

---

## Differentiation of Leisure Time Budget of Residents of Border Municipalities in Poland

---

Submitted 15/05/23, 1st revision 26/05/23, 2nd revision 14/06/23, accepted 30/06/23

Agnieszka Sawińska<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** This article presents selected factors differentiating the possession of leisure time among residents of Polish municipalities bordering Germany. Particular attention was paid to the impact of the Covid pandemic on changes in the perception of the amount of leisure time and the barriers determining the limitation of leisure time among the residents of border municipalities in three Polish voivodeships: West Pomeranian, Lubusz and Lower Silesian. A complementary goal was to analyze the literature on the category of leisure time.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The empirical part was based on a survey conducted using the CATI method on a group of 1,068 residents of border municipalities in Poland. The survey was conducted on a representative group of people while maintaining a purposive-quota selection of respondents taking into account characteristics such as age, gender and place of residence. The theoretical part of the article is based on a review of the literature on defining leisure time.

**Findings:** The analysis of the study showed that the increase in leisure time during the Covid pandemic was felt more often by women than men, and those over 60 years of age were most likely to notice no difference (40.8%). Respondents who were at the beginning of their careers (those aged 18-29) were the most burdened by work responsibilities, of whom almost half reported no increase in leisure time. The main barriers to leisure time in the municipalities of the Lower Silesian and Lubusz Voivodeships were care for children and other family members, and in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, professional work. Activities defined as active reaction did not change significantly compared to the period before the Covid pandemic. Passive recreation activities have increased.

**Practical Implications:** Knowledge of the factors differentiating the possession of leisure time by residents of border municipalities in Poland may contribute to local policy actors taking measures aimed at the proper use of leisure time by residents. These activities may improve the quality of life of residents, increase recreational activities of selected groups, which may indirectly contribute to socio-economic development.

**Originality/Value:** Previous studies related to leisure time are mostly of a very general nature and mainly concern its gender differentiation. Considering the leisure time budget in the context of an individual's perception of it and the impact of emergencies (Covid-19 pandemic) on its quantity and quality, along with an analysis in spatial terms (place of residence), provides a new perspective on the problem.

**Keywords:** Leisure, local development, recreation, border municipalities, economic geography.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D., University of Szczecin, Institute of Spatial Management and Socio-Economic Geography, [agnieszka.sawinska@usz.edu.pl](mailto:agnieszka.sawinska@usz.edu.pl);

**JEL codes:** I30, R23, J220.

**Paper type:** Research article.

**Acknowledgment:** *The project is financed within the framework of the program of the Minister of Science and Higher Education under the name "Regional Excellence Initiative" in the years 2019 - 2022; project number 001/RID/2018/19; the amount of financing PLN 10,684,000.00.*

## **1. Introduction**

Leisure time is treated nowadays as an important element of quality of life. Its possession and use depends on many factors. These can be factors of an individual nature (such as age, gender, education or labor market status) as well as factors of an objective nature (such as legal regulations). Factors that determine the possession of leisure time can also include emergencies, like the Covid-19 pandemic, which significantly impacted all aspects of life.

For residents of border communities, who typically rely on relationships in border areas, border crossing restrictions (quarantine, the need to be tested negative for Covid-19) or the need to work and study remotely have brought about changes in the possession and management of leisure time. Restrictions on travel both abroad and within one's own country have contributed to changes in the organization and use of leisure time.

The purpose of this article is to present the results of a study on the diversity of leisure time among residents of Polish municipalities bordering Germany. These municipalities are part of three voivodeships: West Pomeranian, Lubusz and Lower Silesian. This article is based on surveys conducted using the CATI method on a representative group of 1,068 respondents.

The research was conducted in 2021 and is part of a larger research project on recreational activities of residents of border municipalities. The specific premise of the research conducted was to pay attention to how the restrictions imposed in connection with the Covid pandemic affected the amount of leisure time. The empirical part of the article was preceded by a literature study on defining leisure time.

