

# Homeworking and division of domestic work: the role of gender role attitudes in Germany

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## Abstract

Homeworking is often portrayed as a work-life balance measure. Though in theory homeworking can provide workers with more time for leisure and family, due to the boundary blurring between work and life spheres, it can exacerbate gender inequalities. Empirically, the evidence is mixed whether homeworking increases women's time in domestic labour and men's time in paid labour. We extend the debate by exploring how individuals' gender role attitudes moderate the relationship between homeworking and the division of domestic work. We apply hybrid models to the German Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics Survey. The data covers from 2008 to 2021 which includes the unique COVID-19 pandemic. Results show that gender role attitudes matter. When gaining access to homeworking egalitarian men increased their contribution to childcare, while traditional men did not. Similarly, homeworking traditional women increased their childcare contribution. During the pandemic, only traditional women did even more childcare, while men contributed more regardless of their gender role attitudes.

Keywords: homeworking, domestic work, gender, gender role attitudes

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# 1 Introduction

Homeworking (i.e., telecommuting) is generally perceived to allow workers to better balance work and private demands by providing more time for leisure and family (Noonan and Glass 2012). This is done through the reduction of commuting costs, flexibility and permeability of boundaries between work and family (Clark 2000; Halford 2006), and through the increase of work autonomy (Allen, Golden, and Shockley 2015). There is some evidence of homeworking reducing work-family conflict for parents (Kelly et al., 2011). However, other studies show that homeworking can rather increase work-family conflict, particularly for women (Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir 2021; Yucel and Chung 2023), as it increases the amount of time women spend on both paid and unpaid work (Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Lott, 2019; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001), reinforcing the gendered division of labour (Chung 2020; Lyttelton, Zang, and Musick 2022). In fact, scholars argue that flexible working has the potential to exacerbate gender inequality for this very reason (Chung 2022; Chung and van der Lippe 2020). However, the re-evaluation of current gender norms is essential. Previous studies have noted the variation in the gendered outcomes of flexible working in different gender normative contexts (Kurowska 2020; Lott 2015). Similarly, we expect that Gender Role Attitude (GRA) of individuals matter in explaining how workers use homeworking practices to divide domestic work (West and Zimmerman 1987).

Previous studies have shown the importance of GRA in predicting the division of childcare and housework among heterosexual couples or in explaining levels of work-life conflict (Nitsche & Grunow, 2018; Schober, 2013). More recent studies have shown how GRA moderate the association between homeworking and work-family conflict (Yucel and Chung, 2023), with an assumption that GRAs shape how individuals use homeworking to carry out more paid or unpaid labour. What is less known is how gender role attitudes might moderate the association between homeworking and the division of domestic work. Exploring the role of GRA provides us with a better fine-tuned understanding of what the wider spread of homeworking means for gender equality (Chung et al. 2001). Homeworking may not exacerbate gender inequality as once expected in certain pockets of the population where gender performance is not restricted by social norms. What is more, if GRA shape flexible working outcomes, this can on the one hand provide us with yet another justification of the need to tackle gender biases in social roles in today's societies, and on the other, work on the policy solutions to ensure that flexible working can bring about better gender equality outcomes.

Further, our data includes the period during the COVID-19 pandemic, when there were signs of men contributing more to domestic work, although women still carried out the larger share of housework

and childcare (Craig and Churchill 2021; Steinmetz et al. 2022). Some scholars argue that this may be due to homeworking being widespread during this period (Chung 2022). The potential reduction of stigmatised views against homeworkers due to its normalisation during the pandemic may have better enabled workers, especially men, to use homeworking for care and housework purposes (see also, Rudman and Mescher, 2013). However, we can expect that a pattern of a more equal division of labour would not have been observed for everyone, despite homeworking arrangements being readily available for many. Again, exploring the role GRA would be useful to better understand the outcomes of homeworking, especially in light of its expected expansion in the post-pandemic labour markets.

We explore this question using the German Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics data (Brüderl et al. 2022) from 2008 to 2021 (waves 1-13), and applying hybrid models separating the between effects and within individual changes in homeworking and domestic chores division. This article contributes to the research on the outcomes of homeworking in two ways. First, given the long period covered in our data, we are able to estimate the effect of homeworking over 13-years' time and control for the role of the COVID-19 pandemic in shaping the division of housework and childcare when homeworking. Second, we explore the role of gender and gender role attitudes in this relationship. Enabling a more precise look at the potential heterogeneity across pockets of population with regards to how flexibility is used at work (Clark, 2010), as well as how gender norms shape performance of gender within the household.

## **2 Theory**

### **2.1 Homeworking and division of domestic work**

Flexible working arrangements (Kelly, Moen, and Tranby 2011) can be based on location of work (i.e., homeworking, working from home, telecommuting) and scheduling of work (i.e., schedule control, flexitime with hours count). Here we focus on the flexibility in the location of work, the use of opportunity to work from home always or regularly (Noonan and Glass 2012). Homeworking is actively promoted as a resource to provide a better work-life balance, particularly, for employees with children (Chung 2022). However, empirical evidence shows that homeworking can increase rather than decrease work-family conflict (Allen, Golden, and Shockley 2015; Yucel and Chung 2023). This is largely because homeworking can blur the boundaries between work and private sphere, leading to increase in housework or paid work, or both, largely depending on one's gender – and the roles attributed to them by social norms (Chung 2020; Clark 2000; Kurowska 2020).

Domestic work is housework and childcare that individuals perform to maintain family and home (Coltrane 2000). Housework activities include cooking, cleaning, buying groceries and laundry, which are labelled as routine tasks and considered less enjoyable as non-routine tasks, i.e., taking care of the garden, repairs and bills (Coltrane 2000). Research on the unequal division of housework and childcare (e.g., Chung and Booker 2023; Petts, Carlson, and Pepin 2021) mainly focuses on routine tasks.

How partners divide domestic work can be explained by several theories. According to the time availability perspective (Huber and Spitze 1981), a partner with more time available will do more domestic work relative to the partner who has less time. Relative resources theory argues that the partner with more resources, especially with the potential to gain more market income, would carry out a smaller share of the domestic work (Becker 1991). For example, those with higher market income, higher education would do less domestic work. These perspectives are gender neutral, i.e., assuming that regardless of gender, an individual with more time available or less resources will carry out more domestic work. The “doing gender” approach argue that gender norms shape who does more housework, because men and women are socialized to perform different roles in the society, men as the breadwinner and women as the homemaker or caregiver (West and Zimmerman 1987a). In line with this perspective, societal gender norms define how housework is distributed. In most countries, women spend more time on housework compared to men (Eurofound 2022), but in countries with more egalitarian gender norms (i.e., Denmark, Norway), the gap between men and women in the domestic labour hours is smaller (Kan, Sullivan, and Gershuny 2011).

