

MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS **RESEARCH SUMMARY**

TOPIC: THE GENDER GAP AND COVID STRESS
REPORT: MB #4822

BACKGROUND: Before the pandemic, it was estimated that in opposite-gendered cohabitating couples, husbands created an extra seven hours of housework for their wives every week and wives actually saved their husbands from one hour of housework weekly. Since 1976, the amount of housework done by women has been declining and the amount of housework done by men has doubled. The average amount of housework done by men varied widely according to their marital status. A study in 2005 that was part of the University of Michigan's Panel Study on Income Dynamics revealed that single women with no children did an average of ten hours of housework whereas married women with no children did an average of 17 hours. The only difference being the presence of a husband. Single men with no children did about eight hours of housework whereas married men with no children did about seven hours of work a week. (Source: https://www.nsf.gov/discoveries/disc_images.jsp?cntn_id=111458)

WORK FROM HOME: In March, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic and many companies and offices decided to shelter in place and work remotely from home. Working from home has added additional stressors of work-life balance and drawing the line between work and family. The balance of chores amongst working opposite-gender couples before the pandemic was already uneven. Now, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation Coronavirus poll, 49 percent of women say their lives have been disrupted "a lot" by the outbreak. Only 40 percent of men reported being affected "a lot." The same poll also reported 81 percent of women stayed home instead of going to work or other activities compared to only 69 percent of men. (Source: <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/is-there-widening-gender-gap-in-coronavirus-stress/>)

NEW NORMAL: A Ball State University study has revealed that dads report doing more household chores. However, mothers still do a majority of the total work. Forty-two percent of fathers report an overall increase in housework and 45 percent reported caring for children. However, mothers reported noticing that their partner was only doing 25 percent more housework and 34 percent more childcare. There was no such disagreement or discrepancy in the amount of work or perceived work that the mother was doing. More than a quarter of parents reported mothers increasing their time spent doing housework and caring for children. Richard Petts, PhD, professor of sociology at Ball State University said, "We still see that women are doing more of the housework and childcare regardless. Women are more likely to take time off work and lose their jobs during the pandemic. And so, it's not just more support from workplaces. It's a reduction in gender discrimination. It's an increase in equality for pay. And it's changing cultural perceptions about who's responsible for housework and childcare, who should be responsible for work outside the home and making sure that we have a more equal perception form for men and women across the board." (Source: <https://www.myjournalcourier.com/insider/article/Study-Dads-pitching-in-more-but-moms-still-do-15349524.php> Richard Petts, PhD, Professor of Sociology, Ball State University)

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If this story or any other Ivanhoe story has impacted your life or prompted you or someone you know to seek or change treatments, please let us know by contacting Marjorie Bekaert Thomas at mthomas@ivanhoe.com