

Research Paper

How do disabled individuals spend their leisure time?

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Abstract

Background: Despite the important role that leisure time plays in individuals' health, wellness and quality of life, the disability studies addressing leisure remain extremely limited.

Objective/hypothesis: Examine how people with disabilities allocate their time to leisure activities as compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

Methods: Using data at an individual level from the Time Use Survey for Spain in 2002–2003 and the social model of disability as a framework, we estimate the determinants of time (minutes per day) spent on three aggregate categories (active, passive and social activities) for non-disabled, non-limited disabled and limited disabled individuals.

Results: Individuals who are limited in their daily activities are more likely to allocate their time to passive leisure (e.g. reading, television, video, and radio) and less likely to spend their time in social entertainment (e.g. theater, culture, and social events) as compared to non-disabled individuals. In addition, we find significant differences in minutes per day spent on leisure activities by gender, age, marital status and number of children.

Conclusions: Accessible facilities and leisure installations as well as actions aimed at combating barriers and discrimination practices are needed to encourage participation in physical activity and social entertainment of people with disabilities. It is necessary to define, adapt and implement specific leisure activities that allow people with disabilities to fully participate in these activities and increase their levels of social integration and life satisfaction. © 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Leisure; Time use; Disability; Spain

Disability affects hundreds of millions of people all over the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 10% of the total world's population, roughly 650 million people, live with a disability. Most of these people do not have access to health, rehabilitation, social support, income programs, education, leisure, and employment, among others. In 2009, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognized the rights of people with disabilities in almost all policy fields, as well as the importance of individual autonomy and independence for these people, including the freedom to make their own choices.¹ As for leisure activities, Article 30 states that States Parties shall take appropriate measures to encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in "recreation and leisure and sporting activities" at all levels. Along the same lines, the European

Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (adopted on 15 November 2010) focuses on eliminating all barriers faced by more than 80 million Europeans, which often prevent them from fully taking part in society (e.g. sports, leisure, cultural and recreational organizations, events, venues, etc.) and the economy.

The aim of this article is to investigate the determinants of time devoted by people with and without disabilities to leisure activities. For this purpose, we distinguish three different categories of leisure activities: active leisure, passive leisure and social entertainment. In addition, we introduce an important novelty in our study which is based on the distinction within the disabled group between those people with disabilities who are limited in their daily activities and those who are not. This differentiated analysis allows us to embrace the social model of disability whereby disability is seen as a consequence of social, attitudinal and environmental barriers that prevent people from participating in society.¹ Universal design, a natural outcome from the social model of disability, ensures that recreation amenities in all environments, both built and natural, are designed for access by all people, regardless of size, shape, or ability. People with disabilities require more than

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¹ Full text is available at: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>.

medical care; they require social inclusion.² In contrast, the medical model of disability (which focused on people's impairments and people with disabilities are viewed as a diagnosis and different from the norm) has dominated the discourses and practices of therapeutic recreation and leisure research more widely.³

We have used data taken from the Spanish Time Use Survey for Spain in 2002–2003 and have estimated regression models in order to identify the main factors that affect time spent by people with and without disabilities on each leisure category. Despite the important role that leisure time plays in individuals' health, wellness and quality of life, the disability studies addressing leisure remain limited.² However, there have been several studies focused on the role of leisure activities in the lives of people with disabilities, especially in the lack of accessible and inclusive leisure services.^{3–24} For example and according to Devine and Wilhite,⁸ the lack of physical and programmatic access to leisure environments made people with disabilities feel helpless, excluded, and bothersome to others. Devine and Lashua⁹ and Wilhite and Shank¹⁴ conclude that participants with disabilities in leisure activities play a role in constructing social acceptance (either proactively or reactively) within inclusive leisure contexts and obtain an increase in their physical and emotional health. However, Schleien et al¹⁰ mention that if these leisure contexts are not accessible and inclusive they also have great potential to widen social gaps between people with and without disabilities.

In the same line, Rimmer et al¹¹ points out that the degree of participation in physical activity among people with disabilities is affected by a multifactorial set of barriers (architectural, social, policy and attitudinal) and facilitators that are unique to this population. In addition, Riley et al¹³ conclude, using a framework based on the social model of disability and participatory action research, that whereas the development of specialized recreation programs might have been considered an acceptable solution in the past, the push today is toward integrated and universally accessible programs. Lundberg¹⁷ found the ability of adaptive sports and recreation activities to reduce negative mood states such as tension, depression, and anger among people with disabilities. Finally, Stumbo et al²⁴ mention that when people with disabilities participate in leisure experiences, they obtain benefits on a par with their non-disabled counterparts. However, most of these previous studies on disability and leisure have traditionally focused on sport and active physical activity rather than leisure *per se*, or have analyzed this relationship between disability and leisure from a contextual framework or qualitative point of view. To our knowledge, this empirical study is the first one that examines and compares the leisure time of people with (limited or not in their daily activities) and without disabilities by using personal and household information (micro-data) on daily time spent on different leisure activities.

This study contributes to increasing our knowledge on the special situation of people with disabilities in society

in general, and their participation in leisure activities in particular. This study fills a gap in the existing literature on leisure and disability and represents a step forward in the research agenda on disability and leisure activities. In addition, this type of study gains in importance because of the aging process of the population and the fact that many disabilities are age-related. Another important contribution is that the database used in this study allows us to look at and analyze the leisure time of individuals (disabled or not) from a demand side, i.e. we have data on the minutes per day spent by individuals on a set of leisure activities. Finally, our results can be valid and useful to define, carry out and implement specific actions that contribute to fulfilling the main objectives outlined, for example, by the United Nation Convention and the European Disability Strategy 2010–2020.

Methods

Sample

This study has been done using micro-data from the Spanish Time Use Survey (STUS), carried out throughout the last quarter of 2002 and the first three quarters of 2003. According to the methodology used in the STUS, this dataset considers three basic units of observation and analysis: a) *household members* aged 10 and over; b) *private households* residing in *main family dwellings*; and c) *days* of the week. The STUS covered the entirety of Spanish territory and the sampling type used was the two-staged stratified design. The first-stage units were census sections. The second-stage units were *main family dwellings*. One of the main objectives of this survey is to obtain primary information on the participation of the population in cultural and leisure activities, as well as the use of time by special social groups (e.g. people with disabilities) with the objective of defining and implementing public policies and anti-discriminatory practices. The STUS contains a wide range of information on 20,603 households (e.g. household income, existence of a housekeeper, living in the capital of a province, and region of residence) and 46,774 individuals aged 10 or over (e.g. age, gender, marital status, and educational level), and it includes data on people's daily activities by means of the completion of a personal diary (covering the 24 h of a day, from 6 a.m. to 6 a.m. the following day).² In addition, the STUS follows the directives published in 2000 by the European Union Statistics Office (EUROSTAT) and which was created with the purpose of developing the Harmonised European Surveys Project on

² To attain the survey goals of examining the population's use of time, the sample was evenly distributed over the year in order to represent all days on a strata and Autonomous Community scale. Accordingly, this uniform distribution of the sample reduces the possible overrepresentation of holiday periods in our final sample. More information on the sample design in the STUS is available at: http://www.ine.es/en/metodologia/t25/t2530447_en.htm.

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