## **2. Definition of Leisure Time – Literature Studies**

Leisure time is a term that is considered diversely in the scientific literature. This heterogeneity and difficulty of defining the concept of leisure time may be due to the constant evaluation and the large number of factors that relate leisure time to many aspects of human life. Thus, researchers are often more interested in the

measurement, differentiation, determinants, modes of use, and functions of leisure time than in its essence.

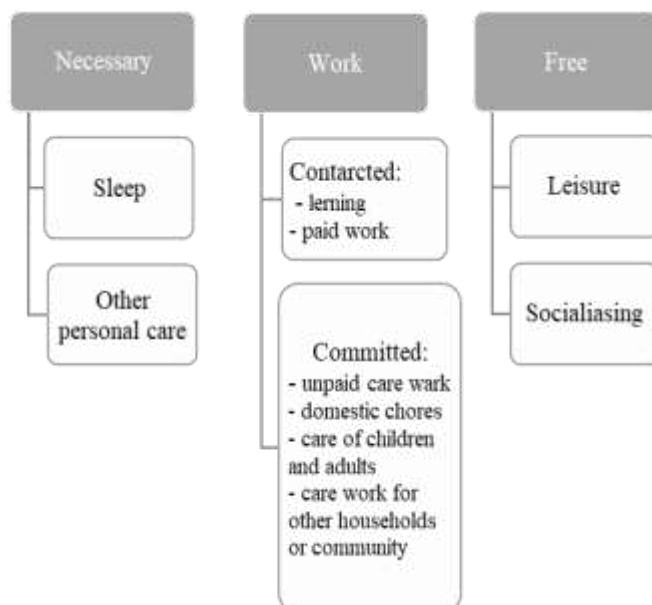
Most commonly, leisure time is defined as the time that a person can devote to the realization of their own and voluntary activities. This time is defined as time devoted, outside of work and household chores, to activities such as recreation, cultural, sports and social events (Aran, 2014; Ettema and Schwanen, 2012).

The classic definition of leisure time, as proposed by J. Dumazedier, specifies it as an activity performed outside of work, family, and social obligations. It is something that an individual voluntarily uses, at their discretion, for relaxation, entertainment, knowledge expansion, or spontaneous social participation.

These are all activities that an individual may indulge in either out of their own desire or for relaxation, entertainment, the development of their knowledge or their education, their voluntary participation in social life, having freed themselves from their professional, family and social obligations. An in-depth consideration of the essence of leisure time is presented in an article by Veal (2019).

Thus, leisure time is part of the time that is present in the time budget, which a person may (but does not have to) devote to recreation. A general summary of the distribution of time in society was provided by Charmes (2022) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** *The General summary of the distribution of time in society*



*Source:* Charmes, 2022.

A similar interpretation of leisure time was presented by Pięta, who argues that leisure time is the part of the time budget that is not occupied by gainful, normal and additional work, nor by systematic university education, nor by satisfying elementary physiological needs, or by regular household duties, and can be consumed either for leisurely vacationing, or for family life, social obligations and activities that bring immediate benefits (Pięta, 2004; Krzepicka and Tarapata, 2017).

Socio-economic literature considers leisure time is both quantitative (possession) and qualitative (value, quality of life) terms. It is now commonly emphasized that leisure time determines the quality of life. Like working time, leisure time has its own value, and its gradual increase does not necessarily reduce production in the economy. Leisure time is also recognized as compensation for working time, and is an element of higher quality and standard of life, as well as a factor of self-realization (Miłaszewicz and Węgrzyn, 2020).

Leisure time is a significant economic factor shaping household needs on a micro-social scale (along with income, possessions, prices, supply of goods and services). Leisure time can be used to satisfy both basic needs, such as regeneration through passive leisure, and higher-order needs, such as human development through cultural participation (Grzega, 2012).

