

The Value of Leisure: Significance and Evolution

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ABSTRACT: In recent decades, Spanish society has evolved, conditioned especially by the changing global environment of which it is a part. One of the areas of people's lives in which these transformations can be most clearly seen is that of leisure, which has given rise to a certain evolution in the value given to it by citizens, as well as in the relevance that leisure lifestyles are progressively acquiring. This article presents the results of the fifth European Leisure Values Survey applied to Spain. In the case of Spain, the effective sample size is 1,200 persons. The random samples provide a complete coverage of the target population (persons aged 18 and over residing in private households, irrespective of nationality or language). The results show how leisure currently occupies a central space in the cultural, social and economic reality of our environment.

KEY WORDS: Leisure, Work, Values, people's lifetimes

INTRODUCTION

Today, the importance of leisure in the economic and social sphere is evident, but its role in the life of citizens and its contribution to personal development is also recognised. Leisure has been gaining prominence due to multiple factors such as the increase in free time, the reduction of working hours, the development of transport, the democratisation of cultural, sporting and tourist life, the increase in the supply of leisure and the emergence of new activities (Pascucci, 2012) and, of course, due to the important economic dimension of leisure. The last decades of the 20th century are characterised by profound transformations in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres (Roberts, 2016). These changes have altered people's living, working, relationship and leisure conditions at different stages of life (Guerra, Hernández, and Pedraza, 2018). Citizens are moving from perceiving work, money and consumption as dominant values, to another model, where friendships, personal fulfilment, leisure (Rivera, 2017) and being oneself are emerging values related to human development. Barnett (2013) argues that the way leisure is perceived has run parallel to changes in other aspects of life and this has changed the importance of leisure in society and for individuals.

In 1970, the World Leisure Organisation adopted the Leisure Charter. Article 1 of the Charter declares that "Leisure is a basic human right..... Therefore, this right cannot be denied to anyone for any reason, creed, race, sex, religion, physical disability or economic condition". Its prologue states that all societies recognise the right of people to times and spaces in which they can freely choose experiences that provide them with personal satisfaction and improve their quality of life.

WLRA, in 1994, adopts the International Charter for Leisure Education where it goes on to state that "leisure is a basic human right, like education, work and health". And it declares that "all people have the right to leisure and recreation through sustainable and equitable political and economic actions". In 2009, the organisation continued to work on leisure as an area for improving the human condition, and in 2018, in Sao Paulo, it approved the declaration entitled "Leisure without barriers". The field of leisure constitutes a space and a time demanded by the majority of people regardless of their age, gender or condition.

In a first approach, the importance and value of leisure is linked to its contribution to the generation of wealth (Roberts, 2016) and focuses on the economic nature of this field. The leisure industry branches into different areas such as culture, sport, tourism and/or recreation. Different statistics collect time uses, jobs related to the provision of services, average citizen expenditure, and fundamentally the economic impact of leisure and its fields, to the gross domestic producer of countries. In Spain, tourism is said to represent around 11%, culture 3% and sport more than 2.5%.

In a second, more person-centred approach, we know that leisure is not synonymous with free time but a vital sphere that provides self-fulfilment (WLRA, 1994). An approach to leisure understood as a human right and personal experience; all of which promotes integral human development (Cuenca, 2000). The Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) already proclaimed the right to rest, the limitation of working time and the need to have free time.

In developed societies, free time is obtained by subtracting from all available time the unavailable time (that dedicated to fulfilling all obligations) and the non-compulsory time allows the person to do whatever they want or wish (Aristegui and Silvestre, 2012). Leisure goes beyond the objective and subjective possibility of having time free of obligations; it is an attitude, a way of life, a space

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in which everyone longs to rest, enjoy and also develop (Dumazedier, 1968 and 1974), the latter linked to the perception of freedom, satisfaction and the positive experience of gratifying experiences.

The French sociologist Roger Sue (1982) identified three groups of functions linked to leisure. The first of these is linked to the personal (he agrees with Dumazedier), the other two are social and economic. The psychological functions of leisure provide help to maintain physical and mental development in balance, which allows for satisfactory and positive personal growth. The social relates to the importance of interpersonal communication and relationships, the social role and meaning of leisure in general and its practices in particular. The economic function highlights the importance of the leisure industry in Western economies, which sometimes generates excessive consumerism. Therefore, we must approach the phenomenon from a perspective that allows us to value its potential and meaning as a life experience (Kleiber and McGuire, 2016), identify the subjective aspects (experiences and feelings), and enhance and promote the values of leisure experiences (Chia, 2018), both at a personal and community level (Kleiber, 2012).

