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# Who does what when? The development of the time spent on housework by women and men in Sweden

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Working Paper 2015: 1

# Who does what when? The development of the time spent on housework by women and men in Sweden

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**Abstract:** Focusing on within-couple gender equality, we analyse the development of, (i) time spent by women and men on housework, and (ii) the economic dependency of women in Sweden, using data from the Swedish Level of Living Surveys of 1974-2010. Cross-sectional results show that the main reduction in the gender gap in housework and women's economic dependency took place in the 1970s and 1980s and that change since then has been modest. Longitudinal analyses indicate that men's time spent on housework reduces significantly when they start cohabiting, while the housework time of the women remains unchanged (compared to when they were single). Instead, women's housework hours increases significantly with the number of children in the household whereas men's housework increases only when the first child is born. In additional longitudinal analyses, the explanatory value of the autonomy perspective and theories relating to relative resources and lagged adaptation are tested with a particular focus on parents. Results indicate that neither the theory of relative resources nor the autonomy perspective can explain changes in women's and men's time spent on housework, controlling for stable characteristics. Focusing on parents, longitudinal analyses show few signs of a lagged adaptation of men's housework over time.

## **Introduction**

Sweden is known as one of the most gender equal countries in the world. Female employment is high and fathers use about one fourth of the total parental leave (Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2013). In case of a divorce, legal custody currently befalls both parents, and alternating residence for the children is becoming increasingly common. In 2012, 35 per cent of all children under the age of 17 with separated/divorced parents were alternating living with their mother and with their father (Statistics Sweden, 2014). Attempting to predict the development by extending observed tendencies and trends ahead in time, it may appear that gender differences in time spent on gainful employment and housework will disappear relatively soon (see, e.g., Nordenmark 2014). But many remain sceptical. Statistics Sweden (2012) show that the part-time work of fathers has not increased to any significant degree, and that women still take the decidedly longest, uninterrupted periods of parental leave. Hence, how large and consistent have changes been?

The division of paid and unpaid work along with women's economic dependency on men constitute important dimensions of inequality in modern society. As an example, individuals with a heavy housework load often experience higher levels of psychological distress than others (Boye, 2010; Harryson, 2013). The purpose of this paper is twofold. In the first part, we study how the time spent by women and men doing housework, as well as women's economic dependency on their partners, have developed in Sweden from 1974 until 2010. In the second part, we follow the same women and men through the years 1991-2010 to see how their housework is affected by an initialized cohabitation, by the couple having one or more children, and by changes in absolute and relative economic resources in the household (see, e.g., Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Gupta, 2006; Lundberg and Pollak, 1996). We test the autonomy perspective in a Swedish context, i.e., whether the absolute rather than relative income of women (vs. their spouse) affects the amount of housework women do (Gupta 2006; 2007). We also look for indications of so called lagged adaptation, where the housework of men approaches that of

women as gender norms change and as men learn how to carry out housework (e.g., Gershuny, Godwin and Jones, 1994; Kan, Sullivan and Gershuny, 2011). Given changing gender norms, we argue that lagged adaptation ought to be noticeable when it comes to changes in the impact of having children on men's time spent on housework.

### **Theoretical perspectives on couple's housework allocation**

One of the most common theories when it comes to explaining the time spent by women and men on housework is the *relative resource* or *bargaining perspective*. This theory is based on the assumption that financial resources can be transformed into power resources in negotiations in the family. Housework is seen as a task that everyone wants to minimise and the person with the most resources will have the best conditions for successfully negotiating housework (e.g., Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Lundberg and Pollak, 1996). As the ultimate threat is a divorce, there is an awareness of the risk involved in failed (explicit or implicit) negotiations, or an outright conflict. A person's power resources within the household are not solely determined by how much they contribute financially but also by the extent to which society provides financial safety nets and social transfer payments to single households (England and Kilbourne, 1990; Lundberg and Pollak, 1996). Other factors that may affect the situation is how prone each person is to negotiate in their own interests. If a person feels they are supported by, and important to their partner, i.e., if there is a strong emotional bond, it may be easier to overlook an unequal allocation of housework (cf: Kawamura and Brown, 2010).

While the relative resources perspective has found support in many empirical studies (e.g., Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre, and Matheson, 2003; Davis and Greenstein 2004; Evertsson and Nermo, 2004; Kühhirt, 2012), it is not supported as strongly by longitudinal analyses of Swedish data (Evertsson and Nermo, 2007). Researchers have examined an alternative approach, where gender is expected to be of greater importance for housework allocation than relative resources (Brines, 1994; Bittman et al. 2003; Evertsson and Nermo 2004; Schneider 2011). From a *gender*

*constructionist perspective*, housework is seen as an area where gender is created in a symbolic sense (Fenstermaker Berk, 1985; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Doing housework may be a way for women to “do gender” in the same way as men may “do gender” by *not* doing housework. Earlier studies have shown that gender has a decisive role in housework allocation (e.g., Evertsson and Neramo, 2004; Halleröd, 2005; Ström, 2002, for Sweden).

Cohabitation or marriage and divorce seems to be of some significance for the gender difference in housework, but the pattern is clearer in Gupta’s (1999) study on American data than in the Australian study by Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes (2008). The gender difference in housework increases when American women and men enter into a cohabitation/marriage and decreases if they divorce or separate (Gupta, 1999). Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes (2008) only found an increase in men’s housework after a divorce. The effect of children on the gender difference in housework is well-documented. Women’s housework time is much more responsive than men’s to the presence of children and mother’s housework time is also considerably longer than father’s, even when both are working similar hours in paid labor (see, e.g., Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008 for Australia, Boye, 2008 for Sweden, Kühhirt, 2012 for Germany and Sanchez and Thomson, 1997 for the USA). However, it is important to note that the masculinity discourse and fathering ideals have changed significantly in Sweden over the last 20-30 years (Johansson and Klinth, 2008) and younger generations of fathers take on a greater responsibility for their children than previous generations did (Björnberg, 2002).

A relatively new perspective is the so called *autonomy perspective*. According to this approach, it is not women’s relative resources, but rather women’s own income and their propensity to buy themselves free of housework that constitute the deciding factor of the division of housework (Gupta, 2006; 2007). Gupta argues that the financial autonomy of women has been underestimated and he bases this theory on American data indicating that the woman’s – but not the man’s – income affects her time in housework. In other words, it is easier for women to use their own financial resources to pay for household services than to negotiate an increase in the

time their partner spends on housework. This theory has met mixed support (see, e.g., Killewald, 2011; Schneider, 2011), and in this paper, we test the impact of the autonomy perspective in a Swedish context.