Homeworking can shape how heterosexual couples divide household responsibilities (Sullivan and Lewis 2001). The new opportunity for flexibility model (Huws et al., 1996) argues that homeworking can allow gender roles to converge, where women can take a larger role in “breadwinning” and men in domestic tasks. This is because homeworking provides workers with more time and flexibility to shape work around their family and personal demands. In other words, (long hours) working in the office may have prevented men from taking a larger role in the household, but with homeworking men are able to save commuting time and have flexibility at work to better engage in domestic work. On the other hand, the flexibility and permeability that homeworking provides have been shown to improve labour market participation of women with care responsibilities (Chung and van der Horst 2018). Therefore, homeworking can provide an opportunity for couples the potential to break the patterns of traditional gender roles if they wish to do so. On the contrary, the exploitation model (Haddon and Silverstone 1993) sees homeworking as a tool to better exploit women’s labour by enabling women to take more part in paid employment, namely work longer hours, without disrupting the unequal division of domestic work within the household (Chung and van der Lippe, 2020). Similarly, men may adhere to their gender role

and use the blurred boundaries between work and home to do more paid work rather than engage more in unpaid domestic work (Chung, 2022).

Combining the theories of division of domestic work and homeworking models, we can either expect that homeworking will enhance gender equality by giving the opportunity for men to engage in the household chores, relieving their female partners' load. Alternatively, it might exacerbate gender inequality where women do much more housework when homeworking, with potential negative career consequence due to this (Chung 2020), whereas men enact the masculine role and do more paid work yet even less housework when homeworking (Marsh and Musson 2008). According to the gender deviance neutralization theory (Bittman et al. 2003), when men have more time to contribute to domestic work due to loss of employment, they still do less than their partner to compensate for the deviation from the role due to losing their male-breadwinning status. Men's masculine identities may also be threatened when working flexibly, as flexible working, especially for care purposes, is seen as a feminine in addition to deviating away from the ideal worker norm (Borgkvist et al. 2021; Rudman and Mescher 2013). Since homeworking was not (and is not) yet a typical and normalized setting for the male worker, men may end up doing less unpaid work, even when it is possible to do more, to compensate for the deviation from the norm.

In sum, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 1a:** Homeworking (WFH) is associated with a higher contribution to domestic work for both men and women.

**Hypothesis 1b:** WFH is associated with a higher contribution to domestic work for women, but not for men.

## 2.2 The role of gender role attitudes

Gender role attitudes (GRA) are views held by individuals regarding the roles men and women should play in society (van der Horst 2014). The way men and women will distribute domestic duties when homeworking relates to their beliefs about the gender (Kan et al., 2011; Schober, 2013). Psychology research on the relationship between attitudes and behaviour also suggests that individuals' behaviour is in line with their attitudes (Cooper and Croyle 1984) and that people act in accordance with their identity (Cast 2003). Empirical research supports this theoretical assumption and shows that egalitarian men are more likely to contribute to housework and childcare (Greenstein 1996; Grunow and Baur 2014), while women who viewed family as their primary sphere would do more housework (Nitsche

and Grunow 2018; Schober 2013) and women with egalitarian attitudes participate more in paid work (Cunningham 2008).

Gender role attitudes are multi-dimensional in that different beliefs about men and women's role do not necessarily align in the traditional – egalitarian spectrum for all individuals (Knight and Brinton, 2017). Based on the existing studies, we see that the beliefs around mother's employment, primacy of family or work for women, men's role in the family, and finally beliefs around couple's income generation roles can all constitute as different attitudinal dimensions where attitudinal ambivalence can be found, namely that individuals can hold egalitarian views on some dimensions and the traditional ones on the other (Sjober, 2010). In this respect it is important to distinguish between different types of GRAs when exploring how it can moderate the association between homeworking and the division of housework rather than considering them as one single dimension. As the focus of our study is on the division of domestic work, the most relevant GRAs are the perception around women's role with regards to family and work and men's role in the household.

How couples view the gender roles can especially matter when homeworking. Border theory (Clark, 2000) argues that flexibility and permeability in the work-family life boundary will result in the expansion of the sphere an individual identifies with more. This is why we expect that workers with different GRAs will have different priorities with regards to how they devote their additional resources of time and energy saved from not having to commute into work. Previous qualitative evidence shows that couples with more egalitarian GRAs used flexibility to divide domestic chores equally whereas women with traditional GRAs viewed flexibility as an opportunity to do more housework and childcare chores (Sullivan and Smithson 2007). Similarly, Yucel and Chung (2023) demonstrate that homeworking increased work-to-family interferences among women with egalitarian GRA while it increased family-to-work interference among women with traditional GRA. GRA did not play a role for men in this relationship. This finding is in line with the expectation that women with traditional views will identify more with a homemaker and expand the domestic work, while women with egalitarian views will focus more on the expansion of paid work when homeworking.

Based on these previous studies, we expect that it is especially women who believe that their primary focus is the family and that men should not do household chores (i.e., traditional GRAs) who will be increasing their share of domestic work when homeworking, whereas this will not be the case for women with egalitarian GRAs. On the other hand, men with egalitarian GRAs will be those who will use the newly obtained flexibility in their work to try to be more involved in housework and childcare, whereas homeworking men with traditional GRAs are unlikely to do additional domestic work. We

expect that for men particularly the attitudes towards men's role in the household will matter, while the women role in the work and family might not be important.

Therefore, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 2a** WFH is associated with a higher contribution to domestic work among women with traditional GRA compared to women with egalitarian GRA.

**Hypothesis 2b** WFH is associated with a lower contribution to domestic work among men with traditional GRA compared to men with egalitarian GRA.

