

Gender Inequalities in Household Management: Mapping of Mental Labour as an Invisible Dimension of Social Reproduction

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The research on gender inequalities in the private sphere have dominantly analysed physical and emotional labour, while mental labour – although pervasive – has remained conceptually and empirically underrepresented. Mental labour encompasses the managing processes of anticipating needs, identifying possible solutions, making decisions, and monitoring their implementation in the daily functioning of the household. Existing research have shown that this type of work is strongly gender-marked, and mostly done by women. This can have negative implications on their well-being, and the quality of partner relations, particularly in households with two employed persons. The aim of the paper is to analyse the gender dimension of mental labour in households in Croatia based on the first nationally representative research of this topic. The quantitative data were collected in the end of 2022 on a sample of 1,000 persons living with an intimate partner. The results point to a strong gender inequality in doing mental labour: most activities are done by women, a smaller number of duties are typically reserved for men, while certain segments of the work are divided relatively evenly. Furthermore, significant gender differences were identified in the perception of egalitarianity, with men more often than women assessing the distribution of mental labour as equal. The findings contribute

to the understanding of mental labour as a crucial, albeit insufficiently recognised, dimension of unpaid work and social reproduction. They point to the need of its integration in the gender inequality analyses, especially in the context of distribution of daily responsibility, well-being and social power within the household, while suggesting that it is necessary to advocate for a detachment from an essentially gendered perspective on the opposition between the private and public sphere.

Key words: household management, mental labour, invisible work, unpaid reproductive work, gender inequalities in private sphere.

1. Introduction

The daily functioning of the household – organised meals, aligned obligations and maintained relations – often seems to be spontaneous and self-understandable. Nevertheless, it is this “smoothness” of daily living reliant on continuous, yet mostly invisible work on the planning, coordination, anticipation, and monitoring, which enables the needs to be recognised and met before they become a problem. This cognitive-managing layer of daily living is in more recent literature conceptualised as mental labour (Ervin et al., 2022; Dean et al., 2022; Daminger, 2019).

Despite the comprehensive research into gender inequalities in the private sphere, the dominant analytical focus has been on physical labour (Sayer, 2005) and providing care in the household, as well as on emotional labour (Hochschild, 1989; 2003.; Bianchi et al., 2000). Such an approach neglected the dimension of the work preceding the execution of tasks and enabling their organisation and continuity. Mental labour does not therefore represent merely an additional category, but a key level at which the daily life of a household is structured.

Empirical research have shown that mental labour is gender-structured, with women taking over the majority of its continuous and anticipatory forms (Offer, 2014; Daminger, 2019; Ciciolla and Luthar, 2019). Simultaneously, its diffuse and implicit nature hinders its recognition as work, which contributes to discrepancies in the perception of its distribution (Braun et al., 2008.; Harrington and Reese-Melancon, 2022).

In the Croatian context, despite the gender-marked distribution of household labour is well documented (Derado, Petrić and Tomić-Koludrović, 2020; Topolčić, 2001; Klasnić, 2017), the cognitive and organisational dimensions of daily living remain systematically underexplored. The examining whether the observed patterns of gendered mental labour are also present in Croatia is important, because their reproduction may have substantial consequences for women, while any divergence would call for a context-specific explanation. This opens an important analytical gap in the understanding of contemporary forms of gender inequalities.

Building on the former, this paper aims to empirically map and analyse the gender dimension of mental labour in households in Croatia. The research is based on the results of the first national research of this type, conducted on a representative sample of persons living with intimate partners.

The paper tackles the following research questions:

1. Which types of work and tasks constitute mental labour in a household?
2. Which types of mental labour are mostly done by women, which by men, and which together or equally?
3. Are there any gender differences in the perception of doing certain mental labour among partners, which ones, and how to explain them?

The contribution of the paper is two-fold. Empirically, the paper brings the first systematical mapping of mental labour in the Croatian context. Theoretically, it contributes to a shift from a two-dimensional understanding of household labour towards a multi-dimensional framework, in which the cognitive-managing dimension is recognised as crucial for the understanding of the organisation of daily living, and reproduction of gender power relations.