In addition, the possession of leisure time may be spatially differentiated, which will be the result of legal solutions applied in a given country (regulations on working time, vacations) or cultural patterns found in a given area. Thus, it is possible to talk about objective factors of leisure time, but also subjective and difficult to measure.

As noted by Miłaszewicz and Węgrzyn (2020), the success of individuals, enterprises, as well as the socio-economic development and well-being of entire communities depend on the division of the time resource into work time and time allocated to other activities, as well as on the ways of their diverse use. The use of leisure time affects many areas of family, personal and professional life, and at the macro level translates into economic and social processes.

This confirms the need to acquire knowledge about the management of part of real time by different groups of people, distinguished by different criteria (e.g., gender, occupational status, family status, age, level of education or place of residence).

### **3. Data and Methods**

We present a statistical analysis of a survey conducted in 2021, involving a representative group of residents from Polish municipalities bordering the Federal Republic of Germany.

The research was conducted within the framework of a research project carried out by the Department of Spatial Economy and Tourism titled: "Changes in the

functioning of border areas during the Covid-19 pandemic, with particular emphasis on cross-border relations, leisure time use, and tourist and recreational activities of the population."

The research was conducted using the CATI method, based on an author-prepared survey questionnaire, consisting of closed-ended questions with a Likert design. The sample size was 1,068 respondents, and the selection of respondents was kept random and stratified, corresponding to the general structure of the population of municipalities, in terms of gender, age.

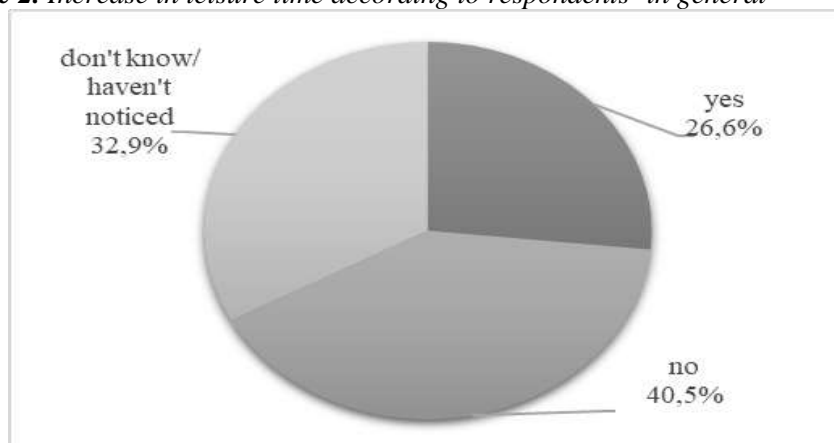
Basic baseline data were obtained from the Local Data Bank of the Central Statistical Office.

#### 4. Results

Conducting the research on the leisure time of residents of Polish border municipalities, it was assumed that an important factor that influenced changes in the amount of leisure time was the restrictions related to the introduction of the so-called lockdown. In Poland, this was the period of March 15 – May 30, 2020.

The analysis of the survey (Figure 2) shows that slightly more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the respondents (26.6%) noticed an increase in the amount of free time during the lockdown period. However, a significantly larger group of respondents (40.5%) reported no increase in time available for recreational activities or fulfilling basic life needs.

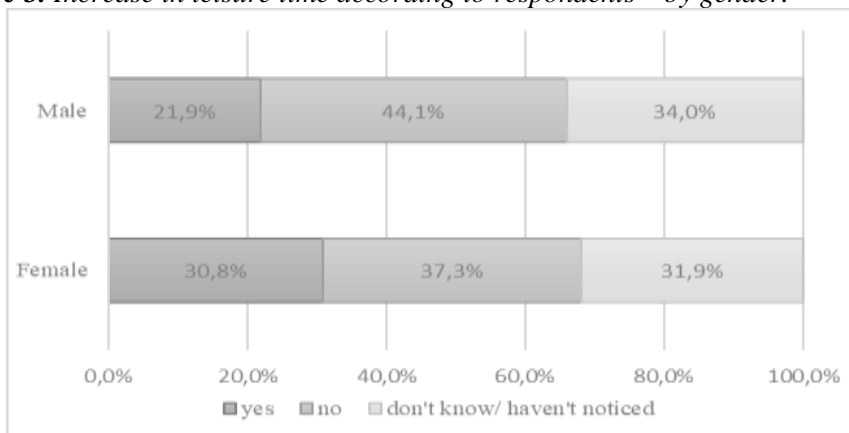
*Figure 2. Increase in leisure time according to respondents- in general*



