

**Divisió del treball domèstic al llarg del curs de vida  
Anàlisi socioeconòmica i regional de les diferències  
de dedicació entre dones i homes**

**Mireia Almirall Llambrich**

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**Tesi doctoral**

***Programa de Doctorat en Demografia***

## **Divisió del treball domèstic al llarg del curs de vida**

Anàlisi socioeconòmica i regional de les diferències de dedicació entre dones i homes

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## Prefaci

El debat sobre la divisió sexual del treball té una llarga trajectòria. Des dels anys setanta, l'opressió de les dones ha estat al centre de les discussions feministes i han evolucionat a mesura que es guanyaven drets, des de la regulació de l'avortament o el divorci fins a les lleis d'igualtat més recents. Això no obstant, aquells primers interrogants sobre la divisió de les esferes productiva i reproductiva i sobre la subordinació de les dones a la llar encara continuen oberts. A les dècades dels vuitanta i noranta es parlava de la 'incorporació' de les dones a l'esfera pública, tot i que convé remarcar que les dones sempre han treballat per un salari, encara que sovint no fossin reconegudes com a assalariades en els registres oficials. Aquest procés semblava que havia d'anar acompanyat de la incorporació dels homes a l'esfera privada, però no ha estat del tot així: la dedicació masculina al treball domèstic, certament, ha anat creixent, però la realitat és que garantir el benestar d'una llar implica una tasca invisible, constant i exigent que acompanya les dones al llarg de totes les etapes del curs de vida.

Quan, fa poc menys de tres anys, en Pau Miret i en Joan García em van proposar iniciar aquest doctorat, em preguntava què podia aportar jo que no haguessin aportat ja tantes acadèmiques a qui admirava i que havien dedicat dècades a qüestionar i analitzar els engranatges d'aquesta opressió. Però la realitat és que la desigualtat en la divisió del treball domèstic continua sent persistent i *només* per això ja segueix sent rellevant parlar de la divisió del treball, actualitzar les dades, aportar noves perspectives i entendre per què les dones continuem assumint una doble jornada laboral. Tot i això, els esforços de moltes investigadores han estat decisius per avançar en el coneixement d'aquest camp, també des de la demografia. Ara bé, les dades disponibles continuen sent limitades: el registre sistemàtic dels usos del temps i de la divisió de tasques dins la llar és relativament recent, les mostres acostumen a ser reduïdes i les dades longitudinals encara són escasses. Tot plegat dificulta analitzar amb profunditat els canvis en la divisió del treball domèstic al llarg del curs de vida.

És des d'aquest context que el meu interès s'ha centrat a abordar el treball domèstic des de la perspectiva del curs de vida i de la persistència i la transformació de les desigualtats de gènere en el treball domèstic no remunerat, amb una pregunta central: com és que les dones encara efectuen més treball domèstic que els homes? Les possibles respostes les volia buscar en els factors socioeconòmics, com la participació al mercat laboral, el nivell educatiu o els ingressos, en els tipus de tasques que assumeixen uns i altres, en les diferents transicions vitals, en els contextos culturals i institucionals i en les percepcions subjectives de justícia i equitat. Per explorar aquests interrogants, vaig estructurar la tesi en tres articles complementaris, en els que es fan servir diferents bases de dades i metodologies quantitatives i qualitatives.

El primer article fa servir dades d'ús del temps de l'enquesta SHARE per explorar els patrons de treball domèstic no remunerat entre la població gran en divuit països europeus, destacant diferències regionals, socioeconòmiques i de gènere. El segon, de caràcter qualitatiu i longitudinal, analitza les narratives de dones i homes joves de Barcelona i Madrid sobre els canvis i continuïtats en la divisió de les tasques visibles i invisibles al llarg de set anys. El tercer compara la satisfacció amb la divisió del treball domèstic a Espanya i Suècia, posant de relleu el paper de les normes culturals, els marcs institucionals i les expectatives de gènere en la configuració de les percepcions d'(in)justícia.

Els resultats apunten a un escenari de canvis parcials i persistències estructurals. Tot i un increment de la implicació masculina, les dones continuen assumint una càrrega domèstica més gran, especialment la invisible, de caràcter cognitiu i emocional. Aquestes desigualtats no només persisteixen a la vellesa, sinó que també es reconfiguren entre generacions, amb variacions segons els recursos socioeconòmics i els règims de benestar. Les interpretacions subjectives també són rellevants: molts homes perceben la divisió com a més equitativa del que és en realitat i moltes dones normalitzen els desequilibris apel·lant a estàndards més exigents o evitant el conflicte. La satisfacció amb divisions desiguals varia segons el país, el gènere i l'edat: les dones en contextos més igualitaris hi mostren un rebuig més gran i la dels homes, especialment a Espanya, es manté relativament estable independentment del repartiment.

Amb una mirada que combina nivells d'anàlisi macro i micro i que incorpora tant les dimensions visibles com les invisibles del treball domèstic, aquesta tesi vol contribuir a entendre com les desigualtats de gènere a la llar es produeixen, es reproduïxen i es negocien al llarg del curs de vida i en diferents contextos institucionals. Els resultats posen de manifest la necessitat d'impulsar polítiques públiques i transformacions culturals que fomentin la coresponsabilitat, així com de reconèixer la diversitat de trajectòries familiars i laborals per avançar cap a societats més igualitàries.

Finalment, aquesta recerca s'ha desenvolupat en el marc del programa de doctorat en Demografia del Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics, de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, que forma part de la xarxa de centres CERCA. El projecte es va iniciar a finals de 2022 i ha comptat amb l'ajuda econòmica dels projectes I+D "Tiempo de trabajo en el empleo y en el hogar: desestandarización y convergencia de género (TEMPHO- PID2020-118770RB-I00)", "Patrones educativos y trayectorias de actividad laboral y empleo del tiempo de la población 50-59. (PETRA-PID2023-148209OB-I00), del programa Ramón y Cajal (RYC2018-024808-I) i del grup de recerca "Demografia y Familias (DEMFAMS-2021 SGR 01241), així com amb el suport dels Amics del País, que va permetre l'estada de recerca a la Universitat d'Estocolm.

# Agraïments

La tesi va començar l'any 2022 al Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics (CED) i, al llarg d'aquests tres anys, només puc donar les gràcies a tothom que m'ha fet costat en qualsevol moment. Moltes gràcies per formar part d'aquest viatge, per animar-me i recolzar-me.

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# 1. Introducció

Tot i els avenços en igualtat de gènere en l'esfera pública, especialment pel que fa a l'increment de la participació de les dones al mercat laboral i a l'educació superior, les desigualtats en l'àmbit domèstic persisteixen. El treball domèstic no remunerat, entenent-lo tant en la seva dimensió visible, amb tasques com netejar, cuinar o anar a comprar, com en l'invisible, amb funcions de planificació, gestió emocional o càrrega mental, continua sent assumit majoritàriament per les dones, i això té implicacions profundes en termes de benestar, temps disponible, autonomia econòmica i equitat de gènere. Per això, la divisió del treball domèstic entre parelles heterosexuales s'ha fet servir àmpliament com a indicador d'igualtat de gènere.

El treball domèstic varia al llarg del curs de vida, tant en la distribució entre gèneres com en el volum de tasques total. Aquests canvis s'associen a esdeveniments com la formació de la parella, molt particularment l'arribada dels fills, la cura de gent gran, de la parella o d'altres dependents o les transformacions en la participació al mercat laboral, inclosa la jubilació a l'edat adulta. Ara bé, l'abast i la configuració d'aquests canvis varien en funció dels marcs institucionals i de les expectatives de gènere de cada context regional. Aquesta tesi doctoral té com a objectiu aprofundir en la comprensió d'aquest fenomen en diferents etapes del curs de vida, des d'una perspectiva demogràfica i sociològica, a través de tres estudis complementaris que analitzen el treball domèstic des de diverses dimensions i contextos internacionals. El cicle de vida, doncs, constitueix el fil conductor de la recerca, ja que permet entendre com les desigualtats de gènere en el treball domèstic es transformen (o persisteixen) en diferents moments i situacions, amb els marcs institucionals i les normes de gènere com a dimensions transversals de l'anàlisi.<sup>1</sup>

Els tres articles que conformen aquesta tesi aborden la desigualtat de gènere en el treball domèstic des de perspectives diferents però connectades. El primer estudia, a través de l'anàlisi de conglomerats, el patró de temps dedicat al treball domèstic no remunerat entre la població adulta major en divuit països europeus, posant el focus tant en les diferències regionals com en les socioeconòmiques. El segon, de caràcter qualitatiu i longitudinal, explora les narratives de dones i homes joves a Barcelona i Madrid sobre els canvis o la persistència en la divisió de les tasques

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<sup>1</sup> En aquesta tesi doctoral ens referim a la divisió del treball domèstic com a igualitària, equitativa o termes similars quan ambdós membres de la parella contribueixen de manera similar o l'home en fa més, i com a no igualitària, desequilibrada, desajustada o similars quan la dona assumeix la major part de les tasques. En alguns treballs anteriors aquesta distinció s'ha descrit com a 'tradicional' i 'no tradicional', però preferim evitar aquests termes pel seu caràcter normatiu, poc precís i per la variabilitat contextual (Altintas i Sullivan, 2016; Hook, 2010).

domèstiques visibles i invisibles en set anys de diferència. Finalment, el tercer article compara la satisfacció amb la divisió de les tasques domèstiques entre població en edat de participar al mercat laboral a Espanya i Suècia, destacant el paper del context cultural i institucional en les percepcions d’(in)justícia. Aquest conjunt d’estudis permet construir una mirada integrada que combina diferents metodologies, escales d’anàlisi i moments del curs de vida per aprofundir en la complexitat de la desigualtat de gènere en l’àmbit domèstic.

Aquesta introducció té com a propòsit establir el marc teòric comú dels tres articles, exposar les principals aproximacions conceptuals sobre el treball domèstic no remunerat, revisar les teories explicatives de la divisió desigual i situar la contribució de la tesi en el context de les investigacions actuals sobre gènere, famílies i organització social del treball al llarg del curs de vida. A més, presenta els objectius generals de la recerca, les preguntes transversals que la vertebrin i la manera com els diferents estudis s’articulen per oferir una visió completa i matisada del fenomen estudiat.

### 1.1. El treball domèstic i la desigualtat de gènere: una revolució estancada?

En les darreres dècades, les transformacions en les relacions de gènere han estat objecte d’intens debat acadèmic i polític. La creixent participació massiva de les dones al mercat laboral i a l’educació superior s’ha llegit sovint com una de les grans revolucions socials del segle XX<sup>2</sup>. Tanmateix, quan mirem què passa a l’esfera privada, els canvis resulten menys clars i emergeixen tensions i contradiccions que conviden a matisar aquest relat de progrés (Altintas i Sullivan, 2016; Bianchi et al., 2012; Goldscheider et al., 2015; Lachance-Grzela i Bouchard, 2010; Perry-Jenkins i Gerstel, 2020). Aquesta asimetria ha estat interpretada com el resultat d’una ‘revolució incompleta’ o ‘estancada’ — de l’anglès, *stalled revolution* o *incomplete revolution*— (England, 2010; Esping-Andersen, 2009; Kan et al., 2022).

Les dades confirmen que, tot i un increment de la participació masculina en el treball domèstic, la divisió sexual del treball segueix estant altament especialitzada (Altintas i Sullivan, 2016; Bianchi et al., 2012; Hook, 2010)<sup>3</sup>. Les dones assumeixen sobretot les tasques rutinàries, quotidianes i menys valorades socialment, mentre que els homes tendeixen a concentrar-se en activitats més esporàdiques

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<sup>2</sup> El concepte de ‘revolució de gènere’ es fa servir sobretot a la demografia i sociologia per descriure els grans canvis en les relacions de gènere, especialment la creixent incorporació de les dones a l’educació superior i al mercat laboral, així com les transformacions familiars i de fecunditat.

<sup>3</sup> En aquesta tesi utilitzem el concepte de divisió sexual del treball en el sentit clàssic de la teoria feminista (Delphy, 1978; Federici, 2010; Carrasco et al., 2011), tot remarquant que es refereix a una organització social i cultural de les tasques i no a una diferència biològica. En alguns apartats també farem servir l’expressió divisió del treball per gènere, més habitual en la literatura sociològica actual, com a equivalent.

o percebudes com a més agradables (Craig i Brown, 2017; García-Román i Ophir, 2024; Hook, 2010; Milkie et al., 2025; Treas, 2008). Aquesta especialització es tradueix en una distribució desigual de la ‘càrrega total de treball’, que recau majoritàriament sobre les dones, especialment quan han de combinar ocupació remunerada i responsabilitats domèstiques i de cura. Una situació que Hochschild i Machung (1989) van conceptualitzar com a ‘doble jornada’.

La convergència de gènere en el treball domèstic no remunerat, per tant, és molt lenta i desigual segons contextos (Altintas i Sullivan, 2016; Kan et al., 2022; Milkie et al., 2025). Aquesta convergència s’explica principalment per la reducció del temps que les dones hi dediquen, sovint a través de l’externalització de tasques i, en menor mesura, per un increment substancial de la implicació masculina (Brines, 1994; Pailhé et al., 2021; Torns, 2005). També hi contribueixen els avenços tecnològics, com l’expansió d’electrodomèstics i serveis digitals, i una rebaixa dels estàndards de neteja que han reduït el temps necessari per a moltes tasques domèstiques (Bianchi et al., 2012; Sayer, 2010; Thébaud et al., 2021; Van Der Lippe et al., 2004). Alhora, s’observen diferències entre països i entre generacions, que reflecteixen tant el pes de les institucions de benestar i del mercat laboral com la persistència de normes culturals diferenciades (Crompton, 1999; Mandel i Lazarus, 2021; Neilson i Stanfors, 2009).

En paral·lel, han guanyat visibilitat a xarxes socials que promouen un retorn a rols domèstics centrats en la llar, la criança i l’atenció a la parella. Tot i minoritaris, el seu ressò, especialment entre públic jove, reactiva imaginari d’especialització per gènere i els presenta com a opcions ‘autèntiques’ (Sykes, 2024). Aquesta tendència posa de manifest la fragilitat dels avenços feministes i la coexistència de discursos contradictoris sobre els rols de gènere (Proctor, 2022).

En definitiva, el treball domèstic no remunerat continua sent atribuït a les dones i distribuït de manera desigual, fins i tot en contextos on elles participen plenament al mercat laboral i tenen nivells educatius elevats. A escala global, elles n’assumeixen prop del triple que els homes (ONU, 2019; UN Women, 2024) i, a Europa, les anàlisis comparatives mostren que les dones hi dediquen entre una vegada i mitja i el doble del temps dels homes, amb desigualtats especialment marcades al sud d’Europa (Altintas i Sullivan, 2016; Hook, 2010; Kan et al., 2011). Aquesta persistència reforça la idea d’una ‘revolució estancada’, en què els avenços en l’esfera pública conviuen amb una divisió privada encara fortament marcada pel gènere (Hochschild i Machung, 1989; Goldscheider et al., 2015). Analitzar-lo, per tant, requereix anar més enllà del recompte de temps i tasques: cal entendre’l com una relació social determinada per normes de gènere i expectatives culturals (England, 2010; Folbre,

1994). Les seccions següents aprofundeixen en aquesta qüestió, primer diferenciant entre treball visible i invisible i després examinant com la seva distribució evoluciona al llarg del curs de vida.

### 1.1.1. Consideració del concepte: El treball visible i el treball invisible

El treball domèstic fa referència al conjunt de tasques diàries i repetitives necessàries per garantir el funcionament de la llar i el benestar de les persones que hi viuen. Dins del treball domèstic, la literatura distingeix entre les tasques que són visibles i les invisibles. El treball visible correspon a les tasques físiques i tangibles, com cuinar, rentar la roba, fregar o comprar aliments i articles per la llar, més fàcilment identificables i mesurables en temps i esforç (Coltrane, 2000; Durán, 2012; Oakley, 2018). Alhora s'ha identificat una certa especialització dels rols de gènere, ja que les dones generalment s'ocupen de les tasques més rutinàries i desagradables i els homes s'especialitzen en les més esporàdiques i creatives, com ara les tasques de manteniment (Bianchi et al., 2012; Coltrane, 2000; Moreno-Colom et al., 2018).

L'especialització encara s'accentua més quan es consideren les dimensions intangibles. El concepte de treball invisible, introduït per Hochschild i Machung (1989) amb l'etiqueta de 'càrrega mental' (de l'anglès *mental load*), engloba el conjunt de responsabilitats cognitives i emocionals que assegurin la gestió global de la vida familiar. No només comprenen la planificació, el seguiment de rutines i la gestió logística de la llar, sinó també formes més subtils de treball mental, com anticipar necessitats, identificar solucions, controlar la finalització de les tasques, fer recordatoris i definir els estàndards segons els quals s'han de dur a terme les tasques (Damingier, 2019; Dean et al., 2022; Hochschild i Machung, 1989; Wayne et al., 2023). A diferència del treball perceptible, aquesta 'càrrega familiar invisible' —tal com l'han anomenat Wayne et al. (2023) i com ho farem al llarg d'aquesta tesi doctoral— és omnipresent, persistent i transcendeix el temps i l'espai, fent-la difícil de delegar o externalitzar (Dean et al., 2022; Offer, 2014; Treas, 2008). A més, sovint implica compaginar múltiples responsabilitats de manera simultània (Carrasco et al., 2011; Craig i Brown, 2017; Wayne et al., 2023). Aquest conjunt de característiques fa que estigui fortament feminitzat i genera una bretxa de gènere encara més marcada que en les tasques clarament manifestes (Aviv et al., 2024; Barigozzi et al., 2025). Cal afegir-hi, a més, que la seva naturalesa intangible i sovint simultània fa que sigui especialment difícil de mesurar amb instruments com els diaris de temps, que tendeixen a infraregistrar aquest tipus d'activitats (Bianchi et al., 2012; Sullivan, 2013).

Considerar el treball invisible és especialment rellevant perquè, tot i ser indispensable pel sosteniment de la vida quotidiana, generalment queda amagat i infravalorat (Barigozzi et al., 2025; Fraser, 1997; Wayne et al., 2023). Els seus efectes es manifesten tant en l'àmbit individual, estrès,

esgotament emocional, menor satisfacció en la relació de parella (Aviv et al., 2024; Offer, 2014), com en l'àmbit col·lectiu, afectant la igualtat d'oportunitats laborals, la qualitat de vida i fins i tot la fecunditat (Carrasco et al., 2011; Craig i Brown, 2017).

Cal assenyalar que, encara que el treball domèstic es realitza principalment sense remuneració, una part s'ha mercantilitzat a través de l'externalització de les tasques (Gonalons-Pons, 2015). Aquestes feines solen estar mal pagades, amb condicions laborals precàries i sovint dins de l'economia submergida (Carrasco et al., 2011; Torns, 2005). La seva comercialització no només manté les desigualtats de gènere associades a la feminització del treball domèstic, sinó que també reproduïx jerarquies de classe i ètnia, atès que una gran part d'aquestes tasques recauen en dones migrades i/o racialitzades en posicions vulnerables (Benería, 2021; Davis, 1981; Federici, 1975; Mezzadri et al., 2021; Vidal-Coso i Miret-Gamundi, 2014). En conseqüència, la mercantilització pot alleugerir la càrrega directa d'algunes dones, però sovint implica transferir-la a d'altres, perpetuant desigualtats estructurals. En aquesta tesi doctoral ens centrem en el treball domèstic no remunerat ja que respon a l'objectiu analític establert d'examinar els processos de negociació i corresponsabilitat dins de les parelles heterosexuales, i per una qüestió de mesura i comparabilitat, ja que les principals fonts capten amb més precisió el temps dedicat a les responsabilitats no remunerades. Això no implica desatendre el treball domèstic remunerat: el considerem com a externalització i en fem referència quan escau.

En aquest punt, es important mencionar la separació entre el treball domèstic i el de cures no remunerades que, agrupats sota el paraigües del treball reproductiu, s'ha subratllat la importància de distingir-los (Domínguez-Folgueras, 2022; Milkie et al., 2025; Sullivan, 2013). Les activitats de cura, especialment la dels fills, tenen característiques pròpies: molts progenitors, en particular els masculins, perceben part d'aquestes tasques com a gratificants i fins i tot properes a l'oci, més que no pas com una obligació rutinària (Craig i Brown, 2017; Sayer et al., 2004). Tot i això, la percepció de la cura continua marcada pel gènere, ja que les dones hi dediquen més temps i hi assumeixen més responsabilitats (Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010). En aquesta tesi, seguim la tendència majoritària de la literatura de tractar de manera diferenciada la cura dels fills i/o d'altres persones dependents i el treball domèstic, i ens centrem únicament en el treball domèstic no remunerat sense oblidar, però, que ambdós àmbits estan estretament interrelacionats (Coltrane i Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Domínguez-Folgueras, 2022; Milkie et al., 2025).

### 1.1.2. L'evolució del treball domèstic al llarg del curs de vida

La perspectiva del curs de vida permet entendre com la distribució i volum del treball domèstic no remunerat varien al llarg de les diferents etapes vitals (Anxo et al., 2011; García-Román i Gracia,

2022). Els canvis en la composició i l'organització de la llar, com la formació de parella, l'arribada de fills, l'emancipació, la jubilació o la viduitat, actuen com a punts d'inflexió que poden reforçar o reduir les desigualtats de gènere (Baxter et al., 2008; Kluwer et al., 2002; Leopold i Skopek, 2015). La teoria del curs de vida posa l'accent en la interdependència de les trajectòries individuals i en la rellevància del context històric i institucional (Elder, 1994; Geist, 2005).

Diverses autores han adaptat aquest marc per analitzar la divisió del treball domèstic, mostrant que les biografies femenines tendeixen a ser més discontinües i fragmentades que les masculines (Anxo et al., 2011; Bühlmann et al., 2010; Horne et al., 2018). Acumulen més interrupcions i reajustos al llarg del curs de vida: reduccions o canvis de jornada, sortides i reentrades al mercat laboral o reassignacions de tasques i responsabilitats dins la llar associades a la formació de parella, la maternitat i episodis intensius de cura. En canvi, les trajectòries masculines acostumen a ser més lineals (Blanco i Pacheco, 2003; Cunningham, 2007; Leopold i Skopek, 2018; Nitsche, 2016). Aquesta dinàmica diferencial ajuda a entendre per què certes transicions, com la paternitat i la maternitat, acostumen a intensificar les bretxes de gènere.

En aquest context, la maternitat és la transició que més intensifica la bretxa de gènere en la divisió del treball domèstic, ja que esdevé fins i tot en parelles amb valors més igualitaris (Domínguez-Folgueras et al., 2018; García i Gracia, 2022; González i Jurado, 2015; Grunow et al., 2012; Schober, 2013). L'etapa de criança concentra una càrrega especialment intensa per a les dones i el temps dedicat al treball domèstic només es redueix de manera apreciable quan els fills s'emancipen, sobretot en el cas de les mares (Anxo et al., 2011; Buhlmann et al., 2010; Sánchez i Thomson, 1997). Entre els homes, el temps dedicat al treball domèstic tendeix a mantenir-se relativament estable durant bona part de la vida adulta i acostuma a augmentar a partir de la jubilació, principalment en tasques esporàdiques o menys rutinàries (Batalova i Cohen, 2002; Gauthier i Smeeding, 2003; Hank i Jürges, 2007; Leopold i Skopek, 2015, 2018), en particular quan viuen sols (García, 2025).

En la vellesa, l'aparent convergència de gènere en el treball domèstic respon sobretot a limitacions físiques de salut i a canvis en la composició de la llar, més que a una transformació cap a valors igualitaris (Gauthier i Smeeding, 2003; Healy, 1988; Leopold i Skopek, 2015, 2018; Kan et al., 2021). De fet, la disminució d'activitat és més acusada en els homes que viuen sols que en les dones en la mateixa situació i la bretxa de gènere tendeix a reduir-se a partir dels 75 anys, quan el volum total de treball domèstic disminueix per a ambdós sexes (Batalova i Cohen, 2002; Hank i Jürges, 2007). A més, la reducció de la bretxa es produeix a gairebé tots els contextos nacionals, amb magnituds diferenciades segons el marc institucional i normatiu (Hook, 2010; Horne et al., 2018; Kil et al., 2016).

Al llarg de totes aquestes etapes, factors com el nivell educatiu, la situació laboral, el nombre de fills o el suport institucional condicionen les pautes de repartiment (Carrasco i Domínguez, 2011; Horne et al., 2018; Kil et al., 2016; Leopold i Skopek, 2018; Van Der Lippe et al., 2004). Els canvis en la participació al mercat laboral i en la disponibilitat de temps continuen sent les justificacions més habituals per explicar les desigualtats domèstiques, especialment quan els homes hi participen menys (Anxo et al., 2011; Coltrane, 2000; Hochschild i Machung, 1989; Thompson, 1991). Tot i així, sovint aquestes justificacions acaben naturalitzant divisions més desequilibrades que tendeixen a perpetuar-se (Kan et al., 2022; Pailhé et al., 2021; Sullivan, 2013). Les estratègies per gestionar aquests canvis inclouen la renegociació de tasques, l'establiment d'acords explícits dins de la parella o l'externalització de part del treball domèstic, aspectes que s'abordaran amb més detall a l'apartat 1.4.2.

Finalment, cal considerar que les divisions del treball dins de la llar no són independents del context més ampli. Les crisis econòmiques o la pandèmia de la COVID-19 han mostrat que, en situacions de xoc extern, els ajustos tornen a recaure majoritàriament sobre les dones, posant de manifest la fragilitat dels avenços cap a una corresponsabilitat real (Del Boca et al., 2020; Rodríguez et al., 2021). Això indica que els progressos cap a la igualtat són fràgils i reversibles, d'aquí la importància de continuar-ne estudiant l'evolució des de la perspectiva del curs de vida i amb especial atenció als contextos institucionals.

En conjunt, la recerca mostra que el curs de vida és un eix fonamental per entendre la persistència i les formes de transformació, sovint desiguals i reversibles, de la divisió del treball domèstic segons el gènere. A més, considerant alhora el treball visible i l'invisible, configura un marc d'anàlisi essencial per comprendre la persistència de les desigualtats de gènere associades al treball domèstic no remunerat. Al llarg dels següents apartats, situarem els diferents punts d'anàlisi que enfoquen la temàtica d'interès a partir de la literatura disponible.

## 1.2. De la industrialització a l'actualitat: evolució històrica de la divisió del treball domèstic

Els estudis historiogràfics mostren que la divisió sexual del treball es va consolidar amb la urbanització i la industrialització del segle XIX, resultat de la interacció entre el nou capitalisme industrial i les estructures patriarcals preexistents (Abeledo, 2024; Borderías i Muñoz-Abeledo, 2024; Engels, 1972; Torns, 2008; Nash, 2000). Ara bé, diversos autors situen l'inici d'aquesta transformació en etapes anteriors, vinculats a la transició al capitalisme, amb la privatització de terres comunals i la reorganització del treball camperol (Federici, 2010; Scott, 2000). Aquest procés va comportar una reestructuració profunda de les activitats productives i reproductives, reforçant la idea que la producció

pertanyia a l'esfera pública, masculina, i la reproducció a la privada, femenina (Carrasco et al., 2011; Humphries i Rubery, 1984; Scott, 2000).

La industrialització va traslladar gran part de les activitats productives fora de la llar. Homes i dones van entrar massivament a les fàbriques, però amb una marcada segregació ocupacional: la classificació d'aquests llocs com a 'feina femenina' en permetia la devaluació i la reducció salarial (Benería, 2021; Berg, 1991; Borderías i Muñoz-Abeledo, 2024; Nash, 2000). Paral·lelament, es va alimentar el mite de la dona com a 'mestressa de casa', invisibilitzant la seva aportació econòmica i menystenint ocupacions com el servei domèstic remunerat, on la presència femenina era majoritària (Benería et al., 2018; Nash, 2000).

A inicis del segle XX, sota l'ideal de 'l'àngel de la llar', moltes dones, sobretot de classe mitjana, van deixar d'ocupar llocs industrials i van ser relegades a l'àmbit domèstic (Lewis, 1992; McDowell, 1991). D'aquesta manera, es va consolidar el model de l'home com el guanyador de pa —en anglès, *breadwinner*— i la dona com la mestressa de casa —en anglès, *housewife*—, que establia noves normes sobre qui aportava el salari principal i qui s'encarregava de la reproducció social (Borderías i Muñoz-Abeledo, 2024; Crompton, 1999; Lewis, 1992). A les societats industrials clàssiques, aquest model es traduïa en taxes oficials d'activitat femenina molt baixes i en una organització econòmica centrada en l'aportació salarial masculina (Berg, 1991; Crompton, 1999).

Aquest escenari però, no reflectia la realitat de les dones de classe treballadora, que van continuar assumint una doble jornada: feina remunerada fora de casa i tasques domèstiques imprescindibles a la llar (Borderías, 1993; Hochschild i Machung, 1989; Humphries i Rubery, 1984). Fins i tot al primer terç del segle XX, la majoria de llars obreres necessitaven els ingressos femenins (i sovint infantils) i altres estratègies com el treball a domicili, el servei domèstic o llogar habitacions, perquè l'ideal del 'salari familiar' masculí era més desig que realitat (Humphries i Sarasúa, 2012; Nicolau, 1990; Sarasúa, 1994, 2006). A Espanya, diverses investigacions han mostrat que la categoria censal '*sus labores*' —traduïda aquí com 'a la feina de casa'— invisibilitzava treballs remunerats o mercantils, de manera que moltes dones registrades així continuaven treballant en l'economia informal o a temps parcial (Borderías, 1993; Humphries i Sarasúa, 2012; Sarasúa, 2006).

A mitjans del segle XX, després de la Segona Guerra Mundial, moltes dones casades van començar a reincorporar-se de manera oficial al mercat laboral, especialment als països d'industrialització avançada; un procés que marca el pas d'un treball femení entès com a secundari i discontinu cap a trajectòries professionals i identitats laborals més estables (Benería, 2021; Goldin,

2006; McDowell, 1991). L'augment del nombre d'assalariats per unitat familiar va afavorir la difusió progressiva del model de parelles de doble ingrés, tot i que sense desplaçar el patró de desigualtat de gènere (Scott, 2000). Paral·lelament, la Segona Transició Demogràfica va modificar els patrons de formació familiar i la mida de les llars, en un procés vinculat als canvis culturals i institucionals (Bianchi et al., 2012). Durant el *baby-boom*, l'elevada fecunditat va intensificar la càrrega de treball domèstic i de cura (Benería et al., 2018; Bianchi et al., 2012).

En les darreres dècades, la diversificació de formes de convivència i la generalització de les parelles de doble ingrés han coexistit amb una convergència de gènere lenta i desigual en el treball domèstic. Les dades comparatives mostren reduccions del temps femení i augments del masculí, però persisteix la bretxa i una clara segregació de tasques (Altintas i Sullivan, 2016; Pailhé et al., 2021). A Europa, els estudis de temps evidencien la presència d'una 'masculinització' parcial en algunes activitats i, alhora, l'estabilitat de diferències en tasques considerades 'femenines' (García-Román i Gracia, 2022; Kan et al., 2011; Moreno-Colom, 2017). Malgrat la forta expansió de l'ocupació femenina, la flexibilitat i discontinuïtat del treball de les dones continuen operant com a mecanismes d'ajust domèstic (Ajenjo i García-Román, 2019; Lázaro et al., 2022; Miret, 2022; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010). En aquest context, la reducció del nombre de fills i l'augment de la diversitat de models de convivència, famílies monoparentals, parelles sense fills, llars reconstituïdes, han transformat les dinàmiques familiars, però sense eliminar la persistència de la divisió del treball (Crompton, 1999; Miret, 2022; Torns, 2008).

Per acabar, la divisió sexual del treball, tal com la coneixem, es consolida amb la industrialització: la separació entre producció i reproducció i la devaluació del treball domèstic esdevenen la norma. L'ideal de l'home com a principal sustentador i de la dona com a mestressa de casa s'imposa com a model hegemònic, tot i que la majoria de llars obreres continuen necessitant els ingressos femenins, i sovint infantils, i diverses estratègies complementàries per garantir la subsistència. Aquest model, amb variacions nacionals, es manté fins ben entrat el segle XXI i estableix el marc que condiciona els límits i ritmes dels avenços actuals en igualtat de gènere. A partir d'aquesta herència històrica s'han desenvolupat els principals marcs teòrics que expliquen la divisió actual del treball domèstic no remunerat, que revisem a continuació.

### 1.3. Teories explicatives de la divisió desigual del treball domèstic

La divisió del treball domèstic ha estat un dels terrenys més analitzats per comprendre com s'articulen les desigualtats de gènere dins de la vida quotidiana. Lluny de ser una qüestió merament privada,

constitueix un espai on s'intercepten factors econòmics, culturals i institucionals i on es posen de manifest les tensions entre l'esfera de la producció i la de la reproducció. Per això, diverses investigacions han subratllat la necessitat d'abordar la desigualtat domèstica considerant el gènere però alhora també la classe, la raça i la generació —una línia vinculada a la tercera onada feminista<sup>4</sup>—, amb dimensions tant materials com simbòliques (Benería et al., 2018; Bhopal, 2010; Carrasco et al., 2011; Fraser, 2017; Mezzadri et al., 2021; Torns et al., 2002).

La recerca sobre el treball domèstic ha estat enriquida a través de camps diversos. Mentre que l'economia n'ha intentat establir el valor, la sociologia ha mostrat com la distribució del temps domèstic familiar reflecteix desigualtats de gènere i disciplines com l'antropologia o la història han posat de relleu la seva trajectòria i el paper que juga en els processos de canvi social i econòmic (Borderías et al., 1994; Borderías, 2003). Alhora, la demografia l'ha quantificat i contextualitzat (mitjançant enquestes d'usos del temps i anàlisis de cicle de vida), mostrant com la distribució es reconfigura amb esdeveniments demogràfics com les unions, els naixements, les separacions, l'envelliment o les migracions) i amb les grans transicions poblacionals (Durán, 2012; Esping-Andersen i Billari, 2015; Goldscheider et al., 2015; Lesthaeghe, 2010; McDonald, 2000).

Els estudis mostren de manera consistent que la distribució de les tasques continua sent desigual, tot i l'expansió del model de doble ingrés (Altintas i Sullivan, 2016; Kan et al., 2022; Pailhé et al., 2021). Diverses investigacions apunten que les parelles amb dos ingressos tendeixen a organitzar-se de manera relativament més equitativa (Aassve et al., 2014; Altuzarra et al., 2020), ja que les dones amb una ocupació a temps complet redueixen la seva dedicació al treball domèstic en comparació amb aquelles que treballen menys hores o no treballen de manera remunerada (Bianchi et al., 2000; Gershuny, 2000). En el cas dels homes els efectes són menys consistents, encara que alguns estudis mostren que una menor dedicació al mercat laboral pot anar associada a una major implicació a la llar (Coltrane, 2000; Lachance-Grzela i Bouchard, 2010; Perry-Jenkins i Gerstel, 2020).

Per tant, els factors socioeconòmics adquireixen formes diferenciades segons el gènere: per a les dones, un major nivell educatiu i una millor posició sociolaboral tendeixen a reduir la seva càrrega domèstica (England, 2010; Goldscheider et al., 2015; Moreno-Colom et al., 2018; Nitsche i Grunow,

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<sup>4</sup> Les onades feministes, descrites molt breument, s'acostumen a dividir en quatre: la primera (finals del segle XIX – inicis del segle XX), centrada en els drets civils i el sufragi; la segona (1960–1980), en la igualtat legal, els drets sexuals i reproductius i la crítica a la separació entre les esferes productiva i reproductiva; la tercera (anys 1990), en la interseccionalitat, la crítica a l'essencialisme i la pluralitat de subjectes; i la quarta (des de la dècada del 2010), en el #MeToo, la lluita contra les violències masclistes, les cures i la inclusió LGBTIQ+.

2016; Torns et al., 2002), pels homes s'associa a una major implicació en les feines de la llar (Bianchi et al., 2000; Evertsson i Nermo, 2007; Kan et al., 2011; Nitsche i Grunow, 2016).

Aquest conjunt d'evidències, diverses i en alguns casos contradictòries, ha donat lloc a diferents marcs teòrics que busquen explicar les raons de la persistència de la divisió desigual del treball domèstic, des de les aproximacions neoclàssiques basades en la racionalitat econòmica fins a les perspectives feministes que posen l'accent en les relacions de poder i explotació.

### 1.3.1. La racionalització de la divisió: l'escola neoclàssica

Diverses aproximacions teòriques han buscat explicar les desigualtats de la divisió de tasques dins de la llar i el funcionament de la producció domèstica fent servir l'instrumental analític de l'economia neoclàssica. Des d'aquest enfocament, s'ha reivindicat situar el treball reproductiu al mateix nivell conceptual que el treball de mercat, tot i que a la pràctica continua sent menys valorat. Seguint aquests postulats, el temps es concep com un recurs limitat que cal distribuir entre diverses ocupacions: treball remunerat, treball domèstic, cura personal i oci (Becker, 1985). Aquesta classificació permet interpretar l'assignació predominant de les dones a l'esfera privada com el resultat de decisions basades en l'eficiència econòmica, les preferències, la qualificació i la productivitat de la mà d'obra.

A partir d'aquesta base, les desigualtats de gènere en la divisió del treball domèstic s'han explicat posant l'èmfasi en la maximització de la productivitat del conjunt de la unitat familiar. Així, el model de l'home com el guanyador del pa i la dona com la mestressa de casa es presenta com a una divisió 'racional' del treball, on cada membre es centra en l'àmbit en el qual és econòmicament més productiu (Lewis, 1992).

Diverses teories busquen explicar aquest supòsit. La teoria dels recursos relatius sosté que qui aporta més ingressos o recursos econòmics té més poder dins de la relació i, per tant, més capacitat de negociació per evitar les tasques domèstiques, habitualment menys valorades socialment (Becker, 1985; Brines, 1994). La teoria de la dependència econòmica planteja que qui depèn dels recursos financers de l'altre tendeix a assumir una major càrrega domèstica, com a mecanisme 'compensatori' de la desigualtat econòmica per part del membre més vulnerable i per mantenir l'equilibri dins de la relació (Aassve et al., 2014; Brines, 1994; Davis i Greenstein, 2004; Greenstein, 2000, 2009; Gupta, 2007; Lennon i Rosenfield, 1994). Finalment, una de les justificacions més habituals és la teoria de la disponibilitat de temps, que interpreta que la persona amb més hores lliures, és a dir, qui participa menys al mercat laboral, és qui realitza més feina a la llar (Baxter, Hewitt i Haynes, 2008; Coltrane, 2000; Davis i Greenstein, 2004; Shelton i John, 1996; Hook, 2006).

No obstant això, nombroses investigacions han mostrat arguments importants en contra d'aquests models. Per exemple, els homes amb més temps disponible haurien d'incrementar la seva implicació a la llar, i no ho fan en un percentatge significatiu (Álvarez i Miles-Touya, 2019; Bianchi et al., 2000; Coltrane, 2000; Nitsche i Grunow, 2016). O, pel que fa als recursos relatius, uns ingressos femenins superiors sovint no s'associen amb una reducció proporcional del treball domèstic ni amb un increment de la dedicació masculina (Altuzarra et al., 2020; Bittman et al., 2003; Brines, 1994; Gupta, 2007; García-Román, 2023; García-Román, 2021b; Milkie et al., 2025). Per tant, les explicacions basades exclusivament en els recursos econòmics o en la disponibilitat de temps es contradiuen en el fet que, en contextos on les dones igualen o superen els homes en educació o ingressos, elles continuen assumint la major part del treball domèstic no remunerat (Durán, 2012; England, 2010).

Aquesta persistència del treball domèstic no remunerat en mans de les dones ha incentivat a diverses autores a qüestionar els models neoclàssics. S'ha subratllat que el treball domèstic és un àmbit d'explotació i no una elecció racional (Borderías et al., 1994; Delphy, 1978; Federici, 1975) i que la família no pot entendre's com una unitat homogènia, ja que les normes de gènere i les relacions de poder són centrals per explicar la persistència de les desigualtats (Davis i Greenstein, 2013; Folbre, 1994; Lachance-Grzela i Bouchard, 2010; Oakley, 2018).

### 1.3.2. Explotació domèstica, capitalisme i patriarcat: el feminisme marxista

El feminisme marxista o socialista explica les desigualtats de la divisió de tasques dins de la llar integrant l'anàlisi estructural del capitalisme amb les relacions de poder patriarcal que tenen lloc a l'esfera domèstica, ja que les consideren una part fonamental de l'opressió històrica de les dones (Benería, 1999; Ferguson, 2019; Vogel, 1983). Segons aquesta perspectiva —ressorgida a la segona onada feminista—, el treball domèstic i de cures és imprescindible pel sistema capitalista, ja que assegura i abarateix la reproducció de la força de treball (Dalla Costa i James, 1972; Davis, 1981; Federici, 1975; Fraser, 2017). En assumir de manera no remunerada de la cura i del manteniment dels treballadors, les dones sostenen indirectament la creació de plusvàlua, ja que el cost de reproduir la força de treball es desplaça a les llars (Borderías et al., 1994; Fraser, 2017; Humphries i Rubery, 1984). Per aquest motiu s'ha definit el treball domèstic com un 'treball de segona classe' subordinat al mode de producció capitalista (Beechey, 1977; Borderías, 2003).

A més, la posició subordinada de les dones dins de la llar es replica al mercat laboral, on constitueixen una reserva de mà d'obra barata i flexible (Borderías i Muñoz-Abeledo, 2024). Aquesta disponibilitat flexible es construeix precisament a partir de la responsabilitat domèstica: concentra a les dones en jornades parcials, contractes temporals i ocupacions amb salaris baixos, reforçant la

segregació horitzontal i vertical. La doble funció, treballadores no remunerades a la llar i mà d'obra disponible al mercat, reforça així les estructures d'explotació capitalista (Beechey, 1977; Pérez Orozco, 2014).