2. Theoretical Framework

The research into gender inequality in the household have traditionally been focused on the distribution of physical labour and care in the household, and on emotional labour as the dimension of maintaining relations (Hochschild, 1989; 2003; Bianchi et al., 2000; Sayer, 2005). Such an analytical framework implicitly presumed that household labour can be thoroughly understood through visible activities and their duration, while the dimension preceding the implementation of the tasks remained not enough theoretically articulated. Thereby, the daily reproduction of life is analytically separated from the processes enabling its organisation.

Early attempts at grasping the cognitive dimension of household labour emerged through the notion of household management. This notion emphasises that household labour involves not only the execution of tasks, but also their organisation, distribution and coordination (Mederer, 1993; Meier et al., 2006). This perspective is further deepened by the papers explicitly positioning women as the “managers” of daily living, responsible for the supervision and coordination of family life (Alby et al., 2014), by which the gender dimension of organisational work in the household is clearly indicated. Later papers further expand this perspective by introducing the planning, routine management and financial decision-making (Ciciolla and Luthar, 2019; Mazzotta et al., 2019). These approaches also grasp mental labour mostly through a set of tasks, while in the present research we attempt to avoid, through the mapping

of activities and tasks, an implicit reduction of mental labour to a sum of these tasks. We demonstrate that it is possible, through the patterns among mental labour tasks, to analytically reconstruct the processual structure and diffuse nature of mental labour.

Contemporary literature employs an array of terms to describe this dimension of work – mental labour, cognitive labour, invisible work, mental load (Offer, 2014; Daminger, 2019; Dean et al., 2021; Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023). More recent research additionally confirm that the cognitive dimension of household labour is systematically gender-structured and focused on women (Haupt and Gelbgiser, 2023). Analytically, it is useful to distinguish mental labour from mental load. Mental labour refers to the processes of anticipation, planning, decision-making and monitoring, while mental load signifies the subjective feeling of continuous responsibility and personal feeling of being burdened due to executing mental tasks (Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023; Klasnić and Degač, 2024). Treating them as the same brings along the reduction of the phenomenon to experience, by which its social organisation might be blurred.

In this paper, mental labour is defined as a processual set of mutually connected cognitive-managing activities that enable the organisation and continuity of household daily life. Its specificity lies in its permanent openness: this type of work is not limited by a beginning and an end, but rather takes place through continuous monitoring of needs and potential problems. Daminger (2019) breaks this process down into the phases of anticipation, identification, decision-making, and monitoring of implementation. The anticipation and identification components are those that are gender-marked the most.

Mental labour is therefore manifested through a series of mutually connected dimensions that encompass the anticipation of needs, logistic planning and organisation, time coordination, managing of information, and financial decision-making. Furthermore, it also includes the relational dimension of maintaining relations, and the symbolic dimension of reproducing the “good parenting” norms and “good housekeeping” (Walzer, 1998; Hochschild, 2003; Ciciolla and Luthar, 2019; Harrington and Reese-Melancon, 2022; Stamp, 2021; Mazzotta et al., 2019). Overall, these dimensions suggest that mental labour functions as a coordination framework that connects various aspects of daily living. The gendered distribution of mental labour is particularly important because cognitive responsibilities appear to be less responsive than physical household labour to changes in women’s time and economic resources. Recent research shows that mothers’ employment and higher earnings may reduce their physical household labour without producing a corresponding reduction in their cognitive responsibilities (Weeks et al., 2025). Weeks et al. (2025) describe this persistence as “gendered cognitive stickiness”: because cognitive labour is largely invisible, diffuse, and difficult to outsource or renegotiate, it may remain a women’s responsibility even when their employment and economic resources increase. This persistence

is particularly relevant given the previous findings that link unequal distribution of cognitive labour to women's lower well-being. Thus, the examining of how mental labour is concretely manifested and gendered is important not only to understand the division of the household labour itself, but also to identify a potentially consequential and particularly persistent dimension of gender inequality.

The social reproduction theory enables mental labour to be embedded in a broader social context. The activities of maintaining daily life make the basis of the reproduction of social relations and work force (Fraser, 1989; Federici, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2017). Therein, mental labour represents their organisational infrastructure. If physical and emotional labour sustain life, mental labour enables their coordination. Its invisibility arises from the historical naturalisation of reproductive labour as women's (Allain, 2024), by which it is simultaneously devalued and removed from the sphere of explicit acknowledgement.

