studies University, and China Central Television, administered by China's National Bureau of Statistics (CNBS), and delivered by the General Post Office of China. The survey was conducted from May 2011 to February 2012. One hundred thousand questionnaires were distributed across Mainland China by local postal employees. Each city/village post office was given a certain number of questionnaires based on the population of the area and asked to randomly distribute them to local residents. In order to minimize omissions, improperly completed surveys and to overcome the problem of limited literacy, postal employees recorded the responses to the survey. The postmen were then responsible for mailing the surveys to the Computing Center of CNBS. This process yielded 73,622 complete questionnaires with a valid response rate of 86.6%. Only the data collected from the urban part of the sample were used in this study. More than 52,000 (52,092) surveys from 99 urban areas were analyzed.

The questionnaire included 14 questions focusing on the consumption patterns, social issues, income expectation, health expenditures, happiness, leisure time, and leisure activities. The two questions that pertained to leisure that were used in this study included "How much leisure time (except for sleeping, schooling, and eating) per day, on average, did you have in the last year?" The response categories ranged from none to more than five hours. Respondents were also asked to choose their three most often participated in leisure activities out of the list of nine pastimes (including watching TV, surfing the Internet, reading books, shopping, eating out or party, fitness and excising, resting at home, going to cinema/theater/stadium, and playing cards). Socioeconomic questions included age, gender, income, education, and marital status.

All of the measures from the original Simplified Chinese questionnaire were translated into English by the bilingual first author of this paper and his translation was verified by another individual fluent in both languages. Subsequently, in order to account for the significant differences between geographic regions of the country and to allow for regional comparisons, the sample was sub-divided into four regions based on different levels of economic development in China: East, Center, West and Northeast (CNBS, 2010) (Table 1 and Figure 1).

Based on the categories developed by Wang, Zhang, and Gong (1999), Wang, Liu, and Xu (2003), and Zhou, Li, Xue, and Lei (2012), leisure activities were grouped into five categories: passive/media-based (watching TV and surfing the Internet), other home-based (reading books, resting at home, and playing cards), exercising (fitness and excising), social (eating out/party, going to cinema/theater/stadium), and shopping (shopping). Midpoint values were assigned to leisure time categories (e.g., 1.5 to 1-2h category, 5.5 to over 5 hours category).

The data analysis consisted of three stages: (a) General leisure patterns in leisure time availability and activities participation were analyzed by frequency and percentage distribution; (b) Differences in leisure time availability and leisure activities participation among the four regions were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVAs with LSD post-hoc tests; and (c) Cross-tabulations, t-tests, and ANOVAs with post-hoc tests were used to examine differences in leisure

Table 1

Regional Distribution of Respondents

Region	Number of cities	Number of respondents	GDP per capita (Local currency)	GDP per capita (U.S. dollars)
East	39	23385	57455.50	8895.90
Northeast	9	4241	40412.33	6257.00
Center	27	10907	29187.50	4519.17
West	24	13559	28564.67	4422.42
Total	99	52092		

Note. According to different levels of economic development, the entire Mainland Chinese administrative territory is divided into 4 regions: the eastern, the central, the western and the northeast (CNBS, 2010). Data of per capita GDP have been extracted from CNBS (2010).

Figure 1. Map of Chinese Four Regions Identified in the Study

time availability and leisure activities participation based on gender, age, and income. Due to a possibility that statistical significance might have been influenced by a large sample size, a probability level of $p < .001$ was used as a cut-off point for statistical significance. The effect sizes were calculated for all relationships of interest (Cohen, 1992; Lantz, 2013).

Results

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample

The sample included slightly more men (58.7%) than women (Table 2). The majority of respondents (91.6%) were young or middle aged and married (68.7%). Almost half (49.6%) had graduated from high school or technical secondary school. Close to half (43.1%) of the respondents made between 20,000-50,000 Yuan ($3,218-$8,045) per year and 34.1% less than 20,000 Yuan ($3,218) per year.

