



LEISURE-TIME ACTIVITIES
of OLDER PERSONS in
SELECTED
RURAL and URBAN AREAS
of KENTUCKY

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INTRODUCTION

One of the phenomenal developments in the past hundred years has been the tremendous increase in the amount of leisure time available to men and women in the United States. Tibbitts¹ estimates that, because of the longer life expectancy and because of the shorter work week, men today have, on the average, 22 years more leisure time than did men a century ago. For the average housewife, with an even longer life expectancy and with simplified homemaking, the increase in leisure time is even greater. With improvements in technology, in medical care, and in living conditions, there is every likelihood that the amount of free time will continue to increase for people in the United States.

The abundance of leisure time available to men and women today suggests some important questions. For many older persons—

¹Clark Tibbitts, Preface to Free Time, edited by W. Donahue, W. W. Hunter, D. H. Coons, and H. K. Maurice (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), pp. vii-xii. A century ago the average life expectancy was about 40 years and a man worked 70 hours a week. Today, a man has a life expectancy of 70 years and he works a 40 hour week.

men and women who have withdrawn from gainful employment and women whose children have grown up and left home—almost all waking hours are leisure time. How is this free time used? Is it used wisely, both for the benefit of society and for the benefit of the individual? Should it be spent in activities which are primarily play, recreation, and amusement? Should it be spent on activities which merely attempt to prevent boredom or physical deterioration? The lack of answers to such questions point up the need for empirical studies of how older persons use their leisure time today.

The general hypothesis of this report is that the social environment has an important bearing on how older persons view and use free time. The principal social environmental condition investigated is that of type of community. The older persons studied are from two rather disparate areas of the United States. One area is representative of modern American industrialized society. The other area is rural and agrarian, a type that is rapidly disappearing from the American scene. In what ways do older persons in these two areas differ in their perceptions of, and in their use of, leisure time? Data relevant to this question should be useful to action-oriented agencies interested in developing activity programs for older persons.

It is recognized that the term "leisure-time activities" evades precise definition. Kaplan² suggests that the term includes

²Max Kaplan, "Toward a Theory of Leisure for Social Gerontology," in Robert W. Kleemeier, editor: Aging and Leisure (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 389-412.

both objective and subjective elements, such as (1) an antithesis to work as an economic function; (2) a pleasant expectation and recollection; (3) a high degree of voluntary behavior; (4) considerable freedom of choice; (5) a close relation to important values of society; and (6) an activity characterized by the element of play. Anderson³ has directed attention to some of the difficulties encountered in obtaining acceptable definitions of leisure, of free-time activity, or of play, and concludes that it may be necessary to study leisure and work activities for some time before major theoretical constructs can be formulated. As used in this report, "leisure-time activities" are identified as family relationships, certain community activities, and favorite pastimes and hobbies of the older persons studied. These types of activities, it is assumed, are increasing in importance to older persons, as activities for pay or profit for older persons are declining in importance.

This report has a twofold objective:

- (1) To examine the use and perceptions of leisure time by older persons living in a rural and an urban area.
- (2) To point out some implications concerning free-time activities for organizations and persons involved in developing activity programs for older people.

³John E. Anderson, "Comments," in Robert W. Kleemeier, *ibid.*, p. 429.

Sample

In 1959, men and women aged 60 and older in an area probability sample of households in a rural Kentucky county and a random sample of persons of comparable age in a Kentucky urban area were interviewed in their homes. No institutionalized older persons were included. Casey county, with a total population of slightly over 14,000 in 1960, is a completely rural county located in the Southern Appalachian Region and relatively isolated from any large urban center. The Lexington urbanized area had a population of about 112,000 persons in 1960.

Selected characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1. The age range was 60 to 97 years, with a median of 69 years. The sample included slightly more women than men, a difference due to the greater proportion of female respondents in the urban sample. Three-fifths of the respondents were married, and a third were widowed. More married persons were in the rural sample than in the urban, and more widowed persons—particularly women—in the urban sample. One-fifth of the urban sample was non-white, compared with less than one percent for the rural sample. The sample was predominantly Protestant. The urban respondents, compared with the rural persons, had more formal education and substantially higher incomes.

