

# European women do more housework even when their partners are unemployed

March 13 2017, by Tony Trueman

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Women in Europe spend much more time doing housework than men, even if they are in work and their partners are unemployed, new research shows.

Researchers analysed [survey data](#) on almost 30,000 men and [women](#) in 27 European countries and Israel and found that women did between 12.4 and 31.2 hours housework a week, depending on the country, and men between 4.7 and 16.6.

The researchers, Professor Tanja van der Lippe and Lukas Norbutas, of Utrecht University, and Professor Judith Treas, University of California, found that in [households](#) where men were unemployed, the gap closed by on average two hours.

In an article in the journal *Work, Employment and Society*, published by the British Sociological Association, they found that:

- in households where men were unemployed, men did 3.3 hours extra housework a week. But, in a "counter-intuitive" finding, in these households women did over an extra hour of housework, even if they were employed, so the gap lessened by around two hours.
- men in households where the woman was employed did not do more housework than men in households where the women were unemployed.
- unemployed women did 4.4 extra hours housework a week than

employed women.

The researchers say that: "Both men and women perform more housework when unemployed. However, the extra domestic work for unemployed women is greater than for unemployed men.

"Women reacted more strongly to unemployment than men. Not only was being unemployed linked to doing more housework hours for women than for men, but also having an unemployed partner led to more housework for women."

The researchers suggest that one reason that women do more housework even if their partner is unemployed may be that "women display their femininity through homework while men demonstrate masculinity by avoiding what has traditionally been seen as 'women's work'."

But, "whatever the explanation, gender-neutral, time-availability notions are insufficient to account for any counter-intuitive pattern of women doing more housework when the partner is unemployed.

"If [unemployed men](#) do not step up their housework enough to compensate for extra work that they create by spending more time around the house, women's domestic workload will be higher than is the case for men with an unemployed partner."

The researchers found that these results applied in all 28 countries studied, and that in countries where unemployment was higher, [unemployed](#) women spent even more time on [housework](#).

Provided by British Sociological Association

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