*Source: Own elaboration.*

Considering the gender structure (Figure 3), increased leisure time was felt more often by women (30.8%) than men (21.9%).

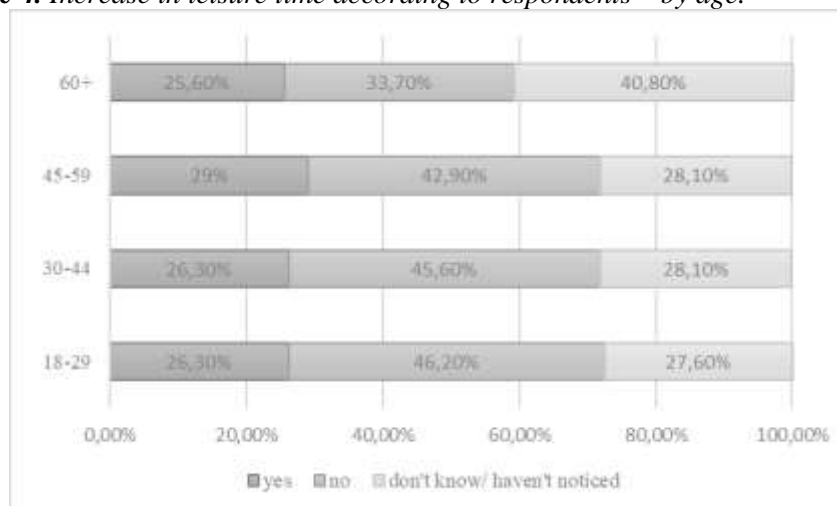
**Figure 3.** Increase in leisure time according to respondents – by gender.



*Source:* Own elaboration.

On the other hand, as Figure 4 shows, those over 60 were most likely not to notice a difference (40.8%), which is a direct result of the lower professional activity of this age group (pensioners, retirees). Respondents at the beginning of their careers (those aged 18-29) appeared to be the most burdened by professional responsibilities, of whom almost half (46.2%) found no increase in leisure time.

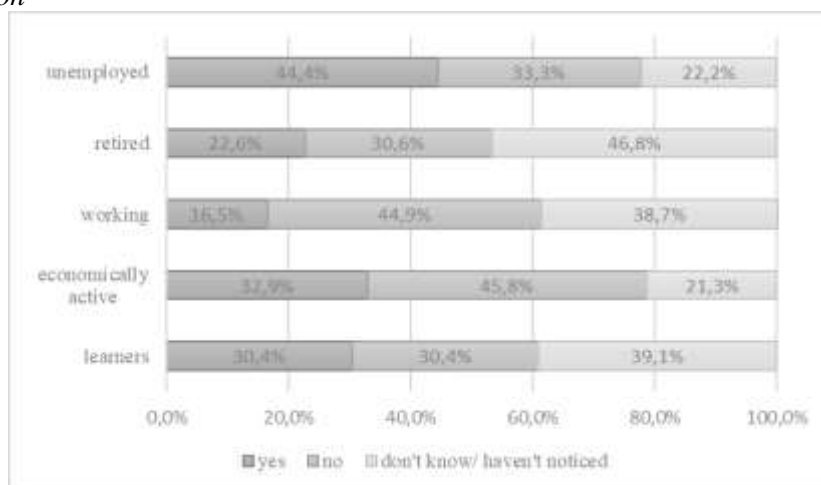
**Figure 4.** Increase in leisure time according to respondents – by age.



