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Why do large gender inequalities in everyday life persist even as women strengthen their attachment to paid work?
Existing evidence shows that women continue to do more unpaid work than men, but much of that evidence is based on individual diaries, says little about how inequality is jointly organized within couples, and rarely links daily time allocation to directly measured gender attitudes.
This paper addresses that gap using the TIMES Observatory, an original survey of 1,928 co-resident couples with at least one child younger than 11 in Emilia-Romagna or Campania. The data combine matched partner diaries for one weekday and one weekend day with rich socio-economic information and direct measures of gender norms.
We document three main findings.
First, women do substantially more unpaid work and spend more time with children, while men do more paid work and enjoy more leisure without children.
Second, these asymmetries remain sizeable even among dual full-time couples, implying that stronger female labor-market attachment does not by itself equalize daily life.
Third, more traditional gender attitudes—especially among men—are descriptively associated with lower male participation in childcare and domestic work and with wider gaps in discretionary leisure.
The analysis is descriptive rather than causal, but it shows that gender inequality within couples is

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Gender, Unpaid Work, and Social Norms in Young Italian Families: Evidence from Couples Time Diaries

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April 20, 2026

Abstract

Why do large gender inequalities in everyday life persist even as women strengthen their attachment to paid work? Existing evidence shows that women continue to do more unpaid work than men, but much of that evidence is based on individual diaries, says little about how inequality arises within couples, and rarely links daily time allocation to directly measured gender attitudes. This paper addresses that gap using the TIMES Observatory, an original and very recent survey of 1,928 co-resident couples with at least one child younger than 11 in Emilia-Romagna or Campania. The data combine matched partner diaries for one weekday and one weekend day with rich socio-economic information and direct measures of gender norms. We document three main findings. First, women do substantially more unpaid work and spend more time with children, while men do more paid work and enjoy more leisure without children. Second, these asymmetries remain sizeable even among dual full-time couples, implying that stronger female labor-market attachment does not by itself equalize daily life. Third, more traditional gender attitudes—especially among men—are descriptively associated with lower male participation in childcare and domestic work and with wider gaps in discretionary leisure. The analysis is descriptive rather than causal, but it shows that gender inequality within couples is visible not only in the amount of work performed, but also in the distribution of time that is genuinely discretionary.

Keywords: gender inequality; unpaid work; time-use; social norms; time-use diaries.
JEL codes: J16, J22, D13, J13

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1. Introduction

Gender inequality is not only a question of wages, employment, or promotion. It is also visible in the way families organize the twenty-four hours of the day. In households with children, the allocation of time to paid work, domestic work, childcare, and leisure shapes not only future earnings and career trajectories, but also current well-being, autonomy, and the quality of family life. The daily division of time is therefore itself an outcome of substantive interest: it reveals how constraints, responsibilities, and opportunities are distributed within households.

This paper studies a simple but widely recognized puzzle. Over recent decades, women have strengthened their labor-market attachment in most high-income countries, including Italy. Yet convergence in paid work has not been matched by equivalent convergence in unpaid work and discretionary leisure. In many households, women have moved closer to men in market work without men moving equally closer to women in domestic work and childcare. As a result, apparent progress in equality can coexist with persistent asymmetries in everyday well-being.

A large literature already documents gender differences in time allocation. Research in family economics has long treated time as central to household production, specialization, bargaining, and identity [7, 15, 10, 11, 2, 3]. Cross-country diary evidence shows that women continue to do more unpaid work and men more paid work, although the magnitude of the gap varies across institutional and cultural settings [1, 14, 9, 13]. Recent work also shows that gender inequality extends beyond total leisure to the way leisure is experienced, including whether it occurs in the presence of children [16]. At the same time, policy-oriented research has emphasized that time-use indicators are central to the measurement of women's empowerment and to the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care work [12].

Italy is a useful setting in which to revisit this issue. Previous evidence shows that Italy combines relatively low female employment, uneven childcare provision, and persistent traditional gender norms, all of which help sustain a wide domestic specialization gap. Using Italian time-use data, Barigozzi et al. [6] show that women increased their labor-market attachment between 2002 and 2014, but unpaid work remained highly asymmetric. Other Italian evidence finds that inequality at home narrows only under specific conditions, such as when women become primary earners or when local gender systems are less traditional [17]. Yet the most recent nationally representative Italian time-use survey is now dated, and standard sources do not allow researchers to jointly observe both partners' daily behavior and directly measured attitudes.

This paper addresses three gaps in that literature. First, many time-use studies observe only one adult per household, making it difficult to examine how inequality is jointly organized within couples. Second, the role of norms is often inferred indirectly rather than measured directly. Third, existing work has devoted less attention to constrained versus unconstrained leisure, even though this distinction is central for understanding autonomy and control over daily life.

We address these gaps using the TIMES Observatory on young families, an original survey of 1,928 co-resident couples with at least one child younger than 11 in Emilia-Romagna or Campania. TIMES has two features that are especially valuable for the present question. First, both partners complete two twenty-four-hour diaries, one for a weekday and one for a weekend day, allowing direct within-couple comparisons. Second, the diaries are linked to rich socio-economic information and to direct measures of gender-role attitudes..[1].

We make two contributions. The first is measurement. First, by using matched partner diaries jointly with gender-role attitudes of both partners, we are able to uncover the association between behaviours and norms within the same household. The second is substantive. We show that gender inequality within couples is especially visible not only in total workloads, but in the distribution of discretionary and less constrained time. This shifts attention from time-use differences in general to inequality in autonomy within daily life.

Our findings are straightforward. Women do substantially more unpaid work and spend more time with

[1]The survey also includes measures of household responsibilities and indicators of mental load and family organization, extending the scope of the analysis beyond visible time inputs alone. [5]

children, while men do more paid work and enjoy more leisure without children. These asymmetries remain sizeable even among dual full-time couples, implying that stronger female labor-market attachment is not sufficient on its own to equalize daily life. Expoliting the unique features of the TIMES survey we find that more traditional gender attitudes—especially among men—are descriptively associated with lower male participation in childcare and domestic work and with wider gaps in discretionary leisure. The analysis is deliberately descriptive rather than causal, but it identifies a set of couple-level indicators that speak directly to gender inequality in everyday well-being.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 situates the paper in the literature and clarifies the conceptual framing. Section 3 describes the TIMES data and the measurement strategy. Section 4 presents the descriptive evidence on time allocation and gender attitudes and then reports the descriptive relationship between norms and time use. Section 5 discusses the implications for the measurement of gender inequality and family well-being. Section 6 concludes.

2. Conceptual background and related literature

Three strands of literature are most relevant for the present paper.

The first comes from the economics of the family. In Becker-style models, household members allocate time according to comparative advantage, which can generate specialization within the couple [7]. In bargaining models, the resulting allocation depends on relative resources, outside options, and intrahousehold decision-making power [10, 11]. Identity-based approaches add a further margin: time allocation may also reflect the desire to conform to gendered expectations about what men and women are supposed to do within families [2]. Taken together, these frameworks imply that unequal time allocations need not be interpreted only as efficiency outcomes; they may also reflect social norms, unequal power, or both.

The second strand is the empirical time-use literature. Harmonized evidence for Europe and other high-income countries consistently shows that women spend more time in unpaid work and childcare, while men spend more time in paid work [1, 14, 13]. Burda, Hamermesh, and Weil are especially important because they show that apparent parity in total work can conceal large differences in the composition of work between paid and unpaid activities [9]. For parents, leisure adds a further layer. Recent evidence for 13 European countries shows that mothers not only have less leisure overall, but also spend more of that leisure with children, whereas fathers spend a larger share in more discretionary forms [16]. A full account of inequality therefore requires going beyond total work and examining how non-work time is constrained.

The third strand concerns gender norms, care infrastructure, and well-being. Policy-oriented work argues that time-use indicators are central to the measurement of women's empowerment because unpaid care work shapes autonomy, labor-market opportunities, and daily quality of life [12]. For Italy, the evidence points to a persistent domestic asymmetry that narrows only partially when mothers work and more clearly in less traditional territorial contexts [17, 6]. Other work based on new digital diaries shows the value of measuring not just the quantity of parental time but also the quality of parent-child interactions [8]. Recent TIMES-based research further shows that the invisible organizational responsibilities of family life—the mental load—are themselves highly gendered [5].

This paper sits at the intersection of these strands. Relative to the existing literature, its comparative advantage is not causal identification but measurement. Matched partner diaries make the within-couple organization of time directly observable. Direct measures of attitudes make it possible to relate time allocation to gender norms rather than inferring them indirectly. And the distinction between leisure with and without children speaks directly to a quality-of-life perspective, because it separates nominal non-work time from time that is genuinely discretionary.

The paper therefore advances the literature in the following ways. It uses a combination of indicators to show how gender inequality is reproduced through the daily organization of family life. The main point is not that one single mechanism explains all observed gaps, but that a set of measurable, couple-level indicators—paid work, unpaid work, time with children, leisure without children, —jointly reveal an

unequal distribution of well-being inside households.

This framing centers two analytically distinct but related dimensions of inequality. The first is the unequal allocation of domestic labor and leisure across women and men within couples. The second is inequality in discretionary time, understood as time that is less constrained by obligation, more continuous, and more available for self-directed use. This distinction matters because equal amounts of nominal leisure do not necessarily imply equal autonomy: leisure that is fragmented, contingent, or easily interrupted is qualitatively different from leisure that is secure and self-directed.

Our analysis is therefore descriptive in a strong sense. It documents the organization of daily time within couples and examines whether more traditional gender attitudes are associated with lower male participation in domestic work and wider gender gaps in discretionary time. This narrower framing better matches the design and clarifies the paper's central claim: gender inequality in couples is expressed not only through time-use gaps, but through unequal access to autonomous time.

3. Data and measurement

3.1. The TIMES project

The main empirical source is the TIMES Observatory, an original survey of co-resident couples with at least one child younger than 11 living in Emilia-Romagna or Campania, observed in the period 2024-2026. The survey collects matched information for both partners, making the couple—rather than the individual respondent—the relevant unit of observation. Each partner completes a rich socio-economic questionnaire and two twenty-four-hour time diaries, one for a weekday and one for a weekend day, through a web-based interface. Activities are recorded in ten-minute intervals and include primary and secondary activities, co-presence, and indicators of whether children are involved in the episode.

Several design features make TIMES a particularly valuable source for providing an up-to-date answer to our question. The survey explicitly targets couples with young children, a life-course stage in which time pressure, care needs, and gender specialization are especially salient. The questionnaires and diaries are collected from both partners independently but linked at the household level, which allows direct within-couple comparisons. The survey also collects attitudinal information on gender roles, maternal employment, father involvement, and household organization. In addition, the broader TIMES measurement strategy includes indicators of organizational responsibility and mental load, which strengthen the interpretation of time inequality as a multidimensional phenomenon rather than a simple difference in hours [5]. Key features of the underlying data collection protocol—including the two-stage design, quota-based recruitment across provinces and municipality size, diary validation rules, and the focus on families with children under 11—are described in detail in the TIMES endline report [4]. The report also documents that the analytical sample used for couple-level analysis contains 3,864 individuals, that is, 1,928 couples who completed both the questionnaire and the two-day diary module [4, pp. 14–17].

This design creates a dataset that is unusually informative for the study of gender inequality as a quality-of-life issue. Standard harmonized time-use surveys often observe only one household member, whereas TIMES makes it possible to compare what each partner does during the day, how responsibilities are perceived, and how these behaviors correlate with attitudes. That feature is central for a paper that treats within-household time allocation as a social indicator rather than merely an individual behavioral outcome.