People's experience and enjoyment of leisure is directly related to their perception of happiness and adjustment to life circumstances (Larson, Jarrett, Hansen, Pearse, Sullivan, Walker, Watkins, & Wood, 2014). And leisure practices in people of different ages determine greater psychological well-being and better health status (Vivaldi and Barra, 2012).

Some authors (Ryan and Deci, 2017; Wang and Wong, 2014) focus their studies on the improvement of cognitive abilities and identify improvements in health, social skills and relationships, self-esteem and mental health as benefits derived from leisure activities. Larson et al. (2014) highlight as positive consequences of participation in leisure activities, the development of personal initiative, promotion of intrinsic motivation, acquisition of skills and respect for diversity. According to Veal (2019), leisure practices promote well-being by helping to reduce stress, establishing relationships, feeling free and taking control of one's life. And Barnett (2013) notes that leisure provides social benefits such as harmony, cohesion and social change, as well as personal benefits related to fun, learning, development, health and personal growth.

Leisure is a value in itself, but it is also an area that promotes values and is now a priority in people's lives because of the meaning and relevance they attach to leisure experiences and experiences. Professor Trilla (1989) identified the ten values of free time, applicable to the concept of leisure described above: freedom, happiness, self-fulfilment, creativity, sociability, activity and effort, culturalisation, values of the everyday and the extraordinary, and solidarity and social participation. A humanistic approach to leisure defends and promotes the values of coexistence and citizenship and facilitates the development of the entire population (Pascucci, 2012), attending to people's needs and promoting spaces for meeting, learning (Roberts, 2016) and participation.

Historically, work has been the protagonist of society and leisure a secondary actor without much relevance. But they are not opposing realities; work is not synonymous with activity and leisure is not doing nothing or being passive (Antunes, 2012). They are two areas that are part of every person's life. Most of us experience work on the one hand and leisure on the other on a daily basis, but we should note that there are jobs that provide leisure experiences and leisure activities that become work.

People throughout life, in addition to having some specific objectives, want and need to give meaning to our lives and leisure contributes to fulfilling this desire (Pagura, 2010). Leisure is an end in itself and is not what comes after work, which is an activity with a specific purpose (Aristegui and Ayerbe, 2010). Often, we find ourselves in work situations that pose many objectives but lack meaning, while in leisure we identify what is relevant and what gives meaning and sense to existence.

Some companies combine workspaces with facilities where leisure activities can take place during the working day (Gigli, 2012). It is noted that this has an impact on creativity and productivity at work and on the well-being linked to leisure in everyday life. All this transformation in the organisation of work moves the boundary of leisure time and has an impact on leisure lifestyles.

Next, we will focus on those leisure practices linked to social participation, altruism and solidarity (Nistal and Alcázar, 2011). From a vision of volunteering in the West (Funes, 2011), this is a form of participation that involves important elements of change and social transformation (Ginés and Piqueras, 2018), while forming a lifestyle and a way of seeing and understanding reality that exercise the value of citizenship and promote personal and social well-being through community participation (de Oca, 2013).

There is a leisure focused on altruistic and supportive behaviour (Kleiber, 2012) that constitutes the exercise of responsible citizen participation in activities with a clear dimension of solidarity (Roberts, Strayer, and Denham, 2014). Such behaviour requires thinking more about others rather than oneself and enables positive relationships with others and, in addition, increases empathy. It fosters sharing, understanding and support for others, which results in personal well-being.

This article aims to fulfil three objectives under the general heading of the value of leisure. Firstly, to delve into the place that leisure occupies in people's lives and the evolution that has been linked to the importance assigned to this area of everyone's life. Secondly, to address the evolution of the leisure-work binomial, which has always been seen as two sides of the same coin, and even as being in opposition to each other. Today, there are intersections in a multitude of jobs and also in individual professional performance, a space in which the boundary separating leisure from work and vice versa is becoming increasingly thinner. And, thirdly, to analyse the practices of participation in solidarity leisure through volunteering. Taking into account the socio-demographic variables selected as determinants: sex, age, marital status, level of studies, occupation. Each objective corresponds to a section of the text, preceded by an introduction in which the importance and significance of leisure in our society is discussed. The article ends with a series of conclusions.

