

Leisure & Older Adults - Part 1. ©

- Later in life there is a shift in the role of leisure when it is not so separate from work & family. Then change itself often allows new forms of leisure & self-direction to develop. These life changes influence males & females differently.
- The meanings of leisure include pleasure and fun, but also involve negotiating a balance between self-direction & social connection, between relaxation & action and between change & routine.
- Leisure for older people is often more about social interaction & relationships than the activities themselves. This interaction is the reason well-being is enhanced.
- Seen as a pastime or hobby, the word "leisure" doesn't seem to convey the richness of engagement with life that some feel is fundamental to their happiness.
- Inadequate leisure leads to social exclusion: access to leisure is dependent on both time & money, but neither time nor money is sufficient conditions for leisure. The income gap is widening with the incomes of the lower 25% of older Australians falling, while those of the top 25% have risen.
- A substantial proportion of older adults are housed in a dwelling that can be described as "not suitable". This is likely to influence the quality & amount of leisure behaviour.
- Studies show a direct correlation between fitness & longevity. With regular exercise, older bones can also better withstand falls, & stronger heart & breathing functions help to maintain better health. Exercise may also lead to more positive attitudes to ageing & thus motivate people to extend themselves to attain their full potential.
- Deterioration of muscle strength & functional capacity is not entirely a result of aging. In many cases it stems largely from disuse.
- The need to administer medication or receive treatments may consume large chunks of time & place considerable constraints on older adults participating in leisure activities.
- Older adults with the highest life satisfaction engage regularly in challenging activity, & make demands on their talents. For some, this provides a sense of satisfaction that exceeds levels experienced in working life.

leisure insights

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- In 2000, 33.8% of Australians 65+ years participated in sport & physical activity (25% for men & 19% for women). For 18-24yr olds, participation was 78% for men & 64% for women.
- Eighty five percent of persons over 80 years are disabled.
- Services for older adults & people with disabilities are commonly fragmented, duplicated & characterised by poor communication & lack of information. This is often due to many funding sources, service providers & levels of government involved.
- Less than 10% of older adults regularly use "senior citizens centres." Women use them more than men. This is consistent with greater participation in organised programs & social interaction by women. Also, participant characteristics are influenced by the variability of the centres themselves.
- Older adults & disabled persons appear to be involved to only a limited extent in the development of policy & the facilities that affect them.