3.2. Sample and key variables

The full sample includes 1,928 couples. Appendix Table 7 shows that women are on average younger than men, substantially less likely to be employed, and less likely to work full-time conditional on employment. Overall, 52% of women are employed compared with 95% of men. Among the employed, 60% of women and 80% of men work full-time. The sample is almost evenly split between Emilia-Romagna and Campania, which makes it possible to contrast two regions with markedly different labor-market contexts and gender-role environments. The endline report confirms the same broad picture: male employment

rates are substantially higher than female rates in both regions, especially in Campania, and gender gaps in unpaid work are visibly larger in the South than in Emilia-Romagna [4, pp. 14–17, 25–30].

The paper studies several indicators of time allocation. *Paid work* includes market work and commuting. *Unpaid work* combines childcare and domestic work. We also separately analyze *childcare*, *housework*, *leisure*, *leisure with children*, *leisure without children*, and *total time with children*. Appendix B provides detailed definitions. All time variables are measured in minutes per day. For many outcomes, we consider women's time, men's time, and the within-couple gap defined as women's time minus men's time.

Two choices are worth emphasizing. First, we distinguish between total leisure and leisure without children. The latter is interpreted as a closer proxy for discretionary time and autonomy. Second, we treat time with children and unpaid work not only as labor inputs but also as indicators of how family well-being is organized and of which partner bears the everyday constraints of care.

The central attitudinal variable is an index of traditional gender norms constructed from survey items on family roles, maternal employment, whether a child suffers if the mother works, whether men should contribute at home, and related statements. Higher values indicate more conservative attitudes. In the descriptive section, we also report the individual components of these attitudes. The endline report shows that women are systematically less supportive of conservative gender norms than men, with sharper gaps in Campania [4, pp. 16–17, 58–61].

3.3. Empirical analysis

The data analysis is structured in two parts. First, we present descriptive comparisons of men's and women's time use and attitudes in the full sample, by region, and for the subsample in which both partners work full-time. This first step addresses the central descriptive puzzle of the paper: whether the combination of two full-time jobs is enough to compress gender gaps in unpaid work and discretionary leisure. Second, we estimate a battery of ordinary least squares regressions linking time-use outcomes of each member of the couple to the traditional-norm indice of both the female and male components. For each outcome, we estimate models without controls and with a common set of socio-economic controls that include age of the oldest child, age of the mother, age of the father and having a college degree or more, and we allow the association to differ in Campania through interaction terms.

These regressions are descriptive. They should be interpreted as conditional correlations, not as evidence that norms causally determine time allocation. The purpose is to document whether more traditional attitudes co-occur with more gender-specialized arrangements and whether the most systematic margins of adjustment concern men's unpaid work and leisure without children rather than women's paid work. From a social-indicators perspective, the goal is to identify a coherent set of observable indicators that reveal how gender inequality is organized inside households.

4. Results

4.1. Gender differences in time use

Table 1 reports the main descriptive results for the full sample. Three findings stand out.

Table 1 presents the main descriptive evidence on gender differences in time allocation within couples. Four central results emerge.

First, the asymmetry between paid and unpaid work remains large and systematic. On weekdays, women perform substantially less paid work than men (about 208 minutes versus 427), while devoting significantly more time to unpaid work (339 versus 129 minutes), resulting in a gap of over 210 minutes. This pattern persists on weekends, where the unpaid-work gap remains sizeable at approximately 138 minutes. The decomposition of unpaid work highlights that both childcare and, even more markedly, housework contribute to this imbalance: housework alone accounts for more than two hours of the weekday gap, compared with roughly 87 minutes for childcare. This indicates that routine domestic production remains the most persistent and least rebalanced component of unpaid work.

Second, total work conceals these underlying asymmetries. On weekdays, women and men perform similar amounts of total work—547.3 versus 555.9 minutes—and the difference is not statistically significant. However, this apparent parity is entirely compositional: men devote about 427 minutes to paid work and 129 to unpaid work, while women allocate roughly 208 minutes to paid work and 339 to unpaid work. On weekends, when paid work declines for both partners (to about 64 minutes for women and 151 for men), the imbalance becomes visible even in total work, with women performing significantly more total work (389.5 versus 338.8 minutes, a gap of about 51 minutes). This indicates that reductions in market work are not accompanied by a proportional redistribution of unpaid work, and that women continue to absorb a larger share of domestic responsibilities.

Third, this compositional asymmetry carries over to non-work time. Although total leisure on weekdays is virtually identical (about 815 minutes for both women and men), its allocation differs markedly. Women spend around 195 minutes of leisure with children compared with 157 minutes for men, while men enjoy approximately 659 minutes of leisure without children against 621 minutes for women. These differences widen on weekends, when men have both more total leisure (about 1003 versus 952 minutes) and substantially more leisure without children (714 versus 647 minutes). As illustrated in Figure 1, a larger share of women's leisure is systematically spent in the presence of children—around 24% on weekdays and 32% on weekends, compared with about 19% and 29% for men—highlighting that women's non-work time is more frequently constrained by caregiving responsibilities. Since leisure spent with children is less discretionary, the relevant margin of inequality concerns not only how much non-work time individuals have, but how free that time is from obligations.

Fourth, a detailed analysis of parental time shows that gender inequality extends across all dimensions of time spent with children, and not only to standard measures of childcare. Beyond basic care activities, the data distinguish between *total time with children*, *engaged time with children*, and *quality time with children*, capturing forms of parental involvement of varying intensity. Women spend substantially more time than men across all these dimensions. On weekdays, mothers devote about 200 additional minutes per day to total time with children, indicating a much higher overall presence during daily activities; this gap remains large even on weekends (over 120 minutes).

Differences persist when focusing on more interactive forms of parenting. Engaged time—defined as time in which the child is actively involved in the activity—shows a gap of about 146 minutes on weekdays and over 85 minutes on weekends. Similarly, quality time—capturing activities that are particularly enriching for child development—exhibits substantial differences, with mothers spending roughly 110 more minutes per day than fathers on weekdays and over 75 minutes more on weekends. These patterns indicate that the higher maternal involvement is not limited to routine care, but extends to activities with greater relational and developmental content.

At the same time, the relative magnitude of the gaps is informative. While fathers remain less involved overall, their participation appears comparatively closer to that of mothers in engaged and quality time than in total time or basic childcare. This suggests that men's contribution is more concentrated in selected, often more discretionary or visible forms of interaction, whereas women disproportionately bear responsibility for continuous presence and routine care. Gender inequality in parental time is therefore both quantitative and qualitative.

Regional comparisons (Tables 2 and 3) confirm the robustness of these patterns. The same qualitative structure emerges in both Emilia-Romagna and Campania, but the magnitude of the gaps is consistently larger in the latter. In Campania, the weekday unpaid-work gap exceeds 260 minutes, and differences in time with children—across all categories—are also more pronounced. This evidence is consistent with the idea that institutional contexts and gender norms jointly shape the allocation of time within families.

Finally, Table 16 in Appendix C shows that these asymmetries persist even among couples in which both partners work full-time. Although the gender gap in paid work narrows substantially in this subsample, women continue to perform significantly more unpaid work—around 80–90 additional minutes per day—and to have less leisure without children. Differences in parental time also remain sizeable: mothers spend more time than fathers in total, engaged, and quality interactions with children. Housework remains particularly unequal, with a gap of about one hour per day, roughly twice as large as that observed in childcare. These findings indicate that stronger female labor-market attachment is not

sufficient to equalize the division of labor within households, pointing instead to incomplete adjustment in men's contribution to domestic work and to persistent inequalities in access to discretionary time.

Table 1: Gender differences in time use

Activity	Women	Men	Diff.	t-statistic	p-value
Paid work					
Weekday	207.9	427.1	-219.2	-27.39	0.000
Weekend	64.4	151.4	-87.0	-12.75	0.000
Unpaid work					
Weekday	339.4	128.8	210.5	35.04	0.000
Weekend	325.1	187.4	137.6	21.77	0.000
Total work					
Weekday	547.3	555.9	-8.6	-1.14	0.254
Weekend	389.5	338.8	50.7	6.22	0.000
Leisure					
Weekday	815.5	815.7	-0.2	-0.03	0.974
Weekend	952.4	1002.6	-50.2	-6.24	0.000
Leisure with children					
Weekday	194.6	156.9	37.8	6.80	0.000
Weekend	305.0	288.7	16.4	2.34	0.019
Leisure without children					
Weekday	620.8	658.8	-38.0	-6.60	0.000
Weekend	647.3	713.9	-66.6	-10.57	0.000
Childcare					
Weekday	174.8	88.1	86.7	20.38	0.000
Weekend	164.8	117.9	46.9	9.35	0.000
Housework					
Weekday	164.0	40.3	123.7	32.75	0.000
Weekend	160.0	68.9	91.2	23.19	0.000
Care for other people					
Weekday	0.6	0.5	0.1	0.40	0.692
Weekend	0.3	0.7	-0.4	-1.59	0.111
Total time with children					
Weekday	479.1	278.2	200.9	24.99	0.000
Weekend	620.9	499.7	121.2	14.18	0.000
Engaged time with children					
Weekday	387.0	240.6	146.3	20.60	0.000
Weekend	526.9	441.5	85.4	10.37	0.000
Quality time with children					
Weekday	267.4	157.5	109.9	20.94	0.000
Weekend	324.8	247.8	76.9	12.39	0.000

Notes: The table reports average daily time devoted to each activity, measured in minutes. The difference is computed as women minus men. t-statistics and p-values come from tests of equality of means across the two groups.

Table 2: Gender differences in time use (Emilia-Romagna)

Activity	Women	Men	Diff.	t-statistic	p-value
Paid work					
Weekday	266.1	426.2	-160.1	-13.54	0.000
Weekend	66.1	114.0	-47.9	-5.17	0.000
Unpaid work					
Weekday	272.1	112.9	159.2	20.42	0.000
Weekend	278.7	189.7	89.1	10.47	0.000
Total work					
Weekday	538.2	539.1	-0.9	-0.08	0.938
Weekend	344.8	303.6	41.2	3.72	0.000
Leisure					
Weekday	838.0	840.2	-2.1	-0.20	0.845
Weekend	994.8	1038.5	-43.7	-3.88	0.000
Leisure with children					
Weekday	196.8	160.7	36.1	4.25	0.000
Weekend	317.2	296.2	21.0	2.04	0.041
Leisure without children					
Weekday	641.3	679.5	-38.3	-4.33	0.000
Weekend	677.5	742.3	-64.7	-6.98	0.000
Childcare					
Weekday	139.8	76.7	63.1	11.91	0.000
Weekend	134.2	115.3	18.9	2.88	0.004
Housework					
Weekday	131.6	36.1	95.5	19.19	0.000
Weekend	144.4	73.9	70.5	12.94	0.000
Care for other people					
Weekday	0.7	0.1	0.6	1.73	0.083
Weekend	0.1	0.5	-0.3	-1.46	0.145
Total time with children					
Weekday	425.4	271.4	154.0	13.87	0.000
Weekend	606.0	513.9	92.2	7.65	0.000
Engaged time with children					
Weekday	356.4	241.2	115.2	11.54	0.000
Weekend	524.6	463.6	61.0	5.14	0.000
Quality time with children					
Weekday	230.8	151.0	79.8	11.33	0.000
Weekend	309.8	250.9	58.9	6.81	0.000

Notes: The table reports average daily time devoted to each activity, measured in minutes. The difference is computed as women minus men. t-statistics and p-values come from tests of equality of means across the two groups.