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METHODOLOGY

The University of Deusto represents Spain in the international consortium European Values Study, which has been applying the European Values Survey since 1981. It is a survey of values that is applied in more than forty European countries every ten years with the aim of detecting trends in values, attitudes, perceptions of European citizenship and in the different cultural frameworks that make it up.

The European Values Survey asks almost one hundred questions about citizens' values, which are grouped into broad thematic dimensions of analysis: family, work, friendships, leisure, politics, religion, attitudes towards migratory movements, solidarity, identities, etc.

The EVS covers a period from 1981 to 2020, with a basic questionnaire repeated over time and applied to representative samples of the adult population resident in each country.

This article presents the results of the fifth European Leisure Values Survey as applied to Spain. In the case of Spain, the effective sample size is 1,200. The random samples provide full coverage of the target population (persons aged 18 and over residing in private households, irrespective of nationality or language).

RESULTADOS

1. The value of leisure

In recent decades, Spanish society has evolved, conditioned especially by the changing global environment of which it is a part. One of the areas of people's lives in which we can most clearly see these transformations is that of leisure, which has led to a certain evolution in the value given to it by citizens, as well as the relevance progressively acquired by leisure lifestyles. As Joffre Dumazedier pointed out in the 1970s, "leisure, although conditioned by mass consumption and class structure, is increasingly at the centre of the development of new values, especially among young people". Thus, it is worth asking whether the definitive break with traditional values such as family, work, politics and/or religion has favoured the rise of leisure in relation to the importance it occupies in people's lives.

1.1. The place of leisure in people's lives

In terms of the importance given by citizens, the value of leisure is in fourth place, ahead of traditional social structures such as politics or religion. For 48% of the population this is a very important aspect of their lives, a percentage that rises to over 90% when adding the responses: very and fairly important (table 1). It is worth noting that only less than 1% of the population considers leisure to be an unimportant aspect of their lives.

Table 1. Degree of importance of different aspects in people's lives (cumulative %) (2017)

	Family	Friends and acquaintances	Work	Leisure / free time	Politics	Religion
Very important	87,6%	54,9%	71,2%	48,7%	13,6%	18,2%
Quite important	99,1%	95,0%	95,2%	90,5%	39,0%	39,9%
Not very important	99,9%	99,8%	98,5%	99,2%	75,2%	70,8%
Not very important	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Looking at the evolution of the value of leisure in the three periods indicated (1999, 2008 and 2017) (table 2), it can be seen that in the last decade there has been a moderate decrease in this value (-0.3 points), maintaining the fourth position in order of importance. However, between 1999 and 2008 there was a notable increase (+10.4 points), and therefore a clear approximation of leisure as a percentage of friends and work. Therefore, in view of the results obtained, it is possible to affirm that the 2000s was the decade of the great advance of leisure in terms of social recognition, possibly reaching its maximum valuation potential in our current social context.

Table 2. Evolution of the degree of importance of different aspects in people's lives (sum of "very important" and "quite important" options) (%)

	2017 (Very + fairly)		2008 (Very + quite a lot)		1999 (Very + quite a lot)		2008-1999	Difference 2017-2008
Family	99,1	1°	98,7	1°	98,9	1°	- 0,2	+ 0,4
Work	95,2	2°	91,8	2°	94,3	2°	- 2,5	+ 3,4
Friends	95,0	3°	91,4	3°	86,2	3°	+ 5,2	+ 3,6
Free time/ Leisure	90,5	4°	90,8	4°	80,4	4°	+ 10,4	- 0,3
Religion	39,9	5°	36,5	5°	41,7	5°	- 5,2	+ 3,4
Politics	39,0	5°	26,5	5°	19,1	5°	+ 7,4	+ 12,5

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The analysis of averages offers the same picture. In the last decade, the average importance given to leisure has remained practically unchanged (3.3 on a scale of 4).

As a first conclusion, it is possible to state that we are currently witnessing a consolidation of the value of leisure in our society, following a loss of importance of work and a revaluation of work in the 2000s. In other words, today's society maintains a balance in the Work-Leisure balance, which until the end of the 1990s was tilted in favour of work. It could be said that the social importance of leisure in the value system is maintained, consolidating itself as the fourth value, close to values such as friendship and work.