### 2.3 The COVID-19 context

The pandemic period provides us with a unique opportunity to look at the association between homeworking and division of housework among heterosexual couples. From March until July 2020 and from about December 2020 to May 2021 Germany like many countries entered a strict lockdown to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Schools, day-care, restaurants, and nonessential retail were closed, and many employees were either temporary dismissed or had to work from home. The sudden expansion of homeworking, and the fact that it has been imposed by the government as a way to reduce the spread of the virus, has been shown to have reduced stigmatised views against homeworkers (Abendroth et al. 2022). This may have enabled parents, especially fathers, to use flexible working to be more involved in housework and childcare without the fear of repercussion on their careers (Chung 2022). What is more, due to school closures, not only was there more housework and childcare to be carried, there was more of an understanding that workers, especially parents, had to address both care and work demands during the lockdown periods (Chung et al. 2020; Petts, Carlson, and Pepin 2021; Zoch, Bächmann, and Vicari 2022). However, again here we expect that these patterns would vary across individuals with different views around gender roles. In such time of crisis, and with the increased demand for domestic work, workers with a more traditional view of gender roles may have reverted more to their assumed roles with a clearer division of roles, where men fully take on the breadwinning role and women the care giving roles. On the other hand, those with a more egalitarian GRA may have welcomed this new opportunity provided by the pandemic to enact their ideal division of labour (Milkie et al., 2002) to divide the increased domestic work more equally.

The research on the consequences of COVID initially proposed and found evidence for two opposing hypotheses: 1) the retraditionalisation hypothesis (Allmendinger 2020) that the pandemic will bring back the traditional unequal division of household chores (Çoban 2022; Nagy et al. 2023; Wojnicka and Kubisa 2023), and 2) the equalising hypothesis (Craig and Churchill 2021; Steinmetz et al. 2022)

that changes in the working hours, income, time and location of work will provide space for both partners to engage more equally in the domestic work. Until now, the studies showed evidence for both, depending on the country and circumstances, the male partner contribution either relatively increased or decreased (Hipp and Bünning 2021; Zamberlan, Gioachin, and Gritti 2022).

Turning to the role of gender role attitudes (GRA), in the sudden and uncertain circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent changes in the composition of working hours and location of work (Chung 2022); individuals might enact following their attitudes even when they gain the resources to expand the domestic work hours. As previous research shows (Schober 2013) following some life events, i.e., childbirth, individual gender role attitudes might predict the division of housework. Comparably, although more abruptly, division of housework and childcare might change during COVID-19 pandemic with variation across gender role attitudes. Similarly to the discussion in the previous section, homeworking women with the traditional GRA will increase their participation in domestic chores particularly during COVID-19. Among homeworking men, on the contrary, those with egalitarian GRA will increase their contribution to unpaid work.

Thus, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 3a:** WFH is associated with a higher contribution to domestic work for both men and women during COVID-19.

**Hypothesis 3b** WFH is associated with a higher contribution to domestic work among women with traditional GRA compared to women with egalitarian GRA during the COVID-19.

**Hypothesis 3c** WFH is associated with a lower contribution to domestic work among men with traditional GRA compared to men with egalitarian GRA during the COVID-19.

### 3 Data and Methods

To analyse how GRA within a couple moderate the relationship between homeworking and the distribution of domestic work, we use data from the German Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics Survey (pairfam) (Brüderl et al. 2022). Pairfam includes extensive information on gender role attitudes, working arrangements, and the relative distribution of household tasks. Pairfam data has been collected yearly since 2008. It includes three birth cohorts (1971-73, 1981-83, 1991-93). We use the pre-pandemic waves 1-12 conducted from 2008/9 to 2019/20 and the pandemic wave 13 collected between November 2020 and April 2021. Moreover, part of the wave 12 sample was conducted in 2020 when the first lockdown begun. We include those cases and create a control variable COVID-19 to indicate which cases were affected by the lockdown measures and the homeworking expansion. The



analytical sample comprises heterosexual couples with children due to the low number of cases among same-sex couples. The sample consists of 13981 total observations with 957 men and 1180 women participating in at least three waves during the observed period (unbalanced panel).

We assess the overall and gendered effect of homeworking by pooling men and women in the same models. To explore the role of the GRA, we build separate models for men and women. We apply hybrid models (Allison 2009) to explore the within individual change in the homeworking status and how it affected the relative division of housework and childcare and the between variation among different groups. The operationalization of the variables is presented below with more information in the appendix, Table 1.

### **3.1 Dependent variable: Division of housework and childcare**

The individuals relatively assess their contribution to the division of housework (“washing, cooking, cleaning” are asked simultaneously) and childcare (“who is taking care of the children”). The possible answers range from 1 ‘(Almost) completely my partner’ to 5 ‘(Almost) completely me’. We recode this variable from 0 (partner doing almost all the housework/childcare) to 1 (respondent doing almost all the housework/childcare).

### **3.2 Independent variable: Homeworking (WFH)**

Homeworking is operationalized in the following way: 0 is unchanging work location without homeworking, 1 is unchanging a work location with a possibility of homeworking, or always homeworking.

### **3.3 Moderating variable: Gender role attitudes (GRA)**

The following statements are available to measure gender role attitudes: 1) “Women should be more concerned about their family than about their career”; 2) “Men should participate in housework to the same extent as women”; 3) “A child under 6 will suffer from having a working mother” and 4) “Children often suffer because their fathers spend too much time at work”. Respondents can assess these statements on a scale from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5). In the appendix, Figure 2, we present the distribution of answers to how much people agree with the statements. Creating an index for all or subsamples of these statements is not possible due to the low internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha is 0.46 for all, 0.35 for the first two, 0.45 for the last two, 0.49 for the first and the third). Therefore, based on previous studies, two statements are used to indicate two distinct GRA dimensions. We use the

statement “Men should participate in housework to the same extent as women” (GRA 1) to indicate attitudes around men’s roles in the domestic sphere and the statement “Women should be more concerned about their family than about their career” (GRA 2) to indicate the respondent’s perception of women’s roles (the correlation between the two is 0.2). We recode the scale for the statements as a binary variable. For GRA 1, 0 = the individuals with egalitarian GRAs (who strongly agree, 1) and 1 = the rest of the individuals to have a more balanced distribution (only 20% of respondents reported 1-3 answers on the original scale). For GRA 2, 0 = individuals with the egalitarian GRA’s (who disagreed (1,2) with the statement) and 1 = the individuals with traditional GRAs (who agreed (4,5) with the statement and neither agreed nor disagreed (3)). Following previous studies (Nitsche and Grunow 2018) we treat GRA as a time constant variable measured at the start of the observation period (wave 1) to avoid feedback loop between acquired resources and individual attitudes.

### **3.4 Control variables**

Following previous research (Chung and Booker 2023; Yucel and Chung 2023) we control for the gender, working hours, number of children and presence of preschool children in the household, education and managerial/professional occupation status, East/West residency and migration background. Since the division of domestic work remains gendered, we control for the respondents’ gender. Based on the time availability perspective, we control for the working hours. To take into account the household demands, we use presence of pre-school children, the number of children and marital status. Following the relative resources, we include education, professional/managerial occupation status, and her share of income as controls. Finally, to account for the potential cultural variation, we control for East/West residency in Germany, migration background, and age.