Table 3: Gender differences in time use (Campania)

Activity	Women	Men	Diff.	t-statistic	p-value
Paid work					
Weekday	151.3	427.9	-276.7	-26.34	0.000
Weekend	62.8	187.8	-125.1	-12.67	0.000
Unpaid work					
Weekday	404.9	144.4	260.5	30.35	0.000
Weekend	370.2	185.3	184.9	20.31	0.000
Total work					
Weekday	556.1	572.3	-16.2	-1.60	0.109
Weekend	432.9	373.1	59.9	5.14	0.000
Leisure					
Weekday	793.5	791.9	1.6	0.18	0.857
Weekend	911.1	967.7	-56.6	-5.04	0.000
Leisure with children					
Weekday	192.5	153.2	39.4	5.48	0.000
Weekend	293.1	281.3	11.8	1.25	0.211
Leisure without children					
Weekday	601.0	638.7	-37.7	-5.16	0.000
Weekend	618.0	686.4	-68.4	-8.19	0.000
Childcare					
Weekday	208.8	99.1	109.7	17.07	0.000
Weekend	194.5	120.4	74.2	9.94	0.000
Housework					
Weekday	195.5	44.4	151.1	27.58	0.000
Weekend	175.3	64.0	111.2	19.82	0.000
Care for other people					
Weekday	0.5	0.8	-0.4	-0.81	0.417
Weekend	0.4	0.9	-0.5	-1.04	0.297
Total time with children					
Weekday	531.5	284.9	246.6	21.69	0.000
Weekend	635.4	485.9	149.5	12.35	0.000
Engaged time with children					
Weekday	416.7	240.1	176.7	17.63	0.000
Weekend	529.1	420.0	109.1	9.59	0.000
Quality time with children					
Weekday	303.0	163.7	139.2	18.35	0.000
Weekend	339.3	244.9	94.4	10.64	0.000

Notes: The table reports average daily time devoted to each activity, measured in minutes. The difference is computed as women minus men. t-statistics and p-values come from tests of equality of means across the two groups.

Figure 1: Leisure and the presence of children: share of leisure spent with children by gender

4.2. Gender differences in gender attitudes

The TIMES data also allow a direct comparison of men's and women's attitudes.

Table 4 reports gender differences in attitudes toward gender norms in the full sample. A clear pattern emerges: men hold, on average, more traditional views than women, particularly on dimensions directly related to family roles and the male role within the household.

The overall index of traditional norms is higher for men (44.4) than for women (42.3), with the difference being statistically significant. While the magnitude of the gap is moderate, it is systematic and consistent with the broader pattern observed in the time-use data. More importantly, the aggregate index masks substantial heterogeneity across dimensions. The largest differences are found in attitudes toward traditional family roles: men score 40.5 compared with 34.4 for women, a gap of over 6 points. Similarly, men express stronger agreement with the idea that having children is a social duty (34.1 versus 29.1). These dimensions capture core elements of gender specialization within the household and are therefore particularly relevant for interpreting the behavioral asymmetries documented in Section 4.1.

By contrast, attitudes toward maternal employment show little gender differentiation. For both statements referring to whether a child suffers if the mother works—both for ages 0–6 and 7–11—the differences between men and women are small and not statistically significant. This suggests that the key margin of divergence is not opposition to maternal employment per se, but rather the persistence of traditional expectations regarding the division of roles within the family. In other words, gender norms appear to operate less through explicit beliefs about mothers' labor-market participation and more through implicit expectations about who should be responsible for care and domestic work.

Further insight comes from attitudes related to role reversals and potential tensions within the couple. Women report slightly higher agreement with the statement that tensions may arise when the woman earns more than the man (40.1 versus 37.8), whereas men show higher agreement with the idea that tensions may arise when the man takes primary responsibility for home and children (41.2 versus 38.6). Although these differences are relatively small, they point to an asymmetry in how deviations from traditional roles are perceived. In particular, the male role appears more rigid: both economic and domestic deviations from the traditional male breadwinner model are associated with perceived relational

costs. This reinforces the interpretation that the main constraint to convergence lies in the redefinition of male roles within the household.

Regional comparisons (Tables 5 and 6) confirm and sharpen this interpretation. In Emilia-Romagna, gender differences in the overall index are smaller and not statistically significant (46.0 for women and 47.4 for men), although differences remain significant for traditional family roles and the duty to have children. In Campania, by contrast, the gap in the overall index is larger (41.5 versus 38.7) and statistically significant, and differences in traditional family roles are particularly pronounced (39.7 for men versus 31.1 for women). This suggests that more traditional normative environments are associated with stronger gender differentiation in attitudes, consistent with the larger behavioral gaps documented in Table 3.

Importantly, Table 17 in Appendix C shows that these patterns persist, albeit in attenuated form, among couples in which both partners work full-time. In this subsample, the overall index of traditional norms remains higher for men (42.7) than for women (40.9), although the difference is no longer statistically significant. However, gender differences in traditional family roles remain present (33.7 versus 29.5) and statistically significant, indicating that even among more symmetric labor-market arrangements, norms related to the division of roles within the household remain differentiated. This suggests that convergence in employment does not necessarily imply convergence in attitudes, particularly on dimensions that directly relate to domestic responsibilities. Ecco una versione integrata e leggermente raffinata, coerente con il paragrafo precedente e con il tono della Section 4:

Taken together, these results point to two closely related conclusions. First, gender differences in attitudes are not uniform across dimensions but are concentrated in beliefs about roles within the family, particularly those that define and constrain the male role. Second, and more importantly, this evidence matters because it shows that the time-use asymmetry documented above is embedded in a normative environment that remains gendered. The main margin of inequality is therefore not simply women doing "too much", but men continuing to do relatively little in the domestic sphere. In this sense, the attitudinal asymmetries mirror the behavioral patterns documented in Section 4.1 and point to a limited adjustment of men within the household. The descriptive comparison of attitudes is thus consistent with the idea that domestic specialization is sustained not only by material constraints, but also by socially embedded expectations that shape the redefinition of roles within couples.

Table 4: Gender differences in attitudes toward gender norms

Indicator	Women	Men	Diff.	t-statistic	p-value
Traditional norms index	42,3	44,4	-2,1	-2,77	0,006
Traditional family roles	34,4	40,5	-6,1	-5,63	0,000
Child suffers if mother works (0–6)	57,1	57,8	-0,7	-0,66	0,511
Child suffers if mother works (7–11)	47,7	48,6	-0,9	-0,83	0,409
Duty to have children	29,1	34,1	-4,9	-4,59	0,000
Woman earns more than man	40,1	37,8	2,2	2,11	0,035
Man takes care of the home	38,6	41,2	-2,5	-2,43	0,015
Woman reduces aspirations	48,9	50,7	-1,8	-1,72	0,086

Notes: The table reports mean values for indicators of gender attitudes. Individual questions are measured on a 0-100 agreement scale, where higher values indicate more conservative views. Composite indices are computed as averages of the relevant items. The difference is computed as women minus men. t-statistics and p-values come from tests of equality of means across the two groups.

Table 5: Gender differences in attitudes toward gender norms (Emilia-Romagna)

Indicator	Women	Men	Diff.	t-statistic	p-value
Traditional norms index	46,0	47,4	-1,4	-1,30	0,194
Traditional family roles	37,8	41,3	-3,5	-2,26	0,024
Child suffers if mother works (0–6)	59,4	60,6	-1,2	-0,80	0,424
Child suffers if mother works (7–11)	51,4	52,5	-1,0	-0,66	0,513
Duty to have children	31,2	34,6	-3,3	-2,21	0,027
Woman earns more than man	44,0	41,7	2,3	1,58	0,115
Man takes care of the home	41,3	43,6	-2,3	-1,57	0,117
Woman reduces aspirations	56,8	57,6	-0,8	-0,55	0,584

Notes: The table reports mean values for indicators of gender attitudes. Individual questions are measured on a 0-100 agreement scale, where higher values indicate more conservative views. Composite indices are computed as averages of the relevant items. The difference is computed as women minus men. t-statistics and p-values come from tests of equality of means across the two groups.

Table 6: Gender differences in attitudes toward gender norms (Campania)

Indicator	Women	Men	Diff.	t-statistic	p-value
Traditional norms index	38,7	41,5	-2,8	-2,65	0,008
Traditional family roles	31,1	39,7	-8,7	-5,71	0,000
Child suffers if mother works (0–6)	55,0	55,1	-0,2	-0,13	0,899
Child suffers if mother works (7–11)	44,1	44,9	-0,7	-0,52	0,606
Duty to have children	27,1	33,6	-6,4	-4,26	0,000
Woman earns more than man	36,2	34,1	2,1	1,43	0,152
Man takes care of the home	36,0	38,8	-2,8	-1,87	0,062
Woman reduces aspirations	41,2	44,1	-2,8	-1,93	0,054

Notes: The table reports mean values for indicators of gender attitudes. Individual questions are measured on a 0-100 agreement scale, where higher values indicate more conservative views. Composite indices are computed as averages of the relevant items. The difference is computed as women minus men. t-statistics and p-values come from tests of equality of means across the two groups.

4.3. Norms and time use: what people think and what they do

We now turn to the relationship between gender attitudes and time allocation. The objective is not to establish causal effects, but to assess whether more traditional attitudes are systematically associated with more gender-specialized daily arrangements within couples.

To make the norms results easier to evaluate, we summarize the main estimates using coefficient plots.[2] The figures reports, for women and men, separately, the key associations between traditional gender attitudes of both partners and time spent in: paid work; unpaid work, further decomposed into housework and childcare; leisure, split into leisure with children and leisure without children; and total time spent with children.

Across the range of outcomes considered, a consistent pattern emerges. More traditional gender attitudes are associated with lower male participation in unpaid work, including both childcare and housework, and with reduced male involvement in total time spent with children. At the same time, they are associated with higher levels of male leisure, particularly leisure without children. By contrast, the relationship between attitudes and paid work is more heterogeneous across weekdays and weekends and does not display a similarly clear pattern.

This asymmetry is central for interpretation. The most systematic associations do not concern women's behavior in the labor market, but rather men's behavior within the household. In other words, more traditional norms are not primarily linked to an increase in male breadwinning, but to a persistence of men at the margins of domestic and care activities. This reinforces the interpretation advanced in the previous sections: gender inequality within couples is sustained less by women's over-participation and more by the limited adjustment of men in the domestic sphere.

A second relevant result is that the attitudes of both partners tend to move in the same direction. Although the magnitude of the estimated associations varies, more traditional orientations—whether expressed by women or by men—are consistently associated with more specialized allocations of time. This suggests that gender norms operate not only as individual preferences but as a shared framework within the couple. In this sense, the observed patterns are consistent with a couple-level equilibrium in which behaviors and attitudes reinforce each other. While the data do not allow for a direct test of assortative matching, the results are compatible with the idea that partners sort into relationships with similar normative orientations, contributing to the persistence of gendered arrangements.

