



# Living it up? Doing the things we enjoy most for longer

**The challenge**

We all need to spend time doing the things we love with the people we love. Whatever our age, socialising, eating and drinking travelling, engaging in culture and heritage, learning, and being active are the things that make life good for most of us. Yet too many of us are locked out of fun by cost, access barriers, or attitudes that make us feel unwelcome due to our age. Meanwhile, leisure industries are on the brink and urgently need to tap into new markets.

**What we know**

The evidence is clear that engaging in enjoyable leisure activities is good for our health, whatever our age. We need to prioritise fun throughout the life course if we want to live longer, healthier lives.

We spend far less of our lives at work - on average people across the UK are paid to work 23 or 24 hours a week, compared to 30 hours in 1970 - and, in March 2023, adults in the UK spent an average of 4 hours a day on leisure activities. However, most of that time is spent watching TV (2 hours and 16 minutes), while more active leisure pursuits are increasingly the preserve of the rich. For example, ILC analysis found that in 2021/22, people in the top 10% income bracket spent almost seven times more a week (£15.20) on sports activities than those in the lowest 10% (£2.20). And even those in the middle of the income distribution were only spending an average of £3.20 per week. At the same time, our average spending on having fun is now in decline: in 2022 we spent significantly less on having fun than in 2012.

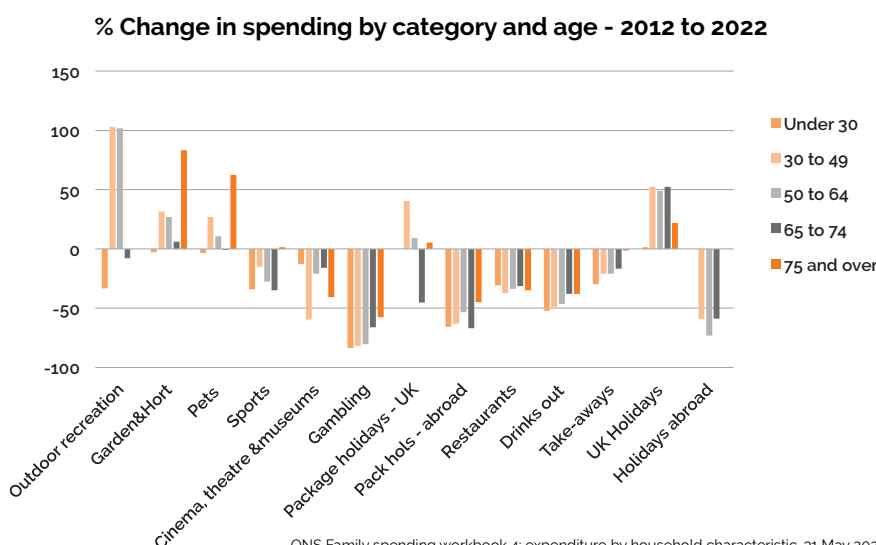
While we all have different ideas of fun, current trends are worrying for the leisure industry: even before the pandemic, younger generations were

choosing the sofa over a night out and cafés over pubs. Yet entertainment businesses are failing to adapt to an increasingly ageing market: in 2019, one report found that over 3.7 million people aged over 45 go out to a club once a week, and the average age of a Glastonbury festival goer is now 39, but too many older adults report feeling excluded from leisure environments.

Leisure industries already make a major contribution to the UK economy - for example, the arts and culture industry is estimated to bring £23bn in GVA (gross value added) to the UK economy. And sport and physical activity contribute £39 billion to the UK's economy and a significant portion of this comes from grassroots sport. However, leisure facilities are increasingly closing down in poorer and rural areas.

And key industries are in decline - with for example a 13% drop in the overall number of licenced premises operating since the start of the pandemic. If our leisure economy is to not only survive but also thrive, industries need to adapt to ensure that they are inclusive to a wide diversity of customers at every stage of life.

**New evidence**



**In 2021/22, people in the top 10% income bracket spent almost seven times more a week (£15.20) on sports activities than those in the lowest 10% (£2.20).**

ONS Family spending workbook 4: expenditure by household characteristic. 31 May 2023. Analysis of data for financial years 2021/22 and 2011/12

**We know we can do better than this. Do you have a sustainable solution for longer lives?**

Please email your solution to [info@ilcuk.org.uk](mailto:info@ilcuk.org.uk)