Aquest enfocament va obrir, però, un intens debat sobre com articular els interessos de classe i els interessos feministes. El feminisme radical va aportar-hi una crítica clau: la subordinació de les dones no es pot explicar només en relació amb el capitalisme, ja que el patriarcat constitueix una estructura de poder autònoma, organitzada sobretot a través del treball domèstic (Benería, 1999; Scott, 2000). Des d'aquesta perspectiva, el treball domèstic és un mode de producció específic i independent (Borderías et al., 1994). Les aportacions de teòriques radicals com Millett (1970) i Delphy (1978) van ser crucials per conceptualitzar el patriarcat com un sistema de dominació amb la seva pròpia lògica de producció i reproducció, més enllà de les necessitats del capital. Al mateix temps, autores com Federici (1975), Dalla Costa i James (1972) van polititzar el treball domèstic i van mostrar que l'explotació de les dones en aquest àmbit és fonamental per sostenir tant el patriarcat com el capitalisme. Aquestes aportacions es van plasmar en la campanya internacional de 'Wages for Housework', traduït com a 'salari pel treball domèstic', una iniciativa que pretenia remunerar les dones dedicades a la llar, però que no va prosperar políticament<sup>5</sup>.

Tot i la seva potència analítica, aquesta visió va ser criticada per obviar la connexió entre patriarcat i capitalisme, plantejant-los gairebé com a sistemes separats. En aquest context, Vogel (1983) va oferir una alternativa dins del feminisme marxista, reformulant la teoria de la reproducció social per mostrar com el treball domèstic i de cures s'inscriu plenament en el mode de producció capitalista. A diferència de la proposta anterior, va defensar que les relacions de gènere operen dins de les relacions de classe i es reforcen a través de la reproducció de la força de treball.

El feminisme materialista va reprendre les aportacions, insistint en la necessitat d'analitzar el treball domèstic i de cures com a part de les relacions socials i de gènere, i no només com una conseqüència del capitalisme (Delphy, 1978; Ferguson, 2019; Torns, 2008). El desenvolupament recent del feminisme de la reproducció social (Bhattacharya, 2017; Ferguson, 2019) continua la línia de Vogel i situa el treball domèstic i de cures al centre de la crítica a l'economia política contemporània. Fraser (2017) interpreta la crisi de la reproducció social com l'efecte combinat de la mercantilització creixent

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<sup>5</sup> Aquesta campanya va ser qüestionada des de diversos fronts: es va argumentar que un 'salari pel treball domèstic' no alliberaria les dones, sinó que podria consolidar la seva subordinació dins de la llar (Davis, 1981) i que no abordaria el caràcter estructural del poder patriarcal (Delphy, 1978; Vogel, 1983), entre altres crítiques respecte a la generació de valor d'aquest treball des del punt de vista marxista.

de les cures i la retallada del suport públic, que desplaça la càrrega a les llars i intensifica la desigualtat de gènere.

En aquesta mateixa línia, el manifest *Feminism for the 99%* (Arruzza et al., 2019) —associat als debats de la quarta onada— ha popularitzat un marc feminista anticapitalista i interseccional que denuncia que la divisió sexual del treball domèstic no és un residu del passat, sinó una peça estructural del capitalisme neoliberal actual. Altres aportacions recents han reforçat aquesta mirada, mostrant que la divisió desigual del treball domèstic s’ha d’analitzar també en relació amb les migracions, les relacions Nord–Sud, la raça i les noves formes de precarietat, que desplacen la càrrega d’unes dones a unes altres (Arruzza, 2016; Mezzadri et al., 2021). Així mateix, s’ha destacat com les pràctiques comunitàries, com cuines comunals, bugaderies o llars d’infants públiques, poden funcionar com a espais de resistència i construcció d’alternatives, i no només com a àmbits d’explotació (Federici, 2010; Motta, 2013; Pérez Orozco, 2014).

Des d’aquest marc, la reproducció de la força de treball s’entén com un procés que articula de manera simultània la llar, el mercat, l’Estat i les xarxes globals de cures, generant una divisió del treball que és alhora de gènere, de classe i sovint racialitzada (Bhattacharya, 2017; Mezzadri et al., 2021). Així, per comprendre l’opressió de les dones a través del treball domèstic no remunerat cal analitzar com les relacions de gènere es configuren i es sostenen dins del sistema econòmic i institucional actual, i com interactuen amb la mercantilització de les cures i amb la seva redistribució desigual entre grups socials (Fraser, 2017; Pérez Orozco, 2014).

En conjunt, totes aquestes aportacions mostren que el treball domèstic només pot ser comprès si es considera el gènere com a eix central, en interacció amb altres desigualtats socials com la classe, la raça o la generació, i sempre inscrit en un context històric i institucional concret.

#### 1.4. ‘Fent gènere’: Actituds, comportaments i percepció vers la divisió del treball domèstic

Més enllà del recompte d’hores i tasques, el treball domèstic reflecteix expectatives socials i culturals sobre els rols de gènere. Des de la perspectiva del ‘fent gènere’ —originalment de l’anglès ‘*doing gender*’ (West i Zimmerman, 1987)—, la divisió de tasques de la llar és una pràctica mitjançant la qual es representen i reafirmen els rols de gènere, de manera que el treball domèstic esdevé tant una activitat com un mecanisme simbòlic de desigualtat (Ferree, 1990; Foster i Stratton, 2019; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010). Fer gènere constitueix, per tant, una expressió d’identitat quotidiana que acostuma a reproduir desigualtats, ja que fins i tot en parelles amb valors igualitaris es mantenen divisions en que la dona

assumeix una part més gran de les tasques (Butler, 1999; Daminger, 2019; Wiesmann et al., 2008). Aquestes dinàmiques estan profundament arrelades al context sociocultural i institucional més ampli (Anxo et al., 2011; Hu i Yucel, 2018; Pailhé et al., 2021).

Un exemple clàssic d'aquesta dinàmica és l'anomenat *gender display* (Brines, 1994) —que podríem traduir com a ‘mostra de gènere’—, que explica com les relacions econòmiques dins de la parella poden activar mecanismes compensatoris de gènere: les dones que aporten la major part dels ingressos poden incrementar el treball domèstic per ‘compensar’ una desviació respecte a les expectatives de gènere i evitar ser percebudes com a ‘atípiques’, mentre que alguns homes en situació de dependència econòmica redueixen la seva implicació domèstica per reafirmar la seva masculinitat (Greenstein, 2000; Hochschild i Machung, 1989). Així, la recerca posterior ha evidenciat que la relació entre ingressos i treball domèstic és complexa i depèn del context regional i de les normes de gènere (Aassve et al., 2014; Bittman et al., 2003). De fet, diversos estudis mostren que són sobretot els ingressos absoluts femenins, més que els relatius, els que permeten reduir el temps dedicat a les tasques, bé a través de l'externalització o bé mitjançant una redistribució interna, però que l'efecte està fortament condicionat per les actituds de gènere predominants en cada context social (Álvarez i Miles-Touya, 2019; Gupta, 2007; Magda et al., 2024; Mandel i Lazarus, 2021).

En la quotidianitat, el ‘fent gènere’ es tradueix en mecanismes com el *gatekeeping* —que podem traduir com a ‘guardiana’— (Allen i Hawkins, 1999), en el qual moltes dones exerceixen un paper de supervisió i control de les tasques domèstiques. Els homes, per la seva banda, adopten habitualment rols més selectius o d’‘aprenents’ (Blain, 1994; Brumley i St. George, 2023; Moreno-Colom et al., 2024), que els permeten decidir quan i com implicar-se, preservant un marge d'autonomia i evitant conflictes.

Això també té a veure amb les pressions socials i culturals que imposen estàndards de neteja i ordre més exigents per a les dones, que fan que siguin percebudes com a responsables morals del benestar domèstic (Risman i Johnson-Sumerford, 1998; Röhler i Huinink, 2010; Thébaud et al., 2021).

La socialització i la transmissió intergeneracional de valors tenen un paper clau en la reproducció de rols de gènere, ja que les actituds més favorables a l'especialització per gènere acostumen a perpetuar divisions desiguals del treball (Altintas i Sullivan, 2016; DeMaris i Longmore, 1996; Evertsson, 2014; Greenstein, 1996). Per tant, des de la infància, diverses pràctiques intervenen en aquest procés d'aprenentatge segregat per gènere: s'espera que les dones desenvolupin competències domèstiques i de cura, mentre que els homes s'orientin cap al treball remunerat (Ajenjo i García, 2018; Cunningham, 2007; Hu i Yucel, 2018).

A la pràctica, les actituds respecte a la divisió del treball domèstic varien segons factors com la generació, el cicle de vida i el nivell educatiu: actualment es considera que les cohorts més joves acostumen a mantenir orientacions menys favorables a l'especialització per gènere, encara que la qüestió és discutida (Altintas i Sullivan, 2016; Bianchi et al., 2000; Sullivan, 2021). Alhora, les dones amb qualificacions més baixes són més vulnerables a abandonar l'ocupació amb la maternitat i a assumir el treball domèstic i la cura informal (Aassve et al., 2014; Evertsson i Nermo, 2007; Grunow et al., 2012; Lázaro et al., 2022).

Per acabar, diversos estudis mostren que la convergència de gènere en determinades tasques domèstiques s'explica tant per la reducció del temps que les dones hi dediquen com per canvis en el comportament dels homes (Altintas i Sullivan, 2016; García-Román i Gracia, 2022; Milkie et al., 2025). Tot i aquests avenços, la cura dels fills, altres tasques domèstiques i formes de treball domèstic invisibles continuen mostrant una forta desigualtat, fet que posa en relleu que els canvis en actituds i rols conviuen amb persistències estructurals en l'àmbit domèstic (Aviv et al., 2024; Barigozzi et al., 2025; Daminger, 2019). A més, s'observen desajustos en la percepció del repartiment: els homes tendeixen a sobreestimar la seva contribució i a percebre més equitat que la real, en part perquè la càrrega cognitiva resta menys visible als seus ulls (Damingier, 2019; Kamo, 2000; Kan, 2008; Lee i Waite, 2005; Wayne et al., 2023). En conjunt, la teoria 'fent gènere' i els estudis sobre rols, actituds i comportaments mostren que la divisió del treball domèstic no pot explicar-se només per criteris d'eficiència o recursos, sinó que alhora han de considerar la lògica de gènere que es reproduïx a través del context social i institucional.

#### 1.4.1. Satisfacció i justícia percebuda en el repartiment

Una manera d'avaluar la divisió del treball domèstic és considerar-ne les dimensions subjectives. Entenem la satisfacció com la valoració que cada membre fa del funcionament del repartiment i la justícia percebuda com el judici normatiu sobre si aquest repartiment és acceptable, basat en regles d'equitat, igualtat o de necessitat i en referents comparatius associats al gènere (DeMaris i Longmore, 1996; Kluwer et al., 2002; Major, 1993, 1997; Thompson, 1991). Aquestes percepcions responen a les normes de gènere i al context institucional, per això, el que es considera just o satisfactori no necessàriament representa una igualtat efectiva (Coltrane, 2000; Kornrich i Eger, 2016; Yerkes i Rose, 2022).

Les divisions desequilibrades sovint són acceptades i considerades com a justes pels dos membres de la parella (Forste i Fox, 2012; Foster i Stratton, 2019; Thompson, 1991). Moltes parelles no aspiren a una igualtat perfecta i poden limitar les expectatives al fet que l'home contribueixi

‘d’alguna manera’, encara que sigui de forma minoritària (Coltrane, 2000; Koster et al., 2022). Aquestes expectatives tan baixes poden fer que una participació masculina mínima sigui interpretada com un avenç respecte a patrons d’especialització per gènere més marcats (Antonelli, 2018; Moreno-Colom et al., 2024; West i Zimmerman, 1987) i, per tant, que moltes dones no se sentin perjudicades (Baxter et al., 2013; Frisco i Williams, 2003). Les expectatives, actituds i valors de gènere són, doncs, centrals en la construcció del sentiment de justícia, i alhora es modelen pel context cultural i institucional en el què s’inscriuen (DeMaris i Longmore, 1996; Kornrich i Eger, 2016; Leopold, 2019; Mead, 2023; Yerkes i Rose, 2022).

En línia de les expectatives, molts homes consideren que la seva menor dedicació domèstica queda compensada per la seva aportació al treball remunerat, de manera que avaluen la justícia de la divisió en termes globals de disponibilitat de temps, i no només dins l’àmbit domèstic (Thébaud, 2010). Aquesta dissociació ajuda a entendre per què, malgrat la persistència d’una distribució desigual, els homes solen percebre la situació com a justa amb més freqüència que les dones (Barstad, 2014; Baxter, 2000; Domínguez-Folgueras, 2022; Gager i Hohmann-Marriott, 2006; Hawkins et al., 1995). En la pràctica, però, aquesta lògica reforça les desigualtats, ja que són sobretot les dones qui adapten de manera més permanent les seves trajectòries laborals i el seu temps personal, mentre que els ajustos dels homes acostumen a ser temporals i més limitats (González i Jurado, 2015; Rodríguez et al., 2021; Vidal-Coso i Miret-Gamundi, 2014).

La teoria de la justícia distributiva ajuda a entendre aquesta paradoxa. Segons Major (1997, 1993) i Thompson (1991), les percepcions de justícia en el treball domèstic sovint es basen en comparacions amb altres persones del mateix gènere, més que no pas amb la pròpia parella. En aquest sentit, moltes dones se senten relativament privilegiades respecte a generacions anteriors, que assumien càrregues més grans sense ajuda masculina (Hochschild i Machung, 1989; Hu i Yucel, 2018). Els homes, per la seva banda, tendeixen a avaluar-se en relació amb altres homes, i aquest mateix patró comparatiu és sovint compartit per les dones, que acaben satisfetes amb una aportació masculina mínima si la comparen amb la d’altres homes (Baxter et al., 2013; Carriero i Todesco, 2016; Foster i Stratton, 2019; Mikula et al., 2009). Ara bé, quan la comparació es fa dins de la pròpia relació, les diferències són més visibles i augmenta la sensació d’injustícia (Greenstein, 1996; Koster et al., 2022; Major, 1997; Mikula et al., 2009; Thompson, 1991).

Per últim, considerar la satisfacció associada al treball domèstic també es rellevant ja que hi ha investigacions que mostren que quan es percep desequilibri, especialment per part de les dones,

augmenta el risc de conflictes i disminueix la qualitat de la relació (Frisco i Williams, 2003; Kluwer et al., 2002; Lachance-Grzela i Bouchard, 2010; Lachance-Grzela i Charbonneau, 2022).

En definitiva, la satisfacció amb la divisió del treball domèstic no depèn tant d'una distribució equitativa de les tasques, sinó de referents socials i de gènere que poden legitimar i normalitzar desigualtats persistents, que evolucionen també al llarg del cicle de vida i segons el context cultural i institucional (Baxter et al., 2008; Kornrich i Eger, 2016; Leopold i Skopek, 2015; Mead, 2023; Schulz i Raab, 2023; Yerkes i Rose, 2022).

#### 1.4.2. Estratègies per afrontar la desigualtat domèstica

Els canvis en la composició i l'organització de la llar, així com el sentiment d'injustícia vers la divisió de tasques, obliguen a les parelles a desplegar diferents estratègies per gestionar el treball domèstic. Aquestes estratègies s'articulen dins la interacció quotidiana, mitjançant processos de negociació més o menys explícits (Kluwer et al., 2002; Mannino i Deutsch, 2007). Les més habituals són la renegociació de tasques, l'establiment d'acords explícits dins de la parella i l'externalització d'una part de les feines. Aquestes estratègies tenen com a objectiu arribar a un resultat considerat 'just' pels membres de la parella, encara que això no signifiqui necessàriament una distribució equilibrada (Braun et al., 2008; Nordenmark i Nyman, 2003; Wiesmann et al., 2008).

Tot i així, homes i dones no parteixen de la mateixa posició en l'aplicació d'aquestes estratègies. Tal com descriuen Hochschild i Machung (1989), les dones són les que especialment senten la necessitat d'aplicar estratègies de gènere orientades a fomentar el canvi, que inclouen la negociació activa, la redefinició d'estàndards i la cerca d'ajudes externes. Els homes, en canvi, tendeixen a fer servir estratègies que mantenen o retarden la transformació de rols, ja sigui limitant la seva implicació a àmbits concrets, adoptant un paper d'aprenents' o apel·lant a la seva aportació econòmica o laboral per justificar una menor responsabilitat domèstica (Brumley i St. George, 2023; Thébaud, 2010). Aquestes asimetries mostren que la corresponsabilitat no és només una qüestió de repartiment quantitatiu de tasques —perquè, com analitzarem al segon article, la part invisible del treball domèstic és la que menys canvis experimenta, especialment en escenaris de negociació de tasques—, sinó també de poder i capacitat per definir què es considera un repartiment 'just' dins de la relació (Komter, 1989; Davis i Greenstein, 2013). Això explica que, quan les dones qüestionen aquest repartiment, sovint expressin més insatisfacció i iniciïn processos de renegociació (Ferree, 1990; Kluwer et al., 2000; Thompson, 1991).

Tot i que algunes parelles fixen acords explícits per repartir les feines, la recerca mostra que aquests es poden afeblir amb el pas del temps i acaben convertint-se en ‘acords silenciosos’, en què les dones incrementen la seva càrrega per evitar tensions i conflictes (Scanzoni i Szinovacz, 1980; Wiesmann et al., 2008). En aquest procés, moltes dones es veuen en el rol de supervisors o ‘guardianes’ (Allen i Hawkins, 1999), la qual cosa evidencia que la corresponsabilitat no només depèn del volum de tasques, sinó també de qui té la responsabilitat de recordar, planificar i garantir-ne el compliment (Aviv et al., 2024; Barigozzi et al., 2025; Daminger, 2019; Dean et al., 2022; Wayne et al., 2023).

Una altra estratègia freqüent és l’externalització del treball domèstic, especialment en llars amb més recursos econòmics. Tot i que pot reduir la càrrega de temps de les dones, la seva efectivitat depèn del context institucional i del mercat de serveis disponibles, i no sempre suposa una redistribució més equitativa dins la parella (Carrasco i Domínguez, 2011; Van Der Lippe et al., 2004). A més, aquest procés transfereix la càrrega cap a altres dones, sovint migrades i racialitzades, reproduint així formes de desigualtat social (Davis, 1981; Gonalons-Pons, 2015; Silfver i Widding, 2024; Torns, 2005).

En conjunt, les estratègies per afrontar la desigualtat domèstica, les percepcions de justícia i les pràctiques quotidianes mostren que la divisió del treball familiar no pot entendre’s únicament com una qüestió d’eficiència o de temps disponible, sinó com un procés profundament marcat pels rols de gènere i pel context social i institucional en el què s’inscriu.

## 1.5. Contextos i institucions: com la família, l’estat i el mercat modelen la divisió del treball domèstic

La distribució del treball domèstic no remunerat presenta grans variacions entre països, resultat de la interacció entre tres esferes clau: la família, l’estat i el mercat. Tal com assenyala Lewis (1992), aquesta relació configura les oportunitats diferencials de dones i homes per participar en l’ocupació remunerada i en el treball domèstic. Així, la manera com s’organitzen les tasques de la llar i de cura depèn tant de factors individuals, com l’edat, la composició familiar o la situació laboral, com de factors estructurals, culturals i institucionals (Aassve et al., 2014; Bianchi et al., 2012; Milkie et al., 2025; Pailhé et al., 2021; Perry-Jenkins i Gerstel, 2020; Sullivan, 2021; Stier i Lewin, 2007).

Els contextos institucionals actuen com a ‘estructures d’oportunitat’ que poden ampliar o reduir les desigualtats de gènere en el treball domèstic (Folbre, 1994; Fuwa, 2004; Kan et al., 2011; Lachance-Grzela i Bouchard, 2010; Mandel i Lazarus, 2021). L’accés a serveis públics de cura, la regulació dels permisos parentals o les normes socials sobre els rols familiars condicionen el temps dedicat a aquestes

tasques i la manera en què es distribueixen dins de la llar (Borràs et al., 2007; Carrasco i Domínguez, 2011; Hook, 2006; Stier i Lewin, 2007). La recerca comparada mostra que, en contextos més igualitaris i amb un major suport institucional en conciliació i serveis de cura, la distribució és més equitativa fins i tot quan es controlen les característiques individuals (Hank i Jürges, 2007; Neilson i Stanfors, 2009).

El context geogràfic i els canvis estructurals més amplis influeixen de manera desigual al llarg del curs de vida. Les grans transicions, com la formació de la parella, la maternitat/paternitat o la jubilació, reconfiguren la divisió de tasques en funció tant dels rols de gènere com de les condicions laborals que ofereix cada context institucional (Baxter et al., 2008; Grunow et al., 2012; Leopold i Skopek, 2014; Saraceno, 2016; Schulz i Raab, 2023). A més, la recerca mostra que l'evolució d'aquestes bretxes al llarg del curs de vida no és uniforme entre països, sinó que depèn del marc institucional i de les polítiques de conciliació vigents (García-Román i Gracia, 2022; Kan et al., 2021; Rodríguez et al., 2021). Diversos estudis han confirmat que aquestes diferències entre països persisteixen també a la vellesa, una etapa on les dones continuen assumint més feina domèstica que els homes (Kan et al., 2021; Leopold i Skopek, 2014). En aquesta línia, les dades de la SHARE mostren que en els països més igualitaris les parelles tendeixen a repartir les tasques de manera més equitativa al llarg del curs de vida (Hank i Jürges, 2007; Leopold i Skopek, 2014).

Més enllà de les pràctiques, també canvia la manera en que les persones interpreten i construeixen les expectatives, tan individuals com socials, del que s'ha de fer i de com s'ha de repartir a dins de la llar. La percepció de justícia i satisfacció amb el repartiment de les responsabilitats familiars està fortament condicionada pel context cultural i institucional (Braun et al., 2008; Forste i Fox, 2012; Greenstein, 2009; Hu i Yucel, 2018; Kornrich i Eger, 2016; Mead, 2023; Ruppanner, 2010; Yerkes i Rose, 2022). En conjunt, la recerca posa de manifest que les desigualtats domèstiques no s'expliquen només a partir de les característiques individuals de les parelles i que l'equitat de gènere està profundament modelada pels contextos institucionals, sociodemogràfics i culturals.

### 1.5.1. Règims de benestar i models de gènere

Una eina fonamental per analitzar com les interaccions entre economia, estat del benestar i organització familiar modelen la divisió del treball són les tipologies de règims del benestar. La proposta clàssica d'Esping-Andersen (1990), amb tres règims principals —liberal, conservador-corporativista i socialdemòcrata—, ha estat ampliada per incloure el gènere i el treball no remunerat (Lewis, 1992, 1997; Orloff, 2009; Sainsbury, 1999), donant lloc a altres variants com el règim mediterrani (Gálvez et al., 2011; Kan et al., 2011; Saraceno, 2016; Sayer, 2010) i el règim dels antics països soviètics (Ciccia i Bleijenbergh, 2014; Fuwa, 2004; Saxonberg i Szelewa, 2007). A més, segons Lewis (1997),

cada règim projecta un ‘model de gènere’ propi. Aquestes ampliacions, resumides a la Taula 1, permeten explicar millor les diferències regionals en les dinàmiques domèstiques i alhora subratllar el paper de les polítiques públiques i dels drets socials en la configuració de les relacions de gènere (Orloff, 2009).

**TAULA 1** *Classificació, descripció i cites clau dels règims de benestar*

| <b>Regim</b>                                                    | <b>Descripció</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Cites clau</b>                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Socialdemòcrata<br/>(Països escandinaus)</b>                 | Alt suport institucional a la conciliació, permisos parentals igualitaris i serveis públics de cura. Afavoreix altes taxes d’ocupació femenina i menor bretxa domèstica, tot i que persisteixen formes de segregació laboral i divisions domèstiques subtils. | Eklund i Lundqvist (2021); Esping-Andersen (1990); Evertsson (2014); Hook (2006); Korpi (2000); Sainsbury (1999)             |
| <b>Conservador-corporativista<br/>(Alemanya, Països Baixos)</b> | Cobertura social intermèdia i persistència de l’especialització per gènere en el treball remunerat i en el domèstic (Alemanya), amb incorporació parcial de la corresponsabilitat als Països Baixos.                                                          | Lewis (1992, 1997, 2006); Leitner (2003); Geist (2005)                                                                       |
| <b>Liberal (Regne Unit, Estats Units)</b>                       | Intervenció estatal mínima i fort pes del sector privat en la provisió de cures. Alta desigualtat de gènere i classe en l’accés als serveis. La conciliació depèn fortament dels recursos privats.                                                            | Esping-Andersen (1990); Baxter (2000)                                                                                        |
| <b>Mediterrani<br/>(Espanya, Itàlia)</b>                        | Menor provisió pública, fort paper de la família com a principal proveïdora de cures. Malgrat avenços educatius i laborals, persisteix una divisió domèstica molt desigual.                                                                                   | Ajenjo i García (2014); Ferrera (1996); Kan et al. (2022); Lázaro et al. (2022); Moreno-Colom et al. (2024); Saraceno (2016) |
| <b>Europa de l’Est<br/>(Polònia, Hongria, Eslovènia)</b>        | Alta participació femenina al mercat laboral. Gran heterogeneïtat segons reformes post-1989: alguns països van reduir fortament la provisió pública.                                                                                                          | Fodor (2005); Fuwa (2004); Saxonberg i Szelewa (2007)                                                                        |

*Font:* Elaboració pròpia

Les diferències institucionals es tradueixen en patrons empírics clars. Als països socialdemòcrates, la provisió universal de serveis de cura i els permisos parentals igualitaris han afavorit una participació més equitativa dels homes i unes taxes altes d’ocupació femenina, tot i que persisteixen formes de segregació ocupacional i desigualtats subtils dins de la llar (Bianchi et al., 2012; Evertsson, 2014; Hook, 2006). Estudis recents també mostren que les polítiques igualitàries poden comportar tensions culturals i percepcions diferenciades d’equitat (Eklund i Lundqvist, 2021; Ruppner et al., 2017). En canvi, en contextos mediterranis, com Espanya o Itàlia, la debilitat històrica de les polítiques públiques i la forta dependència de la família com a proveïdora de cures han mantingut una divisió domèstica desigual (Ajenjo i García, 2014; Ferrera, 1996; Lázaro et al., 2022; Saraceno, 2016). No obstant això, Espanya ha progressat en les polítiques de paternitat/maternitat: des

del 2021, pares i mares disposen de 16 setmanes iguals, intransferibles i remunerades (Farre et al., 2025; Meil et al., 2023). Malgrat aquests avenços, les dones continuen assumint la major part de les tasques invisibles i rutinàries, i la cultura *familiarista*<sup>6</sup> tendeix a reforçar la responsabilitat femenina en la cura (Altuzarra et al., 2020; Bueno i Grau-Grau, 2021; Moreno-Colom et al., 2024).

Als països conservador-corporativistes, com Alemanya o els Països Baixos, la cobertura social més elevada conviu amb un fort arrelament del model de l'home guanyador de pa i la dona mestressa de casa (Geist, 2005; Leitner, 2003). Estudis longitudinals mostren que la maternitat reforça la bretxa de gènere, tot i que les ideologies més igualitàries poden afavorir canvis (Dechant i Blossfeld, 2015; Domínguez-Folgueras et al., 2018; Nitsche i Grunow, 2016). A l'Europa de l'Est, malgrat l'alta participació femenina al mercat laboral, persisteix un repartiment de les tasques domèstiques menys igualitari, amb grans diferències entre països segons l'impacte de les reformes postsocialistes (Fodor, 2005; Kil et al., 2016; Saxonberg i Szelewa, 2007).

Ara bé, la recerca més recent ha posat de manifest que aquestes tipologies, tot i ser útils, poden simplificar una realitat molt més heterogènia. D'una banda, dins d'un mateix règim hi ha diferències notables (per exemple, entre Espanya i Itàlia dins del mediterrani, o entre Alemanya i els Països Baixos dins del conservador). De l'altra, molts països combinen polítiques amb orientacions diferents, donant lloc a configuracions híbrides que no encaixen en un model únic (Ciccia i Bleijenbergh, 2014; Javornik, 2014). Així, la comparació entre països exigeix analitzar no només el tipus de règim sinó també les combinacions específiques de polítiques i normes culturals que configuren els 'models de gènere'.

### 1.5.2. Conciliació o corresponsabilitat? Polítiques públiques amb perspectiva de gènere

Les diferències institucionals descrites anteriorment es concreten també en el disseny i l'orientació de les polítiques públiques. Les anomenades 'polítiques de conciliació' es presenten sovint com a instruments per avançar en la igualtat de gènere, però el plantejament no sempre és neutral. En molts casos, mantenen un biaix implícit que identifica a les dones com el principal subjecte destinatari, a través de permisos maternals exclusius per a mares, reduccions de jornada majoritàriament femenines o ajudes condicionades a la disponibilitat femenina (Borràs et al., 2007; Hook, 2006; Lewis, 1997; Orloff, 2009; Stier i Lewin, 2007).

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<sup>6</sup> La literatura ha descrit com a règims *familiaristes* aquells models que assignen una importància rellevant a la família com a proveïdora de benestar per als seus membres (Javornik, 2014; Leitner, 2003; Saraceno, 2016).

Per tant, des d'aquesta òptica de reproducció social, les polítiques de 'conciliació' només avancen cap a la igualtat si redistribueixen la cura i alteren les regles organitzatives que sostenen la divisió sexual del treball (Benería, 2021; Carrasco et al., 2011; Ruiz-Castro et al., 2024). Per fer possible la corresponsabilitat, una part del treball de cures s'ha d'assumir col·lectivament, mitjançant permisos iguals i intransferibles i serveis públics universals, de manera que el cost de reproduir la força de treball no recaigui només en les llars sinó en el conjunt de la societat (Arruzza et al., 2019; Fraser, 2017).

L'impacte real d'aquestes polítiques depèn tant de la cobertura com de la seva capacitat de transformar les pràctiques socials i les relacions de gènere. Quan s'orienten únicament a facilitar la conciliació femenina, com les presentacions de 'cura a la llar' o permisos parentals intransferibles, acaben reforçant l'especialització per gènere en lloc de qüestionar-la; per contra, les polítiques més efectives són aquelles que promouen la corresponsabilitat masculina, com els permisos intransferibles i els serveis d'educació i cura de 0 a 3 anys, ja que alteren les estructures que sostenen la divisió sexual del treball (Bueno i Grau-Grau, 2021; Leitner, 2003; Mandel i Lazarus, 2021; Meil et al., 2023; Ruiz-Castro et al., 2024). Només quan s'incorporen polítiques amb una mirada transversal i integradora s'aconsegueixen taxes altes d'ocupació femenina i una distribució més equitativa del treball no remunerat (Lewis, 1992, 2006; Sainsbury, 1999).

Des d'una perspectiva feminista, la revisió d'aquestes polítiques requereix un gir cap a un enfocament que reconegui el treball domèstic com a pilar central del benestar i com un valor polític de primer ordre. Això implicaria no només garantir drets, sinó també millorar el reconeixement social i la professionalització del treball de cura i domèstic, de manera que deixi de ser una tasca invisible, infravalorada i majoritàriament feminitzada (Benería, 2021; Carrasco et al., 2011).

Finalment, la recerca prèvia evidència que el treball domèstic no remunerat es modula per un context institucional i cultural específic. La interacció entre la família, l'estat i el mercat determina la (des)igualtat de gènere, així com els estàndards de neteja, les expectatives i la percepció i valoració social. Per tant, l'estudi de les desigualtats en el treball domèstic ha d'entendre la dimensió espacial i cultural per tal d'incidir en els mecanismes de reproducció.

## 2. Aquesta tesi doctoral

Aquesta tesi doctoral s'articula a través de tres estudis que, mitjançant metodologies i enfocaments diferents, comparteixen una mateixa inquietud: entendre com es reproduceix, canvia o percep la desigualtat de gènere en el treball domèstic en diversos moments del curs de vida i contextos socioeconòmics regionals. El conjunt de la recerca proposa una lectura integrada del treball domèstic com a camp de tensions, persistències i possibles transformacions.

El **primer article** aporta evidències sobre el temps que la població adulta major de 50 anys dedica al treball domèstic, un àmbit clau en societats cada cop més envellides però encara poc explorat dins dels estats del benestar europeus. Estudis previs mostren la persistència de la bretxa de gènere entre població d'edat adulta avançada, fins i tot després de la jubilació (Gauthier i Smeeding, 2003; Kan et al., 2021; Leopold i Skopek, 2015, 2018) i, amb dades també de la SHARE, que als contextos amb polítiques més igualitàries la divisió és més equitativa (Hank i Jürges, 2007). L'anàlisi parteix de l'elaboració de quatre agrupacions regionals —Mediterrani, Centre-nord, Balcans i Est— per caracteritzar tant el temps total destinat al treball domèstic com les diferències de gènere associades. La principal aportació és mostrar que, malgrat que la majoria de parelles ja no treballen per un salari i no conviuen amb els fills, les dones adultes continuen assumint una major proporció de les tasques domèstiques. A més, l'estudi evidencia que el context institucional i el nivell socioeconòmic són determinants clau per explicar aquesta desigualtat. Aquest article permet qüestionar fins a quin punt les desigualtats es dilueixen o persisteixen en les últimes etapes de la vida.

El **segon article** aprofundeix en narratives individuals de 35 joves en parella heterosexual sobre l'organització del treball domèstic i en els factors que expliquen canvis i continuïtats, posant en relleu la diversitat de tasques i el valor que s'hi atribueix. La literatura prèvia ha conceptualitzat la 'doble jornada' i la 'càrrega familiar invisible' (Damingier, 2019; Dean et al., 2022; Hochschild i Machung, 1989; Wayne et al., 2023) i ha mostrat com els canvis sovint es negocien però poden confrontar-se amb normes de gènere (Baxter et al., 2008). L'estudi es basa en dues onades (els anys 2012 i 2019) d'entrevistes a les mateixes 35 persones de nivell educatiu alt en les primeres etapes de convivència en parella i transició a la maternitat. L'objectiu és explorar com perceben l'evolució en la divisió de les tasques domèstiques visibles i invisibles en les primeres etapes de formació familiar. Els principals resultats apunten que, tot i els canvis en la divisió, les dones continuen assumint la càrrega invisible; planificació, organització, gestió emocional. Aquest article aporta una mirada acurada que revela narratives diferenciades d'homes i dones sobre les justificacions, les tensions i les estratègies

adaptatives en les dinàmiques quotidianes de parella. A més, fa evident que la interpretació de la divisió requereix integrar la dimensió subjectiva, la qual ha guiat l'enfocament analític del tercer article.

El **tercer article** estudia una peça clau però poc explorada de l'organització del treball domèstic: la satisfacció associada al repartiment entre parelles heterosexuales. Estudis previs han detectat que la satisfacció no sempre coincideix amb la igualtat en la divisió (Baxter, 2000; Braun et al., 2008; Greenstein, 1996; Koster et al., 2022), que els homes declaren, en general, més satisfacció que les dones (Braun et al., 2008; Forste i Fox, 2012; Leopold, 2019) i que el context nacional i institucional modula aquestes percepcions (Greenstein, 2009; Hu i Yucel, 2018; Kornrich i Eger, 2016; Ruppanner, 2010). L'estudi adopta una perspectiva comparativa de persones d'entre 20 i 59 anys que viuen en parella heterosexual a Espanya i Suècia. A diferència d'aquets treballs, es basa en una tipologia de la divisió de tasques, igualitària o desajustada, la vincula explícitament amb la satisfacció i la compara entre països i gèneres amb models estadístics diferenciats. Un dels objectius és analitzar fins a quin punt la satisfacció amb la divisió del treball domèstic està influenciada pel context institucional i quin és el pes dels factors socioeconòmics. Els resultats mostren que els homes tendeixen a declarar més satisfacció que les dones amb una divisió desigual i que la percepció d'(in)justícia depèn del context geogràfic: a Suècia, una divisió desajustada genera més insatisfacció que a Espanya. L'estudi aporta una dimensió subjectiva i cultural a l'anàlisi, mostrant que la percepció de l'equitat no és universal, sinó contextual.

D'aquest article s'ha elaborat una versió orientada a la difusió publicada a la sèrie *Perspectives Demogràfiques* (CED), sota el títol 'Igualtat al treball domèstic, clau per la satisfacció de la parella: una comparativa entre Espanya i Suècia', inclosa a l'Annex de l'article 3 de la tesi. Aquesta extensió pretén mostrar a través de les mateixes dades i metodologia el patró per edat en funció del gènere i del context: entre les parelles amb repartiments percebuts com a desajustats, la satisfacció augmenta amb l'edat a Suècia per a tothom, mentre que a Espanya creix entre els homes però disminueix entre les dones.

El **conjunt dels tres articles** ofereix una mirada integrada del treball domèstic al llarg del curs de vida i omple buits de coneixement del camp d'estudi. El primer estudia la desigualtat estructural des d'una perspectiva comparada, considerant la situació socioeconòmica en l'edat adulta avançada, el segon es centra en les dinàmiques interpersonals i subjectives del treball domèstic visible i invisible en la joventut i la transició a la vida adulta en parella i el tercer es centra en les percepcions subjectives de justícia en etapes intermèdies, quan la vida familiar i laboral conviuen de ple, i en com varien segons el context institucional i cultural. D'aquesta manera, cada article aporta una peça a la narrativa que

mostra com la desigualtat domèstica no és fixa, sinó que es reconfigura en cada etapa del curs de vida: persisteix en la vellesa, s'intensifica després de la maternitat o paternitat i es legitima o qüestiona segons el context cultural i institucional.

Aquesta perspectiva evidencia que les desigualtats no es poden entendre sense considerar com el curs de vida (la sortida del mercat laboral, la formació de la família, la criança o la jubilació) interactuen amb les normes socials i amb les polítiques públiques. Els tres nivells, context, responsabilitat i percepció, permeten entendre la persistència de les desigualtats com un procés dinàmic configurat per les normes socials, els valors de gènere, les polítiques públiques i les relacions quotidianes.

Aquesta història comuna articula la tesi al voltant de la **pregunta central**: *com i per què persisteixen les desigualtats de gènere en el treball domèstic no remunerat en societats que formalment promouen la igualtat?*

## 2.1. Objectius generals i preguntes de recerca

El punt de partida de la present tesi doctoral és la constatació que, malgrat avenços en el mercat laboral, l'educació i les polítiques d'igualtat, el treball domèstic continua sent un espai de desigualtat de gènere. L'**objectiu general** de la recerca és analitzar les desigualtats de gènere en el treball domèstic no remunerat al llarg del curs de vida, en diferents contextos socioeconòmics i institucionals i segons les normes de gènere que configuren les percepcions de justícia, les actituds i les estratègies en cada moment històric.

Els **objectius específics** són:

- Examinar les desigualtats de gènere en la dedicació al treball domèstic en l'edat adulta i la seva relació amb la posició socioeconòmica i el context institucional europeu.
- Analitzar les narratives de dones i homes joves a Espanya sobre el canvi o estabilitat en la divisió de tasques domèstiques visibles i invisibles, amb especial atenció a les diferències de gènere en les justificacions i l'evolució de rols.
- Comparar la satisfacció amb la percepció de la divisió del treball domèstic entre Espanya i Suècia, i identificar com el context normatiu i institucional condiciona aquestes percepcions.

Aquest treball s'estructura al voltant de tres **preguntes transversals**:

- Com es distribueix el treball domèstic entre dones i homes en diferents etapes del curs de vida i segons contextos?

- Quins factors estructurals, actitudinals o contextuals expliquen la persistència o el canvi en aquesta distribució?
- Com es construeixen i expressen les percepcions de justícia i satisfacció en relació amb el repartiment del treball domèstic?

Aquestes preguntes permeten connectar els tres estudis i donar coherència a l'abordatge teòric i empíric de la tesi, destacant la importància de considerar alhora la pràctica, la norma i la percepció en l'estudi de la desigualtat domèstica.

## 2.2. Dades i metodologia emprades

Per abordar aquesta tesi doctoral s'han utilitzat dades i mètodes mixtos, adaptats a cada investigació. El **primer article** es centra en descriure la divisió del treball domèstic entre la població adulta major a Europa. Per fer-ho, s'han emprat les dades de l'Enquesta de Salut, Envel·liment i Jubilació a Europa (Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe, SHARE), que recull informació longitudinal de la població europea de més de 50 anys amb l'objectiu d'analitzar els efectes de les polítiques sanitàries, socials, econòmiques i ambientals al llarg del cicle de vida (Börsch-Supan, 2020). Concretament, s'ha treballat amb la vuitena onada, iniciada l'octubre del 2019, on per primera vegada es va incloure un mòdul específic sobre l'ús del temps (Time Expenditure, TE)

Aquest mòdul permet mesurar la dedicació diària al treball domèstic no remunerat a partir de la pregunta: "Quant de temps va passar ahir fent les feines de la llar (netejar, rentar la roba, comprar, cuinar, fer feines de jardineria, etc.)?". Aquest indicador constitueix la variable dependent de l'estudi. S'han considerat com a variables independents la participació en el mercat laboral, el nivell educatiu i el volum d'ingressos, així com altres controls demogràfics.

L'anàlisi combina dues estratègies. En primer lloc, s'ha aplicat un mètode d'anàlisi de conglomerats per identificar quatre agrupacions de països segons el temps destinat a les tasques domèstiques i les diferències de gènere. En segon lloc, s'han estimat models de regressió lineal ordinària (OLS) amb ponderacions, per examinar fins a quin punt les característiques socioeconòmiques expliquen les diferències de gènere i regionals detectades.

El **segon article** adopta un enfocament qualitatiu per aprofundir en les dinàmiques i decisions de repartiment de tasques dins de les parelles. Es basa en entrevistes longitudinals realitzades a Barcelona i Madrid a persones joves amb estudis superiors en dues onades: 2012 i 2019. S'han seleccionat individus que el 2012 vivien en parella, amb o sense fills, descartant les persones que es

van separar o divorciar entre les dues onades (13) i les que disposaven de servei domèstic intern permanent (2). En total, s'analitzen 35 casos (70 entrevistes). Les entrevistes, elaborades per un equip d'investigació del qual la investigadora principal és coautora, s'han transcrit i codificat amb el programa Atlas.ti.

