

The Political Consequences of the Mental Load*

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Abstract

How do levels of cognitive household labor – the “mental load” involved in anticipating, fulfilling, and monitoring household needs – affect political engagement? The mental load is distinct from the physical tasks of e.g., cooking and cleaning, and thought to be disproportionately undertaken by women. I argue that women have higher mental loads than men, and large mental loads decrease political engagement. To test this argument, I field a descriptive survey on politics and household work to a representative sample of parents in the United States. I find that mothers report being mostly responsible for 72 percent of cognitive household labor, compared to fathers’ 45 percent. High levels of the mental load decrease certain forms of political engagement, including interest in national political issues and discussion with friends and family, especially among mothers. The findings offer new evidence about a gender gap too often hidden, and its consequences for political life.

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Gender gaps in political life are intractable. In the United States, women report less interest in politics, are less likely to participate in political discussions, are less likely to participate in public forms of political actions, and report less political ambition than their male counterparts (Burns, Schlozman & Verba 2002; Lawless & Fox 2010; Preece 2016). Studies from Africa to Asia, Europe, and Latin America, report similar findings (Coffé & Bolzendahl 2010; Desposato & Norrander 2009; Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer 2012; Prillaman 2023). Recently, scholars have begun rethinking the role of gender in the household as a key determinant of political activity (Bernhard, Shames & Teele 2021; Iversen & Rosenbluth 2010; Naurin, Stolle & Markstedt 2022). To date, however, these studies have yet to consider one potential source of these political inequalities that is too often hidden: the “mental load”.

The mental load is the cognitive labor involved in anticipating, fulfilling, and monitoring household needs. It includes remembering schedules and deadlines, arranging goods and services to support the household, reminding others of what needs to be done, household financial management, finding child care solutions, and juggling priorities and time conflicts (Robertson et al. 2019). The mental load can often involve not only the cognitive labor of managing these tasks, but the emotional labor of worrying about completing them (Dean, Churchill & Ruppanner 2022). This concept gained traction as a cultural touch point with the publication of the French feminist cartoonist Emma’s comic about the issue in 2017,¹ and recently path-breaking literature from sociology uses in-depth interviews to define the phenomenon conceptually (Daminger 2019). So far, few studies attempt to measure the mental load quantitatively, and no studies investigate the potential political consequences of this hidden source of gender inequality. This matters because we might be underestimating gender gaps in household labor and their implications for equality in public life.

As a first step, I field a descriptive survey to a representative sample of 3,000 parents

¹“You Should’ve Asked,” by Emma, 20 May 2017.

in the United States to shed light on the following research questions. First, how do levels of the mental load differ across gender? Second, how does the mental load affect levels of political engagement among mothers and fathers? The United States, with its relatively high level of women’s employment combined with scant federal support for parental leave and child care, offers an extreme case. I expect the gender gap in the mental load to be large. The potential ramifications of this hidden gender gap are extensive. Women have made significant progress in education and the labor force within a relatively short span of time. Yet, if women but not men remain the ones mainly responsible for managing household labor, it stands to follow that gender gaps in public life outside the household are likely to persist. I argue that cognitive household labor is mentally taxing and can “crowd out” space for political interests and discussion.

I report evidence of a large gender gap in cognitive household labor among parents. Mothers report being mostly responsible for 72 percent of cognitive household labor according to my task-based measure, while fathers report responsibility for 45 percent. This gender gap of 27 percentage points is larger than the gender gap estimated in share of physical household labor, and it has important implications for politics. As expected, I find that high levels of the mental load are linked to decreases in certain forms of political engagement among parents, such as interest in national political issues and political discussion with friends and family. This is especially true for mothers, who after all take on the majority of mental load work. At the same time, the mental load can have positive impacts as well. Among mothers, for example, it is positively linked to interest in gun control – an issue with clear links to family care given the US epidemic of school shootings. And at low levels, I find that the mental load is often positively linked to political engagement among both mothers and fathers. This suggests that taking some responsibility for household and care tasks might build certain skills or efficacy relevant to political life, but such cognitive labor has diminishing returns and eventually leads to overload. Overall, the results highlight the

enduring relevance of the household division of labor to equality in political life and the need to move beyond time-based measures in order to measure such unpaid labor accurately. They point to increasing men's participation in not just physical but also cognitive household labor as an essential part of closing gender gaps in political engagement.

Gender and the Mental Load

Women continue to do the bulk of household labor across nearly every context in the world. According to data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), globally women spend between two and ten times more time on unpaid care work than men. These gender gaps narrow with women's education and employment, relative income in the household, and when the gender wage gap is relatively smaller (Ferrant, Pesando & Nowacka 2014; Fuwa 2004; Iversen & Rosenbluth 2010). According to household bargaining theories, when women have greater outside options, they have more negotiating power at home, and men begin to take on some of the physical household work (Iversen & Rosenbluth 2010).

The same dynamics might not hold for gender gaps in cognitive household labor. This is because cognitive labor is harder to outsource than physical household labor, and it does not require women's physical presence in the home. Instead, it can always be in the back of one's mind. Even very affluent families with full-time child care, cleaning and other household help require someone to manage all of the services and the day-to-day schedules of family members – most often, the mother (Sherman 2017).

In addition, the rise of intensive mothering has affected middle and upper class women in particular (Hays 1996). This dominant paradigm in Western democracies suggests that 'good' mothers ought to be highly involved in all aspects of their children's lives, but

the same social pressures are not placed on fathers (Damaske 2013). Women but not men are socialized to be the ones ultimately responsible for family life – and they are likely to be judged by their peers if they do not adhere to these norms (Thébaud, Kornrich & Ruppanner 2021). According to some feminist theorists, even in societies where women have achieved the highest levels of legal and economic equality, men’s exploitation of women’s caring capacity is fundamental to the persistence of patriarchy (Jónasdóttir 1993). Jonasdottir’s claim is that men’s position of social and political control generally allows men to expect care and takes away women’s full power of agency to give it.

Men, conversely, face different social pressures. The role of fatherhood is shifting quickly in recent times; many fathers now want to be more involved in their children’s lives (for a recent overview, see Grau Grau, las Heras Maestro & Riley Bowles 2022). Yet men still face intense pressure to be ‘ideal workers’ and breadwinners, and often feel unable to take up policies such as flexible working or parental leave (when it is offered) due to risks of stigmatization (Tanquerel & Grau-Grau 2020). One study highlights that men and women have different patterns of perception about domestic tasks, with women seeing more possibilities for action (“affordances”) related to their households than men (e.g., women might see a floor and think it needs sweeping, but this might not occur to men) (McClelland & Sliwa 2022). These affordances take up more of women’s attention and cognitive space. For all these reasons, gender gaps in the mental load are likely to be especially sticky.

The main expectations about the gender gap in the mental load are thus that the gender gap is large – women having on average higher “mental loads” than men – and that this gap persists across many socio-economic characteristics, including income or education. I also expect the gender gap in cognitive labor to be larger than the gender gap in physical household labor, for the reasons previously outlined but also because of the invisible nature of such work. As Daminger (2019) explains, cognitive labor is “diffuse, disjointed, and often

invisible even to the doer” (p. 9). This could make it more difficult to identify and reallocate within households than physical labor, even if partners want to.

The Mental Load and Political Engagement

We might expect that gender-based inequalities in the division of household labor leave women with less time and fewer opportunities to engage with politics, among other activities. Yet, few existing studies link household labor to political interest or participation directly. Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (1997; 2002) find no link between the percentage of housework done and political activity for men or women; however, having more leisure time is associated with greater participation for men. Other studies show that becoming a parent and the presence of young children affect mothers and fathers in different ways. Analysis of political engagement in 27 European countries finds that gender differences in political interest are largest among couples with children (Quaranta & Dotti Sani 2018). Having a child is associated with less voting frequency for women but not men (Voorpostel & Coffé 2012). Even becoming pregnant leads to significant declines in women’s levels of political participation, but this is not true for their partners, expectant fathers (Naurin, Stolle & Markstedt 2022).

The dampening effect of parenthood for women in particular is also seen at higher levels of political participation, like running for office. For example, mothers with bread-winning responsibility, who despite this still tend to undertake more housework than their partners, are especially unlikely to run for office (Bernhard, Shames & Teele 2021). Women are also less likely to run for office when it would entail longer commuting time, further constraining the time they have available for household and care responsibilities (Silbermann et al. 2015). This makes sense; while the majority of people believe women are better at mul-

titasking (Szameitat et al. 2015), research shows that there is no female advantage. Everyone is bad at multi-tasking (Hirnstain, Larøi & Laloyaux 2019). At the same time, voters prefer women candidates with children to women candidates without children; women candidates thus face a double bind (Teele, Kalla & Rosenbluth 2018). In summary, household inequality can bleed into political inequality – but so far the ways in which the gendered division of household labor impacts political engagement, especially early forms such as taking an interest in politics, have yet to be fully understood.

In the current study, I concentrate on how cognitive household labor might condition gender gaps in political interest and discussion. Like cognitive household labor, political interest is more of a mental state than a physical act. If the mental load affects individuals' engagement with political life, I would expect to observe it first in feelings about wanting to learn about and understand politics. Taking an interest in politics is an important first step that sets the stage for further political engagement and participation. For example, in their study of gender differences in political engagement, Verba, Burns, and Schlozman find that, “differences in political knowledge, efficacy, and interest play a decisive role in explaining the small disparity between women and men in political participation” (Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1997, 1059).

Previous studies investigating the determinants of political interest find consistent gender gaps (men being more interested in politics than women) in samples from the U.S. and most European countries (Bennett & Bennett 1989; Burns, Schlozman & Verba 2002; Fraile & Gomez 2017; Fraile & Sánchez-Vítores 2020; Hayes & Bean 1993; Norris, Lovenduski & Campbell 2004; Preece 2016; Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1997; Wolak 2020). However, these gender gaps often do not persist when considering interest in local political issues, as opposed to national or international issues (Campbell & Winters 2008; Coffé 2013; Hayes & Bean 1993). This might be because women's greater involvement in household tasks and

care work gives them more exposure to certain kinds of local politics, like schools and local health issues. Similarly, when asked about specific political issues, women are more likely to bring up social issues and gender-related concerns (e.g., gender pay gap, gender-based violence) compared to men; yet, men and women do not associate many of these issues with *general* political interest (Ferrín et al. 2020). Studies show that women report higher levels of political interest and knowledge when asked about issues that are particularly relevant to women’s lives, such as abortion (Kraft & Dolan 2023). For this reason, some scholars recommend changing the way that surveys ask about political interest, including a range of specific political issues and issues relevant to women’s lives (Ferrín et al. 2020; Kraft & Dolan 2023; Tormos & Verge 2022).

While previous studies have perceived household constraints mainly in terms of time spent in physical household labor, I propose that cognitive household labor also matters to political engagement. My main argument is that the mental load “crowds out” mental space for other activities, including but not limited to engaging with political life. The notion of “bounded rationality” holds that individuals have only limited (bounded) knowledge and computational capacity, and therefore must be selective in searching for information (Simon 1956). Similarly, cognitive load theory suggests that humans have limited working memory, and so there are constraints on how much new information individuals can register and use in conscious activities (Miller 1956; Plass, Moreno & Brünken 2010). With more of women’s head space taken up by household management, it could be more difficult, and for some less rewarding, to follow political issues that are not perceived to be related to women’s substantive interests, which are informed by their gendered experiences.

I also consider how the mental load might impact the likelihood of being in social groups where politics is discussed. As with political interest, studies find significant gender gaps in the frequency of political discussion across a range of democracies around the

world (Desposato & Norrander 2009; Kittilson & Schwindt-Bayer 2012; Miller, Wilford & Donoghue 1999; Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1997). Studies also indicate that women tend to be more segregated in their networks, with men more likely to discuss politics with people outside the family (Huckfeldt & Sprague 1995; Prillaman 2023). Some forms of household mental labor likely encourage such social relationships – most obviously the work involved in maintaining social ties. Other forms of household mental labor probably deter social incentives to engage with politics. For example, mental work related to child care and cleaning is non-discretionary, repetitive, and mentally taxing (Lennon & Rosenfield 1994). This alone – exhaustion and burnout related to particularly taxing forms of mental work – could depress interest in politics. In addition, these forms of mental work might make it harder to coordinate leisure with others, particularly forms of leisure unrelated to care – for instance, getting together with current or former work colleagues.

Because cognitive household labor is a relatively new concept, I find little previous evidence directly related to how it might affect men’s and women’s levels of political engagement. However, in focus groups preceding the 2005 British general election, Campbell and Winters (2008) report that several women mentioned “the responsibility of child-rearing” as a reason why they do not keep up with politics, whereas no men mentioned this issue (p. 55). Interestingly, these participants specifically brought up mental work related to care. One said, “I think after two kids my brain kind of goes funny. I swear you know I’ve lost half of it,” and another said, “I felt that when I had children and they were young I just really had no time to think about anything else” (p. 71). These remarks are consistent with the idea that cognitive overload can prevent some individuals from taking an interest in politics, and they also highlight the role of mental load related to caring for children in particular.

In summary, my main expectations in the current study of parents are that mothers will have larger mental loads than fathers, and that those with large mental loads are less

likely to express interest in politics – especially political issues that are not directly connected to the household and family care – and less likely to discuss politics frequently.

