

23 Men are more involved in unpaid work at home, but the gender gap persists

Gender roles have been gradually changing over the last several decades regarding family and work. While women are spending an increasing amount of time on paid work, they are spending less time on unpaid work at home. At the same time, survey data suggest that men are increasingly participating in certain household tasks. Regardless of their labour force participation and changes in recent years, women continue to do the majority of household work in Canada.¹

In 2020, less than half (47.5%) of people aged 20 and older who were part of a different-gender couple said that meal preparation was mostly done by women,² down from 62.0% in 2011.³ Approximately one-third (35.5%) said that meal preparation was shared equally,² up from 27.8% in 2011.³ Survey participants were less likely to report that men prepared most of the meals, although there was an increase from 10.2% in 2011 to 16.1% in 2020.² It is important to note that the survey data measured *perceptions*, not the actual time spent doing the household work. In addition, the 2020 data were collected in June, after the COVID-19 pandemic had been declared and

most employees were working from home. As such, the figures may reflect this unique context rather than a broader shift.

Just over half (55.9%) of participants said in 2020 that laundry was mostly done by women,² down from 66.6% in 2011.³ More than one-quarter (27.4%) said that doing laundry was shared equally,² which was similar to 2011 (26.6%).³ Participants were much less likely to report that laundry was mostly done by men, although the proportion saying so more than doubled from 6.8% in 2011 to 15.8% in 2020.²

The 2022 Time Use Survey provides information about how time is *actually* spent on daily activities. Among people who worked from home, women spent 40.4 minutes more per day on unpaid housework than men (102.9 minutes vs. 62.5 minutes).^{a, 4} Women who did not telework also reported spending more time per day than men in the same employment arrangement on unpaid housework (87.3 minutes vs. 48.5 minutes, respectively).

Data from the 2022 Time Use Survey also show that among parents who worked from home, mothers spent an average of



51.5 minutes more per day with children than fathers did (323.5 minutes in total vs. 272.0 minutes, respectively).⁴ Mothers who did not telework spent less time per day with children (252.7 minutes) but more than fathers who did not telework (200.9 minutes).

Most participants in the 2016 General Social Survey (GSS) reported that childcare tasks such as supervising children (58.8%), taking children to activities (55.2%), and performing children's bedtime activities (55.8%) were shared equally.³ When childcare tasks were not shared equally, this work was done primarily by women.

Why this matters

Although data show that some household tasks are perceived to be distributed more equally between women and men in couples, time use data reveal that the pace of change has been slow and women continue to do substantially more unpaid work than men. The division of tasks

remains gendered: women continue to do most meal preparation, laundry, and indoor housework in family homes. In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that among couples in 2016, women (76.3%) were less likely than men (88.4%) to report being satisfied with the division of housework, and more likely than men to report being dissatisfied (9.7% and 2.6%, respectively).³ Women reported higher satisfaction when their spouse did most of the housework or when it was shared equally.²

The "double burden" of paid and unpaid work can affect the wellbeing of women, who are left with a greater overall workload and less time to rest.⁵ Those who also provide caregiving to family or friends have a "third shift" that brings greater complexity and potential cost to wellbeing.⁶ In addition to affecting their wellbeing, multiple workloads can also affect the labour force participation of women.

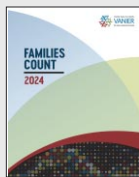
^a This includes both *co-present time* (time reported as "with" a household child of any age, not including time in sleep, personal care, or childcare activities) and *childcare time*, in which caring for children is the primary activity.



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References

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- ⁵ Seedat, S., & Rondon, M. (2021, August 31). Women's wellbeing and the burden of unpaid work. *Women's Health and Gender Inequalities*, 374. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1972>
- ⁶ Gladu, M. (2021, June). *Women's Unpaid Work in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women*. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-2/FEWO/report-8>



Families Count 2024 is a publication of the Vanier Institute of the Family that provides accurate and timely information on families and family life in Canada. Written in plain language, it features chapters on diverse topics and trends that have shaped families in Canada. Its four sections (Family Structure, Family Work, Family Identity, and Family Wellbeing) are guided by the [Family Diversities and Wellbeing Framework](#).

The Vanier Institute of the Family
94 Centrepoin Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K2G 6B1
info@vanierinstitute.ca
www.vanierinstitute.ca



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