

# Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People

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*Places Matter Conference*





# Introduction

- Increasing policy attention but lack of research on children's participation in arts and cultural activities in Ireland
- Growing Up in Ireland data provide new insights:
  - Child cohort (8,500 children and their families) – surveyed at 9 and 13 years; information from children, parents, teachers and principals
  - Infant cohort (>10,000 children and their families) – surveyed at 3 years and 5 years; information from parents and (at 5) from schools (principals and teachers)

# Broad definition of arts and cultural participation



- Reading for pleasure
- Structured cultural activities (such as music and drama classes)
- Popular culture – television; digital engagement
- Younger children – creative play (including painting/drawing)
- Curricular and extra-curricular provision (from principal survey)



## Research questions

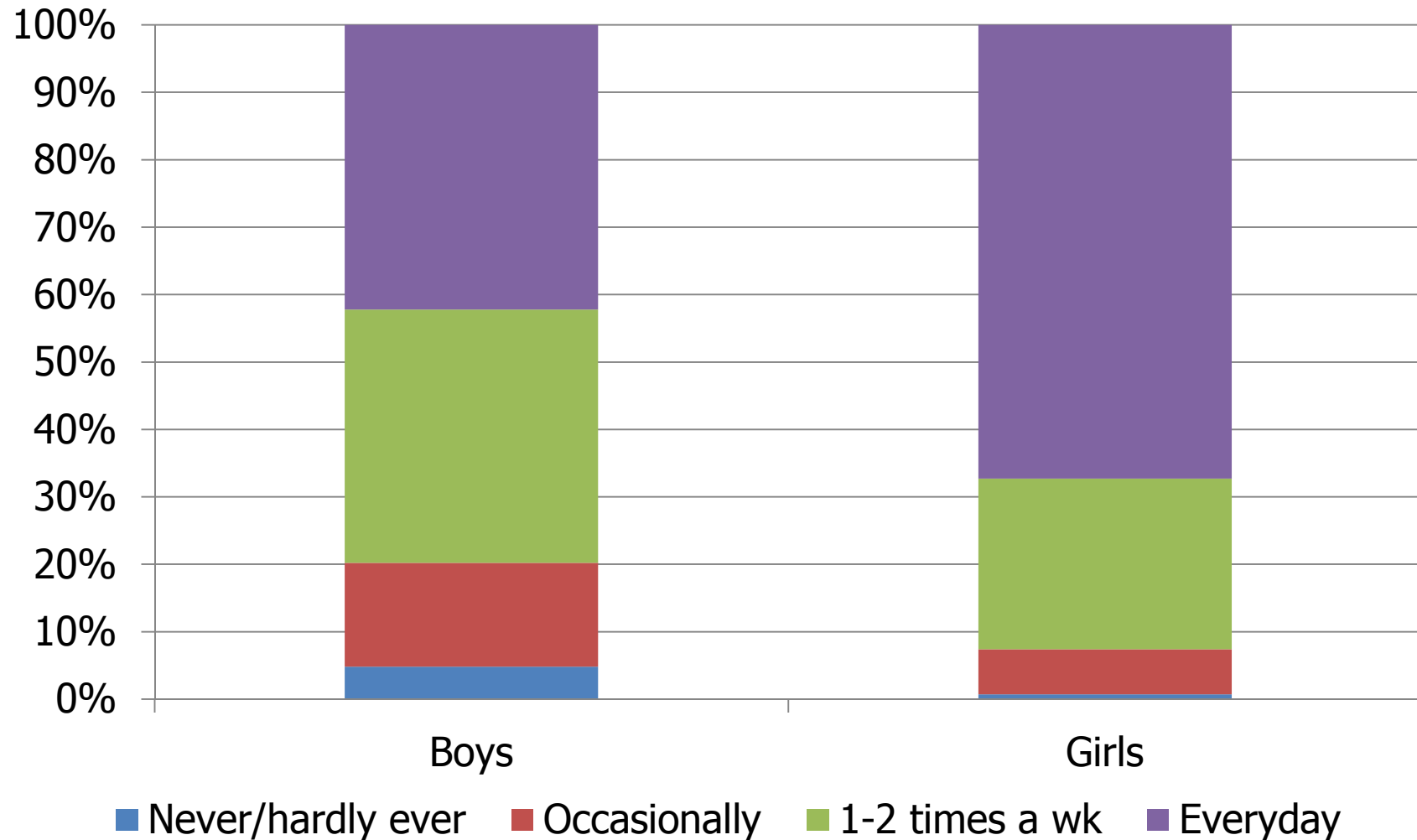
- What groups of children are more likely to engage in (different forms of) cultural activities?
- Which schools and classrooms place greater emphasis on arts activities? Does this influence children's participation in cultural activities outside school?
- How is participation in cultural activities related to other child outcomes, including academic skills and socio-emotional wellbeing?