In a number of publications, Jonathan Gershuny and colleagues discuss why the change in men's housework has not been greater and explain this by the adaptation to new conditions having a delayed effect on housework (e.g., Gershuny, Godwin and Jones, 1994; Gershuny, Bittman and Brice, 2005; Kan, Sullivan and Gershuny, 2011). They argue that the cause of this so called *lagged adaptation* can be found in an analysis of learned habits, conquered skills and the importance of norms and identities founded already during childhood. Children learn what chores they, as gendered individuals, are expected to perform. At the same time, they are often consciously or unconsciously trained in these chores (Evertsson, 2006; Fenstermaker Berk, 1985; Gershuny, et al. 1994). Children internalise feminine and masculine norms, and based on these, form their own gender identity. This identity is linked to expectations and habits that are slow to change as an adult and Gershuny et al. argue that it requires an active effort for people to avoid repeating traditionally gendered behaviours. As an example of this, they discuss men's housework and its connection to women's time spent in gainful employment. When women who have stayed at home full-time or part-time enter into (more) gainful employment their housework hours are reduced. The change in men's housework, on the other hand, is much smaller and according to Gershuny et al., delayed as men have to learn certain skills and tasks from scratch. From a gender perspective, they also must learn how *not* to do gender or to do gender in a new way (cf. Plantin, 2001).

In the following, we test the importance of the above-mentioned theories in a Swedish context. We study the importance of the gender perspective by focusing on how events such as moving in with a partner and of having children influence women's and men's time spent on housework. The importance of the relative resource perspective and the autonomy perspective is tested in an analysis of how changes in the absolute and relative income of the person and their

partner correlate to changes in time spent on housework. The theory of lagged adaptation is tested through an analysis of how the time spent on housework by women and men has changed, during the period 1991-2010, as a consequence of parenthood.

## **Data and method**

We use the Swedish level of living survey (LNU), a nationally representative panel survey, and analyse the rounds conducted in 1974, 1981, 1991, 2000 and 2010. For each survey, a new group of young people and immigrants are added to compensate for age changes in the panel and population changes in the immigrant population. The analyses focus on gainfully employed women and men between the ages 20-60.<sup>1</sup> As the focus of this paper is on gender differences in housework, we exclude the small number of same-sex couples in the survey.

*Time spent on housework* is defined as the number of hours in a regular week that the respondent devotes to 1) grocery shopping, cooking and washing up, 2) laundry, ironing and other clothing-related care, and 3) cleaning. In the discussion of the descriptive analyses, we have in some cases also included *repairs and maintenance* of the household residence, vehicles and other property.

*Time in gainful employment* is the number of regular working hours per week. For the partner, this variable represents current working hours. Hence, there is a greater risk for the measurement of the partner's working hours to be influenced by more short-term changes in work hours. In multivariate analyses, the variable is centred on the gender specific means.

*Own income* and *partner's income* measures the annual income in thousands of SEK according to population registers. In addition to gross salary, the measurement includes work-related compensation such as sickness benefits, occupational injury compensation and temporary parental benefits. It also includes income from active business activity. In multivariate analyses, these variables are centred on the gender specific means. *Total household income* is the combined

income of the respondent and their partner. Total household income is centred on the sample mean in multivariate analyses.

The distribution of financial resources within the household is measured in terms of *economic dependency* (Sørensen and McLanahan 1987). Economic dependency is calculated according to the formula:

$$\text{EcDep} = (\text{Inc}_{\text{ip}} - \text{Inc}_{\text{p}}) / (\text{Inc}_{\text{ip}} + \text{Inc}_{\text{p}})$$

where EcDep refers to the respondent's economic dependency,  $\text{Inc}_{\text{ip}}$  refers to the respondent's annual income in thousands of SEK, and  $\text{Inc}_{\text{p}}$  refers to the partner's annual income in thousands of SEK. This variable varies between -1 and 1, where -1 indicates that the respondent is completely economically dependent on their partner, while 1 indicates that the respondent is solely responsible for their own and their partner's maintenance. When EcDep is 0, both partners contribute equally to the household income.

Cohabitants are indicated in the longitudinal, multivariate analyses by two dichotomous variables. The first, *cohabiting*, assumes the value 1, if the respondent is married or cohabiting, and 0 if they are not, while *no longer cohabiting*, assumes the value 1 if the respondent has previously been, but no longer is cohabiting. Individuals have a 0-value for both of these prior to entering their first cohabitation (the reference category).

*Age of youngest child* is measured in three dichotomous variables. The first indicates that the youngest child is under the age of two. When the child is little, it is more common that one of the parents (often the mother) is on parental leave at the time of the interview. The other two variables indicate that the youngest child is between the ages of two and six, or between the ages of seven and 16.<sup>2</sup>

*Number of children under the age of 17* is measured in two variables indicating that there are two, or more than two children in the family. No variable for *one* child is included, as this



category is captured in the variables for the age of the youngest child (when combined with the two variables for having two or more than two children).

The longitudinal analyses also include an indicator of *survey year*, in order to catch any aggregate changes in the time spent on housework. Multivariate analyses of potential lagged adaptation include an interaction between the year and having a child within a certain age interval (0-2, 2-6 or 7-16) compared to not having any children, which is the reference category. Cross-sectional, multivariate analyses include the *age* of the respondent centred on the gender specific mean.

The longitudinal analyses are estimated with Fixed Effects regression models (FE). FE is a form of regression model where the estimates are based on the changes that take place over time for the same individual, rather than on differences between individuals. This method controls for all individual characteristics that do not change during the studied period, which applies to many characteristics that are difficult to measure. In other words, the method controls for time constant, individual heterogeneity.

### **Time spent on housework and women's economic dependency 1974-2010**

Figure 1 show how the time spent on housework by gainfully employed, cohabiting/married women and men has changed over the period 1974-2010. The time men spend on housework has increased from a little over two hours per week in 1974 to around 7.5 hours in 2010 (see the left side of Figure 1). The increase was the greatest between 1974 and 1991, at a little over four hours. Over the next 19 years, men's housework hours increased by barely one hour. This also applies to men with children in the household (see the right side of Figure 1). Women's time spent on housework has been more than halved in the same period, going from 27.5 hours per week in 1974 to 13 hours per week in 2010. For women with children under the age of 17, the decrease is even greater: from 33.5 hours per week to 15 hours per week. In the same period, gainfully employed women's regular working hours has increased from 30 to 36 hours per week, and

gainfully employed mother's hours has increased from 28 to 36 hours per week (not shown in the figure). Other explanations for the decrease in women's housework hours include increasing technological aids in the households and access to processed foods and ready-made meals. Men's increased housework hours are also part of the explanation (see, e.g., Heisig, 2011). Figure 2 shows that the proportion of couples with an equal routine housework allocation was very small in 1974, at four per cent. It has increased considerably since then and in 2010, 20 per cent of the couples shared the routine housework equally.

