

How reductions in paid work affect gender equality in unpaid work: A systematic review and meta-analysis.

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Introduction

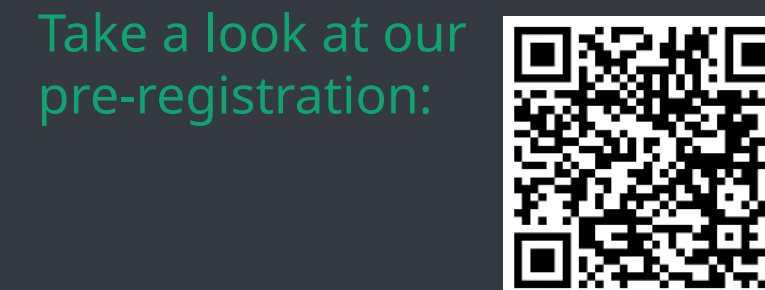
The determinants of how domestic work is allocated among partners are still the object of debate.

- Economic framework:** rational allocation of time → it depends on the time available (left from paid work)
- Gender perspective:** normative and symbolic meanings associated with the gender division of labor → gendered allocation of time to domestic activities, disproportionate to or independent from time/efforts in paid work

What happens when one of the partners loses working hours/job? → Focus on *changes*, rather than *states*.
Existing research on the topic yields mixed results.