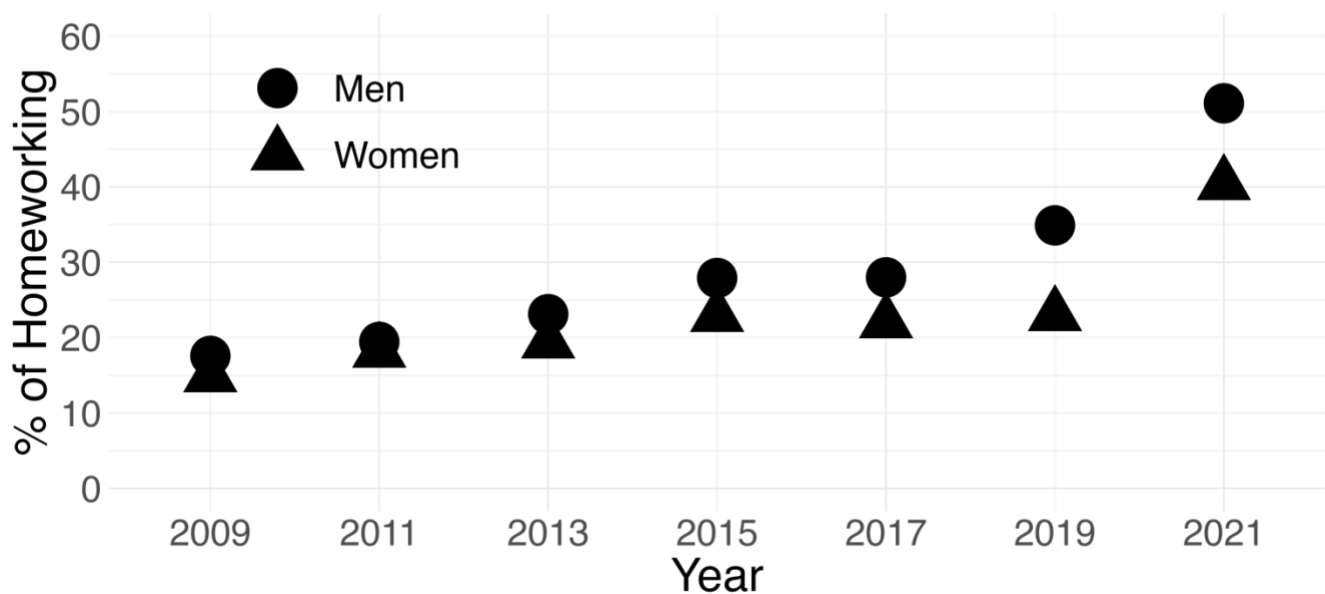
## **4 Results**

### **4.1 Descriptive statistics**

First, we present the descriptive findings (appendix, Table 2) for distribution of domestic work, homeworking, gender role attitudes and control variables separately for men and women. As for the outcome variable, women are doing for the most part housework and childcare (0.72 and 0.67 respectively). On average, about 19% of women and 22% of men do homeworking or have the possibility to do so. As for the statement about men doing housework to the same extent as women, most of the women strongly agree (67%), but among men about a half strongly supports this statement (51%). There is almost no difference between men and women for the statement on women’s role in the family, about 40% disagree that women should focus more on the family than on the career. With respect to controls,

more men than women report to be in professional or managerial occupations (ISCO 1-3). About 2/3 of the respondents have pre-school children in their household and, generally, a family has 1 or 2 children. On average, men work 20 hours more than women per week. The average age of the respondents is 35 years old. About a half have a higher education certificate. Women with children provide about 30% household income.

We further show the percentage of men and women homeworking over the years that we observe in the panel (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows that over the last 13 years men worked from home more often than women and this gap became wider during COVID-19 (2020-2021). About 20% of women worked from home or had a possibility to do so prior to the pandemic and during the lockdown period it rose to 40%. About 25-30% of men worked from home before the pandemic and in 2021 almost a half of men (could) worked from home. These gender differences might be attributed to occupational variations and that less women hold jobs that could be done from home.



**Figure 1.** Share of men and women homeworking from 2008/9 (wave 1) to 2020/21 (wave 13).

#### 4.2 Homeworking, gender, and gender role attitudes

To test the hypotheses 1a and 1b in Table 2 we first examine how changes in the homeworking patterns are associated with changes in the share of housework and childcare. Looking at the total sample (Model 3-1), there were no differences between workers with and without access to homeworking in their share of washing, cleaning, cooking (between effects). Similarly, gaining access to homeworking

did not change the housework contribution of the worker either (within effects). Moreover, there was no evidence for variation across gender with respect to doing housework and homeworking (Model 3-2). The situation was different for the division of childcare. Overall, workers with access to homeworking did a larger share of childcare compared to those working on site (Model 3-3, between coefficient 0.02,  $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, workers who gained access to homeworking increased their childcare contribution (Model 3-3, within coefficient 0.01,  $p < 0.05$ ). These associations varied across gender. Women generally carried out a larger share of childcare (Model 3-4, woman coefficient 0.20,  $p < 0.001$ ), and those who were homeworking did an even larger share (Model 3-4, between WFH\*woman interaction term coefficient 0.07,  $p < 0.001$ ). Examining changes within individuals, although men who gained access to homeworking tended to increase their share of childcare slightly (Model 3-4, within effects coefficient 0.02  $p < 0.001$ ), this was not true for women (Model 3-4, within WFH\*woman interaction term coefficient -0.02,  $p < 0.1$ ). Therefore, these results support hypotheses 1a and 1b, but only for childcare division. Homeworking is associated with a higher contribution to childcare and particularly for women.

**Table 1.** Hybrid regression models. Dependent variable: relative contribution to housework and childcare (1 = A respondent is doing all, 0 = a partner is doing all). Pairfam data, waves 1-13. Controlled for occupation, age, number of working hours, marital status, university diploma, preschool children, number of children, her income share, East/West residence and migration status, COVID-19.

