

Want more sex? Split the household chores

August 3 2016, by Susan Kelley

Couples who share housework report a notable benefit beyond sparkling dishes and clean floors: more action in the bedroom.

Heterosexual couples who share household chores have sex more often than couples in which the woman does the bulk of the [housework](#), according to new research by a Cornell demographer and her colleagues.

But it's not as simple as "grab a mop and get busy." Egalitarian couples have sex more often because they feel a greater sense of fairness in the relationship and higher satisfaction with its quality.

"Sharing the load is beneficial. Couples who have a more equal division of labor seem to be happier, and that's reflected in various ways, only one of which is sex," said co-author Sharon Sassler, a professor of policy analysis and management who studies family and gender. "It's kind of a no-brainer. Contributing more does make a partner appreciate what the other partner is doing."

Sassler points out that "sharing" in this context means the men in the study did between 35 percent and 65 percent of household chores.

"We're not the chore police, saying you must split things 50-50. This is more about when you're both working outside the home, help each other out," she said.

The study, "The Gendered Division of Housework and Couples' Sexual Relationships: A Reexamination," appears in the August issue of *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

The research refutes a widely cited 2013 study suggesting sexual frequency was highest in couples when women did all the housework and lowest when men and women shared chores. But that study, "Egalitarianism, housework and sexual frequency in marriage" by Sabino Kornrich, Julie Brines and Katrina Leupp, was conducted on data that was decades old.

To see if those results held up with contemporary couples, Sassler and her colleagues compared the data Kornrich, Brines and Leupp analyzed, collected in the 1980s and in 1992, with similar data collected in 2006. Both data sets included couples in which the wife was younger than age 45, children were minors and the couples earned a little less than the national median household income.

In the 2006 data set, couples who shared housework equally had sex 6.8 times per month, on average. That was 0.5 times more per month than those with conventional arrangements and more than twice as much as couples who reported that men did the bulk of routine housework.

Those findings contradicted the earlier study, which said sexual frequency was lowest when [couples](#) shared chores.

"Our study challenges these conventional gender roles that say that men's prerogative is that they should not have to do any housework, and it's emasculating if they do," Sassler said. "This study suggests, no, it's not emasculating. In fact, this means you'll have a better [sex life](#) and a higher-quality relationship."

Couples in which the men did most of the housework had sex least often. "That's a total overturning of gender roles, and neither men or women seem to be happy with that," she said.

More information: Daniel L. Carlson et al. The Gendered Division of

Housework and Couples' Sexual Relationships: A Reexamination,
Journal of Marriage and Family (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/jomf.12313](https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12313)

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