

## **Division of labour in the family and fertility intentions: Evidence from the Generations and Gender Survey-II**

Gender practices in paid market work and unpaid domestic work have changed markedly over time. In most industrialised countries there has been a move away from a male-breadwinner model towards various degrees of dual-earner models in which both women and men participate in the labour market. However, the changes in paid employment have been faster than the changes in the division of roles at home. In the literature, this uneven progress is sometimes described as the 'stalled revolution' (England 2010). It is assumed to have consequences regarding fertility. According to McDonald (2000; 2013), very low levels of fertility in certain countries stem from a mismatch between the relatively high level of gender equity in individual-oriented institutions (the educational system and the labour market) and the low level of gender equality in the family.

A similar account of the changes in women's and men's roles and their relationship with family dynamics and fertility is given by Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappegård (2015) in the gender revolution theory. The GRT envisions a developmental process which at the first stage leads to an expansion of opportunities for women in the public sphere and an increased opportunity cost of childbearing. During the second stage, an increased involvement of men in the family is expected to reduce the double burden of women and contribute to recovery of fertility rates. Similar arguments about a U-shaped relationship between gender equality and fertility have also been expressed by Esping-Andersen and Billari (2015).

Although the importance of changes in the division of labour in the family is widely accepted, empirical findings on the relationship between division of roles in the family and fertility are not unequivocal. The results vary considerably depending on which indicators of gender equality are used, which parity transition is examined, whether women or men are studied, and which countries are included in the analysis (Neyer, Lappegård, and Vignoli 2013). Furthermore, housework and child care are often investigated separately but studies that have compared the two have arrived at different conclusions regarding the tasks which division is more closely linked to fertility (Cooke 2004; Schober 2013; Dommermuth, Hohmann-Marriott, and Lappegård 2017).

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the sharing of housework and childcare is related to fertility intentions, drawing on the newly available comparative data collected in the second round of the Gender and Generations Survey. We use data from nine countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region: Belarus, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Norway, and Sweden. Although the GGS-II data do not yet cover all regions of Europe, the countries included in this study represent a broad range of situations regarding the division of housework and childcare in the family between men and women, from the forerunners of the changes in gender roles in Northern Europe to countries that are at earlier stages of this process.

Our study population comprises women and men currently in co-residential heterosexual partnerships at the time of the survey. The analytical sample is limited to couples where women are aged 18–42, excluding couples where partners are not able to conceive.

The dependent variable is short-term fertility intentions. It is a binary variable coded 1 if the respondent definitely or probably expects a child within the three years after the survey. We have two main explanatory variables, focusing on the division of housework and childcare tasks, respectively. Both explanatory variables are constructed as summed indices, based on multi-item questions on the division of housework tasks (preparing daily meals, vacuum cleaning the house, doing the laundry, doing small repairs in and around the house, paying the bills and keeping financial records, organising joint social activities) and childcare tasks (dressing the children and seeing that children are properly dressed, staying at home with children when they are ill, playing with children and/or taking part in leisure activities with them, putting the children to the bed, helping children with homework).

Before constructing the indices, the scales of the housework and childcare questions were transformed to directly reflect the gender division of tasks in the family. The transformed scales show whether each task is performed always by woman, mainly by woman, shared equally between partners, mainly by man, or always by man. Situations where someone else performs housework or childcare tasks are considered as equal division. The score of the housework index ranges from 6 to 30. Score 5 of the index means that woman does all the tasks while value 30 means that man does it all. The score of the childcare index ranges from 5 to 25, respectively. Additional transformations were required for some countries in which the questionnaire items were not fully compliant with the GGS-II standard.

Given the moderate size of analytical samples for individual countries, particularly when analysed separately by gender and parity, we combined countries into three groups: Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden), Central- and Eastern European EU countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia), and the Commonwealth of Independent States countries (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova). Table 1 shows the division of household labour in these three country groups. The equal division of housework appears most common in Nordic countries and least common in CIS countries, while the CEE countries fall between the two groups. Regarding childcare, the CIS and CEE countries exhibit a fairly similar pattern, with less than 30% of couples practicing equal division. By contrast, in Nordic countries almost half of the couples report equal division.

**Table 1.** Division of housework and childcare tasks among couples, GGS-II countries

	Household tasks (%)			Childcare tasks (%)		
	Nordic	CEE	CIS	Nordic	CEE	CIS
Woman doing more	32.7	41.0	69.0	45.5	70.2	72.0
Equal division	54.5	44.6	25.0	45.2	28.3	25.9
Man doing more	12.8	14.4	6.0	9.3	1.5	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of observations	11216	5754	9115	4515	7269	3764

Source: GGS-II, authors calculations

To examine the relationship between the division of labour in the family and fertility intentions, we fitted a series of logistic regression models, with outcome and explanatory variables discussed above. In the models, we used a categorical specification of the main explanatory variables that distinguishes three situations: woman does more housework/childcare (the reference category), housework/childcare is divided about equally

between the partners, and man does more housework/childcare. The models were fitted separately by three country groups, gender, and parity (in addition, we estimated the model for all parities 1+ combined). All models included controls woman's age group, age difference between partners, type of partnership, woman's and man's education, woman's and man's activity status, and the age of the youngest child. Summary of the modelling results is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Odds ratios for the intention of having a(nother) child in the next three years by division of household and childcare tasks, sex, and parity, GGS-II countries