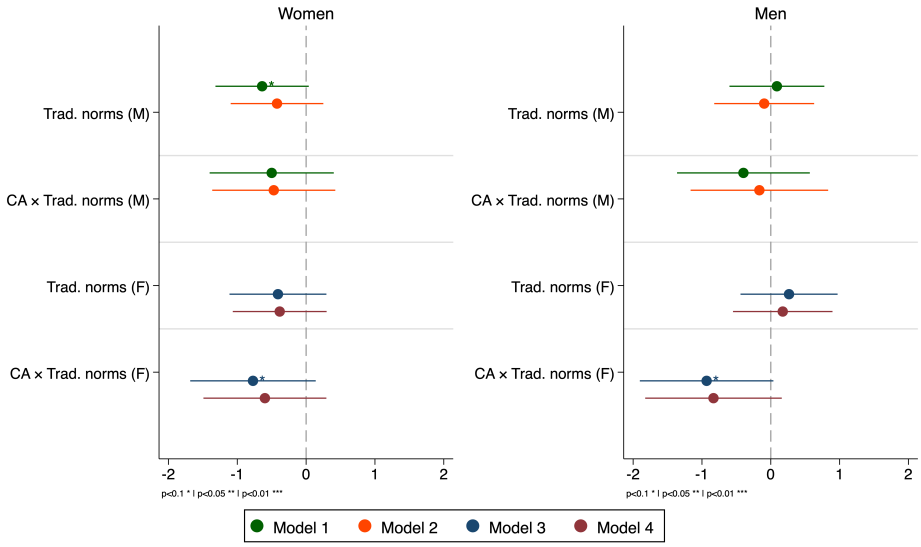
Importantly, these patterns are robust across different domains of time use. The associations between traditional norms and lower male involvement are particularly strong for routine and less substitutable activities, such as housework and basic childcare, while being comparatively weaker for more discretionary or interactive forms of time use. This is consistent with the descriptive evidence showing that men's participation is relatively higher in selected forms of engagement, but remains limited in the continuous and time-intensive components of domestic work.

The results for the subsample of couples in which both partners work full-time, reported in Appendix C, lead to the same substantive conclusion. Greater female labor-market attachment is associated with some reduction in gender gaps, but does not eliminate them. Even in this group, more traditional attitudes are associated with lower male participation in unpaid work and with greater access to leisure without children. This suggests that convergence in employment conditions does not, by itself, translate into a symmetric reallocation of time within the household.

Taken together, these findings indicate that gender norms are closely intertwined with the organization of daily life. While the analysis remains descriptive, the evidence consistently points to the domestic sphere—and particularly to male behavior within it—as the key margin through which norms are associated with gender inequality.

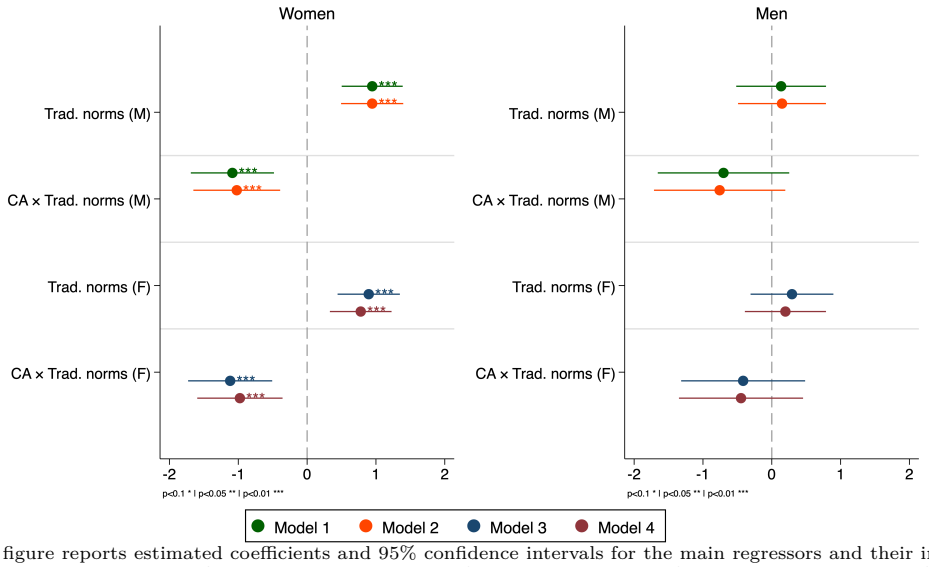
[2] Full estimation results are available upon request.

Figure 2: Paid work (weekday)



Notes: Each figure reports estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main regressors and their interactions with the Campania indicator. The first panel reports estimates for women, the second for men. For each activity, four models are shown: (1) includes Mothers (women) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(M)); (2) adds socio-economic controls; (3) includes Fathers (men) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(F)); (4) adds socio-economic controls.

Figure 3: Paid work (weekend)



Notes: Each figure reports estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main regressors and their interactions with the Campania indicator. The first panel reports estimates for women, the second for men. For each activity, four models are shown: (1) includes Mothers (women) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(M)); (2) adds socio-economic controls; (3) includes Fathers (men) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(F)); (4) adds socio-economic controls.

Figure 4: Unpaid work (weekday)

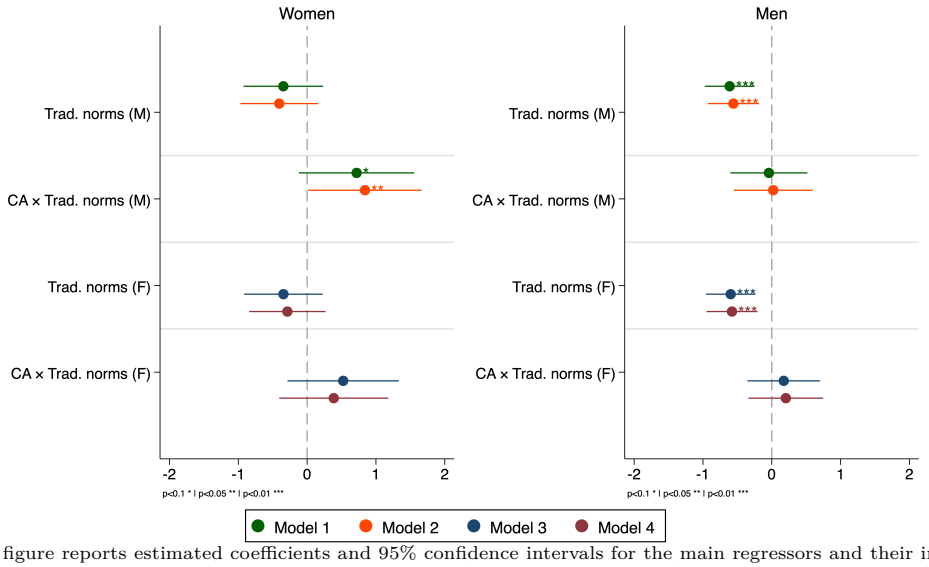


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Figure 5: Unpaid work (weekend)

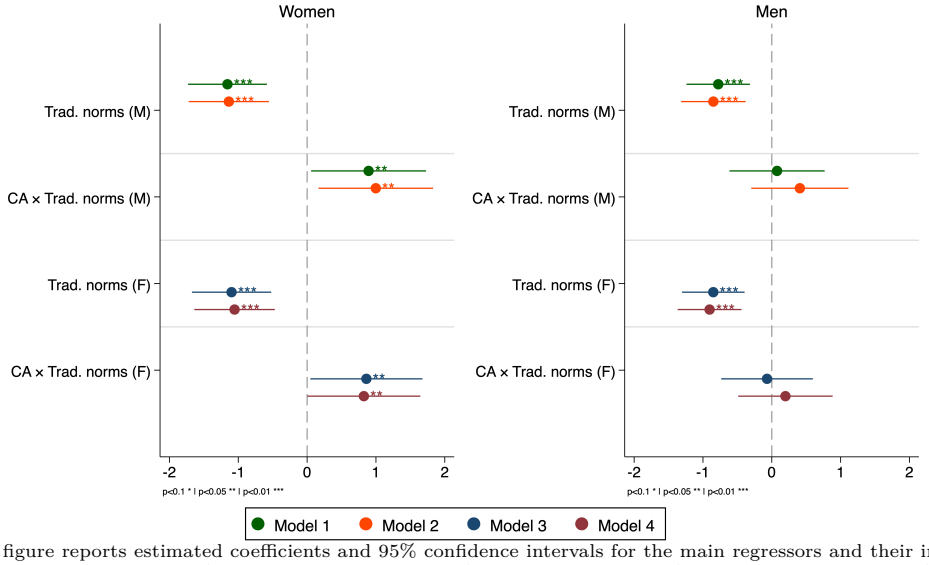

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Figure 6: Leisure (weekday)

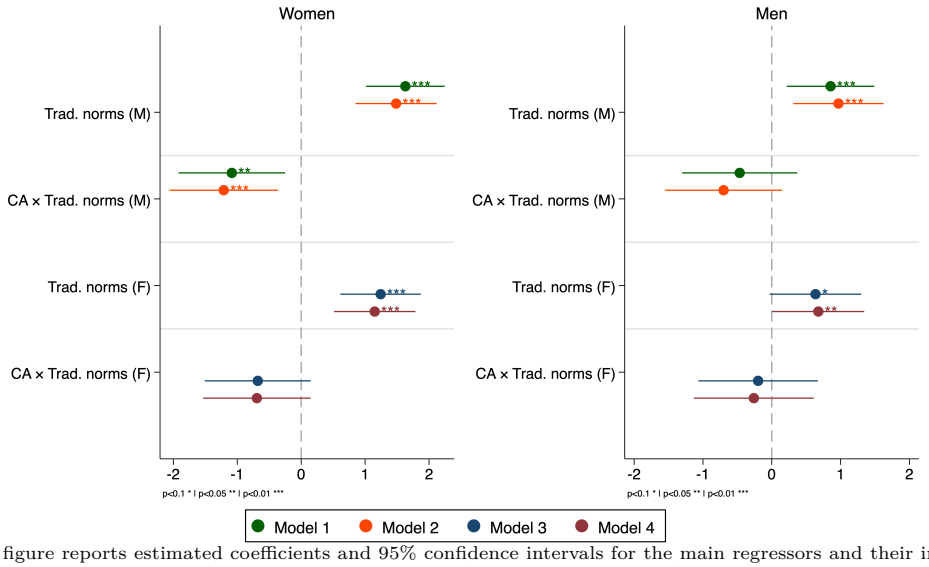

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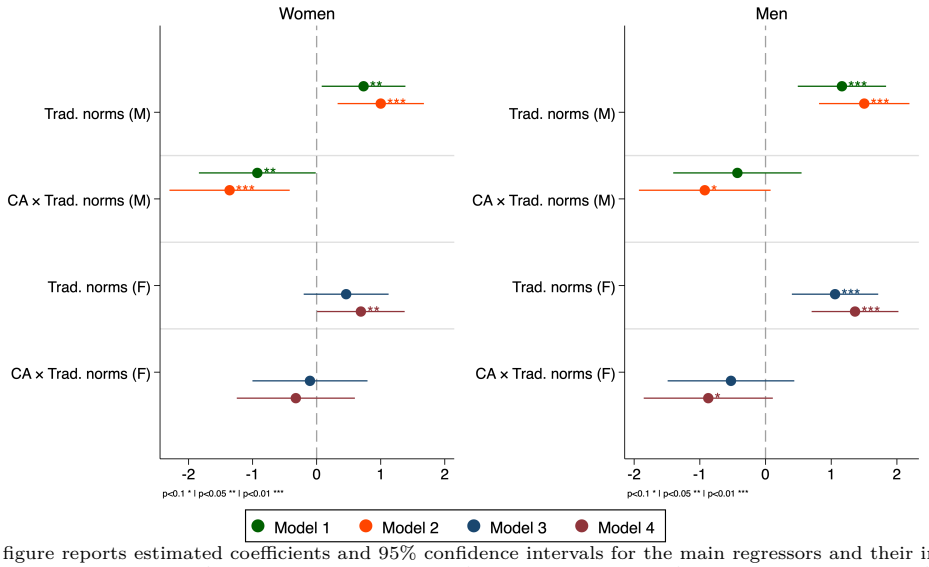
Figure 7: Leisure (weekend)



Notes: Each figure reports estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main regressors and their interactions with the Campania indicator. The first panel reports estimates for women, the second for men. For each activity, four models are shown: (1) includes Mothers (women) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(M)); (2) adds socio-economic controls; (3) includes Fathers (men) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(F)); (4) adds socio-economic controls.