# Cultural participation: informal activities

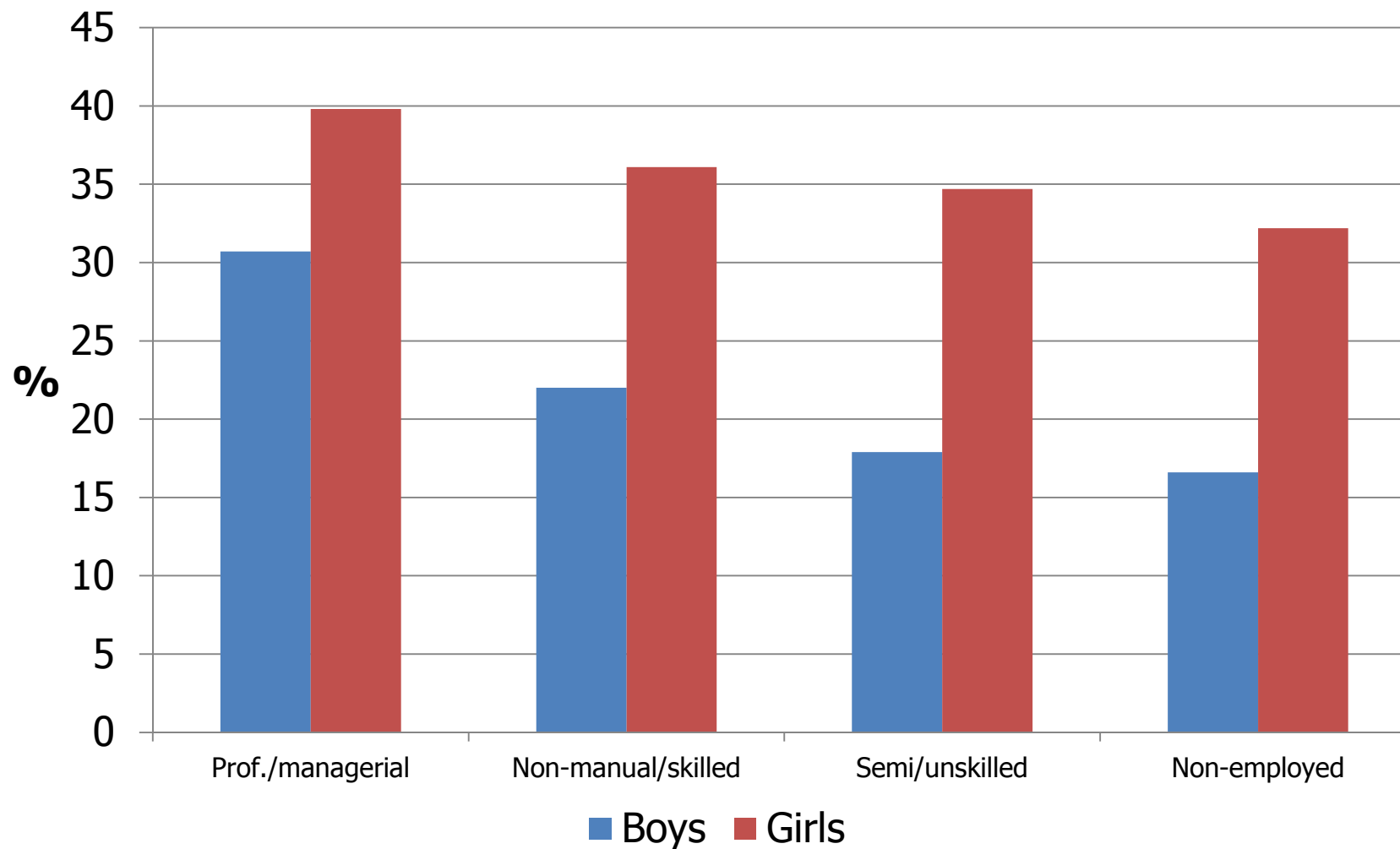


- Across all age groups, frequent engagement in reading/being read to and screen time
- Among young children, frequent engagement in creative play
- Differences in participation by social background and gender emerge early and persist into adolescence
- Lower participation in reading and cultural outings among migrant groups for young children but gap in reading narrows by 13 years of age

