

Family Matters: Sharing housework among couples in Canada: Who does what?

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Wednesday, February 19, 2020

When it comes to sharing household chores, women still do the majority of the laundry (61%) and meal preparation (56%), but men are also increasingly pulling their weight around the home.

Traditionally, paid work was the domain of men, and household work was done by women. Since the 1970s, however, women have increased their levels of education and more have paid jobs like men. This has considerably reduced the gender gap in labour force participation (decreasing from 32% in 1976 to 9% in 2017, according to the Labour Force Survey). This shift in the role of women in Canadian society can affect the distribution of household tasks between men and women in a couple relationship.

Nevertheless, data from the 2017 General Social Survey – Family on household organization and decision-making reveal that the distribution of household tasks remains gendered. This distribution varies by the labour force participation of the spouses or partners and by certain sociodemographic characteristics, such as type of union and age group.

Doing the dishes, grocery shopping and organizing the household's social life are most often shared equally among couples

In 2017, nearly two-thirds of persons aged 20 and older (17.8 million) were in a couple (married or common-law) and living in the same household as their opposite-sex spouse or partner. For half of them, tasks such as doing the dishes, grocery shopping and organizing the household's social life were shared equally between men and women.

While laundry (61%) and meal preparation (56%) were most often done by women, men looked after outdoor work and repairs (78%).

The distribution of some household tasks varies by labour force participation of the spouses or partners

When both spouses or partners work (employed or self-employed), meal preparation is the task most likely to be shared. For example, more than one-third (38%) of persons in a couple relationship reported sharing meal preparation equally. However, when men were the sole earner, preparing meals was less likely to be shared, like some other tasks. When men were the only ones in a couple who had a job, laundry was mostly done by women, and men took care of household finances and paying bills most often.

Type of union and age group affect how some tasks are shared between men and women

Among persons aged 20 and older in a couple, one-quarter of women were more likely to look after the laundry, housework and preparing meals. Married women (27%) were more likely to take care of these tasks than women in a common-law relationship (19%).

For these same three tasks, 11% reported that these tasks were shared equally by men and women. However, persons aged 20 to 64 in a couple (12%) were twice as likely to share these three tasks as those aged 65 and older (6%).

Note to readers

The data cover persons aged 20 and older in Canada who were married or living common-law at the time of the 2017 General Social Survey (GSS) – Family. Respondents living in the same household with a spouse or partner of the opposite sex are considered. Given the nature of this analysis, which compares how household tasks are shared between genders, same-sex couples are not included in this study. According to the GSS, persons in same-sex couples represent 0.7% of the population in Canada.



Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 4501.

The infographic "[Family Matters: Splitting household tasks: Who does what?](#)" is now available as part of the series *Statistics Canada – Infographics (11-627-M)*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).