Figure 8: Leisure with children (weekday)

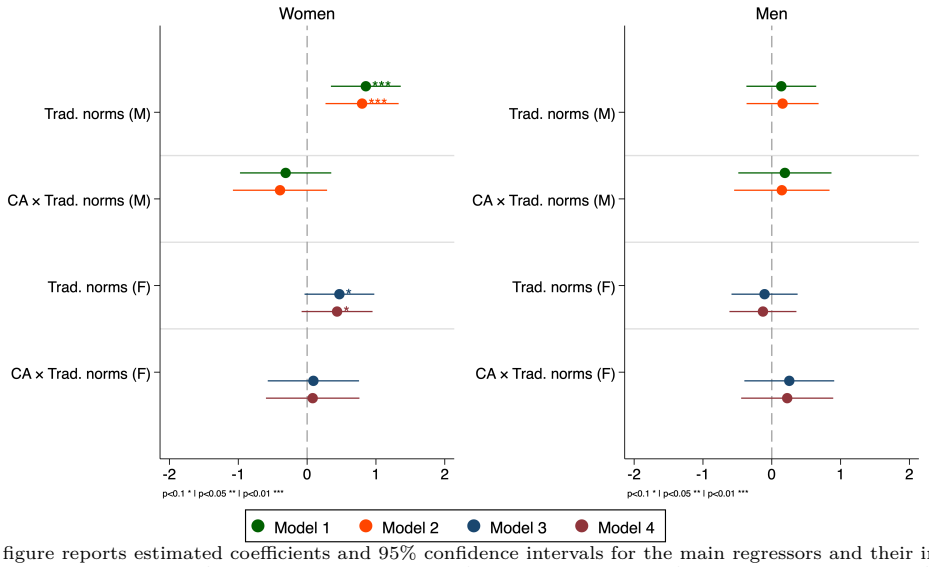


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Figure 9: Leisure with children (weekend)

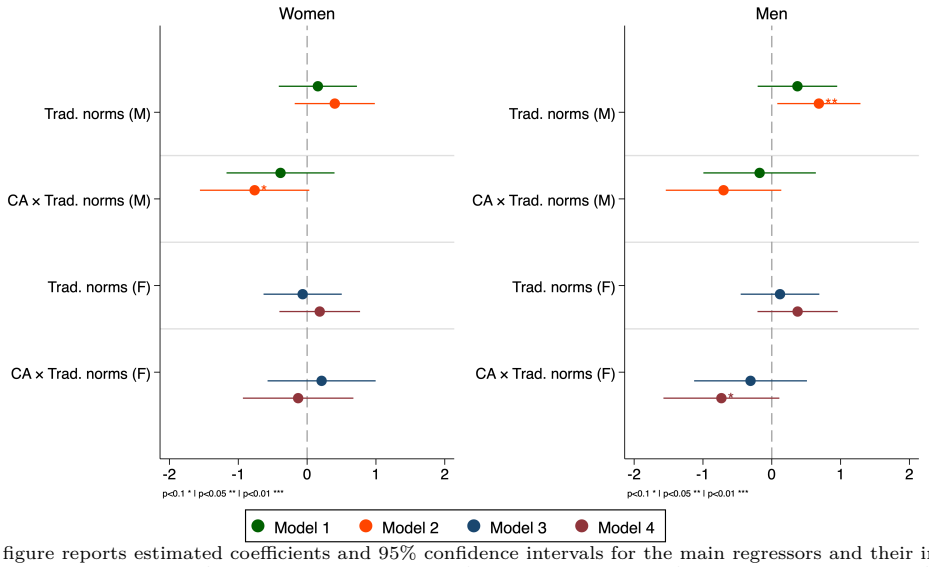

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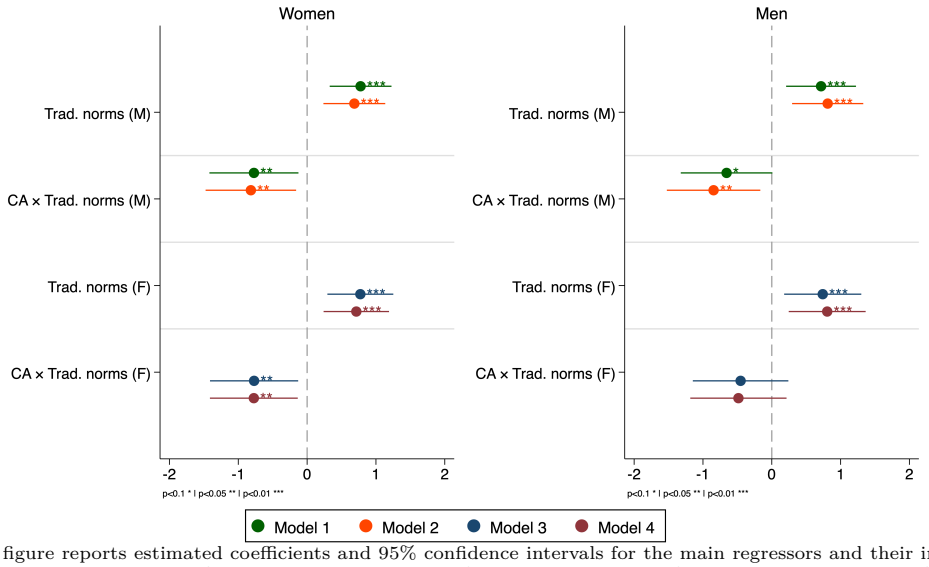
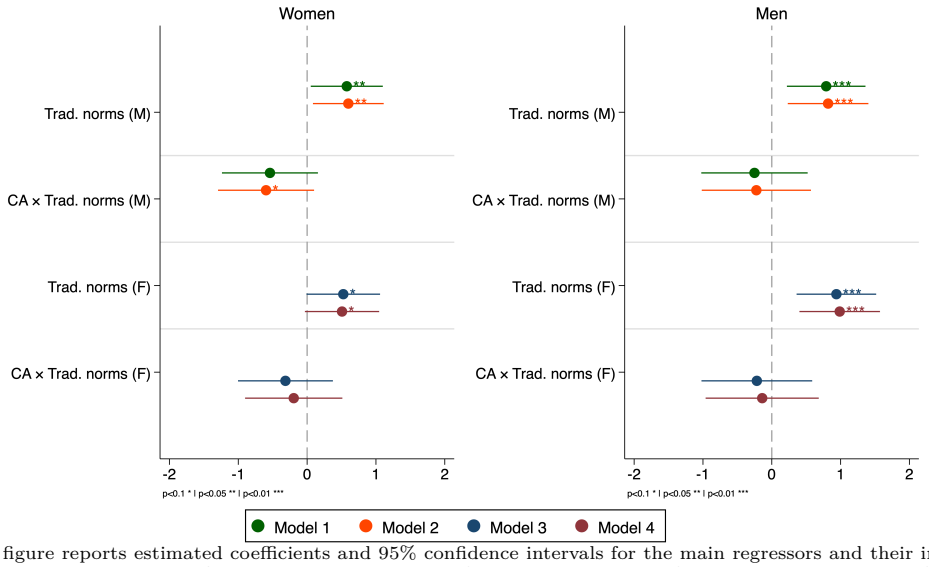
Figure 10: Leisure without children (weekday)



Notes: Each figure reports estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main regressors and their interactions with the Campania indicator. The first panel reports estimates for women, the second for men. For each activity, four models are shown: (1) includes Mothers (women) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(M)); (2) adds socio-economic controls; (3) includes Fathers (men) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(F)); (4) adds socio-economic controls.

Figure 11: Leisure without children (weekend)



Notes: Each figure reports estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main regressors and their interactions with the Campania indicator. The first panel reports estimates for women, the second for men. For each activity, four models are shown: (1) includes Mothers (women) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(M)); (2) adds socio-economic controls; (3) includes Fathers (men) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(F)); (4) adds socio-economic controls.

Figure 12: Childcare (weekday)

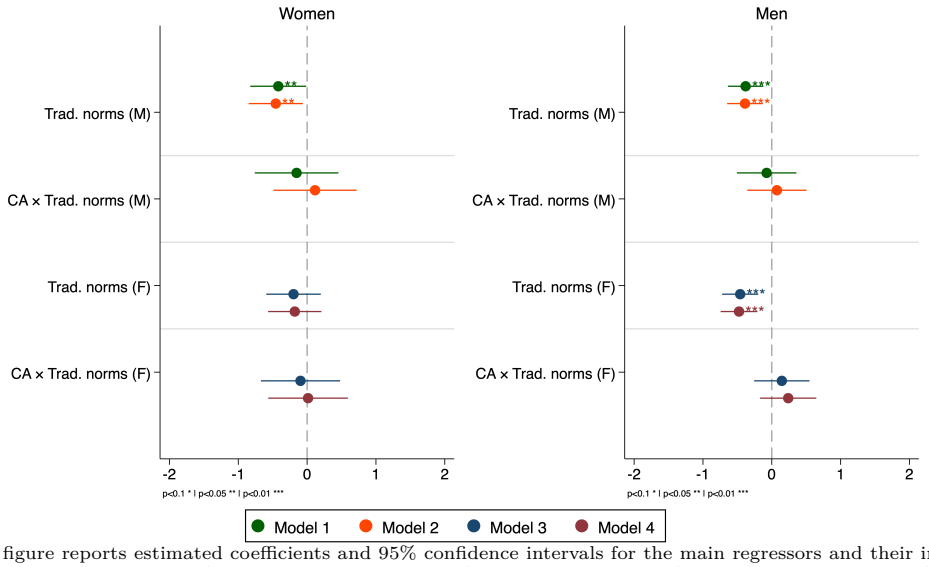


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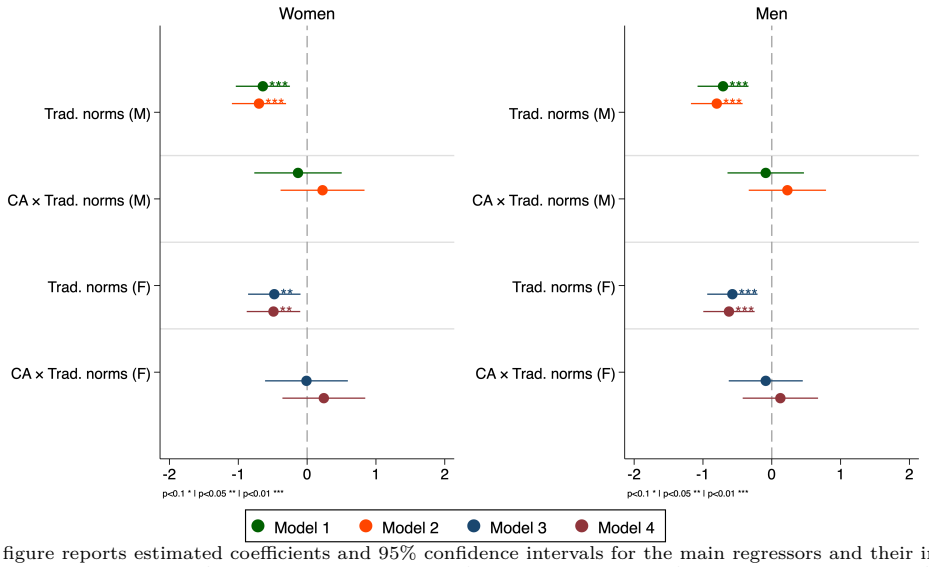
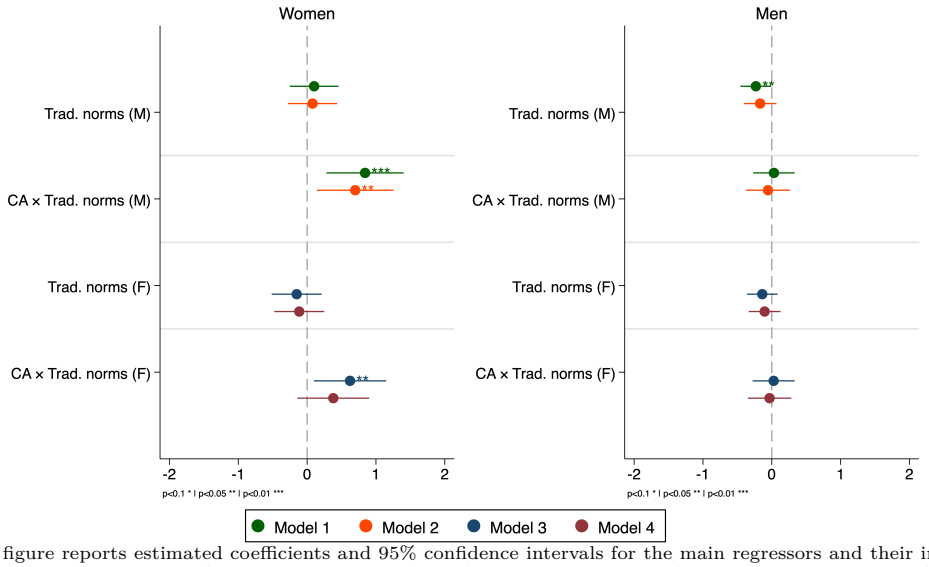
Figure 13: Childcare (weekend)