L'anàlisi qualitativa s'ha estructurat en tres fases. En primer lloc, s'han identificat les percepcions sobre la divisió de les tasques domèstiques visibles, la càrrega familiar invisible i la responsabilitat reproductiva. En segon lloc, s'ha classificat cada cas segons si el repartiment era percebut com a equitatiu o si en feien més la dona o l'home, en cadascuna de les onades. Això ha permès distingir les trajectòries de canvi, cap a més equitat o menys, i les d'estabilitat, més o menys equitatives. En tercer lloc, s'han identificat els factors que expliquen aquests patrons, com ara la disponibilitat de temps, els estàndards de neteja, la maternitat, la negociació explícita o la persistència de rols de gènere. Aquesta aproximació permet entendre no només les pràctiques, sinó també les justificacions narratives de continuïtat i canvi.

Finalment, el **tercer article** analitza la relació entre la satisfacció amb la divisió del treball domèstic no remunerat i la tipologia de repartiment en un context comparatiu: Espanya i Suècia. Per a Espanya s'ha emprat l'Enquesta de Fecunditat del 2018, i per a Suècia l'onada del 2021 de l'enquesta Gender and Generations Survey (GGS). Tot i provenir de projectes diferents, ambdues fonts són comparables i inclouen els mateixos indicadors d'interès.

S'han harmonitzat les variables i s'ha definit com a dependent la satisfacció amb la divisió de tasques (escala 0-10, dicotomitada en 'no satisfactòria' [0-7] i 'satisfactòria' [8-10]). La principal variable independent és el repartiment del treball domèstic, equitatiu o no equitatiu. També s'han incorporat indicadors demogràfics com l'edat, l'estat civil, la trajectòria residencial, la nacionalitat i el nombre i edat dels fills, i socioeconòmics, com els ingressos individuals i de la parella, el servei domèstic i les actituds de gènere.

L'anàlisi es desenvolupa en dues etapes: (1) una descripció bivariant de la relació entre el percentatge de satisfacció i la tipologia de divisió per país i sexe; i (2) una estimació de models de regressió logística binària diferenciats per país, sexe i tipologia (vuit models en total). Els efectes marginals mitjans permeten comparar la probabilitat de satisfacció en funció del context, del gènere i dels diferents factors demogràfics i socioeconòmics. Una extensió d'aquesta recerca s'ha publicat a la revista *Perspectives Demogràfiques* del CED, destacant l'impacte dels patrons d'edat en la satisfacció reportada.

## 2.3. Aportacions de la tesi i estructura del document

Aquesta tesi doctoral contribueix a l'estudi del treball domèstic no remunerat des d'una perspectiva demogràfica i de gènere, integrant metodologies complementàries (anàlisi quantitativa regional, recerca qualitativa longitudinal i anàlisi comparativa de percepcions) i diversos moments del curs de vida, que van des de la joventut en les primeres etapes de convivència a l'edat adulta amb fills i fins a l'edat adulta avançada.

Les aportacions principals consisteixen en constatar la persistència de les desigualtats en l'edat adulta avançada, una etapa sovint desatesa en la literatura, a incorporar de manera central la dimensió del treball invisible i de la càrrega mental en les narratives quotidianes i a posar en relació la satisfacció percebuda amb la divisió del treball domèstic i el context institucional, qüestionant que la igualtat només es consideri a través distribucions objectives del temps. S'ofereix una aproximació integrada que connecta l'estructura organitzativa, les practiques i les percepcions i que ressalta el paper combinat de les polítiques públiques, els valors culturals i les estratègies individuals en la reproducció o transformació de les desigualtats.

El document segueix aquesta estructura: la introducció estableix el marc teòric i articula la narrativa dels diferents estudis, els tres capítols següents presenten els articles publicats o en procés de publicació, cadascun amb el seu propi marc analític, les dades, la metodologia, els resultats i les conclusions, i un darrer capítol de conclusions generals que enllaça les troballes, exposa les implicacions teòriques, metodològiques i de política pública i obre noves línies de recerca futures.

Amb aquesta estructura, la present tesi doctoral pretén a oferir una comprensió matisada, contextualitzada i profitosa per la recerca i per l'elaboració de polítiques orientades a la corresponsabilitat, mostrant com les desigualtats en el treball domèstic no remunerat es configuren i es poden transformar al llarg del curs de vida i segons els contextos institucionals.

### 3. Gender Patterns in the Dedication to Unpaid Domestic Labour among the Older Adult Population in 18 European Countries<sup>7</sup>

#### Abstract

This article examines the dedication to unpaid domestic work among men and women aged 55 to 71 in eighteen European countries. The 2019-2020 SHARE survey is used, which, for the first time included a specific “time use” module to determine the time women and men dedicate to unpaid domestic work. The initial results confirm that more time is allocated to this work in Mediterranean and Eastern European countries, while in the central-north and east, the time allocation between women and men for unpaid domestic work is more equitable. To explain these differences, countries have been classified into four groups, and a gender pattern is found based on variables such as labour market participation, level of education, and income. This permits us to conclude that dedication to unpaid domestic labour is gender based and linked to regional contexts.

**Key words:** Europe; gender; regional patterns; older population; SHARE; unpaid domestic work

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### 3.1. Introduction

This study analyses the persistence of women's responsibility for unpaid domestic work among the older adult population in Europe, and evaluates the degree of equality with men from a comparative and transversal perspective: Do older women continue to be responsible for domestic tasks? Focusing on the population from 55 to 71 years of age, we look at 18 countries included in the latest edition (2019-2020) of the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), which, for the first time, incorporated a module on time-use and looked specifically at time dedicated to unpaid domestic work, while distinguishing it from care work.

Unpaid domestic work refers to essential routine activities related to the maintenance and well-being of the domestic unit, such as the preparation of meals, cleaning, the acquisition of provisions and articles for the home, as well as washing dishes and the making and caring for clothing (Coltrane, 2000). Everywhere in the world, women have the main responsibility for this unpaid work, and it is estimated that they dedicate three times more time to it than men (UN, 2019). This gender difference evolves over the life cycle (Anxo et al., 2022; Healy, 1988), although it tends to decline with entry into older adult life (Gauthier & Smeeding, 2003). In addition, there are differences between countries, which are mainly influenced by the relationship between home, state and market, which in turn conditions the different opportunity structures for men and women (Lewis, 1992).

An additional aim is to reveal the gender pattern in the dedication to unpaid domestic work of the older adult population in relation to socioeconomic position and through grouping the countries into four distinct regions. The pattern most account for women's increasing educational attainment, which exceeds that of men, as well as for their massive participation in the labour market and consequent higher incomes, which has resulted in an increase in women's total workload (Durán, 2012; Hochschild & Machung, 1989). In this study, we will explain the variations between women and men and between countries regarding the gender pattern associated with the older adult population, with the aim of detecting what factors lead to more equitable gender relations. This article contributes empirical evidence to the study of domestic work in ageing societies. Our approach is essential both for the design of public policies and for addressing a gap in research. In contrast to numerous studies focusing on the working age population and in a national context, our article analyses a specific age group in different European welfare states. In addition, although the factors that affect the division of labour within a couple have been studied, there is little literature on time dedication at the individual level. Our study focuses on socioeconomic factors for men and women separately, while also considering all types of households. This is important as in this age cohort a high proportion reside in

single-person households. We also emphasise the importance of distinguishing between modalities of unpaid work, such as caregiving and domestic tasks, which differ significantly in the time dedicated to them and between regions and socioeconomic groups. The use of SHARE data permits us to carry out an analysis considering all these factors.

### 3.2. Theoretical framework

The primary responsibility for unpaid domestic work that women still assume is related to their having less negotiating power and a subordinate social status in comparison with their male partners. In concrete, economic dependency (Aassve et al., 2014; Brines, 1994; Davis & Greenstein, 2004; Greenstein, 2000; Gupta, 2007), differences in available time (Coltrane, 2000; Assave et al., 2014; Davis & Greenstein, 2004) and relative resources (Becker, 1985; Brines, 1994) are variables used among heterosexual couples to establish and justify the division of labour in the home.

Nevertheless, these factors do not completely explain why, despite significant cultural changes, women continue to dedicate more time to unpaid domestic work. In an article, West and Zimmerman (1987) suggested that this was due to “doing gender”: women and men reproduce the roles that social norms attribute to each gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). As a result, women continue to take on the role of “housewife”, even when they are the main breadwinners for the household. This behaviour is interpreted as an attempt to neutralise deviation from the norms in subjective terms (Brines, 1994). Following the same logic, economically dependent male partners may deliberately dedicate less time to domestic chores to reaffirm their masculine gender role (Brines, 1994; Greenstein, 2000; Hochschild & Machung, 1989).

In fact, in different European countries, as well as in the United States, the massive increase in access to university and greater participation of women in the labour market that has occurred since the middle of the 20th century has not been matched with a proportional reduction in their participation in domestic tasks (Ajenjo & García, 2014; England, 2010; Gálvez et al., 2011). This has been referred to as a “stalled revolution” (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Some recent studies are not very optimistic and indicate that gender convergence in the dedication to unpaid domestic work in the countries analysed has stalled (Kan et al., 2022), while other studies suggest that there have been changes in the contribution made by men, but that this is happening at a very slow pace (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Ajenjo & García, 2014; Bianchi et al., 2012; Kan et al., 2011; Pailhé et al., 2021). In general, it has been found that in dual income heterosexual couples, women still work more total time than their partners (Durán, 2012; Goldscheider et al., 2015). We should note that women have always been in the

labour market, so we should not infer that they have all joined it in masse in recent times (Benería et al., 2018).

Other perspectives point to individual factors that influence women's greater dedication to domestic work, especially those related to opportunity costs: women with higher salaries —typically linked to higher education levels— have greater incentive to engage in paid work and avoid unpaid work (England, 2010; Evertsson et al., 2009; García-Román, 2023; Pailhé et al., 2021). Other theories argue that it is absolute income, not relative income, that influences greater or lesser dedication to domestic tasks (Gupta, 2007). It is also argued that working class women are compelled to combine their participation in the labour market, often with flexible or part-time schedules, with their domestic responsibilities (Benería et al., 2018; Evertsson et al., 2009). In contrast, among women with higher incomes —either individually or based on household income— it is common to pay for domestic work (Lázaro et al., 2022). Women's participation in the labour market means that taking on unpaid work results in a “double shift” (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Thus, we would expect to find that the older adult population, particularly women, dedicates less time to unpaid domestic work when in a better economic position and that the relationship between the genders would be more equal.

The time dedicated to unpaid domestic work changes during the life course, marked by having children, caring for dependent adult family members and retirement, although women always take on more responsibilities than men (Kan et al., 2011; Anxo et al., 2011). Women's dedication to domestic tasks increases with the formation of a couple and when raising children, from the arrival of the first child until the emancipation of the last child, known as the “empty nest” stage (Anxo et al., 2011; Buhmann et al., 2010). Women reduce the time dedicated to these tasks in later stages of the life cycle and when they live alone. For men, time dedicated to domestic work is quite homogeneous during the life cycle —in general, they assume less routine tasks, such as gardening and repairs (Leopold & Skopeck, 2015)— and only increases when they reach their sixties, especially after retirement and/or if living alone (Anxo et al., 2011; Gauthier & Smeeding, 2003). In general, the total amount of unpaid domestic work increases for both sexes after retirement, although their relative contribution remains largely stable, and it then declines starting at 75 years of age (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Hank & Jürges, 2007). This pattern has been found to be the same among all the countries studied (Gauthier & Smeeding, 2003).

Generally, the dedication of adult couples to unpaid domestic work is less equal when both participate in the labour market or the woman has fewer relative resources, with differences between generations: men of younger generations dedicate more time to domestic tasks than men of older

generations (Hank & Jürgesm, 2007; Horne et al., 2018). Along similar lines, Kil, Neels and Vergauwen (2016) found that the effects of labour market participation and income are particularly significant among young couples without children and, overall, are relevant in the context of regional public policies related to gender and their effect on paid and unpaid work (Horne et al., 2018; Leopold & Skopek, 2014).

It should be added that among older adult couples, it has been found that physical limitations and not personal choice lead to greater equity in the division of unpaid domestic labour, especially in regard to the physically more difficult tasks, such as doing the shopping. This also limits the activity of individuals that live alone, which is much more significant for men than for women (Healy, 1988). Other studies have found that this life-cycle related trend differs among countries: for example, in the case of single or widowed persons the differences are greater in Italy and France, followed by the U.S. (Anxo et al., 2011).

The level of inequality in the family responsibilities that women take on varies geographically (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016). The relationship between domestic tasks and gender is influenced by countries' opportunity structures and social policies, as well as their cultural norms and practices (Aassye et al., 2014; Bianchi et al., 2012; Pailhé et al., 2021; Sullivan, 2021; Stier & Lewin, 2007). In places where women have greater power and there are supportive political structures, the gender gap is smaller (Fuwa, 2004; Lachance & Bouchard, 2010). It must also be noted that public policies perpetuate the division of labour when, for example, they facilitate balancing work and family life for women but do not do so in the same way for men (Hook, 2006). The most effective policies are those that directly affect women's occupations and position them as breadwinners, altering the logic of the division of labour between the genders (Stier & Lewin, 2007).

Researchers have re-examined the three welfare regimes proposed by Esping-Andersen (1990)—liberal, conservative and social democratic—, incorporating unpaid work in the initial relationship between economy and welfare state (Lewis, 1992) and, therefore, gender (Letablier, 2007). These newer classifications consider the role of the family, with the inclusion of the Mediterranean regime (Kan et al., 2011; Kan et al., 2022; Sayer, 2010) and what were Soviet countries (Fuwa, 2004). In general, it is found that in Mediterranean countries, such as Italy and Spain, and in conservative countries, such as Germany, the gender gap in the division of labour is more accentuated than in social democratic or liberal regimes, where social policies are more oriented toward achieving greater equality (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Gálvez et al., 2011; Kan et al., 2011; Kan et al., 2022; Leopold & Skopek, 2014; Sayer, 2010).

In both the social democratic and liberal regimes, women's economic and political power is greater and their participation in the labour market is higher and of better quality. In addition, men have greater parental leave options and there are better public provisions for childcare (Bianchi et al., 2012; Fuwa, 2004; Hook, 2006; Sayer, 2010). In contrast, in Mediterranean countries, despite the advances in women's participation in the labour market and their improved economic situation, women continue to carry out the majority of unpaid labour, which suggests that social policies have not been as effective (Kan et al., 2022; Lázaro et al., 2022). For example, in the Spanish case we find that women's relative resources continue to have a significant weight in determining inequalities (Altuzarra et al., 2020; García-Román, 2023). In addition, the family continues to be the main provider of unpaid care in these countries (Ajenjo & García, 2014; Gálvez et al., 2011).

In contrast, in conservative regimes, where women also carry out a greater proportion of unpaid work, the gender gap in the total working time has declined more than in Mediterranean countries (Kan et al., 2022). In eastern Europe, where the time dedicated to the home is higher, as in Mediterranean countries, the gender gap is heterogeneous and follows the position of women in the labour market (Davis & Greenstein, 2004; Fodor, 2005; Gálvez et al., 2011). For example, in the Czech Republic, levels of inequality are higher than found in Slovenia and Hungary (Fuwa, 2004); there is evidence that this is due to the different dynamics of change in the welfare regimes adopted in the post-communist era (Saxonberg & Szelewa, 2007). For example, in Poland, the welfare state was still not well developed in 2000, and it was assumed that the family took care of all the domestic work (Fodor, 2005). In short, the regional context has an effect on the gender gap in unpaid labour, although the direct effects remain difficult to quantify (Lachance & Bouchard, 2010).

When combining all these factors, we find that they have different impacts on the time that women and men spend on unpaid domestic labour—for example, economic resources and available time—in function of the country and the life cycle (Anxo et al., 2011; Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Buhmann et al., 2010). Thus, Leopold and Skopek (2014), using data from the SHARE for 2004 and 2006, focus their analysis on older couples' care of their grandchildren and find that the differences in the gender gap in unpaid labour between countries is mainly explained by gendered social roles and participation in the labour market. Also using SHARE data, Hank and Jürges (2007), looking at the same age group, found that when controlling for individual characteristics, couples that live in more egalitarian countries shared domestic tasks more equitably. Lastly, the gender gap in unpaid domestic work among the working age population continues until advanced ages (Kan et al., 2021), so that we suspect that the differences among countries remain.

We expect to find that among older adults, women continue to dedicate more time to unpaid domestic work than men, but with differences in function of socioeconomic position and regional context, which we suggest impacts gender inequality and the total time invested in domestic labour.

### 3.3. Source and methodology

Our source is the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), which is the main European survey gathering longitudinal data on the population above fifty years of age on the effects of health, social, economic and environmental policies during the life-cycle (Bergmann & Börsch-Supan, 2021; Börsch-Supan et al., 2013; Börsch-Supan, 2022). SHARE has been carried out since 2004 on a biannual basis in 28 European countries and Israel, resulting in eight waves of the survey. In addition, SHARE data has been harmonised with data from the United States and the UK and, more recently, Japan, South Korea, China and India as well. In this article we focus on the last wave, which began in October 2019, although the fieldwork was interrupted in March 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. This interruption means that, in some countries, such as Spain, Finland and Portugal, no refresher households were incorporated into the sample to replace households that had abandoned the survey, and only those interviewed before were ultimately included. At the time when the fieldwork was interrupted, information from 70% of the planned sample had been gathered.

The eighth wave of the survey was chosen because it includes a module that gathered information on household time use. This module (TE-for Time Expenditure) surveyed participants on the time they dedicated to different activities during the day prior to being surveyed. In our case, our variable of interest, which we use as the dependent variable, is based on the following question: “How much time did you spend yesterday on household chores like cleaning, laundry, shopping, cooking, gardening, etc.?”, which coincides with the definition of unpaid domestic work found in the earlier bibliography (for example, Coltrane, 2000; Durán, 2012). Based on this question, the survey participants report the time they dedicate to each activity in a typical day. The time reported (in hours and minutes) is converted to minutes. Therefore, the dependent variable corresponds to the daily minutes dedicated to unpaid domestic work. It does not include time dedicated to unpaid care work, which is generally treated separately due to its distinct nature (Letablier, 2007; Sullivan, 2021).

We have selected 18 countries that included the reference question in the survey and we include all the individuals that responded to it and that were not institutionalized. For technical reasons, it is necessary that all the explanatory factors can vary in the sample used. Thus, for example, in the relationship to the labour market, there must be both employed and unemployed men and women in the age range analysed, which makes it necessary that the population we are concerned about, between

55 and 71 years of age, includes both. Following these requirements, the final sample is composed of 11 859 individuals with 58.2% being women (see Table 2).

**TABLE 2.** *Frequencies and explanatory variables by sex and country*

|                | n            |              | Labour market     |            | Education  |            | Income     |            |            |            |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                |              |              | Participation (%) |            | Higher (%) |            | Low (%)    |            | Hight (%)  |            |
|                | W            | M            | W                 | M          | W          | M          | W          | M          | W          | M          |
| Austria        | 297          | 151          | 33%               | 34%        | 25%        | 27%        | 36%        | 9%         | 14%        | 35%        |
| Germany        | 613          | 436          | 50%               | 54%        | 28%        | 36%        | 27%        | 17%        | 18%        | 39%        |
| Sweden         | 334          | 273          | 60%               | 59%        | 53%        | 33%        | 15%        | 8%         | 34%        | 41%        |
| Netherlands    | 358          | 258          | 49%               | 64%        | 26%        | 25%        | 25%        | 9%         | 14%        | 32%        |
| Spain          | 338          | 255          | 34%               | 48%        | 14%        | 21%        | 29%        | 31%        | 24%        | 42%        |
| Italy          | 394          | 215          | 46%               | 68%        | 18%        | 8%         | 18%        | 18%        | 12%        | 31%        |
| France         | 478          | 383          | 42%               | 45%        | 34%        | 28%        | 24%        | 16%        | 13%        | 25%        |
| Denmark        | 471          | 363          | 52%               | 64%        | 58%        | 39%        | 9%         | 12%        | 24%        | 46%        |
| Greece         | 617          | 360          | 32%               | 62%        | 24%        | 39%        | 29%        | 14%        | 11%        | 38%        |
| Switzerland    | 366          | 287          | 60%               | 74%        | 27%        | 20%        | 21%        | 5%         | 14%        | 56%        |
| Belgium        | 419          | 353          | 36%               | 51%        | 36%        | 40%        | 29%        | 13%        | 13%        | 32%        |
| Czech Republic | 559          | 232          | 34%               | 49%        | 14%        | 20%        | 24%        | 9%         | 23%        | 38%        |
| Poland         | 179          | 97           | 16%               | 29%        | 14%        | 15%        | 22%        | 22%        | 19%        | 35%        |
| Luxembourg     | 234          | 156          | 39%               | 57%        | 29%        | 47%        | 22%        | 24%        | 12%        | 23%        |
| Hungary        | 179          | 109          | 15%               | 34%        | 14%        | 15%        | 31%        | 30%        | 30%        | 27%        |
| Slovenia       | 513          | 283          | 27%               | 42%        | 19%        | 25%        | 23%        | 24%        | 20%        | 31%        |
| Estonia        | 617          | 300          | 58%               | 54%        | 31%        | 23%        | 31%        | 35%        | 38%        | 39%        |
| Croatia        | 228          | 154          | 27%               | 26%        | 13%        | 12%        | 24%        | 21%        | 21%        | 37%        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>4.665</b> | <b>7.194</b> | <b>42%</b>        | <b>53%</b> | <b>25%</b> | <b>26%</b> | <b>25%</b> | <b>17%</b> | <b>17%</b> | <b>35%</b> |

*Note 1:* “W” refers to women and “M” refers to men.

*Note 2:* The percentages are calculated based on the total number of women for women, and the total number of men for men.

*Note 3:* The transversal weighting designed by the SHARE has been applied to the explanatory variables.

*Source:* SHARE, wave 8.

With the aim of testing our research approach, we analyse three explanatory variables. First, participation in the labour market is used as an indicator of time availability, therefore, we are interested in knowing if individuals are employed or not. Based on the Employment module, we have created this binary variable.

Secondly, education level is included in a specific module on demography and networks and is based on the classification of the 1997 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). To simplify the analysis, we classify education into two categories: those that state they have higher education (starting at level 5 in the ISCED, which corresponds to short-cycle tertiary education) and those that state they have lower levels of education.

Thirdly, income level is used as an indicator of purchasing power. We have created a variable based on the Employment module, considering, after taxes, annual income from wages, annual income from self-employment, income from public pensions —adapting the figures to an annual level, in function of the time indicated— and income from private pensions. Once the total income by person is calculated we compute quintiles for each country, with countries then being classified into 3 categories: 1) low income, pertaining to the first quintile (which corresponds to the poorest 20% of the population), 2) high income, the fifth quintile, (corresponding to the richest 20%), and 3) the rest of the countries, with midlevel incomes.

In addition to the explanatory variables just described, the dependent variable is adjusted for age, age squared, household type (living alone, couple, couple and children, single parent or other) and physical health (limited or not) (see Table 3).

**TABLE 3.** *Control statistics*

|                        | <b>Women (%)</b> | <b>Men (%)</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Age</b>             |                  |                |
| Mean                   | 62.1             | 61.8           |
| <b>Household type</b>  |                  |                |
| Alone                  | 33%              | 27%            |
| Couple                 | 35%              | 38%            |
| Couple with children   | 8%               | 5%             |
| Single parent          | 16%              | 21%            |
| Others                 | 7%               | 9%             |
| <b>Physical health</b> |                  |                |
| Limited                | 11%              | 14%            |

*Note 1:* The percentages are calculated based on the total number of women for women, and the total number of men for men.

*Note 2:* The transversal weighting designed by the SHARE has been applied to the explanatory variables.

*Source:* SHARE, wave 8.

Lastly, it must be mentioned that other variables were also considered but ultimately excluded from the model because the way in which the data is gathered does not meet the needs of our study or because they are not statistically significant. For example, we have evaluated the presence of domestic service in the household and the type of working day.

We find great differences in the dedication to unpaid domestic work between women and men throughout practically all the age range, although declining as age increases. However, the effect is accentuated when we consider the type of household. On the one hand, women dedicate less time to domestic tasks when they live alone, especially when they are in an advanced phase of the life-cycle. On the other hand, when men dedicate the most time to such tasks is when they live alone or as a single parent with children. Therefore, the smallest gender gaps are found among the population that live in

single-person or single-parent households. In addition, we find that poor physical health leads to less time dedicated to unpaid domestic work.

We have created a linear regression model which, along with the dependent and explanatory variables, includes gender and country, as well as control variables. We apply the weighting variable used in the survey in the models. The final model permits us to estimate the minutes dedicated to unpaid domestic work in each country for both the total population and for men and women separately. Thus, we can ultimately group countries in function of the estimated time dedicated to unpaid domestic work by women and men. This relationship is the result of dividing the time dedicated to unpaid domestic work in minutes of women by that of men, providing us with a ratio. The four groupings are the result of a cluster analysis using the STATA statistical programme, which facilitates the formation of homogeneous groups based on quantitative variables. After, we look at the relationship between the dependent variable and the explanatory variables for all the countries and for the groupings of countries.

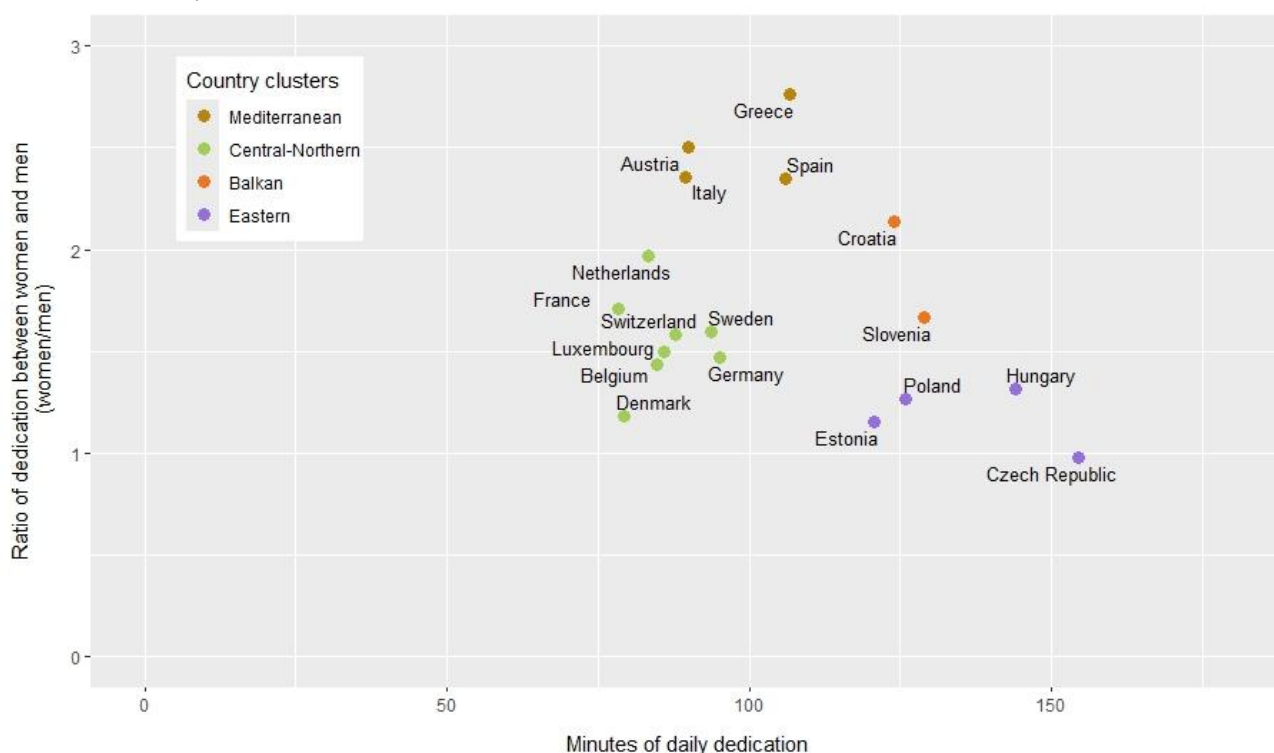
### 3.4. Results

#### 3.4.1. Who dedicates the most time to unpaid domestic work, and where?

To analyse the differences by gender comparatively by country, we calculate the relationship between the time dedicated to unpaid domestic work of women to that of men (minutes dedicated to unpaid domestic work of women, men and overall, as well as the calculation of the relationship, included in Table 1 of the Appendix). The SHARE data show that in 2019-2020 for the totality of countries studies, women dedicated 120 minutes a day and men 71, in other words, women dedicated 1.7 times more time than men did. This ratio ranges from a high of 2.8 in Greece —followed by Austria, Italy and Spain— to a ratio of slightly more than 1 in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Poland. The relationship between men and women in our study is similar to results from other studies (and is consistent with data provided by Eurostat for 2010 based on the Harmonized European Time Use Surveys, HETUS).

We can also consider the total time spent in this manner (independent of gender) across countries, which ranges from 155 minutes in the Czech Republic —followed by Hungary, Slovenia and Poland— to a low of 78 in France —closely followed by Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands—. Considering these two perspectives, the results are shown in Graph 1.

**GRAPH 1.** *Daily time dedicated to unpaid domestic work in minutes and relationship of time dedicated by women to men, by countries*



*Note 1:* Data controlled by age, age-squared, sex, household type, physical health, labour market participation, education level, income level and country.

*Note 2:* The transversal weighting designed by the SHARE has been applied.

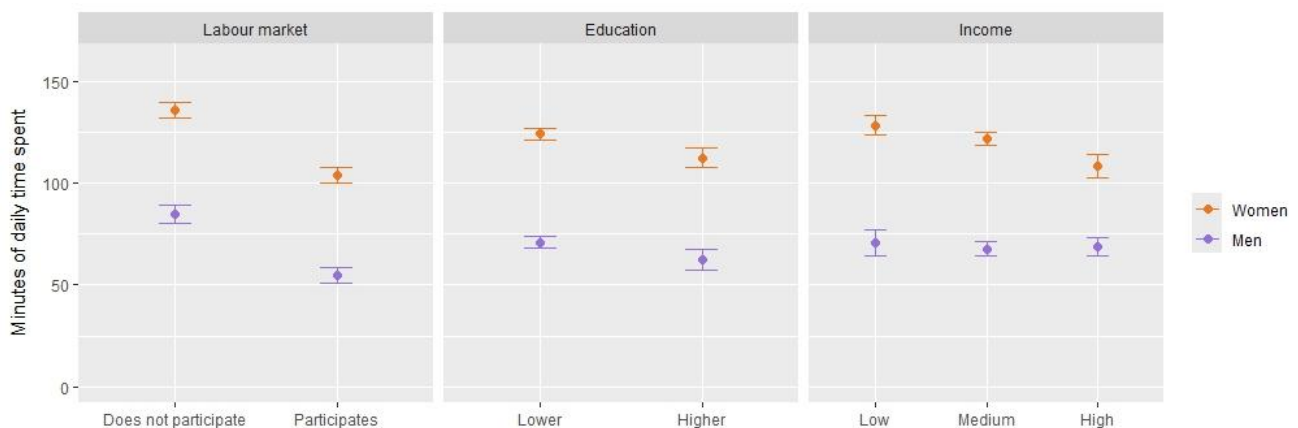
*Source:* SHARE, wave 8.

The first group, formed by the Mediterranean countries, Spain, Greece and Italy, and Austria, is characterized by the greatest difference between men and women—a difference of 2.3 to 2.8 times more time dedicated to unpaid work by women—more than 90 minutes more a day. The second group, with less time dedicated to domestic tasks—approximately 86 minutes daily—and lower differences between men and women—a ratio between 1.2 and 1.9—is formed by central and northern European countries (central-north cluster)—Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland—and is the largest group in terms of number of countries. The Balkans-Croatia and Slovenia (the third grouping) dedicate more time to unpaid domestic labour than the rest of the countries mentioned up to now—126 minutes daily—and the ratio for the difference in time dedicated to unpaid domestic labour is high and similar to the second group: ranging from 1.7 to 2. Eastern Europe shares a significantly higher total amount of time. The Czech Republic and Hungary are the countries where the most time is dedicated to unpaid domestic labour—more than 144 minutes a day—which, along with Poland and Estonia, constitute the fourth group of countries. In this grouping, the time that women and men dedicate to domestic tasks is more equitable, women dedicate less than 20 minutes more a day than men; thus, the ratio in this case is 1.2.

### 3.4.2. Gender pattern associated with dedication to unpaid domestic work in Europe

In the previous section we have seen that variations in time show that European countries are differentiated by two characteristics: total time dedicated to unpaid domestic work and differences in the time dedicated by women and men. In this section we look at the differences between the sexes in relation to three independent variables: participation in the labour market, education level and income level. The relationship between gender and unpaid domestic labour is shown in Graph 2.

**GRAPH 2.** *Time in minutes dedicated to unpaid domestic work in function of the explanatory variables and sex*



*Note 1:* Data controlled by age, age-squared, household type, physical health, labour market participation, education level, income level and country group.

*Note 2:* The transversal weighting designed by the SHARE has been applied.

*Source:* SHARE, wave 8.

First, as we expected to find, participation in the labour market implies less dedication to household tasks for both genders. Those who do not participate in the labour market dedicate approximately 30 minutes more to unpaid domestic work a day, which represents a larger increase for men (54%) than for women (30%). Thus, working women dedicate 1.9 times more time than working men (104 and 55 minutes a day, respectively). While women who do not work dedicate 1.6 times more time to unpaid domestic work than men in the equivalent situation (136 and 85 minutes a day, respectively). These findings indicate that participating in the labour market does not lead to an equivalent reduction in time dedicated to unpaid domestic labour for women and men, and thus, not to greater levels of equality.

Secondly, the population with higher levels of education spends less time on unpaid domestic work than those with lower education levels, which is consistent with the literature (England, 2010; Evertsson et al., 2009; García-Román, 2023; Pailhé et al., 2021). However, the relationship between

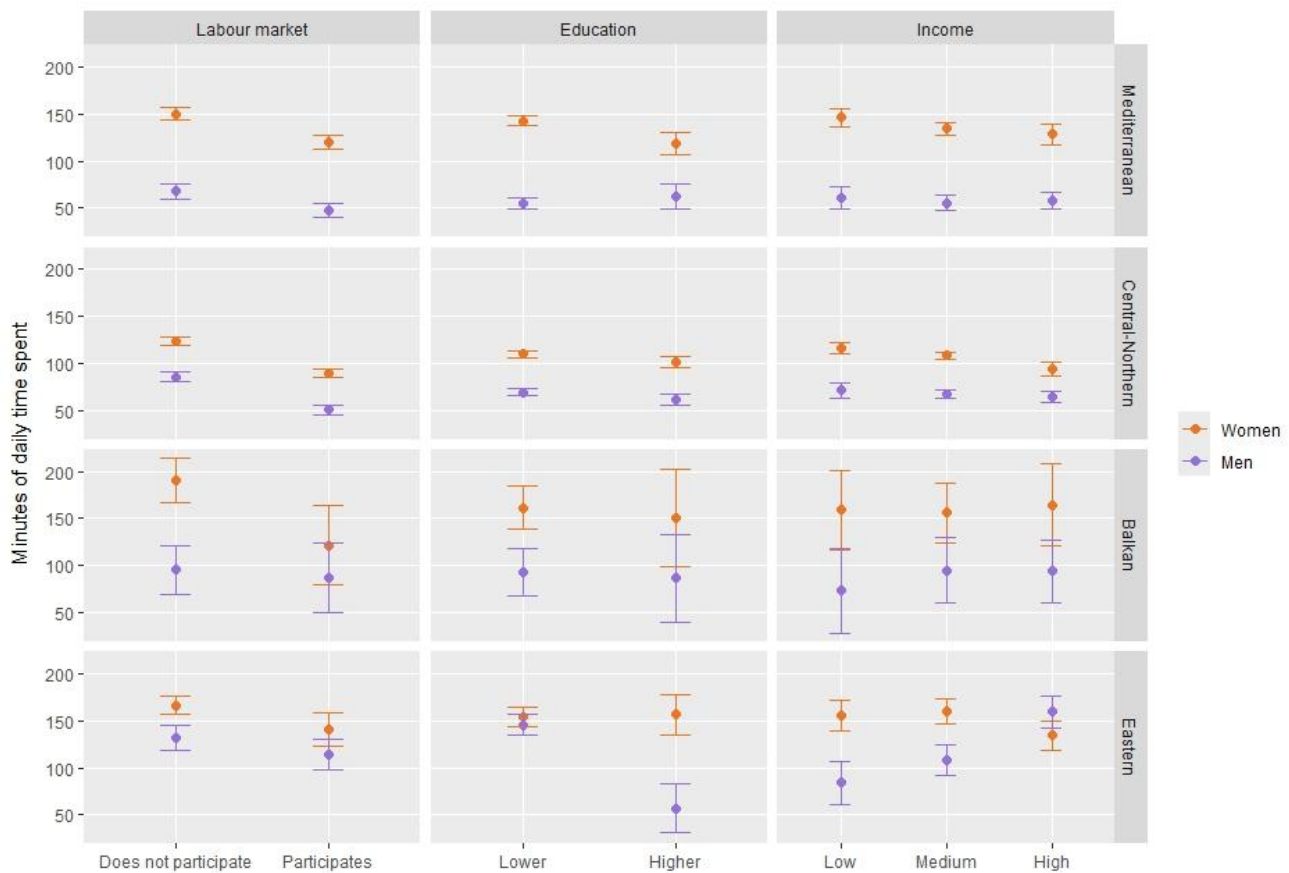
men and women is not more equal among this population than among those with lower education levels, as the same relationship to domestic labour by gender is maintained.

Thirdly, women's income level is inversely related to time spent on unpaid domestic work. In addition, among the population with higher incomes we find that the distance between men and women is reduced in comparison to those with lower incomes. This is the explanatory variable with the greatest impact on the dependent variable: comparing the populations with low and high incomes, the ratio of time spent on unpaid domestic labour between women and men is 1.8 for the low-income population and 1.5 for those with high incomes.

### 3.4.3. Comparison of the gender pattern associated with dedication to unpaid domestic work by country groups

The gender pattern we find when we consider the explanatory variables is reproduced when we look at the groupings of countries, although with some exceptions and differences in terms of the time dedicated to unpaid labour between women and men (see Graph 3). First, regarding the labour market, the gender pattern is reproduced in the Mediterranean (and Austria) grouping and in the Central-north group of countries, but not among the Eastern and Balkan countries, where the population that participates in the labour market presents more equal levels in the division of unpaid domestic work.

**GRAPH 3.** *Time in minutes dedicated to unpaid domestic work daily in function of the explanatory variables, sex and country groups*



*Note 1:* Data controlled by age, age-squared, household type, physical health, labour market participation, education level, income level and country group.

*Note 2:* The transversal weighting designed by the SHARE has been applied.

*Note 3:* The country groupings are the following: (Mediterranean) Austria, Spain, Greece and Italy; (Centre-north) Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland; (Balkans) Croatia and Slovenia; (East) Estonia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic.

*Source:* SHARE, wave 8.

Secondly, regarding education levels, the general pattern found for women is found in the Mediterranean countries but is less significant in the rest of the country groupings. We find greater heterogeneity among men. There are groups—especially in the East, but also in the Centre-north—where we find what the general pattern suggests: those with higher education levels dedicate less time to unpaid domestic work than those with lower education levels. This is not the case in the Mediterranean group, where we find that men with higher education dedicate the most time to unpaid labour, which means that the distance between women and men in this segment of the population is less.

We see the clear effect of class in the time dedicated to unpaid domestic work, but the distance between the genders and level of significance is different among the regions. In the East, Centre-north and Mediterranean, we find that gender equality in unpaid domestic work is greater among individuals with high incomes than among those with lower incomes. In contrast, in the Balkans, the relationship between income and unpaid domestic work is not significant. In addition, the finding that this variable is only significant for men in the East grouping of countries—who dedicate more time to unpaid domestic work the higher their incomes—stands out; while overall, this factor is predominantly relevant for women—who dedicate less time when they have higher incomes—.

### 3.5. Conclusions

Gender is the most important determinant of the organization of unpaid domestic work among older adults, as we find that in all the countries in the sample and without generational differences, women dedicate significantly more time to it than men. However, we also find important differences among the different countries in our sample in the total time spent on unpaid domestic work and in the levels of inequality between women and men. In general, more time is dedicated to unpaid domestic labour in the east, specifically the Czech Republic and Hungary, while the distance between the genders is greatest in the Mediterranean group, and specifically in Greece.

Along these lines, one of the main contributions of this study is the identification of four clusters of countries based on time spent on unpaid domestic labour: a Mediterranean (along with Austria) grouping, a Centre-north one, the Balkans and the East. These regions show important differences in time spent on unpaid domestic labour and differences in the level of equality on this issue between women and men, revealing a significant connection to the welfare regimes proposed by Esping-Andersen (1990), along with the contribution made by Lewis (1992) related to care work.

We have found that the differences in time dedicated to unpaid work between women and men is greatest in the Mediterranean grouping. This finding must be understood within the context of lower social spending per capita and less developed public policies in comparison to countries in central and northern Europe. In contrast, less time dedicated to unpaid domestic work coexists with greater gender equality in the Centre-north countries with their more developed welfare states. These countries have led in the establishment of social policies that, although they have not directly reduced the gender gap in domestic work, have altered the gender pattern in both public and private spheres.

One notable finding is that in these two groups of countries, the relationship of gender to time dedicated to unpaid labour is mainly explain by the contribution of women, as this is greater in the

Mediterranean group, while the time dedicated by men is similar in both groups. This finding reveals that women continue to hold the main responsibility for domestic tasks, and it must be emphasized in interpreting our data, that this situation is in part related to the absence of institutional support and the persistence of gender roles that reinforce the sexual division of labour.