An Original Survey on Politics and Household Work

In order to understand the role of the mental load in politics, the first step is measuring it. No existing research measures the mental load quantitatively. This type of labor is not captured well by time-use studies which ask respondents to indicate how much time in minutes they spend on different tasks in the day, because the planning and monitoring that goes into managing a household are often secondary or tertiary activities (e.g., adding to the grocery list while at work). To make progress on this, I field an original survey to a representative sample of parents of children aged 18 and younger the United States. While the mental load endures throughout the life course (Dean, Churchill & Ruppanner 2022), this labor naturally compounds when there are dependent children to be cared for. In addition, gender gaps in pay and promotion intensify on the birth of a child (Goldin 2021; Kleven et al. 2019), suggesting that it is a critical life stage for understanding gender-based inequalities.

The survey was fielded in February and March of 2023 via the survey firm Dynata (formerly SSI). The sample of 3,000 respondents was selected to mirror the US population of parents with respect to age, race/ethnicity, gender, and education. Unlike previous work which tends to focus only on different-sex couples, the sample includes men and women from same- and different-sex couples, as well as single parents. It thus provides data that is generalizable to the diverse population of US parents.² Tables A1 and A2 in the Supplemental Material provide an overview of the representativeness of the sample and summary statistics. The survey starts by asking respondents a series of questions about political engagement and

²Additional data collection and analysis would be required to conduct intersectional analysis (not the goal of this initial study).

participation. These include questions about different types of political interest and political discussion. I ask the political questions first because questions about physical or cognitive household labor might prime gender and parenthood status, affecting responses to political questions in an undesirable way (Klar 2013). Conversely, I have little reason to suspect that answers to questions about physical and mental household labor will change based on respondents first seeing questions about political engagement.

After the questions about political engagement, I introduce the idea that household work can have physical and mental aspects: “People say that running a household typically involves both physical and mental types of work. For this set of questions we want you to think about the **physical** work involved in managing your household and caring for children, not the mental aspect.” I then ask respondents to estimate the hours they personally spend doing both 1) care work and 2) other types of household labor (cooking, cleaning, etc) on a typical weekday and weekend day.³ Respondents are likely to be more familiar with the idea of physical household labor than mental household labor, so I ask the physical labor questions first. I use these responses to calculate the estimated hours of physical household labor per week for each individual. These questions allow me to assess how gender differences in household physical labor compare to those in cognitive household labor. Additionally, after all the physical household labor questions I ask respondents to estimate the share of physical household labor that they personally do within their household, on a scale of 0 (none of it) to 100 (all of it).

Next I instruct respondents, “Now think about the **mental** work involved in managing your household and caring for children, not the physical aspect.” To measure the mental load, I use a strategy that builds on previous qualitative research describing the cycle of cog-

³The question text reads: “On average, how many hours a week do you spend looking after family members (e.g. children, elderly, ill or disabled family members)?” and, “On average, how many hours a week do you personally spend on household work (such as cooking, cleaning, and yard work), not including childcare and leisure time activities?”

nitive labor in the household: anticipating needs, identifying options and making decisions, and monitoring progress (Daminger 2019).⁴ The questionnaire asks a series of task-oriented questions that correspond with each of these three components, for seven different types of cognitive household labor: scheduling, child care, social relationships, cleaning, food, finances, and home maintenance (21 items in total).⁵ These categories are not exhaustive, but represent the majority of the nine cognitive labor domains identified as applying to most couples in previous interview-based research (Daminger 2019).⁶ Respondents are asked, “In your family, who typically handles” each task, with a range of options given: “Mostly me”, “Mostly my partner”, “Partner and I share equally”, “Someone else (Includes friends and family)”, and “NA”. For example, the questions related to scheduling ask respondents who in their household typically handles the following: Remembering to schedule appointments, such as dentist appointments (*anticipating*); Planning a family event, like a birthday party (*identifying options and making decisions*); and Keeping track of the family calendar, such as kids’ medical appointments (*monitoring*).⁷

I then construct a composite measure of the mental load for each person, which can be broken down by category. I sum the total number of items that an individual claims is done by “Mostly me” and divide this number by the number of items within each category and overall (removing those items that respondents say are not applicable from the denominator).⁸ The advantage of using the ‘mostly me’ response to operationalize the mental load, without including work reported as shared, is that it provides a straightforward measure of

⁴While Daminger (2019) identifies four main components of cognitive household labor (where identifying options and making decisions are separate components), I collapse these to three for the sake of survey length.

⁵I randomly vary the order of the seven types of cognitive household labor.

⁶I leave out “shopping/purchasing” and “travel/leisure” from Daminger’s (2019) domains.

⁷See Supplemental Material section A for the full list of mental task survey items.

⁸The average number of “not applicable” responses among the 21 items was 0.7, suggesting that the vast majority of items were relevant to most respondents.

(perceived) individual responsibility for different types of cognitive labor. Cronbach’s Alpha of the scale items is 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency.

From this I derive the average self-reported mental load done by fathers and mothers, and the gender gap. A similar approach has been found to be effective at measuring issue preferences (Ansolabehere, Rodden & Snyder 2008). The basic idea is that multiple questions – here of different aspects of the mental load, which mirror accounts of the most relevant categories from qualitative studies – reduce measurement error. This is the main methodological contribution of the study. In addition, after all the cognitive labor task questions I ask respondents to estimate their share of the mental load (“Considering all the mental work to take care of your household, about how much of this work is done by you as opposed to someone else?”). I use this estimate as a validation check on my task-based measure of the mental load.

Describing the Mental Load among U.S. Parents

My expectation is that the mental load is highly gendered, with women socialized to take on much more of the cognitive labor necessary to manage their households than men. I begin by providing evidence to support this contention. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the mental load (share of relevant cognitive household labor tasks reported to be done by “mostly me”) among fathers and mothers. In line with Hypothesis 1, mothers report primary responsibility for 72 percent of the mental load on average, while fathers say that they are mostly responsible for 45 percent of it (a gender gap of 27 percentage points). A T-test shows that this gender difference is statistically significant. As the figure shows, the distribution of mental load is skewed differently for fathers and mothers: for fathers, the median mental load (38%) is lower than the mean, while for mothers the median mental

load (76%) is higher than the mean.

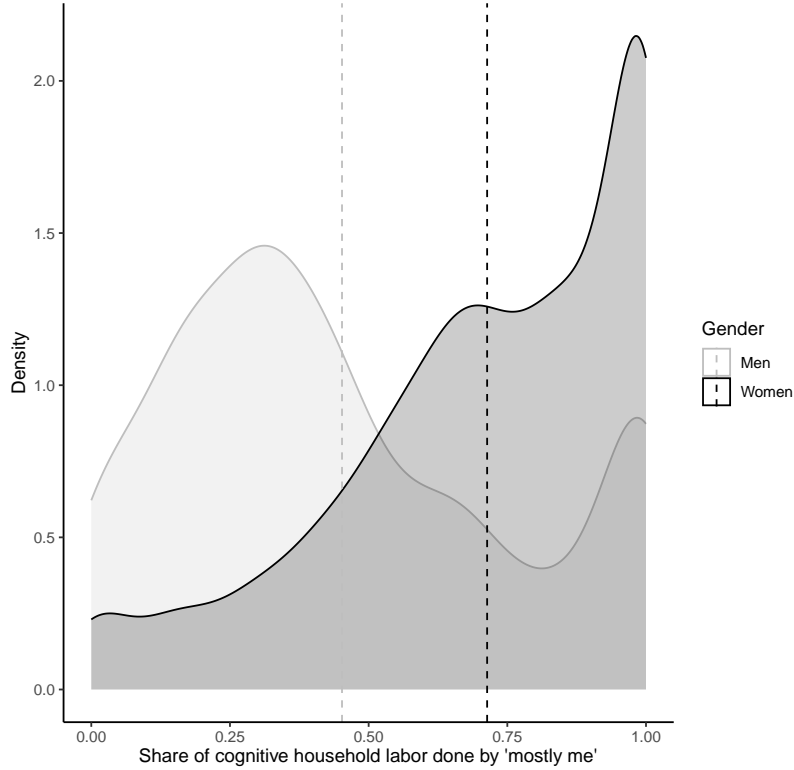


Figure 1: Gender differences in mental household labor

Notes: Vertical lines show means for fathers and mothers.

Next, I provide a validation check on the main variable I use to measure the mental load. Figure 2 shows that the primary, item-based value of the mental load (on the x-axis) is strongly correlated with respondents' own assessments of the share of cognitive household labor they are personally responsible for in their household (on the y-axis). This is true for both mothers and fathers, with correlation coefficients very similar among the sub-samples. Note that in the self-reported estimates, both fathers and mothers say that they do a greater share of the mental load than I find using the item-based measure, and this difference is larger for men. The average self-estimate of household mental load among fathers is 61% (16 percentage points higher than the item-based mean of 45%), compared to mothers' 78% (6 percentage points higher than the item-based mean of 72%). The item-based measure has

the advantage of asking respondents about specific tasks, rather than relying on respondents to remember all of the mental work they do (which could increase over-reporting). Because of this, I rely on the item-based data for the remainder of the study.

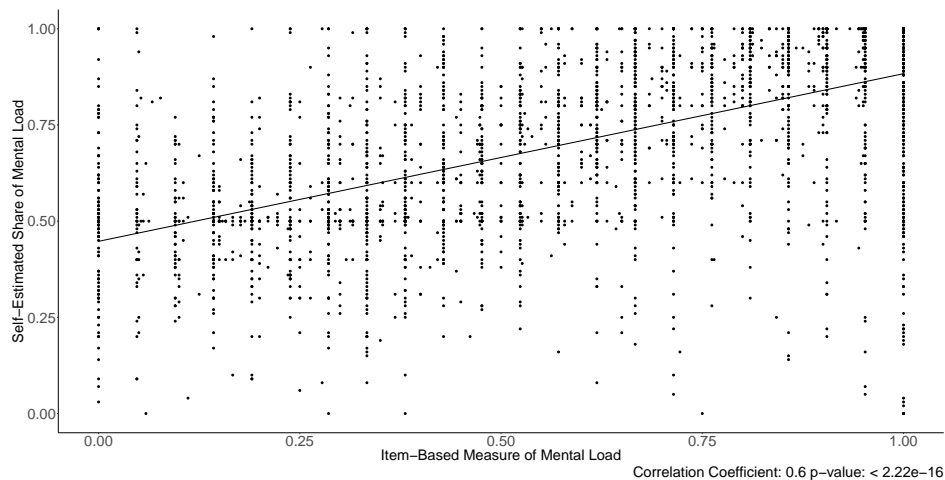


Figure 2: Validation Check on Mental Load Measurement

How do gender gaps in cognitive household labor compare to gender gaps in physical household labor? On average, mothers report spending 71 hours per week doing physical household labor (including both care and other household work), compared to fathers' 46 hours. Translated into the percent of hours per week, mothers spend 42% of time doing such work compared to fathers' 25%, a gender gap of 17 percentage points. Considering self-reported share of physical household labor in the household, rather than time spent, mothers report doing 75% of physical household labor compared to fathers' 62%, a gender gap of 13 percentage points. While both gender gaps are thus sizable and statistically significant, in line with expectations they are smaller than the 27-percentage-point gender gap I report for cognitive household labor.⁹ The gender gap in mental load work appears even larger than gender gaps in physical household labor.

⁹Welch Two Sample t-tests find that the gender differences measured in both the time-based and self-reported relative household estimates of physical household labor are statistically significant.

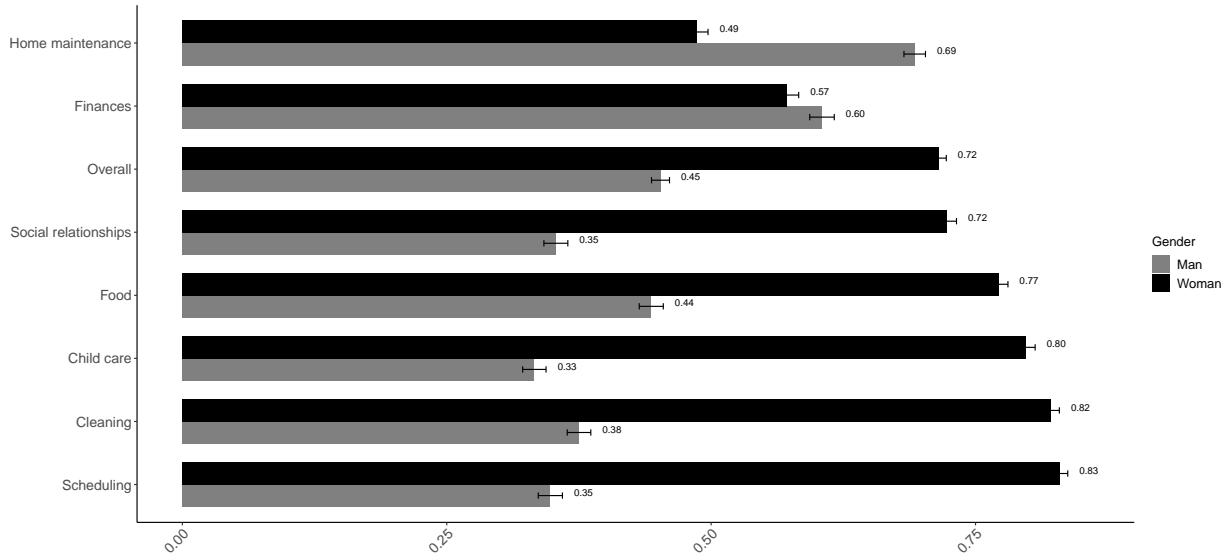


Figure 3: Reported Responsibility for Cognitive Household Labor Tasks by Gender

Notes: Mean share of mothers and fathers reporting that cognitive household labor tasks are done by 'mostly me' as opposed to someone else. Standard errors shown. Data include 3000 respondents.

