GRAPE Working Paper #108

Domestic Labor in the Shadow of Paid Work: A Gendered US Time-Use Analysis

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FAME | GRAPE, 2025

Foundation of Admirers and Mavens of Economics
Group for Research in Applied Economics

GRAPE Working Paper | #108

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Abstract

Using data from the American Time Use Survey and hurdle regression models, this study examines how the gender composition of occupations relates to time spent on housework and childcare. We find that women in male-dominated occupations spend more time on housework than those in female-dominated or gender-neutral fields, suggesting that breaking occupational norms in the labor market does not necessarily translate into less traditional domestic roles. Such mothers are less likely to engage in childcare, although when involved spent the same amount of time on childcare and quality time, and higher earnings are associated with more time spent with children. For men, the patterns differ: fathers in gender-neutral or female-dominated occupations are more likely to participate in childcare and devote more time to it, while those in male-dominated jobs are more likely to report no childcare at all. Increased paternal childcare does not coincide with more housework, indicating a selective reallocation of time. The findings highlight the need for policies that address both occupational segregation and the domestic division of labor to promote gender equality at work and at home.

Keywords:

unpaid work, childcare, gender occupational segregation

JEL Classification

J16, J22

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Acknowledgements

This project was carried out as part of a research grant (2019/33/B/HS4/01645) funded by the National Science Centre, Poland. All errors are ours.

Published by: FAME | GRAPE
ISSN: 2544-2473
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1 Introduction

Historically, the division of labor between women and men was tied to a separation between paid employment and unpaid domestic work. However, today, this clear-cut divide no longer holds. Women participate, increasingly, in the labor market and split their time between market and domestic work. This shift complicates the simplistic trade-off between paid work and household labor, introducing gendered patterns of specialization within both domains. Men and women still tend to cluster in different occupations, and similarly, they often engage in different types of household activities— regardless of how much time their partner devotes to domestic tasks (Blair and Lichter, 1991). For instance, Hersch and Stratton (2000) show that even when single and married men spend comparable total time on housework, they differ in the composition of tasks performed, suggesting a persistent influence of gender norms.

This study investigates whether occupational gender segregation is associated with patterns of time use in the household. Specifically, we examine whether individuals in gender-atypical occupations— such as women in male-dominated fields or men in female-dominated ones, diverge from traditional gender roles at home. Do such individuals carry non-normative behavior into the private sphere, or do they compensate by conforming to traditional roles in the household?

We analyze time spent on household chores and childcare, with a particular focus on *quality time* activities, such as playing, talking, or reading with children. This distinction is important for two reasons. First, parental engagement is critical to the inter-generational transmission of gender norms (Cunningham, 2001). Second, previous research shows that women who spend more time on routine housework report a lower enjoyment of interactions with their children, which can influence both the quality of parenting and the perceptions of children about gender roles (Krueger, 2009; Kahneman et al., 2010).

Despite increasing equality in the workplace, household responsibilities continue to fall disproportionately on women—even among those with careers comparable to their partners' or even higher earnings (Bittman et al., 2003). Whether due to persistent norms or entrenched habits, changes in the domestic division of labor lag behind shifts in occupational gender segregation. This imbalance may constrain women's career trajectories and slow progress toward labor market equality. Possible explanations of such mismatch are provided by (England, 2010), who highlight the direction of changes for men and women. Although, gender egalitarianism is attractive for women who experience upward mobility, for men the mechanism works in the opposite direction.

Theoretical support for this view comes also from the identity-based framework of Akerlof and Kranton (2010), which posits that individuals derive utility not only from outcomes but also from conforming to social norms. Household division of labor may thus reflect internalized gender identities linked to broader occupational choices.

Our central research question is whether gender norms embedded in occupational choices align with household behavior. Do women in male-dominated fields spend less time on domestic work and childcare? Do men in female-dominated fields increase their household engagement, or do they resist crossing gender boundaries at home?

Our analysis uncovers distinct and sometimes unexpected links between occupational gender composition, wages, and domestic roles. For housework, higher-earning women tend

to spend less time on domestic chores, consistent with greater bargaining power or the ability to outsource tasks, whereas higher-earning men devote more time to housework. However, individuals in male-dominated occupations, both women and men, spend more time on housework, possibly reflecting compensation for gender-atypical labor market choices (for women) or lower efficiency in such tasks (for both women and men). In terms of childcare, working in a male-dominated occupation is associated with a lower likelihood of involvement, although among engaged parents, men in gender-neutral occupations spend more total time with children than those in male-dominated. Across genders, higher income is positively associated with both total and quality time spent with children. These patterns suggest an asymmetry: mothers in atypical occupations may face a double burden of paid and unpaid work, while fathers in atypical occupations may increase childcare involvement without a proportional rise in housework.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature; Section 3 describes the data; Section 4 outlines the empirical strategy; Section 5 presents the results and discussion; and Section 6 concludes with implications for gender norms and policy.

2 Literature review

When analyzing links between labor market and household decisions, several strands of the literature are particularly relevant.

First, a substantial body of empirical research documents that women and men tend to sort into different occupations. Occupational gender segregation is extensively analyzed by Blau and Kahn (2000); Blau et al. (2013), among others. Blau and Kahn (2000, 2017) demonstrate that occupational segregation is a key driver of gender wage disparities. They show that segregation declined rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s, but the pace of change slowed markedly in subsequent decades, with decomposition analyses confirming its persistent role in sustaining wage inequality. Blackburn and Jarman (2006) expands this perspective by distinguishing between horizontal segregation — differences in the types of occupations held by men and women—and vertical segregation—differences in occupational status or hierarchy. He argues that horizontal segregation is primarily responsible for wage inequality, whereas certain forms of vertical segregation may even confer advantages to women. Goldin (2014) emphasizes that divergent standards for job flexibility across occupations are central to understanding the persistence of gender inequality in the labor market. Finally, Cortes and Pan (2018) investigate the determinants of gender differences in occupational choice, underscoring the importance of deeply ingrained social norms that shape behavior by prescribing "appropriate" roles for women and men.

