

Researcher Says a Woman's Paycheck Is Key to Determining How Much Housework She Does

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In married working couples, the more money a woman earns, the less housework she will do, regardless of how much money her spouse makes, says Sanjiv Gupta, a sociologist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. That finding, based on a study of women who work full-time, may not seem astounding, but it is breaking new ground for researchers examining the sometimes mysterious relationship between money and domestic work and spousal relationships. The study was recently published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

Gupta goes further and says, based on his newest research, that for every \$7,500 in annual earnings a married woman working full time makes, she can expect to do one hour less of routine housework each week.

The findings are based on data on two-income couples in the United States from 1992-94 and have since been confirmed using similar data from 2000. The most recent data comes from Germany and Sweden in an unpublished study conducted with researchers in those countries, Gupta says.

The critical element, Gupta says, is focusing on how much money a woman makes, not how much she makes compared to her spouse. "It's only about the amount the woman earns," Gupta says. "If she has a big paycheck, she's going to spend less time doing housework."

In earlier studies, Gupta says, there was a working assumption that how much housework a wife does was related to how much money she earned compared to the income of her husband. He says focusing on the ratio of earnings between the husband and wife tended to distort efforts to understand household dynamics. Once that distortion is removed, a clearer picture emerges.

In his study, based on data from the second wave of the National Survey of Families and Households, women employed full time making \$10,000 or less per year are predicted to spend nearly one hour more on housework every day that women making \$40,000 or more.

He also notes that the median annual labor market earnings of U.S. women rose from about \$9,800 in 1965 to more than \$16,000 in 1995, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. During the same time, the time married women spent on weekly routine chores declined from 30.4 hours to 15.8 hours. Gupta's findings suggest a link between these trends.

The findings suggest that women can use their own money to make the division of household labor more balanced with that of their spouse, he says. At the same time, Gupta says, the study suggests that married women do not benefit greatly from the earnings of their husbands when it comes to housework.

Source: University of Massachusetts Amherst

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