Figure 3 maps mothers' and fathers' responsibility for the mental load across different types of cognitive tasks. The figure shows that while mothers report doing the majority of most tasks, gender differences are especially pronounced for mental work related to scheduling, cleaning, and child care. Examples include planning a family event (*scheduling*), keeping track of when sheets and towels need to be washed (*cleaning*), and noticing when children's nails need to be cut (*child care*). Mothers report that they are the ones mostly responsible for 83 percent, 82 percent, and 80 percent of these tasks, respectively. Conversely, fathers report that they are the ones mostly responsible for mental work related to home maintenance (mostly responsible for 69 percent of this work). The questions here relate to noticing when an item needs repair, booking a repair professional like a plumber or mechanic, and remembering when items like a boiler or car need servicing. Mental work related to finances (including deciding how to allocate money and keeping track of household expenses) is the most gender-balanced, although fathers report higher levels of responsibility compared to mothers. See Section B of the Supplemental Material for the distribution of

cognitive household labor across the full range of answer responses within each category, by gender.

Determinants of the Mental Load among U.S. Parents

In order to examine how the mental load relates to political engagement for mothers and fathers, an important first step is understanding “selection” into the mental load. My argument contends that the factors shown to narrow gender gaps in physical household labor – namely, women’s education, employment, and relative income in the household (Ferrant, Pessando & Nowacka 2014; Fuwa 2004; Iversen & Rosenbluth 2010) – will *not* decrease women’s relative cognitive household labor in the same way. This is because such work is diffuse in its nature, going on all the time rather than only when physically at home, and harder to outsource. I provide evidence in line with this theory in Table 1, which reports Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions of the relative share of cognitive and physical household labor on a battery of independent variables, separately for fathers and mothers.

These regressions find that the most important determinant of the relative share of cognitive household labor for both fathers and mothers is having a partner that lives in the same household, which reduces the share of the mental load by 37 percentage points for fathers and 18 percentage points for mothers. Among mothers, the next most important determinant is age, with mothers between 35 and 55 years of age taking on significantly more mental load than younger or older mothers. In line with studies finding a more equal division of household labor within same-sex couples (e.g., Bauer 2016; Doan & Quadlin 2019), lesbian or bisexual mothers take on less primary responsibility for the mental load compared to heterosexual mothers. Ethnicity also matters, in different ways for fathers and mothers. Notably, none of the important factors linked to women’s household bargaining power in previous studies reduce mothers’ mental load: education, employment, level personal income

(reference category: no income / not employed), and relative income in the household are all not significant determinants of the share of mothers' mental loads. These null findings contrast with determinants of the share of physical household labor among mothers, where column 3 of Table 1 shows that income and relative income in the household indeed reduces the share of labor. Among fathers, having very young children is linked to lower levels of mental load compared to having older children, while voting Democrat in the last election is linked to taking on more of the mental load. I thus include having a partner that lives in the same household, age, ethnic identity, age of youngest child, sexual orientation, and voting Democrat in subsequent models of political engagement.

Table 1: Determinants of Cognitive and Physical Household Labor among Mothers and Fathers

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	% Cognitive Household Labor		% Physical Household Labor	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Higher education	0.001 (0.016)	0.032 (0.019)	-0.004 (0.014)	0.001 (0.016)
Low income	0.031 (0.016)	-0.054 (0.029)	-0.014 (0.014)	-0.008 (0.024)
Medium income	0.009 (0.018)	-0.036 (0.027)	-0.033* (0.016)	-0.015 (0.023)
High income	-0.009 (0.025)	-0.002 (0.028)	-0.067** (0.022)	0.006 (0.024)
Relative HH income (earns more)	-0.011 (0.022)	0.022 (0.017)	-0.044* (0.019)	-0.022 (0.015)
Black	-0.034 (0.020)	-0.075** (0.027)	-0.022 (0.017)	-0.036 (0.023)
Asian	-0.077*** (0.023)	0.008 (0.035)	-0.003 (0.020)	-0.011 (0.030)
Mixed / Other race	0.016 (0.031)	-0.052 (0.045)	0.046 (0.027)	-0.056 (0.039)
Age 25–34	0.060 (0.033)	-0.013 (0.081)	0.027 (0.028)	0.021 (0.069)

Age 35–44	0.099** (0.034)	-0.052 (0.081)	0.055 (0.030)	0.017 (0.069)
Age 45–54	0.107** (0.036)	-0.127 (0.082)	0.072* (0.032)	-0.048 (0.070)
Age 55+	0.088* (0.043)	-0.092 (0.086)	0.008 (0.037)	-0.047 (0.073)
Partner	-0.178*** (0.016)	-0.375*** (0.024)	-0.036** (0.014)	-0.171*** (0.020)
Youngest child 4 - 5	-0.016 (0.021)	-0.035 (0.024)	-0.005 (0.018)	-0.006 (0.020)
Youngest child 2 - 3	-0.039 (0.021)	-0.078** (0.025)	0.022 (0.018)	-0.031 (0.021)
Youngest child 0 - 1	0.001 (0.021)	-0.119*** (0.028)	0.014 (0.019)	-0.012 (0.024)
Number of children	0.011 (0.007)	0.001 (0.009)	0.009 (0.006)	-0.003 (0.008)
Democrat	0.006 (0.014)	0.056*** (0.017)	0.006 (0.013)	0.016 (0.014)
Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual	-0.058* (0.024)	0.017 (0.037)	-0.023 (0.021)	0.058 (0.032)
Constant	0.757*** (0.039)	0.833*** (0.087)	0.734*** (0.034)	0.792*** (0.074)
Observations	1,606	1,279	1,612	1,284
R ²	0.119	0.214	0.033	0.096
Adjusted R ²	0.108	0.202	0.022	0.083

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The Mental Load and Political Engagement: Empirical Strategy and Results

So far, I have established that gender gaps in the mental load among parents are large, and they are not explained by the same factors which reduce gender gaps in physical household labor. How does this matter for mothers' and fathers' participation in political life? To describe and compare average gender gaps in political life, I estimate OLS regressions sep-

arately for different types of political engagement. Respondents are asked to indicate their level of political interest in different issues (from not at all interested to very interested) and the frequency of their political discussion with friends or family, in the local community, and at the workplace (from never to daily). Following the recommendations of gender and politics scholars (Ferrín et al. 2020; Kraft & Dolan 2023; Tormos & Verge 2022), I include questions about interest in specific political issues likely to affect women, along with questions about general interest in politics.¹⁰ For ease of interpretation, I rescale these variables to range between 0 and 1, where higher values refer to greater interest and frequency of discussion. To measure baseline gender gaps in political engagement, I deliberately do not control for other covariates such as employment, education, or income because these can all be considered “post-treatment,” occurring after gender identity is “assigned” (Sen & Wasow 2016).

Figure 4 presents the gender differences in mean engagement, based on bivariate OLS regressions (see Table C1 in Supplemental Material). It shows that mothers tend to have less interest in politics than fathers, although this is not true for some specific political issues. Mothers report less interest in local, national, and international political issues, and inflation / prices compared to fathers, but more interest in abortion. No significant gender difference is reported for interest in gun control. These results are consistent with previous research which finds that gender gaps narrow when respondents are asked about specific types of political issues, and issues related to women’s life experiences (Dolan 2011; Kraft & Dolan 2023; Stolle & Gidengil 2010; Tormos & Verge 2022). Moving to political discussion, mothers report that they discuss politics less frequently than fathers in all settings, with the gender gap increasing in the public sphere (in neighborhood or local community, in the

¹⁰The full text of survey questions can be found in the Supplemental Material, section A. Note that analysis of frequency of discussion in the workplace always includes only those respondents who report being employed.

workplace) compared to the private sphere (with friends or family).

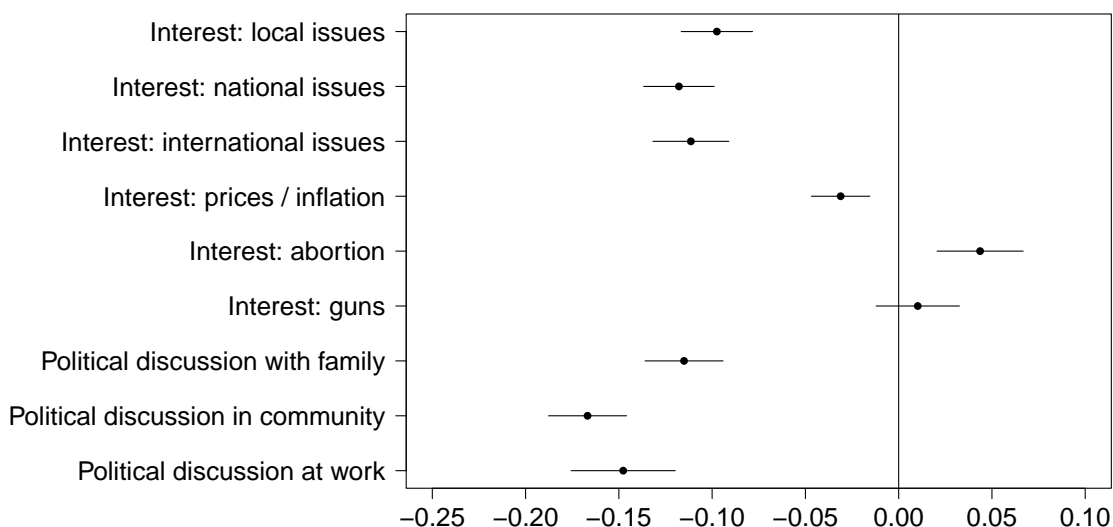


Figure 4: Impact of Gender (Woman) on Political Engagement Among U.S. Parents

Notes: Coefficients from OLS Analysis with 95% CIs. N = 3000.

How does the mental load relate to gender differences in political interest? My main expectation is that high levels of cognitive labor – typical for mothers but not fathers – reduce political engagement. To test this argument, I start by presenting scatterplots of the raw data showing the relationship between political engagement on the y-axis and mental load on the x-axis, by gender (Figure 5). Figure 5 reveals interesting patterns. First, as expected fathers typically express higher political interest and report more political discussion than mothers, although this gender gap is often smaller at low levels of relative mental load share. Second, the figures show that the relationship between share of the mental load and political engagement is typically curvilinear and concave (upside-down U-shaped). At low levels of the mental load, the figures show a positive relationship between mental load and political engagement, while at higher levels of the mental load the relationship is typically, as expected by my crowding-out theory, negative.

The level at which the relationship between the mental load and political engage-

ment shifts from positive to negative is often different for mothers and fathers, and there are also differences observed across the specific types of political engagement measured. Notably, the frequently concave relationship between mental load and political engagement is reversed (U-shaped) among mothers for frequency of political discussion in the neighborhood and local community. That is, mothers report lower political discussion in the community as their mental load increases, but at high levels of the mental load the pattern reverses and a positive relationship is shown (mothers reporting more frequent political discussions). Overall, the patterns here suggest that extreme – both high and low levels – of the mental load are associated with relatively less political engagement for mothers and fathers.

Explaining political engagement: Multivariate analysis

Given the significantly different distributions of mental load observed for fathers versus mothers in Figure 1, I continue to split the sample by gender in subsequent multivariate analyses. This approach also allows for the possibility that the determinants of political engagement, including the mental load, might matter differently for mothers and fathers and is often used by scholars of gender and politics for this reason (e.g., Burns, Schlozman & Verba 2002; Coffé & Bolzendahl 2010; Quaranta & Dotti Sani 2018). I estimate a series of OLS models regressing political engagement on share of the mental load, among mothers and fathers. To account for the curvilinear form of the relationship often shown in Figure 5, I include a quadratic transformation of the mental load variable for the majority of specifications.¹¹ This is the main explanatory variable.

My theoretical argument makes the case for a causal relationship between the men-

¹¹I further confirm that the quadratic term improves model fit by comparing the AIC information criterion in models with and without this transformation. This is true for each dependent variable shown in Figure 6 except for interest in gun control, interest in abortion, and frequency of political discussion at work, among mothers, and interest in abortion, among fathers. For these four specifications, no quadratic transformation is included (see Tables C2 and C3 in Supplemental Material).