Table 3. Average degree of importance of different aspects of people's lives (2017)

	2017	2008
Family	3,87	3,49
Work	3,65	3,83
Friends and acquaintances	3,50	3,33
Free time / Leisure	3,38	3,30
Religion	2,29	1,93
Politics	2,28	2,24

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1.2. The importance attached to leisure according to sex

Virtually all research carried out within the framework of leisure studies offers similar results in terms of gender (Shaw, 1985; Jackson and Henderson; 1995; Henderson and Gibson, 2013). The time available for leisure, the type of leisure activities, the meaning attached to leisure, the benefits perceived through leisure practices, and even the barriers and limitations to accessing leisure, have different nuances and components for men and women.

The data show a higher valuation or appreciation of leisure by men (92.8%) than by women (88.7%) (table 4), perhaps because it is the latter who identify greater limitations to their access in terms of time availability, including difficulties in accessing a job that allows them to ensure their material well-being, or because of their role as carers in our social context.

Table 4. Degree of importance of leisure in people's lives by gender (cumulative %) (2017)

	Male	Female	Total
Very important	47,8%	49,4%	48,7%
Quite important	92,8%	88,7%	90,5%
Not very important	98,9%	99,4%	99,2%
Not important at all	100%	100%	100%
Medium	3,39	3,38	3,38

This gender gap in the evaluation of leisure has widened over the last decade (table 5): while the difference between men and women in 2008 was 1.9 points, in 2017 this difference has risen to 4.1 points.

Table 5. Evolution of the degree of importance of leisure in people's lives (sum of "very important" and "fairly important" options) (%)

	2017 (Very + quite a lot)	2008 (Very + quite a lot)	Difference 2017-2008
Male	92,8%	91,6%	+1,2
Female	88,7%	89,7%	-1,0
	4,1	1,9	

As a second conclusion, although of a less significant nature, it is possible to state that the difference between the sexes is more evident today than it was a decade ago: in the case of women, the value given to leisure has decreased by one point, while in the case of men it has increased by 1.4 points. The time available for leisure in the case of women has probably decreased in the last decade due to their progressive incorporation into the labour market, as well as to the increase in situations of dependency, caused among other reasons by the ageing of the population, which continues to directly affect women and their leisure possibilities.

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1.3. The evolution of the importance of leisure throughout people's lives

Throughout people's lives, leisure evolves in relation to their life cycle, and this evolution can be seen both in the free time available for leisure and in the type of activities carried out, but even more so in its importance and the meaning given to it.

The data show (table 6) how the importance that people attach to leisure increases progressively from the age of 18 to 34, and from that point onwards, with the end of youth and the beginning of adulthood, the value attached to leisure begins to decrease progressively. Thus, the highest point, in terms of the most positive assessment of leisure, is found in the 25-34 age bracket (95.8% of people consider it to be fairly or very important in their lives), compared to people over 75 years of age, when this assessment decreases by 8.2 points.

Table 6. Degree of importance of leisure in people's lives by age group (cumulative %) (2017)

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	+ 75	Total
Very important	49,4%	64,7%	53,2%	51,0%	37,3%	44,7%	37,0%	48,7%
Quite important	92,1%	95,8%	93,2%	92,5%	91,9%	87,6%	76,3%	90,5%
Not very important	98,9%	100%	99,1%	99,2%	98,9%	99,4%	98,5%	99,2%
Not very important	100%		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The analysis of the last decade shows four facts to be highlighted: firstly, people over 65 years of age attach more importance to leisure in their lives today than 10 years ago; secondly, at the other end of the scale, younger people (18 to 24 years of age) currently consider leisure less important in their lives (-4.08 points) compared to the same age group a decade ago; thirdly, people aged 35 to 64 years have also reduced the importance of leisure, although in this case the relative variation is lower; thirdly, among people aged 35 to 64, the importance of leisure has also decreased, although in this case the relative variation is smaller; and finally, in fourth place, there has been an increase over the last decade in the value of leisure in the group of people aged 25 to 34, making this group the one that values leisure the most in their lives.

Table 7. Evolution of the degree of importance of leisure in people's lives (sum of "very important" and "quite important" options) (%)

	2017 (Very + quite a lot)	2008 (Very + quite a lot)	Difference 2017-2008
18-24	92,10%	96,18%	-4,08
25-34	95,80%	93,90%	1,90
35-44	93,20%	95,08%	-1,88
45-54	92,50%	93,03%	-0,53
55-64	91,90%	93,02%	-1,12
65-74	87,60%	84,39%	3,21
75	76,30%	74,21%	2,09

As a third conclusion, it is possible to affirm that the value of leisure throughout people's lives reaches its peak between the ages of 25 and 34, during the peak years of youth, after which time its importance diminishes, mainly due to the value that people progressively place on other spheres of life such as family or work, but also because these are the years in which people have more free time to devote to leisure, as well as a greater capacity to make decisions in this aspect of life, as it is less conditioned by different contexts, such as the family or work.

