

Housework:

Most households engage in heated exchanges about housework. Teenagers are told to come downstairs to clean up the mess on the countertop after making a late-night toasted sandwich, husbands are asked to clean up the newspapers left lying around the sitting-room, small kids are repeatedly told to put away their toys before someone stands on something and breaks their neck. The list of examples could be endless. I am sure you have often sat down and tried to figure out how much housework you actually do in a given week.

Well, a recent study at the University of Michigan in the US examined the amount of housework being done by men and women in families. What the study showed was that having a husband creates an extra seven hours a week of housework for women! For men, the picture is very different: A wife saves men from about an hour of housework a week.

The findings are part of a detailed study of housework trends, based on time-diary data from the state-funded Study, at the Institute for Social Research (ISR).

It's a well-known pattern. There's still a significant reallocation of labour that occurs at marriage—men tend to work more outside the home, while women take on more of the household labour. Certainly there are all kinds of individual differences here, but in general, this is what happens after marriage. And the situation gets worse for women when they have children.

Overall, the amount of housework done by women has dropped considerably since 1976, while the amount of housework done by men has increased, according to the study. In 1976, women did an average of 26 hours of housework a week, compared with about 17 hours in 2005. Men did about six hours of housework a week in 1976, compared with about 13 hours in 2005.

Hours of housework per week:

Married women in 1976:	26
Married women in 2005:	17
Married men in 1976:	6
Married men in 2005:	13
Single women aged 20 – 40	12
Single men aged 20 – 40	12
Married women aged 60 – 80	21
Married women with 3+ Kids:	28
Married men with 3+ kids:	10

But when the researchers looked at just the last 10 years, comparing how much housework single men and women in their 20s did in 1996 with how much they did in 2005 if they stayed single versus if they got married, they found a slightly different

pattern. Both the men and the women who got married did more housework than those who stayed single, the analysis showed. Marriage is no longer a man's path to less housework!

For the study, researchers analyzed data from time diaries, considered the most accurate way to assess how people spend their time. They supplemented the analysis with data from questionnaires asking both men and women to recall how much time they spent on basic housework in an average week, including time spent cooking, cleaning and doing other basic work around the house. Excluded from these "core" housework hours were tasks like gardening, home repairs, or washing the car. The researchers also examined how age and the number of children, as well as marital status and age, influenced time spent doing housework.

Single women in their 20s and 30s did the least housework—about 12 hours a week on average, while married women in their 60s and 70s did the most—about 21 hours a week.

Men showed a somewhat different pattern. Older men did more housework than younger men, but single men did more in all age groups than married men. Married women with more than three kids did an average of about 28 hours of housework a week. Married men with more than three kids, by comparison, logged only about 10 hours of housework a week.

Why not do your own domestic research and cello-tape a time diary to the fridge and have all family members log their hours of housework and tasks completed! It should make interesting reading and late night discussions once completed. It might read something like this:

Working Mom:	20 hours
Working Dad:	10 hours
Stay at home Mom:	30 hours
(not including shopping, taxi-ing, etc.)	
Her husband:	6 hours
Teen:	2 hours
Child:	1 hour
Little child:	15 mins.