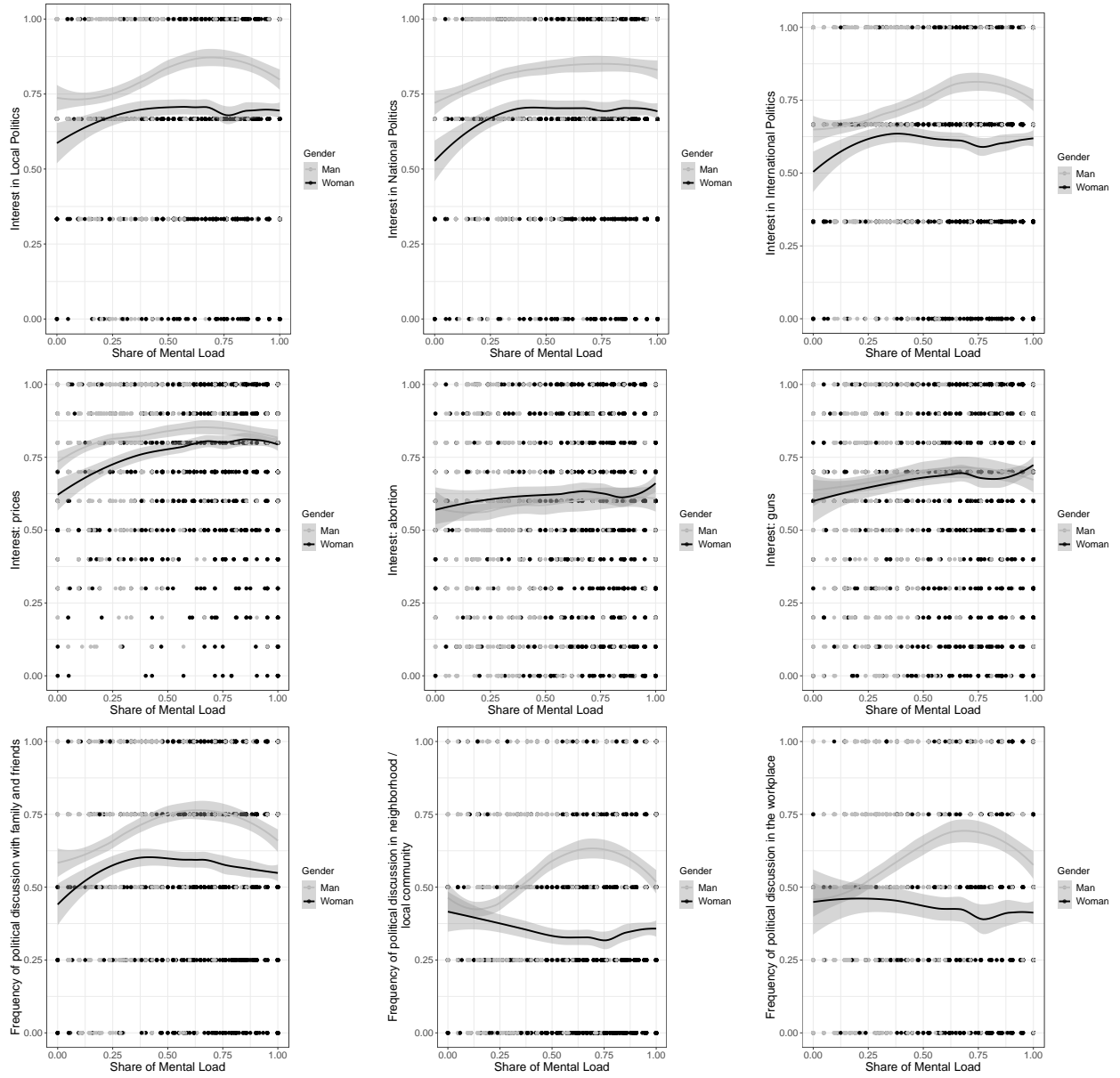


Figure 5: Scatterplots of Political Engagement and the Mental Load, by Gender

tal load and political engagement which is very difficult to prove with observational data. While I cannot fully resolve this problem – and the analysis here should be interpreted as descriptive rather than causal – I carefully identify and control for potential confounding variables which could affect both the probability of having a high mental load and political engagement. These include significant determinants of the relative share of mental load among mothers and fathers, identified in Table 1: having a partner that lives in the same household, age, ethnic identity, having a young child, sexual orientation, and voting Democrat. I also control for a battery of characteristics that previous studies suggest could impact political interest and discussion: the number of children in a household, employment, income, and higher education (Bennett & Bennett 1989; Coffé 2013; Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1997). Finally, I control for the self-reported share of physical household labor the individual does.¹²

In order to translate the results into meaningful quantities of interest (King, Tomz & Wittenberg 2000), I calculate the predicted values of the dependent variable – different types of political engagement – for mothers across different relative shares of the mental load. The predicted values plots shown in Figures 6 (mothers) and 7 (fathers) are calculated from OLS regression specifications that include all covariates listed above (see Table C2 in Supplemental Material). First, in the line with the curvilinear trends observed in the raw data, Figure 6 suggests that at low levels of the mental load it has a positive influence on several types of mothers’ political engagement. For example, the link between the mental load and an interest in national politics is positive and significant up until the share of the mental load reaches 54%.¹³ Given the skewed distribution of mental load among mothers

¹²As with cognitive household labor, the relationship between physical household labor and political engagement is often curvilinear, particularly for mothers. Therefore, I compare AIC information criterion in models with and without a quadratic transformation of physical household labor. In most specifications for mothers, model fit is improved on inclusion, while this is not the case for fathers (see Supplemental Material section C for details).

¹³Thresholds are calculated from average marginal effects and associated confidence intervals at specified

(the median value is 76%), this finding is relevant for 24% of mothers who report such low levels in my data. Similar positive and significant findings are found for low levels of the mental load and interest in prices / inflation (up until 61% of mental load) and frequency of political discussion with family and friends (until 40% of mental load). This is consistent with the idea that, initially, cognitive household labor might enhance individuals' skills, knowledge, and sense of efficacy, making them more likely to engage politically. Beyond a certain point, as I discuss next, these benefits diminish and the mental (over-)load decreases engagement.

Turning to these effects at high levels of the mental load, Figure 6 shows that high levels of the mental load are negatively correlated with many forms of mothers' political engagement. The dot and lines at the bottom of the plots in Figure 6 display the median (dot), interquartile range (solid line; 25th to 75th percentile), and spread (dotted line; 5th to 95th percentile) of mothers' mental load, highlighting that the vast majority of mothers are distributed at high levels of the mental load. The slope at the median value of mental load for mothers is negative for 6 of the 9 forms of political engagement I investigate. This negative link between high levels of mental load and political engagement is statistically significant for interest in national political issues, interest in prices / inflation, and the frequency of political discussion with family and friends. These significant negative effects emerge for levels of mental load of: 96% (interest in national issues), 88% (interest in prices / inflation), and 76% (frequency of discussion with family and friends). Given the left-skewed distribution of the mental load among mothers, these shares of the mental load reduce political engagement for between 28% and 52% of mothers in my data. Confirming theoretical expectations, high mental loads significantly decrease several types of political engagement among mothers.

To give a sense of relative effect size of cognitive 'overload', moving from the mean values of the mental load, holding all other covariates to their means or modes.

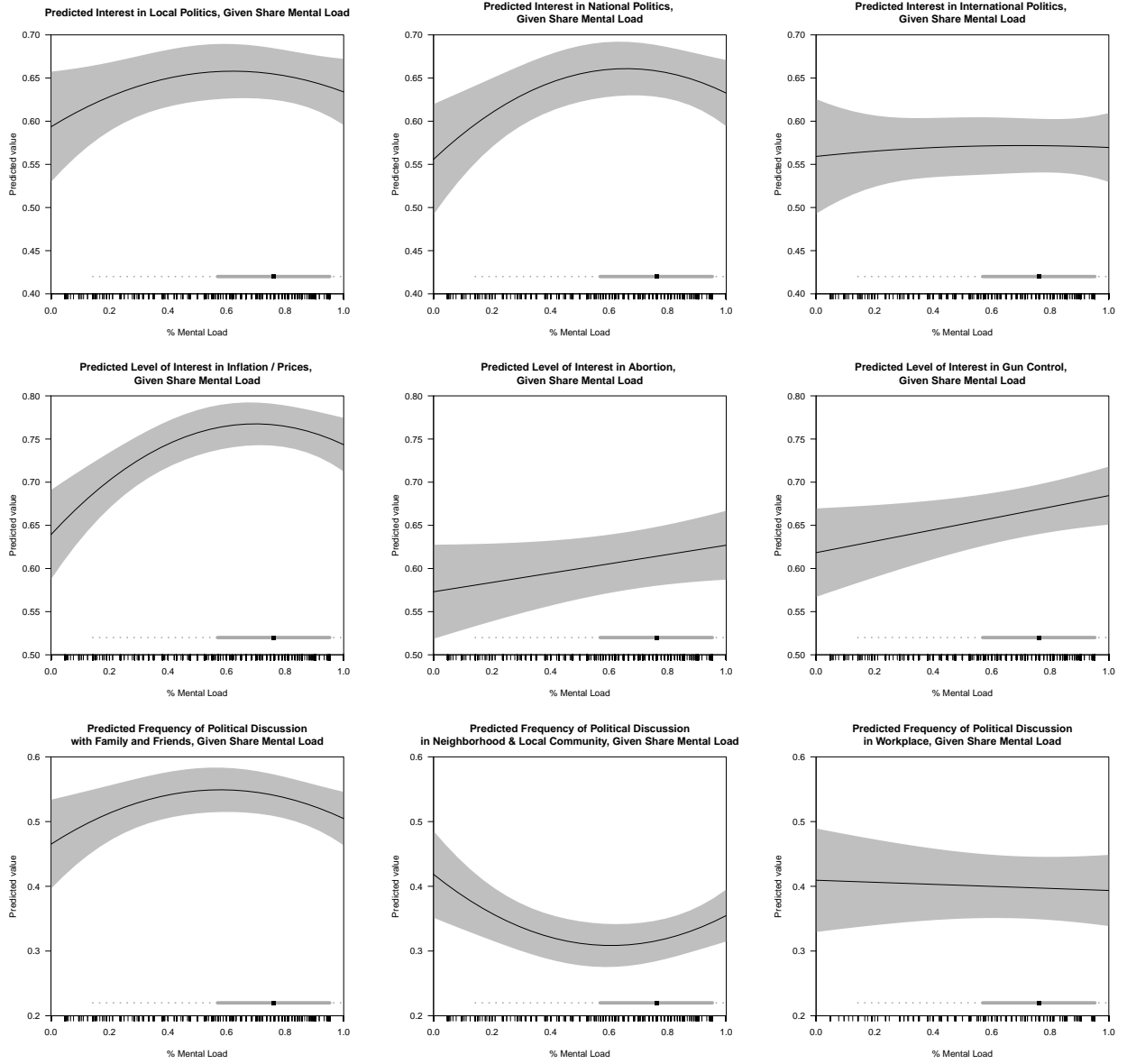


Figure 6: Predicted Values of Political Engagement by Share of Mental Load, Mothers

Predicted values calculated from regression models shown in Supplemental Material Table C2. The dot and lines at the bottom of the figure display quantiles of the mental load for mothers. The dot in the center denotes the median, the end points of the thick bars denote the 25th and 75th percentiles, and the end points of the dotted lines denote the 5th and 95th percentiles.

share of the mental load share to one standard deviation above reduces mothers' interest in national politics and interest in inflation / prices by 2 percentage points each. Considering the size of the gender gap on these issues, such a change corresponds to 17% of the gender gap in interest in national politics and 66% of the smaller gender gap in interest in inflation / prices. Turning to political discussion, the same increase in mental load reduces frequency of political discussion with friends and family by 4 percentage points, equivalent to 35% of the gender gap on this form of engagement. It is important to note that the reported share of physical household labor does not similarly reduce mothers' political engagement at high levels. A similar curvilinear relationship is often observed, where at low levels the share of physical household labor is positively linked to engagement, with diminishing returns as the level increases. However, the average marginal effects across values of physical household labor reveal no significant negative relationship at high levels for most forms of engagement. The exception is frequency of discussion in the neighborhood or local community, where high shares of 96% or more of physical household labor lead to less frequent discussion.

Figure 6 also demonstrates that high levels of the mental load are *positively* linked to two types of political engagement for mothers, frequency of discussion in the neighborhood or local community, and interest in gun control. The positive effect for frequency of discussion in the community emerges at levels of the mental load of 75% (affecting over half of the sample of mothers). Recall that the regression on interest in gun control does not require a quadratic transformation of the mental load; the model fit is better without it. For interest in gun control then, a one unit increase in relative mental load is associated with a 0.07 unit increase in interest. Gun control is an issue that resonates strongly with women's social roles as mothers as a child-protection measure, and this has spurred U.S. mothers to political activism through events like the Million Mom March and groups like Moms Demand Action (Goss 2003). It follows that mothers who bear the primary responsibility for the mental load in their family, which likely includes thinking about the safety of their children at

school, would be all the more interested in gun control. Finally, no statistically significant link is reported between the relative share of the mental load and interest in local issues, international issues, abortion, or in the frequency of political discussion at work.