Table 2

The Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	30,578	58.7
Female	21,514	41.3
Age (year)		
18-35	23,806	45.7
36-59	23,910	45.9
Over 60	4,376	8.4
Marital status		
Unmarried with significant other	7,605	14.6
Unmarried without significant other	6,095	11.7
Married	35,787	68.7
Divorced	1,667	3.2
Widowed	938	1.8
Education		
Primary school and below	4,376	8.4
High school and technical secondary school	25,838	49.6
Junior college	16,461	31.6
Bachelor degree or above	5,522	10.6
Income (Yuan, RMB per year)		
0-20,001	17,763	34.1
20,000-50,001	22,452	43.1
50,000-100,000	9,689	18.6
>100,000	2,188	4.2

There were significant regional differences in the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. Men were overrepresented in each region, but in particular in the Northeast and East (62% and 60% of the sample, respectively) (χ^2=88.6; ν=3; $p < .001$). Of all regions, respondents from the Center included the highest proportion of older people (9.2%), while those from the Northeast had the highest proportion of people in the youngest age category (49.4%) (χ^2=133.6; ν=6; $p < .001$). Income levels were also significantly different by region, with residents of the East being overrepresented in the highest income category (5.1% making more than 100,000Y/year), while residents of the Northeast being overrepresented in the lowest income bracket (50% with incomes below 2,000Y/year) (χ^2=1113.9; ν=9; $p < .001$).

National-level Leisure Time Availability and Leisure Participation Patterns

Leisure time availability. On average, Chinese respondents enjoyed 2.17 hours of leisure time per day. The highest proportion of the respondents (27.2%) indicated having between 1–2 hours of leisure time per day (Figure 2). The majority of the sample (73.7%) had less than 4 hours of leisure a day and only 6.6% had more than 5 hours of leisure time per day.

Leisure participation patterns. More than three quarters (77.1%) of the respondents engaged in passive/media-based leisure (watching TV and surfing the Internet), 71.6% in other home-based activities (reading books, resting at home and playing cards), 21.9% in exercising, 40.6% in socializing, and 33.8% in shopping (Figure 3).

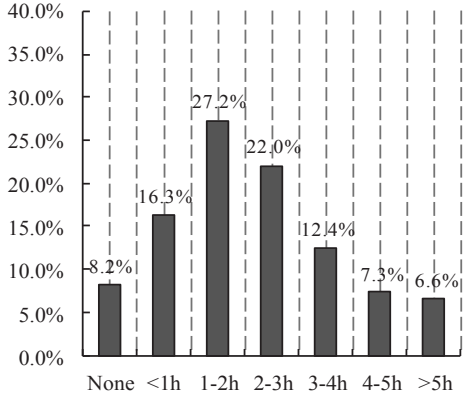

Figure 2. Frequency Distribution of National-Level Leisure Time Availability

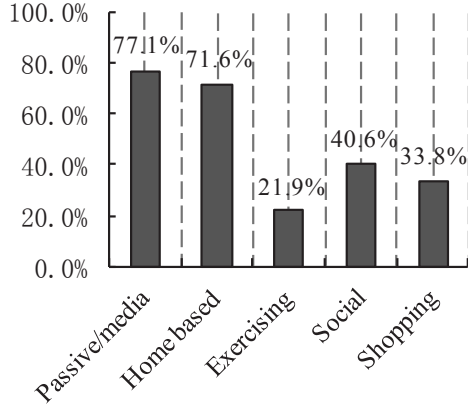

Figure 3. Frequency Distribution of National-Level Leisure Activity Participation

Regional Differences in Leisure Time Availability and Leisure Participation Patterns

Regional differences in leisure time availability. Similar patterns of leisure time distribution were observed in all regions (Table 3). However, the residents of the Northeast reported less leisure time than others, while the residents of the West enjoyed more leisure time than those residing in other regions. The results of the ANOVA confirmed significant differences in leisure time availability (F=41.639, ν=3, $p < .001$, ES=0.002). LSD post-hoc tests showed that there were significant differences between the East and the West (SE=0.0165, $p < .001$); the East and the Northeast (SE=0.0255, $p < .001$); the Northeast and the West (SE=0.0269, $p < .001$); the Northeast and the Center (SE= 0.0276, $p < .001$); and the Centre and the West (ES=0.0196, $p < .001$).

Table 3

Frequency Distributions of Leisure Time for Four Geographic Regions

	East		Northeast		Center		West	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
None	1810	7.7%	357	8.4%	926	8.5%	1194	8.8%
Less than 1 hour	3764	16.1%	935	22.0%	1868	17.1%	1907	14.1%
1-2 hours	6717	28.7%	992	23.4%	2962	27.2%	3472	25.6%
2-3 hours	5294	22.6%	882	20.8%	2364	21.7%	2927	21.6%
3-4 hours	2746	11.7%	551	13.0%	1332	12.2%	1855	13.7%
4-5 hours	1571	6.7%	323	7.6%	768	7.0%	1126	8.3%
More than 5 hours	1483	6.3%	201	4.7%	687	6.3%	1078	8.0%
Total	23385	100.0%	4241	100.0%	10907	100.0%	13559	100.0%