*[Figure 1 and 2 about here]*

Even if men's share of the housework has increased, in 2010 there was still a gender difference of on average 5.5 hours of housework per week. A common argument has been that women's and men's preferences for housework differ and that their perceptions of how clean a home for instance needs to be differ. If this is the most important explanation for the gender gap in housework, there ought to be significant differences in the time spent on housework by single women and men without children. However, this does not seem to be the case. In Table 1, where we compare single women and men, women do an average of 8.2 hours per week of housework, compared to 7.8 hours for men (controlling for education, income, working hours and age). This corresponds to an insignificant time difference of about 20 minutes per week. If we instead look at the time spent on housework by cohabiting/married women and men and keep factors like age, number of children, age of the youngest child, paid working hours and income (the latter two for the respondent and their partner) constant; the differences in time spent on housework is approximately 3 hours and 40 minutes to the disadvantage of women (where they do an average of 10.2 hours of housework each week, see Table 2).

*[Table 1 & 2 about here]*

In Figure 1 and in the regression analyses, we focus on routine housework (i.e. housework that needs to be done recurrently and on a regular basis) and chores such as lawn-mowing, repairs etc. are not included. Information on time spent doing these chores is only available for

the years 2000 and 2010, when they add a little over three hours/week to the housework of the men and approximately 50 minutes/week to that of the women. Gender differences in time spent doing housework in 2010 is thus reduced from a little more than 5.5 hours to 3.5 hours per week when repairs and maintenance work is included. The amount of repairs/maintenance varies greatly depending on season and whether the respondent lives in a house or an apartment. In separate analyses we have therefore compared the housework time for those who live in houses to those who live in apartments (not shown). In 2010, the difference in routine housework between women and men living in an apartment was two hours and 45 minutes per week, while the difference for those who live in houses was as high as six hours and 40 minutes per week. Men who live in a house do less housework and more repairs and maintenance work than other men do, whereas women who live in a house do more of both repairs/maintenance and routine housework than other women.<sup>3</sup>

The change in women's paid and unpaid working hours is connected to changes in their economic dependency on men. While being less economically dependent on their partner might make it easier for women to leave a bad relationship, and to provide for themselves and any children, it can also give women more power within the relationship (see, e.g., Lundberg and Pollak, 1996, cf. Treas and Tai, 2012). Figure 3 shows how the economic dependency of women in couples where both partners are gainfully employed has changed over the period 1974-2010. In 1974, a relatively large proportion of women were economically dependent on their spouses and the median value of women's economic dependency was -0.33 (where 0 means equal contributions). This means that men's average contribution was twice that of women. In 1981, the proportion that is close to completely economically dependent on their spouse is significantly reduced, and the median value of the women's economic dependency is -0.24. Women's average economic dependency has been further reduced after 1981, with the largest change taking place between 1991 and 2000. In 2010, the value for women's average economic dependency is -0.17. This shows that men's contribution to the household economy in 2010 is approximately 40 per

cent larger than women's contribution. If we study families with children 16 years old or younger (Figure 4), we see even greater changes. Mothers were more economically dependent than other women in 1974 but their economic dependency has been reduced more than that of other women. In 2010, the average economic dependency of mothers is -0.18.

[Figure 3 & 4 about here]

### **Changes in the housework allocation over the life cycle**

In the following, we study how the time spent on housework changes when single people move in together, have children and, in some cases, divorce or separate. It could be that those who decide to have children are individuals (or in particular women) that would do the most housework regardless of whether or not they were parents and in order to correct for this, longitudinal analyses are needed. We therefore focus on *changes* in time spent on housework for gainfully employed women and men who participated in at least two of the surveys of 1991, 2000 and 2010, and who were between the ages of 20 and 60 during the period when they participated. We estimate Fixed Effect models. If, for instance, individual preferences regarding how well-kept a home should be are stable, the results presented in these models are unaffected by some individuals generally wanting a cleaner home than others. However, note that possible *changes* in preferences are not held constant.

The results are presented in Table 3 and illustrated in Figure 5, showing how the amount of housework has changed for women and men as a result of moving in with their partner and of having one, two or three children or more. The graph shows changes in housework compared to when the respondent was single and had no children. Results indicate that the time men spend on housework is reduced when they move in with a partner. Men who are cohabiting (with a woman) spend a little more than 1.5 hours less on housework than what they did before living with a partner. Table 3 shows that men who leave a relationship instead increase the time they spend on housework by nearly three hours, compared to the time they spent on housework when

they were singles. One explanation for why the increase in time (when they stop living with a partner) is greater than the decrease when they move in is that many of the separated men have children in the household at least part of the time. For women, the time spent on housework does not change to any significant degree when they move in with a man, or when they leave such a relationship. However, our analyses indicate that there is some selection into cohabitation for women. If we disregard any individual stable factors, it would appear that women's time spent on housework increases both when they enter a relationship and when they leave it (compare the OLS to the FE models for women, Table 3). This could indicate that women with an inclination to do (more) housework are more likely to initiate, and also end, a cohabitation than other women. It could also be other constant characteristics that make some women more likely to initiate/end relationships and to do more housework. These characteristics may be related to socio-economic status or class. Earlier research indicates that women in middle to higher social class positions do less – and men more – housework than other women/men (Evertsson et al., 2009). There are also class differences in divorce rates, where those with higher education are less likely to divorce than others (Cooke et al. 2013).

*[Table 3 and Figure 5 about here]*

The most obvious change in women's time spent on housework arises as they become parents, and this change is amplified when taking into account selection into parenthood. For women, the time spent on housework increases by roughly eight hours per week when they have their first child and the child is under the age of two. For the men, the increase is significantly smaller, at a little over two hours. One explanation might be that many women are on parental leave for at least part of this period. When children get older, women's time spent on housework goes down to a level that exceeds what they were doing before they had a child by approximately 3.5 hours. Women's housework hours increases again with around 1.5 hours if and when they have child number two, and by close to five hours if they have three or more children. For men, there is no noticeable change in the time spent on housework as the family is growing (i.e., after

the first child is born). The time men spend on housework decreases as the youngest child grows, while no such decrease is seen for women with children age two or older. From a gender perspective, housework has a symbolic value in the gender-creation process within the family, where the ideal of a “good” mother prescribes a mother that cooks nutritious and healthy food and makes sure her children are clean and appropriately dressed for all weathers and occasions. If there is harsh judgement from society for “bad” mothers, fathers are not measured against the same standards in this context.