Second, empirical research shows that majority of domestic tasks is done by women (Greenstein, 2000; Sayer et al., 2016; Tichenor, 2005). They are also more more likely to be the primary caregivers for children (Bianchi et al., 2006; Sullivan, 2006). Such statements hold even when controlled for earnings and work time. Such unequal division of unpaid labor has significant implications for labor market behavior and outcomes. For example, Budig and England (2001) estimate that among young American women, each additional child is associated with an approximately 7% reduction in wages, highlighting the economic penalties

associated with motherhood. These domestic responsibilities contribute to occupational sorting, as women may select or remain in jobs offering greater flexibility or fewer hours to accommodate caregiving demands, thereby reinforcing patterns of occupational gender segregation and wage disparities (Goldin, 2014).

Third, intra-household dynamics play a crucial role in shaping labor market behavior and the allocation of time. Bertrand et al. (2015) document a discontinuity in the distribution of the wife's share of household income in U.S. couples, with a sharp drop at the point where the wife's earnings would exceed the husband's. They interpret this as evidence of a social norm discouraging wives from out-earning their husbands, which has implications for occupational choices and career progression. Complementing this, Bittman et al. (2003) find that even when women earn more than their partners, they continue to perform a disproportionate share of housework, underscoring the persistence of traditional gender norms. In contrast, Magda et al. (2024) provide evidence from Poland that women who earn more than their partners tend to spend less time on housework than women who earn less, suggesting that relative earnings influence bargaining power over the division of unpaid labor. Collectively, these findings emphasize the importance of relative, rather than absolute, earnings in understanding the interplay between market work and domestic responsibilities. Accordingly, our study controls for the level of earnings to account for these intra-household dynamics.

Fourth, our study fits into the research on societal gender norms and inter-generational transmission of them. Farré and Vella (2013) explore the inter-generational transmission of gender role attitudes, finding that household environments play a critical role in shaping children's gender beliefs, which subsequently affect women's labor market participation throughout their lives. Complementing these insights, McGinn et al. (2019) finds that daughters of working mothers are more likely to be employed themselves and, when employed, tend to hold supervisory roles, work longer hours, and earn higher wages compared to their peers whose mothers were not employed. Within the domestic sphere, sons raised by employed mothers dedicate more time to caregiving activities, while daughters spend less time on housework.

To sum up, literature provides evidence of strong connections between choices in the labor market and division of household responsibilities. In our study, we take a closer look at the consistency (or lack of it) in following gender norms in a workplace and at home, and on the channel of transmission of gender norms - childcare, especially quality time spent with children.

3 Data

The analysis of links between household activities and characteristics of the labor market requires the use of two types of data: detailed time-use and labor market data with a representative sample of working population (including gender and occupation of the respondent).

To measure time devoted to household activities such as household chores, childcare, and quality time with children - we use American Time Use Survey (ATUS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. ATUS is the first nationally representative time use survey among U.S. residents. Respondents are drawn from households participating in the Current Population Survey (CPS), a nationally representative survey of economic and social well-being. One

randomly selected household member aged 15 or older completes the time-use questionnaire. The survey has been conducted annually since 2003; for this study, we use all available waves through 2024.

The time-use data provides information on how individuals allocate time throughout the day, including paid work, leisure, and unpaid household labor. Time-use research enables the measurement of phenomena—such as the quantity and value of unpaid work performed by women and men—that are difficult to capture in traditional social surveys (Kahneman et al., 2004; Gershuny, 2003; Sullivan, 2013; Zamarro and Prados, 2021).

In our study, we focus on time spent on housework and childcare. Figure 1 presents the average time spent on the seven most time-consuming household tasks among employed individuals: cleaning, food preparation, gardening, laundry, shopping, repairing, and—for parents—physical care of household children. Together, these activities account for over 60 percent of total household chore time in our sample.

Most of these tasks exhibit strong gender patterns. With the exception of gardening and repairing, women spend more time on each task than men. The largest gender gaps occur in cleaning (about 24 minutes more per day for women) and food preparation (about 15 minutes). Grocery shopping is the most gender-neutral activity, with an average gap of only about 3 minutes per day. Over time, we observe increasing time spent on food preparation for both genders, rising time spent on cleaning among men, and a decline in cleaning time among women.

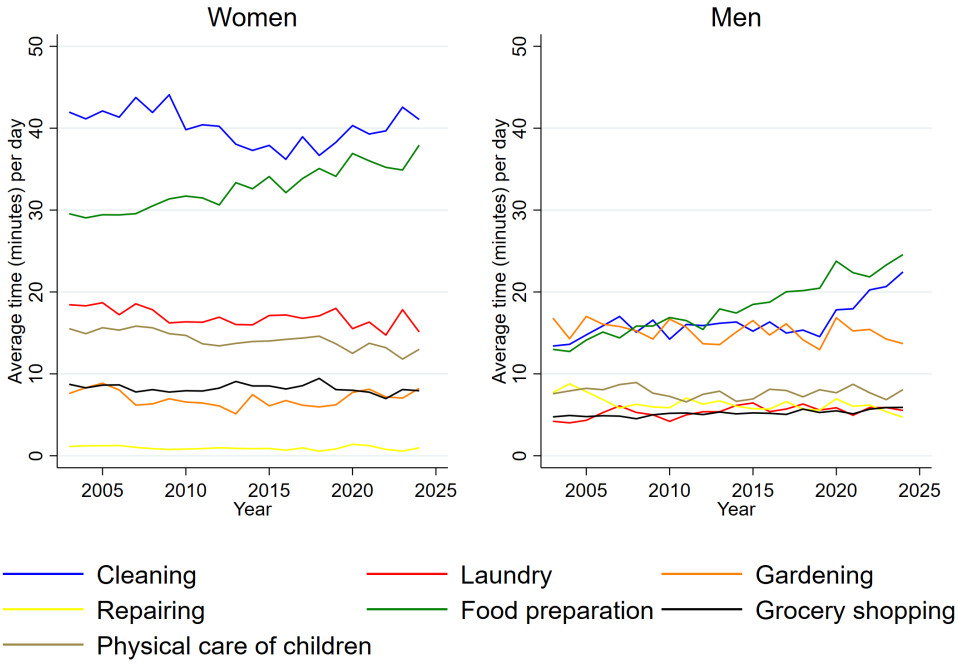
In our analyses, we take into account three cumulative measures of time spent on: (a) household chores, (b) childcare (total) and (c) quality childcare time. The variable *total time spent on household chores* is a sum of minutes per day spent on activities such as, among others, cleaning, laundry, food and drink preparation, repair and decoration, gardening or household management (coded in ATUS 2003-2024 *trcodep* variable between 20100 and 20999). The total *childcare time* includes activities such as physical care (primary), homeschooling, medical care or waiting for a child attending extra curriculum (*trcodep* variable between 30100 and 30399). The variables *quality childcare* includes only reading, playing, arts and crafts, playing sports and talking with children (*trcodep* variable between 30102 and 30186).