	<b>Model 3-1</b>	<b>Model 3-2</b>	<b>Model 3-3</b>	<b>Model 3-4</b>
	<b>Housework</b>	<b>Housework</b>	<b>Childcare</b>	<b>Childcare</b>
(Intercept)	0.55 *** (0.05)	0.54 *** (0.05)	0.53 *** (0.04)	0.54 *** (0.04)
<b>Between Effects</b>				
Homeworking (WFH)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 * (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Woman	0.34 *** (0.01)	0.35 *** (0.01)	0.22 *** (0.01)	0.20 *** (0.01)
WFH*Woman		-0.02 (0.02)		0.07 *** (0.02)
<b>Within Effects</b>				
Homeworking (WFH)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 * (0.00)	0.02 ** (0.01)
WFH*Woman		-0.01 (0.01)		-0.02 + (0.01)

	<b>Model 3-1</b>	<b>Model 3-2</b>	<b>Model 3-3</b>	<b>Model 3-4</b>
	<b>Housework</b>	<b>Housework</b>	<b>Childcare</b>	<b>Childcare</b>
Num. obs.	13981	13981	13981	13981
N obs. per wave	2137	2137	2137	2137
N waves	13	13	13	13

+p<0.1; \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*0.001

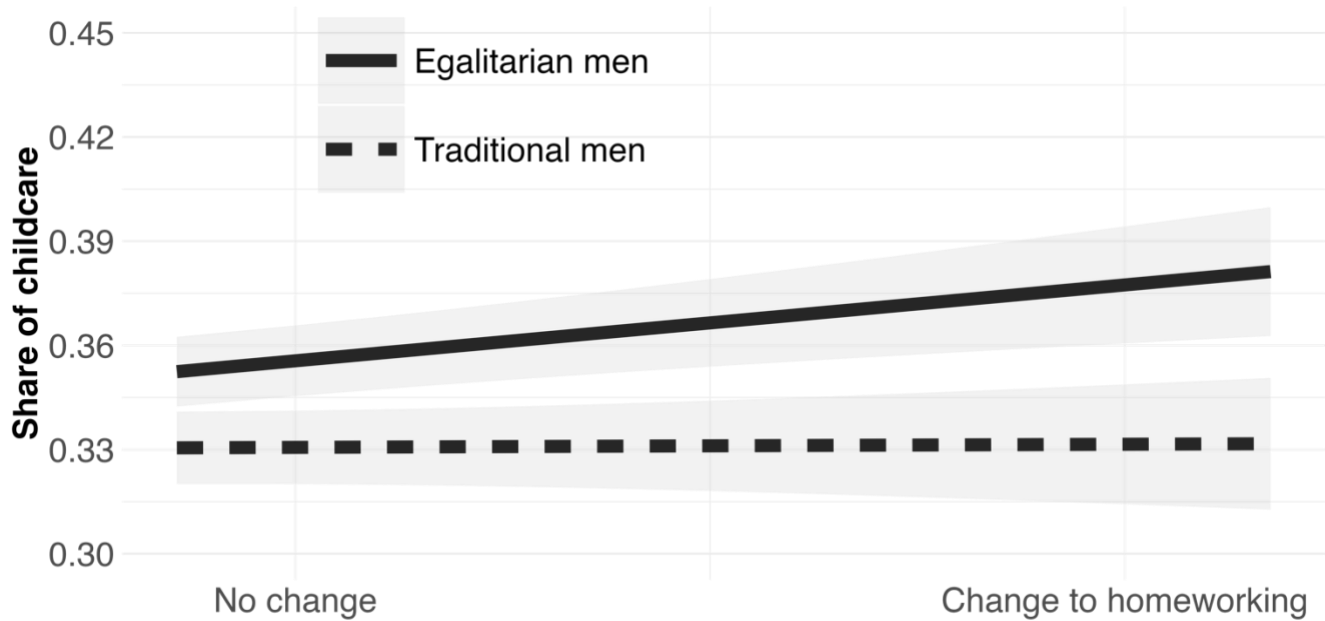
To test the hypotheses 2a and 2b on how gender role attitudes moderate the relationship between homeworking and division of housework and childcare, we present the results in Table 2 for men and in Table 3 for women. Overall, when distinguishing individuals based on their views around men’s role in the household (GRA 1), men with traditional GRAs did a lesser share of housework (Model 4-2, coefficient -0.06,  $p < 0.001$ ) and childcare (Model 4-5, coefficient -0.03,  $p < 0.01$ ) compared to men with egalitarian GRA. When we compared men with different attitudes towards women’s roles (Models 4-3 and 4-6), namely ‘Women should be more concerned about their family than about their career’ (GRA 2), there were no differences. Next, we examined how GRAs shape men’s homeworking with regards to their contribution to housework and childcare. No significant results were found with the exception of how gaining homeworking access is associated with change in men’s share in childcare. Egalitarian men contribute to a higher share of childcare when they gain access to homeworking (Model 4-5, within coefficient 0.02,  $p < 0.01$ ), whereas this was not the case for men with traditional GRA (Model 4-5, within interaction term coefficient -0.03,  $p < 0.05$ ). Of the different GRAs, it is men’s attitude towards men’s housework contribution that matters. Figure 2 depicts the result of Model 4-5 on the relationship between gaining access to homeworking and the division of childcare for traditional and egalitarian men. Traditional men do not change their contribution to childcare when gaining access to homeworking, while egalitarian men started contributing more to childcare.

**Table 2.** Hybrid regression models for **men**. Dependent variable: relative contribution to housework and childcare (1 = Man is doing all, 0 = Woman is doing all). Pairfam data, waves 1-13. Controlled for occupation, age, number of working hours, marital status, university diploma, preschool children, number of children, her income share, East/West residence and migration status.

	<b>Model 4-1</b>	<b>Model 4-2</b>	<b>Model 4-3</b>	<b>Model 4-4</b>	<b>Model 4-5</b>	<b>Model 4-6</b>
	<b>Housework</b>	<b>Housework</b>	<b>Housework</b>	<b>Childcare</b>	<b>Childcare</b>	<b>Childcare</b>
	<b>Men</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Men</b>
(Intercept)	0.43 *** (0.07)	0.46 *** (0.06)	0.45 *** (0.07)	0.48 *** (0.05)	0.48 *** (0.05)	0.43 *** (0.07)
<b>Between Effects</b>						
Homeworking (WFH)	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)
Traditional GRA 1		-0.06 ***			-0.03 **	

	Model 4-1 Housework Men	Model 4-2 Housework Men	Model 4-3 Housework Men	Model 4-4 Childcare Men	Model 4-5 Childcare Men	Model 4-6 Childcare Men
Traditional GRA 2		(0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)		(0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
WFH*Traditional GRA 1		0.00 (0.02)			0.02 (0.02)	
WFH*Traditional GRA 2			-0.05 + (0.03)			0.00 (0.02)
<b>Within Effects</b>						
Homeworking (WFH)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 + (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
WFH*Traditional GRA 1		-0.02 + (0.01)			-0.03 * (0.01)	
WFH*Traditional GRA 2			0.00 (0.01)			-0.00 (0.01)
Num. obs.	6416	6416	6416	6416	6416	6416
N obs. per wave	957	957	957	957	957	957
N waves	13	13	13	13	13	13

+p<0.1; \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*0.001



**Figure 2.** Homeworking and the share of childcare (within-effect) for men. GRA 1: “Men should participate in housework to the same extent as women”.

