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Changes in West German Leisure-Time Habits (1983)

From the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, the growth in personal income and the shortening of the average work week made for a significant rise in leisure expenditures. It also created a shift towards spending on vacations and automobiles, which detracted from the importance of television and newspapers.

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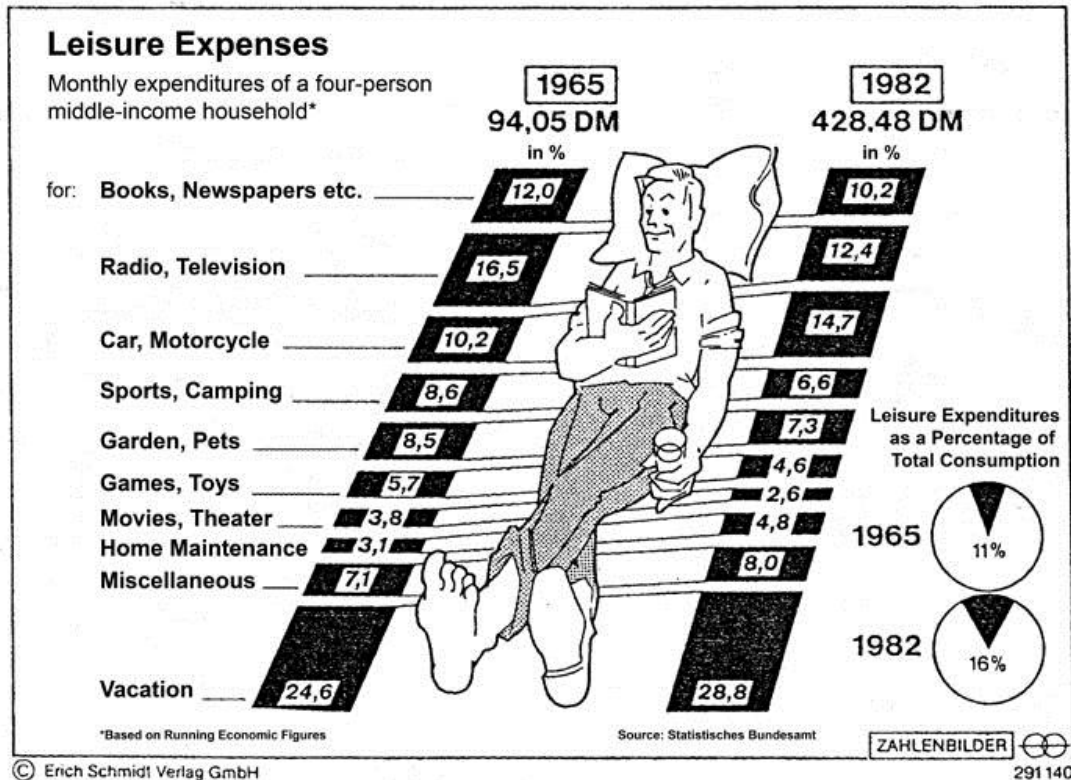
### **Expenditures for Leisure Time**

Since the introduction of the 40-hour work week, the almost standard institution of six weeks of annual vacation, and the lowering of the retirement age, many people [now], at the beginning of the 1980s, have far more time off from work, and consequently more genuine leisure time, than they did ten or twenty years ago. Leisure activities account for more and more of a person's time. Correspondingly, there has been a steep upward trend in household spending on leisure activities. According to the German Federal Office of Statistics Office, the total monthly consumer spending of an average four-person, middle-income, white-collar household rose from DM 881 to DM 2,691 between 1965 and 1982, or by 205 percent. Expenditures for leisure time, however, rose by 356 percent over the same period.

The households polled spent roughly DM 428 on sports and games, education and entertainment, and hobbies and vacation in 1982. This amounted to about one-sixth (15.9%) of total spending. In contrast, in 1965, barely 11 percent of the total consumer budget was used for recreational purposes. The observation that the average percentage spent on leisure products/activities increases with total income is confirmed by a comparison of households of different income levels. Leisure expenditures account for a lower percentage of income in two-person pensioner households (1982: 9.4%) than in middle-income households. The percentage, however, is much higher in four-person, higher-income households of white-collar employees and civil servants (1982: 18.7%).

There have been some remarkable shifts in the breakdown of recreational spending since 1965. In 1982, middle-income households spent a much higher percentage of their total leisure expenditures on vacations, cars, and home improvement equipment than they did back then. In contrast, expenditures for other recreational goods decreased. The largest percentage, by far, has always been allocated for vacations and recreational travel. In 1982, middle-income

households spent an average of DM 123 per month on this category; this was, however, lower than in the two preceding years. Recreational trips by car accounted for an average of DM 63 per month. The third large expense category – radio, television, video, etc. – accounted for an average of DM 53 per month, a significant increase over the previous year. The households polled spent almost DM 44 on reading materials (books, newspapers, magazines). The ranking-order was slightly different for pensioner households as well as more affluent households of white-collar employees and civil servants. In both of these groups, books and other printed materials occupied third place in leisure expenditures.



Source: "Ausgaben für die Freizeit" ["Expenditures for Leisure Time"], *Zahlenbilder*, September 1983, No. 9.

Translation: Allison Brown