How does the mental load relate to fathers' political engagement? Recall that for men the distribution of relative mental load is reversed – skewed to the right. The median share is 38%. Keeping this in mind, as observed among mothers, at low levels the mental load is positively linked to political engagement. The slope at the median value of mental load for fathers (38%) is positive for each of the 9 forms of political engagement I investigate. Significant positive effects are observed for 7 of the 9: interest in local, national, and international politics, interest in inflation / prices, and the frequency of all three forms of political discussion.¹⁴ Figure 7 shows that very high levels of the mental load also tend to decrease political engagement, and among fathers this is statistically significant for interest in inflation / prices (above 72% of mental load) and frequency of political discussion with family and friends (above 76% of the mental load). Finally, no significant link is observed between the mental load and interest in abortion or gun control among fathers.

Table 2 summarizes the results, reporting the average marginal effects (slopes) of the mental load at median and high values (here, I use 80th percentile), for mothers and fathers separately. For mothers, the median value of mental load is 76% and 80th percentile is 100%, while for fathers the median value is 38% and 80th percentile is 76%. Table 2 shows that, for mothers, the median mental load is negatively correlated with political engagement for six of the nine types of engagement. At high shares of the mental load, these negative 'effects' become statistically significant for three types of political engagement (interest in national issues, interest in inflation / prices, discussion with family and friends), while high

¹⁴The thresholds of the share of mental load below which these positive effects are significant are as follows: local issues (65%); national issues (64%); international issues (73%); inflation / prices (47%); discussion with friends and family (57%); in the local community (68%); in the workplace (67%).

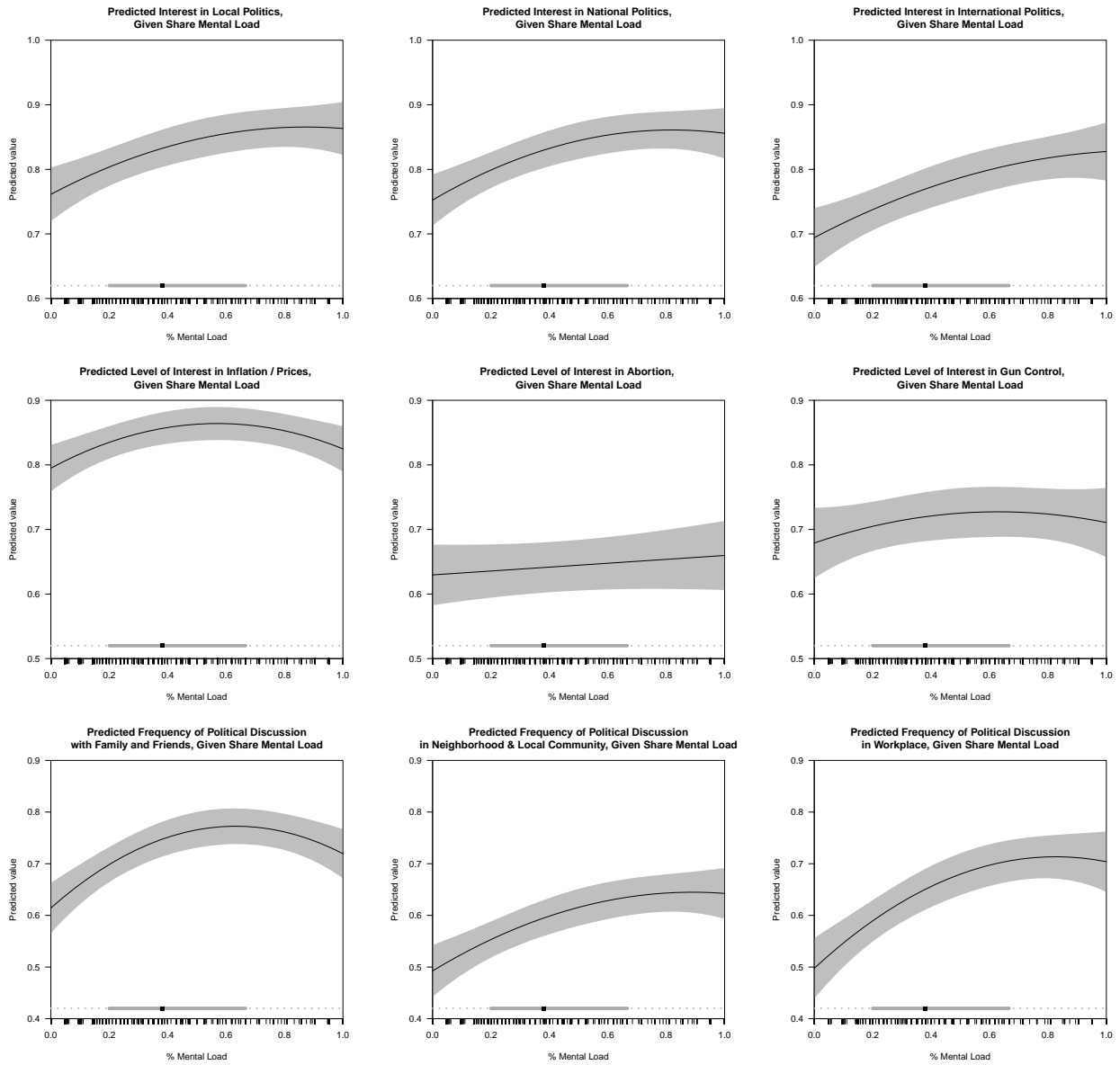


Figure 7: Predicted Values of Political Engagement by Share of Mental Load, Fathers

Predicted values calculated from regression models shown in Supplemental Material Table C3. The dot and lines at the bottom of the figure display quantiles of the mental load for fathers. The dot in the center denotes the median, the end points of the thick bars denote the 25th and 75th percentiles, and the end points of the dotted lines denote the 5th and 95th percentiles.

levels of mental load are positively linked to interest in gun control and political discussion in the local community. However, among fathers the median mental load (which is half of the median load among mothers) is always positively associated with political engagement. At high levels, these positive ‘effects’ of the mental load among fathers typically decrease in size and lose statistical significance. As with mothers, high mental load among fathers is negatively linked to interest in inflation / prices and political discussion with family and friends. These results suggest a nuanced relationship, whereby taking on some mental load can be positive for political life – but the high levels of the mental load that are seen especially among mothers indeed reduce several forms of political engagement.

Table 2: Average Marginal Effects of Median and High Mental Load on Political Engagement

	<i>Median Mental Load</i>		<i>High Mental Load (80th %)</i>	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Interest: local issues	-0.047 (0.043)	0.135*** (0.030)	-0.127 (0.081)	0.031 (0.043)
Interest: national issues	-0.050 (0.043)	0.142*** (0.029)	-0.166* (0.081)	0.0195 (0.041)
Interest: international issues	-0.003 (0.045)	0.158*** (0.033)	-0.015 (0.084)	0.079 (0.048)
Interest: prices / inflation	-0.033 (0.035)	0.081** (0.026)	-0.160* (0.065)	-0.081* (0.038)
Interest: abortion	0.054 (0.033)	0.003 (0.032)	0.054 (0.033)	0.003 (0.032)
Interest: guns	0.066* (0.031)	0.061 (0.040)	0.066* (0.031)	-0.032 (0.057)
Political discussion: family	-0.091 (0.047)	0.200*** (0.035)	-0.211* (0.087)	-0.100* (0.051)
Political discussion: community	0.093* (0.045)	0.196*** (0.036)	0.235** (0.085)	0.005 (0.052)
Political discussion: work	-0.016 (0.046)	0.282*** (0.044)	-0.016 (0.046)	0.042 (0.064)

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

I conduct several sensitivity checks. First, to ensure that the statistically significant findings reported are not dependent on the particular covariates included (Lenz & Sahn 2021), I re-estimate all specifications excluding control variables (see Supplemental Material Tables C4 - C5). Reassuringly, these specifications continue to show the strong influence of the mental load in the expected directions. Next, while the analysis presented here is descriptive due to the nature of the original survey data collected, several findings suggest that a causal relationship, whereby the mental load crowds out space for political engagement, is feasible. First, one concern might be that the findings are driven by single parents. Studies show that having a spouse or steady partner increases political engagement (e.g., Duverger 1955; Morgan-Collins & Potts 2022; Verba, Burns & Schlozman 1997), and Table 1 establishes a strong negative relationship between having a co-resident partner and share of the mental load. Could it be that the lack of a partner, rather than the share of mental load, decreases political engagement? While I control for this variable, as an extra check I rerun all models showing significant effects with the subsample of mothers and fathers who report living with a spouse or steady partner. The findings are largely robust to this test (see Supplemental Material Tables C6 - C7).¹⁵

Another concern might relate to the potential for reverse causality – perhaps it is the case that more politically engaged couples share household work more equally? If this were true, results ought to show the same negative link between high shares of physical household labor and political engagement, but this is not the case. I find little evidence that physical household labor depresses political engagement for mothers or fathers. This is in line with other research on participation which, despite strong theoretical expectations, “could find no evidence that absence of free time handicaps women as citizens” (Burns, Schlozman & Verba 1997, 384, see also Burns, Schlozman & Verba 2002). Yet, when measuring house-

¹⁵The exception that the negative effect of high mental load on interest in national politics for mothers is no longer significant at conventional levels.

hold inequality as cognitive rather than physical labor, this changes. Finally, the results I document here correspond well to recent experimental findings which prime the salience of personal mental load. Helgøy and Weeks' (2023) survey experiment finds a strong negative effect of mental load priming on intentions to engage in politics and at work among parents in the UK. Taken together, my findings point towards a potential crowding out mechanism whereby the mental load that is predominantly taken on by mothers can deplete attention and energy for political life.

Conclusion

Despite major advances in women's access to education and employment over recent decades, women still take on a "second shift" in unpaid labor in the home (Hochschild & Machung 2012). The contribution of this study is to begin to measure the cognitive element of this household labor and its political consequences. This study is among the first to measure cognitive household labor in a quantitative way and with a representative sample. I find large and consistent gender gaps among U.S. parents, with mothers on average claiming to be mostly responsible for 72 percent of cognitive household labor while fathers report responsibility for 45 percent. These gender gaps are significantly larger than those reported for physical household labor. Previous time-use studies which include some element of cognitive household labor (for example, asking respondents to estimate the time spent in mental labor related to the household) find smaller gender gaps, on par with gender gaps in physical household labor (Lee & Waite 2005; Offer & Schneider 2011). As Daminger (2019) points out, this is likely because it is very hard to estimate the *time* spent doing this kind of diffuse mental work which goes on throughout the day. My task-based measure of the mental load affirms the qualitative findings that women take on the vast majority of such work (Damingier 2019, 2020). A natural follow-on project is to investigate how these large gender

gaps in mental load impact the division of paid labor. For example, recent experimental evidence from Norway finds that hypothetical primary responsibility for the mental load can decrease preferred paid working hours (Helgøy 2022).

The gender gaps I identify in who does the mental work of managing the home and family persist across a wide variety of household and individual characteristics, including income and education. Examining how the mental load relates to political interest among U.S. parents, I find that high levels of the mental load decrease levels of certain forms of political engagement. For both fathers and mothers low levels of cognitive household labor offer some positive benefits for political engagement, which could be related to enhancing certain skills and maintaining social ties. However, these returns diminish as the share of the mental load grows, crowding out energy and mental space to engage with politics. Because fathers are distributed at the low end of relative mental load, it tends to have a positive effect for them. Importantly, because mothers take on more mental load than fathers, the mental load tends to have the opposite, negative impact on mothers' political engagement. Measuring the mental load thus helps unpack the longstanding puzzle of gender differences in engagement with politics.

The survey analyzed in this study measures the cognitive dimension of household labor, but the mental load also has an emotional dimension – for example, anticipating and monitoring the emotions of children and the family as a whole (Dean, Churchill & Ruppanner 2022). It is thus important for future studies to consider whether and how we can render this emotional aspect of the mental load more visible. As one indicator of well-being, the survey asks questions about how satisfied respondents are with the division of physical and mental labor in their household. The results suggest that most mothers but not fathers are *not* satisfied with the cognitive labor division in particular. While 66 percent of fathers say that they are extremely or somewhat satisfied with the division of mental work in their

household, only 42 percent of mothers say the same.¹⁶ Interestingly, it is not the case that mothers who are not employed outside the household are more satisfied, as one might assume if they view such labor as an investment, in the vein of traditional household specialization models (Becker 1985). Only 39% of mothers who stay at home are satisfied with the division of cognitive labor in their household, compared to 45% of employed mothers. This suggests my findings are unlikely to be driven by mothers' self-selection into private, and out of public, life: if this were the case, we ought to see higher satisfaction levels among mothers who do not work outside the home. Instead, the mental load appears to be even more of a burden for those mothers who are not employed. Future research should continue to study whether and how inequalities in cognitive labor might cause distress, anxiety, and ultimately poorer well-being for women (Haupt & Gelbgiser 2022; Petts & Carlson 2023).

Future comparative studies are necessary to establish to what extent the gender gap in the mental load varies across countries and welfare state systems. Do generous state policies like shared parental leave, paternity leave, and subsidized child care reduce these gender gaps, or not? Recent research suggesting that direct exposure to paternity leave can increase fathers' participation in household work (Patnaik 2019) and gender-egalitarian norms among both mothers and fathers (Tavits et al. 2023) offers promising evidence that such policies could make a difference. What are the national- and individual-level conditions under which men and women take on cognitive household labor more equally, and does this translate into more political equality as well? In order to pinpoint effective solutions to close these gender gaps at home and in politics, an important first step is raising awareness about the mental load and measuring variation in how it is shared across different contexts.