In this sense, mental labour is necessarily related to the questions of power. The distribution of responsibility for the anticipation, organisation and coordination of daily living is not neutral, but it reflects and reproduces gender relations (Fraser, 2016; Walby, 1990). Bourdieu's (2001) concept of *habitus* further explains how these practices are internalised as "natural", by which they are put out of the question and reflection. Mental labour thus functions as an implicit, but crucial dimension of daily life management that remains outside of explicit distribution.

Empirical research have consistently shown that mental labour is gender-structured. Women more often take the responsibility for the organisation, anticipation and coordination of daily life (Offer, 2014; Daminger, 2019; Ciciolla and Luthar, 2019; Hjálmsdóttir, and Bjarnadóttir, 2021). More recent studies further confirm that it is precisely the cognitive dimension of the household labour that is systematically disproportionately distributed to women (Haupt and Gelbgiser, 2023). Men more often engage in selective and clearly bounded activities (Kamp Dush et al., 2018), which implies the qualitative differences in the structure of the labour.

The gender dimension of mental labour is manifested also in the differences in its perception. Research have shown that men more often assess the distribution of household labour as equal, while women more often report their own greater enagement (Bartolac and Kamenov, 2013; Braun et al., 2008; Harrington and Reese-Melancon, 2022). Such discrepancies may reflect both actual differences in the distribution of mental labour and gender differences in how this labour is perceived and reported. These assessments are strongly related to normative expectations and criteria of justice, which are not necessarily based on the real distribution of labour (Koster et al., 2022.). Differences in perception may be particularly relevant in the case of mental labour because its diffuse and often invisible nature can make it less accessible to those who do not perform it, making inequalities more difficult to recognise.

In the Croatian context, research have confirmed the persistence of gender-marked distribution of labour (Galić, 2012; Klasnić, 2017; Topolčić, 2001, Derado, Petrić and Tomić-Koludrović, 2020), but the cognitive dimensions of household labour have remained underexplored. In the post-socialist context of simultaneous processes of modernisation and retraditionalisation (Tomić-Koludrović, 2003; Nikodem, 2012), mental labour can represent a particularly stable mechanism of reproduction of inequalities, precisely due to its invisibility.

The provided theoretical and empirical insights imply that it is not possible to understand mental labour merely as a set of isolated data, but as a processual, multidimensional and gender-structured phenomenon operating at the level of organisation of daily life. Its diffusiveness, continuity and low visibility make it analytically challenging, nevertheless, at the same time crucial for grasping how social reproduction is coordinated daily, and how gender power relations are reproduced through that coordination. It is from this theoretical perspective that the need for the mapping of concrete manifestations of mental labour arises, to capture its structure, distribution and perception.

3. Methodology

Research Implementation

The research was carried out by employing the method of questionnaire survey on a nationally representative sample of 1,000 persons living in heterosexual relationships with a partner (either married or not) for at least a year. The data were collected by the Hendl Agency during November and December 2022 by a combined online (70%) and telephone (30%) survey. The representativeness of the sample was monitored according to the variables of age, sex, region and size of the settlement in accordance with the Population Census of 2021. The maximum sampling error with a 95% confidence level is $\pm 4\%$. This research is a part of the mixed-method research project *Construction and Evaluation of the Scale of Mental Labour in the Household*, which is financed by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb, Croatia. The research received a positive ethical opinion by the Committee for the Assessment of Research Ethics of the Department of Sociology (Decision No. 03-2022/2023).

Sample

Out of 1,000 investigated persons living with their heterosexual partner for at least a year, there were 521 women (52.1%), and 479 men (47.9%). The majority of respondents were married (79%), while 21% were in a non-marital partnership. The re-

spondents were sampled individually, and not as couples. Joint caring for children was evident in 78% of the respondents. The highest reported educational level was primary education for 6% of women, secondary for 56%, and higher for 38%. Among men, 1% reported primary education, 52% secondary, and 47% higher education. The average age of women in the sample was 53 (standard deviation 13 years), while for men the average was 48 (standard deviation 13 years).

Measurement Instruments

A list of 74 activities of mental labour in the household was created by a combination (and adaptation as appropriate) of the items of three existing measurement instruments related to mental labour in the household (Ciciolla and Luthar, 2019; McNaughton-Cassill and Lynch; 2006; Stamp 2021), and based on the project's qualitative strand, carried out by employing the method of focus groups with separate samples of women and men (Klasnić and Degač, 2024).

