

Do Women Face a Glass Ceiling at Home? The Division of Household Labor among Dual-Earner Couples*

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Abstract

In this paper we ask how the division of household labor varies across heterosexual dual-earner couples with different relative wages with a focus on differences between Southern and Western Europe. Using the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions we first show that high income married or cohabiting women do twice as much housework as single women in Southern Europe. Further, their time spent in household production relative to their spouses' time in Southern Europe is the same regardless of their relative wages, while in Western Europe we find positive elasticity of substitution in household production with respect to relative wages. We thus present positive evidence for the presence of a “second-shift” that women face in Southern Europe, which may stem from regional gender norms. Our findings hold after instrumenting for relative wages using the relative wages of similar socio-economic groups in other countries.

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Keywords: household production; division of labor; gender gap; elasticity of substitution

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