	Women			Men		
	Nordic	CEE	CIS	Nordic	CEE	CIS
<b>Parity 0</b>						
Equal division of housework	1.09	0.84	0.79	1.05	0.67	0.84
Man doing more housework	1.12	0.51***	1.41	1.17	0.66	0.91
<b>Parity 1</b>						
Equal division of housework	0.99	1.41*	0.76*	1.11	0.87	0.77
Man doing more housework	1.54	0.88	1.12	1.15	1.07	0.79
Equal division of childcare	1.05	0.93	1.56***	1.15	0.80	0.79
Man doing more childcare	1.85	0.26	0.56	0.86	0.71	0.82
<b>Parity 2</b>						
Equal division of housework	1.28	1.18	0.73*	0.74	1.09	0.57**
Man doing more housework	0.99	0.74	0.61	0.58	1.15	0.59**
Equal division of childcare	0.94	1.53*	1.14	0.75	1.27	1.20
Man doing more childcare	0.68	0.79	1.39	1.04	4.59**	1.34
<b>Parity 3+</b>						
Equal division of housework	0.74	0.99	0.58**	0.54	1.83	0.86
Man doing more housework	0.77	...	0.37	0.85	2.49	0.32***
Equal division of childcare	0.52	1.15	0.79	0.60	0.76	0.56***
Man doing more childcare	1.46	...	0.66	1.79	...	1.42
<b>Parities 1,2, and 3+ combined</b>						
Equal division of housework	1.26**	1.29**	0.77**	1.30	1.21	0.72***
Man doing more housework	1.44*	1.02	0.86	1.28	1.54**	0.65***
Equal division of childcare	0.91	1.05	1.14	0.79	0.79	0.88
Man doing more childcare	1.33	0.46	0.90	0.86	1.37	1.13

Note: \* p<.10, \*\* p<.05, \*\*\* p<.01; the reference categories (woman doing more housework; woman doing more childcare) are not shown in the table

Source: GGS-II, authors calculations

The results suggest that the association between the division of housework and childcare tasks and fertility intentions is not very pronounced. Overall, despite the fact that we fitted models for country groups rather than individual countries, 12 out of 84 odds ratios (14%) reach the statistical significance (p<.10). Furthermore, only one third of the significant effects observed for parities 0,1,2, and 3+ follow the prediction of the GRT that men's greater involvement in the family is associated with higher fertility.

The focus of our study is related to country group differences. Somewhat unexpectedly, in the parity-specific models we do not find any significant effect of men's equal or greater involvement in housework and childcare on fertility intentions in Nordic countries. The results obtained from parity-specific models show the greatest agreement with the theory of the gender revolution in the CEE countries, with significant effects mostly showing a

positive association between gender-egalitarian division of domestic responsibilities and fertility intentions. By contrast, in the CIS countries, we find mostly an opposite pattern with men's equal or greater involvement in the family associated with prevalingly negative effects on fertility intentions.

The differences between our groups of countries become more distinct when we analyse couples with children at different parity together, thus alleviating the limitations of sample size. The results shown in the last section of Table 2 indicate a positive association between men's equal or greater involvement in the Nordic countries and the CEE countries while a negative association prevails in the CIS countries. This finding suggests that the effect of men's involvement in the family depends on a wider societal context. In settings where the norms favour a more traditional division of roles in the family, the association between men's involvement may differ from the pattern that is expected in the second stage of the gender revolution.

Our study also provides insight into variation in the relationship between the division of responsibilities in the family and fertility intentions by gender of the respondent, parity, and type of tasks.

Cooke, L. P. (2004). The gendered division of labor and family outcomes in Germany. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(5): 1246–1259.

Dommermuth, L., Hohmann-Marriott, B., and Lappegård, T. (2017). Gender equality in the family and childbearing. *Journal of Family Issues* 38(13): 1803–1824.

England, P. (2010). The gender revolution: Uneven and stalled. *Gender and Society* 24(2): 149–166.

Esping-Andersen, G. and Billari, F. C. (2015). Re-theorizing family demographics. *Population and Development Review* 41(1): 1–31.

Goldscheider, F., Bernhardt, E., and Lappegård, T. (2015). The gender revolution: A framework for understanding changing family and demographic behaviour. *Population and Development Review* 41(2): 207–239.

McDonald, P. (2000). Gender equity, social institutions, and the future of fertility. *Journal of Population Research* 17: 1–16.

McDonald, P. (2013). Societal foundations for explaining low fertility: Gender equity. *Demographic Research* 28: 981–994.

Schober, P. S. (2013). Gender equality and outsourcing of domestic work, childbearing, and relationship stability among British couples. *Journal of Family Issues* 34(1): 25–52.