On this point, we must emphasise the case of Eastern Europe, where we find the greatest time dedicated to unpaid household tasks accompanied by a significant level of gender equality. Davis and Greenstein (2004) found that, in countries such as Russia, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Hungary, it was common for men to report doing half of the domestic chores. Our study is consistent with this result as we find that men in this region behave more equally in terms of unpaid domestic labour. In contrast with surveys on the division of domestic labour that evaluate the relationship with both members of the couple, the responses provided in the SHARE survey are gathered from the individuals and measured in minutes per day. The advantage of this method is that it mitigates the possible overestimation of the time men spend on domestic tasks in comparison to their partners, an observation made by Kamo (2000) and that can be extrapolated to the countries in our sample.

To explain the disparities between men and women, we have considered socioeconomic characteristics that have been shown to be significant in prior studies. Our analysis contributes new results and perspectives in this respect. The main conclusion that we draw is that, for the older adult population, in terms of time spent on unpaid domestic work, gender is determinant. In other words, none of the socioeconomic variables reverse the ratio between women and men, although they do alter it: the estimates from the model differ between the sexes with the effect being most pronounced among women. While participation in the labour market in general leads to a decrease in the time spent on unpaid domestic work without modifying levels of inequality, this decrease is greater at higher levels of income and is associated with a more equitable dynamic among the older adult population. In contrast, our analysis does not reveal any significant effects of education level, with the exception of the Mediterranean group of countries. In the latter, couples with higher educations have a more equitable sharing of unpaid domestic work than those with lower levels of education. Our findings show that the significance and implication of the gender pattern differ according to the social context of gender inequality, which in turn suggests that individual characteristics only explain a part of the differences between women and men. For example, in our study, the independent variables are more significant in the Mediterranean countries where, at the same time, the disparity is greater.

This study provides an innovative perspective, although it also has certain limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the observations impedes understanding the impact of certain changes over

the life-cycle, such as the transition to an “empty nest”, to retirement or to widowhood. The individual perspective adopted does not provide an understanding of the process of intra-family negotiation, especially in terms of the division of labour. It would also be important to explore the relationship with unpaid care work, connecting care for older generations, younger generations (especially grandchildren) and partners and other relatives (Letablier, 2007; Sullivan, 2021). Lastly, it has been found that the gender gap decreases when considering certain less routine tasks, such as gardening and food shopping (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Kan et al., 2011). It is necessary to incorporate this distinction among tasks as it has been found that these are the types of tasks that most increase with the entry into adult ages, along with other more invisible tasks, such as the organization of the household and the management of emotions, where the gender gap is greater (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Leopold & Skopek, 2015).

In conclusion, our results show that the ratio of time spent on unpaid domestic work is more equal when older women are employed, have higher education and have higher incomes, although the ratio increases when they live with a male partner and/or child. In contrast, for men, the independent variables are not associated with relevant modifications in their patterns of time dedicated to unpaid domestic work, as only not being employed and not living with a female partner increases their time dedicated to domestic work. However, even when controlling for all of these explanatory variables, the time that older adult women dedicate to unpaid domestic work is greater than that of men in all the countries considered, although the significance varies among countries.

Lastly, we find that, although the socioeconomic variables contribute to explaining the differences between women and men, regional context has an important weight. This is due, to a great extent, to the interaction between institutional policies and cultural gender norms, although the effects are difficult to quantify. This environment becomes a determining factor for establishing whether the gender revolution in the division of labour has stagnated or will continue to see advances toward reducing the gender gap in unpaid work.

## 4. Narratives of change and continuity in the perceived division of visible and invisible housework: A qualitative longitudinal assessment of men and women in Spain<sup>8</sup>

### Abstract

Past research has shown that men and women are not equally involved in housework; not only do women tend to invest more time in housework than men, they also shoulder responsibility and carry the mental and emotional burdens that go with it. To better understand how flexible or resistant these gendered dynamics are over time, this article examines participants' narratives around change or continuity in the perceived division of both visible and invisible housework tasks over time, and explores the main factors involved. Drawing on longitudinal qualitative interviews with 35 urban, highly educated, heterosexual, partnered adults in Spain conducted in 2012 and 2019, we analyse participants' justifications and reasoning for their perceived (by one partner) housework arrangements, identifying the factors that contribute to stability and change over time. We find that time availability, personal cleaning standards, or life-course transitions such as parenthood are factors that contribute to explaining perceived changes in housework distribution over time. Alternatively, effective communication and the persistence of gendered roles explained participants' perceived narratives of stability over time. Our findings reveal a gendered pattern in the way participants explain these dynamics: women emphasize the burden of the invisible family load, while men tend to attribute inequalities to external factors as the time they have available. These findings suggest that achieving a more egalitarian division of housework requires not only a redistribution of tasks, but also, particularly in the case of men, a fundamental shift in attitudes and behaviours towards coresponsibility and proactive participation.

**Keywords:** Division of housework; gender; qualitative research; longitudinal analysis; invisible tasks; Spain

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<sup>8</sup> This chapter was coauthored with PhD Xiana Bueno, Department of Applied Health Science, School of Public Health, Indiana University Bloomington, Indiana (USA), PhD Joan García Román, Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics (CED-CERCA), Barcelona and PhD Pau Miret Gamundi, Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics (CED-CERCA), Barcelona.

## 4.1. Introduction

The distribution of unpaid housework and paid work within couples changes over the course of their lives and is influenced by events such as marriage, parenthood or employment changes (Anxo et al., 2011; Craig & Brown, 2017; García & Gracia, 2022; Kan et al., 2011). These changes also may be the result of negotiation processes between partners, learning experiences, or the outsourcing of housework (Baxter et al., 2008).

Housework is generally described as hard, demanding, and unrewarding; it encompasses both visible tasks —such as cleaning, cooking, or laundry— and invisible tasks —permanent activities of daily family management— (Coltrane, 2000; Durán, 2012; Oakley, 2018; Wayne et al., 2023). Furthermore, the concept of the 'mental load', introduced by Hochschild and Machung (1989), highlights the cognitive and emotional work disproportionately borne by women. Unlike the tangible "second shift", which sees women juggling paid and unpaid work, this 'invisible family load' —as Wayne et al. (2023) have labelled it— is ever-present and transcends time and space (Dean et al., 2022). Consequently, studies that exclude this cognitive dimension tend to underestimate the gender gap (Daminger, 2019).

Our study builds on these frameworks by analysing two series of in-depth interviews conducted seven years apart (2012 and 2019) with urban, highly-educated, heterosexual individuals in stable relationship<sup>9</sup>. This qualitative longitudinal approach enables us to explore, from a gender perspective, not only the narratives and factors that influence changes or stability in the division of unpaid labour, but also all of these tasks, whether visible or invisible, a fact which has previously been overlooked in research into housework, and about which very little is known regarding how it changes over time. By comparing two time points in interviewees' lives, we explore how their perceived experiences and perspectives regarding aspects such as household organization, negotiation strategies, or cleanliness standards, remain or change in their narratives offering insights into the evolving dynamics of housework in contemporary relationships.

## 4.2. Background

### 4.2.1. The persistent gender gap in visible and invisible domestic labour

The real effects of the 'gender revolution' are increasingly being questioned. Despite some advances in gender dynamics in the private and public spheres, there is still an imbalance in the gendered

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<sup>9</sup> All participants in our study were in relationships, but they were interviewed individually about their own experiences and perspectives of their partners. Their partners did not take part in the interviews.

distribution of housework (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Bianchi et al., 2012; Goldscheider et al. 2015). Moreover, the recent slowdown in gender equality suggests that this revolution has either stalled or is incomplete, since it has failed to address the deeply-rooted norms and power imbalances that sustain inequality (England, 2010; Kan et al., 2022). Although there has been a slight increase in the contribution of men to housework (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Bianchi et al., 2012; Hook, 2010), the division remains specialized: women predominantly handle routine tasks, while men focus on occasional tasks that they find more satisfying (Craig & Brown, 2017; García-Roman & Ophir, 2024; Hook, 2010; Treas, 2008).

This specialization is further accentuated when considering its intangible dimensions —the invisible family load— which involves a wide range of cognitive and emotional responsibilities (Wayne et al., 2023). These include not only planning, monitoring routines, and managing household logistics, but also more subtle forms of mental labour such as anticipating needs, identifying solutions, tracking task completion, providing reminders, and defining the standards by which tasks should be performed (Damingier, 2019; Dean et al., 2022; Hochschild, 1989; Wayne et al., 2023). As Fraser (1997) argues, this type of reproductive labour is “paradoxically indispensable yet systematically devalued” in capitalist societies, a contradiction that fundamentally sustains gender injustice. Despite its critical role in sustaining everyday life, domestic and emotional work remains largely invisible and unrecognised, reinforcing persistent power asymmetries within households (Fraser, 1997; Hochschild, 1989).

Primarily performed by women, cognitive and emotional labour is invisible, enduring and boundaryless by time or space (Brumley & St. George, 2023; Dean et al., 2022). The gender gap in these managerial responsibilities is even wider than for physical tasks such as cooking and cleaning (Aviv et al., 2024; Damingier, 2019; Barigozzi et al., 2025). Moreover, mental load has been linked to stress, emotional strain, and lower relationship satisfaction (Aviv et al., 2024; Offer, 2014), especially as they often juggle multiple responsibilities simultaneously, including childcare (Carrasco et al., 2011; Craig & Brown, 2017; Wayne et al., 2023). Unlike some visible tasks, emotional labour —particularly the mental responsibility for the well-being of others— is difficult to delegate and cannot be outsourced (Offer, 2014; Treas, 2008).

#### 4.2.2. Theoretical perspectives on housework division: ‘Doing gender’

Traditional theories, such as relative resources (Becker, 1985), economic dependence (Aassve et al., 2014; Brines, 1994), and differences in time availability (Coltrane, 2000; Aassve et al., 2014) have focused on explaining the gender gap in housework, linking it to the lower bargaining power of women

and their subordinate social status in comparison with their male partners (Coltrane, 2000; Evertsson & Nermo, 2007). While these theories emphasize equality in economic contributions, they overlook how deeply entrenched gender-based norms shape domestic roles (Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010).

The theory of ‘doing gender’ provides a critical lens, emphasizing how housework reinforces traditional gender-based norms and roles (West & Zimmerman, 1987). It highlights the micro-level dynamics by everyday actions often perpetuating inequality (Daminger, 2019; Ferree, 1990; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010; Wiesmann et al., 2008). Women often take on the role of ‘gatekeeper’, overseeing household management, while the involvement of men is often passive (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Brumley & St. George, 2023; Treas, 2008). This implies that men frequently adopt the role of ‘apprentices’, benefitting from the privilege of choice (Brumley & St. George, 2023; Moreno-Colom et al., 2024), and using attitudes and justifications to avoid conflicts and obtain a sense of justice (Hochschild, 1989; Thompson, 1991). Additionally, recent evidence shows that women are held to higher cleanliness standards and seen as more morally responsible for housework, reinforcing gendered expectations through social judgement (Thébaud et al., 2021).

Therefore, an egalitarian division of housework is associated with attitudes regarding reproductive work, especially among men (Cunningham, 2007; Dechant & Blossfeld, 2015; Evertsson, 2014; Nitsche & Grunow, 2016). Consequently, men with higher standards of cleanliness are more inclined to be involved in a more egalitarian distribution of housework (Risman & Johnson-Sumerford, 1998; Röhler & Huinink, 2010; Thébaud et al., 2021). Yet perceptions of equality may coexist with unequal practices, as dominant gender norms shape what is considered fair or balanced. As Thompson (1991) notes, individuals use subjective criteria —such as equity or social comparison— to assess fairness, which can justify and sustain unequal arrangements. (Röhler & Huinink, 2010; Thébaud et al., 2021).

Attitudes toward housework are also influenced by socialization experiences prior to cohabitation, and intergenerational transmission of values in the family of origin, although they may also be influenced by individual experiences over the course of an individual’s life (Ajenjo & García, 2018). This is especially true for women who are socialized to identify with the gender-based role of housewife, and who often have higher standards of cleaning, show more interest in housework, and tend to be more skilled at it (Röhler & Huinink, 2010; Thébaud et al., 2021).

#### 4.2.3. Changes in the division of housework: life course events, time availability, and negotiation process

The gender gap in housework fluctuates throughout the life course, influenced by key family transitions such as cohabitation, marriage, parenthood, or an empty nest (Anxo et al., 2011; García & Gracia, 2022; Kan et al., 2011; Schulz & Raab, 2023). Longitudinal studies have highlighted that, even among couples who uphold egalitarian values, these transitions often lead to a less equal distribution of housework (Kühhirt, 2012; Nitsche & Grunow, 2016; Dechant & Blossfeld, 2015; Grunow et al., 2012; Schulz & Raab, 2023). Parenthood, in particular, increases the amount of unpaid work done by women, while the involvement of men remains largely unchanged (García & Gracia, 2022; González & Jurado, 2015; Schober, 2013). External factors, such as economic crises, or exceptional events like the COVID-19 pandemic, can also disrupt housework dynamics (Rodríguez et al., 2021).

These changes often force couples to adopt a range of strategies to balance professional and family life; however, these strategies often reflect traditional gender roles (Baxter et al., 2008; Cunningham, 2007; Grunow et al., 2012). Women are more likely to reduce their professional commitments to accommodate unpaid responsibilities, while men's adjustments are usually temporary (González & Jurado, 2015; Rodríguez et al., 2021). Time availability is often used to justify unequal divisions of work. Women who challenge this justification report higher levels of dissatisfaction, prompting attempts to renegotiate tasks (Ferree, 1990; Kluwer et al., 2000; Thompson, 1991). Many men perceive the division of domestic work as fair when their lower involvement in household tasks is offset by their contribution to paid work (Thébaud, 2010).

However, these renegotiations are influenced by power dynamics, assertiveness, and attitudes of the partner, but often encounter resistance rooted in gender norms (Kluwer et al. 2000; Mannino & Deutsch, 2007). Qualitative studies reveal that couples striving for an egalitarian division of labour often rely on explicit task-sharing agreements (González & Jurado, 2015; Wiesmann et al., 2008). However, these arrangements often lapse over time due to 'silent agreements,' where women take on additional tasks in order to avoid conflict (Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980; Wiesmann et al., 2008). Outsourcing is an increasingly common strategy to reduce the burden of housework; although typically framed as a way to save women's time, its feasibility depends on the household's financial resources (Carrasco & Domínguez, 2011; Van Der Lippe et al., 2004).

#### 4.2.4. The Spanish context

Although the gender revolution has led to some progress in Spain, it still lags behind other countries, and there is a lack of robust policies aimed at reconciling family and work responsibilities (Carrasco

et al., 2011; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010), making the extended family vital in how household responsibilities are organized (Carrasco & Domínguez, 2011; Durán, 2012). At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of dual-income couples, influenced by greater female employment opportunities and a higher level of education. These changes have, in many households, led to a more equal distribution of time between men and women (Ajenjo & García, 2014; García-Román, 2021).

Further notable changes over this period are transformations with regard to the family and values, with a rise in the number of couples cohabiting and the birth of children outside marriage (Carrasco & Domínguez, 2011; González & Jurado, 2015). Fertility rates have declined, and family sizes have become smaller, contributing to broader demographic shifts. Parental leave policies have also evolved. While women have had 16 weeks of paid maternity leave since 1989, fathers only gradually gained access to longer leaves—from two days in 2001 to an equal, non-transferable 16 weeks by 2021—(Bueno & Grau-Grau, 2021; Escot et al., 2014).

Despite these advances, the distribution of housework remains far from egalitarian (Ajenjo & García, 2014; Carrasco et al., 2011; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010). In line with this, González and Jurado (2015) found in a longitudinal qualitative study that couples who maintain an egalitarian division of labour after the birth of their first child tend to share domestic routines, hold more flexible standards, and involve men more actively in care and household tasks (González & Jurado, 2015). However, the arrival of a child continues to reinforce traditional gender roles, with women more likely to assume unpaid parental leave and additional housework (Bueno & Grau-Grau, 2021).

### 4.3. Research objectives

Our primary objective in this research is to compare over time how partnered men and women—not in union with each other—perceive the dynamics of housework from a gender perspective. Specifically, we aim to elucidate (1) how participants perceive the distribution of visible and invisible tasks, and (2) the perceived factors that influence change or stability in how couples distribute housework.

### 4.4. Data and methods

The original data from this study came from a large cross-cultural research study that interviewed over 400 individuals in five countries in 2012. A follow-up study reinterviewed the Spanish subsample of 80 individuals in 2019. All protocols and procedures in this study were approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university of one of the authors at the time of the study. This study draws on the

original sample of 35 participants who were in the same heterosexual relationship at the time of both interviews; therefore, a total of 70 interviews were analysed.

The samples were drawn separately from men and women (i.e. only one member of the couple was interviewed). Conducting interviews without their partners permits a more critical perspective to be extracted from the interviewees, but it should be noted that they may be more susceptible to political correctness and social desirability; and this may be particularly the case of men (Kamo, 2000), given that the interviewer was a woman.

Our interviewees were all Spanish natives who, during the first wave of interviews, were aged 24-35, highly educated (holding university or post-secondary vocational studies), in stable heterosexual relationships (married or in consensual unions), and living in large urban areas (i.e., Barcelona or Madrid). By focusing on the highly educated, we aimed to avoid heterogeneity in the analysis and consider the closer link shown in previous research between higher education and gender egalitarianism (Goldscheider et al., 2015).

The 2012 full sample (Wave 1), which comprised of individuals born between 1976 and 1987, consisted of 80 in-person interviews evenly distributed by gender. The sample was limited to individuals who were not full-time students, not pregnant, had no children from previous relationships and were not separated, divorced or widowed. The 2019 sample included follow-up phone interviews with the same participants. The attrition rate was minimal, as 77 of the 80 original respondents agreed to be re-interviewed. The analytical sample for the current study excluded the 29 participants who were single or not living with their partner in the first wave, as well as the 13 participants who were separated and/or divorced at the time of the second interview. The two people who outsourced housework to a live-in full-time houseworker were also excluded, given that, in practice, the distribution of housework in such cases can be seen as outliers. The subsample, therefore, consisted of 35 interviews in each wave, 18 women and 17 men. Table 4 shows the changes in family composition between 2012 and 2019. For full comprehension, Appendix Table A4 includes detailed socioeconomic information for each participant and their partner.

**TABLE 4.** *Family composition of the 2012 and 2019 samples*

|       |           | 2019      |           |              |                |       |
|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|----------------|-------|
|       |           | Childless | One child | Two Children | Three children | Total |
| 2012  | Childless | 4         | 3         | 10           | 2              | 19    |
|       | One child | -         | 1         | 14           | 1              | 16    |
| Total |           | 4         | 4         | 24           | 3              | 35    |

Source: Interview data

The selection of interviewees in 2012 was carried out using the snowball sampling method, starting with many individuals as "seeds", who were subsequently asked to provide a maximum of two references. First-wave interviews lasted from 60 to 120 minutes and second-wave interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. All interviews were voice recorded and later fully transcribed by a native speaker. In both waves, the interviews were conducted by a female interviewer (the second author) of similar status to the interviewees; this was thought to increase mutual trust and therefore facilitate greater sharing by participants (Bhopal, 2010).

The interview protocols compiled the sociodemographic information of interviewees and their partners; their financial and employment situations; fertility intentions; the division of housework and childcare; and gender-role attitudes. Regarding housework, participants were asked how they and their partners divided the household tasks; the proportion they estimated each of them did; their satisfaction with this distribution; whether they outsourced any tasks; and their attitudes toward outsourcing. The main question we focused on was: 'How do you share household chores at home?'.

Structural descriptive codes were developed based on key themes such as the labour market, education or housework. Initially, the responses were coded inductively, and memos were made, following the grounded theory originally proposed by Strauss (Flick, 1998). From there, we developed specific codes for each thematic section. For instance, in relation to the division of domestic work and its perception, we created two main categories: one for references to visible tasks and another to invisible ones. Additionally, we introduced codes related to the socialization experiences or notions of justice or satisfaction, among others. For the visible tasks, we focus on each individual's perception, considering all the task they describe. Specifically, we examine both the amount of housework they and their partner, as well as the type of tasks involved. These include both routine and non-routine chores, such as food preparation, cleaning, grocery and household shopping, dishwashing, as well as doing and caring for laundry (Coltrane, 2000). For the invisible family load, we consider all the activities that Wayne et al. (2023) grouped into three interrelated domains: 1) the managerial family load, which includes directive tasks such as planning, organizing, supervising, and delegating

household work and the 2) cognitive family load, involving mental processes like attention, memory, anticipation, information processing, decision-making, and problem-solving (Barigozzi et al., 2025; Daminger, 2019); and the 3) emotional family load, referring to the ongoing concern with meeting the needs, responsibilities, goals, and overall well-being of the family (Barigozzi et al., 2025; Dean et al., 2022). Additional information was also coded related to sociodemographic and economic factors that affected the life course of the interviewee, their partner, and children.

An initial codebook was developed by the first author using Atlas.ti to analyse a group of 12 interviews. This was discussed by all the authors, and the analyses were shared among them throughout the whole process, thus enabling in-depth discussions regarding data analysis and interpretation (Flick, 1998). Once all the interviews had been coded, they were analysed by comparing the first and second waves. As a result, we were able to categorize the interviewees based on whether or not the distribution of their housework had changed, as detailed in the next section.

#### 4.5. Findings: Narratives around changes and no changes over time in the division of housework

To identify changes in the division of housework labour over time or the lack thereof, participants were categorized according to the level of egalitarianism in their perceived distribution of housework in the two interviews, as well as by gender, regarding both physical tasks and invisible family responsibilities. We are aware that determining whether the division of housework is egalitarian or not is complex, even more so when analysing the perspective of only one member of the couple. For this reason, we have considered the extensive existing research and feminist debates on this matter (Doucet, 1995). Hence, our criterion was to thoroughly evaluate how domestic tasks were conceptualized in the narratives of each interviewee to identify changes in the division of housework over time (see Appendix Table A3 for more details).

Based on our analytical strategy, we present our findings in two main blocks: (1) the narratives of those interviewees who said that there had been a change in their distribution of housework between 2012 and 2019; and (2) the narratives of those whose reasoning behind housework distribution had not changed. Each block contains the main sub-narratives that respondents use to justify change or non-change, along with the factors that appear to facilitate or deter change, as summarized in Table 5.

**TABLE 5.** *Summary of the findings*

|                                 |                                                                                                                     | <b>Justification</b>                                            | <b>Narrative</b>                                                                                          | <b>Characteristics</b>                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Change over time</b>         |                                                                                                                     |                                                                 |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1                               | <i>Time availability shapes the perception of the housework distribution</i>                                        | Availability of time (due to work or childcare)                 | Change perceived as spontaneous and functional unintentional                                              | Often reported by men; mental load is overlooked; reliance on outsourcing and lowering of standards                                                                                       |
| 2                               | <i>Gendered distribution shaped by the woman's higher standard</i>                                                  | She is seen and having more time and being more demanding       | Slight and discursive change; female leadership is maintained                                             | Both men and women acknowledge invisible tasks, but the gendered responsibility persist; women legitimize the situation by comparing with other men or downplaying their own expectations |
| 3                               | <i>Women perceive a setback in equality after parenthood</i>                                                        | Lack of justification; Women explicitly problematize inequality | Expression of imbalance and demand for redistribution                                                     | Women express discomfort and a desire for change in response to the logistical and emotional burden                                                                                       |
| 4                               | <i>Women deliberately pursue change through pressure and negotiation with men</i>                                   | Women's dissatisfaction and need for redistribution             | Partial change, but persistence of mental load                                                            | Men respond reactively; participation is conditional, not fully assumed                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Lack of Change over time</b> |                                                                                                                     |                                                                 |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1                               | <i>Mutually agreed-upon division of housework sustained over time through effective communication and consensus</i> | Consensus and communication                                     | Division perceived as spontaneous and equitable                                                           | Men speak in general terms; women show more detailed and organized knowledge                                                                                                              |
| 2                               | <i>Persistent unequal sharing of housework through passive male involvement</i>                                     | Role dynamics or personality traits                             | Resigned acceptance; the woman leads, the man helps when asked                                            | Underlying conflict, especially perceived by women                                                                                                                                        |
| 3                               | <i>Persistent gendered distribution due to male lack of involvement</i>                                             | Tradition, economics, resignation                               | The man does not participate; the woman takes on everything, with the man only "compensating" financially | Visible discomfort, but practical acceptance with no expectation of change                                                                                                                |

Source: Interview data

#### 4.5.1. Narratives around changes over time

We have identified four different narratives among those interviewees who reported changes in the perceived distribution of housework between the two interviews. Transitions such as the arrival of children or changes in employment are transversal across the sample, but they are not treated here as causes of change per se. Rather, we examine how interviewees use these transitions to justify or reinterpret change—or its absence—in the distribution of housework. This analytical approach centres on subjective representations, symbolic negotiations, and the discursive strategies employed to make sense of (in)equality.

##### **“Whoever’s free does it, and that’s it!”: Time availability shapes the perception of the housework distribution**

Some interviewees use time availability—often related to labour market and childcare—as the main justification for how tasks are divided. Some evolved from an equal towards an unequal distribution of tasks between 2012 and 2019, while others evolved towards a highly egalitarian arrangement, such as Federico<sup>10</sup>, a 26-year-old<sup>11</sup> man:

“I think that now she does more than I do, because she’s at home more than I am [...] But... well, we do things as best we can” [Federico, 2012: no children]

“[In the] Domestic cleaning tasks, there’s no difference; whoever’s free does it, and that’s it! And the shopping, for the sake of ease sometimes I go, if she stays with the baby girl, ‘OK, I’ll go and get it all,’ or if not, then she goes and I stay with the girl, that is, we try to have one of us do it, not together because it’s more practical, faster [...] During the ... [period of] breastfeeding our daughter, which lasted almost 18 months, we decided that it required a greater effort from her in terms of being available and present, so, I took on the remaining tasks” [Federico, 2019: two children] (Appendix A1 #01<sup>12</sup>)

Federico attributed the prior imbalance to his partner being unemployed<sup>13</sup>. In some cases, the opposite occurs: in the second wave, it is the woman who is unemployed or on maternity leave. There is a prevalence of male interviewees in this group, and in their narratives, it is common to observe the use of the 'transitory' differences in participation in the labour market. In the second interview, the increased workload due to childcare is used again to justify the perception of a more equal distribution.

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<sup>10</sup> Names have been changed to protect the respondent’s privacy.

<sup>11</sup> The age provided for each interviewee pertains to the first wave conducted in 2012. The ages for the second wave, conducted in 2019, are detailed in the Appendix Table A4.

<sup>12</sup> The original quotes in Spanish are included in the Appendix Table A2.

<sup>13</sup> At the time of the first interview (2012), Spain was undergoing the Great Recession, with many interviewees and their partners facing unemployment or job instability.

This male-led discourse tends to present housework as spontaneous and unplanned, as Federico says: "whoever's free does it, and that's it". Similar justifications appear in Javier, a 26-year-old man. He and his wife both worked full-time during the first wave. Due to work demands, Javier had less available time, which required his wife to devote more time to domestic labour. The change in the second wave is that children led to an increased workload and reduced available time, even though his wife reduced her working hours to care for their daughters.

"She does more than me for sure, but also because I'm often away at the weekends, and that's the time we do these things, so I think she does more simply because of that" [Javier, 2012: no children]

"50% each, come on, no... I couldn't make a distinction if she does more or I do more [...] Generally due to personal preferences [laughs], in the sense that we reach an agreement between the two of us, since I really like to cook [...] we have, we decided to hire someone for a good part of the cleaning tasks, because we don't have time [...] Doing the laundry, for example, is something that really irritates me because I always get the colours mixed up, so she normally does the laundry to avoid further harm" [Javier, 2019: three children] (Appendix A1 #02)

These accounts illustrate how time availability becomes a key discursive strategy to legitimise task allocation. A notable pattern, especially in men's narratives, is the tendency to describe the division as undifferentiated or neutral.

Some women also justify the inequality based on time, but closer look reveals the presence of invisible responsibilities, especially the emotional family load (Wayne et al., 2023). An example is Abril's narrative, a 27-year-old woman, who was a stay-at-home mother during the first wave, but in the second interview, with both partners in full-time employment, she refers to the domestic worker as 'her help'.

"Well, it's hard to divide, honestly... I'm the one who takes care of the house" [Abril, 2012: one child]

"Well... 50/50 [...] we both do more or less everything. It's true that *I have* [our italics] a cleaning lady who comes... every week. Um... I have her more than anything because I only have Mondays, which is the day we both have off" [Abril, 2019: two children] (Appendix A1 #03)

Rather than problematising this imbalance, men, as Federico or Javier, often invoke a logic of compensatory fairness (Thébaud, 2010), whereby their greater involvement in paid work justifies lower engagement in unpaid domestic tasks. This framing reinforces the idea that equality is subjective and constructed through flexible but unequal arrangements.

Similar to how outsourcing decreases the overall burden of housework, another strategy to reduce it involves lowering cleaning standards or cleaning less frequently, as Federico explained.

“Cleaning has become more short-lived than ever, it doesn’t make much sense to hire someone for one or two days a week because they’ll clean now, and within two hours, everything is messy again” [Federico, 2019: two children] (Appendix A1 #04)

In sum, the narratives in this group reflect a gendered perception of equality. Men focus on time availability, flexibility, and task visibility, while women —though less explicitly critical— offer a more holistic view that includes standards, organisation, and mental load. These accounts portray equality, but a deeper reading reveals enduring gender asymmetries.

### **“She clearly takes the initiative”: Gendered distribution shaped by the woman’s higher standards**

Some interviewees report a modest change toward what they perceive as a more equitable arrangement, often linked to periods of unemployment or parental leave. However, this shift is partial and largely discursive: while the involvement of men may have increased slightly, women continue to assume the burden of invisible responsibilities. Inequality is reframed as less problematic, often justified through gendered assumptions about standards or preferences. In this case, men recognize the invisible tasks but associate the responsibility to the women, who presumably voluntarily monopolize housework, as in the case of Alejandro, a 29-year-old man. Between the two interviews, he perceives a slightly more balanced distribution (e.g., he does some ironing), but still attributes the greater share of responsibility to his wife’s high expectations:

“When she was working, it was... well, 70/25 - 75% her, 25% me... and now, it’s 90% her and 10% me” [Alejandro, 2012: no children]

“In my wife’s case, she is a real, real perfectionist when it comes to cleaning. I’m very organized, but it’s true that I lack a bit of... the right technique. And every time I try to do something [...] she quickly corrects me and pushes me aside [...] I’m convinced that if I tried a bit harder, um... she would eventually let me, I don’t know how to put it. [...] For example, she doesn’t iron; I do the ironing. So maybe it’s not 70/30, but rather 60/40, I’m not sure. But... well, she clearly takes the initiative” [Alejandro, 2019: no children] (Appendix A1 #05)

In this type of narrative, men acknowledge a certain evolution but frame the unequal division as the result of their partner’s personality or standards. The responsibility for the imbalance is subtly shifted back to women, who are portrayed as voluntarily taking control.

However, this kind of narrative was also legitimized by some women, albeit through more subjective mechanisms, such as comparing their partners to other men —rewarding their contributions for being greater than those of other men rather than comparing them directly with themselves— or downplaying their own cleaning standards, perceiving their expectations as being 'too high' (some strategies described also by Hochschild, 1989). These mechanisms are evident in the account of Eulàlia, a 33-year-old interviewee.

“Well, forgive me, right now, since I’m not working, of course, I dedicate myself entirely to it... [...] I’m also very demanding, so I understand that’s very... but my husband is really quite exceptional compared to the rest of the men on the face of the earth, yes, that’s how it is” [Eulàlia, 2012: no children]

“I’m a bit more meticulous about everything, you know, like I can’t leave a dish unwashed, so I take on a bit more, like staying on top of the laundry, hanging out the clothes” [Eulàlia, 2019: two children] (Appendix A1 #06)

These narratives show a slight redistribution of tasks, particularly in visible aspects. Both men and women perceive some progress: men report doing more than before, and women acknowledge this increased involvement. However, personal preferences and individual traits are used to frame persistent imbalances as acceptable or voluntary. In Eulàlia’s case, her internalised standards of cleanliness and her meticulous attitude reflect a significant share of the invisible family load, particularly in its cognitive dimension (i.e., monitoring, anticipating) and emotional dimension (i.e., feeling responsible). This internalisation is reinforced by broader social expectations. As Thébaud et al. (2021) demonstrate, women are held to higher standards of cleanliness and are seen as more morally responsible for the state of the household. This dynamic echoes the logic of doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987), expressed here through women’s assumed responsibility for how domestic tasks should be performed.

In sum, this category reflects a discursive and partial shift toward greater equity. While male participation increases slightly and is viewed positively or with resignation, persistent differences in standards, legitimising narratives, and the overlooked invisible load prevent true equality. Across narratives, women’s management role remains central, often justified through the notion that they are simply “more meticulous.”

### **“The roles have to be rearranged”: Women perceive a setback in equality after parenthood**

This narrative reflects a perception of regression in the fairness of housework distribution following key life transitions, especially the arrival of children or changes in working hours. The imbalance is not justified, but instead openly questioned, particularly by women. These narratives, express

discomfort, disappointment and a clear awareness of inequality, often accompanied by a desire to renegotiate roles.

In the first interview Rocío, a 32-year-old woman, although the outsourcing the most demanding tasks, was already ambivalent about how fair their arrangement truly was. By the second interview, after becoming a mother and with various changes in her partner's job, she perceived a greater imbalance and called for a redistribution of responsibilities:

"I am very satisfied with what we have, but I think it's a bit fictitious because, since we have someone who comes and does the dirtiest work, I don't know what would happen if we had to share that, but everything else works very well" [Rocío, 2012: no children]

"The roles have to be rearranged, I mean, for example, the fact that he's working doesn't mean that I have to do everything, right? We must redistribute that a bit, find... but well, so far there have been many changes... he worked in a company where he had to put in many hours, now he has just started in another..." [Rocío, 2019: two children] (Appendix A1 #07)

This category illustrates how life transitions can reactivate traditional dynamics, even for interviewees who perceived a more equal distribution in their first interview. The transition to parenthood increases the domestic workload significantly, and although both partners may face time constraints, it is women who absorb the additional burden—something highlighted by González and Jurado (2015) in previous literature—. While outsourcing may help manage visible tasks, it does not eliminate the mental load or relieve women of the responsibility for planning, logistics, and emotional care.

These narratives stand out for their critical stance: women do not conform to traditional roles and explicitly question the unequal distribution, even when structural or situational constraints are present. Rocío's account illustrates this tension well. Her frustration after becoming a mother reflects not only the increase in visible chores, but also the weight of having to coordinate, anticipate, and maintain emotional balance at home. Her experience highlights the cognitive (planning, anticipating), managerial (organising, assigning), and emotional (worrying about fairness and wellbeing) dimensions of the invisible family load. Her call to "rearrange roles" reflects a desire for more profound change—beyond task redistribution—toward shared responsibility. Unlike other narratives where inequality is justified (e.g., by standards or personality), here women highlight the mismatch between new demands and the persistence of unbalance, often due to men's limited involvement in invisible.

### **“I was starting to ask him for more help”: Women deliberately pursue change through pressure and negotiation with men**

Some narratives reflect a perceived improvement in the distribution of housework, attributed to a deliberate intention by women to renegotiate roles. In these cases, the shift is neither spontaneous nor equally initiated by both partners. Instead, it is the result of a process in which women express dissatisfaction and take action—whether through conflict, dialogue, or planning—to achieve a more egalitarian distribution. As a result, the mental and planning load continues to fall on women. One such example is Ruth, a 26-year-old woman, who between her pregnancy and return to the labour market made her partner understand that she was unable to manage everything on her own and the new distribution is little bit more balanced, but still unequal specially regarding planification duties:

“In the beginning, he helped me more... ‘So, I do this, and you do something else.’ Now, he has got used to the fact that I do practically everything, and he helps me with practically nothing” [Ruth, 2012: no children]

“It was more after the pregnancy, because I think he saw that maybe I couldn’t manage everything, because I started asking him for more help [...] he grew up in a household like that, so for him it all seems normal, and then it’s like, ‘hey, maybe this is something we could do together.’” [Ruth, 2019: two children] (Appendix A1 #08)

The strategies that women report includes reducing their standards of cleanliness, facilitating a learning process for their partners, increasing planning—for example, by assigning specific tasks to each partner or scheduling specific days to complete tasks together—and engaging in a negotiation process, which may be the result of previous conflict. Although these efforts often lead to a better balance in visible tasks, they reported that the man continues to take a passive role and waits for specific instructions. In Ruth’s case, this passivity is met with a certain tolerance, as she justifies her partner’s behaviour by referring to his upbringing in a traditional household where domestic responsibilities were not expected of him—an explanation that echoes the influence of early socialisation and intergenerational transmission of gender roles (Ajenjo & García, 2018)—.

Dissatisfaction among women has therefore prompted the perception of change in the distribution of housework, with the man’s reactive adaptation. Although the distribution of some visible tasks become more egalitarian, the underlying gendered structure remains. In Ruth’s case, the reorganisation follows a moment of overload during pregnancy, but the responsibility for initiating and sustaining the new balance still falls to her. This kind of change, driven by women’s initiative and emotional burden, aligns with what Kluwer et al. (2000) describe as a gendered negotiation process,

where conflict often becomes the necessary trigger for renegotiation, yet the responsibility for change remains unequally distributed.

Ultimately, these narratives show that the emergence of conflict or overload d—especially following parenthood— can serve as a trigger for women to push for more fairness. The result is a partial rebalancing: change occurs, is perceived as progress, and is often valued positively, but remains fragile and incomplete.

#### 4.5.2. Narratives around lack of change over time

The second section of findings focuses on those interviewees for whom no changes were identified in the narratives about how they perceived the division of housework. However, there are nuances regarding how these participants explain continuity. Transitions such as parenthood or changes in employment occurred in many of these cases as well, but they did not lead to a reconfiguration of household responsibilities. Instead, interviewees interpreted these transitions through existing norms or justifying mechanisms that sustained either egalitarian or gendered arrangements.

##### **“We’re both involved, we care about that”: Mutually agreed-upon division of housework sustained over time through effective communication and consensus**

In this group, the division of housework is perceived as fair and remains stable over time, even across major life events. A common observation made by both men and women is the perception of balanced and low-conflict arrangement. For instance, Arantxa, a 28-year-old woman, described a steady and consensual dynamic with her partner.

“I always cook, and he always washes the dishes. Regarding everything else, whoever sees it does it, and that's it [...] We normally do the shopping together” [Arantxa, 2012: no children]

“Yes, I cook, and he does the dishes, until now the cleaning was done by a lady [house worker], and now, we also do it between the two of us, one dusts, the other cleans the bathroom, but, well, between the two of us [...] after 10 years [together] we each develop a dynamics, and that's that” [Arantxa, 2019: one child] (Appendix A1 #09)

Among the women, there is a sense of a well-established routines; tasks were more precise and consolidate in the second interview. This highlights the importance of good communication as a key factor in sustaining equitable divisions of domestic work (Wiesmann et al., 2008). In contrast, men such Manuel, a 30-year-old, describe it in a more general terms and less deep knowledge and focus on the absence of conflict and a good communication:

“I mean, it works pretty well, since we both like to live in a clean house and we’re both involved, we care about that” [Manuel, 2012: no children]

“Organization and all that, yes, if one of us considers that, you know, that perhaps the other is taking their eye off the ball in a certain activity, we have good communication and we tell each other as well; that is, in general I think that neither of us takes advantage of the other” [Manuel, 2019: no children] (Appendix A1 #10)

Good communication between partners and a well-established division of work is key in the consolidation of housework distribution over time. Finally, neither men nor women mention the role of bearing the invisible family load, which appears to be implicitly assumed by women within the framework of established dynamics.

### **"I tell him, and he does it, but it doesn't come from him": Persistent unequal sharing of housework through passive male involvement**

In this group, the division of housework remains clearly gendered over time, with women assuming the role of primary organisers and men participating only when explicitly asked. Even if the men are willing to collaborate, responsibility for identifying and initiating tasks falls on women. This is the case of Imma, a 31-year-old woman, that describes how, despite her partner’s willingness to “help,” the responsibility for identifying and initiating tasks always falls on her:

“I have the responsibility of doing things, that is, doing laundry, I tell him, ‘do the laundry,’ and then, he does it, but it's like I have to say it and he does it, but it doesn't come from him [...] This is because I am very organized, so I’m always doing things, but that’s my character” [Imma, 2012: one child]

“Theoretically, with my husband, if you were to interview him, he would say yes, that he would dedicate the same time, and I don't dispute that. But then there are many things about day-to-day logistics that seem a bit like “domestic issues” to him. And they are not domestic issues, they’re very important things that, if I didn’t do, wouldn’t get done” [Imma, 2019: two children] (Appendix A1 #11)

This perception is also reflected in men’s accounts. Daniel, a 35-year-old man, acknowledges that the role of the 'gatekeeper' did appear, when they respond to the demands of their partners; they also admit that they take on a smaller proportion of domestic tasks.

“She decides when it needs to be done and at what time it needs to be done, although then let's say I do it, put the things in the washing machine, turn the washing machine on, hang it out and all that sort of stuff, and do the shopping anyway” [Daniel, 2012: one child]

“The truth is that I would like to get involved more with things in the kitchen and that, but uff, wow, it’s hard for me, you know! And I also think, well, I don’t know, it’s hard for me, and it’s about dedicating

time and all that. Really, it's always like the role, isn't it? [...] During the week when she's making dinner, I spend time with them [their daughters], putting on their pyjamas, finishing looking at something from school or something" [Daniel, 2019: two children] (Appendix A1 #12)

These narratives reveal a stable yet asymmetrical pattern in which men's collaboration depends on women's initiative —described in previous literature as the apprentice role (Brumley & St. George, 2023; Moreno-Colom et al., 2024). Despite life changes, this structure does not evolve. Instead, both men and women employ discursive mechanisms to explain the situation: "I'm very organised" or "it's always like the role", as in the cases of Imma or Daniel, respectively. In both accounts, the invisible load becomes visible: Imma makes it explicit, while Daniel indirectly acknowledges it by noting that she decides what needs to be done and when. These forms of passive male involvement reflect a broader barrier to change: without a shift in the perception of responsibility, real equality remains out of reach. This dynamic can be understood as a form of "silent agreement" (Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980; Wiesmann et al., 2008), in which women assume responsibility to ensure tasks are done without explicit negotiation, thus reinforcing asymmetrical roles despite apparent cooperation.