¹⁶A Welch two-sample t-test finds that this difference is significant at conventional levels.

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Supplemental Material

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A Information about the Survey

Ethical Considerations

The study was reviewed and approved by my university's relevant ethics committee. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Data was collected by the survey provider Dynata (formerly Survey Sampling International), and like other providers Dynata recruits participants through small monetary or reward incentives. Before participants could proceed to the survey, they were directed to an information and consent page. Participants were provided with information about the purpose of the scientific study, eligibility, that participation is entirely voluntary and they can exit at any time, that no identifying information is collected, expected duration of survey, and contact information (name and email address) for the principal investigator. Participants are then given a choice between providing their informed consent and proceeding with the survey, or not providing consent and choosing not to participate in the study. To the best of my knowledge, this study adheres to APSA Principles and Guidance on Human Subjects Research.

Survey Question Items: Politics and Mental Load

Respondents first answer the following series of questions about their level of interest in politics and how often they discuss politics. How interested would you say you personally are in the following types of political issues:

- Local issues
- National issues
- International issues

Response options are: "Not at all interested", "Not very interested", "Fairly interested", and "Very interested."

Please indicate your level of interest in each of the following political issues, on a scale from

0 to 10, where 0 means “no interest at all” and 10 means “a lot of interest”:

- Inflation / prices
- Abortion
- Gun control

How often do you discuss politics in the following contexts?

- With friends or family
- In your neighborhood or local community
- In your workplace

Response options are “Never”, “Rarely”, “Occasionally”, “About once a week”, “Daily.”

Questions Composing the Task-Based Measure of the Mental Load

After answering questions about politics and physical household labor, respondents are told the following:

“Now think about the **mental work** involved in managing your household and caring for children, not the physical aspect.

You will see a series of 8 questions which ask about some different aspects of household and care work. **Please respond who in our household (yourself or someone else) typically handles this kind of mental work.**”

The response options given are: “Mostly me”, “Mostly my partner”, “Partner and I share equally”, “Someone else (Includes friends and family)”, and “NA”. The eight categories shown below were randomly varied.

Care for children: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Researching options for new items children need, like school supplies or shoes
- Deciding on a child care provider (e.g., babysitter, daycare, camp)

- Noticing when children’s nails need to be cut

Cleaning: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Keeping track of when sheets and towels need to be washed
- Cleaning out kids’ clothes that no longer fit
- Noticing when the house needs to be tidied

Finances: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Researching options for financial products like bank accounts or insurance
- Deciding how to allocate money (such as paying off credit cards or increasing savings)
- Keeping track of household expenses

Food: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Keeping track of which groceries need to be purchased
- Deciding what meals to cook
- Monitoring food for “sell-by” dates, or noticing when foods need to be thrown away

Home maintenance: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Noticing when something like a dishwasher or faucet needs repair
- Booking a repair professional like a plumber or mechanic
- Remembering when items like a boiler or car need servicing

Social relationships: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Finding social options for children’s enrichment (sports classes, clubs, etc)
- Coordinating a playdate
- Checking in with family and friends

Scheduling: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Keeping track of the family calendar, such as kids’ medical appointments
- Planning a family event, like a birthday party
- Remembering to schedule appointments, such as dentist appointments

Table A1: Representativeness of Sample of U.S. Parents

	Dynata	2021 Census (ASEC)
Woman	55.3%	55.3%
Man	44.7%	44.7%
Age 18–24	3.1%	3.1%
Age 25–34	25.7%	25.7%
Age 35–44	40.8%	40.8%
Age 45–54	24.1%	24.1%
Age 55 +	6.3%	6.3%
White	76.2%	76.2%
Black	12.3%	12.3%
Asian	7.6%	7.7%
Mixed race or other	3.9%	3.9%
Education, less than high school degree	8.8%	8.9%
Education, high school degree	24.2%	24.2%
Education, some college or Associates	25.0%	25.1%
Education, Bachelors or more	41.9%	41.8%

Census data source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2021 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Internet Release Date: November 2021. Note that Census reference figures were compiled using data for parents with children under 18.

Table A2: Summary Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Woman	3,000	0.553	0.497	0	1
Age 18–24	3,000	0.031	0.172	0	1
Age 25–34	3,000	0.257	0.437	0	1
Age 35–44	3,000	0.408	0.492	0	1
Age 45–55	3,000	0.241	0.428	0	1
Age 55 +	3,000	0.063	0.243	0	1
White	3,000	0.762	0.426	0	1
Black	3,000	0.123	0.328	0	1
Asian	3,000	0.076	0.265	0	1
Mixed or other race	3,000	0.039	0.194	0	1
Lesbian, gay, or bisexual	3,000	0.067	0.251	0	1
Higher education	3,000	0.419	0.494	0	1
Share mental load	2,989	0.597	0.315	0	1
Share physical HH labor	3,000	0.693	0.242	0	1
Partner	3,000	0.785	0.411	0	1
Democrat	3,000	0.398	0.489	0	1
Republican	3,000	0.306	0.461	0	1
Not employed	3,000	0.318	0.466	0	1
Low income (< \$50,000)	3,000	0.217	0.412	0	1
Medium income (\$50,000 – \$100,000)	3,000	0.249	0.432	0	1
High income (> \$100,000)	3,000	0.212	0.409	0	1
Youngest child 0 or 1	3,000	0.121	0.326	0	1
Youngest child 2 or 3	3,000	0.131	0.337	0	1
Youngest child 4 or 5	3,000	0.128	0.334	0	1
Youngest child over 5	3,000	0.590	0.492	0	1
Number of children	3,000	1.725	0.931	0	5
Interest in local issues	3,000	0.737	0.270	0.000	1.000
Interest in national issues	3,000	0.744	0.269	0.000	1.000
Interest in international issues	3,000	0.660	0.288	0.000	1.000
Interest in inflation/ prices	3,000	0.798	0.218	0.000	1.000
Interest in abortion	3,000	0.608	0.321	0.000	1.000
Interest in guns	3,000	0.682	0.310	0.000	1.000
Political discussion, family	3,000	0.619	0.296	0.000	1.000
Political discussion, community	3,000	0.422	0.302	0.000	1.000
Political discussion, work	3,000	0.417	0.342	0.000	1.000

B Distribution of Mental Load by Gender for All Survey Items

Figures B1 – B7 present the distribution of the mental load across all answer options, for each of the 21 items that make up my item-based scale of the mental load. The question text can be found on the right-hand side of each figure. The answer options are on the x-axis, and percentage of responses by gender is on the y-axis. Women (mothers) are in blue, and men (fathers) are in red. For each question item, the percentage among mothers (fathers) sums to approximately 100 (due to rounding within each response category among mothers and fathers, responses do not always sum to 100 exactly).

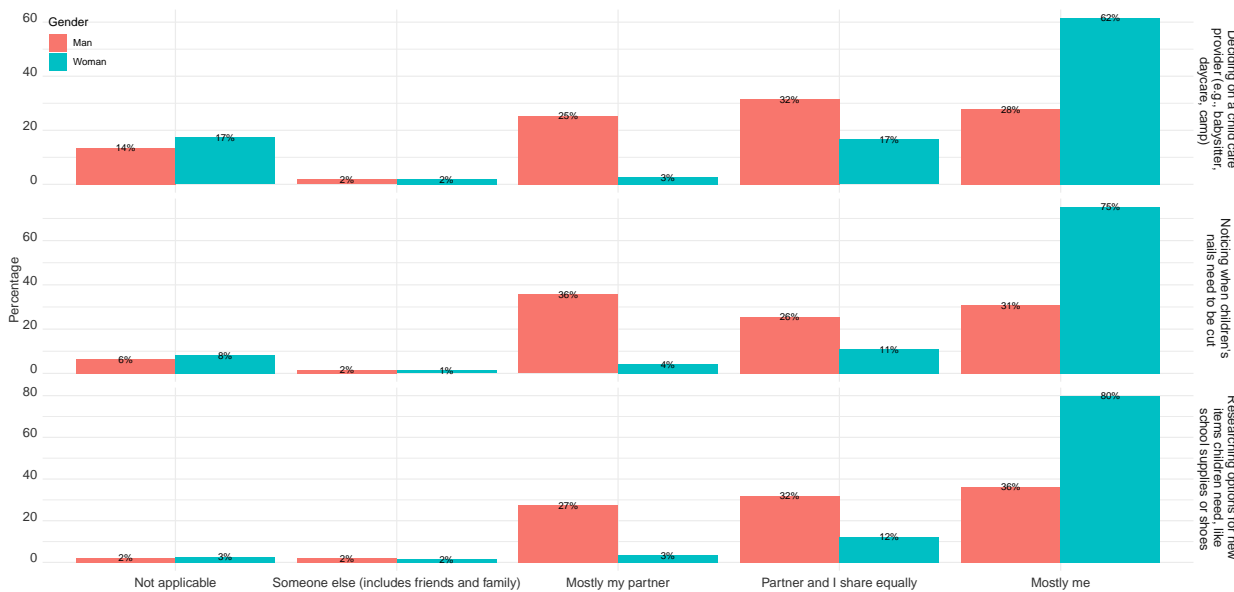


Figure B1: Care for Children

Notes: The question text is, “In your household, who typically does the following?” Data include 3000 respondents.

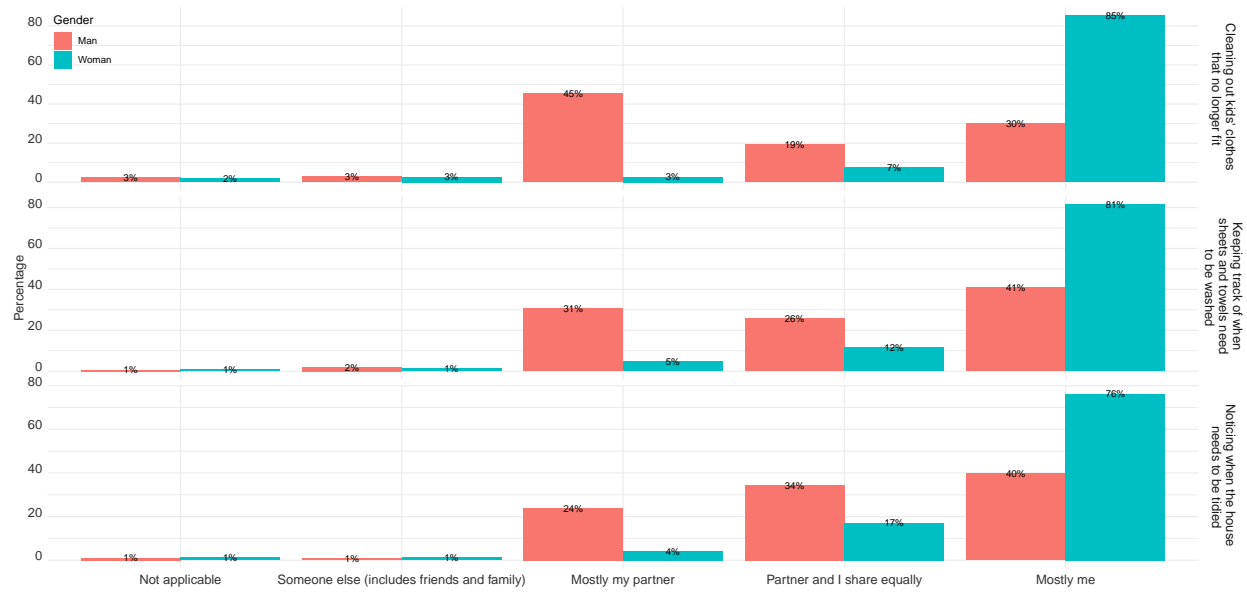


Figure B2: Cleaning

Notes: The question text is, "In your household, who typically does the following?" Data include 3000 respondents.

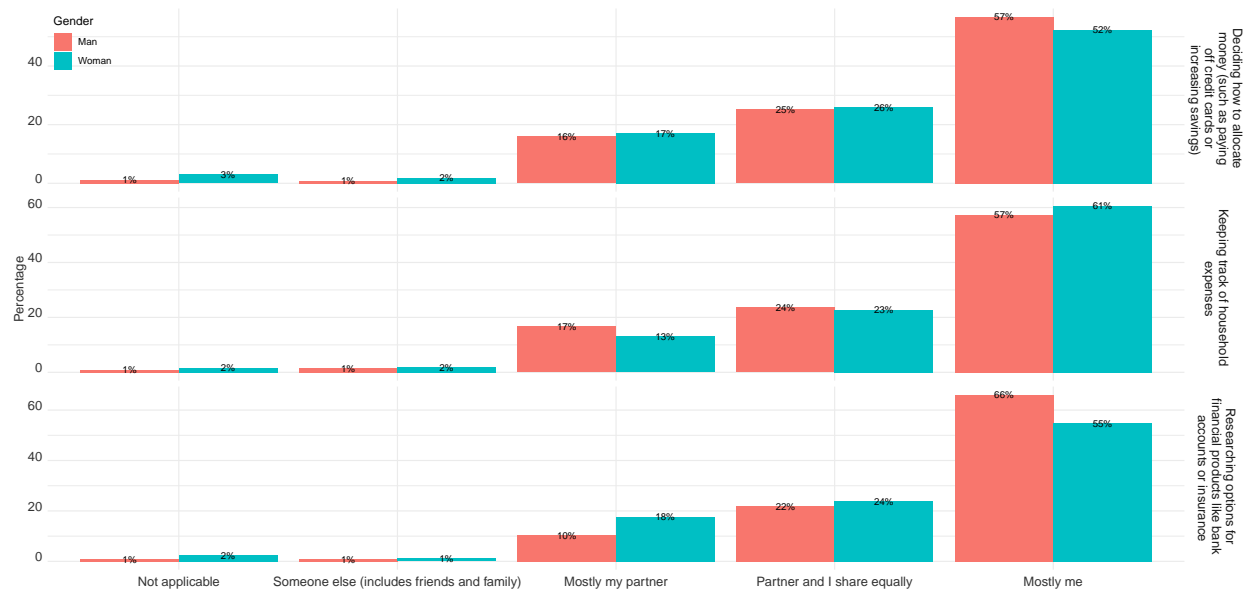


Figure B3: Finances

Notes: The question text is, "In your household, who typically does the following?" Data include 3000 respondents.