Table 4

ANOVA Leisure Time by Four Geographic Regions

Multiple comparison Leisure time LSD

Region		Mean	SE	*p*	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
East	Centre	.0138	.0177	.435	-.021	.049
	West	-.1445***	.0165	.000	-.177	-.112
	North East	.1002***	.0255	.000	.050	.150
Northeast	East	**-.1002*** **	.0255	.000	-.150	-.050
	Centre	**-.0864*** **	.0276	.002	-.141	-.032
	West	**-.2448*** **	.0269	.000	-.297	-.192
Center	East	-.0138	.0177	.435	-.049	.021
	West	-.1583***	.0196	.000	-.197	-.120
	North East	.0864***	.0276	.002	.032	.141
West	East	**.1445*** **	.0165	.000	.112	.177
	Centre	**.1583*** **	.0196	.000	.120	.197
	North east	**.2448*** **	.0269	.000	.192	.297

Note. ***. Denotes difference significant at $p<.001$ level.

Regional differences in leisure participation patterns. The ranking of participation in leisure activities was the same across all four geographic regions, with passive/media activities being the most popular, followed by home-based activities, social activities, shopping, and exercising (Table 5). The participation rates in passive/media, home-based, and social activities were significantly different across the regions. People from the West participated in social activities most frequently (43.76%; χ^2=95; ν=3; $p < .001$; $d = 0.043$), while those from the East participated in passive/media activities more frequently than people from other regions (78%; χ^2=28.3; ν=3; $p < .001$; d=0.023). In contrast, residents of the Northeast participated in home-based activities more often than others (74.51%; X^2=28.5; ν=3; $p < .001$; $d = 0.023$).

Demographic Differences in Leisure Time Availability and Leisure Participation Patterns

Gender. The results of a t-test showed that men had significantly more leisure time than women (F=27.30, $p < .001$, ES=0.064), although the absolute difference was small (Table 6). Leisure time distribution among men and women was quite similar (Figure 4). Both men and women were most frequently engaged in passive/media-based activities and home-based activities. However, there were significant variations in leisure participation patterns based on gender

Table 5

Frequency Distributions of Leisure Activities for Four Geographic Regions

	East		Center		West		Northeast		
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Passive/media	18199	78.00%	8235	75.77%	10323	76.29%	3290	77.94%	X^2=28.3;v=3; p<.001; d=0.023
Home-based	16502	70.72%	7818	71.93%	9754	72.09%	3145	74.51%	X^2= 28.5; v=3; p<.001; d=0.023
Exercising	5033	21.57%	2451	22.55%	3022	22.33%	864	20.47%	X^2= 10.7; v=3; p=0.013
Social	9380	40.20%	4108	37.80%	5921	43.76%	1668	39.52%	X^2= 95; v=3; p<.001; d=0.043
Shopping	7913	33.91%	3566	32.81%	4598	33.98%	1460	34.59%	X^2= 6.2; v=3; p=0.101

Table 6

T-Test Leisure Time by Gender

T-test leisure time by gender - **Group Statistics**

	Gender	N	Mean	*SD*	*SE* Mean
Leisure time	Male	30583	2.206	1.5451	.0088
	Female	21509	2.109	1.5026	.0102

T-test leisure time by gender -**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	*p*	T	v	*p* (2-taied)	Mean Difference	*SE* Difference	Lower	Upper
Leisure time	Equal variance assumed	27.301	.000	7.175	52090	.000	.0976	.0136	.0709	.1242
	Equal variance not assumed			7.210	47079.980	.000	.0976	.0135	.0710	.1241

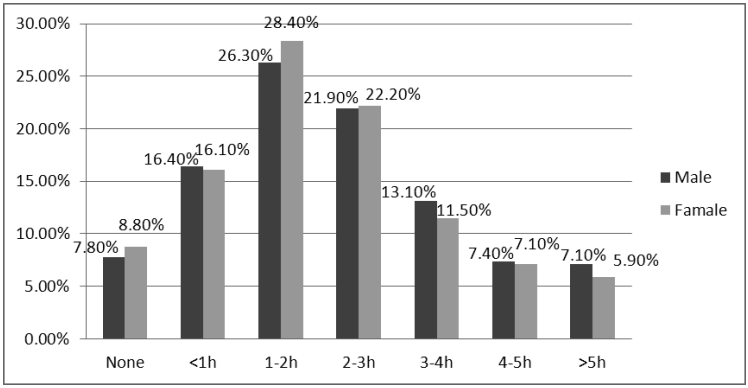

Figure 4. Leisure Time by Gender (Comparison by Categories)