We restrict our sample to adults aged 18-65 who are currently employed ($telfs = 1$), working full-time ($trdpftpt = 1$) and living with a partner who is also employed full-time ($trspftpt = 1$). This restriction helps avoid potential confounding effects arising from differences in partners' labor market participation, which could influence intra-household bargaining positions. After applying these criteria, our final sample comprises 37,354 individuals, including 23,603 parents (defined as those with at least one minor child in the household).

Descriptive statistics for the full sample and for the subsample of parents are presented in the Table 1. As expected, women spend significantly more time than men on housework (131.33 minutes per day versus 99.65 minutes, $p-value = 0.00$), childcare (81.68 versus 56.67, $p-value = 0.00$) and quality childcare (40.13 versus 34, $p-value = 0.00$). Conversely, men spend more time in paid work, both in the overall sample (253.01 versus 290.17, $p-value = 0.00$), and among parents: 250.57 versus 302.38, $p-value = 0.00$).

Our key explanatory variable — the measure of how typical an occupation is for a given gender — is the share of women in that occupation ($FemOcc$). To construct this indicator, we use data from the American Community Survey (ACS) for the years 2003–2024, which

Figure 1: Average time spent on household duties among employed men and women



Notes: The figure presents average time (in minutes) per day spent on tasks: cleaning, laundry, gardening, repairing, food preparation, grocery shopping, physical care of own children in subsamples of employed women and men who participated in American Time Use Survey between 2003 and 2024. The sample includes 148 458 individuals.

includes, among others, respondents' gender and occupation. In the ATUS, each participant reports their main occupation, coded using the four-digit CPS Occupation Classification Codes from 2002, 2010, or 2018, depending on the survey year. We harmonize the ACS data to the same coding scheme and compute the proportion of women in each occupation. These occupational gender-share values are then merged with the ATUS dataset.

In addition to using $FemOcc$ as a continuous measure, we follow the classification proposed by Blau and Kahn (2017) to categorize occupations into female-dominated, male-dominated, and gender-neutral groups. Occupations with more than 70% women are classified as female-dominated, those with less than 30% women as male-dominated, and the remainder as gender-neutral. This categorical approach allows us to assess whether potential effects are primarily driven by the dominance of one gender in an occupation or whether they are sensitive to more moderate differences in gender representation.

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the share of women in respondents' occupations ($FemOcc$) for selected years between 2003 and 2024, separately for women (top row) and men (bottom row).

The left-hand panels show kernel density estimates of $FemOcc$. For women, as expected, the distribution is strongly right-skewed, with most employed women concentrated in occupations with a high share of female workers. This pattern has remained stable over time, with only minor shifts in density across the years. For men, the opposite pattern emerges:

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	All		Women		Men	
	Average	Std dev	Average	Std dev	Average	Std dev
All						
Housework time (total)	116.44	134.26	131.33	133.51	99.65	133.13
Paid work time (inc. commute)	270.48	267.27	253.01	255.83	290.17	278.30
Age	41.81	10.04	41.19	9.90	42.51	10.15
Number of children	1.13	1.09	1.12	1.07	1.14	1.10
FemOcc	0.50	0.29	0.65	0.23	0.32	0.24
Weekly wage (in $)	1029.91	564	939.32	539.23	1132	573.79
Number of observations	37 354		19 792		17 562	
Parents						
Childcare time (total)	67.73	97.35	77.78	99.91	56.34	93.06
Childcare time (quality time)	36.68	70.59	39.27	69.23	33.74	71.99
Paid work time	266.16	265.88	246.99	252.81	287.87	278.37
Age	39.61	7.78	38.84	7.51	40.47	8
Number of children	1.79	0.83	1.77	0.82	1.81	0.85
FemOcc	0.50	0.29	0.65	0.23	0.32	0.24
Weekly wage (in $)	1031.27	565.96	940.55	543.11	1134	572.59
Number of observations	23 603		12 534		11 069	

Notes: Own calculations based on ATUS and ACS 2003-2024 data.

the distribution is left-skewed, with the largest concentration in occupations where women make up less than 30% of the workforce. The shape of the distribution has also been relatively stable, though there is some evidence of a modest shift toward more gender-balanced occupations in recent years.

The right-hand panels uses categorical variable classifying occupations into male-dominated, female-dominated, and gender-neutral categories following Blau and Kahn (2017). Among women, the majority work in female-dominated occupations, with only a small share in male-dominated fields; this pattern shows little change over time. Among men, most are employed in male-dominated occupations, though the share in gender-neutral and female-dominated fields has slightly increased since 2003. Overall, the figure highlights the persistence of occupational gender segregation in the U.S. labor market, despite gradual movement toward more balanced occupational distributions.

Additionally, we include a set of control variables: time spent on paid work and commuting, respondent's age, number of children, and—following the literature—weekly wage. The wage measure is based on the *trernwa* variable, which, according to the ATUS documentation, is the most reliable wage variable in the dataset. Although an hourly wage measure might be conceptually more aligned with our analysis, it contains substantially more missing values and would therefore reduce the sample size considerably.

Figure 2: Distributions of share of female in the occupation by respondents' occupations.