### **"If he doesn't do it, then he pays for it": Persistent gendered distribution due to male lack of involvement**

This final narrative reflects a situation of persistent and extreme inequality, in which men have been excused from performing any tasks. Unlike other cases where men take on a minimal or passive role, here they are explicitly excused from participating, and women assume full responsibility for both visible and invisible tasks. The result is perpetuating a pattern in which women become the sole homemaker. Daniela, a 31-year-old woman, exemplifies this situation:

"I have seen in my [parents'] house things that are happening to me in my house right now... the man, I don't know, Carlos is not someone who helps much, he's like my father... I didn't expect it... Day to day life is hard since it has its ups and downs" [Daniela, 2012: no children]

"I do 99 and he does 1% [...] [laughs] No, hang on, if he hears this, he's going to say 'No, it's not like that!' I mean, lately he's been doing more things. But... basically I'm the one who does everything. That is, the one who thinks about the meals, what to buy, what not to buy, right?... The household logistics [...] So, if he doesn't do it, then he pays for it" [Daniela, 2019: two children] (Appendix A1 #13)

Despite the explicit imbalance, Daniela express an uneasy resignation and, with reservations, accept that men do not engage in housework. They may justify their partner's behaviour by referring to traditional gender roles that stem from their upbringing, or by citing time constraints, as noted in

previous categories. This narrative shows how inequality can be sustained as women, despite their dissatisfaction, find ways to legitimize these inequalities and accept the situation.

Ultimately, this type of narrative represents the most rigid form of gendered continuity, in which no real redistribution of responsibilities is envisioned. The man's disengagement is tolerated as long as he "pays for it," yet this economic exchange does not address the unequal managerial, cognitive and emotional labour. The imbalance is not simply a matter of time availability; it reflects deeply ingrained gender norms that are reproduced rather than questioned, even when women express discontent.

## 4.6. Discussion

Through the longitudinal analysis of 70 in-depth interviews conducted with 35 partnered young, highly educated men and women in 2012 and 2019, we have identified key patterns in how interviewees explain their perceived distribution of housework within their relationships and how this perception may have varied over time from a gender perspective.

First, invisible tasks are predominantly performed and recognized by women, while only a few men acknowledge their female partner's leading role in the invisible family load. Second, we found that time availability, personal cleaning standards, or life-course transitions such as parenthood were factors that contributed to explaining perceived changes in housework distribution, where effective communication and the persistence of gendered roles underpinned perceptions of stability. More broadly, we observe strong gender differences in how participants construct their narratives: women's accounts are more diverse and highlighting emotional and cognitive aspects of housework, while men's are far more homogeneous and instrumental.

The longitudinal and narrative-based approach used in this study enables us to capture not only changes in task distribution, but also the discursive mechanisms through which individuals frame perceived (in)equality over time in their relationships. This perspective shows that apparent progress often masks continuity in gendered roles, particularly regarding the less visible responsibilities.

A key distinction that persists across narratives is the recognition—or lack thereof—of the invisible family load (Daminger, 2019; Hochschild, 1989; Wayne et al., 2023). Women often highlight these tasks as a significant source of disagreement, whereas they rarely appear in men's discourses. Even among who perceived an egalitarian division—whether stable or evolving towards greater equality—woman often continued to take the lead in logistical and cognitive management. This divergence indicates that men often overestimate equality, partly because these tasks lie outside their cognitive map and are not counted as "housework." Where men did mention them, they acknowledged

their partner responsibility, thereby indirectly recognizing the imbalance. This pattern suggest that invisible tasks have undergone the least change over time, pointing to a disconnect between perceived and actual equality.

This study also aimed to identify the factors that influence (dis)continuity in the division of housework. Time availability was the most common explanation, especially among men. Tangible life events such as parenthood or job changes could alter the distribution in both directions. Even when the partners' participation in the labour market is the same, men invoke time availability, suggesting that the initial division was unstable and that women disproportionately absorbed invisible. In the cases where both partners shared a perception of equity, egalitarian routines had been established early and flexibly adapted over time.

Moreover, some men consider fairness in terms of the total amount of work —both paid and unpaid— claiming that their role as breadwinner is compensated by their contribution to paid work (Thébaud, 2010). This logic supports not only the persistence of traditional roles but also new forms of unequal arrangements, such as work schedules or time availability, to justify imbalances. This instrumental perspective tends to minimise —or completely overlook— the emotional and cognitive load of domestic work, reinforcing deeply rooted gender roles under the guise of fairness. While women also use time availability, their narratives tend to include references to invisible work and to differentiated cleaning standards. Even those in relatively egalitarian arrangements sometimes used the argument “he works long hours” to justify temporary or structural imbalances.

This dynamic is closely linked to the fact that women make employment adjustments to accommodate responsibilities more often (Bueno & Grau-Grau, 2021). Paradoxically, this adaptation increases their time availability and domestic involvement, while reducing their relative bargaining power, thus deepening inequality.

Women more frequently expressed dissatisfaction with imbalances. Both showing progress or the persistence of traditional roles, many women voiced a sense of injustice and frustration and took the initiative to drive change —by lowering standards, planning tasks, redistributing responsibilities or negotiating new roles—. However, even when visible tasks were more equally shared, the invisible load generally remained untouched. These gendered dynamics reflect how couples often ‘doing gender’ through daily routines, as theorised by West and Zimmerman (1987). Even in contexts of perceived fairness, women remain symbolically and practically responsible for domestic organisation, while men often adopt a passive or secondary role. These changes were often fragile, sustained by women's ongoing efforts and on a male involvement that was more reactive or conditional on factors

such as time availability. Some women openly questioned the compensatory logic —especially when they managed all domestic work while their partners were the sole earners—.

A strategy observed in the narratives of both men and women is the outsourcing, often to compensate for the greater amount of time women spend on visible tasks. However, is often conditioned by household income and financial capacity.

The value attributed to housework, which may be formed prior to cohabitation (through socialization and prior experiences) or during it (often driven by the woman), is crucial in the perception and negotiation of housework distribution. This value varies by gender and across the different narratives identified, indicating that domestic work is not based solely on objective criteria such as time or quantity, but also involve symbolic and affective dimensions. These aspects are often absent from men's narratives, while they occupy a central place in women's.

As noted by Wiesmann et al. (2008), women invest more effort in planning and managing household tasks, a dimension rarely present in men's narratives. Women expect visible tasks to be equally shared but often have to accept that men continue in a secondary, "apprentice" role (Brumley & St. George, 2023; Moreno-Colom et al., 2024). This perpetuates traditional gender roles and hinders change. In unequal arrangements, couples often resort to 'silent agreements' (Wiesmann et al., 2008) or subtle justifications —such as "she does it better" or "he hasn't got the know-how"— to avoid conflict and maintain a sense of harmony. These mechanisms naturalise inequality and aligns with Hochschild (1989) 'going rate', where fairness is judged relative to other couples rather than within the relationship. In doing so, they help preserve gendered roles, including the enduring position of the female "gatekeeper" (Allen & Hawkins, 1999).

#### 4.7. Limitations and future research

There are some limitations to this study. Firstly, it focuses exclusively on heterosexual couples. Future research would benefit from being more inclusive by incorporating same-sex couples and individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Secondly, although our analysis is based on the perspective of one of the partners, either man or woman, interviewing both partners would have offered a more comprehensive understanding of the daily dynamics of organization and decision-making, as well as each partner's distinct perspective on their involvement in the distribution of housework. Thirdly, our sample consists of highly educated people, as all participants had pursued education beyond secondary school. While this allows for meaningful comparisons within the sample and can be seen as a strength, it also limits the generalizability of our findings providing only a partial view of housework distribution

in Spanish society. Further research should further explore how housework is distributed over time across different educational backgrounds and socio-economically diverse groups.

## 4.8. Conclusion

In summary, despite seven years between the two interviews, our findings show limited change in how housework is perceived and organised, especially regarding invisible family load. Even among individuals who appear egalitarian in their relationships, gender-based specialization persists over time, particularly in the symbolic and cognitive domains of domestic responsibility. This unique study, which utilizes qualitative longitudinal data, highlights that the perception of equality often masks the persistence of unequal gender roles, particularly when invisible tasks are not acknowledged. While some studies focus on visible or measurable behaviours, our narrative approach reveals that changes frequently rest on subjective criteria such as time availability or preferences, which do not necessarily imply a redistribution of responsibility. Ultimately, our findings highlight that any movement towards equality in housework is limited unless invisible tasks are explicitly recognised and shared.

## 5. Unequal Chores, Unequal Joy? Perceptions of Housework Satisfaction in Spain and Sweden<sup>14</sup>

### Abstract

Despite advances in gender equality, the division of domestic labour remains unequal, with significant consequences for individual well-being and couple relationships. This article analyses satisfaction with the division of housework among heterosexual couples in Spain and Sweden —two countries with contrasting institutional and normative contexts regarding gender equality—. Drawing on harmonised data from the 2018 Spanish Fertility Survey and the 2021 Swedish Generations and Gender Survey, the study examines responses from over 12,800 individuals aged 19 to 55 living with a different-sex partner. The results reveal persistent gender differences: men report greater satisfaction with traditional arrangements, whereas women are more satisfied when the division is non-traditional. The sociocultural context proves crucial: Swedish women are the least satisfied with traditional divisions, while Spanish men exhibit high satisfaction regardless of domestic arrangements. Regression analyses confirm that the type of division is the strongest predictor of satisfaction, outweighing other factors such as employment status or educational level. This study contributes to the debate on the stalled gender revolution, highlighting that perceived satisfaction with the division of housework must be understood in relation to structural inequalities and national normative frameworks.

**Keywords:** Housework; satisfaction; gender; national context; comparative study

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<sup>14</sup> This chapter was coauthored with PhD Livia Oláh, Stockholm University, Dept. of Sociology, Demography Unit (Sweden).

## 5.1. Introduction

The stalled gender revolution (Cook, 2024; Friedman, 2015) is one of the greatest puzzles of modern times. Despite advances in gender equality in the public sphere, especially paid employment, women still bear the primary responsibility for housework and household management (Anxo et al., 2011; Pailhé et al., 2021; Sullivan, 2021). However, such arrangement is not necessarily satisfactory for both partners in a relationship (Aguiar et al., 2021; Braun et al., 2008; Greenstein, 2009; Mead, 2023). This raises the question about how perceptions of (un)fairness are constructed, which not only affect well-being but also the perceived quality and in turn stability of couple relationships (Foster & Stratton, 2019; Lachance-Grzela & Charbonneau, 2022; Mikula et al., 2009; Ruppanner et al., 2018). The primary aim of this study is to understand why numerous individuals, men and women alike, perceive a traditional division of housework as satisfactory while others do not<sup>15</sup>.

Perceptions of fairness regarding the division of housework develop within a specific cultural and socioeconomic framework, shaped by internalised norms and reference points that vary by gender and national context. Country context thus plays a key role in shaping perceived fairness and satisfaction with the division of responsibilities in the family sphere (Greenstein, 2009). However, studies analysing fairness from a comparative perspective remain relatively scarce (but see as exception Braun et al., 2008; Forste & Fox, 2012; Greenstein, 2009; Hu & Yucel, 2018; Kornrich & Eger, 2016; Ruppanner, 2010). This study explores the mechanisms at hand by examining the division of housework and reported satisfaction with it in two distinct European contexts: Sweden, with a long tradition of gender-neutral policies and adherence of gender equality, and Spain, where more traditional norms have remained quite prevalent up until today (cf. Almirall et al., 2024; Mandel & Lazarus, 2021; Ruppanner, 2010). The comparison allows us to highlight how institutional factors, and cultural and socioeconomic contexts influence the distribution of tasks and related construction of fairness perceptions within couples. In doing so, the study examines the relationship between (un)equal division of family labour and satisfaction with it.

## 5.2. Background

### 5.2.1. Satisfaction with the division of housework

Men and women often perceive fairness differently. While housework remains unequally distributed placing a disproportionate burden on women, men are more likely than women to consider this division

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<sup>15</sup> In this study, we define traditional division as one in which the woman takes on more than half of the household tasks, often limiting her participation in other areas, such as the labour market (Coltrane, 2000; Durán, 2012; Hiekel & Ivanova, 2023).

fair (Baxter, 2000; Barstad, 2014; Dominguez-Folgueras, 2022; Foster & Stratton, 2019; Gager & Hohmann-Marriott, 2006; Hawkins et al., 1995; Kluwer et al., 2002; Leopold, 2019; Thompson, 1991). Consequently, women often perform more housework than they prefer that impacts their level of satisfaction negatively, whereas men are generally satisfied with their own contribution (DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Koster et al., 2022; Leopold, 2019).

Perceptions of fairness and satisfaction do not always align with an equal division of housework (Forste & Fox, 2012; Foster & Stratton, 2019; Thompson, 1991). Research shows also that individuals and couples do not generally seek perfect equality in housework distribution (Koster et al., 2022; Kluwer et al., 2002; Greenstein, 2013). Although most women perform more housework than their partner, they do not necessarily feel disadvantaged (Baxter et al., 2013; Frisco & Williams, 2003). Several studies found that women's satisfaction is closely linked to performing specific tasks traditionally considered female responsibilities, such as cooking and other routine chores (Aguiar et al., 2021; Antonelli, 2018; Baxter & Western, 1998; Blair & Johnson, 1992). Other research suggests that women's satisfaction is more influenced by their partner's contributions than by their own participation (Barstad, 2014; Baxter, 2000; Forste & Fox, 2012; Kluwer et al., 2002). Thus, for many women, the primary concern is not to achieve an equal share of housework but to ensure that their partners contribute in some way (Coltrane, 2000; Foster & Stratton, 2019). Complete equality is often considered unattainable, and even minimal male participation is perceived as advantageous compared to traditional arrangements (Antonelli, 2018; Moreno-Colom et al., 2024; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Studies have shown, however, that women tend to be more dissatisfied with an unequal division of domestic labour when both partners are employed full time —a dissatisfaction that intensifies when she works more than her husband (Aguiar et al., 2021; Baxter, 2000; Esche, 2020) —. Similarly, the arrival of children often leads to an increase in household chores, which are distributed unevenly, placing a greater burden on women and negatively impacting their satisfaction (Baxter et al., 2013; Frisco & Williams, 2003; Hiekel & Ivanova, 2018). Even childless couples may choose to outsource domestic tasks to improve overall satisfaction, but women often continue to bear the primary responsibility (Gonalons-Pons, 2015; Silfver & Widding, 2024). Although this affects both partners' satisfaction (Ruppanner et al., 2018), research has shown that the impact is greater for women (Gonalons-Pons, 2015; Forste & Fox, 2012; Koster et al., 2022).

Research indicates that the actual division of household chores and how individuals interpret fairness and, by extension, justice matter for perceived satisfaction (Antonelli, 2018; Baxter, 2000; Baxter et al., 2013; Gager & Hohmann-Marriott, 2006; Hiekel & Ivanova, 2023; Yerkes & Rose, 2022).

Therefore, this study focuses on identifying how social gender norms and individual characteristics interact to shape the division of housework—an interaction reflected in perceptions of justice—.

### 5.2.2. Explaining satisfaction with the division of housework

Dividing housework to optimize resources appears to benefit both partners. Several approaches provide explanations about the division of domestic chores. Time availability theory suggests that the division depends on the paid work hours of each partner (Coltrane, 2000; Davis & Greenstein, 2013). The greater labour market engagement, the more unfair and unequal division of housework is perceived (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Davis & Greenstein, 2013; Esche, 2020; Koster et al., 2022; Shelton & John, 1996). Similarly, the relative resource theory (Brines, 1994) suggests that the partner with more resources—such as higher income or education—holds greater bargaining power in the division of housework. Hence, it can be considered fair that the main breadwinner contributes less to the unpaid work (Altuzarra et al., 2020; Shelton & John, 1996). Another approach sees women's absolute wage as most important, reducing their dependence on the partner and facilitating decision to outsource the housework (Brines, 1994; Gupta, 2007; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994). The division is then considered fair even though men—who often hold more resources—tend to avoid or minimize their engagements in unpaid tasks, while women assume a disproportionate share of the domestic burden (Brines, 1994; Davis & Greenstein, 2013; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Gupta, 2007). These theories explain the gendered division of labour when the man is the sole or main breadwinner but they fail to justify why the division of labour usually remains unchanged even when women also engage in the task of economic provision to the household (Aguiar et al., 2021; Baxter, 2000; Del Boca, 2020; Dominguez-Folgueras, 2022; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010).

The key issue is indeed to understand why people fail to perceive unfairness or refrain from expressing dissatisfaction with objectively unjust outcomes. Major (1987, 1993) and Thompson (1991) analysed this "paradoxical sense of satisfaction" within the framework of distributive justice, a key theoretical model in the study of family equity. They showed that individuals usually compare their contribution not with that of their partner but with others of the same gender, using gender as a primary reference point instead of their relationship (Hochschild, 1989; Kluwer et al., 2002). For women, this often means feeling privileged compared to their mothers or grandmothers, who assumed a much greater domestic burden with nearly nonmale involvement (Hochschild, 1989; Hu & Yucel, 2018; Mikula et al., 2009). More importantly, men generally compare themselves to other men and would feel satisfied even when their division of housework is more unequal than that of their male role models (Carriero & Todesco, 2016; Gager & Hohmann-Marriott, 2006; Mikula et al., 2009).

Women often consider their husbands' involvement as sufficient, as societal and cultural norms shape their expectations, making inequality seem normal and acceptable (Hochschild, 1989). Comparing their male partner's contribution to that of other men instead of their own contribution to domestic tasks reinforces the perception of the distribution being fair or at least bearable even if they receive little help from their partners with the household chores (Baxter et al., 2013; Carriero & Todesco, 2016; Foster & Stratton, 2019; Greenstein, 1996; Major, 1993; Mikula et al., 2009; Moreno-Colom et al., 2024). Indeed, the most common pattern is for both partners to compare men's contribution to that of other men (Carriero & Todesco, 2016; Gager & Hohmann-Marriott, 2006; Mikula et al., 2009). However, studies show that when individuals compare themselves to their heterosexual partners (i.e. between-sex comparisons), they more often notice the unfairness of the situation and perceive a sense of injustice (Greensterin, 1996; Major, 1987; Mikula et al., 2009, Thompson, 1991). Hence both men and women use comparisons with their partners as well as with others of their gender to support their perceptions of justice and equity (Gager & Hohmann-Marriott, 2006; Hu & Yucel, 2018; Major, 1987; Thompson, 1991).

Individual values and attitudes also shape the perception of fairness (Aguilar et al., 2021; Greenstein, 1996; Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003; Ruppanner et al., 2017). Women and men with egalitarian views associate a greater share of housework —either for themselves or their partner— with lower satisfaction given that such inequality is inconsistent with their ideals (Aguilar et al., 2021). In contrast, individuals with traditional attitudes are less dissatisfied with an unequal division in which women have a larger burden, such housework division being aligned with their gender role expectations (Aguilar et al., 2021; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Greenstein, 1996; Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003). Thus, beyond the actual distribution of tasks, deeply ingrained cultural norms play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of fairness.

The importance of the societal context for individual values and desires has been addressed in the theory of 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This theory highlights how social norms assign distinct roles to each gender, reinforcing the perception that domestic work is primarily women's responsibility (Ferree, 1990; Foster & Stratton, 2019; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010). Doing gender constitutes an expression of identity along with constant efforts to reinforce gender norms, which can lead to satisfaction with less equitable divisions of work. These dynamics deeply rooted in social norms are in turn shaped by the broader sociocultural context and institutional factors (Anxo et al., 2011; Hu & Yucel, 2018; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Pailhé et al., 2021; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

### 5.2.3. The influence of the context on the housework division and satisfaction

The division of housework and satisfaction with it are influenced by the specific socioeconomic and cultural context (Braun et al., 2008; Greenstein, 2009; Hu & Yucel, 2018; Kornrich & Eger, 2016; Mencarini & Sironi, 2012; Ruppanner, 2010). Country contexts shape the perceptions of equity and the division of housework through cultural norms and institutional frameworks (Anxo et al., 2011; Ferree, 1990; Mandel & Lazarus, 2021). Various studies have shown that perceptions of injustice related to inequalities in housework division tend to be more pronounced in countries with higher levels of gender equity (Aguiar et al., 2021; Hu & Yucel, 2018; Kornrich & Eger, 2016; Mencarini & Sironi, 2012; Ruppanner, 2010). As highlighted by Greenstein (2009), the national context itself provides a generalized comparison referent which increases perceptions of injustice regarding women doing a larger share of housework in more equitable societies unlike viewing such division as fair in contexts where traditional gender roles prevail.

Our study focuses on Sweden and Spain. On the one side, Sweden is seen as a pioneer in promoting gender equality both at the societal level and in the family (Besley et al., 2017; Eklund & Lundqvist, 2021; Evertsson, 2014; Hagqvist et al., 2017; Mandel & Lazarus, 2021). In 2021, for instance, the gender employment gap was less than five percentage points—well below the OECD average of approximately 11 points (OECD, 2023)—. Despite this progress in the labour market along with the implementation of policies such as gender-neutral parental leave and high-quality public childcare services, which have encouraged greater male involvement in parenting and household responsibilities, women still take on a much larger share of housework, even when they earn the same income as men (Anxo et al., 2011; Evertsson & Nermo, 2007; Hook, 2006; Silfver & Widding, 2024). Swedish men spend an average of nine hours per week on housework compared to 15 hours dedicated to that by women (Evertsson, 2014). Although gender equality policies have reduced women's economic dependence and positioned Sweden as a leader in gender matters, the imbalance in domestic responsibilities persists, even in households with strong egalitarian values (Evertsson, 2014; Fuwa & Cohen, 2007; Ruppanner et al., 2017).

In Spain, the gender revolution has also brought about progress toward greater equality, albeit later than in Sweden (Almirall et al., 2024; García, 2024; Mandel & Lazarus, 2021; Moreno-Colom et al., 2018; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010). The Spanish welfare state has expanded public sector involvement in the provision and regulation of care services, yet the family continues to play a key role in achieving work-life balance (Carrasco & Domínguez, 2011; Domínguez-Folgueras et al., 2018; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010). Women's participation in the workforce has increased in recent decades, leading to a

widespread rise in dual-income households (Ajenjo & García, 2019; García, 2024). In 2021, the gender gap in employment rates stood at approximately ten percentage points, aligning with the OECD average (OECD, 2023). However, empirical evidence shows that women perform a disproportionate share of housework, even if they work longer hours or earn more than their male partners (Almirall et al., 2024; Altuzarra et al., 2020; Carrasco & Domínguez, 2011; Sevilla-Sanz et al., 2010). Additionally, household composition and the number of children significantly influence women's time devoted to housework, while the outsourcing of domestic tasks emerges as a strategy for reducing their overall burden (Carrasco & Domínguez, 2011; Domínguez-Folgueras et al., 2018; García-Román, 2025).

The most recent comparative data on satisfaction with the division of domestic tasks between Sweden and Spain date back to the early 2000's, indicating that 42.9% of Swedish women and 43.3% of Spanish women perceived the distribution of domestic responsibilities in their relationships as fair (Braun, 2008). In the current context —marked by socioeconomic changes and evolving gender attitudes— both the organization of domestic labour and the satisfaction derived from it reflect new paradigms.

### 5.3. Hypotheses

Based on the review of relevant research above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

**H1.** Women report higher satisfaction with a non-traditional division of housework than men, independently of the country context. Given slower changes regarding the male role, men may feel less comfortable deviating from traditional roles.

**H2.** The sociocultural context plays a key role in shaping perceptions of fairness in the division of domestic labour. In a more gender-equal society, traditional division of housework is less likely to be perceived as fair. In Sweden, where gender equality is more institutionalized, the traditional division of housework is associated with lower satisfaction levels compared to Spain, where traditional norms remain more deeply embedded.

**H3.** Demographic and socioeconomic factors also influence satisfaction with the division of housework, while also playing a role in the decision-making about how to divide household chores which can lead to more or less satisfactory outcomes for each partner.

## 5.4. Data and method

### 5.4.1. Data

To analyse the effects of the division of housework within couples on individual satisfaction and to compare it in Spain and Sweden we rely on data from two different surveys. We use the Spanish Fertility Survey ‘Encuesta de fecundidad’ from 2018 and the Swedish Generations and Gender Survey from 2021. The Fertility Survey was conducted by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística Española (INE) between January and March 2018, and the questionnaire was prepared with consideration to the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS). The survey includes more than 180 questions, conducted with over 14,000 women and more than 2,000 men. The Swedish Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) is part of the international data infrastructure GGP addressing changes in fertility and family dynamics, home-leaving, and gender issues in Europe, designed as a panel survey. The questionnaire was prepared by Stockholm University Demography Unit, in collaboration with Statistics Sweden, the latter in charge of the field work. The survey includes more than 130 questions, and about 8,000 respondents contributed. Both surveys are cross-sectional with retrospective questions about partnership-, fertility- and employment history, other sociodemographic data and information on values and attitudes.

Our analytical sample includes 12,875 respondents between age 19 and 55 years in total, with 9,200 respondents from Spain and 3,675 from Sweden. The age range follows that of the Swedish survey to ensure comparability. Only individuals living with a partner of the opposite sex, either in a cohabiting or a marital relationship are included. Same-sex couples are not examined in this study given their likely different gender dynamics with respect to housework division and satisfaction.

### 5.4.2. Dependent variable

The dependent variable is self-reported satisfaction with the division of domestic tasks with one's partner. The questions are rather similar in the two surveys. The Swedish survey asked: ‘How satisfied are you with the division of household tasks between you and your partner?’ with the answers ranging from 0 (Not at all satisfied) to 10 (Completely satisfied), while the Spanish survey asked ‘How satisfied are you with sharing household tasks between you and your spouse or partner?’ with the answers also ranging from 0 (totally unsatisfied) to 10 (totally satisfied). For our analysis we have created a dichotomous variable with ‘not satisfied’ (0) as the reference category in which answers from 0 to 7 are included, versus ‘satisfied’ (1), with answers ranging from 8 to 10 (Table 6). Table 6 presents the percentage of respondents reporting satisfaction.

**TABLE 6.** *Statistics for Women and Men in Spain and Sweden*

|                                                             | <b>Spain</b> |            | <b>Sweden</b> |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|------------|
|                                                             | <b>Women</b> | <b>Men</b> | <b>Women</b>  | <b>Men</b> |
| <b>Housework (traditional)</b>                              | 71.1%        | 61.5%      | 38.1%         | 25.2%      |
| <b>Satisfaction with the housework division (satisfied)</b> | 54.1%        | 78.7%      | 55.5%         | 65.8%      |
| <b>Age category</b>                                         |              |            |               |            |
| (0) [19 - 29]                                               | 7.9%         | 4.9%       | 16.7%         | 11%        |
| (1) [30 - 39]                                               | 34.2%        | 28.5%      | 40.6%         | 31.9%      |
| (2) [40 - 49]                                               | 42.6%        | 44.3%      | 31.5%         | 37.8%      |
| (3) [50 - 55]                                               | 15.4%        | 22.3%      | 11.2%         | 19.3%      |
| <b>Age difference category</b>                              |              |            |               |            |
| (0) Same (+-1)                                              | 35.8%        | 34.7%      | 35.9%         | 36.1%      |
| (1) Women older                                             | 13.6%        | 14.1%      | 11.3%         | 15%        |
| (2) Men older (2 - 7)                                       | 42%          | 42.6%      | 43%           | 41.4%      |
| (3) Men older than 8                                        | 8.7%         | 8.6%       | 9.9%          | 7.5%       |
| <b>Marriage (yes)</b>                                       | 78.8%        | 77.7%      | 55%           | 51.9%      |
| <b>Previous cohabitation (yes)</b>                          | 9.6%         | 10.6%      | 36.3%         | 36.6%      |
| <b>Nationality respondent</b>                               |              |            |               |            |
| (0) Spain/Sweden                                            | 82.9%        | 90.4%      | 73.4%         | 76.9%      |
| (1) North global                                            | 6.4%         | 3.7%       | 14%           | 12.5%      |
| (2) South global                                            | 10.8%        | 5.9%       | 12.6%         | 10.7%      |
| <b>Children age category</b>                                |              |            |               |            |
| (0) No child                                                | 19.7%        | 19.5%      | 30.9%         | 31.3%      |
| (1) 1 Child 0-5 years                                       | 12.5%        | 13.4%      | 10.6%         | 8.9%       |
| (2) 1 Child more 5 years                                    | 17.9%        | 16.3%      | 10.3%         | 11.4%      |
| (3) 2 Children, the youngest less 5 years                   | 17.3%        | 18.3%      | 19.1%         | 16%        |
| (4) 2 Children, the youngest more 5 years                   | 32.7%        | 32.5%      | 29.1%         | 32.4%      |
| <b>Employment category</b>                                  |              |            |               |            |
| (0) Full time both                                          | 62.1%        | 61.1%      | 72%           | 74.4%      |
| (1) Men work                                                | 25.7%        | 26.9%      | 18.6%         | 16.8%      |
| (2) Women work                                              | 6.5%         | 6.9%       | 5.4%          | 5.6%       |
| (3) Any work                                                | 5.8%         | 5.2%       | 4%            | 3.2%       |
| <b>Education category</b>                                   |              |            |               |            |
| (0) Both high                                               | 34.1%        | 32.9%      | 32%           | 35.5%      |
| (1) Both no high                                            | 39.8%        | 39.2%      | 39.4%         | 31.4%      |
| (2) Men more educated                                       | 8%           | 9.6%       | 8.4%          | 7%         |
| (3) Women more educated                                     | 18.2%        | 18.3%      | 20.1%         | 26.2%      |
| <b>Wage respondent</b>                                      |              |            |               |            |
| (0) Low                                                     | 60.4%        | 30%        | 33.1%         | 14.3%      |
| (1) Medium                                                  | 36.9%        | 63.9%      | 42.2%         | 33.3%      |
| (2) High                                                    | 2.7%         | 6.2%       | 24.6%         | 52.4%      |
| <b>Household income</b>                                     |              |            |               |            |
| (0) Low                                                     | 14.4%        | 12.3%      | 24.2%         | 20%        |
| (1) Medium                                                  | 53%          | 52.9%      | 38.6%         | 38.2%      |
| (2) High                                                    | 32.7%        | 34.9%      | 37.2%         | 41.8%      |
| <b>Outsourcing housework (yes)</b>                          | 8.4%         | 7.5%       | 14.2%         | 13.7%      |
| <b>N</b>                                                    | 7,714        | 1,486      | 1,972         | 1,703      |

*Note:* For dichotomous variables, only the percentage for the category specified (in parenthesis) is shown.  
*Source:* Authors, using data from the Encuesta de fecundidad (INE, 2018) and the Generations and Gender Survey (SUDA, 2021).

### 5.4.3. Key variable

The division of housework is the key independent variable in the analysis. Both surveys define 'housework' as an unpaid activity performed to maintain the household and ensure the well-being of its members, encompassing routine tasks such as meal preparation, laundry, shopping, as well as non-routine activities like repairs, maintenance, plant and animal care, in line with the definition in earlier bibliography (cf. Coltrane, 2000; Durán, 2012). The division of housework is measured differently in the two surveys, requiring distinct ways to harmonize the data. In the Swedish survey, respondents are asked, "How do you and your partner divide the housework?" with three possible answers: "I do most of it," "We share equally," and "My partner does most of it." In contrast, the Spanish survey asks respondents to indicate the percentage of household tasks they perform, the percentage their partner performs, and the percentage performed by another person.

To overcome these differences, a dichotomous variable was created. The reference category (0) represents an unequal division of household tasks, where the woman does more, and is described as 'traditional division of housework'. The comparative category (1) called 'non-traditional division of housework' includes cases where the distribution is either equal between the partners or the man does more<sup>16</sup>. For the Swedish survey, responses were classified by gender as respondent or partner to define the categories. The literature indicates that surveys based on aggregated data (e.g., surveys with five response options as, for example, GGS) are more prone to bias than those with more detailed information (as the fertility survey from Spain, for our case) (Kamo, 2000; Kan, 2008; Lee & Waite, 2005). Accordingly, our strategy has been to classify responses as "traditional" in Spain when women report doing more housework, provided that the difference between male and female responses does exceed 10 percentage points. This harmonization ensures that, despite differences in data collection methods—one survey using categorical responses and the other using percentages—the results from both countries remain meaningfully comparable (Carrasco & Domínguez, 2015; Lee & Waite, 2005).

### 5.4.4. Independent variables (control)

We control for sociodemographic measures such as respondents' age, age difference with their partner, marital status, previous co-residential relationships, nationality (distinguishing between native, from the Global North, and from the Global South), and the age and number of children living in the

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<sup>16</sup> Only 10.51% and 4.85% of Swedish men and women respectively, and 9.57% and 4.81% of Spanish men and women respectively reported that the man does more.

household. We have run models with alternative variable specifications, and also further variables included, not presented here given lack of statistical significance.

Further independent variables of interest are socioeconomic factors regarding the respondent and their partner, such as the couple's labour market participation, educational level and the household income. We also include the wage of the respondent (as for Sweden we had such information only for the respondent). Except for outsourcing housework, which was a dichotomous variable, we relied on categorical variables in the analysis (see Table 6 for descriptive statistics).

#### 5.4.5. Method – Analytical strategy

The study examines the satisfaction with the division of housework reported by men and women regarding their share of domestic chores with their partners, be it traditional or non-traditional, in two countries: Sweden and Spain.

The analysis consists of two parts. First, descriptive findings on the reported satisfaction and with respect to the housework division are presented. Second, we employ logistic regression models as our analytical tool, with focus on marginal predicted probabilities, which offer advantages in terms of comparability across groups and models and facilitate the interpretation of the results. Marginal predicted probabilities represent the predicted likelihood of an outcome occurring based on specific values of the independent variables, illustrating how changes in these variables influence the probability of the outcome for all individuals in the study (see, e.g., Mood, 2010; Mize et al., 2019). Indeed, AME is the most adequate measure to compare effects across models (Mood, 2010; Mize et al., 2019). We run separate models by gender and country.

### 5.5. Findings

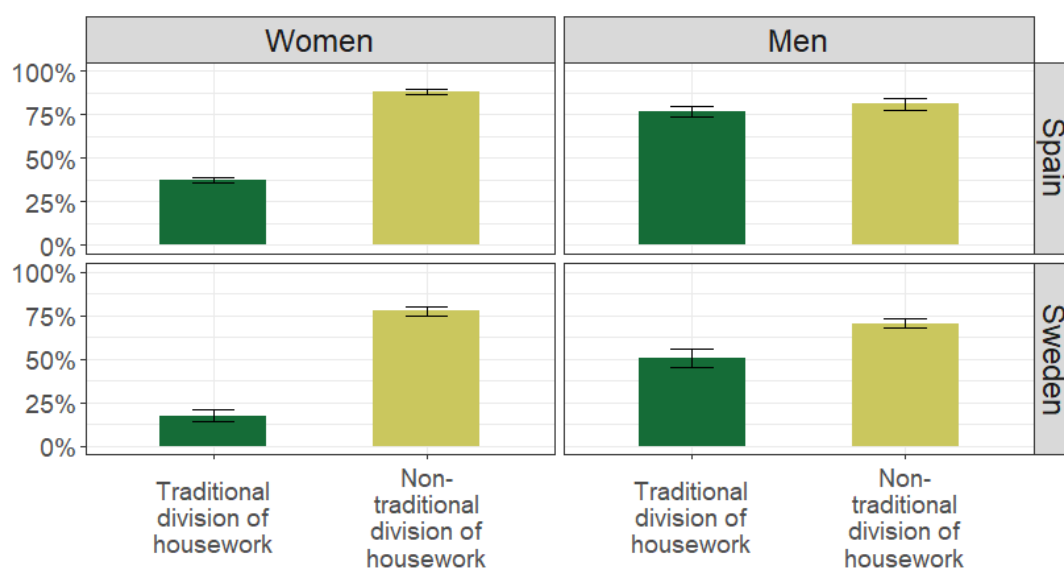
#### 5.5.1. Descriptive analysis: reported satisfaction regarding the housework division

Graph 4 below presents the dependent variable, satisfaction, in relation to our key independent variable, the division of housework illustrating how the proportions differ between men and women, as well as between Spain and Sweden. We see that more than twice as many men as women are satisfied with a traditional share of domestic chores. In contrast, the majority of respondents, independently of their gender, are satisfied with a non-traditional division of housework<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> In the Annex of article 3 you will find a publication in the *Perspectives Demogràfiques* series of the Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics (CED) 'Igualtat al treball domèstic, clau per la satisfacció de la parella: una comparativa entre Espanya i Suècia' —Equality in Household Labour, Key to Couple Satisfaction: A Comparison between Spain and Sweden— presenting these descriptive data disaggregated by age. The main results indicate that

**GRAPH 4.** *Proportion of housework satisfaction regarding the housework division*



*Note:* Intervals represent a 95% confidence level.

*Source:* Authors, using data from the Encuesta de fecundidad (INE, 2018) and the Generations and Gender Survey (SUDA, 2021).

Among women, those enjoying a non-traditional housework division are more than twice as satisfied as those with a traditional division. The difference is less pronounced for men. Comparing the results by country, we find a wider gap in satisfaction among Swedish women than among their Spanish counterparts, notwithstanding higher overall satisfaction levels in Spain. Notably, Swedish women show extremely low levels of satisfaction when experiencing a traditional division of housework. For men, similar levels of satisfaction are seen for Spanish respondents, regardless the division of domestic tasks. Swedish men however show noticeably higher level of satisfaction regarding non-traditional housework division compared to traditional share of domestic chores.

All in all, the descriptive data suggest similar gender patterns of housework satisfaction in both countries, notwithstanding lower overall satisfaction levels in Sweden compared to Spain.

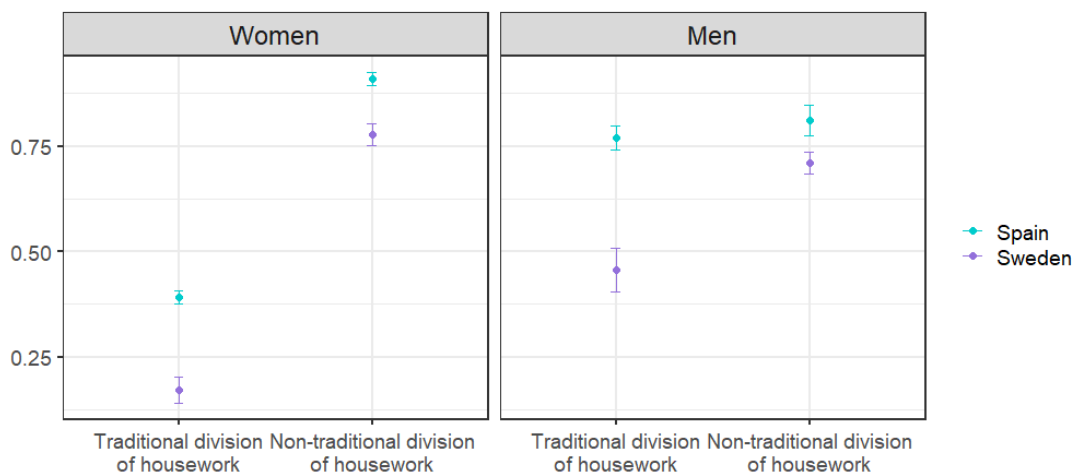
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younger couples perceive greater equality, although it is not possible to determine whether this reflects life-course change or generational differences. Moreover, when the division is non-egalitarian, satisfaction also varies with age: in Sweden it tends to increase over the years for everyone, whereas in Spain it rises among men but declines among women. By contrast, under egalitarian divisions, age, gender and country show little association with satisfaction.

### 5.5.2. Probability of being satisfied (versus not satisfied or indifferent) regarding the division of domestic work (traditional or non-traditional)

The regression results confirm the descriptive findings discussed above, controlling for all factors (Graph 5). Our results show a significantly higher probability of being satisfied when the division of housework is non-traditional than otherwise, particularly among women.

**GRAPH 5.** *Probability of being satisfied with the division of housework based on whether the division is traditional or non-traditional, by country and the gender of the respondent*



*Source:* Authors, using data from the Encuesta de fecundidad (INE, 2018) and the Generations and Gender Survey (SUDA, 2021).

Among women, the probability of being satisfied is much higher for those with a non-traditional division with their partners. Swedish women are especially unlikely to be satisfied with a traditional division, with a predicted probability below 0.25. In contrast, their satisfaction rises to approximately 0.75 in non-traditional arrangements. Spanish women exhibit consistently higher satisfaction levels regardless of the division type, but they also experience an increase, from around 0.35 in traditional settings to nearly 0.80 in non-traditional ones. This pattern suggests that the positive effect of a non-traditional division on satisfaction may be less pronounced in contexts where gender norms are more rigid or in transition, such as Spain.

For men, the probability of being satisfied varies much less by the type of housework division. Swedish men tend to follow a pattern similar to women, with satisfaction increasing from approximately 0.45 in traditional arrangements to 0.75 in non-traditional ones. However, we find no significant differences in satisfaction for Spanish men between traditional and non-traditional divisions, given a satisfaction level close to 0.75 in both cases. Hence the effect of housework division on satisfaction is less pronounced for men than for women.

These results suggest that a significant share of the population in Spain, and among Swedish men may still perceive an unequal division of housework as fair. For Spanish men especially we find at best weak association between housework division and satisfaction.