*[Table 4 about here]*

### **The significance of economic factors**

In the next step, we move on to study whether changes in income and/or economic dependency lead to changes in housework allocation for cohabiting couples with children under the age of 17 in their household. As indicated above, the relative resource perspective assumes that financial resources can be transformed into power resources in the family. If so, the person with the most resources will have the best conditions for successfully reducing their share of the housework. According to the autonomy perspective on the other hand, high income women mainly use their financial resources to buy out of housework as they have difficulties negotiating a change in the division of housework with their partner/spouse. Table 4 shows that neither men’s nor women’s time spent on housework is affected to any greater extent by changes to their own income, nor by changes to their partner’s income (Model 1) or the total household income (Model 2). Instead, the analyses indicate that the income variable mainly catches stable preferences of high-income earners to outsource housework – alternatively to do less housework than others – i.e., preferences that are not affected in the same way by a change in income (compare the estimate in the FE models with the OLS models of Table 4). Similarly, changes in economic dependency do not seem to lead to any clear changes in time spent on housework (Table 4, Model 2). Hence, neither the autonomy perspective nor the relative resource perspective receives support in this

analysis. Women seem to have limited possibilities to renegotiate the housework allocation with their partner as a result of becoming more financially independent, and unless the women are already part of the group with a preference to outsource housework (and/or minimise their own housework) this preference does not appear to increase along with their own income (cf. Kühhirt, 2012, who has found similar results for Germany).

### **Change in the impact of children on the time spent on housework – a case of lagged adaptation?**

Even if the working hours of gainfully employed women have increased incrementally since 1974 and on, the great changes in Sweden took place between the mid-1960s and 1990. During this period, the employment rate of women increased, and then remained relatively constant and high from the early 1990s and on. In the same way, the descriptive analyses show that the greatest changes in the time men spend on housework took place in the 1970s and 1980s, while the changes after 1990 were small (Figure 1). All in all this seems to support a direct adaptation, small as it may be, among men to women's decreased time spent on unpaid work rather than a lagged one.

However, as previously mentioned, the ideals of gender equality and the norms for being a good father have changed fairly drastically over the last decades. We therefore expect to find a more clear connection between having children and the time men spend on housework in later years (if the changed ideals have led to men taking on a greater parental responsibility in practical terms). We therefore estimate models where we study the degree to which the number of children influence the time spent on housework by cohabiting/married women and men at the time of the different surveys in 1991, 2000 and 2010. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 5. Figure 6 shows the estimated changes to the time spent on housework for cohabiting women and men with average incomes and working hours. Respondents with no children and those whose children are between the ages 2-6 are included in the figure. Women's

and men's time spent on housework increases the most when they become parents to their first child (Table 5). We have previously noted that men's time spent on housework does not increase to any significant degree if more children are added to the family but as we can see in Figure 6, the increase in time spent on housework from having no children to having one child age 2-6 is somewhat greater for men in 2010 than it was in 2000, although not significantly so (see Table 5). The increase in women's time spent on housework is greater than for men, and it has remained roughly the same for the entire period 1991-2010. However, women's time spent on housework when they have more children increases to a lesser degree if we compare the year 2010 to 2000 and 1991. This could possibly be the result of a lagged adaptation among women, where they gradually have adapted (and reduced) their time spent on children and housework due to an increased level of gainful employment.

*[Table 5 and Figure 6 about here]*

### **Summarising discussion**

The debate on the gender equality development in Sweden can be divided into two camps. Some expect women and men to be sharing paid work as well as unpaid work and childcare equally already in the 2020s (e.g. Nordenmark, 2014). The sceptics on the other hand are arguing that we have a long way to go, and that the gender equality trend has stagnated. In this paper, we have updated earlier research and trend studies with new data and information from the Swedish Level of Living Survey. The study is the first to analyse whether there has been a delay in the adaptation of Swedish men's housework to women's decreased housework time, greater labour market participation and to changing gender norms during the past few decades (Gershuny et al, 1994; Gershuny et al 2005). We furthermore analyse the importance of the autonomy perspective (Gupta, 2006; 2007) in relation to the relative resource perspective in the Swedish context, where the gender discourse has been strong for a long time and where the masculinity discourse in particular has undergone changes over the past twenty years.



Our first conclusion is that the major increase in men's housework time took place between 1974 and 1991. Using new data, we have thus been able to show that the trend towards greater equality in the distribution of unpaid household work has levelled off over the past two decades. The time spent doing repairs and maintenance work varies greatly with the seasons and form of living, and our results show that the housework allocation often is more traditional for those who live in houses compared to those who live in apartments. The overall proportion of couples who share the housework equally has increased over the years. In 1974, only four per cent of the couples shared housework equally, compared to 20 per cent in 2010. The increased share of gender equal couples (if we define those who share housework equally as being gender equal) is mainly a result of women significantly decreasing their time spent on housework. Considering that this decrease has slowed down, the question is whether it is possible for women to keep reducing their time spent on housework – as long as men do not pick up the slack – or if we are closing in on a floor, or a minimum level, for the time required to cook, wash up, do laundry and keep a home clean. If men's housework hours continue to increase as slowly as it has over the last 20 years, we do not find it likely that Swedish couples will be gender equal within a foreseeable future.

A positive result for gender equality is the indication that women's economic dependency on men has decreased, and in 2010, cohabiting/married men contribute an average 40 per cent more to the household economy than the women, compared to the beginning of the period when the men's average contribution was twice that of the women. Women's economic dependency has gone down more in families with children than in other families. This development is positive considering women's possibility to provide for themselves and any children in case of a divorce. Women's own economic resources may also be important inside the relationship if they can be transformed into symbolic power resources in negotiations within the family. However, our analyses indicate that relative economic resources are of limited importance when it comes to understanding how Swedish couples allocate the housework. Is housework allocation instead

related to absolute economic resources? According to the autonomy perspective (Gupta, 2006; 2007), women are expected to use their own – but not their partner’s – income to buy themselves free of housework. Our results indicate that the connection between women’s own income and their time spent on housework, at least in Sweden, mainly is due to higher income women having a stable preference to do less housework. Hence, even if aggregated trends indicate a connection between women’s overall increased incomes and reduced time spent on housework, we find no such connection when we study changes for the same individuals over time. In sum, our results challenge both the autonomy perspective and the relative resource perspective. Women do not appear to want, or be able, to use increasing economic resources to renegotiate the housework allocation and reduce their own time spent on housework, provided that we take into account stable characteristics and any changes in working hours, number of children and the age of the youngest child.

All in all, our results indicate that the social changes that have taken place over the period studied have had the greatest impact on the time women spend on housework. For example, it does not appear that men’s increased utilisation of parental leave has led to any greater *aggregate* changes when it comes to the time men spend on housework. The change in men’s time spent on housework between 1991 and 2010 is small, and even if this time may increase temporarily when they are at home with children (see Evertsson, 2014), there are few indications of any major long-term changes in men’s time spent on housework. Nor do we find any clear signs that fathers’ housework hours increase with a delay – when we follow the same individuals over time – as argued in the theory of lagged adaptation (Gershuny et al. 1994; Gershuny et al. 2005).