Notes: Distribution of the share of women in respondents' occupations ($FemOcc$) and occupational gender composition categories, by gender and year. Kernel densities (left panels) are based on the proportion of women in each occupation, computed from ACS data and matched to ATUS respondents. Bar charts (right panels) classify occupations as male-dominated (share of women $<$ 30%), female-dominated ($>$ 70%), or gender-neutral (30–70%), following Blau and Kahn (2017). Data: ATUS 2003–2024, merged with ACS 2003–2024.

4 Method

The method used in this study is selected due to the specific nature of the dependent variables - measured in minutes per day - combined underlying research goal of testing whether the genderedness of an occupation is associated with the time allocated to household activities and childcare. The dependent variable is censored and concentrated at zero (lower bound) and, in theory, at 1440 minutes (upper bound, total length of a day). In practice, the actual maximum values observed in the data are much lower than this theoretical upper limit, and substantial variation exists in the upper tail of the distribution. More importantly, the lower bound of zero minutes carries specific interpretative meaning in this research context: it reflects the decision not to engage in the activity at all on that day (see histograms of housework time, childcare time, and quality childcare time in Appendix A1).

This two-stage nature of the decision: first, whether to participate in a given activity

at all, and second, how much time to spend on it, makes the *hurdle* model an appropriate analytical approach (Cragg, 1971). The *hurdle* model explicitly separates the binary participation decision from the continuous time allocation decision, allowing for different processes to govern each stage.

In the first stage of *hurdle* regression model, we estimate the probability that an individual spends at least one minute on household duties or childcare:

$$P(ActivityTime_i > 0|X_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FemOcc_i + \beta_2 WorkTime_i + \beta_3 X_i + \beta_4 Y_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where $ActivityTime$ denotes daily minutes spent on household duties or childcare; $FemOcc$ measures the share of women in the individual's occupation (based on ACS data); and $FemDom$ and $Neutral$ are categorical indicators for female-dominated and gender-neutral occupations, respectively (male-dominated occupations serve as the reference category). $WorkTime$ captures total minutes spent working (including commuting), X includes individual characteristics such as age, number of own children in the household, and weekly wage (in \$100 units), while Y_i is a set of day-of-week indicators. In regressions where the dependent variable is time spent with children, we additionally control for time spent on household chores.

In the second stage, conditional on participation (i.e., excluding respondents reporting zero minutes), we estimate the amount of time devoted to the activity. The same set of explanatory variables is used. Given the positively skewed distribution of time-use variables, we model the outcome using an exponential functional form:

$$ActivityTime_i = \exp\left(\beta_0 + \beta_1 FemOcc_i + \beta_2 WorkTime_i + \beta_3 X_i + \beta_4 Y_i + \epsilon_i\right) \quad (2)$$

This modeling strategy allows us to capture both the extensive margin (whether an activity is undertaken at all) and the intensive margin (the amount of time devoted), providing a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between occupational gender composition and time spent on unpaid work.

5 Results

Following the procedure outlined above, we present the results examining the relationship between time spent on household activities (housework, childcare, and quality time with children) and the gender composition of one's occupation. The regression results are reported separately for women (mothers) and men (fathers) to allow for within-gender comparisons of the effects. The primary goal is to test whether systematic differences in time spent on household activities and time spent with children are associated with the labor market choice to work in an atypical or gender-neutral occupation. Indirectly, this analysis also explores whether such patterns in time allocation may play a role in the intergenerational transmission of gender norms from parents to children.

We first present results related to time spent on housework, followed by time devoted to childcare, and finally time spent on quality childcare.

Table 2 yields several noteworthy insights. First, the gender composition of one's occupation appears to have a weaker effect on the probability of engaging in housework at all than

on the total amount of time devoted to it. This is intuitive: it is virtually impossible to avoid housework altogether, so women—whether in male-dominated, neutral, or female-dominated occupations—will still do some household tasks.

However, for men, the occupational gender mix is associated with higher likelihood of participating in housework. In particular, men in female-dominated occupations are significantly more likely to report doing any housework than men in male-dominated jobs (coefficient = 0.080, $p - value < 0.1$ in the selection model). This suggests that gender-atypical occupational choices can influence household role engagement, at least in terms of participation.

When it comes to time spent on housework, the relationships are stronger and more systematic. Both women and men in female-typical occupations spend less time on housework compared to those in male-dominated or neutral occupations. For women, working in a male-dominated occupation is associated with about 7% more time spent on housework than women in female-dominated jobs (coefficient = –0.073, $p - value < 0.01$ in the continuous outcome model, noting the log-transformed dependent variable). This suggests that women breaking gender norms in the workplace may not follow the same non-traditional patterns at home—in fact, they may compensate by increasing household contributions.

For men, the effect runs in the opposite direction: those in female-dominated occupations spend around 6–10% less time on housework than their counterparts in male-dominated jobs (–0.064, $p - value < 0.1$; –0.099, $p - value < 0.01$), suggesting that atypical occupation for men is associated with less engagement in household chores in terms of total hours. However, this association is insignificant when we take into account only two largest, typical for women household tasks: cleaning and food preparation (see Appendix A1 and A2).

Controlling for work hours shows a striking symmetry: an additional hour of paid work reduces both the probability of doing any housework and the total time spent on it at virtually the same rate for men and women (–0.001 in the selection model; –0.002 in the outcome model, all $p - value < 0.001$).

The wage effect diverges sharply by gender. Women with higher earnings are both less likely to engage in housework and spend less time on it (–0.004 in selection, –0.006 in outcome, $p - value < 0.05$–0.001). For men, higher wages are linked to a greater probability of participating in housework (+0.013, $p - value < 0.001$) and more time spent (0.004, $p - value < 0.001$). This asymmetry may reflect different intra-household bargaining dynamics or norms about the "value" of male vs. female time in domestic contexts.

The age profile is also consistent: both the probability and the duration of housework increase with age up to a point, before tapering off (positive coefficient for age, negative for age^2). Children in the household substantially increase women's housework load (0.083 probability, +0.053 duration, both $p - value < 0.001$), while the effect on men's probability is negligible but their time does increase modestly (0.019, $p - value < 0.05$).