Table 1. Selected Characteristics of Persons Aged 60 and Older,
Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Characteristic	Rural (Casey County)		Urban (Lexington)		Total	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
<u>Sex</u>						
Male	312	50	220	36	532	43
Female	315	50	389	64	704	57
<u>Age</u>						
60-64	166	27	152	25	318	26
65-69	159	25	145	24	304	24
70-74	124	20	143	23	267	22
75 and over	178	28	169	28	347	28
(Median)	(69)		(70)		(69)	
<u>Marital Status</u>						
Married	429	68	308	51	737	60
Widowed	161	26	252	41	413	33
Never married	23	4	37	6	60	5
Divorced or Separated	14	2	12	2	26	2
<u>Residence</u>						
Farm	439	70	--	--	439	36
Village or town	131	21	--	--	131	10
Open country, not farm	57	9	--	--	57	5
Large city	--	--	609	100	609	49
<u>Race</u>						
White	627	100	482	79	1,109	90
Non-white	*	*	127	21	127	10

Table 1
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Characteristic	Rural (Casey County)		Urban (Lexington)		Total	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
<u>Religion</u>						
Protestant	494	79	521	86	1,015	82
Catholic	14	2	26	4	40	3
Jewish	1	-	10	2	11	1
Other	25	4	13	2	38	3
No response	93	15	39	6	132	11
<u>Formal Education</u>						
0-4 grades	222	35	103	17	325	26
5-8 grades	329	52	206	34	535	43
9-12 grades	35	6	142	23	177	14
13-16 grades	21	3	109	18	130	11
17 or more grades	4	1	20	3	24	2
no response	16	3	29	5	45	4
(Median)	(5.5)		(8.1)		(6.5)	
<u>Annual Money Income</u>						
None	36	6	16	3	52	4
\$1 - 499	164	26	59	10	223	18
\$500 - 999	201	32	134	22	335	27
\$1,000 - 2,999	169	27	203	33	372	30
\$3,000 - 4,999	23	4	69	11	92	8
\$5,000 and over	18	3	80	13	98	8
No response	16	2	48	8	64	5
(Median)	(\$762)		(\$1,704)		(\$964)	
Total cases	(627) (100)		(609) (100)		(1,236) (100)	

*Less than 0.05 percent.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

For most persons in the United States, young and old, family relationships are an important "free time" interest and activity. Almost no one is without some degree of contact with family members, and for many persons these are the most frequent of interpersonal relationships. Primary group relationships seem necessary for emotional well-being, and it is in the family setting that the individual finds his major source of psychological support. For older men and women who have withdrawn either partly or fully from gainful employment, and for women whose children have grown up and left home, relationships with members of their family may be the most important events in their lives.

Two aspects of family relationships are examined in this report: (1) the spatial distribution of the older person's family that is, the proximity of his children and of his brothers or sisters; and (2) the visiting patterns existing between the older person and his children and between the older person and his brothers or sisters.

Proximity of Children and Siblings

At the time of the interview, 80 percent of the older persons reported they had children living, and 82 percent said they had brothers or sisters living. More of the rural than of the urban older persons⁴ reported that they had children living (88 and 72 percent, respectively), and more of the rural than of the urban respondents said they had brothers or sisters living (92 and 72 percent, respectively).

The proximity of the older respondents to their children and to their brothers or sisters is indicated in Table 2. Almost half the respondents (44 percent) lived in the same household with one or more of their children. Only 6 percent of the respondents with living siblings lived in the same household with one or more of their brothers or sisters. Two-thirds of the respondents with children (67 percent) reported that one or more of their children lived within a distance of 9 miles, but only half the respondents with siblings (52 percent) reported that one or more of their brothers or sisters lived within this distance. On the average, the children living apart from the older persons were as widely dispersed as were the siblings living apart. The average (median) distance of the children from the older respondents was 45 miles, and the average distance of the siblings from the older respondents was 43 miles.

⁴The 0.05 level of probability was used in testing the significance of differences. Differences which are not statistically significant but supply supporting evidence are referred to as slight.

Table 2. Proximity of Children and Siblings to Persons Aged 60 and Older, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Proximity of 1 or more	Children			Siblings		
	Rural (Casey Co.)	Urban (Lexington)	Total	Rural (Casey Co.)	Urban (Lexington)	Total
	<u>Pct.*</u>	<u>Pct.*</u>	<u>Pct.*</u>	<u>Pct.*</u>	<u>Pct.*</u>	<u>Pct.*</u>
In same household	46	40	44	5	8	6
Within 9 miles	71	62	67	60	41	52
10-49 miles	37	17	28	37	31	35
50-250 miles	66	26	48	42	37	40
Over 250 miles	38	43	40	33	38	35
Total with living children or siblings	(544)	(439)	(983)	(575)	(437)	(1,012)
None or not living	(83)	(170)	(253)	(52)	(172)	(224)
Total cases	(627)	(609)	(1,236)	(627)	(609)	(1,236)

*Percentages add to more than 100 because of multiple responses.