1.4. The importance attached to leisure according to socio-demographic profiles

This section analyses the current degree of importance of leisure for the Spanish population in relation to certain socio-demographic variables such as marital status, level of studies and occupation.

The marital status of individuals does not show a clear pattern for drawing conclusions (table 8), except in the case of widowed persons, among whom the value given to leisure is notably lower than in the rest of the situations.

Table 8. Degree of importance of leisure in people's lives by marital status (cumulative %) (2017)

	Married	Unmarried Partner	Widowed	Divorced Separated	Never married or registered as a partner	Total
Very important	48,0%	52,6%	33,0%	48,8%	55,1%	48,8%
Quite important	91,4%	89,5%	74,8%	92,0%	94,2%	90,5%
Not very important	99,1%	100%	99,1%	98,1%	99,7%	99,2%
Not very important	100%		100%	100%	100%	100%

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Various studies published in recent years show the same results as those observed in the case of the relationship between level of education and appreciation of leisure. The higher the level of education, the greater the importance people attach to this area of life. This can be seen in the data shown in table 8, where 74% of people with less than primary education rate leisure as fairly or very important in their lives, compared to 98% of people with a baccalaureate or vocational training, or 95% of people with higher education.

Table 9. Degree of importance of leisure in people's lives by level of educational attainment (cumulative %) (2017)

	Less than Primary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary Baccalaureate + VET	Higher	Total
Very important	30,1%	42,1%	55,1%	53,7%	40,6%	48,8%
Quite important	74,2%	86,3%	91,4%	97,9%	94,9%	90,5%
Not very important	97,8%	98,8%	99,3%	100%	99,3%	99,2%
Not very important	100%	100%	100%		100%	100%

The marital status of individuals does not show a clear pattern for drawing conclusions (table 10), except in the case of housewives, among whom the value given to leisure is notably lower than in the rest of the situations.

Table 10. Degree of importance of leisure in people's lives by occupation (cumulative %) (2017)

	Employed	Self-employed	Retired / pensioner	Housewife only	Student	Unemployed	Total
Very important	55,0%	51,5%	40,9%	37,1%	56,8%	46,4%	48,7%
Quite important	94,7%	87,9%	87,0%	80,5%	93,2%	91,5%	90,6%
Not very important	99,7%	100,0%	98,2%	99,4%	100,0%	98,7%	99,3%
Not very important	100,0%		99,9%	100,0%		100,0%	100,0%

As a last conclusion of this section, it is possible to conclude that in relation to the value of leisure and marital status, the importance given to leisure by widows is notably lower than in the rest of the population, as in the case of housewives. It is also possible to conclude that when people reach higher levels of education (baccalaureate or vocational training, higher education), they value the role of leisure in their lives to a greater extent.

2. The leisure-work binomial

Reflection on the importance of work has been present in the history of humanity through the intellectual efforts of different thinkers from antiquity to the present day. In much of the discourse in this sense, the relationship with leisure is a central element (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman and Lance, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi and Lefevre, 1989; Thomas, 1964), a problem that has provoked historical and current controversies about the preponderance of both elements in the relationship between these two axes on which our social life develops: work and leisure or leisure and work.

The reading of the data in this section is based on the position of the Spanish population with regard to the statement "Work always comes first, even if it means less free time", interpreting, according to the social imaginary, free time as leisure. This statement makes explicit the confrontation existing in our society between what has been interpreted as the two sides of the same coin: work and leisure.

2.1. The importance given to leisure versus work

As indicated in the previous section, the importance given by citizens to the value of leisure has been consolidated over the last decade, but it is still behind work (table 11), with 90% of the Spanish population considering leisure to be a fairly or very important value, compared with 95.2% who hold the same opinion, but in relation to work. From this perspective, it is possible to affirm that the difference between the two values is not so notable at first sight. However, when the two spheres of life are compared, people currently continue to attach greater importance to work. Thus, for 46% of the Spanish population, work always comes first, even if this means less free time and, therefore, fewer leisure opportunities (Table 12).