Finally, the ln sigma parameter is statistically significant for both genders but in opposite directions (women: –0.078, $p - value < 0.001$; men: 0.031, $p - value < 0.001$). In the hurdle model context, ln sigma captures the log of the standard deviation of the residuals in the continuous part of the model. A negative value for women suggests less variability in housework time after accounting for covariates — housework patterns among women are relatively more predictable. Conversely, the positive value for men indicates greater unexplained variation in their housework time, implying that other unobserved factors (e.g.,

partner's employment status, personal preferences) may play a stronger role for men.

Table 2: Time spent on housework and genderness of the occupation - hurdle regression results

	Selection: Housework time > 0				Outcome: Housework time			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
FemOcc	-0.018		0.077*		-0.073***		-0.099***	
	(0.054)		(0.044)		(0.031)		(0.019)	
Neutral Occ		-0.009		0.014		-0.055**		-0.042
		(0.045)		(0.022)		(0.026)		(0.034)
FemDom Occ		-0.020		0.080*		-0.068***		-0.064*
		(0.044)		(0.045)		(0.026)		(0.033)
Work time	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.002***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Weekly wage (in 100$)	-0.004*	-0.004*	0.013***	0.013***	-0.006***	-0.006***	0.004***	0.004***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age	0.047***	0.047***	0.024***	0.023***	0.033***	0.032***	0.019***	0.019***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Age^2	-0.000***	-0.000***	-0.000**	-0.000**	-0.000***	-0.000***	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Number of children	0.083***	0.083***	-0.002	-0.002	0.053***	0.053***	0.019**	0.019**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Day of the week	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	0.257	0.260	0.234	0.245	4.160***	4.170***	4.280***	4.263***
	(0.195)	(0.196)	(0.177)	(0.177)	(0.120)	(0.120)	(0.158)	(0.158)
Ln sigma	-0.078***		0.031***		-0.078***		0.031***	
	(0.005)		(0.006)		(0.005)		(0.006)	
Observations	19 792		17 562		19 792		17 562	

Notes: Regression coefficients from hurdle regression selection (columns 2-5) and outcome (columns 6-9) models. Dependent variable: Total time spent on housework. Regressions separately for sample of women (columns 2-3 and 6-7), and men (columns 4-5, and 8-9). Standard deviations are in parentheses. *** p <0.01, ** p <0.05, * p <0.1 Data: ATUS 2003–2024, merged with ACS 2003–2024.

Table 3 provides a complementary picture to the housework results, this time focusing on childcare.

First, the gender composition of the occupation plays a stronger role in the likelihood of participating in childcare than it did for housework. Women in female-typical occupations are about 12% more likely to engage in any childcare than women in male-dominated jobs (0.119, $p - value < 0.05$), and the effect is even stronger for men: those in female-typical jobs are around 56% more likely to do any childcare (0.558, $p - value < 0.001$). Using occupational categories, men in female-dominated jobs are around 28% more likely than those in male-dominated jobs to participate in childcare (0.285, $p - value < 0.001$), while the corresponding increase for neutral occupations is around 23% (0.227, $p - value < 0.001$).

Interestingly, these occupational effects are much smaller (and mostly insignificant) for the amount of time spent on childcare— except for men in female-typical jobs, who spend about 15% more time on childcare than men in male-dominated jobs (0.150, $p - value < 0.05$). For women, occupational gender composition does not significantly affect childcare time once participation is accounted for. This pattern suggests that occupation influences whether people are involved in childcare more than how much time they actually spend on it— especially for women.

Housework hours are negatively related to both the probability and amount of childcare time for men and women, with effect sizes small but highly significant (–0.000 to –0.001). This reflects a trade-off between domestic chores and childcare.

Paid work hours reduce both the likelihood and the time spent on childcare for both genders, at almost identical rates (–0.001 in both stages, $p - value < 0.001$).

What is especially worth to highlight is that the level of wage tell a different story from housework: higher earnings are associated with more childcare for both men and women. For example, an increase of $100 in weekly pay corresponds to a 2–3.5% increase in both the probability and amount of childcare, with the effect slightly stronger for women. This may reflect that higher income allows for more flexibility or choice in spending time with children, rather than crowding it out. It can be also reflecting the fact that women and men who achieved a high position in the labor market are more likely to chose more time with own children.

Age effects are mixed: for women, probability of childcare declines with age (–0.030, $p - value < 0.05$), but there's no significant pattern in hours; for men, only the quadratic term is significant, suggesting a small non-linear effect.

Number of children has the largest substantive impact: each additional child increases the probability of doing any childcare by around 14–18% and the amount of childcare by 7–13% ($p - value < 0.001$ for all), with stronger effects for women in both stages.

Finally, ln sigma is positive and significant for both genders (0.096 for women; 0.169 for men, p ¡ 0.001). This means that, after accounting for observed characteristics, there is greater unexplained variability in childcare hours. The higher value for men suggests that their childcare time is more heterogeneous, likely shaped by unobserved factors such as partner's employment, parenting preferences, or custody arrangements.

Table 3: Time spent on childcare and genderness of the occupation - hurdle regression results

	Selection: Childcare time > 0				Outcome: Childcare time			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
FemOcc	0.119**		0.558***		-0.059		0.150**	
	(0.054)		(0.053)		(0.052)		(0.064)	
Neutral Occ		0.205***		0.227***		-0.010		0.064**
		(0.046)		(0.026)		(0.044)		(0.032)
FemDom Occ		0.180***		0.285***		-0.005		0.075
		(0.046)		(0.048)		(0.045)		(0.056)
Housework	-0.000***	-0.000***	-0.000***	-0.000***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Work time	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Weekly wage (in 100$)	0.035***	0.035***	0.028***	0.028***	0.025***	0.026***	0.023***	0.023***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Age	-0.030**	-0.030**	-0.006	-0.005	-0.009	-0.009	0.017	0.017
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Age^2	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000**	-0.000**	-0.000**	-0.000**	-0.001***	-0.001***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Number of children	0.183***	0.184***	0.141***	0.140***	0.128***	0.127***	0.072***	0.072***
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Day of the week	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	1.372***	1.282***	0.281	0.321	4.985***	4.944***	4.262***	4.276***
	(0.272)	(0.273)	(0.267)	(0.267)	(0.262)	(0.262)	(0.342)	(0.342)
Ln sigma	0.096***		0.169***		0.096***		0.169***	
	(0.007)		(0.009)		(0.007)		(0.009)	
Observations	12 534		11 069		12 534		11 069	

Notes: Regression coefficients from hurdle regression selection (columns 2-5) and outcome (columns 6-9) models. Dependent variable: Total time spent on childcare. Regressions separately for sample of women (columns 2-3 and 6-7), and men (columns 4-5, and 8-9). Standard deviations are in parentheses. *** p <0.01, ** p <0.05, * p <0.1 Data: ATUS 2003–2024, merged with ACS 2003–2024.