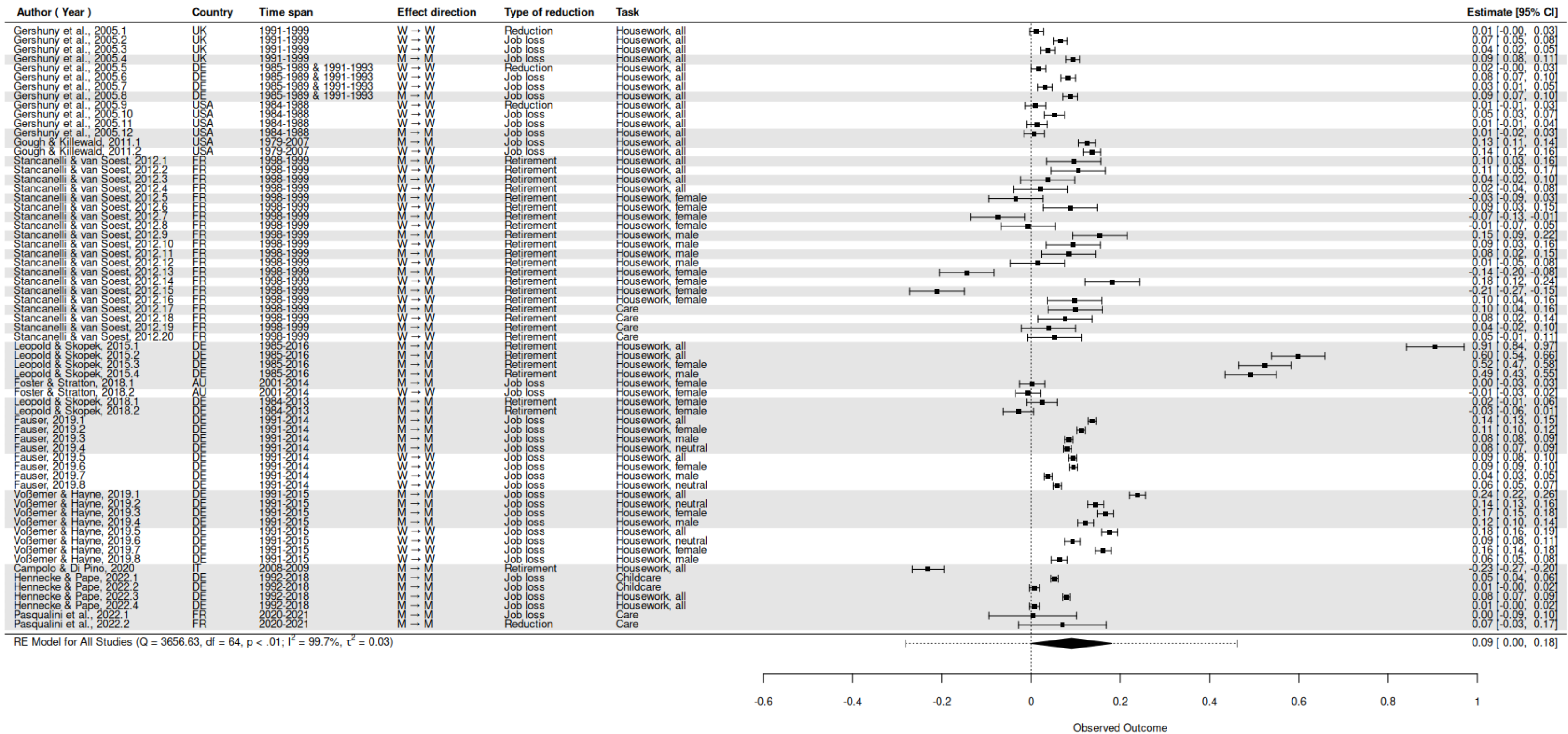
Data & methodology

- Systematic search and study selection**
 - Scopus, WoS, Scholar
 - Main criteria for selection:
 - Causal design
 - Employment reduction (job loss, reduction in working hours, retirement) of at least one member of the couple
 - Dep. variable: unpaid work (total, housework, care, detailed tasks) measured as absolute or relative
- Data collection and study quality assessment**
 - QUIPS tool → generally low risk of misreporting and bias
- Statistical analyses**
 - Standardized mean differences (SMD)
 - Meta-analysis using RE models, clustered std.err. (paper level), REML method



Reductions in paid work lead to a small (0.09 SMD) increase in one's time spent on domestic work → consistent with time availability

Forest plot of the effect of reductions in paid work on the absolute time spent on domestic work



- 65 estimates grouped in 11 papers
- The prediction interval (within which estimates from future research will fall) ranges from -0.3 to 0.45 SMD
- Very high heterogeneity** in effect sizes indicates a distribution of effects, rather than a single effect, of reductions in paid work
- Removing **outliers** does not change the results

Does heterogeneity depend on study characteristics?

Meta-regression of SMDs on study characteristics

	β	SE
Type of decrease in paid work (ref: Job loss)		
Retirement	0.52***	(0.01)
Reduction	-0.05**	(0.02)
Gender direction of the effect (ref: Unpaid work of the man)		
Unpaid work of the woman	-0.02	(0.01)
Type of domestic task (ref: Housework, all tasks)		
Care work	-0.07	(0.04)
Housework (female tasks)	0.02	(0.03)
Housework (male tasks)	-0.02	(0.03)
Housework (neutral tasks)	-0.01	(0.03)
Sample selection (ref: Heterogeneous couples)		
Dual earner couples only	-0.64**	(0.01)
Intercept	-1.89	(5.21)

Estimates from a random-effects model. Other variables included: country and publication year.

- Papers estimating the effect of **retirement** generally find a **larger effect** than those focusing on job loss. Estimates based on reductions in working time show a substantially negligible deviation from estimates based on job loss
- No relevant gender differences
- No relevant differences between domestic tasks
- Estimates on a more selected sample of **dual-earner couples** find **smaller effects** compared to those based on more heterogeneous samples (which also include male-breadwinner households)

Additional analyses

- Reductions in paid work and partner's absolute contribution to domestic work:**
- Small negative change (-0.02 SMD [-0.06, 0.02])
 - Meta reg → retirement < job loss; dual-earner couples > heterogeneous samples
- Reductions in paid work and one's relative contribution to domestic work:**
- Small positive change (0.13 SMD [-0.02, 0.28])
 - Meta reg → retirement > job loss; women's relative domestic contribution after a reduction in their paid work < men's domestic contribution after a reduction in their paid work; dual-earner couples < heterogeneous samples
- Reduction in paid work and partner's relative contribution to domestic work:**
- Small negative change (-0.04 SMD [-0.08, -0.01])
 - Meta reg → retirement > job loss; women's domestic contribution after a reduction in their partner's paid work > men's domestic contribution after a reduction in their partner's paid work; overall housework < all other tasks