Table 3 demonstrates the moderating GRAs role in the association between homeworking and division of housework and childcare for women. Overall, traditional women contributed more to housework (Model 5-2, coefficient 0.06,  $p < 0.001$ ) and childcare (Model 5-5, coefficient 0.03,  $p <$

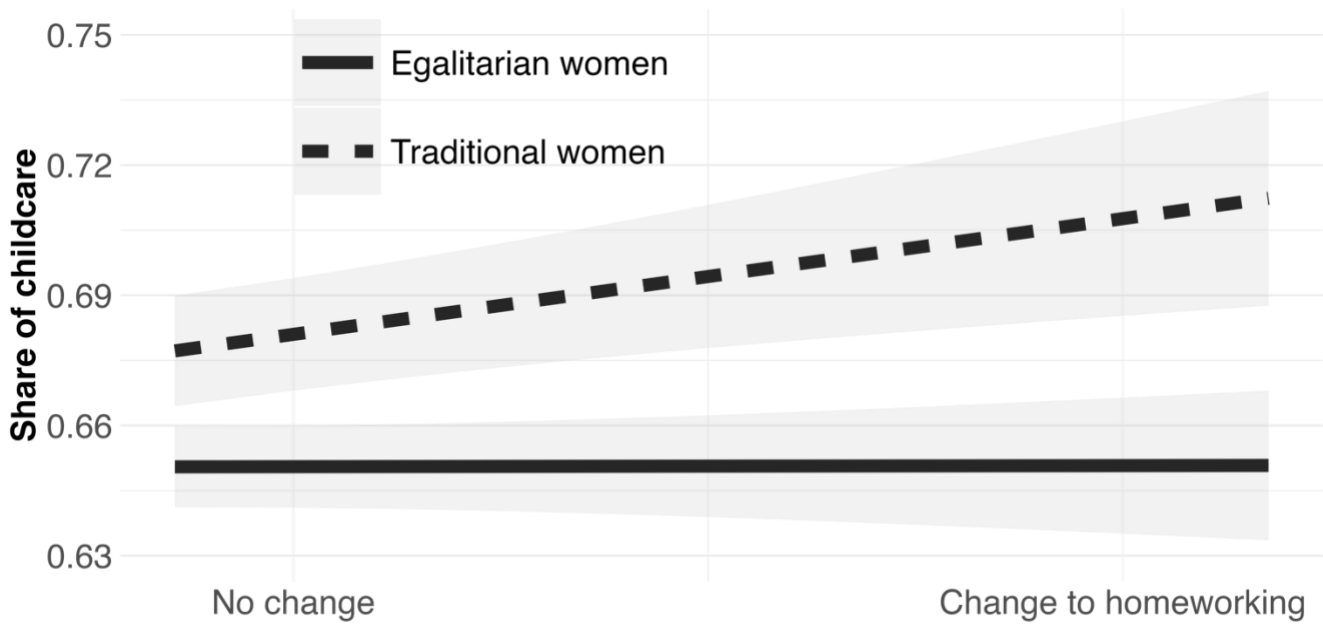
0.001). We find that women with traditional views on men’s role in the household (GRA1), when gaining access to homeworking tended to increase their contribution to housework more, compared to their egalitarian counterparts (Model 5-2, within effects, interaction term coefficient 0.03,  $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, women who hold traditional views regarding men’s roles (GRA1), as well as women’s roles (GRA2), when gaining homeworking access contributed more to childcare than those with egalitarian GRAs (Model 5-5, within interaction term coefficient 0.04,  $p < 0.01$  and Model 5-6, within interaction term coefficient 0.03,  $p < 0.05$ ). The former result is depicted in Figure 3, showing that contribution to childcare among egalitarian women did not change when gaining access to homeworking, while traditional women did more childcare. The results support our hypothesis 2a that traditional women increase their share of housework and childcare when gaining access to homeworking. Nevertheless, there is some variation for the GRA measure, attitudes towards men’s participation in housework were particularly relevant for explaining housework and childcare contribution, while the GRA on women’s role in family and a career was relevant only for the childcare. For men, only the GRA towards men’s housework contribution mattered and only for the increase in the childcare participation. Thus, hypothesis 2b is only partially supported.

**Table 3.** Hybrid regression models for **women**. Dependent variable: relative contribution to housework and childcare (1 = Woman is doing all, 0 = Man is doing all). Pairfam data, waves 1-13. Controlled for occupation, age, number of working hours, marital status, university diploma, preschool children, number of children, her income share, East/West residence and migration status.

	<b>Model 5-1</b>	<b>Model 5-2</b>	<b>Model 5-3</b>	<b>Model 5-4</b>	<b>Model 5-5</b>	<b>Model 5-6</b>
	<b>Housework</b>	<b>Housework</b>	<b>Housework</b>	<b>Childcare</b>	<b>Childcare</b>	<b>Childcare</b>
	<b>Women</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Women</b>
(Intercept)	0.88 *** (0.07)	0.86 *** (0.07)	0.88 *** (0.07)	0.67 *** (0.06)	0.66 *** (0.06)	0.68 *** (0.06)
<b>Between Effects</b>						
Homeworking (WFH)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.04 ** (0.01)	0.04 ** (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Traditional GRA 1		0.06 *** (0.01)			0.03 ** (0.01)	
Traditional GRA 2			-0.00 (0.01)			-0.01 (0.01)
WFH*Traditional GRA 1		-0.02 (0.03)			-0.01 (0.02)	
WFH*Traditional GRA 2			0.00 (0.03)			0.03 (0.02)
<b>Within Effects</b>						
Homeworking (WFH)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)

	Model 5-1 Housework Women	Model 5-2 Housework Women	Model 5-3 Housework Women	Model 5-4 Childcare Women	Model 5-5 Childcare Women	Model 5-6 Childcare Women
WFH*Traditional GRA 1		0.03 *			0.04 **	
		(0.01)			(0.01)	
WFH*Traditional GRA 2			0.00			0.03 *
			(0.01)			(0.01)
Num. obs.	7565	7565	7565	7565	7565	7565
N obs. per wave	1180	1180	1180	1180	1180	1180
N waves	13	13	13	13	13	13

+p<0.1; \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*0.001



**Figure 3.** Homeworking and the share of childcare (within-effect) for Women. GRA 1: “Men should participate in housework to the same extent as women”.