Table 4 examines the relationship between occupational gender composition and quality time spent with children, defined as time spent in interactive, engaged, or recreational activities.

In the selection stage (probability of spending any quality time), occupational gender composition has a clear, positive association for both genders. Women in female-typical occupations are about 13% more likely to spend any quality time with their children compared to women in male-dominated occupations (0.130, $p - value < 0.05$). For men, the effect is much stronger: those in female-typical jobs are 42% more likely to spend any quality time than their male-dominated occupation counterparts (0.424, $p - value < 0.001$).

The occupational category breakdown shows that for both genders, working in neutral or female-dominated jobs is associated with higher participation in quality time—effects range from 14 to 18% for women and 18–19% for men, all significant at 0.001. This pattern suggests that men in gender-atypical or less male-dominated work environments may adopt more engaged parenting roles, at least in terms of participation.

In the outcome stage (amount of quality time), occupational gender composition has no statistically significant effect for either gender once participation is accounted for. This mirrors the childcare findings: occupation matters more for whether quality time is spent than for how much.

Other controls show consistent patterns. Housework and paid work hours are both negatively related to quality time for men and women, with effects of –0.001 to –0.002 ($p-value < 0.001$), suggesting time trade-offs between different domains.

Wages are positively associated with both the probability and amount of quality time: for every additional $100 in weekly pay, women increase participation probability by 3.1% and time by 2.1%, while men increase by 2.2% and 1.7%, respectively ($p - value < 0.001$).

Age effects differ by stage: for women, age slightly increases participation (0.026, $p - value < 0.05$) but reduces the amount of quality time (–0.031, $p - value < 0.1$), suggesting that older mothers are more likely to engage but spend somewhat less time when they do. Age patterns for men are weaker.

Number of children strongly increases both participation and time for women (11% higher probability, 6% more time per additional child, $p - value < 0.001$), but has no significant effect on the amount for men.

The ln sigma values are the highest among all the models so far (0.204 for women, 0.251 for men, both $p - value < 0.001$), indicating substantial unexplained variability in quality time hours. The larger value for men again suggests greater heterogeneity in their engagement— possibly reflecting more diverse parenting roles and constraints.

Table 4: Quality time with children and genderness of the occupation - hurdle regression results

	Selection: Childcare quality time > 0				Outcome: Childcare quality time			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
FemOcc	0.130**		0.424***		-0.031		-0.019	
	(0.051)		(0.052)		(0.066)		(0.079)	
Neutral Occ		0.147***		0.183***		0.000		-0.032
		(0.043)		(0.026)		(0.056)		(0.039)
FemDom Occ		0.137***		0.194***		0.033		0.051
		(0.043)		(0.047)		(0.056)		(0.070)
Housework	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.000***	-0.000***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Work time	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.002***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Weekly wage (in 100$)	0.031***	0.031***	0.022***	0.022***	0.021***	0.022***	0.017***	0.018***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Age	0.026**	0.026**	0.014	0.015	-0.031*	-0.030*	0.009	0.009
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Age^2	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.000***	-0.000***	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000*	-0.000*
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Number of children	0.111***	0.112***	0.095***	0.095***	0.063***	0.062***	0.009	0.009
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Day of the week	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	-0.458*	-0.496**	-0.603**	-0.573**	5.087***	5.033***	4.543***	4.544***
	(0.250)	(0.250)	(0.265)	(0.265)	(0.335)	(0.336)	(0.424)	(0.424)
Ln sigma	0.204***		0.251***		0.204***		0.251***	
	(0.008)		(0.010)		(0.008)		(0.010)	
Observations	12 534		11 069		12 534		11 069	

Notes: Regression coefficients from hurdle regression selection (columns 2-5) and outcome (columns 6-9) models. Dependent variable: Quality time spent with children (reading, talking, doing arts and crafts, playing, playing sports). Regressions separately for sample of women (columns 2-3 and 6-7), and men (columns 4-5, and 8-9). Standard deviations are in parentheses. *** p <0.01, ** p <0.05, * p <0.1 Data: ATUS 2003–2024, merged with ACS 2003–2024.

6 Discussion

In this study, we examine the link between labor market outcomes and household decisions, focusing on two central domains of unpaid work: housework and childcare. While both are stereotypically viewed as gendered activities, performed disproportionately by women (Bianchi et al., 2012; Sullivan et al., 2018), they differ in important ways. First, both tasks can be outsourced to market services: housework to cleaners or cooks, childcare to nannies or teachers. However, outsourcing childcare, particularly quality time with one's own children, has deeper and more enduring implications than outsourcing housework. Second, childcare, especially interactive, high-quality engagement, is widely recognized as a crucial driver of children's cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Starting with housework, previous literature has examined the relationship between wages and the amount of household chores undertaken, but the evidence is mixed (Bittman et al., 2003; Magda et al., 2024). Existing studies typically explain their findings through either the influence of gender norms (both in the labor market and at home) or bargaining power within couples. In our study, we consider both occupational choice—measured in terms of gender intensity— and absolute wage level (as we do not observe relative income). We find that women with higher earnings are less likely to engage in housework and spend less time on it. In contrast, both women and men employed in male dominated occupations spend more time on housework. Interestingly, higher earnings among men are associated with greater time spent on housework, suggesting that for women, higher income may increase their ability to outsource domestic tasks or strengthen their bargaining power, while for men, higher income may be linked to greater overall engagement in family and household life.

