

Household chores: Women still do more

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Canadian women of all ages still tend to do more household chores than their male partners, no matter how much they work or earn in a job outside the home. Findings from a study in Springer's journal *Sex Roles* demonstrate the persistent gendered nature of how housework is divided, says lead author Rebecca Horne of the University of Alberta in Canada.

The research drew on data collected from the Edmonton Transitions Study, which has been tracking the transition of more than 900 Canadians from high school to work, and from adolescence into adulthood. Horne and her colleagues analysed the questionnaires of participants who had life partners in 1992, 1999 and 2010, when they were 25 (moving into adulthood), 32 (a young adult) and 43 years old (midlife). The researchers examined how [household tasks](#) were divided between individuals and their [intimate partners](#) across these three life stages, and how housework was influenced by one's work hours, relative income, marital status and responsibilities towards children.

The study followed a life course theoretical approach. This perspective emphasizes the salience of social conditions in shaping the way

people's lives unfold over time. It holds that people's behaviours are informed not only by their own biological development, but also by the work and family responsibilities they negotiate with their intimate partners. Broader social norms that govern appropriate role ordering and duration are also significant.

"Women consistently perform more housework than men do," Horne explains. "Patterns of housework responsibility between men and women tend to be quite consistent at each life stage despite minor fluctuations in the volume of housework chores."

She says the results further showed that women and the [partner](#) with the lowest income tend to be the ones doing more household tasks when a couple is around 25 years old. Work hours and raising children (for men only) come into play among 32-year olds, reducing [housework](#) involvement. Gender again becomes the biggest predictor of who will do what around the house when couples are in their forties. Such tasks are then generally done by the woman.

"Overall, time, money, and gender variables seem to be important for explaining the division of household labour, albeit to varying intensities depending on stage in the life course," adds Horne.

Horne hopes the findings will promote greater gender equality on a societal level and help life partners be more aware of the many factors that shape domestic life. These results can also be used by policymakers and employers to develop or alter laws, policies, and work environments in ways that promote men's involvement in unpaid labour. Horne further suggests that couples therapists and educators should encourage partners to reflect on where they are in [life](#) and the many factors that shape decisions being made to keep a household going.

More information: Rebecca M. Horne et al, Time, Money, or Gender? Predictors of the Division of Household Labour Across Life Stages, *Sex Roles*

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