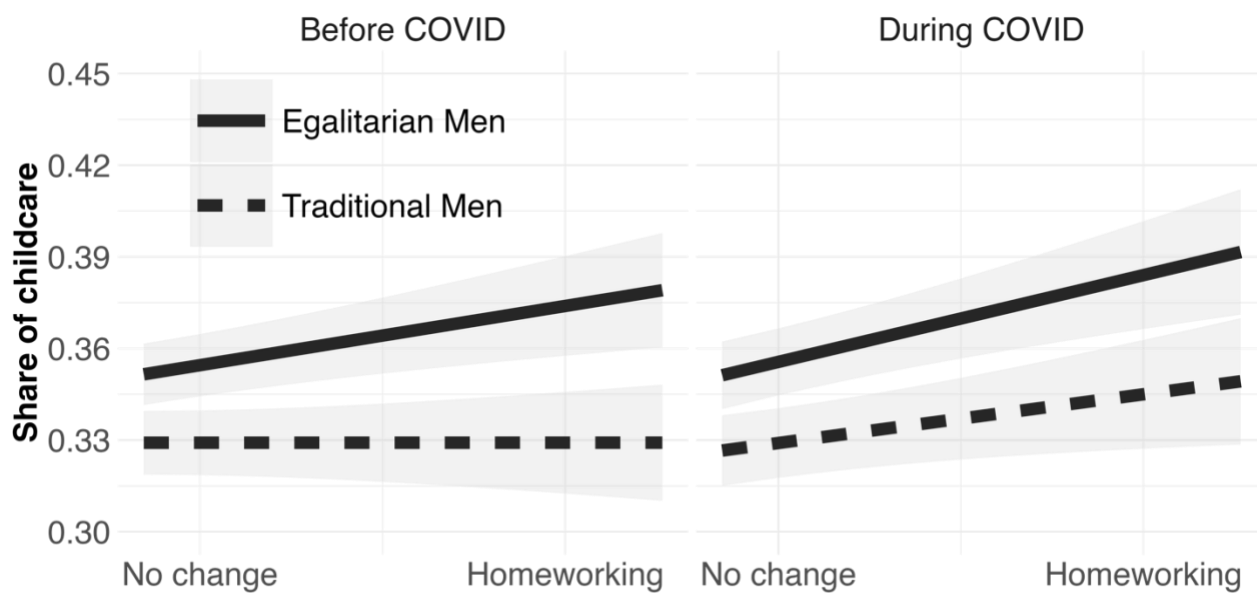
### 4.3 COVID-19 Context

During COVID-19 pandemic there was an enormous homeworking expansion. This subsection presents the sensitivity analysis of the role of that period in the relationship between homeworking and division of domestic chores. In the appendix, Section 6 (Tables 6-8), we present the results for the same models as above, but without the wave conducted during COVID (wave 13) to observe whether the increase in access to homeworking was driven by the data collected during the pandemic. As showed in Tables 6-8, the main coefficients of interest remain the same. Thus, our models capture a broader pattern of the gender role attitudes role in the relationship between homeworking and division of domestic work both prior and during the pandemic period.

To further investigate the role of COVID-19, we include interaction terms between gaining access to homeworking, whether it happened during the pandemic period and gender, and finally, whether the gender role

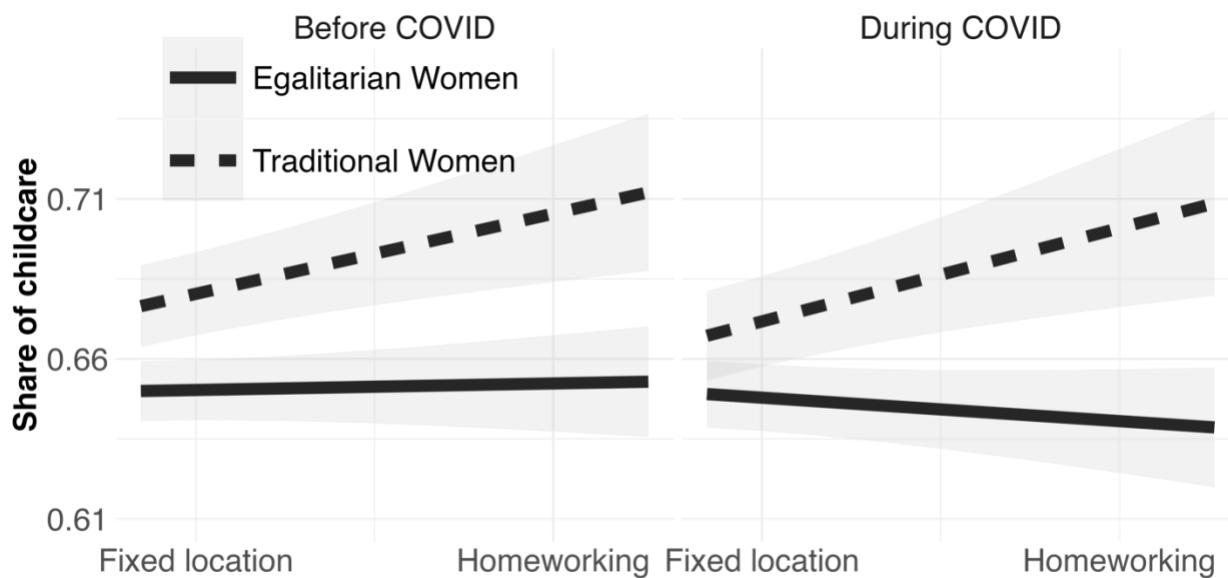


attitudes played a role in this relationship during the pandemic (Appendix, Section 7, Tables 9-11). Partially supporting the Hypothesis 3a, during the pandemic when gaining access to homeworking men increased their contribution to childcare, while there was no major increase among homeworking women. Turning to the GRA, Hypothesis 3c is not supported, during the pandemic both men with traditional and egalitarian GRA increased their contribution to childcare, albeit to a varying degree as shown in Figure 4. In other words, during the increased demands for childcare and when homeworking was normalised it seems that even traditionally minded men were able to make use of homeworking practices to engage more in childcare.