In the analyses of changes in the time spent on housework as a consequence of initiating or ending cohabitation and of having children, we take into account the possibility that people with a (constant) higher propensity to do housework also might have a higher propensity to enter a relationship or to become parents. Considering individual characteristics that remain stable over time, results show that men’s housework hours falls by a little more than 1.5 hours when they

start living with a partner, while it goes up by nearly three hours if/when they end that relationship, compared to when they were single. Given that there are benefits of scale related to living in a two-person household, it is interesting to note that only men appear to benefit from this. For women, there is no noticeable change in the time spent on housework whether they enter or end cohabitation. The factor that leads to the clearest increase in women's time spent on housework is instead the occurrence of children, and this increase is even greater when taking into account the selection involved in parenthood. The increase in time spent on housework for women who become mothers, compared to the significantly more modest increase for men, can be seen as a sign of how gender is socially constructed in the home. Women do "good mothering" by cooking healthy food for the children, keeping the home clean and making sure that the children have the cloths they need for the season (cf. Evertsson, 2014). Even if men are keen to be "a good father", this role is not as clearly linked to housework. In sum, it appears that the altered norms of the last few decades with regard to masculinity and fatherhood have had a very limited impact on the amount of time men spend on housework.

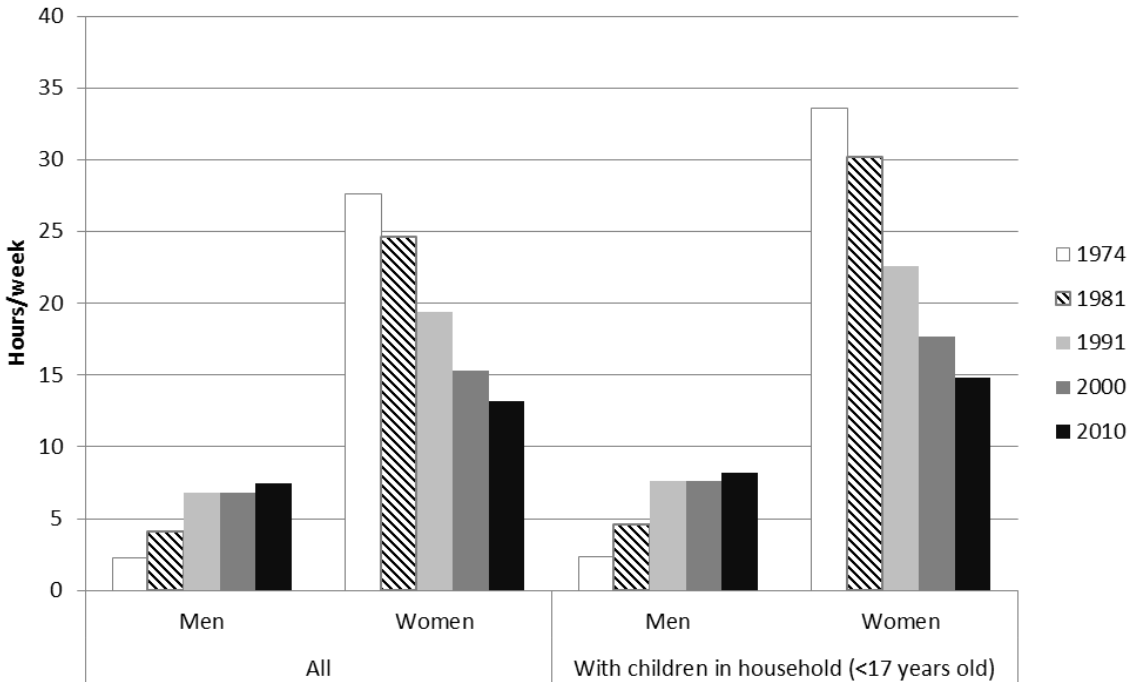
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**Figure 1. Average number of hours per week spent on housework 1974-2010. All cohabiting/married, gainfully employed women and men between the ages of 20-60, and those within this group who have children aged 0-16 in their household.**



**Figure 2. The proportion of couples where the partners share the housework equally, where the woman does the most and where the man does the most, for the period 1974-2010**

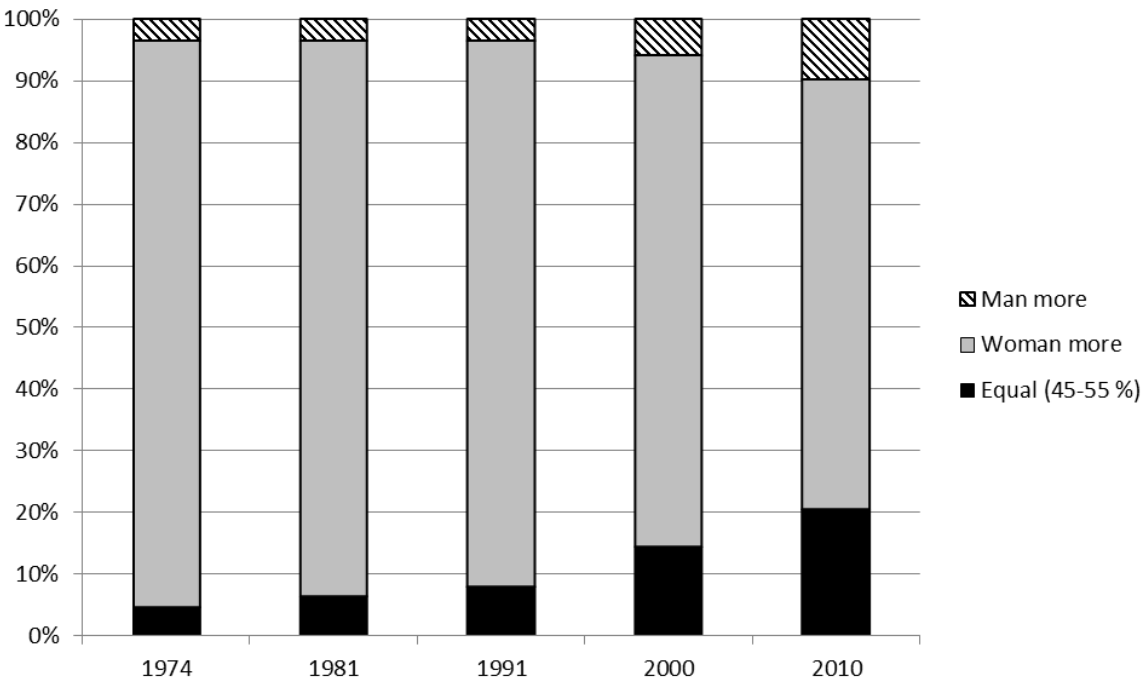


Figure 3. Change in women’s economic dependency on their partner 1974-2010. Cohabiting/married, gainfully employed, 20-60 years old.