(Table 7). In particular, more men than women participated in home-based activities (72.5% vs. 70.4%; χ^2=25.8; ν=1; p < .001; d = 0.012), exercising (23.1% vs. 20.1%; χ^2=66.4; ν=1; p < .001; d = 0.036), and social activities (41.7% vs. 38.9%; χ^2=39.9; ν=1; p < .001; d = 0.028). Women participated more frequently in only one type of activity – shopping (41.3% vs. 28.5%; χ^2=920.2; ν=1; p < .001; d = 0.133).

Table 7

Cross Tabulation Leisure Activity by Gender

	Leisure Activity				
	Passive/media %	**Home-based %**	**Exercising %**	**Social %**	**Shopping %**
Male	77.5%	72.5%	23.1%	41.7%	28.5%
Female	76.5%	70.4%	20.1%	38.9%	41.3%
	X^2=7.7; ν=1; p=.005	X^2= 25.8 ν=1; p<.001 d=0.012	X^2= 66.4 ν=1; p<.001 d=0.036	X^2= 39.9 ν=1; p<.001 d=0.028	X^2= 920.2 ν=1; p<.001 d=0.133

Age. The results of the ANOVA revealed significant differences in leisure time availability depending on age (F=415.208, ν=2, p < 0.001, ES=0.016). The results of LSD post-hoc tests confirmed that there were significant differences between the young and older adult categories (SE=0.0250, p <. 001) and between the middle aged and older adult categories (SE=0.0250, p < .001) (Table 8). Overall, the amount of free time decreased slightly between the young and the middle age categories and then sharply increased for the oldest age category (Figure 5).

Table 8

ANOVA Leisure Time by Age

Multiple Comparisons Leisure time LSD						
Age	Age	Mean Difference	*SE*	*p*	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
Young	Middle aged	.0010	.0139	.945	-.026	.028
	Older adult	-.6907***	.0250	.000	-.740	-.642
Middle aged	Young	-.0010	.0139	.945	-.028	.026
	Older adult	-.6916***	.0250	.000	-.741	-.643
Older adult	Young	.6907***	.0250	.000	.642	.740
	Middle aged	.6916***	.0250	.000	.643	.741

Note. ***. Denotes difference significant at p<.001 level.

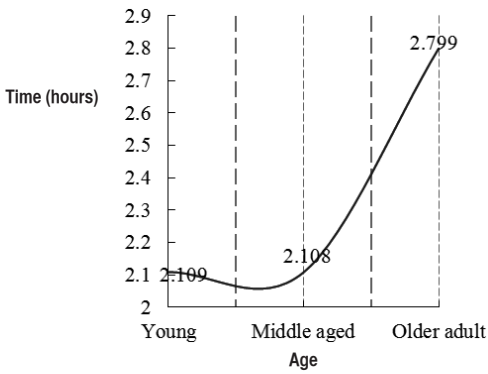

Figure 5. Leisure Time by Age (General Trend)

Leisure activity patterns differed depending on age (Table 9). Older respondents had the highest proportion of participants in home-based activities (77.3%; χ^2=161.8%; ν=2; $p < .001$; $d = 0.056$) and, interestingly, exercising (30.9%; χ^2=263.1; ν=2; $p < .001$; $d = 0.071$). The youngest respondents had the highest proportion of participants in passive/media activities (78.5%; χ^2=166.4; ν=1; $p < .001$; $d = 0.057$) and shopping (35.4%, χ^2=77.1; ν=2; $p < .001$; $d = 0.039$). Participation in socializing was lowest among the middle aged people (39%; χ^2=42.6; ν=2; $p < .001$; $d = 0.028$). In general, participation in home-based activities and in exercising increased with age, participation in passive/media-based activities and in shopping decreased with age, and participation in social activities showed a U-shaped pattern.