A slightly larger proportion of the rural than of the urban older persons lived in the same household with one child or more (46 and 40 percent, respectively). However, the children of the rural older persons had migrated farther from home than the children of the urban older persons. The average (median) distance from home of one or more rural children was 47 miles, and for urban children, 37 miles.

A slightly larger proportion of urban than of rural respondents lived in the same household with a sibling (8 and 5 percent, respectively). However, the siblings of the urban respondents were more widely dispersed than were the siblings of the rural respondents. The urban respondents reported that they had one or more siblings living at an average (median) distance of 57 miles. For the rural respondents, the average distance was 37 miles.

Visiting Patterns

The older persons were questioned about the frequency of their visits with their children and with their siblings, and about initiating such visits.

Frequency of Visits. As might be expected, proximity was an important factor in the frequency of visits between the older person and his children and between the older person and his siblings (Tables 3 and 4). Although the average (median) distance between the older person and his children was approximately the same as the average distance between him and his siblings, the older person

Table 3. Frequency of Visits With Children For Persons Aged 60 and Older, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959, by Proximity of Children

Frequency of Visits	Proximity of Children							
	Within 9 miles		10-49 miles		50-250 miles		Over 250 miles	
	Rural*	Urban**	Rural*	Urban**	Rural*	Urban**	Rural*	Urban**
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Daily	35	44	2	12	--	--	--	--
Weekly	50	48	30	39	2	7	1	1
Monthly	13	4	41	37	20	41	4	5
2-4 times year	2	3	22	11	53	35	28	34
Yearly	--	***	4	--	21	12	31	26
Less frequently	***	1	1	1	4	5	36	34
Total with children at each distance	(384)	(272)	(199)	(75)	(359)	(112)	(204)	(187)

*Casey county
 **Lexington
 ***Less than 0.05 percent.

Table 4. Frequency of Visits With Siblings By Persons Aged 60 and Older, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959, by Proximity of Siblings

Frequency of Visits	Proximity of Siblings							
	Within 9 Miles		10-49 Miles		50-250 Miles		Over 250 Miles	
	Rural*	Urban**	Rural*	Urban**	Rural*	Urban**	Rural*	Urban**
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Daily	13	21	--	1	--	--	--	--
Weekly	33	43	5	16	--	2	--	--
Monthly	29	17	25	37	3	9	3	5
2-4 times year	17	12	41	29	24	35	5	12
Yearly	5	2	19	11	40	31	21	29
Less frequently	3	5	10	6	33	23	71	54
Total with Siblings at each distance	(347)	(177)	(214)	(136)	(243)	(160)	(189)	(165)

*Casey county
 **Lexington

visited more often with his children than with his siblings. Urban older persons visited more frequently than rural older persons with their children and with their siblings (Tables 3 and 4), a difference probably related to the poorer transportation facilities available to rural older persons as well as to their more limited financial resources.

Initiating Visits. Very few older persons reported that they usually initiated visits either with their children or with their siblings (4 and 11 percent, respectively). Substantial proportions said that they exchanged visits about equally with their children and with their siblings (35 and 45 percent, respectively), and substantial proportions said that their children and their siblings usually initiated the visits (54 and 39 percent, respectively).

Rural older persons depended much more on their children and siblings to initiate visits than did urban older persons. For example, the proportions of rural and urban older persons who said their children usually visited them were 69 and 35 percent, respectively, and the proportions who said their siblings usually visited them were 47 and 28 percent, respectively (Table 5). These rural-urban differences in the initiation of visits probably reflect, as did the frequency of visits, the poorer transportation facilities in the rural area as well as the more limited financial resources of the older rural persons.

Table 5. Initiation of Visits With Children and Siblings,
Reported by Persons Aged 60 and Older, Casey
County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959

Initiation of Visits	Children			Siblings		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
	(Casey Co.)	(Lexington)		(Casey Co.)	(Lexington)	
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Visit usually made by respondent	2	7	4	7	15	11
Visit usually made by children or siblings	69	35	54	47	28	39
Exchange visits about equally	25	47	35	40	51	45
No response	4	11	7	6	6	5
Total with children or siblings	(544)	(439)	(983)	(575)	(437)	(1,012)

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

The community in which a person lives provides opportunities for various leisure-time activities. Some persons become involved in community activities; others, for various reasons, do not. The physically able person can move about the community. When he gets bored with one form of activity or with a particular person, he may search for another which may more adequately meet his needs. In the community, the older person is not subjected to many of the constraints and restrictions which would maintain if he were placed in an institution. The community activities of the older respondents in this study are examined under two broad types: (1) their participation in formally organized groups in the community and (2) their informal relationships with people in the community.