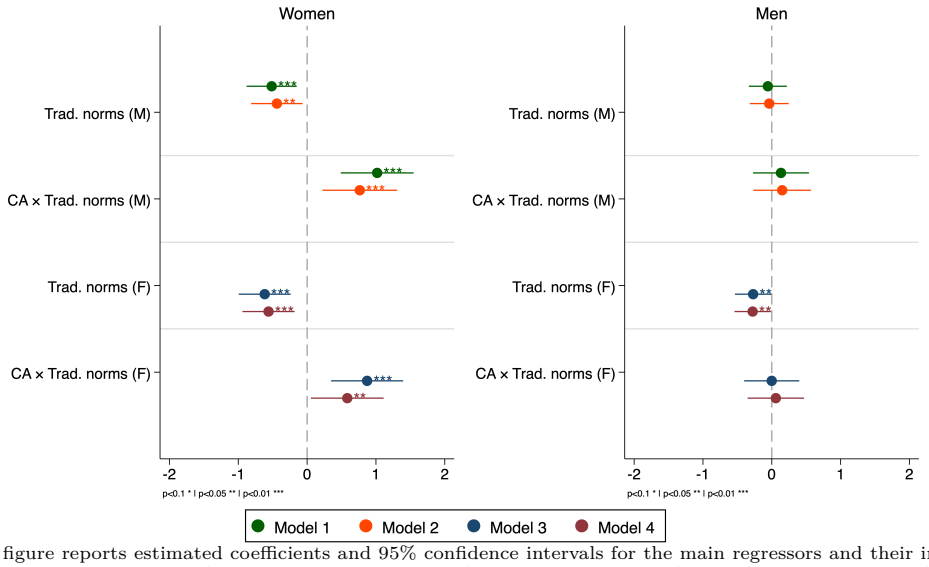
Notes: Each figure reports estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main regressors and their interactions with the Campania indicator. The first panel reports estimates for women, the second for men. For each activity, four models are shown: (1) includes Mothers (women) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(M)); (2) adds socio-economic controls; (3) includes Fathers (men) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(F)); (4) adds socio-economic controls.

Figure 14: Housework (weekday)



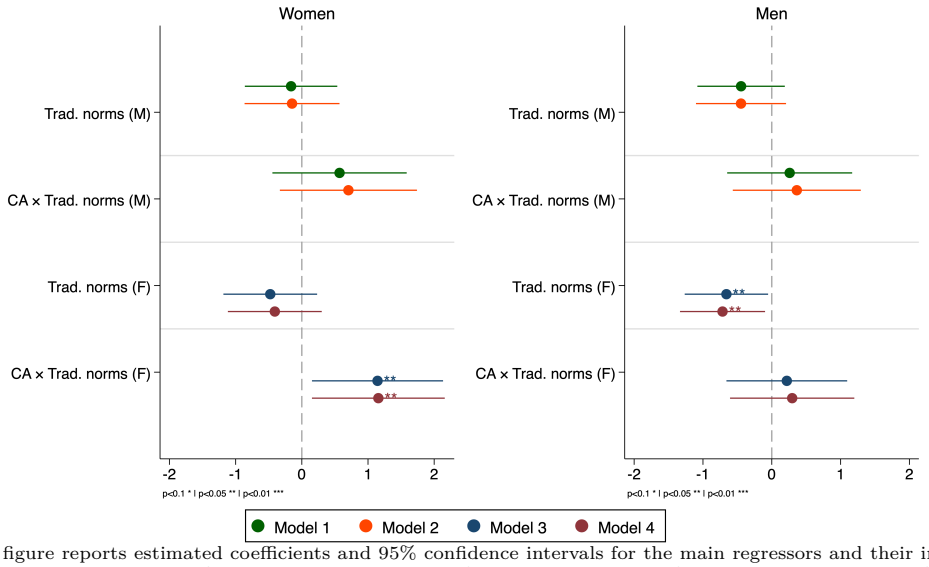
Notes: Each figure reports estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main regressors and their interactions with the Campania indicator. The first panel reports estimates for women, the second for men. For each activity, four models are shown: (1) includes Mothers (women) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(M)); (2) adds socio-economic controls; (3) includes Fathers (men) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(F)); (4) adds socio-economic controls.

Figure 15: Housework (weekend)



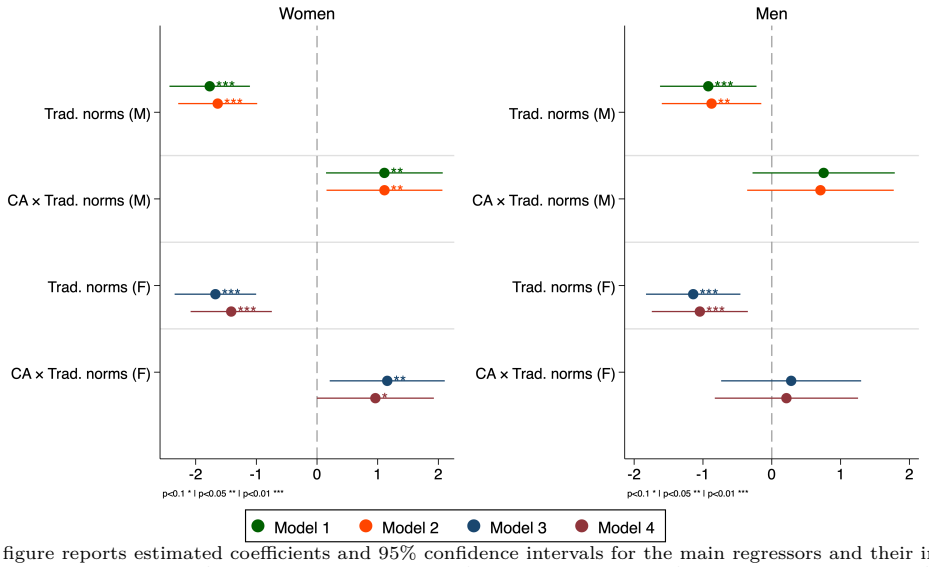
Notes: Each figure reports estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main regressors and their interactions with the Campania indicator. The first panel reports estimates for women, the second for men. For each activity, four models are shown: (1) includes Mothers (women) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(M)); (2) adds socio-economic controls; (3) includes Fathers (men) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(F)); (4) adds socio-economic controls.

Figure 16: Total work (weekday)



Notes: Each figure reports estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main regressors and their interactions with the Campania indicator. The first panel reports estimates for women, the second for men. For each activity, four models are shown: (1) includes Mothers (women) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(M)); (2) adds socio-economic controls; (3) includes Fathers (men) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(F)); (4) adds socio-economic controls.

Figure 17: Total work (weekend)



Notes: Each figure reports estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the main regressors and their interactions with the Campania indicator. The first panel reports estimates for women, the second for men. For each activity, four models are shown: (1) includes Mothers (women) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(M)); (2) adds socio-economic controls; (3) includes Fathers (men) traditional gender-norm index (Trad.norm(F)); (4) adds socio-economic controls.

5. Discussion and policy implications

The evidence helps resolve the paper's opening puzzle. The persistence of gender inequality among young Italian families is not mainly a story of women failing to enter paid work. It is a story of incomplete convergence inside the household once women do so. On weekdays, women and men often perform similar amounts of total work, but the composition of that work remains sharply asymmetric. Women continue to absorb most unpaid work and spend more time with children, while men retain greater access to leisure without children. On weekends, these asymmetries remain visible and often widen.

This distinction between total work and its composition matters for how gender inequality is interpreted. If women and men perform similar total work but one partner bears more unpaid work and has less discretionary leisure, then equality in total hours does not imply equality in lived well-being. The results therefore suggest that within-household inequality should be measured using a broader family of indicators: not only paid and unpaid work, but also constrained versus unconstrained leisure, time with children, and responsibility for the organization of family life.

The attitudinal evidence points in the same direction. More traditional views are systematically associated with lower male domestic participation and wider male access to unconstrained leisure. The strongest descriptive relationships are not in women's paid work but in men's behavior inside the household. That pattern is consistent with a slow redefinition of masculine family roles and with the idea that norms help stabilize unequal arrangements even when women's labor-market attachment increases. The paper cannot establish whether norms cause behavior, whether behavior rationalizes norms, or whether both are jointly determined. But it does show that the two are empirically intertwined in ways that matter for everyday life.

The regional comparison adds a further layer. Campania exhibits wider time gaps and more polarized attitudes than Emilia-Romagna, suggesting that labor-market conditions, care infrastructures, and the normative environment are mutually reinforcing. In more constrained contexts, the family absorbs more unpaid work and gender specialization becomes harder to break. This is consistent with a broader literature that treats work-family reconciliation as jointly shaped by institutions and social norms rather than by household preferences alone.

Two qualifications are important. First, the paper studies a specific population: co-resident couples with at least one child younger than 11 in Emilia-Romagna or Campania. The results should therefore be interpreted as evidence on the organization of time within young families in these settings, not as claims about all Italian households. Second, the results linking attitudes to time allocation are informative because they locate the strongest associations in men's unpaid work and leisure without children, but they remain associational.

These qualifications do not reduce the paper's policy relevance. If the objective is a more equal distribution of well-being within families, increasing female employment is necessary but not sufficient. Without a parallel increase in male involvement in unpaid work, stronger female labor-market attachment may intensify women's double burden rather than reduce inequality. Policies that expand childcare availability, full-time schooling, and after-school services remain important because they relax material constraints. But policies that explicitly target men's involvement—such as non-transferable paternity leave, workplace arrangements that legitimize fathers' care responsibilities, and public communication that challenges traditional role expectations—are equally important. From a social-indicators perspective, progress should be monitored not only through labor-market participation, but also through indicators of domestic redistribution and discretionary time.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined how paid work, unpaid work, childcare, leisure, and gender attitudes are organized within young Italian families. It began from a puzzle: why do large gender inequalities persist in everyday life even as women strengthen their attachment to paid work? Using matched partner diaries and direct measures of gender attitudes, the paper shows that the answer lies in the incomplete

redistribution of unpaid work and discretionary time within couples.