Table 9

Cross Tabulation Leisure Activity by Age

	Leisure Activity				
	Passive/media %	**Home-based %**	**Exercising %**	**Social %**	**Shopping %**
Young	78.5	69.2	19.9	41.9	35.4
Middle aged	77.0	73.0	22.2	39.0	33.0
Older adult	69.6	77.3	30.9	41.8	29.0
	X^2=166.4; ν=2; p<.001	X^2=161.8 ν=2; p<.001	X^2=263.1 ν=2; p<.001	X^2=42.6 ν=2; p<.001	X^2=77.1 ν=2; p<.001

Income. The results of the ANOVA revealed that leisure time availability increased with people's income (F=169.740, ν=3, $p < .001$, ES=0.01) (Figure 6). The results of LSD post-hoc tests confirmed that there were significant differences between people in each income category except between those in the 50,000-100,000Y and over 100,000Y categories. People in the lowest income category had on average 1.97 hours on free time per day, while those in the highest income category had 2.39 hours (Table 10).

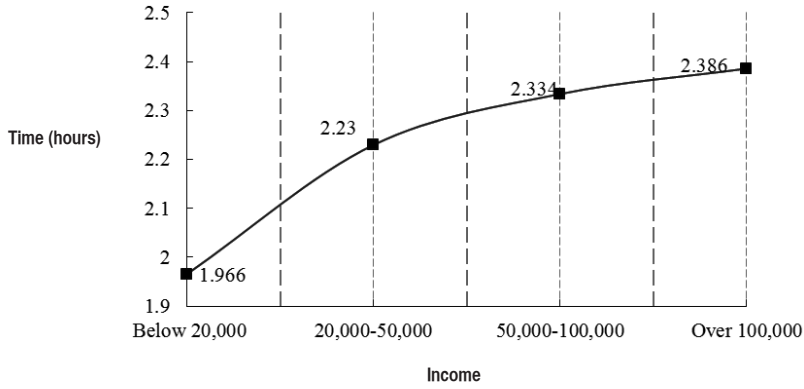

Figure 6. Leisure Time by Income (General Trend in Yuan)

Table 10

ANOVA Leisure Time by Income

Multiple Comparisons Leisure time LSD						
Annual household income (Yuan)	Annual household income	Mean Difference	*SE*	*p*	95% Confidence Interval Lower	Upper
0-20,000	20,000-50,000	**-.2632*** **	.0153	.000	-.293	-.233
	50,001-100,000	**-.3676*** **	.0192	.000	-.405	-.330
	>100,000	**-.4191*** **	.0344	.000	-.486	-.352
20,001-50,000	<20,000	**.2632*** **	.0153	.000	.233	.293
	50,001-100,000	**-.1044*** **	.0185	.000	-.141	-.068
	>100,000	**-.1559*** **	.0340	.000	-.223	-.089
50,001-100,000	<20,000	.3676***	.0192	.000	.330	.405
	20,001-50,000	.1044***	.0185	.000	.068	.141
	>100,000	-.0515	.0359	.152	-.122	.019
>100,000	<20,000	.4191***	.0344	.000	.352	.486
	20,001-50,000	.1559***	.0340	.000	.089	.223
	50,001-100,000	.0515	.0359	.152	-.019	.122

Note. ***. Denotes difference significant at $p<.001$ level.

Leisure activity patterns varied greatly for people with different income levels (Table 11). Participation in passive/media activities was the highest among people with lowest incomes (79.7%, χ^2=468.7; ν=3; $p < .001$; $d = 0.095$) and decreased with increasing income. The same trend was observed for participation in home-based activities (72.7%, χ^2=70.1; ν=3; $p < .001$; $d = 0.037$). Participation in exercising (30.5%, χ^2=161.4; ν=3; $p < .001$; $d = 0.056$) and in social activities (52.7%, χ^2=479.9; ν=3; $p < .001$; $d = 0.096$) showed a reverse trend. Participation in shopping showed an inverse U-shaped pattern. It was the highest among people with incomes between 50,001–100,000Y (36.8%, χ^2=71.1; ν=3; $p < .001$; $d = 0.037$).

Table 11

Cross Tabuliation Leisure Activity by Income

	Leisure Activity				
	Passive/media %	**Home-based %**	**Exercising %**	**Social %**	**Shopping %**
0- 20,000 Yuan	79.7	72.7	20.4	36.9	31.8
20,001-50,000	78.9	72.2	21.1	39.0	33.9
50,001-100,000	70.5	69.6	24.4	48.0	36.8
More than 100,000	67.2	65.8	30.5	52.7	34.8
	X^2= 468.7 ν =3; p<.001 d=0.095	X^2= 70.1 ν=3; p<.001 d=0.037	X^2= 161.4 ν=3; p<.001 d=0.056	X^2= 479.9 ν=3; p<.001 d=0.096	X^2= 71.1 ν=3; p<.001 d=0.037