Table 11. Importance of leisure in people's lives (cumulative %) (2017)

	Work	Leisure time
Very important	71,2%	48,7%
Quite important	95,2%	90,5%
Not very important	98,5%	99,2%

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Not very important	100%	100%
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Table 12. Work in relation to leisure/leisure time (2017)

<i>Work always comes first, even if it means less free time.</i>	
Strongly agree + agree	46,2%
Neither agree nor disagree	21,2%
Disagree + Strongly Disagree	32,6%

Looking at the evolution of the value of leisure and work in the three periods indicated (1999, 2008 and 2017) (table 13), it can be seen, as has been pointed out, that leisure has experienced a moderate decrease in the last decade (-0.3 points), compared to the increase experienced by work (+3.4). However, between 1999 and 2008 there was a notable increase (+10.4 points), and therefore a clear approximation of leisure to work. Therefore, given the results obtained, it is possible to conclude that we are witnessing a dynamic that repeats itself cyclically: an increase in the positive valuation of leisure implies a decrease in the valuation of work.

Table 13. Evolution of the degree of importance of work and leisure in people's lives (sum of "very important" and "fairly important" options)

	2017 (Very + fairly)		2008 (Very + quite a lot)		1999 (Very + quite a lot) Difference		2008-1999	Difference 2017-2008
Work	95,2	2°	91,8	2°	94,3	2°	- 2,5	+ 3,4
Leisure time	90,5	4°	90,8	4°	80,4	4°	+ 10,4	- 0,3

However, a comparison of the two realities (table 14) shows that, although most people now agree that work always comes first, even if this means less free time, this assessment has lost 5.6% of supporters over the last decade, i.e. fewer people than a decade ago are now of the opinion that work comes before leisure.

Table 14. Work in relation to leisure/leisure time

<i>Work always comes first, even if it means less free time.</i>			
	2017	2008	Difference 2017-2008
Strongly agree + agree	46,2%	51,8%	- 5,6
Neither agree nor disagree	21,2%	16,9%	+ 4,3
Disagree + Strongly Disagree	32,6%	31,1%	+1,5
Media	3,19	4,6	-1,41

It can be concluded that people's attitudes towards one value tend to vary when it is compared with another, i.e. the value of work has an important unitary weight in people's lives, and leisure to a lesser extent, but when the two values are compared, the weight of the former seems to diminish compared with the latter.

2.1. Importance of leisure vs. work by gender

Continuing with this analysis, the comparison of both realities, and gender, we observe that women show a similar degree of agreement with respect to men in terms of the relevance of work versus leisure (table 15). It should be recalled that the non-confronted data showed a greater valuation or appreciation of leisure on the part of men.

Table 15. Work in relation to leisure/leisure time by sex (2017)

<i>Work always comes first, even if it means less free time</i>		
	Male	Female
Strongly agree + agree	47,20%	45,40%
Neither agree nor disagree	21,20%	21,30%
Disagree + Strongly Disagree	31,60%	33,40%
Media	3,21	3,18

As has been pointed out, there are now fewer people than a decade ago who believe that work comes before leisure. This pattern is repeated for both men and women, but it should be noted that the decrease in the percentage of men is notably higher than that of women.

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Table 16. Evolution of the importance of work in relation to leisure/leisure time by sex

<i>Work always comes first, even if it means less free time</i>						
	2017		2008		Difference 2017-2008	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Strongly agree + agree	47,2%	45,4%	55,2%	48,5%	-8,0	-3,1
Neither agree nor disagree	21,2%	21,3%	16,4%	17,5%	+4,8	+3,8
Disagree + Strongly Disagree	31,6%	33,4%	28,5%	31,6%	+3,1	+1,8
Media	3,21	3,18	4,66	4,59	-1,45	-1,41

2.2. The changing importance of leisure versus work over people's lifetimes

The data shown throughout the article allow us to conclude that the importance that people attach to leisure increases progressively from the age of 18 to 34, after which, with the end of youth and the onset of adulthood, the value attached to leisure begins to decrease progressively. However, the positioning by age groups with regard to the statement that work always comes first, even when this means less free time, and therefore less leisure, shows the same pattern: the group of people over 55 years of age is the group that agrees most with this statement, but in this case the group aged 35 to 44 years also shows higher percentages of agreement than disagreement.