Participation in Formal Organizations

The older men and women were asked what clubs and organizations they attended regularly. As shown in Table 6, almost all the respondents participated in some form of church activity, and for the great majority of persons this was the only community activity engaged in. A larger proportion of women than of men reported that they took part in religious activities. The

average (mean) number of organizations participated in was 1.6 per person. Thirteen percent of the respondents said they took part in no formally organized group activities. The organizations participated in by the men and women were (in descending order) religious, service and welfare, clubs and lodges, farm organizations, Veterans' organizations, labor organizations, and golden-age clubs.

Slight differences existed between rural and urban persons in their participation in formally organized activities. The urban persons participated in slightly more community activities (average [mean] number 1.7 for urban and 1.5 for rural). Slightly more of the urban respondents reported they took part in church and church related activities, but more of the rural persons said they took part in Sunday School activities. Slightly more urban than rural persons took part in all other community groups shown in Table 6, with the exception of farm organizations. Six percent of the urban persons but none of the rural took part in "golden-age clubs."

Informal Community Activities

The older persons were asked about their informal relationships with people in their community—such as whether they knew people in the community well, how often they visited with friends and neighbors, and in what ways they helped friends and neighbors.

Table 6. Participation in Formal Organizations by Persons Aged 60 and Older, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959, by Sex

Organization	Rural			Urban			Total
	(Casey County)			(Lexington)			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Pct.*
	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*
Church	73	93	83	85	94	91	87
Sunday School	34	47	40	24	32	30	35
Other church activity	2	2	2	7	18	14	8
Service and welfare	--	7	3	3	13	9	6
Clubs and lodges	9	2	5	15	4	7	6
Social clubs	1	3	2	6	10	8	5
Farm organizations	10	2	6	2	2	2	4
Veteran's organizations	6	--	3	5	1	2	3
Golden-age clubs	--	--	--	1	10	6	3
Labor organizations	--	--	--	7	1	3	1
No participation	25	9	16	11	9	10	13
Total cases	(312)	(315)	(627)	(220)	(389)	(609)	(1,236)
(Mean)	(1.3)	(1.6)	(1.5)	(1.5)	(1.9)	(1.7)	(1.6)

*Percentages add to more than 100 because of multiple responses.

The rural older persons reported a greater degree of informal community activity than did the urban older persons. The proportions of rural and of urban respondents who said they knew people in the community well were 92 and 65 percent, respectively. Over half the rural respondents (53 percent) reported that they helped their friends and neighbors, but only 32 percent of the urban older persons made this statement. Those who said they gave help to their neighbors named a variety of ways this help was given, such as help in case of illness, help with work, financial help, transportation, food, and "being a good neighbor."

In response to the question, "How often do you visit with friends and neighbors?" about one-fourth (23 percent) said "frequently," about one-third (33 percent) said "occasionally," and the remainder said "seldom." The urban older persons visited with friends and neighbors only slightly less often than did the rural older persons (Table 7).

HOBBIES AND PASTIMES

A new period of life has been added to the adult years for most men and women in the United States. In early adulthood the individual is occupied with raising a family and establishing his place in the community. In later middle age the pressures and responsibilities of parenthood are mainly over, and the person must cope with his new role in retirement. After years of work and family responsibilities, the individual has abundant time for new

Table 7. Informal Community Relationships of Persons Aged 60 and Older, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959, by Sex

Informal Relationships	Rural (Casey County)			Urban (Lexington)			Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Know people in community well	94	89	92	65	66	65	79
Help friends and neighbors	55	50	53	32	32	32	42
Visit with friends or neighbors							
frequently	24	22	23	23	24	24	23
occasionally	37	38	38	27	27	27	33
seldom	39	40	39	48	47	47	43
no response	--	--	--	2	2	2	1
Total cases	(312)	(315)	(627)	(220)	(389)	(609)	(1,236)

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interests, hobbies, and pastimes. For some older persons this can be a period in life of adventure and personal growth; for others it is a period of aimless drifting. One indication of how this new period of life is used may be seen in the hobbies the older people claim. Respondents were asked: "What are your favorite pastimes or hobbies?" They named an average (mean) of 2.6 hobbies and pastimes per person. The average number for rural persons was 2.5 and for urban persons 2.7. Only 5 percent said they had no favorite hobbies or pastimes. The hobbies and pastimes mentioned have been placed in major groupings adapted from a classification scheme outlined by Max Kaplan.⁵ The groupings are: (1) immobile pastimes, (2) exploration pastimes, (3) creative pastimes, and (4) sociability and association. It is recognized that the categories are not mutually exclusive, but they are useful for analyzing the data at hand.