*Source:* Own elaboration.

We also considered the respondents' labor market status. As shown in the survey (Figure 5), the increase in leisure time was felt most by the unemployed, and least by the employed.

**Figure 5.** Increase in leisure time according to respondents – by labor market situation



*Source:* Own elaboration.

Given that the Covid pandemic led to a shift of school and childcare responsibilities to homes through remote learning, we examined whether the number of children in a household influenced changes in respondents' leisure time.

As Table 1 shows, a considerable proportion (46%) of respondents with two or more children did not experience an increase in leisure time.

**Table 1.** Increasing leisure time vs. number of children in the household

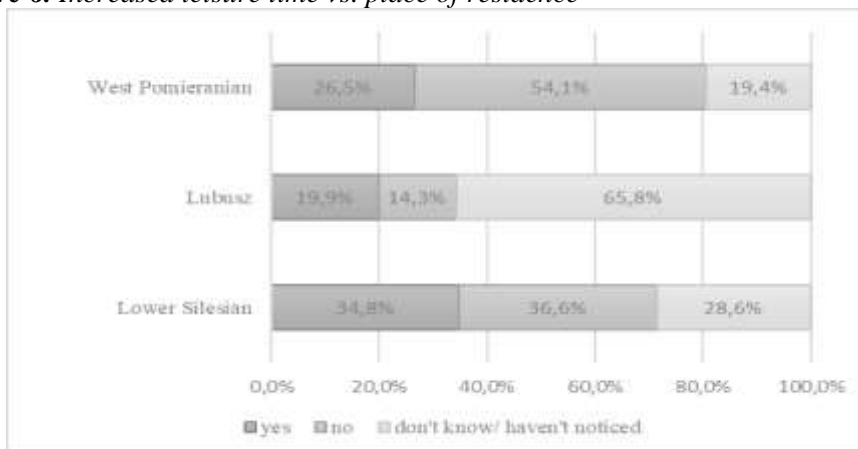
Increasing leisure time	Childless	One child in the family	Two or more children in the family
Yes	25,37	30,91	25,84
No	38,96	40,91	46,07
Don't know/ didn't notice	35,67	28,18	28,09

*Source:* Own elaboration.

Considering the respondents' place of residence, the survey showed differences in the municipalities comprising each voivodeship (Figure 6). Residents of municipalities located in the Lubusz Voivodeship were least likely to notice an increase in leisure time.

As many as nearly 66% of respondents from the Lubusz Voivodeship did not notice that their free time, which they could devote to recreation, had increased.

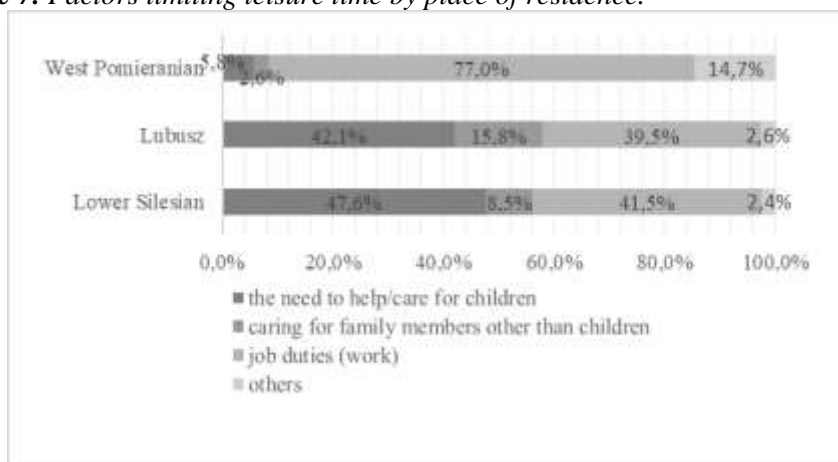
**Figure 6.** Increased leisure time vs. place of residence



Source: Own elaboration.