The first consulted scale, called the *Division of Labour Measure* (Meier, McNaughton-Cassill and Lynch, 2006), consisted of four subdimensions, of which two referred to physical labour: *Household Tasks* with 14 items and *Childcare Tasks* with 11, while the remaining two, which are the subject of the present paper, encompassed *Household Management* with 11 items and *Childcare Management* with 10 items.

The second consulted study (Ciciolla and Luthar, 2019) developed the instrument called *Household Management Items*, which included three subdimensions of mental labour: *Responsibility for Household Routines* with four items, *Responsibility for Child Adjustment* with four items, and *Responsibility for Household Finances* with 5 items.

The third and the most comprehensive scale, called *Mental Labour in Relationships* (Stamp, 2021), developed a new instrument consisting of 50 items distributed across five subdomains: *Planning and Strategising*, *Monitoring and Anticipating Needs*, *Knowing*, *Managerial Thinking*, and *Self-Regulating*. Since the last subdomain does not conceptually fit the mental labour definition in the present study, it was not included in the analysis.

From these sources, a list of a total of 74 types of mental labour was assembled. This list was shown to the participants of the focus groups. A total of two focus groups were conducted with women, and one with men, with altogether 25 participants. More details about the structure of the participants is provided in Klasnić and Degač (2024:7-8). The participants were given the following instructions: *I ask you to carefully examine the listed behaviours and think about their meaning. Are all the listed behaviours clear to you, or is it clear to you what is meant by them? Are these behaviours familiar to you based on your own experience? How do you call them, perhaps, by using*

some other expressions? Please, also consider which of these behaviours do not apply to you, and for what reason. Finally, do you think that something important is missing from this list, and is related to the mental labour we are discussing today? Based on the discussions developed in some focus groups, some items from the initial version of the list were removed because they were unclear to the participants or too general, while others were reformulated for clarity and precision purposes. In addition, the male and female participants of focus groups suggested the addition of new items describing additional tasks related to household mental labour, which were not present in the previously consulted measurement instruments. After the implementation of the changes, the final list once again consisted of 74 mental labour activities. All the activities were then the subject of a quantitative analysis with regard to the respondent's sex, with the aim to ascertain the gender differences in pursuing mental labour. In the questionnaire survey, each item was measured in such a way that the respondents assessed on a six-level scale who was the person most often doing a particular task in their household. The respondents chose among the following answers: "Neither I nor the partner do it", "Only I do it", "I do it more often than the partner", "The partner and I do it equally", "The partner does it more often than me", and "Only the partner does it".

Analytical Strategy

Typically men's and typically women's types of mental labour are defined based on the share of the respondents' answers pointing to their dominant involvement in the practising of a particular activity compared to the partner. In the analysis, the answers "Only I do it" and "I do it more often than the partner" were taken together for all of the 74 activities, separately for women and men, and then the sums of the answers were compared for both sexes for each type of mental labour. A certain type of labour was classified as typically women's if two criteria were met: firstly, the sum of women's answers "Only I do it" and "I do it more often than the partner" had to be 50% or above; secondly, the difference between the shares of these answers given by women and men had to be higher than 20%. Analogously, a task was considered as typically men's if the same criteria were met in favour of men.¹

Equally shared were the types of mental labour for which none of the sexes had the sum of the answers "Only I do it" and "I do it more often than the partner" higher than 50%, and the difference between these answers for women and men was lower than 20%.

¹ The example of the application of this procedure can be illustrated by the activity "Writing of Christmas and birthday cards". Here the sum of the answers "Only I do it" and "I do it more often than the partner" amounted to 54.9% for women, while for men this share was 11.3%, thus yielding a difference of 43.6%. Since more than a half of women reported they were doing this activity either always or most of the time by themselves, and the difference compared to men exceeded 20%, this type of mental labour was classified as typically women's.

Gender discrepancy in the perception of egalitarianity was observed by comparing the shares of the answers “The partner and I do it equally” given by the respondents for each of the 74 types of mental labour from the list. For each activity a difference in the proportion of this answer given by men and women was calculated, with the aim of detecting the extent to which their perception of equal distribution of the tasks was different. After the comparisons, twenty activities were selected, which had the highest discrepancy in the perception of egalitarianity between men and women. This was a kind of a “top list” of mental labour with the highest gender discrepancy in the perception of egalitarianity. These activities were later further interpreted by authors with the aim to obtain an insight into the patterns and possible reasons for disharmony in the perception of mental labour division between the partners.