Immobile Pastimes

The category of free-time activity called immobile pastimes refers to "bringing the world" to the person. Immobility is not to be confused with the mental passivity of those who merely sit, stare, and remain unmoved for hours at a time. The term as used here refers to some kind of mental activity or emotional response on the part of older persons. The person may be severely

⁵Max Kaplan, "Toward a Theory of Leisure for Social Gerontology," in Robert W. Kleemeier, Ibid., pp. 406-409.

restricted in his ability to move about. He may be physically handicapped. For one reason or another he may be confined to his home, to a wheelchair, or even to his bed. However, the term immobile pastime suggests that despite the older person's inability to get around, he is psychologically involved in the pastime to some degree.

The most popular immobile pastime reported by the older men and women studied was "listening to radio or watching television programs." This activity was named by over half the respondents (52 percent), a proportion which exceeded by far the proportion that named any other one leisure-time activity (Table 8). About a third (36 percent) of the respondents named reading as a leisure-time activity, and 13 percent said they spent leisure time "sitting and thinking." Persons living in the rural community did not differ to any significant degree from those living in the urban area in their participation in immobile pastimes. Slightly larger proportions of men than women reported that they listened to radio or watched television programs, and more women than men reported that they engaged in reading.

Exploration Pastimes

In contrast to immobile pastimes which refer to bringing the world to the person, exploration pastimes refer to "going to the world" by the person. Exploration may include a wide variety of mental, emotional, and physical activities which suggest a "going

Table 8. Favorite Hobbies and Pastimes of Persons Aged 60 and Older, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959, by Sex

Activity	RURAL (Casey County)			URBAN (Lexington)			TOTAL
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	
<u>Immobile Pastimes</u>							
Listening to radio or watching television	53	47	50	58	51	53	52
Reading	29	48	39	25	38	33	36
Sitting and thinking	13	12	13	15	13	14	13
<u>Exploration Pastimes</u>							
Travel and taking rides	12	6	9	11	7	8	8
Shopping	2	5	3	3	8	6	5
Movies	1	1	1	3	5	4	3
<u>Creative Pastimes</u>							
Gardening	28	27	27	28	23	25	26
Sewing	**	47	24	2	42	28	26
Fishing, hunting	29	4	16	21	4	10	13
Sports	14	2	8	30	4	13	11
Playing cards	8	5	6	10	11	11	9
Writing letters	2	10	6	3	9	7	7
Woodwork or crafts	5	1	3	11	3	6	4
Dancing	--	--	--	4	7	6	3
Odd jobs in house	3	2	3	4	4	4	3
Collecting	--	--	--	6	5	5	3
Painting	3	2	3	--	--	--	1

Table 8. (cont'd)

Activity	RURAL (Casey County)			URBAN (Lexington)			TOTAL
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	Pct.*	
<u>Sociability and association</u>							
Visiting	34	29	31	19	25	23	28
Meetings, clubs	4	8	6	7	13	11	9
<u>None Reported</u>	4	4	4	9	4	6	5
<u>Average (mean) number of activities per person</u>	(2.4)	(2.6)	(2.5)	(2.6)	(2.7)	(2.7)	(2.6)
Total cases	(312)	(315)	(627)	(220)	(389)	(609)	(1,236)

*Percentages add to more than 100 because of multiple responses.

**Less than 0.05 percent.

out for something," a desire to meet the outside world and to take the consequences of such action. Exploration activity requires considerable self-reliance, a degree of aggressiveness, and the ability to move around by one's self.

Very few of the older persons studied (16 percent) reported that they engaged in activities which could be classified as exploratory. Three such pastimes were mentioned, (1) travel and taking rides, (2) shopping, and (3) movies. Slight differences were found between the rural and the urban older persons and between the men and the women. Slightly more of the urban than of rural respondents said they shopped and went to the movies. A slightly larger proportion of the men than of the women said that they traveled and took rides.

Creative Pastimes

Creative pastimes as a category of leisure-time activity refer to those which require considerable skill on the part of the participant. The skill may involve competition with an opponent, such as many games require, or it may involve shaping materials in an artistic activity. With the development of skill in these activities, the individual develops a feeling of mastery and growth. In contrast to a game, which usually starts and is over at a given time, artistic activity can go on indefinitely. The participant in an artistic activity usually has no clear

conception of the end result he wants to achieve. The final product may be the outcome of many innovations made during the experience. Creative pastimes provide possibilities of excitement, power, satisfaction, defeat, and disappointment.