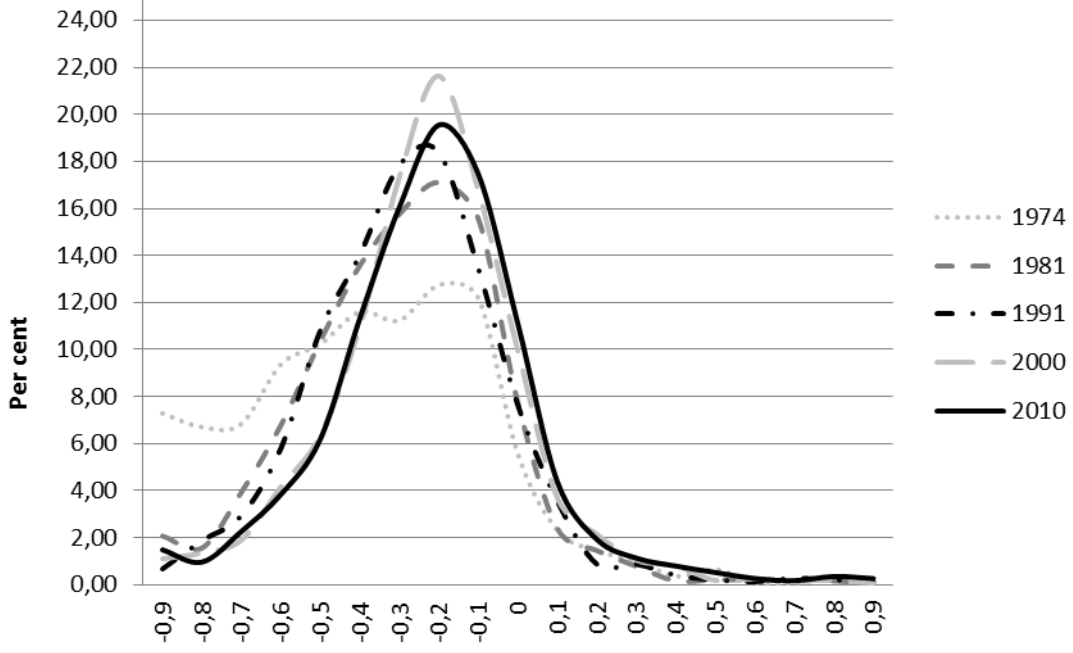


Figure 4. Change in women’s economic dependency on their partner 1974-2010. Cohabiting/married, gainfully employed, 20-60 years old with children at the age of 16 or younger in the household.

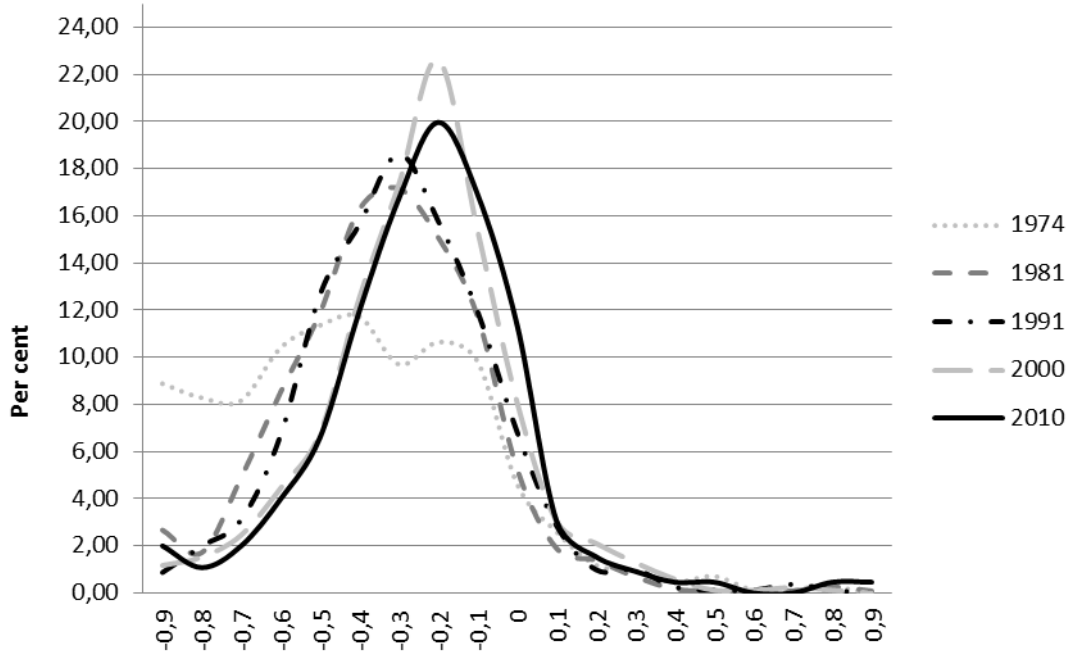




Figure 5. Change in the time spent on housework by single women and men as a consequence of moving in with a partner and the respective arrival of the first, second and third (and above) child. Gainfully employed women and men between the ages of 20-60, LNU 1991, 2000 and 2010.

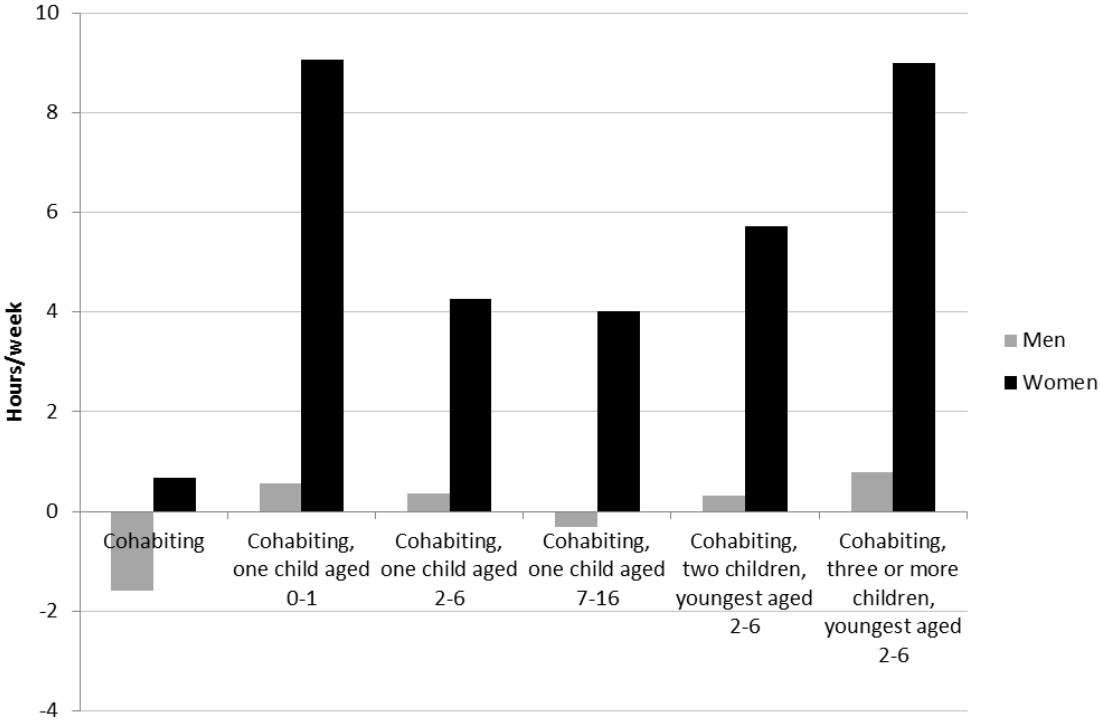


Figure 6. Change in the time spent on housework by women and men as a consequence of the respective arrival of their first, second and third (and above) child. Gainfully employed women and men between the ages of 20-60 LNU 1991, 2000 and 2010.