The analyses were conducted by combining the softwares IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 and MS Excel. The paper is based on descriptive analyses of the shares of particular answers and their combinations.

4. Results

Based on the contents of 74 identified mental labour activities, their analytical classification into eleven thematic groups was carried out. This classification is not a result of a statistical procedure, but a conceptually led categorisation based on the functional relatedness and meaning of particular activities in the daily functioning of the household. In other words, single indicators of mental labour were grouped in broader domains in line with the type of the tasks they include (e.g. planning, anticipation, organisation, emotional care), while considering the existing theoretical approaches to mental labour (Daminger, 2019; Dean et al., 2022), and empirical insights from previous research. The aim of this classification was to enable analytical reduction of the complex set of variables, and to facilitate interpretation of patterns of mental labour gender division across functionally connected units. It is important to point out that this is an interpretive, rather than inferential procedure, which does not aspire to ascertain the latent structures of the construct, but rather serve as a heuristic framework for the presentation and interpretation of results. The distributions of responses for each of the eleven groups are presented separately for women (N = 521) and men (N = 479) in the tables that follow.

1. Emotional and Developmental Childcare (items 1–3, 35–37, 67)

The emotional and developmental childcare encompasses the tasks related to the monitoring of the emotional state, behaviour and development of the child, and the maintaining of contacts with educators, teachers and other persons involved in the child's upbringing and education. These tasks include taking care of the child's feelings, instilling of values and forming of character, monitoring of the child's developmental progress, school performance and behaviour, solving of problems with educators, teachers

and coaches, and learning about child upbringing. The data collected by the research point to a strong gender inequality in performing these tasks. Women largely take the responsibility for the emotional and developmental care for children, while men more often consider these tasks as equally shared. However, figures show that in practice, women carry the main burden. For example, taking care of the child's feelings was predominantly a women's task, as 40% of women stated they were the only one doing it or doing it more often than the partner. Contrarily, only 8% of men said the same. A similar pattern is visible in maintaining contact with educators and teachers, which is dominantly or solely done by 36% of women, while the same is practised by only 9% of men. Monitoring of progress in the child's development is also more often undertaken by women, with 37% of women reporting that they perform this task predominantly or solely, compared with 7% of men. Similarly, taking care of the child's success and behaviour in school is predominantly or solely performed by 35% of women, compared with 7% of men. Learning about child upbringing also appears as a women's task, as 42% of women do it primarily on their own, compared to 7% of men. Men tend to perceive these tasks as joint or equally divided, however, women report that it is them who more often take responsibility for the emotional and developmental care for children.

Table 1.
Emotional and Developmental Childcare, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
1. Taking care of child's feelings/emotions	W	23.4%	13.4%	26.7%	34.2%	1.5%	0.8%
	M	23.8%	1.9%	6.1%	45.7%	20.9%	1.7%
2. Knowing of educator/teacher and preschool/school staff	W	38.2%	14.2%	21.7%	23.2%	2.1%	0.6%
	M	37.2%	2.9%	6.1%	31.1%	19.8%	2.9%
3. Instillation of values and forming of character of one's own children	W	22.5%	10.6%	21.9%	42.4%	2.3%	0.4%
	M	23.4%	1.7%	8.4%	53.9%	12.1%	0.6%
35. Monitoring of progress in the child's development	W	41.5%	19.0%	18.2%	19.4%	1.7%	0.2%
	M	37.8%	2.1%	4.4%	34.7%	18.2%	2.9%
36. Taking care of the child's success and behaviour in school	W	39.3%	17.1%	18.2%	23.6%	1.5%	0.2%
	M	37.8%	2.3%	4.8%	36.5%	16.9%	1.7%
37. Solving of problems with preschool teachers; teachers; coaches, etc.	W	39.3%	19.8%	16.9%	21.1%	2.5%	0.4%
	M	38.4%	3.5%	6.3%	32.6%	16.7%	2.5%
67. Learning about raising children	W	26.7%	23.0%	18.8%	29.8%	1.5%	0.2%
	M	28.0%	2.1%	4.6%	49.7%	13.2%	2.5%

2. Managing Tasks and Needs Related to Children (items 28–34, 38–39)

The managing of the tasks and needs related to children encompasses the tasks such as planning of the diet, preparing of the necessities for the next day, organisation of free time and social activities, and taking care of medical check-ups. The data collected in the research point to a strong gender inequality in performing these tasks. Women are to a great extent those who take the responsibility for the planning, organisation and coordination of children's daily needs, while men most often perceive these tasks as equally shared. The planning of the child's diet is dominantly a women's task (44%), while the same was reported by only 7% of men. A similar pattern is also evident in the preparing of the child's necessary things for the next day. Men tend to perceive these tasks as joint or equally divided, nevertheless, women report that it is them who take greater responsibility for the daily organisation and care for the children.

