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**Media Contact:**

Contact: Sheila B. Lalwani  
Sociologists for Women in Society  
(574) 310-9163  
[Sheila.b.lalwani@gmail.com](mailto:Sheila.b.lalwani@gmail.com)

**Research: Living Spaces and Lifestyles Impact Chores More For Men Than Women**

**New article from *Gender & Society* Indicates that Women, Regardless of Location, Perform Significant Household Chores**

Want more help at home? New data from leading researchers indicate that you may not be alone.

Dr. Natasha Quadlin, Assistant Professor at Ohio State University, and University of Maryland Assistant Professor Long Doan examined the dynamics of place – city, urban and rural settings – among heterosexual married individuals from the American Time Use Survey and the Current Population Survey to assess the role of place in the gendered division of household chores.

Their findings show that “urban men spend relatively little time on male-typed chores, but they spend the same amount of time on female-typed chores as their suburban and rural counterparts. This pattern suggests that urban men do not “step up” their involvement in female-typed tasks even though they contribute little in the way of other housework. In contrast, urbanicity rarely predicts women’s time use, implying that women spend considerable time on household chores regardless of where they live.”

These and other observations are published in their upcoming article, “Sex-Typed Chores and the City: Gender, Urbanicity and Housework.” The researchers show that lifestyles differ across urban, suburban and rural areas when it comes to time spent on household chores.

**Why This Research Matters To The Public: Households in America**

One of the most persistent findings in the housework literature is that chores are sex-typed. In other words, in heterosexual married couples, women take primary responsibility for some chores while men take primary responsibility for other chores. Although the exact tasks men and women do vary across couples, most studies consider “female-typed” chores to include cooking, doing dishes, cleaning, laundry, and grocery shopping, and “male-typed” chores to include auto maintenance, making repairs, and outdoor. Previous research acknowledges that female- and male-typed chores are attached to different schedules that dictate people’s time spent on these tasks. Studies show, for example, that female-typed chores are more routine than male-typed chores. Most female-typed chores must be performed daily or weekly, while male-typed chores are more irregular, thus contributing to gender differences in time spent on housework.

Despite this acknowledgement, until this study, virtually no research has considered how *place* is related to time spent on certain tasks. Urbanicity is an important factor because it structures people’s lifestyles and places special constraints on housework.

The article suggests that urban men’s and women’s time use indicates how partners contribute to household chores when there is less structural demand for the types of tasks they typically do. It has been long held that people’s living spaces and lifestyles differ dramatically across urban, suburban and rural areas, which would mean that time spent on household chores also varies. The study finds that urban male and female time use provides insight into how partners contribute to household chores.

The study found that women are more likely to carry the burden of responsibility for household chores than one might think. The study found that women are still held responsible for the lion’s share of household responsibilities.

“We tend to think that men and women in urban areas are more likely to share household responsibilities,” said Dr. Natasha Quadlin, Assistant Professor at Ohio State University. “The research suggests that is not the case and that women are still largely responsible for household chores.”

### **Explaining Why Women Still Do More At Home**

The most likely explanation for this pattern is that urban men resist female-typed housework because it is inherently intertwined with femininity. Authors note that since tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry are considered “women’s work,” men do not spend additional time on these tasks even when they have great incentives to do so. Further, because female-typed chores account for most of partners’ time spent on housework, the researchers found that overall housework time does not significantly differ by place. Even when men are perhaps most willing and able to step up in female-typed chores, these findings suggest they do not.

Given the extent to which men resist female-typed chores, these findings help clarify the mechanisms underlying gender inequality in housework. Research points to many possible reasons women spend more time on chores than men, including the notion that wives generally earn less money than their husbands.

The article notes an alternative perspective—the “doing gender” perspective—resonates with feminist scholars because it characterizes housework as both cultivating and reinforcing models of gender. By doing sex-typed chores, men and women enact socially defined roles associated with masculinity and femininity. This study goes one step further and places a special emphasis on the role of abstention.

“Men, in other words, do gender not just by doing male-typed chores, but also by declining to do female-typed chores even when male-typed chores are structurally constrained,” the study notes.

The article will be published in the February edition of *Gender & Society*.

### **Further information**

*Gender & Society* is a peer-reviewed journal, focused on the study of gender. It is the official journal of Sociologists for Women in Society, and was founded in 1987 as an outlet for feminist social science. Currently, it is a top-ranked journal in both sociology and gender studies. *Gender & Society*, a journal of Sage Publications, publishes less than seven percent of all papers submitted to it. For additional commentary, you can also read the Gender & Society blog and follow the journal on Twitter: @Gend\_Soc.

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