Discussion

The findings indicate that, compared to leisure time availability in developed countries such as the U.S., New Zealand, and Japan, Chinese enjoyed relatively little leisure time (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008; Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2006; Statistics New Zealand, 1999; Zhou et al., 2012). We can attribute this to three factors. First, the traditional labor intensive nature of the Chinese agriculture and manufacturing is likely responsible for the low availability of free time among large parts of its population. Second, the unfavorable attitudes to leisure (Li, 2009; Liu, Yeh, Chick, & Zinn, 2008) associated with the traditional Chinese culture and the higher value placed on work in Chinese society (Wang & Stringer, 2000) may partly explain the low levels of leisure time in China. Third, the availability of leisure time is likely influenced by the general lower level of economic development of the country and the corresponding low levels of disposable income that, in turn, constrains leisure participation and leisure time availability (Deng, Walker, & Swinnerton, 2005; Dong, Hou, & Zhou, 2010).

In terms of regional variations, differences were shown to exist in the distribution of free time availability in China, although the effect size was small (Lantz, 2013). The fact that people in the West had the most time available for leisure and people from the Northeast had less leisure time than those in the East and West can be attributed to the regional differences in industry, with the Northeast being the biggest traditional manufacturing base (Wang, Zheng, & Shi, 2006), while the West is a less industrially developed region (Qing, Wang, & Dong, 2011). Moreover, the sample from the Northeast included the highest proportion of people with low incomes who tend to have least time available for leisure.

The overall pattern of preference for passive/media and other home-based activities, combined with the low participation rates in exercise evident across all genders, ages, and income categories is consistent with findings from existing research (e.g., Jackson & Walker, 2006; Walker & Wang, 2008, 2009). Chinese people's preference for passive activities is deeply rooted in the traditional culture that prioritizes work and learning and contrasts physical activity with mental or intellectual capacities (Walker & Deng, 2004; Wang & Stringer, 2000).

The findings also indicated that men had on average slightly more leisure time than women, although the effect size was small. Moreover, women engaged in shopping more often than men, while men engaged more frequently in social activities, home-based leisure, and exercising. These gender differences in leisure time availability and allocation can be attributed to cultural influences. Chinese women's leisure lives are still affected by the traditional Confucian value system of feminine virtue and morality that prescribes that the public domain is the sphere of men whereas the private domain is the sphere of women (Guo, 2005). This helps to explain why men were engaged in more social activities, such as eating out, partying, and going to events than women. With respect to age, a U-shaped pattern of leisure time availability was detected. Such trends are observable not only in China, but in the Western countries as well (Kleiber, Walker, & Mannell, 2011), as middle aged people usually care for their children and have to deal with the pressures of work. Regarding the effects of age on activity patterns, not surprisingly, the rates of involvement in home-based activities were the highest among people in older age categories, which confirms the trend observed in other countries (Kleiber et al., 2011). Interestingly, however, the rates of participation in passive/media activities have decreased with age and participation in exercising has gone up. This is likely attributable to the fact that participation in passive/media activities was affected by the involvement in on-line leisure and that in China it is the older population that typically engages in low-impact exercising such as tai-chi. Income

was also found to affect leisure time availability and leisure participation patterns, although the effect size was small (Lantz, 2013). More economic resources provided more freedom to enjoy leisure time and to engage in activities of choice (Borodulin, Laatikainen, Lahti-Koski, Jousilahti, & Lakka, 2008). Furthermore, Chinese participants with higher discretionary incomes displayed an increased awareness of Western leisure lifestyles (Wang, 2001), which promoted their participation in active pastimes and in shopping, while reducing participation in home-based and passive/media leisure.

The findings of this study provided useful preliminary information on the distribution of leisure time and activity participation among the urban Chinese population. Our study is one of the first attempts to provide insights into the leisure behavior among a cross-section of the population of this entire country. Our findings also underscore the importance of recognizing the regional diversity, as well as the rapid cultural, social, and economic changes taking place in China. Although this study generated some innovative findings, it also had a number of limitations. The scope of analysis was hindered by the design of the survey instrument, which contained only two items pertaining to leisure behavior. Moreover, the manipulation of the survey data introduced additional limitations since midpoint values were assigned to leisure time categories and an arbitrary value of 5.5 hours was used for the "over 5 hours" category, which could have introduced a downward bias. Lastly, the effects sizes discovered in the study were small, which underscores the need to treat the results of the study with caution. It would be desirable if future research provided more detailed information to help to account for the regional differences in leisure behavior in China and certain findings obtained in this study that are difficult to explain based solely on the results of a survey.

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