Table 2.
Managing Tasks and Needs Related to Children, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
28. Planning of the child's diet (meals)	W	36.7%	24.0%	19.6%	17.5%	2.1%	0.2%
	M	35.5%	2.5%	4.6%	28.0%	25.5%	4.0%
29. Noticing when there is a need for child's supplies (e.g. diapers, toys, school supplies, etc.)	W	39.3%	25.7%	19.6%	14.4%	0.8%	0.2%
	M	37.4%	2.5%	5.0%	30.3%	21.3%	3.5%
30. Deciding when to buy new clothes for the child, which clothes no longer fit him/ her and what to do with the old clothes	W	38.2%	26.5%	18.4%	15.4%	1.2%	0.4%
	M	36.3%	2.3%	3.5%	25.9%	25.7%	6.3%
31. Deciding whether the child needs medical care	W	37.2%	16.7%	18.4%	26.1%	1.3%	0.2%
	M	35.1%	2.1%	4.2%	40.5%	15.4%	2.7%
32. Taking care of the schedule of the child's doctor appointment	W	37.4%	26.7%	16.9%	15.9%	2.5%	0.6%
	M	34.4%	2.7%	4.8%	31.1%	23.2%	3.8%
33. Preparation of the child's necessities for the next day	W	39.9%	28.0%	16.5%	14.2%	1.3%	0.0%
	M	37.8%	2.7%	3.3%	25.1%	24.4%	6.7%
34. Planning of the time spent with the child outside of the household (e.g. going to the park, cinema, etc.)	W	38.8%	13.8%	18.0%	27.8%	1.5%	0.0%
	M	36.1%	3.1%	6.7%	38.6%	14.0%	1.5%
38. Monitoring of the child's extracurricular activities' schedule	W	40.5%	17.7%	20.0%	19.0%	2.7%	0.2%
	M	38.2%	2.7%	8.4%	30.1%	18.2%	2.5%
39. Organisation of the child's social activities (birthdays, excursions, and other types of socialising with the peers)	W	38.6%	21.5%	18.4%	19.4%	2.1%	0.0%
	M	35.5%	1.9%	5.0%	32.4%	22.1%	3.1%

3. Financial Planning and Household Budget Management (items 5–10, 25)

The financial planning and household budget management encompass making decisions on large financial investments, planning of daily and future costs, rationalisation of the use of energy resources, and control of utility costs. The gathered data suggest that this domain is slightly more evenly divided between women and men compared to other aspects of household mental labour. Thus, the decisions on larger financial investments, such as investing, going on vacation or home renovation, are mostly brought together. Deciding upon where and how to make a large financial investment is perceived as a joint task by 64% of women and 64% of men, while only a smaller proportion report this to be mostly done by themselves only or by their partner. A similar picture is visible also in making decisions whether the family can afford to go on vacation, where 66% of women and 72% of men say that they make this decision together. A somewhat greater gender difference in perception occurs in deciding whether the house or apartment needs redecorating, where 63% of men view this as a joint task, while a little above a half of women think the same. At the same time, 26% of women report that it is them who mostly make these decisions, whereby the same is stated by only 9% of men. The share of men who say that this is mostly done by their partner (22%) is twice as big as the share of women who say the same about their partner. This suggests that men delegate this task more often to the partner or perceive it as her responsibility, while women more often see that they take over the responsibility for making decisions in that segment. In deciding on the daily financial options of the family (whether something can be afforded), most respondents say they are equal – 64% of women and 74% of men. However, women somewhat more often than men report taking over the greater part of that responsibility (27% of women compared to 14% of men). The strongest difference in favour of men is evident in the caring for the rationalisation of energy resources (electricity, gas, water), which is predominantly or exclusively done by 47% of men compared to 33% of women. It is also visible that women more often than men view this task as mutual (50% of women compared to 42% of men). Altogether, the decisions on larger financial issues are in most cases mutual, but in the daily managing of finances there is still a visible yet slight gender division – women are more often responsible for administrative tasks such as paying utility bills, while men more often engage in the rationalisation of the use of energy resources.