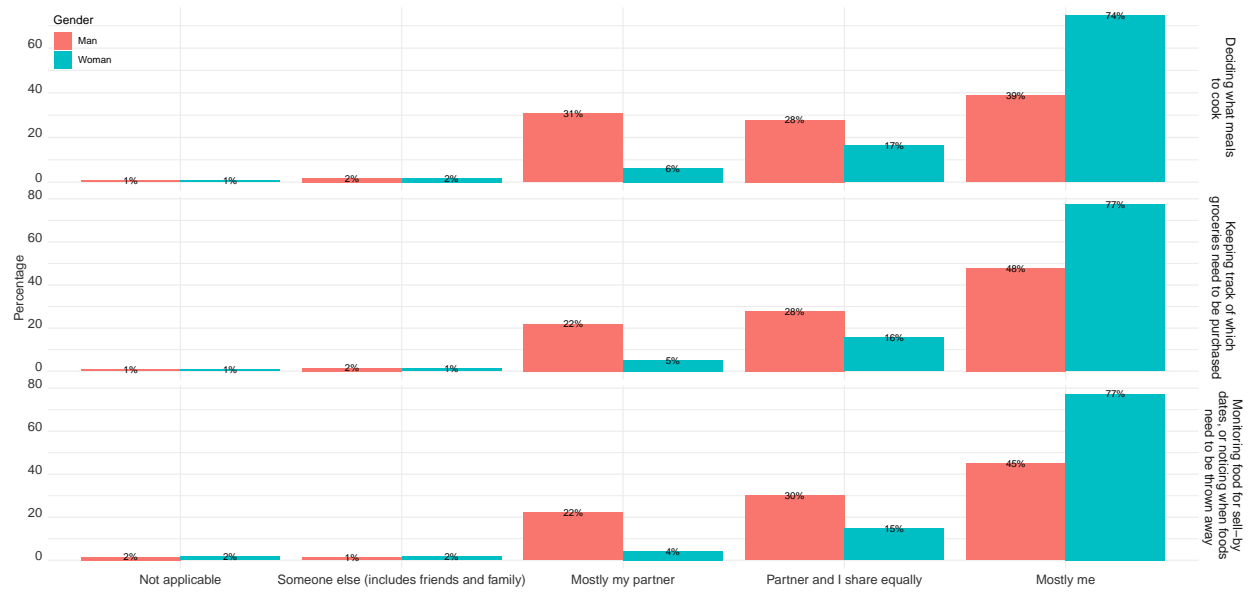


Figure B4: Food

Notes: The question text is, "In your household, who typically does the following?" Data include 3000 respondents.



Figure B5: Home Maintenance

Notes: The question text is, "In your household, who typically does the following?" Data include 3000 respondents.

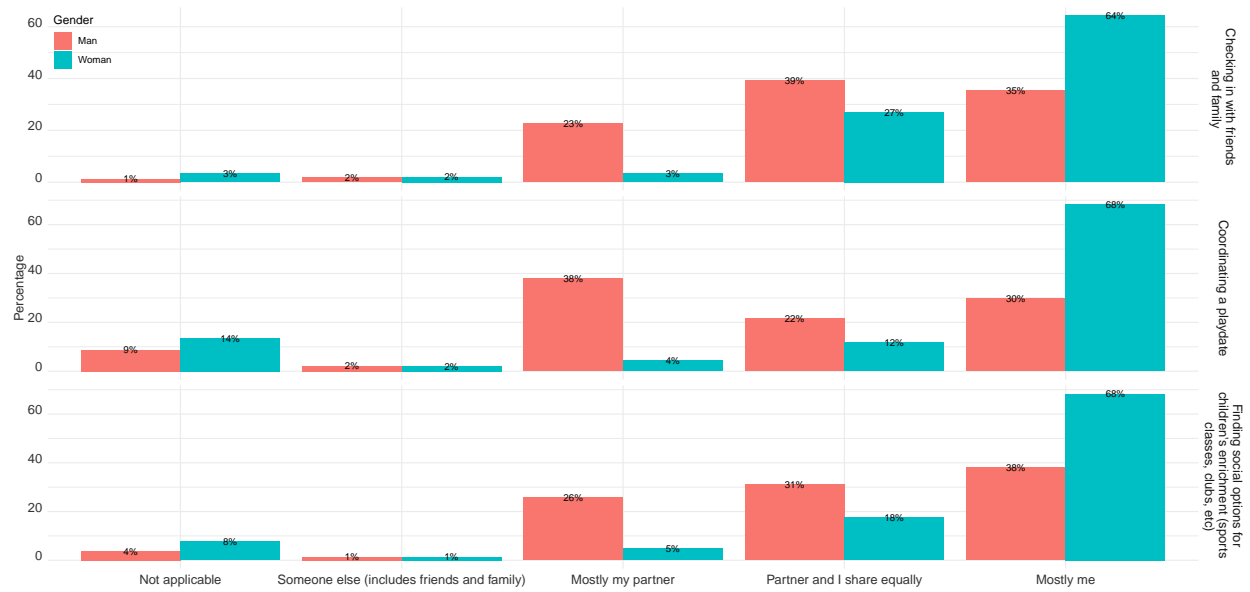


Figure B6: Social Relationships

Notes: The question text is, "In your household, who typically does the following?" Data include 3000 respondents.

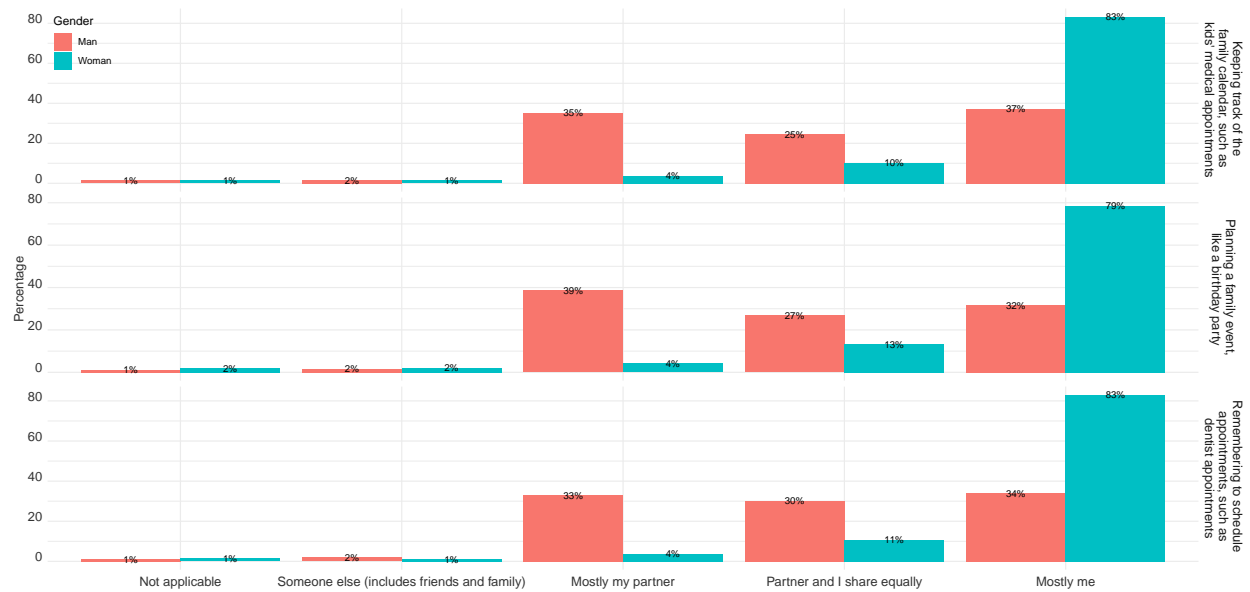


Figure B7: Scheduling

Notes: The question text is, "In your household, who typically does the following?" Data include 3000 respondents.

C Regressions

Table C1: Bivariate Regression Results, Gender and Political Engagement

	Dependent Variable	Coefficient	Std Error	t-value	p-value
Model 1	Interest: Local issues	-0.097	0.010	-9.986	0.000
Model 2	Interest: National issues	-0.118	0.010	-12.221	0.000
Model 3	Interest: International issues	-0.111	0.010	-10.731	0.000
Model 4	Interest: Inflation / prices	-0.031	0.008	-3.890	0.000
Model 5	Interest: Abortion	0.044	0.012	3.707	0.000
Model 6	Interest: Gun control	0.010	0.011	0.899	0.369
Model 7	Discussion: Friends and family	-0.115	0.011	-10.794	0.000
Model 8	Discussion: Local community	-0.167	0.011	-15.645	0.000
Model 9	Discussion: Workplace	-0.148	0.014	-10.37	0.000

Notes for Tables C2 and C3

Tables C2 and C3 below show the full model specifications used to create Figures 6 and 7 in text. Note that income refers to personal annual salary (not household), and the reference category is no income / not employed. For models of discussion in the workplace, where only employed respondents are included, the reference category is high income. As with mental load, the relationship the relationship between physical household labor and political engagement is often curvilinear, especially for mothers. Following the same procedure used with mental load, then, I test whether physical household labor requires a quadratic term by comparing the AIC information criterion in models with and without this transformation. I find that quadratic terms improve the model fit in each specification shown in Table C2 (mothers) except for gun control. For fathers, the quadratic term for physical household labor only improves model fit for interest in abortion (see Table C3).

Table C2: Determinants of Political Engagement among Mothers

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>								
	<i>Interest</i>					<i>Discussion</i>			
	Local (1)	National (2)	Int'l (3)	Prices (4)	Abortion (5)	Guns (6)	Family (7)	Comm (8)	Work (9)
Mental load	0.208 (0.106)	0.319** (0.106)	0.036 (0.110)	0.368*** (0.086)	0.054 (0.033)	0.066* (0.031)	0.290* (0.114)	-0.363** (0.111)	-0.016 (0.046)
Mental load ²	-0.167 (0.089)	-0.243** (0.089)	-0.025 (0.093)	-0.264*** (0.072)			-0.251** (0.096)	0.299** (0.093)	
Physical HH labor	0.624*** (0.150)	0.553*** (0.150)	0.414** (0.156)	0.167 (0.122)	0.233 (0.176)	0.107** (0.035)	0.460** (0.161)	0.494** (0.157)	0.470 (0.248)
Physical HH labor ²	-0.335** (0.114)	-0.285* (0.115)	-0.167 (0.119)	0.022 (0.093)	-0.091 (0.134)		-0.254* (0.123)	-0.342** (0.120)	-0.317 (0.189)
Higher education	0.035* (0.017)	0.064*** (0.017)	0.077*** (0.017)	-0.003 (0.013)	0.003 (0.020)	0.009 (0.018)	0.054** (0.018)	0.051** (0.017)	0.012 (0.025)
Low income	0.051** (0.017)	0.038* (0.017)	0.034 (0.017)	0.041** (0.014)	-0.010 (0.020)	-0.010 (0.019)	0.039* (0.018)	0.043* (0.018)	-0.067 (0.034)
Medium income	0.139*** (0.019)	0.112*** (0.019)	0.080*** (0.019)	0.087*** (0.015)	0.002 (0.022)	0.042* (0.021)	0.096*** (0.020)	0.081*** (0.020)	0.004 (0.004)
High income	0.090*** (0.026)	0.094*** (0.026)	0.055* (0.027)	0.054* (0.021)	0.013 (0.030)	0.026 (0.029)	0.111*** (0.028)	0.060* (0.027)	
Age 25–34	-0.053 (0.034)	-0.078* (0.034)	-0.016 (0.035)	-0.005 (0.027)	-0.045 (0.040)	0.027 (0.038)	-0.004 (0.036)	-0.048 (0.035)	-0.072 (0.059)
Age 35–44	-0.060 (0.035)	-0.089* (0.035)	-0.048 (0.036)	0.032 (0.028)	-0.058 (0.041)	0.031 (0.039)	-0.014 (0.038)	-0.063 (0.037)	-0.109 (0.061)
Age 45–54	-0.030 (0.037)	-0.047 (0.037)	-0.029 (0.039)	0.073* (0.030)	-0.018 (0.044)	0.082* (0.041)	0.015 (0.040)	-0.103** (0.039)	-0.157* (0.064)
Age 55+	0.061 (0.044)	0.056 (0.044)	0.061 (0.046)	0.166*** (0.036)	0.067 (0.052)	0.134** (0.049)	0.109* (0.047)	-0.037 (0.046)	-0.096 (0.078)
No. children	0.011	0.011	0.001	-0.002	0.006	-0.007	0.007	0.012	0.002