The finding that individuals in male dominated occupations spend more time on housework appears inconsistent with the idea of maintaining gender norms both at work and at home. Several explanations are possible. First, women in male dominated occupations may "compensate" for their gender-atypical labor market choice by assuming a greater share of domestic work. Second, if individuals work in female dominated occupations, their professional tasks may resemble household activities (e.g., cleaning, food preparation), making them more experienced and efficient at such tasks at home. By contrast, those in male dominated occupations may be less practiced in domestic chores and therefore less efficient, requiring more time to complete them.

When it comes to engagement in childcare (particularly quality time with children), the developmental psychology literature consistently emphasizes the importance of parental time investments for shaping children's outcomes. Frequent, engaged parent–child interactions promote language acquisition, problem-solving skills, and socio-emotional regulation (Hsin and Felfe, 2014; Kalil and Mayer, 2016). Quality time also helps shaping children's aspirations, values, and behavioral patterns (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2004; Cabrera et al., 2011). From the perspective of gender socialization, parental interactions serve as a channel for transmitting, among others, gender norms to the next generation (Cunningham, 2001; Farré and Vella, 2013). Children observe not only occupational roles but also how tasks are divided within the household— potentially reinforcing or challenging existing gender norms.

We find that working in the male dominated occupation is associated with a lower probability of involvement in childcare, including quality time with children. Among parents who are already involved, the only notable difference is that men in gender-neutral occupations

spend more total time on childcare than men in male-dominated occupations. We also observe a positive correlation between income and time—both total and quality—spent with children. This may reflect either greater awareness of the value of parent–child time or greater availability of higher-earning parents, who may have more control over their schedules.

Our results reveal several noteworthy and, in some cases, unexpected patterns. From the lens of gender identity theory (Akerlof and Kranton, 2010), one might expect that parents in gender-typical occupations would adhere more strictly to traditional gender roles at home: mothers taking on more unpaid work, fathers less involved in childcare. This expectation is only partially supported by our data.

The findings highlight an asymmetry in how occupational gender composition relates to domestic roles. Mothers in atypical occupations may face a double workload. Mothers in atypical occupations may face a "double burden" of long paid work hours coupled with substantial unpaid household responsibilities, potentially leading to fatigue and reduced capacity to serve as positive role models for gender norm change. In contrast, fathers in atypical occupations who also earn more may increase their involvement in children's lives without a proportional rise in housework, making their engaged parenting more visible.

From an intergenerational perspective, this asymmetry could slow changes in occupational gender segregation for women while accelerating them for men. If daughters perceive mothers in atypical occupations as overburdened and stressed, they may be less inclined to pursue such career paths. However, the fact that high-earning women devote more time to childcare (including quality time) and less to housework may counterbalance this effect. Conversely, sons observing fathers in female-dominated roles actively engaged with their children may view such occupations as compatible with fulfilling family lives.

7 Conclusion

In this study we explore the intersection of occupational gender composition and the allocation of unpaid work within households, with a focus on both housework and childcare (distinguishing between total childcare time and quality time with children).

Using a large, nationally representative dataset—the American Time Use Survey—and applying hurdle regression models, we find that women working in male-dominated occupations spend more time on housework than women in female-dominated or gender-neutral occupations. This suggests that breaking occupational norms in the labor market does not necessarily translate into less adherence to traditional domestic roles; in fact, the opposite pattern may occur. Although mothers in male-dominated occupations are less likely to be involved in childcare or quality time with children, those who are engaged spend, on average, a similar amount of time as mothers in gender-neutral or gender-typical occupations. Moreover, higher-earning mothers devote more time to their children, both in total and in quality time.

For men, the occupational effects point in a different direction. As with women, men in female-dominated occupations spend less time on housework. Fathers in gender-neutral or female-dominated occupations are more likely to engage in childcare, and when they do, they spend more time on it—although the effect is insignificant for quality time. Fathers in male-dominated jobs are more likely to report no childcare involvement at all. Notably, for

fathers, increased engagement in childcare does not come with a corresponding rise in housework, suggesting a selective reallocation of time toward socially and emotionally rewarding activities with children.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to empirically examine the links between occupational gender composition and both household duties and childcare, while controlling for work hours and wage level. Limitations include the inability to capture qualitative aspects of housework or childcare beyond time spent, potential endogeneity between occupational choice and domestic behavior, and the lack of detailed partner characteristics that could influence household task allocation. Furthermore, cultural and institutional factors may limit the generalizability of our findings to other countries.

Our results contribute to the policy debate on reducing gender occupational segregation. Such efforts may be more effective if accompanied by interventions addressing the domestic sphere. Expanding access to flexible working arrangements for both parents, encouraging fathers to take parental leave, and promoting a more equitable division of household labor could improve the lived experience of parents in atypical occupations. In turn, this may make such career paths more attractive to the next generation, accelerating progress toward greater gender balance in both paid and unpaid work.