Table 3.

Financial Planning and Household Budget Management, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
5. Deciding where and how to make a big financial investment	W	3.6%	5.6%	13.4%	63.7%	11.1%	2.5%
	M	3.3%	6.3%	19.6%	63.5%	6.5%	0.8%
6. Deciding whether the family can financially afford to go on vacation	W	4.2%	7.1%	14.2%	65.8%	7.1%	1.5%
	M	2.1%	4.0%	13.6%	72.2%	6.7%	1.5%
7. Deciding whether the house/apartment needs renovating	W	1.2%	8.4%	26.1%	55.1%	7.5%	1.7%
	M	1.5%	2.5%	9.2%	62.8%	21.7%	2.3%
8. Deciding whether you can afford something as a couple/family (daily needs, not including large financial expenses)	W	1.7%	6.5%	20.0%	64.1%	6.7%	1.0%
	M	1.5%	2.1%	12.1%	73.7%	9.8%	0.8%
9. Planning of future household and family expenses	W	1.3%	9.2%	20.7%	61.2%	6.5%	1.0%
	M	0.8%	4.2%	18.6%	66.8%	8.8%	0.8%
10. Caring for energy rationalisation / monitoring of gas, electricity, and water consumption	W	0.8%	13.1%	19.4%	49.5%	14.8%	2.5%
	M	1.7%	13.6%	33.0%	42.0%	8.4%	1.5%
25. Collection of utility bills and taking care of their timely payment	W	1.0%	35.7%	18.2%	26.5%	13.6%	5.0%
	M	1.3%	25.3%	23.2%	31.3%	12.3%	6.7%

4. Planning and Managing of Household Chores (items 17–19, 21, 26, 27, 52)

The planning and managing of household chores implies the planning, allocation, coordination and prioritisation of tasks necessary for the everyday functioning and maintenance of the household. This group of tasks includes assigning of household chores to other household members, deciding which obligations should take priority when schedules overlap or when there are too many tasks to complete, as well as planning and organising of household repairs and renovations and coordinating them with external service providers.

The data reveal a gendered pattern within this domain, although the direction of the gender difference varies depending on the type of the activity involved. Women are more often responsible for the continuous coordination and prioritisation of household obligations, whereas men are more frequently responsible for organising of household repairs and communicating with external service providers. For example, assigning household chores to the partner and other household members is predominantly or exclusively performed by 55% of women, compared with 13% of men. Similarly, deciding which household chore should take priority when there are too many

chores to complete is predominantly or exclusively performed by 53% of women and 15% of men. Deciding which obligations are most important when schedules overlap also shows a gender difference in the same direction, with 43% of women reporting that they predominantly or exclusively assume this responsibility, compared with 13% of men.

The opposite pattern is evident in the activities related to organising of household repairs and dealing with external service providers. The organisation of necessary works and repairs in the home is predominantly or exclusively performed by 54% of men compared with 28% of women, while arranging of household repairs with handymen is reported as a predominantly or exclusively their own responsibility by 59% of men and 22% of women. The planning of how to renovate the apartment or house, however, shows the opposite pattern, with 41% of women compared with 13% of men reporting that they predominantly or exclusively assume this responsibility. Thus, even within the activities related to home maintenance and renovation, different components of the organisational process appear to be gendered differently.

Overall, these findings indicate that the planning and managing of household chores does not constitute a uniformly gendered domain. Rather, there appears to be an internal gender division of managerial responsibility. Women more often assume responsibility for the ongoing coordination, allocation and prioritisation of everyday household obligations, whereas men more often take responsibility for the organisation of repairs and communication with external service providers.