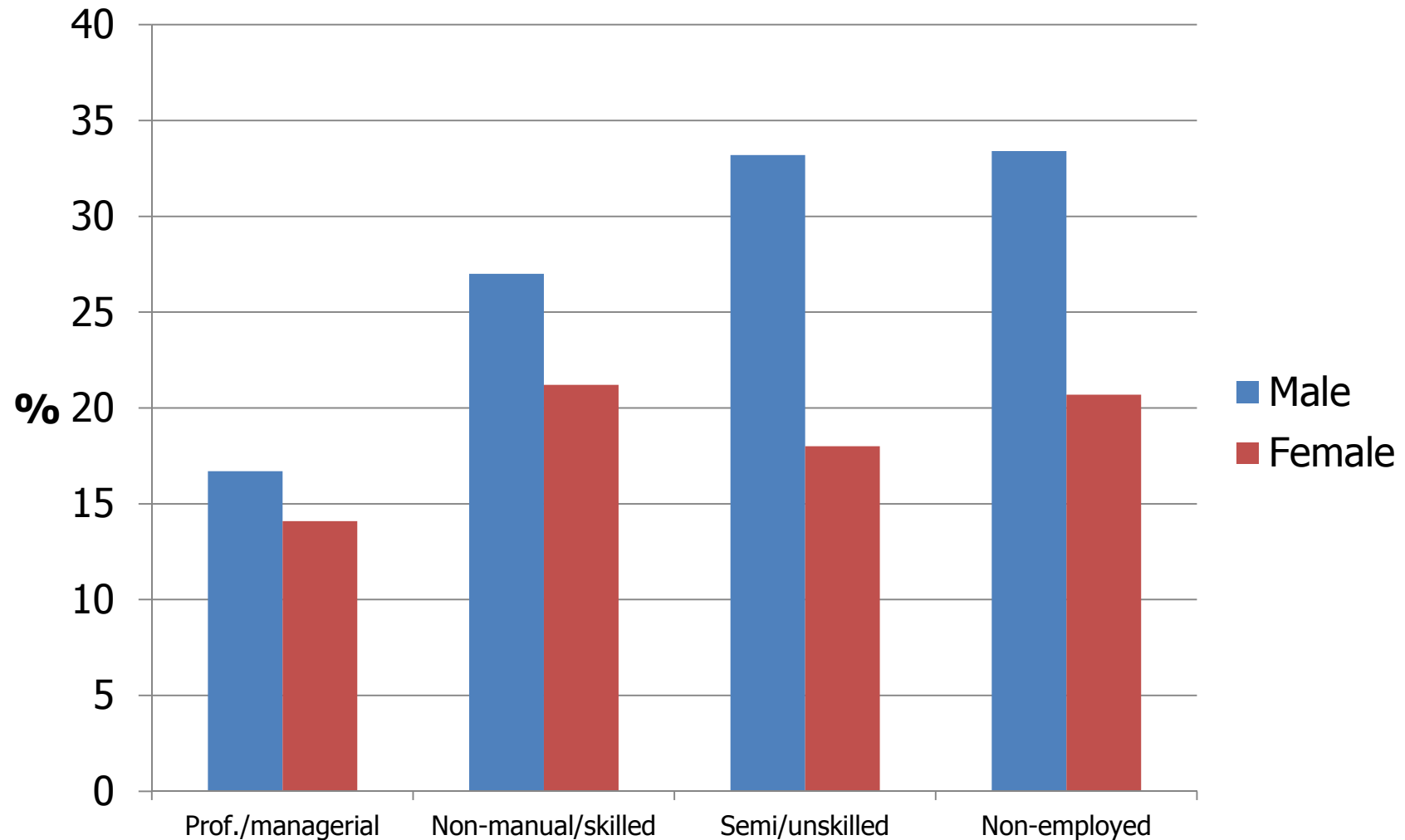
# Painting/drawing/making models



# Frequency of reading for pleasure every day (9 years)

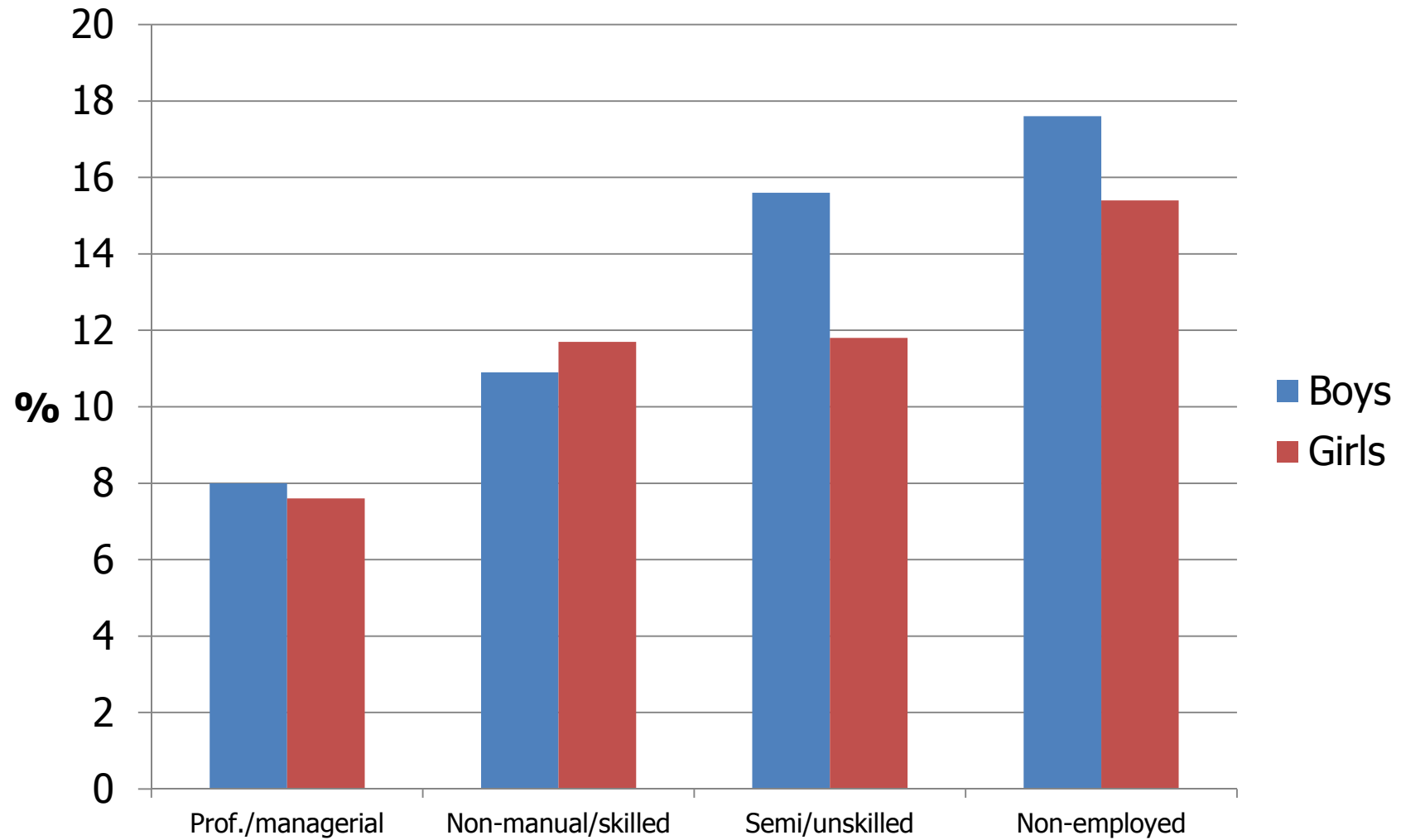


# No time spent reading for pleasure on term-time evening (13 years)

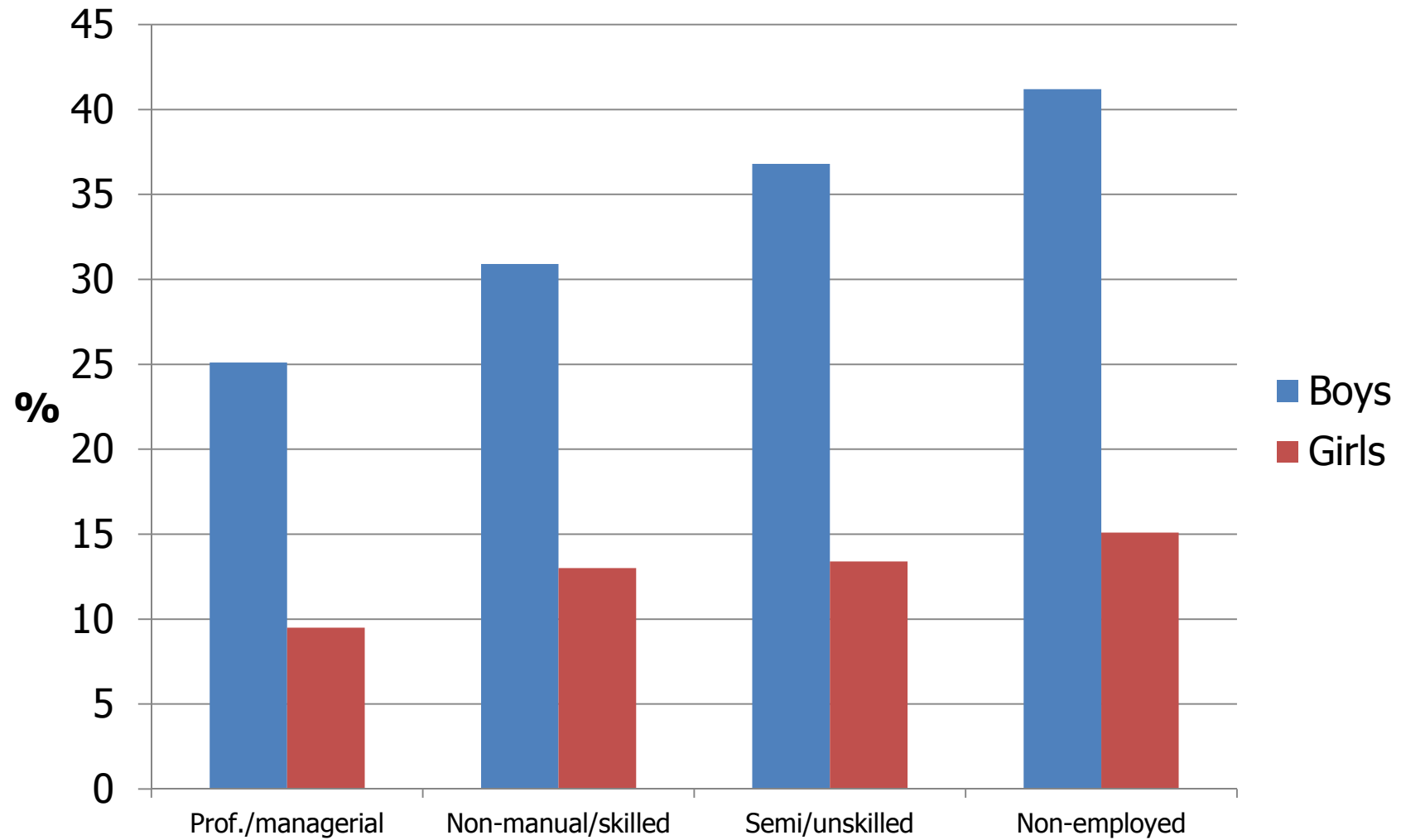




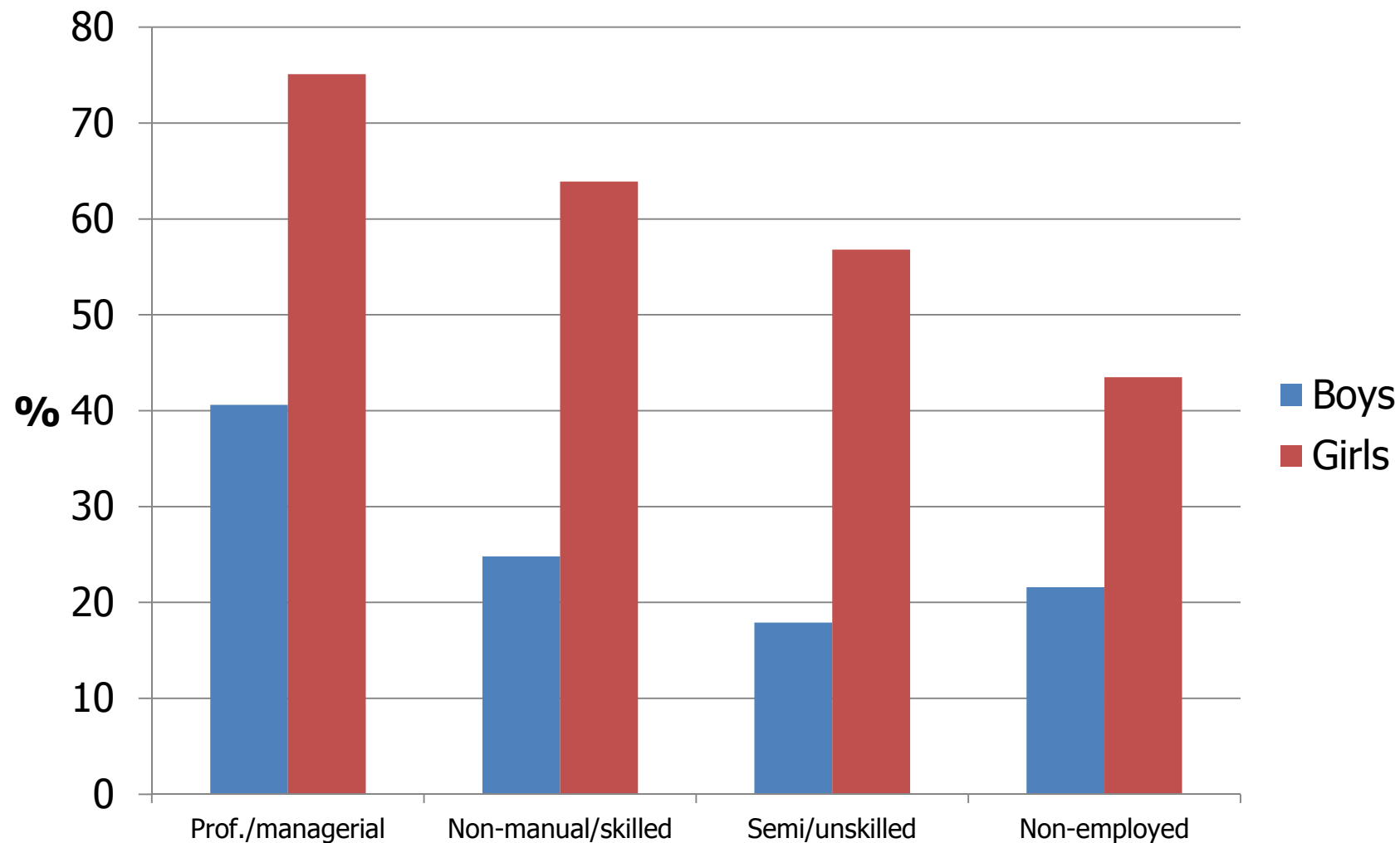
# Watching TV/videos (3+ hours) – 9 years of age



# Playing computer games (1+ hours) – 9 years of age



# Structured cultural activities outside school (9 years)



# Structured cultural activities at 9 and 13



- Participation is higher among more advantaged families (professional, higher education, higher income and two-parent families)