### 5.5.3. Control variables

For women in Spain, under a traditional division of housework, satisfaction drops significantly with age: middle-aged women are less satisfied with this arrangement than those below age 30 (Table 7). Those with higher levels of education than the partner, are also more critical of the traditional division, while the difference is smaller in Sweden. In both countries—but especially in Sweden—the presence of young children is a source of tension for women if there is no co-responsibility for domestic chores. The negative impact on satisfaction of the traditional division is larger when the woman works and the man does not contribute, with a stronger effect observed in Sweden.

For men, in Spain, satisfaction with a traditional division remains high and even increases with age (Table 8). In contrast, in Sweden, male satisfaction with this model is low, particularly among younger men. Education has little impact on men's satisfaction, unlike among women. The presence of young children slightly reduces men's satisfaction with the traditional division, especially in Sweden. When only the woman is employed, men's satisfaction increases—most notably in the Spanish context—.

**TABLE 7. Women — average marginal effects of being satisfied with the division of housework by division type and country**

|                                                         | Women Spain                       |      |            |            |                          |      |            |            | Women Sweden                      |      |            |            |                          |      |            |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|------------|------------|--------------------------|------|------------|------------|-----------------------------------|------|------------|------------|--------------------------|------|------------|------------|
|                                                         | Traditional division of housework |      |            |            | Non-traditional division |      |            |            | Traditional division of housework |      |            |            | Non-traditional division |      |            |            |
|                                                         | AME                               | sd   | [95% conf. | interv al] | AME                      | sd   | [95% conf. | interv al] | AME                               | sd   | [95% conf. | interv al] | AME                      | sd   | [95% conf. | interv al] |
| Satisfaction                                            | 39.2%                             | 0.01 | 37.7%      | 40.7%      | 90.9%                    | 0.01 | 89.4%      | 92.5%      | 17.1%                             | 0.02 | 14.1%      | 20.2%      | 77.8%                    | 0.01 | 75.2%      | 80.4%      |
| Age (ref: 19-29)                                        | 47.1%                             | 0.03 | 40.3%      | 54.0%      | 87.5%                    | 0.04 | 79.6%      | 95.5%      | 13.4%                             | 0.05 | 4.2%       | 22.6%      | 80.6%                    | 0.03 | 73.8%      | 87.3%      |
| (1) 30-39                                               | 42.0%                             | 0.02 | 38.9%      | 45.1%      | 91.2%                    | 0.01 | 88.6%      | 93.8%      | 15.7%                             | 0.03 | 10.6%      | 20.8%      | 77.0%                    | 0.02 | 72.3%      | 81.7%      |
| (2) 40-49                                               | 38.0%                             | 0.01 | 35.5%      | 40.4%      | 90.0%                    | 0.01 | 87.4%      | 92.5%      | 16.6%                             | 0.03 | 10.8%      | 22.5%      | 77.5%                    | 0.03 | 72.1%      | 83.0%      |
| (3) 50-55                                               | 32.6%                             | 0.02 | 28.9%      | 36.3%      | 94.5%                    | 0.01 | 91.7%      | 97.3%      | 30.3%                             | 0.06 | 19.2%      | 41.3%      | 76.7%                    | 0.04 | 68.2%      | 85.1%      |
| Age difference (ref: Same age +-1)                      | 41.0%                             | 0.01 | 38.4%      | 43.5%      | 91.7%                    | 0.01 | 89.4%      | 94.0%      | 20.6%                             | 0.03 | 15.2%      | 26.1%      | 78.3%                    | 0.02 | 73.9%      | 82.6%      |
| (1) Women older                                         | 35.2%                             | 0.02 | 31.1%      | 39.4%      | 90.5%                    | 0.02 | 86.5%      | 94.5%      | 6.7%                              | 0.03 | 1.0%       | 12.4%      | 76.9%                    | 0.04 | 68.9%      | 84.8%      |
| (2) Men older <7                                        | 39.7%                             | 0.01 | 37.3%      | 42.0%      | 90.0%                    | 0.01 | 87.7%      | 92.4%      | 15.6%                             | 0.02 | 11.3%      | 19.8%      | 75.9%                    | 0.02 | 71.8%      | 80.0%      |
| (3) Men older >7                                        | 36.2%                             | 0.03 | 30.4%      | 42.1%      | 92.8%                    | 0.02 | 88.2%      | 97.4%      | 22.2%                             | 0.05 | 11.5%      | 32.9%      | 85.4%                    | 0.04 | 77.9%      | 92.9%      |
| No marriage                                             | 36.8%                             | 0.02 | 33.1%      | 40.5%      | 93.5%                    | 0.01 | 90.8%      | 96.1%      | 13.3%                             | 0.02 | 9.1%       | 17.5%      | 74.1%                    | 0.02 | 69.4%      | 78.7%      |
| Marriage                                                | 39.9%                             | 0.01 | 38.1%      | 41.7%      | 90.2%                    | 0.01 | 88.3%      | 92.1%      | 20.1%                             | 0.02 | 15.3%      | 24.8%      | 80.9%                    | 0.02 | 77.4%      | 84.3%      |
| No previous cohabitation                                | 38.3%                             | 0.01 | 36.7%      | 39.9%      | 91.0%                    | 0.01 | 89.4%      | 92.6%      | 18.4%                             | 0.02 | 14.7%      | 22.1%      | 77.7%                    | 0.02 | 74.3%      | 81.0%      |
| Previous cohabitation                                   | 47.7%                             | 0.03 | 42.2%      | 53.2%      | 90.6%                    | 0.02 | 86.0%      | 95.2%      | 14.6%                             | 0.03 | 9.4%       | 19.7%      | 78.1%                    | 0.02 | 73.7%      | 82.6%      |
| Nationality (ref: Spain/Sweden)                         | 37.2%                             | 0.01 | 35.6%      | 38.8%      | 91.1%                    | 0.01 | 89.5%      | 92.6%      | 15.3%                             | 0.02 | 12.3%      | 18.4%      | 77.5%                    | 0.01 | 74.6%      | 80.4%      |
| (1) North Global                                        | 48.9%                             | 0.04 | 40.5%      | 57.3%      | 89.9%                    | 0.04 | 81.4%      | 98.4%      | 17.1%                             | 0.05 | 8.0%       | 26.2%      | 83.7%                    | 0.04 | 75.6%      | 91.9%      |
| (2) South Global                                        | 48.9%                             | 0.03 | 42.8%      | 55.1%      | 90.4%                    | 0.02 | 85.6%      | 95.3%      | 27.8%                             | 0.07 | 14.7%      | 40.9%      | 73.5%                    | 0.06 | 62.4%      | 84.7%      |
| Children at home by age (ref: no children at home)      | 44.7%                             | 0.02 | 40.6%      | 48.8%      | 89.7%                    | 0.02 | 86.0%      | 93.3%      | 18.0%                             | 0.03 | 11.5%      | 24.5%      | 80.3%                    | 0.02 | 75.6%      | 85.0%      |
| (1) One child, the younger between 0-5 years            | 38.3%                             | 0.02 | 33.7%      | 42.9%      | 92.7%                    | 0.02 | 88.9%      | 96.6%      | 10.5%                             | 0.04 | 1.7%       | 19.2%      | 77.2%                    | 0.04 | 68.6%      | 85.8%      |
| (2) One child more than 5 years                         | 40.9%                             | 0.02 | 37.2%      | 44.6%      | 92.5%                    | 0.01 | 89.6%      | 95.3%      | 15.9%                             | 0.04 | 7.4%       | 24.5%      | 83.6%                    | 0.04 | 75.5%      | 91.7%      |
| (3) Two or more children, the younger between 0-5 years | 35.3%                             | 0.02 | 31.6%      | 39.0%      | 88.3%                    | 0.02 | 84.0%      | 92.6%      | 19.7%                             | 0.04 | 11.9%      | 27.5%      | 73.9%                    | 0.04 | 66.3%      | 81.6%      |
| (4) Two or more children, the younger more than 5 years | 37.5%                             | 0.01 | 34.7%      | 40.3%      | 91.6%                    | 0.01 | 88.7%      | 94.4%      | 17.2%                             | 0.03 | 10.9%      | 23.6%      | 75.7%                    | 0.03 | 69.9%      | 81.5%      |

|                                        |       |      |       |       |       |      |       |       |       |      |       |       |       |      |       |       |
|----------------------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| Employment (ref: both full employed)   | 37.6% | 0.01 | 35.5% | 39.6% | 91.9% | 0.01 | 90.1% | 93.6% | 16.8% | 0.02 | 12.8% | 20.7% | 77.8% | 0.02 | 74.5% | 81.1% |
| (1) Men work                           | 43.9% | 0.02 | 40.8% | 47.0% | 89.7% | 0.02 | 85.5% | 93.9% | 22.0% | 0.04 | 13.8% | 30.1% | 80.1% | 0.03 | 73.5% | 86.8% |
| (2) Women work                         | 36.7% | 0.04 | 29.8% | 43.6% | 89.4% | 0.02 | 85.0% | 93.8% | 10.3% | 0.07 | -2.9% | 23.5% | 72.5% | 0.06 | 59.9% | 85.2% |
| (3) Any work                           | 39.0% | 0.04 | 31.8% | 46.3% | 88.4% | 0.03 | 82.2% | 94.7% | 9.5%  | 0.06 | -2.4% | 21.3% | 73.9% | 0.08 | 58.8% | 88.9% |
| Education (ref: both higher education) | 39.9% | 0.01 | 37.0% | 42.7% | 93.2% | 0.01 | 90.8% | 95.5% | 14.2% | 0.03 | 9.2%  | 19.2% | 78.7% | 0.02 | 74.6% | 82.9% |
| (1) Both no-higher                     | 41.6% | 0.01 | 39.0% | 44.2% | 88.6% | 0.01 | 85.8% | 91.5% | 20.0% | 0.03 | 14.4% | 25.6% | 76.9% | 0.02 | 72.1% | 81.7% |
| (2) Men higher                         | 38.2% | 0.03 | 32.8% | 43.5% | 90.2% | 0.03 | 84.5% | 95.8% | 15.4% | 0.06 | 4.4%  | 26.3% | 79.1% | 0.05 | 69.6% | 88.5% |
| (3) Women higher                       | 33.2% | 0.02 | 29.8% | 36.6% | 91.8% | 0.02 | 88.7% | 94.9% | 16.7% | 0.03 | 10.9% | 22.4% | 77.7% | 0.03 | 72.3% | 83.2% |
| Wage respondent (ref: low)             | 39.8% | 0.01 | 37.6% | 41.9% | 92.0% | 0.01 | 90.1% | 93.9% | 20.3% | 0.03 | 13.8% | 26.9% | 74.9% | 0.03 | 69.2% | 80.6% |
| (1) Medium                             | 38.3% | 0.02 | 35.4% | 41.3% | 89.6% | 0.02 | 86.4% | 92.8% | 15.7% | 0.02 | 10.9% | 20.6% | 78.8% | 0.02 | 74.8% | 82.7% |
| (2) Hight                              | 39.3% | 0.05 | 29.0% | 49.6% | 75.2% | 0.08 | 60.3% | 90.0% | 14.6% | 0.03 | 8.0%  | 21.3% | 80.4% | 0.03 | 75.3% | 85.4% |
| Household income (ref: low)            | 37.1% | 0.02 | 32.5% | 41.6% | 89.6% | 0.02 | 85.2% | 94.0% | 24.7% | 0.05 | 15.3% | 34.0% | 75.1% | 0.03 | 68.3% | 81.8% |
| (1) Medium                             | 37.4% | 0.01 | 35.2% | 39.5% | 89.9% | 0.01 | 87.6% | 92.2% | 13.7% | 0.02 | 9.0%  | 18.4% | 78.8% | 0.02 | 74.7% | 83.0% |
| (2) Hight                              | 43.3% | 0.02 | 40.2% | 46.5% | 93.0% | 0.01 | 90.5% | 95.5% | 16.5% | 0.03 | 11.5% | 21.5% | 78.7% | 0.03 | 73.6% | 83.9% |
| No outsourcing                         | 39.3% | 0.01 | 37.7% | 40.9% | 91.3% | 0.01 | 89.7% | 92.9% | 17.4% | 0.02 | 14.2% | 20.7% | 77.5% | 0.01 | 74.7% | 80.4% |
| Outsourcing                            | 38.4% | 0.03 | 32.9% | 44.0% | 86.4% | 0.04 | 79.0% | 93.8% | 15.3% | 0.04 | 7.0%  | 23.6% | 79.8% | 0.03 | 73.2% | 86.4% |

Source: Authors, using data from the Encuesta de fecundidad (INE, 2018) and the Generations and Gender Survey (SUDA, 2021).

**TABLE 8. Men** — average marginal effects of being satisfied with the division of housework by division type and country

|                                    | Men Spain            |      |               |               |                          |      |               |               | Men Sweden           |      |               |               |                          |      |               |               |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|------|---------------|---------------|----------------------|------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|------|---------------|---------------|
|                                    | Traditional division |      |               |               | Non-traditional division |      |               |               | Traditional division |      |               |               | Non-traditional division |      |               |               |
|                                    | AME                  | sd   | [95%<br>conf. | interv<br>al] | AME                      | sd   | [95%<br>conf. | interv<br>al] | AME                  | sd   | [95%<br>conf. | interv<br>al] | AME                      | sd   | [95%<br>conf. | interv<br>al] |
| Satisfaction                       | 77.0%                | 0.01 | 74.1%         | 79.9%         | 81.2%                    | 0.02 | 77.6%         | 84.8%         | 45.6%                | 0.03 | 40.3%         | 50.9%         | 71.0%                    | 0.01 | 68.4%         | 73.6%         |
| Age (ref: 19-29)                   | 68.9%                | 0.08 | 52.5%         | 85.3%         | 92.0%                    | 0.05 | 82.3%         | 101.6%        | 39.9%                | 0.14 | 11.7%         | 68.0%         | 59.15%                   | 0.06 | 48.06%        | 70.23%        |
| (1) 30-39                          | 79.3%                | 0.03 | 73.3%         | 85.3%         | 74.5%                    | 0.04 | 65.7%         | 83.3%         | 41.0%                | 0.05 | 30.6%         | 51.4%         | 66.38%                   | 0.03 | 60.49%        | 72.26%        |
| (2) 40-49                          | 75.8%                | 0.02 | 71.1%         | 80.4%         | 81.8%                    | 0.03 | 76.9%         | 86.8%         | 47.2%                | 0.04 | 39.1%         | 55.4%         | 72.11%                   | 0.02 | 67.74%        | 76.47%        |
| (3) 50-55                          | 78.3%                | 0.03 | 72.0%         | 84.7%         | 85.4%                    | 0.04 | 78.1%         | 92.6%         | 52.6%                | 0.06 | 41.6%         | 63.5%         | 81.78%                   | 0.03 | 76.38%        | 87.18%        |
| Age difference (ref: Same age +-1) | 80.4%                | 0.02 | 75.8%         | 84.9%         | 80.3%                    | 0.03 | 74.0%         | 86.6%         | 41.2%                | 0.04 | 32.7%         | 49.8%         | 70.17%                   | 0.02 | 65.74%        | 74.59%        |
| (1) Women older                    | 66.7%                | 0.04 | 58.0%         | 75.4%         | 85.1%                    | 0.04 | 77.5%         | 92.6%         | 54.7%                | 0.07 | 41.1%         | 68.2%         | 75.51%                   | 0.03 | 69.36%        | 81.67%        |
| (2) Men older <7                   | 76.5%                | 0.02 | 72.1%         | 80.9%         | 81.9%                    | 0.03 | 76.8%         | 87.1%         | 47.3%                | 0.04 | 39.5%         | 55.1%         | 69.60%                   | 0.02 | 65.31%        | 73.90%        |

|                                                         |       |      |       |       |       |      |       |        |       |      |        |       |        |      |        |        |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|--------|------|--------|--------|
| (3) Men older >7                                        | 83.3% | 0.05 | 73.1% | 93.5% | 74.7% | 0.06 | 63.0% | 86.3%  | 39.5% | 0.09 | 22.5%  | 56.5% | 73.16% | 0.05 | 63.11% | 83.20% |
| No marriage                                             | 76.2% | 0.04 | 69.1% | 83.2% | 74.2% | 0.05 | 65.4% | 83.0%  | 35.8% | 0.04 | 27.1%  | 44.5% | 68.83% | 0.02 | 64.31% | 73.35% |
| Marriage                                                | 77.3% | 0.02 | 73.9% | 80.6% | 82.9% | 0.02 | 79.1% | 86.7%  | 52.5% | 0.04 | 45.0%  | 59.9% | 72.62% | 0.02 | 68.88% | 76.35% |
| No previous cohabitation                                | 77.1% | 0.02 | 74.1% | 80.2% | 81.1% | 0.02 | 77.3% | 84.8%  | 47.7% | 0.03 | 41.3%  | 54.1% | 71.84% | 0.02 | 68.50% | 75.18% |
| Previous cohabitation                                   | 75.8% | 0.05 | 66.1% | 85.5% | 82.2% | 0.05 | 71.8% | 92.7%  | 42.0% | 0.04 | 33.5%  | 50.5% | 69.48% | 0.02 | 64.82% | 74.15% |
| Nationality (ref: Spain/Sweden)                         | 76.0% | 0.02 | 73.0% | 79.1% | 81.2% | 0.02 | 77.5% | 84.9%  | 43.9% | 0.03 | 38.3%  | 49.5% | 69.69% | 0.01 | 66.86% | 72.52% |
| (1) North Global                                        | 79.0% | 0.06 | 66.3% | 91.7% | 89.7% | 0.07 | 76.4% | 102.9% | 45.0% | 0.10 | 26.2%  | 63.9% | 77.41% | 0.04 | 68.90% | 85.92% |
| (2) South Global                                        | 90.6% | 0.04 | 82.2% | 99.0% | 75.7% | 0.09 | 57.9% | 93.6%  | 62.5% | 0.10 | 42.3%  | 82.7% | 75.39% | 0.06 | 63.13% | 87.64% |
| Children at home by age (ref: no children at home)      | 75.7% | 0.04 | 68.3% | 83.2% | 85.1% | 0.03 | 78.7% | 91.5%  | 47.8% | 0.05 | 38.0%  | 57.7% | 75.24% | 0.03 | 70.32% | 80.16% |
| (1) One child, the younger between 0-5 years            | 73.2% | 0.05 | 63.8% | 82.6% | 86.3% | 0.04 | 78.9% | 93.7%  | 37.0% | 0.15 | 7.9%   | 66.0% | 70.25% | 0.05 | 61.37% | 79.13% |
| (2) One child more than 5 years                         | 79.3% | 0.04 | 72.5% | 86.2% | 73.8% | 0.05 | 63.4% | 84.2%  | 44.0% | 0.07 | 30.9%  | 57.2% | 67.62% | 0.04 | 58.94% | 76.31% |
| (3) Two or more children, the younger between 0-5 years | 76.7% | 0.04 | 69.6% | 83.8% | 80.8% | 0.04 | 73.0% | 88.7%  | 54.2% | 0.07 | 40.6%  | 67.8% | 76.66% | 0.03 | 70.07% | 83.25% |
| (4) Two or more children, the younger more than 5 years | 78.4% | 0.03 | 73.1% | 83.7% | 80.0% | 0.04 | 72.9% | 87.1%  | 42.4% | 0.04 | 33.8%  | 51.0% | 64.82% | 0.03 | 58.97% | 70.67% |
| Employment (ref: both full employed)                    | 75.6% | 0.02 | 71.6% | 79.6% | 83.6% | 0.02 | 79.9% | 87.3%  | 46.6% | 0.03 | 40.0%  | 53.3% | 72.23% | 0.02 | 69.10% | 75.37% |
| (1) Men work                                            | 79.1% | 0.03 | 74.1% | 84.0% | 78.4% | 0.05 | 68.4% | 88.5%  | 48.2% | 0.07 | 35.4%  | 60.9% | 67.90% | 0.04 | 60.06% | 75.73% |
| (2) Women work                                          | 86.1% | 0.05 | 76.3% | 95.8% | 77.8% | 0.06 | 65.3% | 90.4%  | 39.3% | 0.12 | 15.9%  | 62.6% | 63.41% | 0.06 | 51.47% | 75.36% |
| (3) Any work                                            | 70.9% | 0.08 | 55.7% | 86.2% | 62.7% | 0.11 | 41.8% | 83.6%  | 19.7% | 0.19 | -16.6% | 55.9% | 70.48% | 0.08 | 54.68% | 86.27% |
| Education (ref: both higher education)                  | 78.7% | 0.03 | 73.4% | 83.9% | 78.7% | 0.03 | 72.8% | 84.7%  | 36.1% | 0.04 | 27.6%  | 44.6% | 71.27% | 0.02 | 67.24% | 75.30% |
| (1) Both no-higher                                      | 76.7% | 0.02 | 71.9% | 81.4% | 84.2% | 0.03 | 78.6% | 89.9%  | 56.5% | 0.05 | 47.6%  | 65.5% | 72.30% | 0.03 | 66.95% | 77.64% |
| (2) Men higher                                          | 79.3% | 0.04 | 71.1% | 87.4% | 78.3% | 0.07 | 64.9% | 91.7%  | 41.7% | 0.07 | 27.7%  | 55.8% | 59.31% | 0.05 | 49.12% | 69.50% |
| (3) Women higher                                        | 73.6% | 0.04 | 66.6% | 80.6% | 81.1% | 0.04 | 73.7% | 88.5%  | 46.6% | 0.06 | 34.8%  | 58.4% | 72.15% | 0.03 | 66.69% | 77.62% |
| Wage respondent (ref: low)                              | 78.3% | 0.03 | 71.7% | 84.9% | 80.4% | 0.04 | 72.8% | 88.1%  | 47.2% | 0.11 | 25.8%  | 68.5% | 76.25% | 0.04 | 68.77% | 83.74% |
| (1) Medium                                              | 76.3% | 0.02 | 72.4% | 80.1% | 82.1% | 0.02 | 77.6% | 86.7%  | 38.7% | 0.05 | 29.0%  | 48.3% | 69.03% | 0.03 | 63.81% | 74.25% |
| (2) Hight                                               | 78.7% | 0.06 | 66.5% | 90.8% | 75.4% | 0.07 | 60.9% | 89.9%  | 49.5% | 0.04 | 41.9%  | 57.1% | 70.82% | 0.02 | 66.63% | 75.01% |
| Household income (ref: low)                             | 78.2% | 0.05 | 68.0% | 88.3% | 88.3% | 0.04 | 80.9% | 95.7%  | 44.2% | 0.10 | 23.7%  | 64.6% | 73.88% | 0.04 | 66.43% | 81.33% |
| (1) Medium                                              | 76.4% | 0.02 | 72.3% | 80.5% | 83.5% | 0.02 | 78.7% | 88.4%  | 50.7% | 0.04 | 42.2%  | 59.2% | 72.86% | 0.02 | 68.38% | 77.33% |
| (2) Hight                                               | 77.5% | 0.03 | 71.8% | 83.1% | 74.7% | 0.04 | 67.2% | 82.2%  | 41.9% | 0.05 | 33.0%  | 50.8% | 67.69% | 0.03 | 62.10% | 73.29% |
| No outsourcing                                          | 76.3% | 0.02 | 73.2% | 79.3% | 81.2% | 0.02 | 77.5% | 84.9%  | 44.7% | 0.03 | 39.1%  | 50.3% | 71.03% | 0.01 | 68.19% | 73.87% |
| Outsourcing                                             | 85.9% | 0.05 | 76.3% | 95.5% | 81.3% | 0.05 | 71.3% | 91.2%  | 51.4% | 0.07 | 38.5%  | 64.3% | 70.83% | 0.04 | 63.78% | 77.88% |

Source: Authors, using data from the Encuesta de fecundidad (INE, 2018) and the Generations and Gender Survey (SUDA, 2021).

## 5.6. Discussion

This study provides new evidence on the relationship between the division of housework and satisfaction in heterosexual couples, with a particular focus on gender and social context. Through comparative data analysis, we have identified patterns illustrating how the distribution of household tasks shapes perceptions of fairness which in turn contributes to individual well-being. Research on satisfaction with the division of housework is essential for understanding persistent gender inequalities, especially since these are not always perceived as unjust. This is one of the central findings of the study—also observed by Baxter (2000), Braun et al. (2008), and others—which holds important implications for both personal and relational well-being.

Our first hypothesis with respect to gender differences in satisfaction with the division of housework has been confirmed. Men consistently report higher satisfaction than women, no matter the type of division. This finding aligns with previous research (Greenstein, 1996; Major, 1989; Mikula et al., 2009), which shows that women are more likely to perceive injustice in unequal arrangements. However, both men and women may perceive unequal divisions as fair: 38% of Spanish women and 18% of Swedish women in our analysis consider a traditional division to be fair, while among men, this figure rises to 77% and 51%, respectively. These perceptions reinforce traditional models of housework, especially for men, and highlight the enduring influence of gender norms in shaping couple satisfaction.

Second, the results underscore significant cross-national differences in line with our second hypothesis. In Spain, overall satisfaction levels are higher than in Sweden, suggesting that perceptions of fairness are culturally and structurally mediated—shaped by factors such as institutional support for work-family balance and ingrained gender norms—. This finding echoes Braun et al. (2008) and Greenstein (2009), who highlight a stronger connection between fairness perceptions and domestic division in more egalitarian societies, although their analyses focused only on women. Our more recent data confirm this association among men as well. In Spain, satisfaction does not vary significantly by division type, while in Sweden, men report lower satisfaction in traditional arrangements. Among women, differences appear in both countries. This suggests that in Spain, women may hold more egalitarian values than their male partners, potentially creating tensions within the couple. However, men tend to overestimate their contribution to housework compared to their partners' reports—especially in Sweden—which may distort their perceptions of fairness and help explain lower satisfaction in more traditional divisions (Ruppanner et al., 2018).

As for the third hypothesis regarding demographic and socioeconomic factors' influence on satisfaction, our findings partially support previous studies (Braun et al., 2008; Aguiar et al., 2021; Koster, 2022) with respect to paid employment, particularly the time availability perspective (Shelton & John, 1996). In couples with a traditional division, women report higher satisfaction when they do not engage in paid work and their male partners do, reflecting the persistence of the male breadwinner model —especially in Spain—. Paradoxically, Spanish men report the highest satisfaction with traditional domestic division when they are not employed but their female partners are. This can be interpreted through the lens of 'doing gender' (Brines, 1994), as a way of reasserting gender roles in situations that deviate from traditional norms. Furthermore, in non-traditional arrangements Spanish men are more satisfied when neither partner is employed, while Swedish men report greater satisfaction when only the woman is employed.

As for relative educational attainment, Spanish women with higher education than their partners report lower satisfaction when the housework division is traditional, whereas men in Sweden who are more educated than their partner express lower satisfaction when the division is non-traditional. These results suggest that the intersection of power dynamics, educational attainment, and cultural context matters in shaping how housework is experienced and evaluated.

Finally, our analysis highlights that the type of division itself is the most decisive factor influencing satisfaction, also considering the context. Different patterns of task distribution have distinct effects on perceived fairness and satisfaction. It is not only the amount of work done but the manner in which it is shared that shapes perceptions of equity. While individual and contextual variables do influence this relationship, their impact is contingent on the specific configuration of work division. The data show that unequal arrangements are more strongly associated with perceptions of injustice among women than men (as also found by Koster et al., 2022), especially in Spain where the differences between men and women are larger. In Sweden, the gendered pattern is less marked, possibly due to more convergent gender attitudes between men and women —though this convergence in attitudes does not necessarily translate into equal behaviours—.

One of the main limitations of this study is the inability to distinguish between routine and non-routine domestic tasks. This distinction is important, as routine tasks carry a greater gender burden and entail an additional mental load, which disproportionately affects women (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Kan et al., 2011). Additionally, the use of cross-sectional data limits causal inference. Future research would benefit from longitudinal studies to better understand how perceptions of fairness and satisfaction evolve over time. It is also important to note that our data come from only one person in

each couple, potentially introducing bias. Subsequent studies should include responses from both partners to capture the dynamics of shared decision-making and mutual satisfaction. Finally, it would be appropriate to include a more objective measure of domestic tasks; the most reliable are time-use diaries (Sevilla, 2014).

A key contribution of this study lies in showing that men's satisfaction with the division of housework can remain high even when arrangements are objectively unequal. This suggests that satisfaction may reflect internalised expectations about gender roles rather than actual fairness. These findings challenge dominant frameworks that treat satisfaction as a proxy for preference fulfilment or efficient bargaining. Instead, we offer a normative reading of satisfaction, shaped by gendered reference points often external to the couple. This asymmetry—where women's satisfaction depends more clearly on the actual division of labour—helps explain the persistence of traditional arrangements despite social change. It also calls for a more critical use of “satisfaction” as an analytical category, as it may conceal underlying inequalities.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the literature on housework and gender by showing that satisfaction with household task division depends not only on time spent on such tasks, but also on national context, the nature of the division, and subjective perceptions of fairness. By highlighting the role of internalised norms and gendered expectations—particularly among men—in sustaining high satisfaction even in objectively unequal situations, the study advances a relational and context-sensitive approach to understanding domestic satisfaction. The findings highlight the importance of public policies aimed at promoting more egalitarian divisions of labour and awareness campaigns that challenge existing perceptions of fairness within households. In a context where progress toward gender equality appears to be stalling, it is crucial to examine the underlying factors that continue to impede change.

## 6. Conclusions

Aquesta tesi doctoral ha explorat la divisió sexual del treball domèstic no remunerat i ha analitzat com s'organitza i s'articula amb les desigualtats de gènere, les transicions vitals i la satisfacció amb la divisió de les tasques en el context català, espanyol i europeu. Tot i que les transformacions socials i laborals de les darreres dècades han comportat un qüestionament de la divisió de rols entre homes i dones, la persistència d'una distribució desigual del treball domèstic continua sent un dels principals reptes per a l'equitat de gènere.

A diferència d'altres estudis que s'han centrat només en una part quantitativa del treball domèstic, aquesta tesi posa èmfasi també en la dimensió qualitativa i subjectiva: com les persones perceben, negocien i justifiquen la distribució de tasques i com aquestes percepcions varien en diferents estadis del curs de vida i contextos europeus. Això permet captar una visió holística dels canvis i de l'estabilitat de la divisió del treball domèstic. Per una banda, mostra que les diferents tasques evolucionen de manera desigual i es perceben diferent entre homes i dones, per exemple, es detecta que la càrrega familiar invisible habitualment recau a les dones i poques vegades es desplaça cap als homes. Per l'altra, les raons subjacents d'aquest canvi o estabilitat, incloent-hi la persistència de normes de gènere, la interiorització de determinats estàndards i els límits de la negociació en les parelles.

Per abordar aquestes perspectives, la recerca s'ha construït a partir de tres estudis complementaris basats en la combinació de metodologies i fonts de dades. Els tres enfocaments han contribuït a oferir una visió panoràmica de les dinàmiques del treball domèstic, identificant factors individuals, com la disponibilitat de temps, les transicions laborals, les característiques sociodemogràfiques i les actituds de gènere, estructurals, com les polítiques de conciliació i la provisió de serveis, i culturals, com les normes de gènere, les expectatives socials i els estàndards de realització de tasques, que influeixen en l'organització. L'originalitat d'aquesta recerca rau en la mirada integrada, que combina dades quantitatives i qualitatives, nivells d'anàlisi micro i macro i diferents dimensions del treball domèstic visible i invisible.

Finalment, les conclusions de la tesi apunten a que cal actuar sobre els mecanismes que reproduïxen aquesta divisió desigual, les polítiques públiques, les normes culturals i les pràctiques quotidianes, i promoure un canvi cap a la corresponsabilitat. També evidencien la necessitat de considerar la diversitat de trajectòries familiars i laborals per comprendre millor les desigualtats de

gènere en el treball domèstic. El coneixement generat pot contribuir a orientar intervencions que facilitin una distribució més equitativa de les tasques per avançar cap a societats més igualitàries.

## 6.1. Principals resultats de la tesi

Els principals resultats apunten a un escenari de canvis parcials i persistències estructurals: les desigualtats de gènere a l'àmbit domèstic es mantenen i, a més, s'adapten i es reproduïxen en noves formes.

Les **principals conclusions** que es desprenen de cada article són:

(1) Les desigualtats persisteixen fins a l'edat adulta avançada, tant en la dedicació total com en la bretxa de gènere, però varien segons el context institucional i segons els recursos socioeconòmics, afectant de manera especialment marcada a les dones, sobretot en països mediterranis. A més, s'identifica que els homes que dediquen més temps a la llar són els que viuen sols.

(2) Les narratives revelen percepcions sovint esbiaixades del treball i de la seva divisió entre homes i dones, fetes servir tant per justificar els canvis com la seva absència: la càrrega familiar invisible és la principal font de discrepàncies entre gèneres i, en molts casos, la divisió es percep com a equilibrada ja que aquesta dimensió no es considera. És fa evident que la interpretació de la divisió requereix integrar la dimensió subjectiva, la qual ha guiat l'enfocament analític del tercer article.

(3) La satisfacció amb repartiments desajustats és relativament habitual, però varia segons el gènere, el país i l'edat: les dones en països més igualitaris mostren un rebuig més ampli, mentre que entre els homes, sobretot els espanyols, la satisfacció és relativament independent del tipus de repartiment. El patró per edat ens mostra que la satisfacció augmenta amb els anys a Suècia per a tothom, mentre que a Espanya creix entre els homes però disminueix entre les dones.

En definitiva, per avançar cap a una societat més igualitària cal continuar investigant com es transformen les desigualtats al llarg de les generacions, del curs de vida i dels contextos institucionals, els tres eixos que vertebraven aquestes conclusions.

### 6.1.1. Generacions: persistència i canvi de la bretxa de gènere

En clau generacional, els resultats mostren que el gènere continua sent l'eix que estructura la dedicació al treball domèstic: la bretxa no desapareix, sinó que es reconfigura entre cohorts. L'anàlisi comparativa del primer article, centrat en població major de 50 anys, i la del tercer article, centrat en població en edat laboral, confirmen que a tots els països estudiats les dones dediquen significativament més temps que els homes a les tasques domèstiques, fins i tot quan es controlen les variables

demogràfiques i socioeconòmiques. Al primer article detectem que, de mitjana als 18 països europeus estudiats, les dones dediquen 1.7 vegades més temps que els homes i, a Espanya, 2.3 cops més, reforçant la hipòtesi de la convergència lenta (Bianchi et al., 2012; Kan et al., 2022).

L'estudi qualitatiu del segon article permet identificar els mecanismes de reproducció d'aquesta diferència: fins i tot entre les parelles joves amb valors igualitaris, la divisió desigual reapareix parcialment en la càrrega familiar invisible. Els homes tendeixen a percebre la situació com a més equitativa que les dones i justifiquen la seva menor implicació apel·lant a la participació laboral, la disponibilitat de temps o l'argument de compensació pel treball total. Així, identifiquem que quan incorporen el treball invisible al seu relat, la divisió ja no es percep com a tant igualitària. Daminger (2019) identifica que no considerar el treball invisible subestima el treball de les dones: *'Ella decideix quan s'ha de fer i en quin moment s'ha de fer encara que després —diguem— jo ho executo'*<sup>18</sup>. Les dones, en canvi, habitualment incorporen la dimensió emocional i cognitiva de la gestió de la llar, que roman menys visible i delegable. Aquest desajust entre pràctiques i percepcions entre homes i dones mostra com el 'fent gènere' actua a petita escala, en la quotidianitat de la llar.

Pel que fa a l'avaluació d'aquesta divisió, l'evidència posa en relació generacions i percepcions de justícia: les desigualtats no sempre es perceben com a injustes i es normalitzen sota un context cultural específic. En el nostre estudi, això es concreta en una satisfacció més alta dels homes, particularment a Espanya, i una satisfacció més baixa de les dones. Tot i que, sota una divisió desajustada, el 37.5% de les dones a Espanya i el 17.7% a Suècia es declaren satisfetes, reflectint estàndards i expectatives socialitzades que varien entre generacions i contextos.

A nivell micro, aquesta satisfacció femenina amb divisions desajustades s'expressa amb justificacions com ara *'jo també soc molt exigent'*, *'soc una mica més meticulosa'* o, des de la perspectiva dels homes *'la meua dona, és una persona molt, molt perfeccionista amb la neteja'*, en la línia de Hochschild (1989), normalitzen uns estàndards femenins més elevats, eviten el conflicte i mantenen una harmonia aparent. En canvi, per justificar la menor implicació dels homes en aquests casos desajustats, observem arguments basats en la participació al mercat laboral, o bé la justícia tendeix a avaluar-se per comparació amb altres referents socials més que no pas dins la relació mateixa (Major, 1997, 1993; Thompson, 1991), com observem en les nostres entrevistes: *'Jo he vist a casa meua [dels pares] coses que ara mateix se'm repeteixen a mi a casa meua...'*. Així, es transmet

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<sup>18</sup> Les cites incloses a l'apartat de conclusions provenen del segon article de la tesi doctoral i es poden trobar tant als resultats de l'article com a l'annex de l'article 3, on consten en la seva versió original.

socialment la diferència de temps, juntament amb les jerarquies socials i els significats culturals que l'acompanyen i, alhora, es modulen i mantenen en un context institucional específic.

Això no obstant, al segon article s'observa que les divisions desajustades no sempre es legitimen: hi ha dones que expressen resignació o recorren a 'acords silenciosos' per evitar conflictes i n'hi ha d'altres que actuen com a 'guardianes' que centralitzen la coordinació i forcen la implicació masculina (Allen i Hawkins, 1999; Wiesmann et al., 2008): *'Ell ho pregunta tot. Aleshores jo crec que és aquí on hi ha més desigualtat, jo porto el control de com s'organitza tot, i ell fa les coses quan jo els ho dic'*. Es podria suposar que aquests casos s'alineen amb el perfil d'insatisfacció femenina a les llars amb divisions desiguals identificat al tercer article, ja que accepten (amb resignació) la divisió però identifiquen el desequilibri com a injust. Pel que fa als homes, una part també expressa insatisfacció amb els desequilibris —a Espanya observem un 23% i a Suècia un 49.4%— i al segon article això s'identifica amb discursos conscients a nivell actitudinal però passius a nivell de comportament: *'M'agradaria posar-me més amb coses de la cuina i això, però uff ostres, em costa eh'*.

A més, la publicació de l'annex de l'article 3, mostra que, quan la divisió és desajustada, la satisfacció tendeix a augmentar amb l'edat, indicant que les generacions més joves toleren menys les divisions que no son igualitàries, amb una excepció rellevant: entre les dones espanyoles, la satisfacció disminueix amb l'edat, cosa que apunta a processos de normalització selectiva entre les més joves que accedeixen a la cohabitació i/o matrimoni. Els diferents resultats evidencien que en entorns amb major igualtat de gènere, tant a nivell institucional com pel que fa a normes de gènere, les persones son més conscients de les desigualtats a la llar i tenen més rebuig per les divisions desajustades (en la línia d'altres estudis, com ara Hu i Yucel, 2018). Això és especialment cert per a les dones, probablement perquè la interiorització d'estàndards més igualitaris, la major consideració de la càrrega invisible i uns costos de renegociació més baixos, derivats de més recursos propis i d'un millor suport institucional, redueixen la tolerància envers els repartiments desajustats.

### 6.1.2. Curs de vida: transicions vitals i reorganització

L'anàlisi del curs de vida mostra que les desigualtats de gènere no només persisteixen sinó que poden intensificar-se en moments de transició, quan es reorganitzen el temps, els rols i les expectatives socials i de gènere. El primer article mostra que la convivència amb parella masculina i amb fills incrementa el temps de dedicació femenina al treball domèstic fins i tot en la vellesa, reproduint patrons ja documentats (Anxo et al., 2011; Leopold i Skopek, 2015) i situant l'edat avançada, on en molts casos no hi ha el condicionant laboral, com a etapa on la desigualtat no s'esvaeix, sinó que es reconfigura.

El segon article, amb seguiment longitudinal, aprofundeix en el mecanisme d'aquest procés: la parentalitat és la transició que més reforça els rols de gènere, incloses parelles que prèviament es declaraven igualitàries: *‘Cal recol·locar els papers, és a dir, per exemple, el fet que ell estigui treballant [i ella està de baixa per maternitat] no vol dir que jo ho hagi de fer tot’*. Les dones adapten les seves trajectòries laborals i redueixen hores de treball remunerat, un escenari que els hi permet disposar de més temps per a assumir més responsabilitats domèstiques, mentre que els homes mantenen pautes similars o incrementen lleugerament la participació en tasques visibles: *‘tenir la nostra filla prenent el pit [...] vam decidir que això implica un esforç més gran per a ella [la seva dona] de disponibilitat d'estar per ella, doncs jo assumia les tasques que quedaven’*. Així, les narratives mostren que molts dels avanços que es presenten com a corresponsabilitat són canvis només aparents: es pot oferir més ajuda puntual, però la càrrega mental i la coordinació de la llar continuen sent femenines.

Pel que fa a la persistència d'aquestes dinàmiques, una tercera onada permetria avaluar-ne la durabilitat i distingir millor entre ajustaments temporals i reorganitzacions estables. En paral·lel, les millores en la conciliació i en la perspectiva de gènere de les polítiques públiques de paternitat espanyoles poden modificar aquests patrons, un efecte que previsiblement es farà visible en generacions posteriors més exposades a permisos iguals i intransferibles, a serveis de cura i a entorns normatius més igualitaris.

Les narratives masculines apel·len sovint a la disponibilitat de temps per justificar la seva menor implicació en determinats moments del curs de vida. No obstant això, en l'anàlisi quantitativa no identifiquem diferències en la participació dels homes a les tasques domèstiques —ni en el temps (al primer article), ni en el repartiment (al tercer)— quan es modifiquen els recursos masculins —el nivell educatiu o els ingressos—, només s'observa un lleuger increment del temps entre els homes adults majors que no treballen de manera assalariada i els que viuen sols. Hi ha altres estudis que també troben que les reduccions en la dedicació al mercat laboral poden anar acompanyades d'una major implicació domèstica i que en les llars de doble ingrés el repartiment acostuma a ser relativament més equitatiu (García-Román, 2023; Kan et al., 2022; Lachance-Grzela i Bouchard, 2010; Perry-Jenkins i Gerstel, 2020).

