

Psychological distress associated with division of domestic work

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Women are more likely than men to be responsible for the majority of domestic work in a household, which can lead to higher psychological distress, and new research shows that this correlation is further increased by perceived socioeconomic and gender inequality in the relationship, according to a study published June 13 in the open access journal *PLoS ONE*.

The researchers, led by Lisa Harryson of Umea University in Sweden, used data from the Northern Swedish Cohort, which monitored individuals from a small Swedish town from 1981 until 2007. The results confirmed previous studies showing that women tend to have higher levels of domestic responsibility, which in turn is related to higher [psychological distress](#), and they also showed that the correlation depended on the perceived gender equality in the relationship. Specifically, if the relationship was perceived as equal, the associated with psychological distress was no longer seen. Additionally, the study found that men had higher psychological distress if their socioeconomic position was lower than their partner's.

Dr. Harryson concludes, "both these directions of inequality in domestic work, in combination with experiencing the couple relationship as gender-unequal, is associated with psychological distress."

More information: Harryson L, Strandh M, Hammarström A (2012) Domestic Work and Psychological Distress: What Is the Importance of Relative Socioeconomic Position and Gender Inequality in the Couple Relationship? *PLoS ONE* 7(6): e38484. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0038484](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0038484)

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