The paper's main contribution is to fill a measurement gap. By combining matched partner diaries, socio-economic information, and direct indicators of gender norms, the TIMES Observatory makes it possible to observe and relate to each-other dimensions of family inequality that standard surveys usually miss. In that sense, the paper considers a set of couple-level indicators that help reveal how gender inequality is reproduced through the daily organization of work, care, and autonomy. Our descriptive evidence provides a clearer empirical basis for understanding inequality in family well-being and for monitoring whether change is occurring where it matters most: inside households.

Three conclusions follow. First, within-couple gender gaps in unpaid work remain very large, and women also spend more time with children. Second, those gaps persist even among dual full-time couples, implying that stronger female labor-market attachment is not sufficient on its own to equalize daily life. Third, more traditional gender attitudes are consistently associated with lower male domestic involvement and more unequal access to leisure without children. The broader takeaway is that gender inequality within couples is not only a matter of who works more in total, but of who has access to time that is genuinely discretionary. Women may have less time that is continuous, less interruptible, and more available for self-directed use, even when aggregate differences in leisure appear modest. Seen in this way, time inequality is also inequality in autonomy. nside households.

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A. Additional descriptive tables

Table 7: Socio-economic descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Women					
Age	1.928	37,42	6,91	19,00	61,00
Number of children	1.928	1,27	0,49	1,00	5,00
Age of oldest child	1.928	5,10	3,15	0,00	11,00
Employed	1.928	0,52	0,50	0,00	1,00
Employed full-time	999	0,60	0,49	0,00	1,00
College degree or more	1.864	0,40	0,49	0,00	1,00
Resident in Emilia-Romagna	1.928	0,49	0,50	0,00	1,00
Men					
Age	1.928	39,92	7,74	18,00	81,00
Number of children	1.928	1,27	0,49	1,00	5,00
Age of oldest child	1.928	5,10	3,15	0,00	11,00
Employed	1.928	0,95	0,21	0,00	1,00
Employed full-time	1.838	0,80	0,40	0,00	1,00
College degree or more	1.855	0,38	0,48	0,00	1,00
Resident in Emilia-Romagna	1.928	0,49	0,50	0,00	1,00

Notes: The table reports socio-economic descriptive statistics for women and men. The variable *Employed full-time* is defined only among employed respondents. The number of observations for *College degree or more* is lower because some respondents did not provide information on education.

Table 8: Socio-economic descriptive statistics (Emilia-Romagna)

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Women					
Age	951	37,41	7,58	19,00	60,00
Number of children	951	1,24	0,47	1,00	5,00
Age of oldest child	951	5,19	3,18	0,00	10,00
Employed	951	0,69	0,46	0,00	1,00
Employed full-time	653	0,68	0,47	0,00	1,00
College degree or more	928	0,38	0,49	0,00	1,00
Men					
Age	951	39,83	8,47	18,00	81,00
Number of children	951	1,24	0,47	1,00	5,00
Age of oldest child	951	5,19	3,18	0,00	10,00
Employed	951	0,98	0,15	0,00	1,00
Employed full-time	928	0,85	0,35	0,00	1,00
College degree or more	927	0,43	0,50	0,00	1,00

Notes: The table reports socio-economic descriptive statistics for women and men. The variable *Employed full-time* is defined only among employed respondents. The number of observations for *College degree or more* is lower because some respondents did not provide information on education.

Table 9: Socio-economic descriptive statistics (Campania)

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Women					
Age	977	37,43	6,19	20,00	61,00
Number of children	977	1,29	0,51	1,00	4,00
Age of oldest child	977	5,01	3,11	0,00	11,00
Employed	977	0,35	0,48	0,00	1,00
Employed full-time	346	0,45	0,50	0,00	1,00
College degree or more	936	0,41	0,49	0,00	1,00
Men					
Age	977	40,01	6,96	20,00	64,00
Number of children	977	1,29	0,51	1,00	4,00
Age of oldest child	977	5,01	3,11	0,00	11,00
Employed	977	0,93	0,25	0,00	1,00
Employed full-time	910	0,74	0,44	0,00	1,00
College degree or more	928	0,32	0,47	0,00	1,00

Notes: The table reports socio-economic descriptive statistics for women and men. The variable *Employed full-time* is defined only among employed respondents. The number of observations for *College degree or more* is lower because some respondents did not provide information on education.

Table 10: Descriptive statistics for time use

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Paid work					
Women (Weekday)	1,928	207.91	246.44	0.00	1110.00
Men (Weekday)	1,928	427.08	250.48	0.00	1110.00
Gap (Weekday)	1,928	-219.16	325.34	-1110.00	870.00
Women (Weekend)	1,928	64.39	167.61	0.00	1110.00
Men (Weekend)	1,928	151.38	248.40	0.00	1060.00
Gap (Weekend)	1,928	-86.99	267.52	-1060.00	1110.00
Unpaid work					
Women (Weekday)	1,928	339.38	223.91	0.00	1290.00
Men (Weekday)	1,928	128.84	139.56	0.00	1050.00
Gap (Weekday)	1,928	210.53	253.17	-730.00	1220.00
Women (Weekend)	1,928	325.07	216.37	0.00	1390.00
Men (Weekend)	1,928	187.43	173.93	0.00	1020.00
Gap (Weekend)	1,928	137.65	251.36	-900.00	1050.00
Total work					
Women (Weekday)	1,928	547.29	231.58	0.00	1290.00
Men (Weekday)	1,928	555.92	238.19	0.00	1200.00
Gap (Weekday)	1,928	-8.63	283.07	-950.00	1110.00
Women (Weekend)	1,928	389.46	242.68	0.00	1390.00
Men (Weekend)	1,928	338.81	262.39	0.00	1220.00
Gap (Weekend)	1,928	50.65	285.10	-1070.00	1230.00
Leisure					
Women (Weekday)	1,928	815.47	221.90	0.00	1440.00
Men (Weekday)	1,928	815.70	220.98	150.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekday)	1,928	-0.23	262.09	-1020.00	990.00
Women (Weekend)	1,928	952.36	240.80	50.00	1440.00
Men (Weekend)	1,928	1002.60	259.03	10.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekend)	1,928	-50.24	274.71	-1230.00	1310.00
Childcare					
Women (Weekday)	1,928	174.80	155.52	0.00	1170.00
Men (Weekday)	1,928	88.06	103.59	0.00	1020.00
Gap (Weekday)	1,928	86.74	169.84	-620.00	1010.00
Women (Weekend)	1,928	164.76	171.05	0.00	1180.00
Men (Weekend)	1,928	117.87	138.87	0.00	1020.00
Gap (Weekend)	1,928	46.89	191.71	-850.00	1080.00
Housework					
Women (Weekday)	1,928	163.99	144.59	0.00	1280.00
Men (Weekday)	1,928	40.31	81.20	0.00	780.00
Gap (Weekday)	1,928	123.68	165.23	-610.00	1280.00
Women (Weekend)	1,928	160.04	134.86	0.00	900.00
Men (Weekend)	1,928	68.87	107.68	0.00	1020.00
Gap (Weekend)	1,928	91.16	162.79	-830.00	900.00
Total time with children					
Women (Weekday)	1,928	479.14	269.26	0.00	1440.00
Men (Weekday)	1,928	620.93	254.67	0.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekday)					
Women (Weekend)	1,928	386.97	232.23	0.00	1320.00
Men (Weekend)	1,928	526.87	244.23	0.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekend)					
Engaged time with children					
Women (Weekday)	1,928	324.76	199.59	0.00	1080.00
Men (Weekday)					
Gap (Weekday)	1,928	278.25	228.18	0.00	1240.00
Women (Weekend)	1,928	499.70	275.94	0.00	1380.00
Men (Weekend)	1,928	240.62	208.26	0.00	1240.00
Gap (Weekend)	1,928	441.50	266.36	0.00	1380.00
Quality time with children					
Women (Weekday)	1,928	247.85	185.70	0.00	960.00
Men (Weekday)	1,928	109.91	217.53	-810.00	1200.00
Gap (Weekday)	1,928	76.91	241.62	-780.00	960.00
Women (Weekend)	1,928	146.35	273.97	-1080.00	1240.00
Men (Weekend)	1,928	85.37	297.33	-1100.00	1230.00
Gap (Weekend)	1,928	200.89	316.30	-1140.00	1320.00
	1,928	121.23	319.79	-960.00	1230.00

Notes: The table reports descriptive statistics for time-use variables, measured in minutes per day.

Table 11: Descriptive statistics for time use (Emilia-Romagna)

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Paid work					
Women (Weekday)	951	266.10	260.47	0.00	870.00
Men (Weekday)	951	426.20	255.39	0.00	1080.00
Gap (Weekday)	951	-160.11	324.87	-1080.00	870.00
Women (Weekend)	951	66.07	174.45	0.00	960.00
Men (Weekend)	951	113.95	226.07	0.00	960.00
Gap (Weekend)	951	-47.89	244.60	-900.00	900.00
Unpaid work					
Women (Weekday)	951	272.10	206.88	0.00	1140.00
Men (Weekday)	951	112.88	122.61	0.00	750.00
Gap (Weekday)	951	159.22	232.72	-650.00	960.00
Women (Weekend)	951	278.72	200.37	0.00	1390.00
Men (Weekend)	951	189.66	169.36	0.00	900.00
Gap (Weekend)	951	89.05	232.92	-900.00	840.00
Total work					
Women (Weekday)	951	538.20	241.74	0.00	1140.00
Men (Weekday)	951	539.09	249.95	0.00	1200.00
Gap (Weekday)	951	-0.88	290.88	-950.00	900.00
Women (Weekend)	951	344.78	235.87	0.00	1390.00
Men (Weekend)	951	303.62	246.30	0.00	1020.00
Gap (Weekend)	951	41.17	278.26	-900.00	900.00
Leisure					
Women (Weekday)	951	838.04	237.79	210.00	1440.00
Men (Weekday)	951	840.19	240.59	210.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekday)	951	-2.15	276.68	-950.00	990.00
Women (Weekend)	951	994.75	238.79	50.00	1440.00
Men (Weekend)	951	1038.45	252.63	310.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekend)	951	-43.70	261.67	-900.00	830.00
Childcare					
Women (Weekday)	951	139.83	136.98	0.00	930.00
Men (Weekday)	951	76.70	89.12	0.00	600.00
Gap (Weekday)	951	63.13	150.86	-540.00	840.00
Women (Weekend)	951	134.19	147.26	0.00	780.00
Men (Weekend)	951	115.31	138.00	0.00	720.00
Gap (Weekend)	951	18.87	174.64	-690.00	750.00
Housework					
Women (Weekday)	951	131.58	133.71	0.00	690.00
Men (Weekday)	951	36.10	75.23	0.00	690.00
Gap (Weekday)	951	95.48	153.54	-520.00	690.00
Women (Weekend)	951	144.38	130.64	0.00	810.00
Men (Weekend)	951	73.86	105.74	0.00	830.00
Gap (Weekend)	951	70.53	150.39	-830.00	810.00
Total time with children					
Women (Weekday)	951	425.35	259.56	0.00	1170.00
Men (Weekday)	951	606.05	257.20	0.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekday)					
Women (Weekend)	951	356.38	228.03	0.00	1170.00
Men (Weekend)	951	524.61	252.58	0.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekend)					
Engaged time with children					
Women (Weekday)	951	309.80	199.28	0.00	840.00
Men (Weekday)					
Gap (Weekday)	951	271.38	223.24	0.00	1240.00
Women (Weekend)	951	513.87	268.14	0.00	1190.00
Men (Weekend)	951	241.19	206.66	0.00	1240.00
Gap (Weekend)	951	463.58	265.31	0.00	1170.00
Quality time with children					
Women (Weekday)	951	250.86	177.78	0.00	840.00
Men (Weekday)	951	79.78	198.41	-780.00	870.00
Gap (Weekday)	951	58.94	230.80	-780.00	800.00
Women (Weekend)	951	115.19	261.22	-990.00	1130.00
Men (Weekend)	951	61.03	290.46	-1100.00	950.00
Gap (Weekend)	951	153.97	289.30	-990.00	1090.00
	951	92.18	303.92	-960.00	1160.00

Notes: The table reports descriptive statistics for time-use variables, measured in minutes per day.

