

Closing the Gender Gap at Home:

Job Characteristics and Household Labor

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality in the household continues to lag behind women's advancements in the labor market. While prior research has linked job characteristics to the persistent gender gap in household labor, few studies have considered these factors in combination or examined how their influence has changed over time. Using data from the 2003–2019 American Time Use Survey, this study analyzes four types of household tasks—female-typed housework, male-typed housework, care-based childcare, and interaction-based childcare—across two periods (2003–2010 and 2011–2019). It first assesses how job characteristics, including work hours, earnings, autonomy, irregular schedules, time pressure, and competition, are associated with time spent on household labor. It then evaluates how gender differences in these characteristics contribute to the unequal division of household labor, distinguishing between compositional differences and behavioral responses. Results from OLS regression show that weekly work hours are significantly associated with all types of household labor, while weekly earnings are linked only to female-typed housework. Some job characteristics, such as time pressure and autonomy, have only recently begun to influence household labor. Findings from the Blinder–Oaxaca decomposition indicate that gender differences in job characteristics explain a smaller share of the gender gap than behavioral responses. Among compositional factors, differences in weekly work hours are the most influential, highlighting the need to address long working hours. The behavioral results further suggest that men's responses to work constraints may reflect shifting gender norms.