The older persons named a wide variety of leisure-time activities which could be classified as creative (Table 8). Virtually no differences existed between rural and urban persons in the proportions who reported such activities as gardening, sewing, writing letters, and doing odd jobs around the house. Slightly more rural than urban persons mentioned fishing and hunting and painting. Slightly more urban than rural persons named sports, playing cards, woodwork and crafts, dancing, and collecting. More women than men said they did sewing and letter writing, and more men than women named fishing and hunting, sports, and woodwork and crafts.

Sociability and Association

The central theme in leisure-time activities identified as sociability and association is liking for, and interacting with, people. The content or objectives of such activities may be unimportant. The interaction with people may take place in an informal, primary group setting or it may take place in more formal groups organized to deal with economic, political, religious, civic, or intellectual problems. The participant in

these activities may expect pleasant and warm personal relationships, but he also must be venturesome enough to take the risk of competition, jealousy, and disharmony.

Informal visiting was the most popular form of sociability engaged in by the older persons: it was named by about one-quarter (28 percent) of the respondents. Nine percent said they attended meetings and clubs. Slightly more rural than urban persons engaged in informal visiting as a pastime, and slightly more urban than rural persons attended meetings and clubs. In the rural area, informal visiting was slightly more prevalent among the men than among the women, but in the urban area a slightly larger proportion of women than men engaged in this activity (Table 8).

ATTITUDES AND NEEDS

In young adulthood and throughout middle age, men and women in the United States have been involved in work-oriented activities, either outside or inside the family setting. These work activities have made rather inflexible demands upon the time of the person. He was required to make relatively few choices or decisions about how time was used. In older age, in contrast, the individual is required to make many choices and decisions about how he will use his abundant free time. The present findings reveal some of the attitudes and needs of older persons relative to their use of free time.

The respondents were asked whether their social activities had increased or decreased since age 50, whether they felt they needed

more activities, and what some of their evaluations were about their use of time. Half the respondents (49 percent) reported that their social activities had decreased since age 50, almost half (45 percent) said they had stayed about the same, and only 3 percent said their social activities had increased (3 percent did not respond). Proportionately more rural persons than urban persons reported that their social activities had decreased since age 50, and a slightly larger proportion of women than of men made this statement (Table 9).

More than one-fourth (29 percent) said they would like to take part in some activities they were not now doing, and there was little difference between rural and urban respondents or between men and women in this desire. Those who expressed a desire for more activities named a wide range of types. These were classed (in descending order) as (1) social activities, (2) recreational and athletic activities, (3) some kind of work, (4) civic activities, (5) travel, (6) sedentary activities, such as reading, sewing, and television, and (7) miscellaneous activities, such as shopping, helping sick people, and walking.

Only 14 percent of the persons in the total sample indicated they felt the need for more opportunities to work for financial reward. Slightly more of the urban than of the rural persons said they wanted to work for pay, and slightly more men than women reported this interest. On the other hand, the older persons

Table 9. Attitudes of Persons Aged 60 and Older, Concerning Activities, Casey County and Lexington, Kentucky, 1959, by Sex

Attitudes	RURAL (Casey County)			URBAN (Lexington)			TOTAL
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	
1. Since age 50, have your social activities							
increased?	3	2	3	3	5	4	3
decreased?	51	63	57	35	42	40	49
stayed about the same?	44	33	38	58	49	52	45
no response	2	2	2	4	4	4	3
2. Are there some activities you would like to take part in which you are not now doing?							
yes	28	30	29	28	30	29	29
no	69	68	69	68	67	68	68
no response	3	2	2	4	3	3	3
3. Do you feel the need for more opportunities to work for pay or profit?							
yes	13	7	10	22	16	18	14
no	81	82	81	76	79	78	80
no response	6	11	9	2	5	4	6

Table 9 (cont'd)

Attitudes	RURAL (Casey County)				URBAN (Lexington)				TOTAL
	Male		Female		Male		Female		
	Pct.		Pct.		Pct.		Pct.		
4. There is no sense in working if you can get along without the money.	26	20	23	27	23	25	24		
agree				61	65	63	68		
disagree	70	75	72	10	9	9	6		
don't know	2	5	4	2	3	3	2		
no response	2	--	1						
5. I feel my life could be more useful.	49	38	44	36	35	35	39		
agree				46	49	48	46		
disagree	39	50	44	15	12	13	12		
don't know	10	12	11	3	4	4	3		
no response	2	*	1						
6. I don't know what to do with my free time.	30	19	25	26	18	21	23		
agree				69	78	75	70		
disagree	61	74	67	2	1	1	4		
don't know	7	5	6	3	3	3	3		
no response	2	2	2						
Total cases	(312)	(315)	(627)	(220)	(389)	(609)	(1,236)		

*Less than 0.05 percent.

appeared to place considerable value upon the non-economic aspects of work. For example, two-thirds of the subjects indicated there was value in working even if they did not need the money. They were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, "There is no sense in working if you can get along without the money." One-fourth of the respondents agreed with this statement and two-thirds disagreed, a response which probably revealed a belief that there is sense in working for other than financial reasons. This belief was held equally by both rural and urban older persons, and was slightly stronger among women than among men (Table 9).