	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.013)
Child under 4	-0.012	-0.005	0.001	0.031*	0.041*	0.036	0.025	-0.009	-0.004
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.028)
Partner	0.009	0.008	0.036	0.022	0.009	-0.003	0.044*	0.014	0.018
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.028)
Democrat	0.076***	0.092***	0.094***	0.008	0.143***	0.145***	0.076***	0.091***	0.077***
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.023)
Black	0.029	0.021	0.039	-0.007	-0.020	0.057*	0.008	0.034	0.032
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.016)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.033)
Asian	-0.005	-0.006	0.062*	-0.005	0.001	0.069**	-0.037	-0.012	-0.069
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.038)
Mixed / other race	-0.046	-0.001	0.053	-0.004	-0.0003	0.042	-0.001	-0.030	-0.071
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.026)	(0.038)	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.052)
LGB	0.002	0.013	0.027	-0.010	0.071*	-0.022	0.021	0.024	0.029
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.041)
Constant	0.310***	0.309***	0.285***	0.449***	0.425***	0.443***	0.181**	0.221**	0.360**
	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.067)	(0.053)	(0.074)	(0.052)	(0.070)	(0.068)	(0.113)
Observations	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645	877
R ²	0.121	0.141	0.118	0.110	0.070	0.103	0.099	0.081	0.056
Adjusted R ²	0.111	0.130	0.107	0.099	0.059	0.093	0.088	0.070	0.037

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table C3: Determinants of Political Engagement among Fathers

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>								
	<i>Interest</i>					<i>Discussion</i>			
	Local (1)	National (2)	Int'l (3)	Prices (4)	Abortion (5)	Guns (6)	Family (7)	Comm (8)	Work (9)
Mental load	0.239** (0.079)	0.265*** (0.075)	0.238** (0.087)	0.242*** (0.068)	0.030 (0.032)	0.153 (0.103)	0.500*** (0.092)	0.342*** (0.095)	0.522*** (0.113)
Mental load ²	-0.137 (0.074)	-0.161* (0.070)	-0.104 (0.081)	-0.212*** (0.063)		-0.122 (0.097)	-0.395*** (0.086)	-0.192* (0.089)	-0.316** (0.107)
Physical HH labor	0.068* (0.028)	0.047 (0.026)	0.059 (0.030)	0.162*** (0.024)	0.332* (0.168)	0.051 (0.036)	0.047 (0.032)	0.078* (0.033)	0.008 (0.040)
Physical HH Labor ²					-0.212 (0.138)				
Higher education	0.073*** (0.015)	0.064*** (0.015)	0.087*** (0.017)	0.013 (0.013)	0.0003 (0.020)	0.006 (0.020)	0.046** (0.018)	0.064*** (0.018)	0.019 (0.022)
Low income	0.019 (0.023)	0.019 (0.021)	0.028 (0.025)	-0.002 (0.019)	-0.026 (0.030)	-0.021 (0.029)	-0.022 (0.026)	-0.041 (0.027)	-0.081** (0.029)
Medium income	0.069** (0.021)	0.075*** (0.020)	0.078*** (0.023)	0.022 (0.018)	-0.004 (0.028)	-0.009 (0.028)	0.022 (0.025)	0.009 (0.025)	-0.053* (0.022)
High income	0.095*** (0.022)	0.071*** (0.021)	0.124*** (0.025)	0.057** (0.019)	0.040 (0.030)	0.033 (0.029)	0.066* (0.026)	0.084** (0.027)	
Age 25–34	-0.026 (0.067)	0.073 (0.064)	0.007 (0.073)	0.025 (0.057)	-0.054 (0.090)	0.058 (0.087)	0.037 (0.078)	-0.029 (0.080)	-0.018 (0.093)
Age 35–44	-0.024 (0.066)	0.092 (0.063)	0.013 (0.073)	0.037 (0.057)	-0.054 (0.089)	0.060 (0.087)	0.025 (0.077)	-0.070 (0.080)	-0.012 (0.093)
Age 45–54	-0.039 (0.067)	0.113 (0.064)	0.005 (0.074)	0.058 (0.058)	-0.110 (0.090)	0.041 (0.088)	0.001 (0.078)	-0.146 (0.081)	-0.104 (0.094)
Age 55+	0.017 (0.070)	0.149* (0.067)	0.086 (0.078)	0.084 (0.061)	-0.063 (0.095)	0.061 (0.092)	0.070 (0.082)	-0.147 (0.085)	-0.089 (0.100)
No. children	0.003	0.001	-0.010	0.006	-0.001	-0.002	0.005	-0.0001	0.011

	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.011)
Child under 4	-0.014	-0.001	-0.008	0.001	-0.026	-0.031	-0.016	-0.007	-0.052*
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.023)
Partner	0.035	0.030	0.032	0.006	0.041	0.047	0.031	0.062*	0.102***
	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.017)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.031)
Democrat	0.049***	0.046***	0.065***	-0.018	0.156***	0.137***	0.050**	0.045**	0.029
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.020)
Black	0.029	0.024	0.005	-0.018	-0.00002	0.091**	0.017	0.058*	0.029
	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.032)
Asian	-0.077**	-0.045	-0.012	-0.036	-0.037	0.036	-0.106**	-0.061	-0.061
	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.031)	(0.024)	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.038)
Mixed / other race	-0.118**	-0.020	0.065	0.005	-0.056	0.072	-0.152***	-0.080	-0.069
	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.031)	(0.049)	(0.048)	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.053)
LGB	0.009	0.008	0.042	0.020	0.069	0.034	0.048	0.034	0.022
	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.033)	(0.026)	(0.040)	(0.039)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.046)
Constant	0.560***	0.479***	0.433***	0.588***	0.421***	0.445***	0.423***	0.323***	0.389***
	(0.075)	(0.072)	(0.083)	(0.065)	(0.110)	(0.099)	(0.088)	(0.091)	(0.107)
Observations	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,152
R ²	0.155	0.124	0.164	0.080	0.107	0.094	0.124	0.159	0.114
Adjusted R ²	0.142	0.111	0.152	0.067	0.094	0.081	0.111	0.147	0.100

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table C4: Mental Load and Political Engagement among Mothers, No Controls

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>								
	<i>Interest</i>					<i>Discussion</i>			
	Local (1)	National (2)	Int'l (3)	Prices (4)	Abortion (5)	Guns (6)	Family (7)	Comm (8)	Work (9)
Mental load	0.301** (0.106)	0.437*** (0.107)	0.203 (0.110)	0.461*** (0.085)	0.061* (0.030)	0.094*** (0.028)	0.421*** (0.112)	-0.302** (0.108)	-0.059 (0.040)
Mental load ²	-0.217* (0.086)	-0.314*** (0.087)	-0.150 (0.089)	-0.291*** (0.069)			-0.358*** (0.091)	0.231** (0.088)	
Constant	0.605*** (0.030)	0.564*** (0.031)	0.555*** (0.032)	0.626*** (0.024)	0.585*** (0.023)	0.621*** (0.022)	0.477*** (0.032)	0.429*** (0.031)	0.467*** (0.031)
Observations	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	884
R ²	0.006	0.011	0.002	0.029	0.003	0.007	0.009	0.005	0.002
Adjusted R ²	0.004	0.010	0.001	0.027	0.002	0.006	0.008	0.004	0.001

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table C5: Mental Load and Political Engagement among Fathers, No Controls

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>								
	<i>Interest</i>					<i>Discussion</i>			
	Local (1)	National (2)	Int'l (3)	Prices (4)	Abortion (5)	Guns (6)	Family (7)	Comm (8)	Work (9)
Mental load	0.400*** (0.081)	0.372*** (0.076)	0.398*** (0.089)	0.324*** (0.067)	0.058* (0.028)	0.250* (0.104)	0.644*** (0.092)	0.567*** (0.097)	0.730*** (0.112)
Mental load ²	-0.275*** (0.074)	-0.260*** (0.069)	-0.240** (0.082)	-0.252*** (0.061)		-0.193* (0.095)	-0.517*** (0.084)	-0.388*** (0.089)	-0.525*** (0.103)
Constant	0.693*** (0.018)	0.719*** (0.016)	0.614*** (0.019)	0.745*** (0.015)	0.558*** (0.015)	0.622*** (0.022)	0.546*** (0.020)	0.374*** (0.021)	0.399*** (0.024)
Observations	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,158
R ²	0.030	0.028	0.034	0.020	0.003	0.005	0.039	0.042	0.051
Adjusted R ²	0.028	0.026	0.033	0.019	0.002	0.004	0.038	0.040	0.050

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table C6: Determinants of Political Engagement among Mothers, Excluding Singles

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Interest			Discussion	
	National	Prices	Guns	Family	Community
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Mental load	0.265*	0.395***	0.074*	0.322*	-0.348**
	(0.115)	(0.096)	(0.036)	(0.126)	(0.124)
Mental load ²	-0.174	-0.290***		-0.262*	0.320**
	(0.097)	(0.081)		(0.106)	(0.104)
Physical HH labor	0.631***	0.189	0.120**	0.462*	0.420*
	(0.169)	(0.141)	(0.043)	(0.185)	(0.182)
Physical HH labor ²	-0.363**	-0.013		-0.230	-0.263
	(0.129)	(0.108)		(0.142)	(0.140)
Higher education	0.053**	-0.007	0.017	0.034	0.039*
	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Low income	0.034	0.032*	-0.007	0.029	0.046*
	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.021)
Medium income	0.109***	0.080***	0.030	0.092***	0.076***
	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.022)
High income	0.115***	0.062**	0.029	0.120***	0.106***
	(0.027)	(0.022)	(0.031)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Age 25–34	-0.078*	-0.010	0.026	-0.010	-0.055
	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.040)	(0.038)	(0.037)
Age 35–44	-0.085*	0.026	0.046	-0.009	-0.066
	(0.036)	(0.030)	(0.041)	(0.039)	(0.039)
Age 45–54	-0.030	0.077*	0.065	0.027	-0.105*
	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.045)	(0.042)	(0.041)
Age 55+	0.067	0.127**	0.072	0.126*	-0.0002
	(0.050)	(0.042)	(0.058)	(0.055)	(0.054)
No. children	0.014	-0.004	-0.005	0.007	0.010
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.008)
Child under 4	-0.003	0.029	0.021	0.022	-0.008
	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Democrat	0.091***	-0.007	0.160***	0.084***	0.089***
	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Black	0.040	-0.011	0.086**	0.050	0.078**
	(0.025)	(0.021)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.027)
Asian	0.003	-0.004	0.067*	-0.029	0.008
	(0.024)	(0.020)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.026)

Mixed / other race	-0.030 (0.038)	-0.028 (0.032)	0.024 (0.044)	-0.008 (0.042)	-0.072 (0.041)
LGB	0.012 (0.027)	-0.007 (0.023)	0.008 (0.032)	0.036 (0.030)	0.034 (0.029)
Constant	0.297*** (0.070)	0.490*** (0.058)	0.416*** (0.053)	0.191* (0.076)	0.223** (0.075)
Observations	1,233	1,233	1,233	1,233	1,233
R ²	0.150	0.090	0.108	0.101	0.096
Adjusted R ²	0.136	0.076	0.095	0.087	0.081

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table C7: Determinants of Political Engagement among Fathers, Excluding Singles

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Interest	Discussion
	Prices (1)	Family (2)
Mental load	0.241** (0.074)	0.480*** (0.101)
Mental load ²	-0.209** (0.072)	-0.360*** (0.098)
Physical HH labor	0.142*** (0.026)	0.066 (0.036)
Higher education	0.010 (0.014)	0.055** (0.019)
Low income	-0.025 (0.024)	-0.021 (0.032)
Medium income	-0.008 (0.021)	0.012 (0.029)
High income	0.037 (0.022)	0.057 (0.029)
Age 25–34	0.037 (0.060)	0.027 (0.082)
Age 35–44	0.048 (0.059)	0.019 (0.081)
Age 45–54	0.068 (0.060)	-0.004 (0.082)

Age 55+	0.089 (0.063)	0.063 (0.086)
No. children	0.007 (0.007)	0.001 (0.009)
Child under 4	0.004 (0.015)	-0.026 (0.020)
Democrat	-0.021 (0.013)	0.050** (0.017)
Black	-0.025 (0.022)	-0.001 (0.030)
Asian	-0.044 (0.026)	-0.100** (0.035)
Mixed / other race	0.032 (0.037)	-0.146** (0.051)
LGB	0.012 (0.029)	0.020 (0.039)
Constant	0.619*** (0.067)	0.462*** (0.091)
Observations	1,105	1,105
R ²	0.073	0.125
Adjusted R ²	0.058	0.110
<hr/> <i>Note:</i> *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001		