

Men do more at home, but not as much as they think^[1]

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Men today are much more committed to equality at home, sharing dinner-cooking and diaper-changing duties, than in previous generations. But even in families in which both parents work outside the home, the division of labor at home remains unequal.

Men tend to disagree. They say they do as much housework and child care as their wives — even though data show that they don't.

This disconnect shows up in surveys, like a recent one of two-income families by Pew Research Center in which fathers said they shared home and child responsibilities equally, while mothers said they did more. But the mothers' perceptions are supported by plentiful research, including more rigorous data collection in which people keep diaries of the ways they spend their time.

The results offer one reason that the gender revolution in the workplace has stalled in many ways — particularly around the time women start having children. Despite enormous advances for women in the labor market, they still shoulder much more responsibility at home.

"Even feminist couples find it very difficult to attain equality, particularly after a child," said Jill Yavorsky, a sociology doctorate candidate at Ohio State University who published a paper on the topic in *The Journal of Marriage and Family* in June. "What this means is extra work for women that is hard and stressful and also pushes them out of the work force. Women are taking on more of the economic risk that's associated with a child."

Along with Claire Kamp Dush and Sarah Schoppe-Sullivan, professors at Ohio State, Ms. Yavorsky studied the division of labor among 364 opposite-sex, dual-earner parents across the transition to parenthood.

When couples were surveyed on their perceptions of how they spent their time after having a child, there wasn't much of a gender gap — and both sexes overestimated the amount they spent on housework and child care. But the researchers found the surveys weren't necessarily accurate because longitudinal time diaries, from pregnancy until babies were 9 months, revealed something different.

Before children, there was no gender gap — men and women each did about 14.5 hours of housework a week. (The researchers did not know whether these couples were always so equitable, or whether the men picked up more of the slack while the women were pregnant.)

But after a birth, women's total work — including paid work, housework and child care — increased 21 hours a week and men's increased 12.5 hours. For women, but not men, child care did not substitute for any of their existing work; it was all supplemental.

"Most males say they want to have a high-achieving partner," Ms. Yavorsky said. "However, that very much changes after a birth of a baby and other highly gendered, ritualized time periods."

New fathers and mothers each worked about the same number of hours at their jobs. Fathers did five fewer hours of housework, while mothers did the same amount they always had. Over all, mothers spent an additional three hours a day on home and child chores, while fathers spent roughly one hour and 45 more minutes.

The researchers found less of a gap in time spent playing or reading with children than in physical child care tasks like dressing, bathing and feeding a baby. For women, the additional time came at the expense of their leisure time.

Other time-use studies have found similar results.

Suzanne Bianchi, a sociologist who studied family time, found that modern-day working mothers spent more hands-on time with their children than midcentury stay-at-home mothers. Fathers have greatly increased their time, but still do not do as much as mothers.

In 2008, she found, mothers spent 13.9 hours a week on child care, up from 10.2 in 1965. Fathers nearly tripled their child care hours to 7 from 2.5 and more than doubled the hours they spent on housework to 9.5 from 4.4.

For mothers, the trade-off came in housework, on which they spent 17.9 hours a week in 2008, down from 31.9 in 1965, as well as time for hobbies, grooming and meals.

According to the American Time Use Survey by the Department of Labor, women who worked full-time with children at home spent 1 hour and 12 minutes on an average day caring for children, while working fathers spent 49 minutes.

Eighty-nine percent of working mothers and 64 percent of fathers did housework on an average day. Women spent 2.1 hours and men spent 1.4 hours. Nineteen percent of mothers and 9.8 percent of fathers shopped for groceries on an average day.

The Labor Department found that the extra time mothers spent on these activities came out of their leisure and work time. Married fathers tended to work more hours a week than mothers — 42.6 versus 36 — mostly because mothers were more likely to be absent from work. They slept about the same, just over 8 hours, but mothers spent 2.9 hours a day on leisure activities and fathers spent 3.7 hours.

Social scientists say one reason for the lingering difference is that women's recent success in the labor force has coincided with an embrace of intensive, time-consuming mothering: breast-feeding, for example, or putting children in structured activities like sports teams.

Deep societal expectations also play a role, researchers say: Men are expected to prioritize bread-winning after having children, while women are expected to prioritize their families. And, as the sociologist Paula England and others have written, the gender revolution has largely been one-sided — women have entered traditionally male jobs, but men have been reluctant to take on traditionally female activities.

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