En canvi, entre les dones, s'observa una major sensibilitat als factors socioeconòmics: quan disposen de menys recursos o menys hores de treball remunerat, augmenta la probabilitat d'acceptar, i fins i tot declarar-se satisfetes, divisions desajustades i de dedicar més temps a la llar, especialment en contextos *familiaristes*. El primer article també ens mostra que l'elasticitat del temps de les dones és més flexible que la dels homes, i això s'accentua entre les dones adultes majors si viuen amb la

parella masculina o hi ha els fills a la llar. Aquest patró contraposat confirma que el temps i els recursos modulen els rols, però no els anul·len, i que per comprendre la divisió cal considerar també les normes de gènere i els estàndards que defineixen què es considera just.

A nivell micro també identifiquem les dones com les principals impulsores dels canvis en la distribució del treball domèstic. A les entrevistes del segon article, moltes dones que expressaven injustícia van prendre la iniciativa d'impulsar el canvi, rebaixant els estàndards, planificant tasques, redistribuint responsabilitats o negociant nous rols: *‘arran de l'embaràs crec que m'ha vist que potser no arribava jo a tot, perquè jo li començava a demanar més ajuda’*. Aquests canvis sovint són fràgils, sostinguts pels esforços continus de les dones i per una participació masculina més reactiva o condicionada a factors com la disponibilitat de temps. Una estratègia que s'observa en les narratives tant d'homes com de dones és l'externalització, sovint per compensar la major quantitat de temps que les dones dediquen a tasques visibles. Tanmateix, sovint depèn dels ingressos de la llar i de la capacitat financera.

Finalment, els moments de renegociació, com les entrades i sortides del mercat laboral, els períodes de permisos i retorns laborals, les etapes d'autonomia dels fills, l'emancipació o la jubilació, obren oportunitats per redistribuir, però només es tradueixen en canvis sostenibles quan els marcs institucionals i culturals són favorables i quan s'aborda explícitament la càrrega invisible. En absència d'aquests elements, el patró predominant tendeix a reproduir-se al llarg del curs de vida.

### 6.2.3. Context: influència del marc institucional i cultural

El tercer eix de les conclusions, el context, subratlla que les desigualtats observades responen a configuracions institucionals i culturals específiques. El primer article identifica quatre grans agrupacions regionals a Europa —Mediterrani, Centre-nord, Balcans i Est—, i mostra que la bretxa de gènere és més gran als països mediterranis i més petita a l'Europa de l'Est, especialment a la República Txeca i Hongria on, paradoxalment, el temps total dedicat a les tasques domèstiques és més elevat. També és baixa als països del Centre-nord. Per tant, hi ha diferències notables tant en el temps total com en la relació entre homes i dones.

Als països de l'agrupació del Centre-nord, el menor temps dedicat al treball domèstic coexisteix amb més igualtat de gènere, mentre que als països Mediterranis la dedicació a la llar és més gran i la bretxa de gènere més ampla. La clau és que la diferència entre grups s'explica principalment per la dedicació de les dones, ja que la dels homes es relativament similar. A més, entre les dones dels països mediterranis l'efecte dels factors socioeconòmics és més rellevant, la qual cosa indica que les característiques individuals expliquen parcialment la desigualtat de gènere. Això confirma que la

presència d'un estat del benestar més desenvolupat i de polítiques de suport a la conciliació afavoreixen una distribució més igualitària. És important destacar que les agrupacions de països obtingudes en aquest estudi mitjançant mètodes estadístics, coincideixen en bona mesura amb tipologies prèvies de règims de benestar (p. ex., Esping-Andersen, 2009; Lewis, 1992).

Aquest patró també s'observa al tercer article: les dones espanyoles amb divisions desequilibrades tendeixen a mostrar satisfacció quan no treballen de manera remunerada, reproduint el model de l'home com el guanyador del pa, mentre que les dones amb estudis elevats el rebutgen. L'efecte dels factors socioeconòmics és menor entre les dones sueques i encara menor entre els homes d'ambdós països. A Suècia, les dones mostren menys tolerància a divisions desiguals i informen de menys sobrecàrrega, confirmant que les normes culturals i les polítiques públiques influeixen en les pràctiques i en les percepcions de justícia (Evertsson, 2014).

Braun et al. (2008) i Greenstein (2009) ja havien apuntat que la relació entre la percepció de justícia i la divisió de tasques domèstiques és més forta en societats més igualitàries. El nostre estudi actualitza aquestes conclusions per a dos nous contextos i les amplia als homes: en el cas dels espanyols, la satisfacció amb la divisió no sembla dependre del tipus de repartiment, mentre que entre els suecs la tendència s'acosta al patró femení i la insatisfacció augmenta quan la divisió és desigual. En aquest punt és important destacar que hi ha autors que han assenyalat que en determinats contextos, com especialment en el suec pels homes, la percepció de les tasques que efectuen no coincideix amb el que fan en realitat (Evertsson i Nermo, 2007; Nordenmark i Nyman, 2003; Ruppanner et al., 2017).

Finalment, el cas espanyol mostra una situació de corresponsabilitat incompleta: les polítiques d'igualtat han avançat, però conviuen amb un model *familiarista* que manté una alta dependència de la disponibilitat femenina. La teoria de la reproducció social ajuda a entendre que aquesta configuració institucional no és neutral: al no redistribuir el treball reproductiu, el sistema continua depenent de la disponibilitat femenina i reproduceix desigualtats de gènere i de classe.

### 6.3. Conclusió general

Aquesta tesi mostra que la divisió del treball domèstic continua sent una peça central de la reproducció social de les desigualtats de gènere i que el nucli de resistència al canvi és la càrrega invisible, malgrat les transformacions institucionals i de valors. La combinació d'evidències de la present tesi documenta canvis parcials però persistències estructurals: els homes han incrementat la participació en tasques visibles, però l'arquitectura de rols i percepcions que sosté la desigualtat es reconfigura més que no pas desapareix.

Les **principals conclusions** a destacar són:

(1) S'ofereix un mapa comparatiu dels contextos europeus en quatre agrupacions — Mediterrani, Centre-nord, Balcans i Est—, diferenciades tant pel temps total dedicat a la llar com per la bretxa de gènere. La diferència entre grups s'explica sobretot per la major dedicació femenina, mentre que el temps masculí és relativament estable.

(2) S'identifica un patró contraposat entre homes i dones en referència als factors socioeconòmics: el temps domèstic de les dones respon molt més als recursos, en relació al mercat de treball, el nivell educatiu i la renda, que el dels homes, fet que ajuda a entendre la lentitud de la convergència.

(3) Es descriu com, fins i tot en parelles amb valors igualitaris, la divisió es manté desajustada en la càrrega familiar invisible que, alhora, s'identifica com la part del treball domèstic que menys varia al llarg del curs de vida.

(4) Es mostra que la satisfacció amb divisions desajustades és més alta entre els homes, especialment a Espanya, i més baixa entre les dones, més accentuada a Suècia, amb un gradient d'edat que indica una menor tolerància de les generacions més joves i excepcions rellevants per a les dones espanyoles.

(5) Metodològicament, es fa servir una combinació de mètodes i fonts de dades i la tesi ofereix una narrativa que connecta el context català, espanyol i europeu, els factors socioeconòmics i les normes de gènere, les pràctiques i les percepcions i la legitimitat i la injustícia.

Com a **conclusió final**, el que es reproduceix socialment no és només la diferència de temps entre homes i dones, sinó l'estructura social i de gènere, les pràctiques i la percepció d'aquestes diferències: les normes apreses i la influència institucional defineixen els estàndards de justícia, que alhora modelen la negociació i el valor associat a les tasques. En última instància, això és el que es transmet entre generacions.

## 6.4. Limitacions

A més de les limitacions detallades als capítols principals, les anàlisis presentades mostren diverses limitacions en relació a les dades i metodologies emprades. La naturalesa transversal de les dades impedeix apreciar els canvis al llarg del curs de vida de manera específica i individual. La perspectiva individual, i no dels dos membres de la parella, de les dades dels tres articles també dificulta disposar

d'una visió més amplia del procés de negociació intrafamiliar i de les diferències entre comportaments i actituds, així com de la distància en les percepcions d'homes i dones davant d'una mateixa divisió de tasques.

En relació amb la composició de la mostra, al segon article qualitatiu es treballa només amb persones amb nivell educatiu alt. Aquesta elecció buscava reduir l'heterogeneïtat i s'alinea amb la relació observada entre educació i igualtat de gènere en estudis previs (Goldscheider et al., 2015), però limita la possibilitat d'analitzar la interacció amb factors socioeconòmics. L'enfoc en parelles heterosexuales també restringeix l'anàlisi de les dinàmiques de l'organització del treball domèstic més enllà de les normes de gènere hegemòniques, pel que seria rellevant incloure orientacions sexuals i identitats de gènere diverses o dissidents. Això és a causa de la mida limitada de les mostres, que impedeix analitzar amb significació el que succeeix en aquestes llars. Molt similar succeeix amb la consideració de l'origen de les persones, que seria rellevant posar-hi l'enfoc per entendre i comparar la socialització i reproducció de normes de gènere des d'altres mirades.

Finalment, les dades fetes servir al primer i al tercer article no permeten una visió més desagregada de les diferents tasques rutinàries i no rutinàries, ni del treball visible i invisible que conformen el conjunt del treball domèstic. Un major detall ens permetria identificar en quines tasques s'està produint una convergència de gènere i en quines es continuen reproduint les desigualtats de gènere. En aquest sentit, els diaris d'ús del temps són l'instrument més fiable per abordar estudis d'aquesta tipologia (Sevilla, 2014).

## 6.5. Futures línies d'investigació

Després de realitzar tres estudis sobre el treball domèstic no remunerat, s'obren nombroses línies d'investigació; a continuació se'n resumeixen les més rellevants i viables. Una primera línia de recerca seria donar continuïtat a les entrevistes qualitatives realitzades el 2012 i el 2019. Les parelles participants ja han tingut fills i, en molts casos, aquests fills ja són més grans, fet que permetria analitzar com evolucionen les dinàmiques de divisió del treball domèstic en fases més avançades del curs de vida. També seria rellevant incorporar la perspectiva d'aquelles persones que s'han separat, per examinar tant les causes de la ruptura com la seva visió prèvia de la divisió de tasques. Una altra millora metodològica consistiria a entrevistar tots dos membres de la parella, amb l'objectiu d'obtenir una visió més completa i contrastada de les percepcions i de la negociació quotidiana.

En segon lloc, resulta pertinent explorar la relació entre el treball domèstic i el treball de cures, on la bretxa de gènere és encara més marcada. En aquest àmbit, les noves dades d'enquestes d'usos

del temps amb diaris —Catalunya 2023-24, Espanya 2024-25 i la ronda harmonitzada europea de l'HETUS 2020— obriran oportunitats per analitzar de manera més precisa les diferències entre tasques rutinàries i no rutinàries, visibles i invisibles i per vincular-les a altres factors socioeconòmics i demogràfics (Sullivan, 2013).

En tercer lloc, seria rellevant que les properes onades de la GGS i de l'Enquesta de Fecunditat continuessin incorporant la satisfacció autoinformada amb la divisió del treball domèstic, per poder-ne seguir l'evolució entre generacions (Baxter et al., 2013; Hiekel i Ivanova, 2023; Leopold, 2019). Així mateix, convindria que la GGS de Suècia amplii el detall dels ítems sobre divisió domèstica, atès que a la resta de països de la GGS i a l'Enquesta de Fecunditat aquesta dimensió és més completa; això permetria analitzar amb més precisió la relació entre la tipologia, amb més categories que al tercer article, de la divisió i la satisfacció. També seria pertinent estendre l'anàlisi a tots els països disponibles de la GGS i, si escau, a altres enquestes internacionals comparables, per disposar d'un mapa comparatiu més robust i harmonitzat. Finalment, seria rellevant analitzar la relació amb altres factors en els que la insatisfacció amb la divisió hi pot tenir un paper clau, com la satisfacció dins de la parella, la propensió a la separació o al divorci, o la voluntat de tenir fills/es.

En quart lloc, és important abordar l'organització del treball domèstic remunerat. Des del punt de vista de les llars que externalitzen aquests serveis, cal analitzar com això modifica el temps i la distribució de tasques: el nostre estudi qualitatiu suggereix que sovint representa un suport per a les dones i es fa servir per evitar conflictes, però no trenca la lògica de gènere (Fraser, 2017; Gonalons-Pons, 2015). Des del punt de vista de la mà d'obra remunerada, convé examinar qui realitza aquest treball, majoritàriament dones migrades de països de renda baixa o mitjana-baixa i en posicions socioeconòmiques més vulnerables (Carrasco i Domínguez, 2011; Vidal-Coso i Miret-Gamundi, 2014). Futures recerques haurien d'incorporar una perspectiva històrica que permeti entendre com aquest treball s'ha externalitzat i delegat en dones d'orígens diversos al llarg del temps. A més, convindria afegir una mirada demogràfica actual per conèixer quines són les dinàmiques familiars d'aquestes dones, els itineraris migratoris que les situen en aquests segments del mercat laboral, així com les condicions laborals associades (Davis, 1981; Mezzadri et al., 2021).

En cinquè lloc, cal aprofundir en l'estudi del treball invisible, l'àmbit menys explorat però també el més resistent al canvi. Fer-ho requereix incorporar metodologies mixtes que captin la dimensió emocional i cognitiva de les tasques. Alhora, és fonamental analitzar com les desigualtats de gènere interactuen amb altres eixos de desigualtat —classe social, origen migratori o edat— per entendre com es distribueix la càrrega domèstica en societats cada cop més diverses.

També seria rellevant incloure en futurs estudis persones amb orientacions sexuals i identitats de gènere diverses o dissidents, per analitzar com s'organitza el treball reproductiu més enllà de les normes de gènere hegemòniques.

Finalment, caldria superar el biaix eurocèntric de la recerca actual. Aquesta tesi s'ha centrat en societats de la primera industrialització, fet que restringeix els marcs de coneixement. Tot i que s'han incorporat perspectives internacionals al marc teòric, cal desenvolupar estudis amb dades que permetin comparar la socialització i reproducció de normes de gènere en contextos no europeus (Bhattacharya, 2017). Les nostres dades quantitatives ja inclouen l'origen de les persones, però la mida reduïda de les mostres no permet obtenir resultats significatius; futures recerques haurien de pal·liar aquesta limitació.

## 6.6. Apunts finals: recomanacions polítiques per avançar cap a la convergència de gènere

A partir dels resultats obtinguts a la present tesi doctoral, es presenten diverses recomanacions per avançar cap a la igualtat de gènere a l'àmbit domèstic, especialment útils per a les administracions públiques.

S'ha constatat que els canvis en la distribució del treball domèstic, tant en la pràctica com en la percepció, continuen sent limitats, especialment entre les generacions més grans, sovint poc estudiades però clau per entendre la persistència. També es confirma que els avenços cap a la igualtat són fràgils quan la càrrega invisible —planificar, vigilar, decidir i coordinar— no es reconeix ni es reparteix explícitament, i quan persisteix una àmplia acceptació social de divisions desajustades: si aquestes no es perceben com a injustes, difícilment es tradueixen en canvis conductuals. Alhora s'observa que la reducció del temps domèstic de les dones no es compensa amb un increment proporcional del temps que hi dediquen els homes, de manera que es manté la lògica de la 'doble jornada' femenina. Per això, sense renunciar als avenços en l'esfera pública, cal impulsar polítiques que incrementin la implicació masculina a la llar i que defineixin clarament el subjecte destinatari, de manera que interpel·lin i, si escau, obliguin als homes.

Per tant, les polítiques més efectives són les que fomenten la conciliació i reparteixen la responsabilitat, i no les que es limiten a pal·liar les necessitats de cura sense alterar els desequilibris de gènere. Això implica permisos parentals iguals i intransferibles amb condicions que l'assegurin l'ús dels homes; una expansió dels serveis públics d'educació infantil (0-3 anys) i d'atenció a la dependència, que permetin externalitzar parcialment les cures fora de la família; i mesures laborals

amb perspectiva de gènere, com els horaris previsibles, el dret a la desconexió, la flexibilitat regulada i les reduccions de jornada sense penalitzacions. En contextos mediterranis, on les modificacions de recursos continuen recaient sobretot al temps de les dones, es suggereix que només les estratègies combinades de servis i de permisos fets servir de manera efectiva pels homes poden evitar que el cost de l'ajust continuï recaient sobre elles.

Cal a dir que, encara que aquesta tesi no s'ha centrat específicament en la cura, la bibliografia prèvia mostra que és imprescindible integrar el conjunt del treball domèstic per alterar la bretxa de gènere dins la llar i transformar els rols socials. En aquesta línia, les estadístiques i l'avaluació de polítiques han de mesurar el global del treball domèstic i de cures i incorporar indicadors específics per a considerar la càrrega, per evitar diagnòstics parcials. Fer-ho requereix combinar seguiments longitudinals i mètodes quantitius i qualitatius.

Seguint aquesta perspectiva, l'orientació de les polítiques públiques també ha de ser cultural: cal educació i sensibilització en corresponsabilitat des de les primeres etapes educatives i al llarg del curs de vida —escola, mitjans, entitats i mercat laboral—, considerant la càrrega invisible i qüestionant normes i estereotips. En alguns contextos, s'ha detectat que un percentatge més alt de població es declara insatisfeta amb divisions desajustades. Això no garanteix la igualtat efectiva dins de la llar, però indica que el canvi d'actitud és un mecanisme previ per impulsar canvis conductuals: el primer pas és ser conscient de que hi ha un desequilibri. L'escenari espanyol, que és *familiarista*, amb un pes central de la família en el treball domèstic i de cures, reforça aquesta hipòtesi, ja que una part significativa d'homes es mostra indiferent davant la tipologia de divisió. Per això, cal prioritzar mesures educatives i de conscienciació ciutadanes —currículums amb perspectiva de gènere, campanyes sostingudes, programes adreçats a nois i homes, formació en organitzacions i administracions i influència mediàtica— i, alhora, desplegar estratègies específiques a les xarxes socials per difondre missatges en clau d'igualtat i contrarestar l'auge de continguts reaccionaris i de valors 'tradicionals' que perpetuen la feminització del treball domèstic i de cures. Aquest enfocament cultural, combinat amb mesures materials, com serveis i permisos efectivament utilitzats pels homes, pot potenciar que el canvi actitudinal es tradueixi en pràctiques quotidianes més equitatives.

Per acabar, els resultats de la tesi doctoral indiquen que, més enllà de les diferències socioeconòmiques, el context territorial és decisiu: la interacció entre polítiques institucionals i normes culturals de gènere configura oportunitats i incentius diferents. Això fa que el ritme i la direcció de la convergència de gènere en el treball no remunerat siguin força dependent del context geogràfic.

## 7. Conclusions

This doctoral thesis has explored the sexual division of unpaid domestic work and analysed how it is organised and connected to gender inequalities, life-course transitions, and satisfaction with the division of tasks in the Catalan, Spanish, and European contexts. Although the social and labour transformations of recent decades have improved the division of roles between men and women, the persistence of an unequal distribution of domestic work continues to be one of the main challenges for gender equity.

Unlike other studies that have focused only on the quantitative aspect of domestic work, this thesis also emphasises the qualitative and subjective dimension: how people perceive, negotiate, and justify the distribution of tasks, and how these perceptions vary across different stages of the life course and European contexts. This makes it possible to capture a holistic view of change and stability in the division of domestic work. On the one hand, it shows that different tasks evolve unevenly and are perceived differently by men and women, for example, it is found that the invisible family burden usually falls on women and is rarely shifted to men, who also have a lower perception of it. On the other hand, the underlying reasons for this change or stability include the persistence of gender norms, the internalisation of certain standards, and the limits of negotiation within couples.

To address these perspectives, the research has been built upon three complementary studies based on a combination of methodologies and data sources. The three approaches have contributed to offering a panoramic view of the dynamics of domestic work, identifying individual factors such as time availability, labour market transitions, sociodemographic characteristics and gender attitudes, structural factors such as work and family reconciliation policies and the provision of services, and cultural factors such as gender norms, social expectations and standards of task performance that influence its organisation. The originality of this research lies in its integrated approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative data, micro- and macro-level analyses, and different dimensions of visible and invisible domestic work.

Finally, the conclusions of the thesis point to the need to act on the mechanisms that reproduce this unequal division, public policies, cultural norms, and everyday practices, and to promote a shift towards co-responsibility. They also highlight the importance of considering the diversity of family and labour trajectories to better understand gender inequalities in domestic work. The knowledge generated can help guide interventions that facilitate a fairer distribution of tasks, contributing to progress towards more equal societies.

## 7.1. Main results of the thesis

The main results point to a scenario of partial changes and structural persistence: gender inequalities in the domestic sphere remain and, moreover, adapt and reproduce in new forms.

The **main conclusions** drawn from each article are:

(1) Inequalities persist into later adulthood, both in overall dedication and in the gender gap, but vary according to the institutional context and to socio-economic resources. These particularly affect women particularly, especially in Mediterranean countries. In addition, it is identified that men who devote more time to the household are those who live alone.

(2) The narratives reveal perceptions of work and its division between men and women that are often biased, used both to justify change and its absence: the invisible family burden is the main source of gender discrepancies, and in many cases the division is perceived as balanced because this dimension is not considered. It becomes evident that interpreting the division requires integrating the subjective dimension, which has guided the analytical approach of the third article.

(3) Satisfaction with unequal arrangements is relatively common, but varies according to gender, country, and age: women in more egalitarian countries show greater rejection, while among men, especially Spanish men, satisfaction is relatively independent of the type of division. The age pattern shows that satisfaction increases with age in Sweden for everyone, while in Spain it rises among men but decreases among women.

In short, in order to move towards a more equal society, it is necessary to continue investigating how inequalities are transformed across generations, over the life course, and within institutional contexts, the three axes underpinning these conclusions.

### 7.1.1. Generations: persistence and change in the gender gap

From a generational perspective, the results show that gender continues to be the axis structuring dedication to domestic work: the gap does not disappear but is reconfigured across cohorts. The comparative analysis of the first article, focused on the population aged over 50, and the third article, centred on the working-age population, confirms that in all the countries studied women devote significantly more time than men to domestic tasks, even when controlling for demographic and socio-economic variables. In the first article we find that, on average across the 18 European countries

studied, women spend 1.7 times more time than men, and in Spain 2.3 times more, thus reinforcing the slow convergence hypothesis (Bianchi et al., 2012; Kan et al., 2022).

The qualitative study of the second article makes it possible to identify the mechanisms reproducing this difference: even among young couples with egalitarian values, the unequal division partially reappears in the invisible family burden. Men tend to perceive the situation as more equitable than women and justify their lower involvement by appealing to labour market participation, time availability, or the argument of compensation for total work. Thus, we identify that when they incorporate invisible work into their narrative, the division is no longer perceived as so egalitarian. Daminger (2019) notes that not considering invisible work underestimates women's work: '*She decides when it needs to be done and at what time it needs to be done, although then —let's say— I do it*'<sup>19</sup>. Women, on the other hand, usually incorporate the emotional and cognitive dimension of household management, which remains less visible and delegable. This mismatch between practices and perceptions among men and women shows how "doing gender" operates at a small scale, in the everyday life of the home.

Regarding the evaluation of this division, the evidence links generations with perceptions of justice: inequalities are not always perceived as unfair and are normalised within a specific cultural context. In our study, this is reflected in higher satisfaction among men, particularly in Spain, and lower satisfaction among women. Nevertheless, under an unequal division, 37.5% of women in Spain and 17.7% in Sweden declare themselves satisfied, reflecting socialised standards and expectations that vary between generations and contexts.

At the micro level, this female satisfaction with unequal divisions is expressed through justifications such as '*I'm also very demanding*', '*I'm a bit more meticulous*' or, from men's perspective, '*In my wife's case, she is a real, real perfectionist when it comes to cleaning*', in line with Hochschild (1989), normalising higher female standards, avoiding conflict, and maintaining an apparent harmony. Conversely, to justify men's lower involvement in these unequal cases, we observe arguments based on labour market participation, or justice tends to be assessed by comparison with other social references rather than within the relationship itself (Major, 1997, 1993; Thompson, 1991), as we see in our interviews: '*I have seen in my [parents'] house things that are happening to me in my house right now...*' Thus, the difference in time is socially transmitted, together with the social

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<sup>19</sup> The quotations included in the conclusions section come from the second article of the doctoral thesis and can be found both in the results of the article and in the annex of the article 3, where they appear in their original version.

hierarchies and cultural meanings that accompany it, while at the same time being modulated and maintained within a specific institutional context.

Nevertheless, the second article shows that unequal divisions are not always legitimised: some women express resignation or resort to “silent agreements” to avoid conflicts, while others act as “gatekeepers” who centralise coordination and compel male involvement (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Wiesmann et al., 2008): *‘He asks about everything. So, I think this is where there is more inequality, I am the one who controls how everything is organised, and he does things when I tell him to.’* These cases could be assumed to align with the profile of female dissatisfaction in households with unequal divisions identified in the third article, since they accept (with resignation) the division but identify the imbalance as unfair. As for men, some also express dissatisfaction with the imbalances—in Spain we observe 23% and in Sweden 49.4%—and in the second article this is identified with discourses that are attitudinally aware but behaviourally passive: *‘I would like to get involved more with things in the kitchen and that, but uff, wow, it’s hard for me, you know!’*

In addition, the annexed article 3, as a dissemination of the third article, shows that when the division is unequal, satisfaction tends to increase with age, indicating that younger generations tolerate unequal divisions less, with one relevant exception: among Spanish women, satisfaction decreases with age, pointing to processes of selective normalisation among the youngest who enter cohabitation and/or marriage. The different results show that in contexts with greater gender equality, both institutionally and in terms of gender norms, people are more aware of household inequalities and more rejecting of unequal divisions (in line with other studies, e.g. Hu & Yucel, 2018). This is especially true for women, probably because the internalisation of more egalitarian standards, the greater consideration of the invisible burden, and lower renegotiation costs, derived from greater individual resources and better institutional support, reduce tolerance towards unequal arrangements.

### 7.1.2. Life course: life transitions and reorganisation

The life course analysis shows that gender inequalities not only persist but can intensify at times of transition, when time, roles, and social and gender expectations are reorganised. The first article shows that cohabitation with a male partner and with children increases women’s time dedicated to domestic work even in old age, reproducing already documented patterns (Anxo et al., 2011; Leopold & Skopek, 2015). This also reframes later life, a stage often free from the constraints of employment, as a period where inequality does not disappear but is reconfigured.

The second article, with longitudinal follow-up, delves into the mechanism of this process: parenthood is the transition that most reinforces gender roles, even among couples who previously declared themselves egalitarian: *'Roles have to be rearranged, I mean, for example, the fact that he's working [and she is on maternity leave] doesn't mean that I have to do everything'*. Women adapt their employment trajectories and reduce hours of paid work, a scenario that enables them to have more time to take on more domestic responsibilities, while men maintain similar patterns or slightly increase participation in visible tasks: *'During the ... [period of] breastfeeding our daughter, [...] we decided that it required a greater effort from her [his wife] in terms of being available and present, so, I took on the remaining tasks'*. Thus, the narratives show that many of the advances presented as co-responsibility are only apparent changes: more occasional help may be offered, but the mental load and coordination of the household remain female.

As for the persistence of these dynamics, a third wave would allow their durability to be assessed and a clearer distinction to be made between temporary adjustments and stable reorganisations. In parallel, improvements in work–life balance and in the gender perspective of Spanish paternity policies may modify these patterns, an effect that is likely to become visible in later generations more exposed to equal and non-transferable leave, care services, and more egalitarian normative environments.

Men's narratives often appeal to time availability to justify their lower involvement at certain points in the life course. However, in the quantitative analysis we do not identify differences in men's participation in domestic tasks—neither in time (first article), nor in the division (third article)—when men's resources are modified—the educational or income level—; only a slight increase in time is observed among older men who are not in paid employment and those who live alone. Other studies also find that reductions in time devoted to the labour market can be accompanied by greater domestic involvement and that in dual-earner households the division tends to be relatively more equitable (García-Román, 2023; Kan et al., 2022; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010; Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020).

In contrast, among women, greater sensitivity to socio-economic factors is observed: when they have fewer resources or fewer hours of paid work, the likelihood of accepting and even declaring themselves satisfied with unequal divisions increases, as does the time devoted to the household, especially in *familistic* contexts. The first article also shows us that women's time elasticity is more flexible than men's, and this is accentuated among older women if they live with a male partner or if children are in the household. This contrasting pattern confirms that time and resources modulate roles

but do not cancel them out, and that in order to understand the division it is also necessary to consider gender norms and the standards that define what is considered fair.

At the micro level, we also identify women as the main drivers of change in the distribution of domestic work. In the interviews from the second article, many women who expressed a sense of injustice took the initiative to promote change, lowering standards, planning tasks, redistributing responsibilities, or negotiating new roles: *‘It was more after the pregnancy, because I think he saw that maybe I couldn’t manage everything, because I started asking him for more help’*. These changes are often fragile, sustained by women’s continuous efforts and by men’s participation that is more reactive or conditioned by factors such as time availability. One strategy observed in the narratives of both men and women is externalisation, often to compensate for the greater amount of time women devote to visible tasks. However, this often depends on household income and financial capacity.

Finally, moments of renegotiation, such as during entries and exits from the labour market, periods of leave and returns to work, stages of children’s autonomy, leaving home, or retirement, open opportunities for redistribution. However, they only translate into sustainable changes when institutional and cultural frameworks are favourable and when the invisible load is explicitly addressed. In the absence of these elements, the predominant pattern tends to be reproduced throughout the life course.

### 7.1.3. Context: influence of the institutional and cultural framework

The third axis of the conclusions, the context, underlines that the inequalities observed respond to specific institutional and cultural configurations. The first article identifies four major regional groupings in Europe —Mediterranean, Central-Northern, Balkan, and Eastern— and shows that the gender gap is larger in Mediterranean countries and smaller in Eastern Europe, especially in the Czech Republic and Hungary, where, paradoxically, the total time devoted to domestic tasks is higher. It is also low in Central-Northern countries. Therefore, there are notable differences both in the total time and in the relationship between men and women.

In the Central-Northern group of countries, less time devoted to domestic work coexists with greater gender equality, while in Mediterranean countries dedication to the household is greater and the gender gap wider. The key point is that the difference between groups is explained mainly by women’s dedication, since men’s is relatively similar. Moreover, among women in Mediterranean countries the effect of socio-economic factors is more relevant, indicating that individual characteristics partially explain gender inequality. This confirms that the presence of a more developed

welfare state and of work–life balance support policies favours a more equal distribution. It is important to highlight that the country groupings obtained in this study through statistical methods largely coincide with previous typologies of welfare regimes (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 2009; Lewis, 1992).

This pattern is also observed in the third article: Spanish women with unbalanced divisions tend to show satisfaction when they do not work in paid employment, reproducing the male breadwinner model, while women with higher education reject it. The effect of socio-economic factors is smaller among Swedish women and even smaller among men in both countries. In Sweden, women show less tolerance for unequal divisions and report less overload, confirming that cultural norms and public policies influence practices and perceptions of fairness (Evertsson, 2014).

Braun et al. (2008) and Greenstein (2009) had already pointed out that the relationship between perceptions of fairness and the division of domestic tasks is stronger in more egalitarian societies. Our study updates these conclusions for two new contexts and extends them to men: in the case of Spanish men, satisfaction with the division does not seem to depend on the type of arrangement, while among Swedish men the trend approaches the female pattern, and dissatisfaction increases when the division is unequal. At this point it is important to note that some authors have pointed out that in certain contexts, particularly in Sweden for men, perceptions of the tasks they perform do not coincide with what they actually do (Evertsson & Nermo, 2007; Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003; Ruppanner et al., 2017).

Finally, the Spanish case shows a situation of incomplete co-responsibility: equality policies have progressed but coexist with a *familistic* model that maintains a high dependence on women's availability. The theory of social reproduction helps to understand that this institutional configuration is not neutral: by not redistributing reproductive work, the system continues to depend on women's availability and reproduces gender and class inequalities.

## 7.2. General conclusion

This thesis shows that the division of domestic work remains a central element in the social reproduction of gender inequalities and that the core of resistance to change lies in the invisible load, despite institutional and value transformations. The combination of evidence in this thesis documents partial changes but structural persistence: men have increased their participation in visible tasks, but the architecture of roles and perceptions that sustains inequality is reconfigured rather than disappearing.

The **main conclusions** to highlight are:

(1) A comparative map of European contexts is offered in four groupings —Mediterranean, Central-Northern, Balkan, and Eastern— differentiated both by the total time devoted to the home and by the gender gap. The difference between groups is explained mainly by greater female dedication, while men's time is relatively stable.

(2) A contrasting pattern between men and women is identified with regard to socio-economic factors: women's domestic time responds much more to resources, related to labour market, education, and income, than men's does. This helps explain the slow pace of convergence.

(3) It is described how, even in couples with egalitarian values, the division remains unbalanced in the invisible family load, which is also identified as the part of domestic work that varies least over the life course.

(4) It is shown that satisfaction with unequal divisions is higher among men, especially in Spain, and lower among women, more marked in Sweden, with an age gradient indicating lower tolerance among younger generations and relevant exceptions for Spanish women.

(5) Methodologically, a combination of methods and data sources is used, and the thesis offers a narrative that links the Catalan, Spanish, and European contexts, socio-economic factors and gender norms, practices and perceptions, and legitimacy and injustice.

As a **final conclusion**, what is socially reproduced is not only the difference in time between men and women, but also the social and gender structure, the practices, and the perception of these differences: learned norms and institutional influence define standards of fairness, which in turn shape negotiation and the value associated with tasks. Ultimately, this is what is transmitted across generations.

### 7.3. Limitations

In addition to the limitations detailed in the main chapters, the analyses presented show several limitations in relation to the data and methodologies employed. The cross-sectional nature of the data prevents changes over the life course from being captured in a specific and individual way. The individual perspective, and not that of both members of the couple, of the data in the three articles also makes it difficult to obtain a broader view of the process of intra-family negotiation and of the

differences between behaviours and attitudes, as well as of the distance in perceptions of men and women regarding the same division of tasks.

With regard to the composition of the sample, the second qualitative article works only with people with a high level of education. This choice sought to reduce heterogeneity and is in line with the relationship observed between education and gender equality in previous studies (Goldscheider et al., 2015), but it limits the possibility of analysing the interaction with socio-economic factors. The focus on heterosexual couples also restricts the analysis of domestic work organisation dynamics beyond hegemonic gender norms, making it relevant to include diverse or dissident sexual orientations and gender identities. This is due to the limited sample sizes, which prevent a meaningful analysis of what happens in these households. A very similar issue arises with the consideration of people's origin, which would be relevant to focus on in order to understand and compare the socialisation and reproduction of gender norms from other perspectives.

Finally, the data used in the first and third articles do not allow for a more disaggregated view of different routine and non-routine tasks, nor of the visible and invisible work that together make up domestic work. Greater detail would enable us to identify in which tasks gender convergence is occurring and in which gender inequalities continue to be reproduced. In this sense, time-use diaries are the most reliable instrument for addressing studies of this type (Sevilla, 2014).

## 7.4. Future lines of research

After conducting three studies on unpaid domestic work, numerous lines of research open up; the most relevant and feasible are summarised below. A first line of research would be to continue the qualitative interviews conducted in 2012 and 2019. The participating couples have already had children, which would allow an analysis of how the dynamics of the division of domestic work evolve in later stages of the life course. It would also be relevant to incorporate the perspective of those who have separated, to examine both the causes of union dissolution and their prior view of the division of tasks. Another methodological improvement would consist of interviewing both members of the couple, with the aim of obtaining a more complete and contrasted view of perceptions and of everyday negotiation.

Secondly, it is pertinent to explore the relationship between domestic work and care work, where the gender gap is even more pronounced. In this area, new time-use survey data with diaries — Catalonia 2023–24, Spain 2024–25, and the harmonised European round of HETUS 2020 — will open opportunities to analyse more precisely the differences between routine and non-routine tasks, visible and invisible, and to link them to other socio-economic and demographic factors (Sullivan, 2013).

Thirdly, it would be relevant for future waves of the GGS and the Fertility Survey to continue incorporating self-reported satisfaction with the division of domestic work, in order to track its evolution across generations (Baxter et al., 2013; Hiekel & Ivanova, 2023; Leopold, 2019). Likewise, it would be advisable for the Swedish GGS to expand the detail of items on domestic division, since in the other GGS countries and in the Fertility Survey this dimension is more complete; this would make it possible to analyse more precisely the relationship between typology, with more categories than in the third article, of the division and satisfaction. It would also be pertinent to extend the analysis to all available GGS countries and, if appropriate, to other comparable international surveys to obtain a more robust and harmonised comparative map. Finally, it would be relevant to analyse the relationship with other factors in which dissatisfaction with the division may play a key role, such as satisfaction within the couple, the propensity for separation or divorce, or the willingness to have children.

Fourthly, it is important to address the organisation of paid domestic work. From the perspective of households that outsource these services, it is necessary to analyse how this modifies time and the distribution of tasks: our qualitative study suggests that it often represents support for women and is used to avoid conflict, but it does not break the gendered logic (Fraser, 2017; Gonalons-Pons, 2015). From the perspective of paid labour, it is necessary to examine who carries out this work, primarily migrant women from low- or lower-middle-income countries and in more vulnerable socio-economic positions (Carrasco & Domínguez, 2011; Vidal-Coso & Miret-Gamundi, 2014). Future research should incorporate a historical perspective to understand how this work has been externalised and delegated to women of diverse origins over time. Additionally, a current demographic perspective is needed to understand the family dynamics of these women, the migratory trajectories that place them into these segments of the labour market, as well as the working conditions they face (Davis, 1981; Mezzadri et al., 2021).

Fifthly, it is necessary to deepen the study of invisible work, the least explored but also the most resistant to change. Doing so requires incorporating mixed methodologies that capture the emotional and cognitive dimension of tasks. At the same time, it is essential to analyse how gender inequalities interact with other axes of inequality —social class, migratory origin, or age— to understand how the domestic load is distributed in increasingly diverse societies.

It would also be relevant to include in future studies people with diverse or dissident sexual orientations and gender identities, in order to analyse how reproductive work is organised beyond hegemonic gender norms.

Finally, it is necessary to overcome the Eurocentric bias of current research. This thesis has focused on societies of early industrialisation, which restricts the frameworks of knowledge. Although international perspectives have been incorporated into the theoretical framework, it is necessary to develop studies with data that make it possible to compare the socialisation and reproduction of gender norms in non-European contexts (Bhattacharya, 2017). Our quantitative data already include the origin of individuals, but the small sample sizes do not allow significant results to be obtained; future research should address this limitation.

## 7.5. Final notes: policy recommendations for advancing towards gender convergence

Based on the results obtained in this doctoral thesis, several recommendations are presented to advance towards gender equality in the domestic sphere, particularly useful for public administrations.

It has been observed that changes in the distribution of domestic work, both in practice and in perception, remain limited, especially among older generations, often little studied but key to understanding persistence. It is also confirmed that progress towards equality is fragile when the invisible load —planning, monitoring, decision-making, and coordination— is neither recognised nor explicitly shared, and when there is broad social acceptance of unequal divisions: if these are not perceived as unfair, they are unlikely to translate into behavioural changes. At the same time, it is observed that the reduction in women's domestic time is not compensated by a proportional increase in the time men devote to it, thus maintaining the logic of the female “double shift”. For this reason, without renouncing advances in the public sphere, policies must be promoted that increase male involvement in the home and clearly define the target subject, so that they call upon and, where necessary, oblige men.

Therefore, the most effective policies are those that promote work–life balance and share responsibility, and not those that merely alleviate care needs without altering gender imbalances. This implies equal and non-transferable parental leave with conditions that ensure men's use; an expansion of public childcare services (0–3 years) and long-term care provision, which allow care to be partially externalised outside the family; and labour measures with a gender perspective, such as predictable schedules, the right to disconnect, a regulated flexibility, and reductions in working hours without penalties. In Mediterranean contexts, where resource adjustments still fall mainly on women's time, it is suggested that only combined strategies such as services and parental leave effectively used by men can prevent the cost of adjustment from continuing to fall upon them.

It should be noted that, although this thesis has not focused specifically on care, previous literature shows that it is essential to integrate the whole of domestic work in order to alter the gender gap within the household and to transform social roles. In this regard, statistics and policy evaluation must measure the entirety of domestic and care work and include specific indicators to account for the load, in order to avoid partial diagnoses. Doing so requires combining longitudinal follow-ups and quantitative and qualitative methods.

Following this perspective, the orientation of public policies must also be cultural: education and awareness-raising on co-responsibility are needed from the earliest educational stages and throughout the life course —school, media, organisations, and the labour market— considering the invisible load and questioning norms and stereotypes. In some contexts, it has been observed that a higher proportion of the population declare themselves dissatisfied with unequal divisions. This does not guarantee effective equality within the home, but it indicates that attitudinal change is a preliminary mechanism for driving behavioural changes: the first step is to be aware that there is an imbalance. The Spanish scenario —*familiarism*, with the family playing a central role in domestic and care work— reinforces this hypothesis, since a significant proportion of men show indifference towards the type of division. For this reason, it is necessary to prioritise educational and civic awareness measures —gender-sensitive curricula, sustained campaigns, programmes aimed at boys and men, training in organisations and administrations, and media influence. At the same time, deploy specific strategies on social networks to disseminate equality-based messages and counter the rise of reactionary content and ‘traditional’ values that perpetuate the feminisation of domestic and care work. This cultural approach, combined with material measures, such as services and leave effectively taken up by men, can strengthen the likelihood that attitudinal change will translate into more equitable everyday practices.