Free time appeared to be a burden to a substantial minority of the older persons studied. Two-fifths (39 percent) of the total persons said they felt their lives could be more useful. This viewpoint was more common among rural persons, particularly rural men, than among urban persons. About one-quarter (23 percent) of the respondents agreed with the statement, "I don't know what to do with my free time." The men appeared to have more difficulty in using their free time than did the women, and there was virtually no difference between rural and urban older persons in this respect (Table 9).

IMPLICATIONS

Information on the leisure-time activities and interests of older persons carries implications for a wide variety of agencies and persons. Among these are health, welfare, and extension workers; community and area development personnel; counselors and pre-retirement advisors; city planners and architects; educational, union, industrial, and religious leaders; businessmen, publishers, and advertisers; and government officials and legislators. As Havighurst⁶ suggests, for the first time in history there are large numbers of people beyond 50 with time and money to spend. America today is capable of supporting more and more persons in non-work pursuits, and all segments of society are involved in pioneer efforts to find suitable solutions to the problem of use of time. An important question is: What principles can be proposed to guide action agencies concerned with leisure-time programs for older persons? It is recognized that a statement of principles may contribute more to a philosophy of leisure than to specific action which might be taken.

One principle is a precautionary one. Action-oriented agencies and personnel may interpret what older persons are

⁶Robert J. Havighurst, "The Nature and Value of Meaningful Free-Time Activity," in Robert W. Kleemeier, *ibid.*, pp. 309-310.

capable of doing on the basis of what they are now doing.⁷ Field studies, such as the one reported here, are necessary and useful in recording the analyzing what older persons do, and in providing some guides for social intervention. Social intervention should bring about some improvement in the environment of older persons. The problem then becomes: How can the environments of older persons be modified to obtain the greatest benefits both to the older person and to society? A partial answer to such a question is that the intervention should result in the development of activities that are meaningful to aged persons. Two considerations appear pertinent to meet this requirement. One is that leisure-time activities of older persons should be a satisfactory substitute for the work-oriented activities they have engaged in most of their lives, and the second is that the activities should be tailored to meet the needs of a heterogeneous population of oldsters living in widely different circumstances and settings.

It is commonplace to observe that the United States is a work-centered society. The average older man has spent most of his life in gainful employment. The average older woman has spent most of her life caring for and raising a family. Abundant leisure time in later life suggests the questions: Can men and

⁷ Max Kaplan, "Toward a Theory of Leisure for Social Gerontology," in Robert W. Kleemeier, *ibid.*, pp. 389-412.

women be happy in any other way than in work-oriented activity?
How can leisure-time activities fill the void caused by reduction of or withdrawal from work activities?

Anderson⁸ has pointed out that certain characteristics of work activity provide a model by which the adequacy of leisure-time activities may be assessed: (1) Work is an activity which has a value to society and this value is recognized by the participant and by others. (2) Work is a kind of behavior involving various interests and values, which have developed over many years. (3) Work has a degree of complexity which holds the attention and interest of the person. (4) Work is a continuing activity with which the person identifies. (5) Work activity brings interaction and relationships with other people. It is recognized that such a model probably pertains more to the higher-skilled, white-collar, and professional occupations than to those that are in the unskilled or semi-skilled category.

If leisure-time activities of older persons are to measure up to the requirements of work, it seems apparent that they cannot be based entirely on entertainment and recreational activities. To be meaningful to the older person, a leisure-time activity must be one in which the person can become deeply concerned. It must be a complex task which brings out a person's resources and permits him to feel he is growing and developing. Proposed

⁸John E. Anderson, "Psychological Aspects of the Use of Free Time," in W. Donahue, W. W. Hunter, D. H. Coons, and H. K. Maurice, editors: Free Time (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), pp. 29-44.

activities for older persons cannot be conceived in terms of short-term activities performed for momentary relief from something else; they cannot be constructed entirely on what older persons may think they need or want; and they cannot be developed with the fear that older persons will reject all complex and difficult pursuits.

The present data suggest some leisure interests which might be satisfactory substitutes for work-oriented activities. Family relationships, for example, are leisure activities for almost all older persons, and action-oriented personnel might make special efforts to analyze problems of family relationship for older persons, and provide advice and guidance for family members.