Table 17. Work in relation to leisure/leisure time by age (2017)

<i>Work always comes first, even if it means less free time</i>						
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	+65
Strongly agree + agree	46,1%	38,3%	43,6%	39,1%	47,5%	57,9%
Neither agree nor disagree	18,0%	21,6%	17,3%	22,9%	19,5%	24,7%
Disagree + Strongly Disagree	36,0%	40,1%	39,1%	38,0%	32,9%	17,5%
Media	3,10	2,98	3,07	3,00	3,23	3,58

Finally, in the last decade we observe (table 18) that, among people under 24 years of age, as well as in the 45-54 age group, there has been an increase in the number of individuals who think that work always comes first, even if this means less free time, contrary to the rest of the age groups, especially in the group formed by people over 65 years of age (-16.5).

Table 18. Evolution of the importance of work in relation to free/leisure time by age (Disagree + Strongly Disagree)

<i>Work always comes first, even if it means less free time</i>			
	2017 (Very + quite a lot)	2008 (Very + quite a lot)	Difference 2017-2008
18-24	46,1%	39,3%	6,8
25-34	38,3%	40,5%	-2,2
35-44	43,6%	47,4%	-3,8
45-54	48,6%	31,2%	17,4
55-64	47,5%	55,5%	-8,0
+65	57,9%	74,4%	-16,5
Media			

CONCLUSIONS

Leisure currently occupies a central space in the cultural, social and economic reality of our environment, a developed society in which, until now, well-being and a level of quality of life that responded to the needs of citizens, both those of a basic nature and those of a more psychological nature that are linked to personal development, self-realisation and personal well-being, which are also very relevant (Ryan and Deci, 2017).

Leisure experiences have to do with one's own personal experience, but they are also integrated in a context since they have to do with the social environment, with the community (Gañan and Villafruela, 2015). Therefore, the importance of the phenomenon of leisure is undeniable in the definition of society, communities and individuals. As the analysis has shown, in the last ten years the balance between the leisure-work balance has been consolidated, following the revaluation of leisure developed in the 2000s. All this within the framework of a welfare society, in which quality of life is both an important end in itself and a tool for planning and managing services and programmes (Guerra et al., 2018). Leisure is a significant space for relationships and development (Llorente-Barroso, Vinaras-Abad, and Sánchez, 2015).

The Value of Leisure: Significance and Evolution

The century in which we live presents us with leisure as one of the most desired and representative experiences of our time. However, there are differences between men and women in terms of the value placed on leisure, and this has increased in recent years, with women placing the lowest value on leisure. And possibly related to gender, the lower value given to leisure by widows, widowers and housewives can be indicated. In age groups, it is young adults (25-34 years) who place the highest value on leisure. If we focus on the level of education, some differences can also be found, with a higher level of education corresponding to a higher value of leisure.

Moreover, whether or not leisure time is available is a necessary condition, but not sufficient, since leisure is an area of development as it provides satisfaction, an experience of freedom and self-realisation. The understanding of leisure as free time or as an activity has been superseded in the 21st century by the emergence of leisure centred on experience.

Numerous studies support the leading role of leisure as a promoter of human development and a generator of high levels of social and personal well-being. Leisure cultivates values that affect satisfaction, self-fulfilment, achievement or positive self-esteem; the experience of rewarding and positive experiences promotes a greater perception of quality of life (Nimrod 2007 and Chia, 2018).

Leisure is a rising value at personal, social and economic levels, which has meant that it has moved up the scale of values in society, and favours personal and social development (Kleiber, 2012; Kleiber and McGuire, 2016), being an area of value, a positive leisure that is integrated into lifestyles and enhances personal, social and community values. And it enables full participation in cultural, sporting, recreational and/or tourist activities.

We have gone from a work culture in which leisure was almost a reward or recognition with social implications for the work performed, to living in a culture of leisure and enjoyment linked to personal development in which work is an instrument to achieve and attain goals and experiences more closely linked to life satisfaction and the exercise of freedom.

The desire to experience leisure underpins the need for us to work, but the significance of the importance of leisure in our lives makes sense in itself and not in relation to work (Aristegui and Silvestre, 2012). Work often crosses the boundaries of Friday and floods the weekend, and leisure creeps into everyday life. This scenario makes it possible to a greater extent to reconcile family life and increases the degree of freedom perceived by the working person, recognises the importance of work (Cuenca, 2000) and above all its function as a source of income, but it also places or makes it possible for citizens to recognise the importance of leisure in their lives. According to the data, men and people under 24 years of age experience work first, unlike the group of people over 65 years of age.

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