- Little difference by location or region
- Lower participation among immigrant children at 9 (39% v. 48%) but gap narrows by 13
- Lower participation among children with SEN at 9 (37% v. 50%); narrows by 13
- In vast majority of cases activities are paid for (especially at primary level)

# Schools and cultural participation



- Exposure to visual arts, drama and music at primary level but choice at second-level means lower take-up of Art and Music
- Significant levels of extracurricular cultural provision but less evident in smaller schools and more prevalent in girls' schools
- Students in schools with a strong emphasis on cultural activities are more involved in reading or structured lessons outside school



# Participation and outcomes

- Young children:
  - Being read to frequently and having access to more books enhances vocabulary development (3-5 years)
  - TV is related to improved vocabulary but also greater socio-emotional difficulties
  - Painting/drawing is related to fewer socio-emotional difficulties
- Older children:
  - Improved verbal and numeric skills and academic self-confidence among those involved in reading and structured classes; also more positive about school
  - TV is related to improved vocabulary but also greater socio-emotional difficulties



## Implications for policy

- Scale of variation by gender and social background poses challenges but some policy levers are evident
- Importance of early intervention: preschool settings – expansion of free preschool year as opportunity; potential use of library
- Schools as important arenas for access to arts/culture but challenges for small schools; potential for Arts Rich Schools as dissemination and for community collaboration

## Implications for policy (2)

- Need for an inclusive approach:
  - Information in a variety of languages for migrant families; use of schools to target this group
  - Inclusion of children and young people with SEN
- Resources for DEIS schools for after-school and holiday provision
- Financial barriers – subsidies for disadvantaged families within and outside DEIS schools