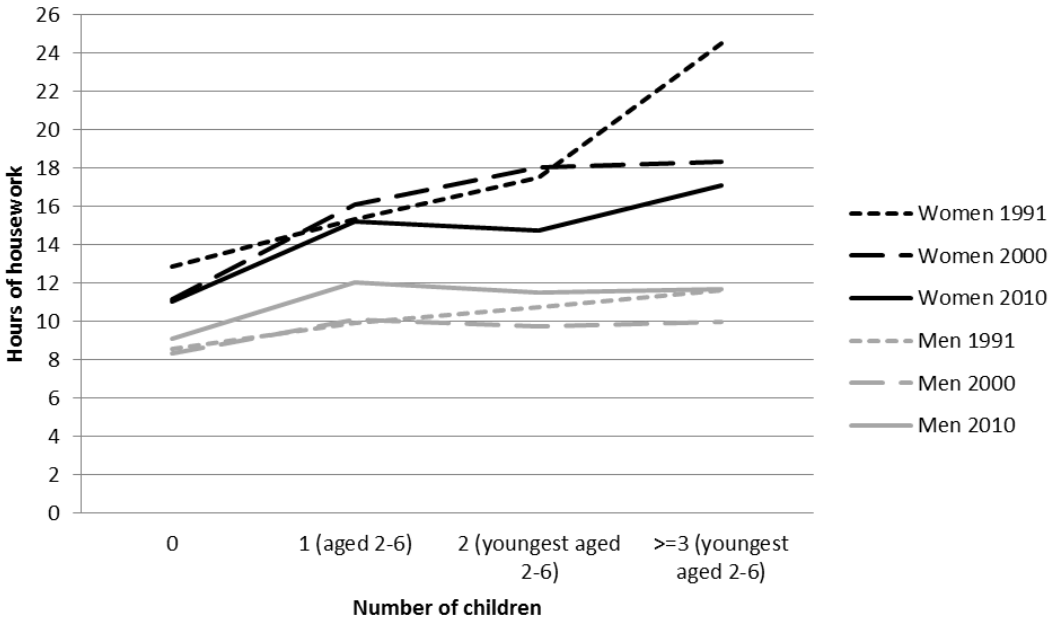


Table 1. Gender differences in housework for childless, gainfully employed singles in 2010

	Model 1	Model 2
woman	0.498 (0.533)	0.370 (0.531)
years of education		0.090 (0.091)
income		0.001 (0.002)
working hours		-0.019 (0.032)
age		0.093*** (0.021)
Intercept	9.050*** (0.339)	7.849*** (1.255)
N	515	515
R <sup>2</sup>	0.002	0.048

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, + p<0.1

Table 2. OLS analysis of time spent on housework by cohabiting and gainfully employed women and men between the ages of 20-60 in 2010

	Men	Women
age	-0.010 (0.020)	0.172*** (0.035)
income	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.007** (0.002)
income p	0.002 (0.002)	-0.004* (0.002)
working hours	-0.179*** (0.048)	-0.135** (0.044)
working hours p	0.019 (0.026)	0.210*** (0.041)
no children	ref.	ref.
youngest child <2	2.790*** (0.707)	8.083*** (1.110)
youngest child 2-6	1.939*** (0.576)	3.535*** (0.966)
youngest child >6	1.870*** (0.461)	4.093*** (0.811)
2 children	-0.292 (0.483)	0.317 (0.794)
>2 children	-0.531 (0.703)	2.157* (1.025)
Intercept	6.580*** (0.263)	10.228*** (0.445)
N	559	538
R <sup>2</sup>	0.091	0.222

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, + p<0.1

Table 3. Time spent on housework for gainfully employed women and men between the ages of 20-60 (hours/week). OLS analysis of the relationship between independent variables and a dependent variable. FE analysis of the relationship between a change in the independent variables and a change in the dependent variable.

	Men		Women	
	FE	OLS	FE	OLS
year 2000	-0.238 (0.199)	-0.092 (0.214)	-1.866*** (0.356)	-2.241*** (0.362)
year 2010	0.570* (0.281)	0.815*** (0.245)	-1.980*** (0.518)	-3.135*** (0.412)
income	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001+ (0.000)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.009*** (0.001)
working hours	-0.045 (0.030)	-0.058* (0.023)	-0.056+ (0.029)	-0.086*** (0.025)
house	-1.092*** (0.305)	-1.372*** (0.205)	0.642 (0.448)	2.036*** (0.311)
cohabiting	-1.597*** (0.473)	-2.163*** (0.290)	0.677 (0.747)	2.305*** (0.431)
ended cohabitation	2.749*** (0.687)	2.676*** (0.472)	1.272 (1.025)	3.709*** (0.573)
no children	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
youngest child <2	2.166*** (0.475)	2.779*** (0.448)	8.376*** (0.903)	6.020*** (0.831)
youngest child 2-6	1.954*** (0.385)	2.116*** (0.336)	3.579*** (0.604)	1.705** (0.546)
youngest child >6	1.283*** (0.280)	1.610*** (0.282)	3.345*** (0.462)	3.135*** (0.422)
2 children	-0.044 (0.283)	0.367 (0.280)	1.453** (0.492)	1.236* (0.481)
>2 children	0.434 (0.389)	1.284** (0.413)	4.739*** (0.817)	4.372*** (0.804)
Intercept	8.625*** (0.375)	8.811*** (0.271)	13.057*** (0.613)	11.761*** (0.401)
N (person year)	2848	2848	2841	2841
Number of groups (persons)	1219		1220	
R <sup>2</sup> within/R <sup>2</sup>	0.097	0.126	0.255	0.224
rho	0.487		0.476	

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, + p<0.1

Table 4. Time spent on housework for gainfully employed and cohabiting parents between the ages of 20-60 (hours/week). Analysis of the significance of economic factors. OLS analysis of the relationship between independent variables and a dependent variable. FE analysis of the relationship between a change in the independent variables and a change in the dependent variable.