The reasons for respondents not having more leisure time in each voivodeship are shown in Figure 7. For respondents living in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship and the Lubusz Voivodeship, less leisure time was due to caregiving duties, both for children and other family members. In the case of residents of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, on the other hand, the reason was work obligations.

**Figure 7.** Factors limiting leisure time by place of residence.



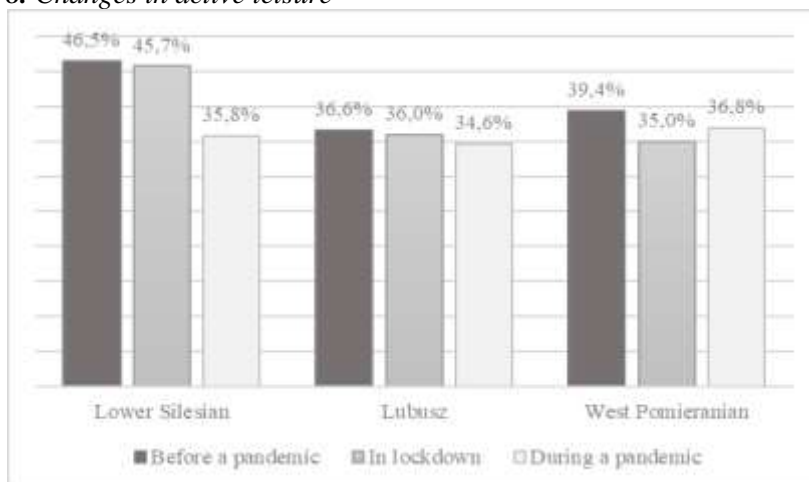
Source: Own elaboration.

The way leisure time is used can take many forms. In general, recreation is divided into active (e.g., running, walking, Nordic walking, gardening) as well as passive (reading books, watching TV, crossword puzzles, board games, surfing the Internet). Figure 8 shows changes in undertaking active recreation and Figure 9 passive recreation, by voivodeship.



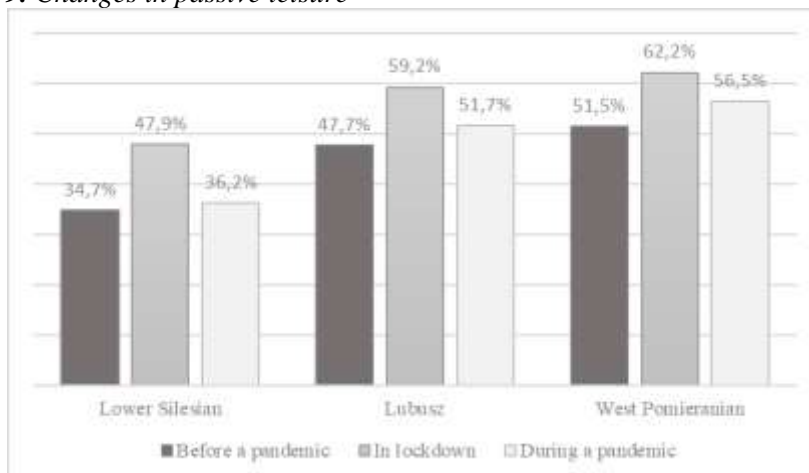
By convention, the division was made into three periods, i.e. before the pandemic (until March 15, 2020), during the lockdown (March 15 to May 31, 2020), and during the pandemic (after May 31, 2020 to 2021).

**Figure 8.** Changes in active leisure



*Source:* Own elaboration.

**Figure 9.** Changes in passive leisure



*Source:* Own elaboration.