Finally, the results of the doctoral thesis indicate that, beyond socio-economic differences, the territorial context is decisive: the interaction between institutional policies and cultural gender norms shapes different opportunities and incentives for co-responsibility. This makes the pace and direction of the ‘gender revolution’ in unpaid work highly dependent on the geographic context. To make sustained progress, context-sensitive strategies are required, with a design and implementation adapted to each territory, only in this way will it be possible to transform the domestic balance in a stable way and advance towards gender convergence in the whole of household work.

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# Appendix article 1

**TABLE A1.** *Time in minutes dedicated daily to unpaid domestic work by women, men and average, by countries and ratio of dedication of women to men*

|                | <b>Women</b> | <b>Men</b> | <b>Average</b> | <b>Ratio of women to men (W/M)</b> |
|----------------|--------------|------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Austria        | 129          | 52         | 90             | 2.5                                |
| Germany        | 114          | 78         | 95             | 1.5                                |
| Sweden         | 116          | 73         | 94             | 1.6                                |
| Netherlands    | 111          | 57         | 83             | 2.0                                |
| Spain          | 149          | 64         | 106            | 2.3                                |
| Italy          | 126          | 54         | 89             | 2.4                                |
| France         | 100          | 58         | 78             | 1.7                                |
| Denmark        | 87           | 73         | 79             | 1.2                                |
| Greece         | 157          | 57         | 107            | 2.8                                |
| Switzerland    | 108          | 68         | 88             | 1.6                                |
| Belgium        | 101          | 70         | 85             | 1.4                                |
| Czech Republic | 154          | 157        | 155            | 1.0                                |
| Poland         | 142          | 112        | 126            | 1.3                                |
| Luxembourg     | 104          | 69         | 86             | 1.5                                |
| Hungary        | 165          | 125        | 144            | 1.3                                |
| Slovenia       | 162          | 97         | 129            | 1.7                                |
| Estonia        | 130          | 113        | 121            | 1.2                                |
| Croatia        | 170          | 79         | 124            | 2.1                                |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>120</b>   | <b>71</b>  | <b>95</b>      | <b>1.7</b>                         |

*Note 1:* “W” refers to women and “M” refers to men.

*Note 2:* Data controlled by age, age-squared, household type, physical health, labour market participation, education level, income level and country.

*Note 3:* The transversal weighting designed by the SHARE has been applied.

*Source:* SHARE, Wave 8.

## Appendix article 2

TABLE A2. *The quotes in the original language*

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| #01 | <p>“Yo creo que ahora ella hace más que yo, justamente porque está más en casa que yo. [...] Pero... pues eso, las cosas se hacen como se puede” [Federico, 2012: no children]</p> <p>“Tareas domésticas de limpieza no hay ninguna diferencia, se pone el que está y ya está y temas de compra, por facilidad a veces voy yo, si ella se queda con la niña, ‘venga, voy yo a cargar con todo’ o si no, pues va ella y me quedo yo con la niña, o sea intentamos que lo haga uno, no juntos porque es más práctico, más rápido” [Federico, 2019: two children]</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| #02 | <p>“Ella hace más que yo seguro, pero también porqué muchas veces yo no estoy los fines de semana y es el tiempo que aprovechamos para hacer cosas entonces creo que ella hace más simplemente por eso” [Javier, 2012: no children]</p> <p>“Al 50% cada uno, vamos, no... yo no podría hacer distinción si es más ella o yo. [...] Normalmente por preferencias personales [risas], en el sentido que llegamos a un acuerdo entre los dos, a mi como me gusta mucho cocinar [...] tenemos, decidimos, contratar una persona para una buena parte de las labores de limpieza, porque nosotros no tenemos tiempo [...] Poner lavadoras, por ejemplo, pues es una cosa que a mí me fastidia un montón porque siempre la lio con los colores, entonces procura ponerlas ella para evitar daños mayores” [Javier, 2019: three children]</p> |
| #03 | <p>“Pues lo repartimos difícil, la verdad... Soy yo la que me encargo de la casa” [Abril, 2012: one children]</p> <p>“Pues... 50/50 [...] hacemos los dos, más o menos de todo. Sí que es verdad que yo tengo una mujer de la limpieza que viene... cada semana. Eh... la tengo más que nada, porque yo tengo sólo el lunes, que es el día que hacemos los dos fiesta” [Abril, 2019: two children]</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| #04 | <p>“Visto que ahora el tema de la limpieza es más efímero que nunca, pues tampoco tiene sentido tener una persona contratada un día o dos días a la semana, porque limpiará ahora y al cabo de dos horas vuelve a estar el asunto revuelto [...] Los primeros meses del primer año que el cargo, o sea tener a nuestra hija tomando el pecho que ha estado casi hasta los 18 meses y así, pues bueno, decidimos que eso implica un esfuerzo mayor para ella de disponibilidad de estar por ella, todo, pues yo asumía las tareas que quedaban” [Federico, 2019: two children]</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| #05 | <p>“Cuando ella trabajaba pues... pues 70, 25, 75 ella, 25 yo... y ahora pues... 90 ella y 10 yo” [Alejandro, 2012: no children]</p> <p>“En el caso de mi mujer, es una persona muy, muy perfeccionista con la limpieza. Yo soy muy ordenado, pero es verdad que a mí me falta un poco la... la forma de hacer. Y cada vez que intento hacer algo [...] ella me corrige rápido, me quita del medio rápido [...] Estoy convencido que, si lo intentara un poco más, eh... ella se terminaría dejando, no sé cómo decirte. [...] Por ejemplo, ella no plancha, plancho yo. Entonces, a lo mejor no es un 70/30, si no un 60/40, no lo sé. Pero... bueno, la iniciativa la tiene ella, claramente” [Alejandro, 2019: no children]</p>                                                                                                     |

- 
- #06** “Bueno perdona ahora lo único que como no estoy trabajando claro me dedico yo íntegramente... [...] yo también soy muy exigente entonces eso también he de entender que es muy... pero mi marido realmente es bastante excepcional con el resto de hombres que, que existen en la faz de la tierra si, es así” [Eulàlia, 2012: no children]
- “Yo soy un poco más meticulosa en todo sabes, yo soy incapaz de eso, de dejar un plato sin fregar y por eso yo tiro un poco más, estoy más pendiente de las lavadoras, de tender la ropa” [Eulàlia, 2019: two children]
- 
- #07** “Estoy muy conforme con lo que tenemos lo que creo que es un poco ficticio porque como viene una persona a hacer igual el trabajo más sucio no sé qué pasaría si tuviésemos que repartir eso, con lo demás funciona muy bien” [Rocío, 2012: no children]
- “Hay que recolocar los papeles, o sea, por ejemplo, el hecho de que él esté trabajando no quiere decir que yo lo tenga que hacer todo, ¿no? Eso lo tenemos que redistribuir un poco, encontrar... pero bueno, hasta ahora han sido muchos cambios... él estaba en una empresa que tenía que meter muchas horas, ahora acaba de empezar en otra...” [Rocío, 2019: two children]
- 
- #08** “Al principio pues él me ayudaba más: ‘pues yo hago no sé qué y tú haces otra cosa.’ Ahora él se ha acostumbrado a que yo hago prácticamente de todo y él me ayuda prácticamente en nada” [Ruth, 2012: no children]
- “Ha sido más a raíz del embarazo porque yo creo que me ha visto que a lo mejor no llegaba yo a todo, porque yo le empezaba a pedir más ayuda [...] él ha mamado un ambiente casa así, para él son como normales y entonces es como ‘no mira, oye que igual esto lo podríamos hacer entre los dos’” [Ruth, 2019: two children]
- 
- #09** “Yo cocino siempre y él friega siempre y todo lo demás pues quien lo ve lo hace y ya está [...] A hacer la compra normalmente vamos los dos” [Arantxa, 2012: no children]
- “Si, yo hago la comida, él friega los platos y la limpieza hasta ahora la hacía una chica [persona de la limpieza] y ahora la hacemos entre los dos también, pues uno saca el polvo, otro el lavabo, pero bueno entre los dos [...] después de 10 años ya cada uno coge las dinámicas ya está” [Arantxa, 2019: one child]
- 
- #10** “A ver está bastante bien porque los dos nos gusta vivir en una casa que esté limpia y estamos impli- [implicados], nos preocupamos por eso” [Manuel, 2012: no children]
- “De organización y todo eso, si, si uno de los dos considera que sabes que a lo mejor el otro está un poco dejado con una actividad determinada, tenemos buena comunicación y nos lo decimos también, o sea, en general yo creo que ninguno de los dos abusa del otro” [Manuel, 2019: no children]
- 
- #11** “La responsabilidad de hacer las cosas la llevo yo, o sea, de ahí que poner la lavadora, yo se lo digo, ponla, y entonces lo hace, pero es como que yo lo digo y él lo hace, pero no sale de él [...] Lo que pasa es que yo soy muy ordenada entonces siempre estoy haciendo cosas, pero eso ya es por carácter” [Imma, 2012: one child]
- “Teóricamente yo con mi marido, si lo entrevistaras a él te diría que sí, que le dedicaría el mismo tiempo, y no lo discuto. Pero luego hay muchas cosas de la logística del día a día que le parecen un poco como “temas domésticos”. Y no son temas domésticos, son cosas muy importantes que, si no las solucionara yo,
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no se harían. Toda esa organización mental, la llevo yo. Él es más que si le mandas a hacer algo, lo hace. Y su rutina, que es la compra, la hace. Pero a lo mejor te pregunta ‘¿oye y qué compro?’. O sea, él como que lo pregunta todo. Entonces yo creo que es ahí hay más desigualdad, yo llevo el control de cómo se organiza todo, y él hace las cosas cuando yo se lo digo” [Imma, 2019: two children]

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**#12** “Ella decide cuando se tiene que hacer y en qué momento se tiene que hacer aunque luego digamos yo lo, lo ejecute, meta las cosas a la lavadora, ponga la lavadora, tienda y todo ese tipo de cosas y la compra igual digamos” [Daniel, 2012: one child]

“La verdad es que me gustaría ponerme más con cosas de la cocina y eso, pero uuuffff ¡ostras, me cuesta eh! y también creo , bueno no sé, me cuesta y es dedicarle tiempo y eso y la verdad es que siempre, es como el rol ¿no? [...] Entre semana cuando ella está haciendo la cena, yo me dedico a estar con ellas, poner pijamas, acabar de ver alguna cosa del colegio o alguna cosa” [Daniel, 2019: two children]

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**#13** “Yo he visto en mi casa [de mis padres] cosas que ahora mismo se me repiten a mi en mi casa... el hombre, no sé, Carlos no es una persona que ayude mucho, es como mi padre... no me esperaba..., es duro el día a día pues tiene sus más y sus menos” [Daniela, 2012: no children]

“Yo el 99 y él el 1[...] [risas] No, a ver, que si me oye esto, que me va a decir ‘¡que no, que no sé qué!’ A ver, él últimamente hace más cositas. Pero... principalmente soy yo la que hace todo. O sea, la que piensa las comidas, lo que hay que comprar, lo que no hay que comprar, eh... la logística de casa [...] Entonces si él no lo hace, pues lo paga” [Daniela, 2019: two children]

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*Source:* Interview data

**TABLE A3.** *Distribution of interviewees according to their self-perceived division of housework*

|                   |                                                                      | <b>Men</b> | <b>Women</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Changes</b>    | Transition to a highly egalitarian distribution                      | 3          | 1            | <b>5</b>     |
|                   | Transition to a highly egalitarian distribution (man was doing more) | 1          | 0            | <b>1</b>     |
|                   | Transition to a more egalitarian distribution                        | 1          | 4            | <b>5</b>     |
|                   | Transition to a less egalitarian distribution                        | 5          | 2            | <b>7</b>     |
| <b>No changes</b> | Same egalitarian distribution                                        | 5          | 3            | <b>8</b>     |
|                   | Same gendered distribution                                           | 1          | 6            | <b>7</b>     |
|                   | Same highly gendered distribution                                    | 1          | 2            | <b>3</b>     |
|                   | Total                                                                | <b>17</b>  | <b>18</b>    | <b>35</b>    |

*Source:* Interview data

**TABLE A4.** *Demographic and socioeconomic information about the interviewed and their partners*

| Pseudo-nym<br>City | Gender | Year | Number children | His age (M) | Her age (F) | His working hours (M) | Her working hours (F)                       | His level of education (M)     | Her level of education (F) | Relative income          | Distribution housework | Outsourcing (hours/ week)                               |
|--------------------|--------|------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Loli</b>        | F      | 2012 | 0               | 31          | 26          | 40                    | 40 (PhD)                                    | Bachelor's Degree              | Master's Degree            |                          | She does more          | No                                                      |
| Barcelona          |        | 2019 | 0               | 38          | 33          | 40                    | 40 (Two-jobs)                               | No changes                     | PhD                        | He earns more than her.  | She does more          | No                                                      |
| <b>Arantxa</b>     | F      | 2012 | 0               | 28          | 28          | 0                     | 40                                          | Bachelor's Degree              | Bachelor's Degree          |                          | Egalitarian            | No                                                      |
| Barcelona          |        | 2019 | 1               | 35          | 35          | 20 (and studying)     | 40 (Maternity leave)                        | No changes                     | Master's Degree            | Same.                    | Egalitarian            | Not anymore, since she is on maternity leave. Before 2h |
| <b>Paula</b>       | F      | 2012 | 0               | 30          | 28          | 0                     | 40                                          | Short-cycle Tertiary Education | Bachelor's Degree          |                          | She does more          | No                                                      |
| Barcelona          |        | 2019 | 1               | 37          | 35          | 40                    | 20                                          | No changes                     | No changes                 | He earns more than her.  | She does more          | 2h, since she was pregnant                              |
| <b>Núria</b>       | F      | 2012 | 0               | 38          | 33          | 40                    | 40                                          | Bachelor's Degree              | Bachelor's Degree          |                          | She does more          | No                                                      |
| Barcelona          |        | 2019 | 2               | 45          | 40          | 40                    | 37,5                                        | No changes                     | No changes                 | He earns more than her.  | Less egalitarian       | 3h                                                      |
| <b>Ainhoa</b>      | F      | 2012 | 0               | 31          | 33          | 0                     | 40 (Flexible)                               | Bachelor's Degree              | Bachelor's Degree          | She earns more than him. | She does more          | No                                                      |
| Barcelona          |        | 2019 | 2               | 38          | 40          | 0 (Paternity leave)   | 20 (Reduced working hours due to maternity) | No changes                     | Not changes                | She earns more than him. | She does more          | 2h, since first children was born                       |

|                  |   |      |   |    |    |                        |                                             |                                |                                |                         |                  |                                   |
|------------------|---|------|---|----|----|------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Inés</b>      | F | 2012 | 1 | 34 | 33 | 40                     | 40                                          | Lower Secondary Education      | Bachelor's Degree              |                         | She does more    | 2h, since first children was born |
| Barcelona        |   | 2019 | 2 | 41 | 40 | 40                     | 40                                          | No changes                     | No changes                     |                         | She does more    | 2h                                |
| <b>Ana</b>       | F | 2012 | 1 | 36 | 34 | 40                     | 0 (Maternity leave)                         | Bachelor's Degree              | Master's Degree                |                         | She does more    | No                                |
| Barcelona        |   | 2019 | 2 | 43 | 40 | 40 (split shift)       | 20 (Reduced working hours due to maternity) | No changes                     | No changes                     | He earns more than her. | More egalitarian | 3h, her decision                  |
| <b>Abril</b>     | F | 2012 | 1 | 31 | 27 | 40                     | 0 (Unpaid maternity leave)                  | Lower Secondary Education      | Short-cycle Tertiary Education |                         | She does more    | No                                |
| Barcelona        |   | 2019 | 2 | 38 | 35 | 40                     | 40                                          | No changes                     | No changes                     | Same.                   | Egalitarian      | 4h, since she is working again    |
| <b>Margarita</b> | F | 2012 | 1 | 34 | 33 | 40                     | 0 (Unpaid maternity leave)                  | Bachelor's Degree              | Master's Degree                |                         | She does more    | No                                |
| Barcelona        |   | 2019 | 2 | 41 | 41 | 40 (Working from home) | 40                                          | Master's Degree                | No changes                     | He earns more than her. | More egalitarian | No                                |
| <b>Cristina</b>  | F | 2012 | 1 | 37 | 33 | 40                     | 0                                           | Short-cycle Tertiary Education | Master's Degree                |                         | Egalitarian      | No, she is unemployed             |
| Barcelona        |   | 2019 | 2 | 44 | 39 | 40                     | 40                                          | No changes                     | No changes                     | He earns more than her. | Egalitarian      | 1'5h, since she is working again  |
| <b>Rafa</b>      | M | 2012 | 0 |    |    | 0                      | 35                                          | Bachelor's Degree              | Bachelor's Degree              | Same.                   | He does more     | No                                |
| Barcelona        |   | 2019 | 1 |    |    | 40                     | 40 (Maternity leave)                        | No changes                     | No changes                     | Same.                   | Egalitarian      | No                                |
| <b>Alfonso</b>   | M | 2012 | 0 | 34 | 29 | 40                     | 40                                          | Master's Degree                | Bachelor's Degree              |                         | Egalitarian      | 4h                                |

|                 |   |      |   |    |    |                   |                                             |                   |                                |                          |                  |    |
|-----------------|---|------|---|----|----|-------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----|
| Barcelona       |   | 2019 | 3 | 41 | 36 | 55                | 20                                          | No changes        | No changes                     | He earns more than her.  | Less egalitarian | 4h |
| <b>Federico</b> | M | 2012 | 0 | 26 | 30 | 40                | 0                                           | Bachelor's Degree | Bachelor's Degree              |                          | She does more    | No |
| Barcelona       |   | 2019 | 2 | 33 | 37 | 40                | 35                                          | No changes        | No changes                     | He earns more than her.  | Egalitarian      | No |
| <b>Ignacio</b>  | M | 2012 | 0 | 25 | 25 | 15 (and studying) | 20 (and studying)                           | Bachelor's Degree | Bachelor's Degree              |                          | Egalitarian      | No |
| Barcelona       |   | 2019 | 2 | 32 | 32 | 20 (and studying) | 10 (and studying)                           | Master's Degree   | Master's Degree                | He earns more than her.  | Egalitarian      | No |
| <b>Julio</b>    | M | 2012 | 0 | 32 | 30 | 40                | 40                                          | Bachelor's Degree | Short-cycle Tertiary Education |                          | Egalitarian      | No |
| Barcelona       |   | 2019 | 2 | 38 | 37 | 40                | 40                                          | Master's Degree   | No changes                     | He earns more than her.  | Less egalitarian | No |
| <b>Arturo</b>   | M | 2012 | 1 |    |    | 40                | 35 (Reduced working hours due to maternity) | Bachelor's Degree | Bachelor's Degree              |                          | She does more    | 5h |
| Barcelona       |   | 2019 | 3 | 39 |    | 40 (and studying) | 35 (Unpaid maternity leave)                 | No changes        | No changes                     | Same.                    | Less egalitarian | 5h |
| <b>Pablo</b>    | M | 2012 | 1 | 33 | 31 | 40                | 40                                          | Bachelor's Degree | Bachelor's Degree              | She earns more than him. | Egalitarian      | 3h |
| Barcelona       |   | 2019 | 2 | 38 | 38 | 50                | 40                                          | No changes        | No changes                     | She earns more than him. | Egalitarian      | 3h |
| <b>Tomás</b>    | M | 2012 | 1 | 33 | 29 | 35                | 40                                          | Master's Degree   | Short-cycle Tertiary Education |                          | Egalitarian      | Si |
| Barcelona       |   | 2019 | 2 | 40 | 36 | 40                | 0 (Studying)                                | No changes        | No changes                     | He earns more than her.  | Less egalitarian | No |

|                |   |      |   |    |    |               |                                             |                                |                                |                          |                  |                                    |
|----------------|---|------|---|----|----|---------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Daniel</b>  | M | 2012 | 1 | 35 | 35 | 40            | 40                                          | Master's Degree                | Bachelor's Degree              |                          | She does more    | No                                 |
| Barcelona      |   | 2019 | 2 | 43 | 42 | 40            | 35 (Reduced working hours due to maternity) | No change                      | No change                      | He earns more than her.  | She does more    | No                                 |
| <b>Jacobo</b>  | M | 2012 | 1 | 29 | 35 | 40 (Two-jobs) | 40                                          | Short-cycle Tertiary Education | Upper Secondary Education      |                          | She does more    | No                                 |
| Barcelona      |   | 2019 | 1 | 36 | 42 | 40            | 40                                          | Master's Degree                | No changes                     | He earns more than her.  | She does more    | No                                 |
| <b>Eulàlia</b> | M | 2012 | 0 | 32 | 33 | 40            | 40                                          | Short-cycle Tertiary Education | Bachelor's Degree              | She earns more than him. | She does more    | 4h, since first child was born     |
| Madrid         |   | 2019 | 2 | 39 | 41 | 40            | 40                                          | No change                      | Master's Degree                | She earns more than him. | She does more    | 4h, since first child was born     |
| <b>Daniela</b> | F | 2012 | 0 | 30 | 31 | 40            | 0                                           | Bachelor's Degree              | Bachelor's Degree              |                          | She does more    | No, she is unemployed              |
| Madrid         |   | 2019 | 2 | 37 | 38 | 40            | 40 (Medical leave due to maternity)         | No changes                     | No changes                     | He earns more than her.  | She does more    | 4h, because he doesn't do anything |
| <b>Ruth</b>    | F | 2012 | 0 | 28 | 26 | 40            | 40                                          | Bachelor's Degree              | Bachelor's Degree              | She earns more than him. | She does more    | No                                 |
| Madrid         |   | 2019 | 2 | 35 | 34 | 40            | 40                                          | No changes                     | PhD                            | She earns more than him. | More egalitarian | No                                 |
| <b>Pamela</b>  | F | 2012 | 0 | 38 | 27 | 50            | 40 (Two-jobs)                               | Short-cycle Tertiary Education | Short-cycle Tertiary Education |                          | She does more    | No                                 |
| Madrid         |   | 2019 | 0 | 45 | 35 | 50            | 40                                          | No changes                     | No changes                     | He earns more than her.  | She does more    | Punctually                         |

|                  |   |      |   |    |    |                        |                                             |                           |                           |                          |                  |                             |
|------------------|---|------|---|----|----|------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Rocío</b>     | F | 2012 | 0 | 32 | 32 | 40                     | 40                                          | Bachelor's Degree         | Bachelor's Degree         |                          | Egalitarian      | 3h                          |
| Madrid           |   | 2019 | 2 | 39 | 39 | 40                     | 0 (Studying)                                | No changes                | Master's Degree           |                          | Less egalitarian | No                          |
| <b>Teresa</b>    | F | 2012 | 1 | 30 | 30 | 40                     | 40                                          | Master's Degree           | Master's Degree           |                          | She does more    | Yes, since she was pregnant |
| Madrid           |   | 2019 | 2 | 37 | 37 | 40                     | 20 (Reduced working hours due to maternity) | PhD                       | PhD                       | He earns more than her.  | She does more    | Yes                         |
| <b>Imma</b>      | F | 2012 | 1 | 31 | 31 | 0                      | 20 (Reduced working hours due to maternity) | Bachelor's Degree         | PhD                       | Same.                    | She does more    | No, not enough money        |
| Madrid           |   | 2019 | 2 | 38 | 38 | 40                     | 50 (Two-jobs)                               | No changes                | No changes                | Same.                    | She does more    | 2-4h                        |
| <b>Elsa</b>      | F | 2012 | 1 | 33 | 35 | 0                      | 40                                          | Bachelor's Degree         | Bachelor's Degree         |                          | He does more     | No, not enough money        |
| Madrid           |   | 2019 | 2 | 40 | 43 | 25 (Plus, extra hours) | 35 (Reduced working hours due to maternity) | No changes                | No changes                | She earns more than him. | He does more     | 3h                          |
| <b>Alejandro</b> | M | 2012 | 0 | 29 | 30 | 40 (Two jobs)          | 0                                           | Master's Degree           | Upper Secondary Education |                          | She does more    | No                          |
| Madrid           |   | 2019 | 0 | 37 | 37 | 40                     | 40                                          | No changes                | No changes                |                          | More egalitarian | No                          |
| <b>Manuel</b>    | M | 2012 | 0 | 30 | 29 | 40                     | 25 (and studying)                           | PhD                       | Bachelor's Degree         |                          | Egalitarian      | No                          |
| Madrid           |   | 2019 | 0 | 37 | 36 | 40                     | 40 (PhD)                                    | No changes                | No changes                | He earns more than her.  | Egalitarian      | No                          |
| <b>Julián</b>    | M | 2012 | 0 | 33 | 34 | 40                     | 0                                           | Upper Secondary Education | Master's Degree           | Same.                    | Egalitarian      | No                          |

|                |   |      |   |    |    |               |                                                            |                                |                           |                          |                  |                                 |
|----------------|---|------|---|----|----|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Madrid         |   | 2019 | 2 | 40 | 41 | 40            | 40                                                         | No changes                     | No changes                | He earns more than her.  | Egalitarian      | No, not enough money            |
| <b>Javier</b>  | M | 2012 | 0 | 26 | 26 | 40            | 40                                                         | Master's Degree                | Master's Degree           | She earns more than him. | She does more    | No                              |
| Madrid         |   | 2019 | 3 | 34 | 33 | 40            | 35 (Reduced working hours due to maternity) (and studying) | No changes                     | No changes                | Same.                    | More egalitarian | Yes, since she is working again |
| <b>Antonio</b> | M | 2012 | 1 | 34 | 33 | 40            | 0                                                          | Short-cycle Tertiary Education | Lower Secondary Education |                          | She does more    | No                              |
| Madrid         |   | 2019 | 2 | 41 | 40 | 40            | 40                                                         | No changes                     | No changes                | He earns more than her.  | Egalitarian      | No                              |
| <b>Felipe</b>  | M | 2012 | 1 | 32 | 33 | 40            | 40                                                         | Bachelor's Degree              | PhD                       |                          | Egalitarian      | No                              |
| Madrid         |   | 2019 | 2 | 40 | 40 | 40 (Flexible) | 40 (Flexible)                                              | No changes                     | No changes                | She earns more than him. | Egalitarian      | No                              |
| <b>Alberto</b> | M | 2012 | 1 | 30 | 29 | 40            | 20 (Reduced working hours due to maternity)                | Short-cycle Tertiary Education | Bachelor's Degree         |                          | Egalitarian      | No                              |
| Madrid         |   | 2019 | 2 | 37 | 36 | 40            | 20 (Reduced working hours due to maternity)                | Master's Degree                | Master's Degree           | Same.                    | Less egalitarian | 4h                              |

*Source:* Interview data

*Note:* The (M) and (F) refer to Male and Female, respectively.

*Note 2:* In the level of education, "No changes" means that the level of studies reported in the second interview is the same as in the first interview.

*Note 3:* The level of education refers to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

## Appendix article 3

**PUBLICATION A1.** *Perspectives demogràfiques (CED)*

*This publication was co-authored with PhD Livia Oláh, PhD Joan García Román and PhD Pau Miret Gamundi and was published in Perspectives Demogràfiques, the journal of the Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics (CED).*

### **A Key to Couple Satisfaction: A Comparison of Equality in Domestic Work in Spain and Sweden**

#### **Abstract**

Despite advances in gender equality in the public sphere, the division of domestic labour remains unequal inside households. This situation can create wellbeing—or discontent—in couples, especially among women. In this number of *Perspectives Demogràfiques*, we analyse data from Spain and Sweden when exploring how men and women perceive the distribution of domestic tasks and the degree of satisfaction they show in this regard. The present study is the result of a joint project of researchers from the Centre for Demographic Studies (CED-CERCA) of the Autonomous University of Barcelona and from Stockholm University who have compared data from two nationally representative surveys: the 2018 Fertility Survey (Spain) and the 2021 Generations and Gender Survey (Sweden).

Two research questions guide this study. The first is, how do men and women in the two countries perceive the division of household tasks? The second is, how do levels of satisfaction vary depending on the type of division and country of reference? Differences by gender, age, and country are analysed as is the interaction between the type of distribution of tasks and the satisfaction reported. The initial results clearly show that perception of equality in the distribution is associated with greater satisfaction for both genders and in both countries. Conversely, when there is an imbalance, women—especially in Spain—report lower satisfaction than men. The data also indicate that younger couples perceive a more equal

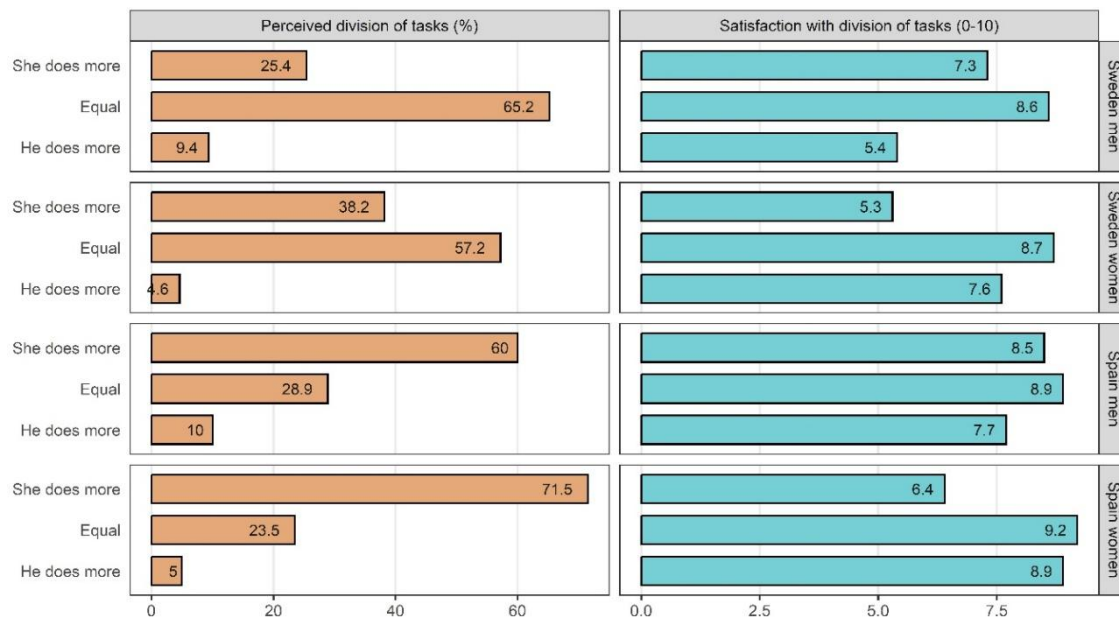
distribution but this does not necessarily imply either convergence between the countries or greater satisfaction when there is imbalance.

### **Dissatisfaction and domestic inequalities: a comparison between northern and southern Europe**

The “doing gender” theory (West and Zimmerman, 1987) describes how social norms define what is expected of women and men. These expectations mean that household tasks are generally associated with the female role and that people adapt to this even when they consider it unfair. This depends not only on individual choices but also on the social environment and the institutions that shape them. Studies show that in societies with more gender equality, people are more aware of inequalities in the home and are less tolerant of unequal distribution of domestic tasks (Hu and Yucel, 2018).

At the European level, the northern model tends to be compared with the southern one. In the present study, we compare a northern country, Sweden, with a southern country, Spain. We use two comparable data sources, the 2021 Generations and Gender Survey (Sweden) and the 2018 Fertility Survey (Spain) when focusing on heterosexual couples to compare perceptions of men and women in relation to whether they consider that there is an equal distribution of domestic tasks in the couple and, furthermore, whether they are satisfied with this distribution. In the case of the first aspect, each interviewee’s individual perception of how housework is divided with his or her partner is recorded. We classify their responses into three groups: when tasks are shared equally, when the woman does most of the work, and when the man does most of the work. The second aspect of satisfaction with the distribution is measured on a ten-point scale where 0 represents complete dissatisfaction and 10 represents complete satisfaction. Figure 1 shows, by gender and country, distribution of household tasks and average satisfaction resulting from this situation.

**Figure 1. Distribution of domestic tasks (percentage) and degree of satisfaction with the distribution (score) by gender and country: heterosexual couples aged 18-55**



*Source:* Authors using data from the Spanish Fertility Survey (INE, 2018) and the Swedish Generations and Gender Survey (SUDA, 2021).

Perceptions of the division vary by gender and country. Swedish men perceive the highest levels of equality (65%) while Spanish women report the greatest imbalance (with only 23% perceiving equality). Swedish women, with only 57% perceiving an equal balance, are also less positive than their male counterparts. In Spain, 29% of men consider that household tasks are equally shared. Accordingly, the perception that “she does more” is higher in Spain and, for both men and women, the proportion exceeds that observed in Sweden by about 35 points. Couples where the man does more housework represent a very small percentage in all groups.

Despite the difference between men and women, the results show a shared pattern. The highest level of satisfaction is found in households where distribution is equal, in both Sweden and Spain (around 9 points higher). By contrast, the greatest dissatisfaction is observed in couples that show significant imbalances, especially for both sexes in Sweden and for women in Spain. In terms of unequal distribution of household tasks, Spanish men (8.5 points) are much more satisfied than Spanish women (6.4 points). The gap is similar in Sweden where men who do less than their partners express a notable degree of satisfaction (7.3 points) while women

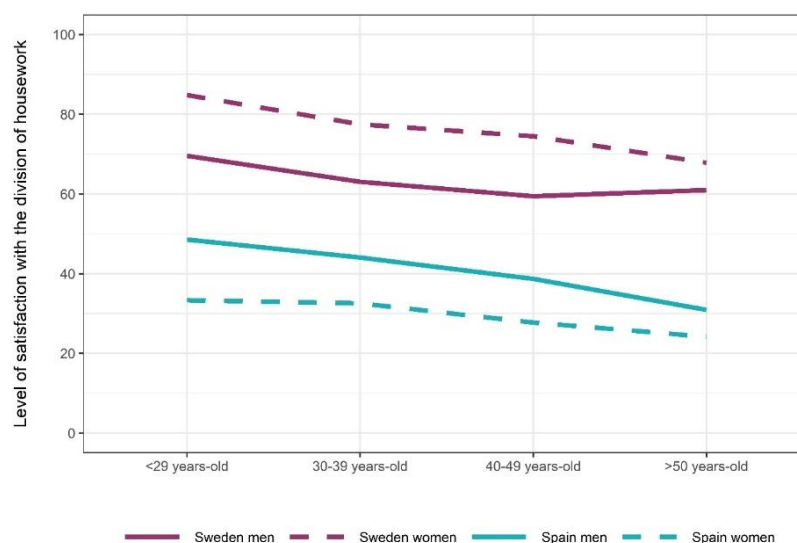
who do almost all the housework show a lower figure (5.3 points). In short, the best way to achieve high satisfaction, among both men and women and in the north and the south, is to share household tasks equally.

### *Division of domestic work by age*

Since the data we use are cross-sectional (corresponding to a single observation in time), it is not possible to observe changes over any one person's lifetime. An indirect way to analyse possible generational changes is to compare groups by age and, here, perception of balance in the division of domestic tasks shows a fairly clear pattern that is shared by gender and country: the younger the couple, the more tasks are perceived to be equally shared (Figure 2).

Although there is progress among the younger generations, no convergence is seen between domestic models in Sweden and Spain. The data show that, whatever the age, Swedish couples report greater equality than their Spanish counterparts, and that men declare greater equality than women. Moreover, in younger groups, the gender gap is particularly marked. In both countries, younger men perceive a more equal distribution score, which is 15 points higher than that for women of the same age. In other words, above and beyond differences between countries and genders, age plays a significant role in perception of domestic division of labour.

**Figure 2. Pattern by age in perception of equality in distribution of domestic tasks, by country and gender (%)**



*Source:* Authors using data from the Spanish Fertility Survey (INE, 2018) and the Swedish Generations and Gender Survey (SUDA, 2021).

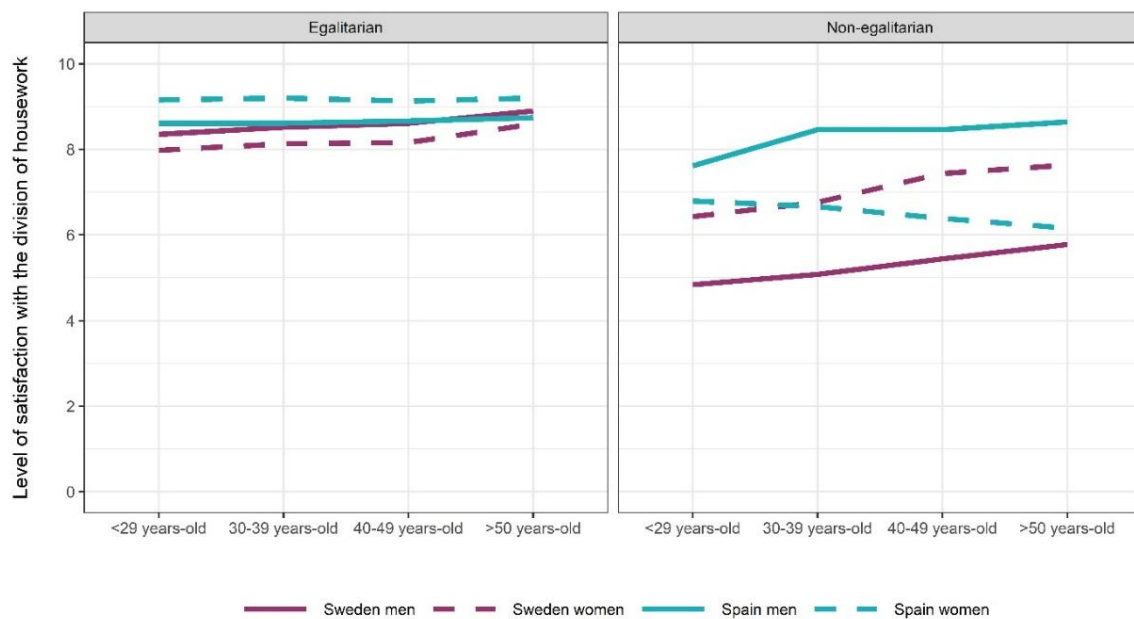
In short, regardless of location and gender, the younger the population, the more equal distribution of household tasks is perceived to be. However, this conclusion does not answer the question of whether this is an age effect (couples change over time) or a generation effect (younger generations have grown up with more egalitarian values, which remain unchanged). The latter assumption would suggest significant cultural change.

### ***Satisfaction with division of domestic labour by age***

With regard to satisfaction with division of domestic work, the pattern by age varies in accordance with the type of perception of equality. In this section where we aim to analyse the pattern that is at odds with the prevailing norm (homes where the woman does the greater share of domestic work), we consider both equal division of housework and situations where men report doing the greater share of domestic work. People who report an equal division of labour show very high levels of satisfaction at all ages, with few differences between countries and genders (Figure 3). In this group, levels of satisfaction exceed 8 points in all cases and rise to 9.1 among young Spanish women.

By contrast, with the exception of Spanish women, among people who perceive an unbalanced distribution, the youngest are the least satisfied. In Sweden, men show a clear increase with age, from 6.4 points at the age of 29 to 7.6 points after the age of 50. Nevertheless, Swedish women show lower levels for all ages, from 4.8 to 5.7 points, with a slight increase among older women. The contrast is more marked in Spain. Men report high levels of satisfaction with unbalanced distribution, and this increases with age (from 7.6 to 8.6 points), while women show an opposite pattern. The older they are, the less satisfaction they express with scores ranging from 6.7 among the youngest to 6.1 among the oldest. These figures support the idea that, beyond the type of distribution of household tasks, age also influences degree of satisfaction but does so differently depending on the country and gender.

**Figure 3. Pattern by age of satisfaction with distribution of household tasks according to type of division, country, and gender (%)**



*Source:* Authors using data from the Spanish Fertility Survey (INE, 2018) and the Swedish Generations and Gender Survey (SUDA, 2021).

However, there are two possible explanations for these differences. Either people's perceptions and degrees of satisfaction change over the course of their lives (age effect) or the younger generations have more egalitarian expectations, which persist over time (generational effect). In a context where people form couples later in life, equality in the division of domestic tasks could act as a criterion of choice among younger women with egalitarian values. It is therefore possible that younger women who agree to less co-responsible living arrangements do so for reasons of tolerance or contextual adaptation, but also because of a lack of alternatives. The lower levels of satisfaction observed in older age groups could reflect not only a change of perception over time but also a persistence of relationships where the domestic imbalance is the norm or made invisible. This indicates the extent to which gender norms continue to set limits of shared responsibility and everyday wellbeing. In any case, even within each group (egalitarian and non-egalitarian), satisfaction varies with age and context. This suggests that, in addition to the type of distribution, other age-related factors like expectations, adaptation, and generational context could also have an influence.

## **Conclusions: Equality in the home is confirmed as a key factor of wellbeing in couples**

The results clearly show that, independently of gender, there is a higher perception of equality in Sweden than in Spain. However, in both countries analysed, an equal distribution of household tasks is associated with greater satisfaction among both women and men. Equality in the home is confirmed as a key factor in the wellbeing of couples.

Even so, perceptions of the division of labour and levels of satisfaction vary according to gender, country, and age. Women are more critical in their perception of household equality and report lower levels of satisfaction when there is imbalance. However, men, especially in Spain, tend to show higher levels of satisfaction, even in situations of unequal distribution of household tasks.

As for age, young couples perceive greater equality although it is unclear whether this is due to changes over the life cycle or generational differences. Satisfaction also varies with age when the division is not equal. In Sweden, it increases over the years for the entire population while, in Spain, it rises among men but decreases among women. When the division of tasks is equal, effects of age and gender do not affect satisfaction.

Overall, the data suggest that household equality is not only a matter of fairness in the couple but it also reveals structural tensions between gender, work, and wellbeing. The fact that women are more critical of imbalance and less satisfied with this situation reflects not only unequal expectations but also the persistence of a patriarchal system that renders their work invisible and legitimises men's "auxiliary" contribution in the home. This reproductive labour is still essential to sustaining the economic system, and its unequal distribution shows how the private sphere reproduces the social order. Achieving a fairer distribution of domestic work would not only improve individual wellbeing but it would also challenge the material foundations of gender inequality.

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