Table 12: Descriptive statistics for time use (Campania)

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Paid work					
Women (Weekday)	977	151.28	217.64	0.00	1110.00
Men (Weekday)	977	427.93	245.74	0.00	1110.00
Gap (Weekday)	977	-276.65	315.51	-1110.00	720.00
Women (Weekend)	977	62.75	160.75	0.00	1110.00
Men (Weekend)	977	187.81	263.41	0.00	1060.00
Gap (Weekend)	977	-125.06	283.06	-1060.00	1110.00
Unpaid work					
Women (Weekday)	977	404.86	220.52	0.00	1290.00
Men (Weekday)	977	144.38	152.75	0.00	1050.00
Gap (Weekday)	977	260.48	262.25	-730.00	1220.00
Women (Weekend)	977	370.19	221.86	0.00	1320.00
Men (Weekend)	977	185.25	178.33	0.00	1020.00
Gap (Weekend)	977	184.94	259.61	-860.00	1050.00
Total work					
Women (Weekday)	977	556.14	221.01	0.00	1290.00
Men (Weekday)	977	572.31	225.09	0.00	1160.00
Gap (Weekday)	977	-16.17	275.20	-750.00	1110.00
Women (Weekend)	977	432.95	241.42	0.00	1350.00
Men (Weekend)	977	373.07	272.96	0.00	1220.00
Gap (Weekend)	977	59.88	291.44	-1070.00	1230.00
Leisure					
Women (Weekday)	977	793.50	202.97	0.00	1440.00
Men (Weekday)	977	791.86	197.29	150.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekday)	977	1.64	247.20	-1020.00	750.00
Women (Weekend)	977	911.10	235.65	90.00	1440.00
Men (Weekend)	977	967.69	260.55	10.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekend)	977	-56.60	286.83	-1230.00	1310.00
Childcare					
Women (Weekday)	977	208.84	164.74	0.00	1170.00
Men (Weekday)	977	99.12	114.92	0.00	1020.00
Gap (Weekday)	977	109.72	183.65	-620.00	1010.00
Women (Weekend)	977	194.52	186.71	0.00	1180.00
Men (Weekend)	977	120.36	139.75	0.00	1020.00
Gap (Weekend)	977	74.17	203.39	-850.00	1080.00
Housework					
Women (Weekday)	977	195.54	147.84	0.00	1280.00
Men (Weekday)	977	44.41	86.46	0.00	780.00
Gap (Weekday)	977	151.13	171.55	-610.00	1280.00
Women (Weekend)	977	175.27	137.21	0.00	900.00
Men (Weekend)	977	64.02	109.38	0.00	1020.00
Gap (Weekend)	977	111.25	171.72	-670.00	900.00
Total time with children					
Women (Weekday)	977	531.49	268.33	0.00	1440.00
Men (Weekday)	977	635.42	251.47	0.00	1440.00
Gap (Weekday)					
Women (Weekend)	977	416.75	232.53	0.00	1320.00
Men (Weekend)	977	529.08	235.93	0.00	1320.00
Gap (Weekend)					
Engaged time with children					
Women (Weekday)	977	339.31	198.91	0.00	1080.00
Men (Weekday)					
Gap (Weekday)	977	284.93	232.82	0.00	1230.00
Women (Weekend)	977	485.91	282.78	0.00	1380.00
Men (Weekend)	977	240.07	209.92	0.00	1230.00
Gap (Weekend)	977	420.01	265.75	0.00	1380.00
Quality time with children					
Women (Weekday)	977	244.91	193.14	0.00	960.00
Men (Weekday)	977	139.23	231.00	-810.00	1200.00
Gap (Weekday)	977	94.40	250.58	-780.00	960.00
Women (Weekend)	977	176.67	282.69	-1080.00	1240.00
Men (Weekend)	977	109.07	302.14	-820.00	1230.00
Gap (Weekend)	977	246.56	334.41	-1140.00	1320.00
	977	149.52	332.23	-960.00	1230.00

Notes: The table reports descriptive statistics for time-use variables, measured in minutes per day.

Table 13: Descriptive statistics for traditional gender norms

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Traditional norms index	3,856	43.34	23.67	0.00	100.00
Traditional family roles	3,856	37.46	33.74	0.00	100.00
Child suffers if mother works (0–6)	3,856	57.48	33.05	0.00	100.00
Child suffers if mother works (7–11)	3,856	48.17	32.94	0.00	100.00
Duty to have children	3,856	31.60	33.26	0.00	100.00
Woman earns more than man	3,856	38.94	32.60	0.00	100.00
Man takes care of the home	3,856	39.88	32.51	0.00	100.00
Woman reduces aspirations	3,856	49.82	33.38	0.00	100.00

Notes: The table reports descriptive statistics for indicators of gender attitudes. Individual questions are measured on a 0-100 agreement scale, where higher values indicate more conservative views. Composite indices are computed as averages of the relevant items.

Table 14: Descriptive statistics for traditional gender norms (Emilia-Romagna)

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Traditional norms index	1,902	46.70	23.53	0.00	100.00
Traditional family roles	1,902	39.59	33.56	0.00	100.00
Child suffers if mother works (0–6)	1,902	59.98	33.45	0.00	100.00
Child suffers if mother works (7–11)	1,902	51.93	34.37	0.00	100.00
Duty to have children	1,902	32.91	32.89	0.00	100.00
Woman earns more than man	1,902	42.85	32.35	0.00	100.00
Man takes care of the home	1,902	42.45	31.47	0.00	100.00
Woman reduces aspirations	1,902	57.18	32.54	0.00	100.00

Notes: The table reports descriptive statistics for indicators of gender attitudes. Individual questions are measured on a 0-100 agreement scale, where higher values indicate more conservative views. Composite indices are computed as averages of the relevant items.

Table 15: Descriptive statistics for traditional gender norms (Campania)

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Traditional norms index	1,954	40.07	23.36	0.00	100.00
Traditional family roles	1,954	35.40	33.79	0.00	100.00
Child suffers if mother works (0–6)	1,954	55.05	32.48	0.00	100.00
Child suffers if mother works (7–11)	1,954	44.50	31.06	0.00	100.00
Duty to have children	1,954	30.33	33.57	0.00	100.00
Woman earns more than man	1,954	35.14	32.41	0.00	100.00
Man takes care of the home	1,954	37.38	33.32	0.00	100.00
Woman reduces aspirations	1,954	42.66	32.62	0.00	100.00

Notes: The table reports descriptive statistics for indicators of gender attitudes. Individual questions are measured on a 0-100 agreement scale, where higher values indicate more conservative views. Composite indices are computed as averages of the relevant items.

B. Variable definitions

Paid work

All activities that generate labor income. This includes work performed on site or remotely, time spent in main or secondary jobs, overtime, work carried out from home, and commuting time to and from the workplace. The definition follows Gimenez-Nadal and Sevilla [14].

Unpaid work

All activities that do not generate labor income. In this paper, unpaid work includes domestic work and childcare. It covers meal preparation, cleaning, laundry, ironing, shopping, household planning and management, small repairs, and all forms of direct childcare. The definition corresponds closely to Gimenez-Nadal and Sevilla [14].

Leisure

Social activities, hobbies, personal care, sleep, rest, and passive time. It includes reading, television, social media, internet use, sports, artistic activities, socializing, eating out, and other non-work activities. The concept is broader than that in Aguiar and Hurst [1] because it also includes sleep and personal care.

Childcare

Time spent feeding, dressing, washing, supervising, reading to children, playing with them, helping with homework, accompanying them, discussing their activities with teachers or other adults, providing health care, and other child-related tasks.

Housework

Time devoted to cooking, cleaning, tidying, organizing or repairing the home, laundry, shopping, planning family life, and other domestic activities [6].

Care for other people

Time devoted to the care of other family members who are not children.

Total time with children

Minutes in which at least one co-resident child is present during the activity [8].

Engaged time with children

Minutes in which at least one co-resident child is both present and actively involved in the activity [8].

Quality time with children

Enriching activities carried out with at least one co-resident child, including reading, playing, talking and listening, arts and crafts, eating together, sports, cultural activities, religious practice, physical care, and homework help for older children [18].

C. Subsample of couples in which both partners work full-time

Table 16: Gender differences in time use (full-time couples)

Activity	Women	Men	Diff.	t-statistic	p-value
Paid work					
Weekday	362,6	432,7	-70,1	-4,57	0,000
Weekend	58,4	110,1	-51,7	-4,29	0,000
Unpaid work					
Weekday	219,5	128,7	90,8	10,16	0,000
Weekend	288,3	206,2	82,2	7,14	0,000
Total work					
Weekday	582,1	561,3	20,7	1,37	0,172
Weekend	346,7	316,2	30,4	2,04	0,041
Leisure					
Weekday	795,9	817,0	-21,1	-1,45	0,148
Weekend	986,4	1025,2	-38,7	-2,53	0,012
Leisure with children					
Weekday	185,5	169,8	15,7	1,36	0,173
Weekend	328,6	312,3	16,3	1,16	0,247
Leisure without children					
Weekday	610,4	647,2	-36,8	-3,51	0,000
Weekend	657,9	712,9	-55,1	-4,75	0,000
Childcare					
Weekday	119,5	89,9	29,6	4,53	0,000
Weekend	146,3	126,6	19,7	2,06	0,040
Housework					
Weekday	100,0	38,8	61,2	11,13	0,000
Weekend	142,0	78,9	63,1	8,82	0,000
Care for other people					
Weekday	0,0	0,0	0,0		
Weekend	0,0	0,6	-0,6	-1,67	0,095
Total time with children					
Weekday	388,1	296,8	91,3	6,22	0,000
Weekend	630,6	545,3	85,3	5,43	0,000
Engaged time with children					
Weekday	329,8	264,2	65,6	4,87	0,000
Weekend	552,3	493,9	58,3	3,71	0,000
Quality time with children					
Weekday	211,0	164,9	46,1	5,10	0,000
Weekend	310,9	258,4	52,5	4,56	0,000
N	512	512	512		

Notes: The table reports average daily time devoted to each activity, measured in minutes. The difference is computed as women minus men. t-statistics and p-values come from tests of equality of means across the two groups.

Table 17: Gender differences in attitudes toward gender norms (full-time couples)

Indicator	Women	Men	Diff.	t-statistic	p-value
Traditional norms index	40,9	42,7	-1,8	-1,35	0,178
Traditional family roles	29,5	33,7	-4,1	-2,10	0,036
Child suffers if mother works (0–6)	56,3	57,9	-1,6	-0,76	0,445
Child suffers if mother works (7–11)	49,6	50,7	-1,2	-0,54	0,587
Duty to have children	25,2	29,7	-4,5	-2,36	0,019
Woman earns more than man	38,0	35,5	2,6	1,32	0,188
Man takes care of the home	36,1	38,8	-2,6	-1,37	0,171
Woman reduces aspirations	51,6	52,9	-1,2	-0,59	0,557
N	512	512	512		

Notes: The table reports mean values for indicators of gender attitudes. Individual questions are measured on a 0-100 agreement scale, where higher values indicate more conservative views. Composite indices are computed as averages of the relevant items. The difference is computed as women minus men. t-statistics and p-values come from tests of equality of means across the two groups.