As can be seen from Figures 8 and 9, activities undertaken as part of active recreation did not change significantly during the period of restrictions in all municipalities surveyed. In the case of passive recreation, an increase in its participation was noted during the lockdown period as well as immediately after it.

## 5. **Discussion and Summary**

Leisure time serves as the basis for all recreational activities, whether conducted at home or involving tourist trips. The choice and frequency of recreation are influenced by a variety of interconnected factors. These may include an individual's characteristics, needs and preferences, professed values or socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender or education.

External factors beyond individual control – including immediate and wider environment, cultural norms, and legal regulations or restrictions implemented in emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic – can also be significant determinants. Nevertheless, recreational activity is a derivative of leisure time. Given the classic factors that differentiate the experience of leisure time, one should take into account gender, age, labor market situation or place of residence, which is what was assumed in the analysis of the surveys conducted.

The issue of gender differences in the allocation of leisure time is not new in literature. These differences are the subject of social and economic research. M. Shaw (1994) noted that men have significantly more leisure time on weekends than women, while during the work week the differences are not as significant. On the other hand, Charmes (2022) presented data showing that women account for more than 72% of the total amount of unpaid work. This may indicate that women are burdened with responsibilities other than those of paid work.

Mattingly and Blanchi (2003) also point out that changes in marital status, childcare responsibilities, and working hours contribute to differences in women's and men's experiences of leisure time. Relating these reports to the research described in the article, it is worth noting that although women were more likely than men to experience an increase in leisure time during the Covid pandemic (which may also signify the equalization of social roles in the modern world), household responsibilities and their increase due to the transfer of schooling and preschool care to the home was the reason respondents did not have more leisure time in border municipalities of the Lower Silesian and Lubusz Voivodeships.

It is puzzling what was dictated by the fact that, in the municipalities of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, care responsibilities were not indicated as a significant constraint to having leisure time. Correlating the results of this research with other variables would perhaps yield an answer to this question, so it seems right to deepen the research conducted in the future.

In terms of age, the study conducted is consistent with reports in the literature. As Miłaszewicz and Węgrzyn (2020) point out, more leisure time is available to children and non-participating adolescents.

The study also showed changes in the use of leisure time for activities of a passive nature. Despite the inclusion of activities with a positive impact on human development, the growing and persistent share of activities such as watching TV or surfing the Internet is worrisome. Therefore, it becomes necessary for local policy-makers to introduce measures promoting active or cultural recreation and supporting family recreational activities.

### References:

- Aran, S. 2014. A Case Study on Defining Leisure Time Motivation of Recreation Students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 152, 734-739.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SBSPRO.2014.09.312>.
- Charmes, J. 2022. Variety and change of patterns in the gender balance between unpaid care-work, paid work and free time across the world and over time: A measure of wellbeing? *Wellbeing, Space and Society*, 3, 100081.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.WSS.2022.100081>.
- Ettema, D., Schwanen, T. 2012. A relational approach to analysing leisure travel. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 24, 173-181.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JTRANGEO.2012.01.023>.
- Grzega, U. 2012. Poziom życia ludności w Polsce - determinanty i zróżnicowania. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach.
- Mattingly, M.J., Blanchi, S.M. 2003. Gender Differences in the Quantity and Quality of Free Time: The U.S. Experience. *Social Forces*, 81(3), 999-1030.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2003.0036>.
- Miłaszewicz, D., Węgrzyn, G. 2020. Free time and its use depending on the professional status of respondents – selected results of the research on the students' free time. *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego We Wrocławiu*, 104-115.
- Krzepicka, A., Tarapata J. 2017. Czas wolny jako determinanta zachowań konsumentów, *Nowoczesne Systemy Zarządzania. Zeszyt*, 12, 163-173.
- Pięta, J. 2004. *Pedagogika czasu wolnego*. Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczna, Warszawa.
- Shaw, S.M. 1994. Gender, Leisure, and Constraint: Towards a Framework for the Analysis of Women's Leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26(1), 8-22.