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Appendix

Figure A1: Distributions of dependent variables

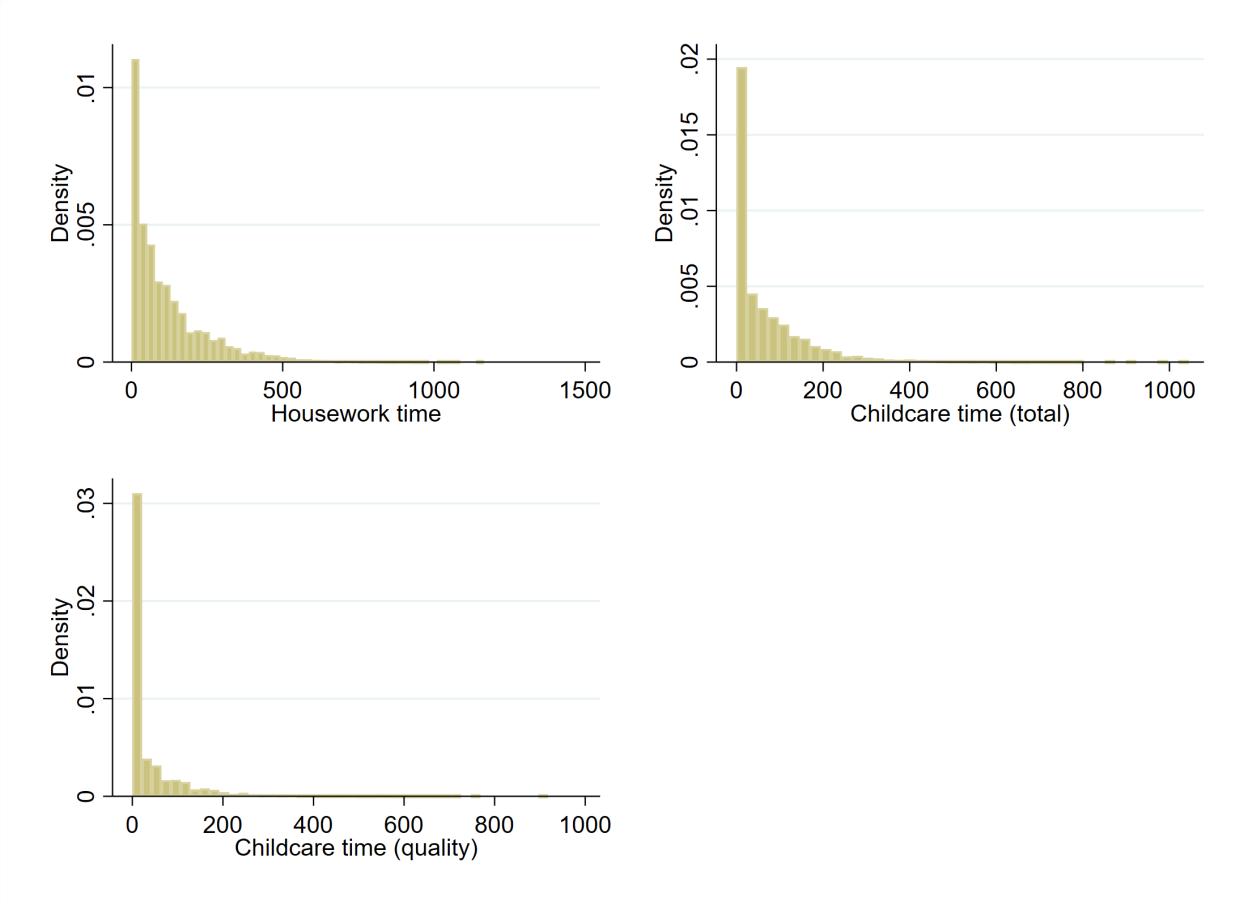

Table A1: Cleaning and genderness of the occupation - hurdle regression results

	Selection: Cleaning (time) > 0				Outcome: Cleaning (time)			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
FemOcc	0.060		0.342***		-0.079**		-0.045	
	(0.040)		(0.044)		(0.040)		(0.058)	
Neutral Occ		0.029		0.123***		-0.073**		-0.042
		(0.034)		(0.022)		(0.034)		(0.029)
FemDom Occ		0.029		0.204***		-0.067**		-0.051
		(0.034)		(0.039)		(0.034)		(0.050)
Work time	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.001***	-0.001***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Weekly wage (in 100$)	-0.003	-0.003*	0.016***	0.017***	-0.009***	-0.008***	-0.008***	-0.007***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age	0.036***	0.036***	-0.002	-0.002	-0.014*	-0.014*	0.008	0.008
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Age^2	-0.000***	-0.000***	-0.000	-0.000	0.000*	0.000*	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Number of children	0.121***	0.121***	0.091***	0.091***	0.021**	0.020**	0.015	0.015
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Day of the week	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	-0.847***	-0.831***	-0.749***	-0.705***	4.601***	4.609***	4.115***	4.118***
	(0.154)	(0.155)	(0.181)	(0.180)	(0.159)	(0.159)	(0.248)	(0.248)
Ln sigma	-0.093***		-0.068***		-0.093***		-0.068***	
	(0.007)		(0.010)		(0.007)		(0.010)	
Observations	19 792		17 562		19 792		17 562	

Notes: Regression coefficients from hurdle regression selection (columns 2-5) and outcome (columns 6-9) models. Dependent variable: Time spent on cleaning. Regressions separately for sample of women (columns 2-3 and 6-7), and men (columns 4-5, and 8-9). Standard deviations are in parentheses. *** p <0.01, ** p <0.05, * p <0.1 Data: ATUS 2003–2024, merged with ACS 2003–2024.

Table A2: Food preparation time and genderness of the occupation - hurdle regression results

	Selection: Food preparation (time) > 0				Outcome: Food preparation (time)			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
FemOcc	-0.080*		0.285***		-0.151***		0.002	
	(0.041)		(0.040)		(0.033)		(0.044)	
Neutral Occ		-0.022		0.100***		-0.094***		-0.001
		(0.035)		(0.020)		(0.028)		(0.022)
FemDom Occ		-0.044		0.196***		-0.119***		0.050
		(0.035)		(0.037)		(0.028)		(0.038)
Work time	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Weekly wage (in 100$)	-0.003*	-0.003	0.010***	0.011***	-0.004***	-0.004***	0.004**	0.004**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age	0.021***	0.021***	-0.008	-0.008	0.005	0.004	0.002	0.002
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Age^2	-0.000	-0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Number of children	0.134***	0.134***	0.065***	0.065***	0.059***	0.059***	0.049***	0.049***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Day of the week	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constant	-0.038	-0.061	-0.130	-0.095	3.755***	3.756***	3.547***	3.542***
	(0.156)	(0.157)	(0.164)	(0.164)	(0.131)	(0.131)	(0.182)	(0.182)
Ln sigma	-0.136***		-0.082***		-0.136***		-0.082***	
	(0.006)		(0.008)		(0.006)		(0.008)	
Observations	19 792		17 562		19 792		17 562	

Notes: Regression coefficients from hurdle regression selection (columns 2-5) and outcome (columns 6-9) models. Dependent variable: Time spent on food preparation. Regressions separately for sample of women (columns 2-3 and 6-7), and men (columns 4-5, and 8-9). Standard deviations are in parentheses. *** p <0.01, ** p <0.05, * p <0.1 Data: ATUS 2003–2024, merged with ACS 2003–2024.