Community activities offer opportunities for complex and satisfying roles for many older persons. The present data indicate that almost all the older persons studied participated to some degree in religious activities. Perhaps religious leaders and workers can make these church-related activities more meaningful for older persons. The State of Massachusetts (1960) made a number of suggestions to the White House Conference on Aging for doing this.⁹ Organized community, educational, and religious groups might develop special programs for older persons by organizing them into creative groups, by discovering suitable and interesting tasks for older persons, by constantly searching

⁹Max Kaplan, op. cit., p. 405

for ways to use the talents possessed by older people, by stimulating the imagination for art forms, by exerting influence on the mass media (radio, television, and newspapers) to tailor more programs to the needs and interests of older people, and by providing church sponsored religious and community services especially designed to meet the interests and needs of the elderly.

Probably the most fertile area for constructive and imaginative innovations in developing leisure-time programs for older persons is that of hobbies and pastimes. The findings of this study indicate that older persons, like the general population in the United States, are especially addicted to the sedentary and immobile pastime of listening to the radio and watching television programs. Older persons are particularly disposed to these mass media programs. With advances in age, the older person becomes more sedentary, he has more leisure time, and he has fewer ties to the world. Television and radio for the older person can serve as a time-killer.

Meyersohn,¹⁰ in his critical examination of radio and television programs, points out that these mass media present mass entertainment most often based on commercial rather than artistic criteria, and are directed to the largest segment of the population which might be a possible market for a commodity. Whether Meyersohn's view is correct or not, it is probably accurate to

¹⁰Rolf Meyersohn, "A Critical Examination of Commercial Entertainment," in Robert W. Kleemeier, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-272.

say that the content of radio and television programs is not directed sufficiently to the interests, needs, or problems of older persons. As Meyersohn underscores, it is hard to say how such programs could be designed for older persons. However, there is no doubt that the interests of older adults could be identified and that some way could be found for television and radio to serve these interests. Study and effort are needed to reveal more desirable ways of using these mass media for the benefit of older persons. Radio and television programs might be used to provide a stronger link between older and younger persons, to foster greater understanding of the problems of older people in American society, and to stimulate older persons to become interested in more constructive, challenging, and beneficial hobbies and activities.

SUMMARY

This report has examined the leisure-time activities of 1,236 men and women aged 60 and over living in a selected rural county and an urban area of Kentucky. Their leisure-time activities have been classified as family relationships, community activities, and hobbies and pastimes.

At the time of the interview (1959), 4 out of 5 older persons reported they had children living. Of the respondents with living children, almost half (44 percent) reported that they lived in the same household with one or more of their children, and two-thirds reported that one or more of their

children lived within a distance of 9 miles. The frequency of visits between the older person and his children was directly related to the proximity of his children.

Four out of 5 respondents reported they had brothers or sisters living in 1959. Of those with living brothers or sisters, 6 percent reported that they lived in the same household with one or more of their siblings, half had one or more of their siblings living within a distance of 9 miles, and one-third had one or more of their siblings living 10 to 49 miles away. The respondents visited more frequently with their children than they did with their siblings.

The children of the rural older persons were more widely dispersed than were the children of the urban older persons, but the siblings of the urban respondents were more widely dispersed than were the siblings of the rural respondents. The urban older persons reported more frequent visits with their children and with their siblings than did the rural older persons. Visits were usually initiated by the children, but visits were commonly exchanged with siblings.

The most common community activity for the older people was some form of church activity, and for the great majority these were the only community activities. No difference was found between the rural and urban persons in their participation in religious activities. Six percent of the urban persons but none of the rural said they took part in "golden-age clubs," The

rural older persons reported a greater degree of informal relationships with friends and neighbors than did the urban older persons.

The respondents said they engaged in an average of 2.6 hobbies per person, with very slight differences between the rural and the urban residents. Listening to the radio or watching television programs was the hobby or pastime named by the largest number of older persons, reading was the second, visiting was the third, and gardening and sewing tied for fourth place.

Half the respondents said their social activities had decreased since age 50. Slightly more than one-quarter said they wanted more activities, but only 14 percent expressed interest in working for pay or profit. Free time appeared to be a burden to a substantial minority of the older persons.

Action-oriented agencies and personnel involved in developing leisure-time programs for older persons might recognize (1) that what older persons now do with their free time is not necessarily an indication of what they can do, (2) that older persons living in different circumstances and settings may have widely different needs and interests for leisure-time activities, and (3) that older persons in the United States have devoted most of their adult lives to work-oriented activities and that leisure-time programs must, in some way, substitute for such work activity.