	Men				Women			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	FE	OLS	FE	OLS	FE	OLS	FE	OLS
year 2000	-2.189*	-0.371	-2.183*	-0.367	0.343	-3.589***	0.218	-3.639***
	(0.909)	(0.371)	(0.905)	(0.371)	(1.384)	(0.683)	(1.382)	(0.686)
year 2010	-2.231	0.039	-2.221	0.072	3.934	-5.661***	3.522	-5.778***
	(1.634)	(0.393)	(1.627)	(0.389)	(2.929)	(0.734)	(2.845)	(0.744)
household inc.			-0.002	0.000			-0.004	-0.005***
			(0.001)	(0.001)			(0.003)	(0.001)
econ. dependency			0.107	-1.691**			-2.225	-1.610
			(1.451)	(0.648)			(2.663)	(1.065)
income	-0.002	-0.001+			-0.013	-0.011***		
	(0.001)	(0.001)			(0.009)	(0.002)		
income p	-0.001	0.004*			0.000	-0.002		
	(0.003)	(0.002)			(0.003)	(0.002)		
working hours	-0.094	-0.179***	-0.094	-0.180***	-0.059	-0.138**	-0.061	-0.150***
	(0.058)	(0.037)	(0.057)	(0.037)	(0.082)	(0.042)	(0.082)	(0.043)
working hours p	0.039	0.034	0.040	0.034	-0.004	0.139***	-0.003	0.144***
	(0.053)	(0.021)	(0.054)	(0.021)	(0.069)	(0.041)	(0.069)	(0.041)
youngest child >6	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
youngest child <2	-1.135	1.687**	-1.130	1.660**	9.397***	2.169*	9.583***	2.327*
	(1.063)	(0.522)	(1.064)	(0.521)	(1.872)	(0.907)	(1.894)	(0.910)
youngest child 2-6	-0.551	0.537+	-0.559	0.529+	2.880*	-1.428*	2.996*	-1.399*
	(0.931)	(0.306)	(0.929)	(0.306)	(1.371)	(0.572)	(1.386)	(0.573)
2 children	-0.707	0.189	-0.696	0.225	2.817**	1.673**	2.724**	1.680**
	(0.521)	(0.305)	(0.524)	(0.307)	(0.970)	(0.559)	(0.959)	(0.560)
>2 children	0.116	1.185*	0.115	1.257**	4.376**	5.312***	4.376**	5.326***
	(0.694)	(0.482)	(0.702)	(0.482)	(1.363)	(0.882)	(1.362)	(0.881)
Intercept	10.165***	7.509***	10.138***	7.848***	12.646***	19.903***	12.338***	19.580***
	(1.234)	(0.337)	(1.255)	(0.361)	(1.939)	(0.646)	(2.214)	(0.698)
N (person year)	1072	1072	1072	1072	1120	1120	1120	1120
Number of groups (persons)	853		853		875		875	
R <sup>2</sup> within/R <sup>2</sup>	0.0682	0.063	0.0682	0.064	0.269	0.208	0.264	0.205
rho	0.561		0.562		0.650		0.648	

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, + p<0.1

Table 5. Change in the impact of children on the time spent doing housework for gainfully employed women and men between the ages 20-60 in 1991-2010 (hours/week). OLS analysis of the relationship between independent variables and a dependent variable. FE analysis of the relationship between a change in the independent variables and a change in the dependent variable.

	Men		Women	
	FE	OLS	FE	OLS
year 2000	-0.208 (0.265)	-0.295 (0.278)	-1.726*** (0.462)	-0.627 (0.449)
year 2010	0.550 (0.411)	0.726* (0.343)	-1.830** (0.639)	-1.143* (0.493)
income	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001+ (0.000)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.009*** (0.001)
working hours	-0.047 (0.030)	-0.058* (0.023)	-0.039 (0.028)	-0.070** (0.025)
house	-1.133*** (0.312)	-1.398*** (0.206)	0.583 (0.441)	1.965*** (0.308)
cohabiting	-1.619*** (0.473)	-2.125*** (0.292)	0.790 (0.739)	2.037*** (0.431)
ended cohabitation	2.741*** (0.682)	2.734*** (0.474)	1.269 (1.017)	3.241*** (0.576)
no children	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
youngest child <2	1.343* (0.641)	1.923** (0.623)	8.375*** (1.273)	8.415*** (1.190)
youngest child 2-6	1.364* (0.685)	1.696** (0.592)	2.438* (1.101)	2.877** (1.046)
youngest child >6	0.670 (0.540)	0.939+ (0.524)	2.839*** (0.857)	4.504*** (0.803)
2 children	0.827 (0.550)	0.874+ (0.516)	2.158* (0.920)	2.153* (0.902)
>2 children	1.696* (0.764)	2.087** (0.744)	9.189*** (1.559)	7.063*** (1.455)
< 2 in 2000	1.194 (1.135)	1.669+ (0.988)	-0.569 (1.892)	-4.956** (1.750)
2-6 in 2000	0.413 (0.892)	0.368 (0.758)	2.518+ (1.442)	-1.748 (1.279)
> 6 in 2000	0.987 (0.730)	0.643 (0.644)	-0.030 (1.083)	-2.329* (0.997)
< 2 in 2010	1.309 (1.326)	1.085 (1.121)	-2.136 (2.364)	-3.510 (2.389)
2-6 in 2010	1.594 (0.974)	0.962 (0.804)	1.731 (1.487)	-0.977 (1.368)
> 6 in 2010	0.688 (0.833)	1.311+ (0.702)	2.863* (1.307)	-1.004 (1.076)
2 children in 2000	-1.208 (0.779)	-0.329 (0.686)	-0.209 (1.260)	-0.274 (1.156)
> 2 children in 2000	-1.816 (1.183)	-0.427 (1.001)	-6.955** (2.219)	-3.398+ (1.868)
2 children in 2010	-1.393+ (0.798)	-1.312+ (0.704)	-2.652* (1.262)	-3.341** (1.191)
> 2 children in 2010	-2.068+ (1.095)	-2.297* (1.036)	-7.340*** (1.975)	-6.179*** (1.916)
Intercept	8.670*** (0.419)	8.907*** (0.292)	12.835*** (0.656)	10.805*** (0.416)
N (person year)	2848	2848	2841	2841
Number of groups (persons)	1219		1220	
R <sup>2</sup> within/R <sup>2</sup>	0.102	0.130	0.278	0.240
rho	0.488		0.485	

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, + p<0.1

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The gainfully employed includes all those who were employed full or part-time the week before the interview, and who had an income for the year of the interview (however, for 1974, the income data from the previous year was applied).

<sup>2</sup> A long time has passed between the surveys and some of the respondents have had one (their first) child at a relatively early point during the period. This means that we probably underestimate the more short-term and temporary increases in time spent on housework that follows as a direct result of becoming a parent.

<sup>3</sup> Taking into account repairs and maintenance work, the gender difference in unpaid work adds up to 1.5 hours/week for those living in apartments, while for those living in houses, the gender difference is a little over four hours.