**Figure 4.** Change to homeworking and the division of childcare (within-effect) for men before and during COVID-19 pandemic. GRA 1: “Men should participate in housework to the same extent as women”.

The results for women in the Table 11 (appendix) and Figure 5 (below), indicate that gender role attitudes did play a role during the pandemic. As shown in Figure 7, when gaining access to homeworking traditional women increased their contribution to childcare both prior to and during the pandemic, while egalitarian women childcare contributions did not increase due to homeworking and in the pandemic their share of childcare even slightly decreased. This may be because during the pandemic there may have been more men at home to provide some of the caregiving of children, which may have provided egalitarian women a relief from taking on the bulk of childcare. We should be mindful that here we are not looking at absolute amount of childcare provided but merely the division, meaning that although the division may have become more equal this does not entail the amount of childcare carried out reduced (see also, Chung et al., 2021). Therefore, Hypothesis 3b is supported, homeworking women with traditional gender role attitudes increased their childcare contribution, whereas men increased their contribution regardless of the attitudes.



**Figure 5.** Change to homeworking and the share of childcare (within-effect) for women before and during COVID-19. GRA 1: “Men should participate in housework to the same extent as women”.

## 5 Discussion and conclusion

Homeworking has been introduced as a policy that can enable workers to have a better work-life balance by saving their commuting costs and providing more work autonomy (Allen, Golden, and Shockley 2015; Noonan and Glass 2012), contributing to the gender equality both at home and in the labour market (Council of the European Union 2019). While some research supports the idea of homeworking benefiting workers, for instance, helping workers relieve tensions between work and family life (Huws and et al. 1996), others argue that it may enable the exploitation of individuals, especially women, where homeworking enables them to carry out more of both paid and unpaid work (Chung 2022; Haddon and Silverstone 1993). The use of homeworking might be gendered with women traditionally devoting the spare time to the household chores in addition to paid work, while men might be able to focus only on the later (Kurowska 2020), exacerbating the unequal division of labour across gender (Chung and van der Lippe, 2020). Previous studies (Hilbrecht et al. 2008; Lott 2019; Sullivan and Lewis 2001) have explored this assumption and analysed whether homeworking changes the relative distribution of housework and childcare among heterosexual couples. We contribute to this debate by looking at a longer time frame and looking at both between and within individual changes, including the COVID-19 pandemic which provides a unique period where homeworking was normalised. What is more, we contribute to the debate by examining how the gender role attitude of individuals may shape the use of homeworking with regards to their engagement in domestic work across gender. Thus, we expected that women with egalitarian GRAs would not necessarily increase their share of domestic work

when homeworking whereas traditional women might use the flexibility of their work to ‘do gender’. Similarly, we expected egalitarian men would be the ones to use homeworking as a way to engage more in domestic work, whereas traditional men would not. This assumption has been tested by using data from the German Family Survey in the span from 2008 to 2021.

At first glance, homeworking did not make any difference to the division of housework among heterosexual couples, however homeworkers contributed more to childcare. Nevertheless, there are differences across gender and whether we examine within or between individuals. Compared to women who worked on site, women who were homeworking carried out a larger share of childcare. However, gaining access to homeworking did not change women’s contribution to childcare. On the other hand, when men gained access to homeworking (within individual change) they seem to contribute more to childcare. On an even closer inspection, as expected, gender role attitudes mattered. Men with egalitarian GRAs generally contribute more to housework and childcare compared to men with traditional GRAs, and when egalitarian men gained access to homeworking their contribution to childcare increased even further. This was not the case for men with traditional GRAs. Similarly, women with traditional GRA did a larger share of housework and childcare compared to egalitarian women. When women with traditional GRA gained access to homeworking they increased their share in housework and childcare even further. This pattern was not observed for women with egalitarian GRAs. The type of GRA mattered. For men, their perception of men’s contribution to housework mattered more, whereas for women, both their perception of men’s role in the household as well as their attitudes towards women’s role in family and career mattered. Furthermore, we investigated whether gender role attitudes mattered in the COVID-19 pandemic and the expansion of homeworking. The findings are similar to the ones observed in the longer time span for women yet not for men. During the pandemic, men who gained access to homeworking increased their contribution to childcare regardless of their GRAs.

The study has some limitations. The division of housework and childcare is not an absolute measure, but rather a perception of the individual and their share within the couple in very broad terms. Future studies could potentially use time use data and other sources to have more precise measures of the division of housework and childcare carried out by couples. Couple’s division of mental load (Churchill et al, 2021) would also be important to explore, with regards to how homeworking can help divisions of labour. Similarly, the intensity of different homeworking settings must be considered as those who are homeworking daily might differ in their household practices compared to those who are homeworking only occasionally. Homeworking variable used here measures a combination of use and access, although previous studies have shown the importance of access in explaining work-family outcomes in addition to use (Chung and van der Horst, 2018). Regardless, future studies should

distinguish between workers' access to and use of homeworking, in addition to the frequency of homeworking to better understand the dynamics of home and hybrid working on the division of labour within couples. Additionally, it is important to consider the role of organizations, i.e., supervisors, in providing access to homeworking (Hennekam, Kelland, and Dumazert 2023). Moreover, studies need to account for the changes in the gender role attitudes over the life course and particularly how people adapt their values due to different critical events, such as childbirth or COVID-19 (Vandecasteele et al. 2022).

Regardless, this study has provided important contributions to the on-going debate around whether the expansion of homeworking practices can result in a more egalitarian division of labour within households. Unlike the fears of previous studies (Chung 2022; Hilbrecht et al. 2008; Sullivan and Lewis 2001), the results of this study suggest that homeworking has the potential to provide with a more equal division of labour in the household. However, this largely depends on individuals' and in a way society's views around gender roles. Conservative attitudes towards the role of men and women might reproduce a more unequal distribution of labour particularly when homeworking. In other words, if we want homeworking to pave the way to gender equality, we need to ensure that the gender normative context in which it is introduced changes. For instance, ensuring that all individuals regardless their gender are treated equally starting from intentional interventions in early education to eliminate gender biases would be useful. Guaranteeing that fathers take up the parental leave especially for over two months periods independently without the mothers being at home (Bünning 2015), could also help change society and individual's perceptions of gender roles. Thus, only with measures that support gender egalitarianism, homeworking will be able to support a more equal distribution of domestic work. The expansion of homeworking can pave a way for greater gender equality if we are able to provide the right contexts for this to happen.

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