Table 4.
Planning and Managing of Household Chores, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
7. Assigning of household chores to the partner and other household members	W	6.1%	21.5%	33.8%	35.5%	2.7%	0.4%
	M	4.0%	2.7%	10.2%	60.1%	20.7%	2.3%
18. Organisation of work and repairs that need to be done in the apartment/house	W	0.6%	10.0%	17.9%	33.8%	28.6%	9.2%
	M	0.6%	22.1%	32.2%	36.7%	6.9%	1.5%
19. Arrangement of household repairs with handymen	W	1.2%	9.6%	12.3%	29.9%	36.7%	10.4%
	M	2.3%	27.1%	31.7%	29.9%	7.7%	1.3%
21. Planning of how to renovate the apartment or house	W	2.1%	15.4%	25.1%	50.5%	6.0%	1.0%
	M	2.9%	3.8%	9.2%	58.7%	23.4%	2.1%
26. Deciding which obligations are the most important when the schedules "overlap"	W	2.1%	17.5%	25.5%	50.1%	4.2%	0.6%
	M	0.8%	2.5%	10.6%	70.6%	13.6%	1.9%

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
27. Deciding which household chore is the most important to do when there are too many chores	W	1.2%	22.1%	30.9%	41.5%	3.5%	1.0%
	M	0.8%	4.4%	10.9%	64.1%	16.9%	2.9%
52. Deciding whether something that has broken down in the household should be replaced or not	W	0.4%	13.1%	21.9%	45.1%	15.4%	4.2%
	M	0.4%	12.9%	30.7%	49.1%	5.8%	1.0%

5. Planning of Diet and Household Supplies (items 11–16)

The planning of diet and household supplies includes the tasks related to the provision of food for the household members, and encompasses the planning of meals, monitoring of supply reserves, writing of the shopping list, deciding on the preparation of meals in line with the supplies at hand, and thinking about the long-term quality of diet. The data show that this domain strongly reflects the traditional distribution of household labour. Women dominantly perform all the tasks related to food and provision, from the planning of meals to the shopping lists and monitoring of reserves, while men mostly find this to be equally shared. Thus, the writing of the shopping list is primarily a women's task: 72% of women reported that this is done exclusively or mostly by them, while the same was reported by 18% of men. The planning of when to start cooking is even more present in the women's domain: 77% of them take over this responsibility, compared to 17% of men. A similar pattern is visible also in the long-term thinking about the quality of diet, which is done by 64% of women, while the same is reported by 16% of men.

Table 5.
Planning of Diet and Household Supplies, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
11. Noticing when some of the groceries and household supplies are running out	W	0.2%	40.9%	32.8%	20.5%	4.4%	1.2%
	M	0.6%	4.0%	14.4%	45.3%	31.3%	4.4%
12. Making of the shopping list	W	1.3%	44.0%	28.2%	22.1%	3.5%	1.0%
	M	1.0%	4.8%	12.7%	43.2%	31.5%	6.7%
13. Taking care that there is enough food for all household members	W	0.4%	39.3%	27.1%	27.1%	5.6%	0.6%
	M	0.4%	5.2%	13.4%	49.7%	26.3%	5.0%
14. Planning of when to start cooking	W	0.6%	51.8%	25.3%	16.5%	5.0%	0.8%
	M	0.6%	4.8%	11.9%	31.7%	37.4%	13.6%

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
15. Deciding what to cook with the ingredients already in the household, i.e. those already bought	W	0.6%	44.0%	28.6%	21.5%	4.6%	0.8%
	M	0.6%	4.8%	11.9%	38.2%	33.6%	10.9%
16. Long-term thinking about the quality of diet of the household members	W	1.2%	35.5%	28.6%	30.5%	3.5%	0.8%
	M	2.9%	4.2%	11.7%	51.6%	24.0%	5.6%

6. Maintaining of Order, Cleanliness and Supplies (items 24, 46–49)

The maintaining of order, cleanliness and supplies encompasses mental tasks regarding the maintenance of hygiene standards and the functioning of the household. These tasks include noticing when certain parts of the home need cleaning, changing of bed linen, filling up of household supplies, and monitoring when household utensils need to be serviced or repaired. The data in the present research reveal that this domain is strongly marked by gender inequality, with women being dominantly responsible for the execution of these tasks. Men view these tasks as mostly women's or do not notice them at all, which further contributes to their invisibility.

Thus, for example, the noticing when bed linen needs changing is the task which is in 84% of the cases done by women, while the same is confirmed by only 9% of men. A similar pattern is visible in noticing when the detergent or other cleaning agents are running out, which is in 83% of the cases done by women, while the same task is perceived as mostly or exclusively their own by only 15% of men. These data show that men either do not notice or perceive these tasks as naturally belonging to women. Women, on the other hand, take over the mental burden of continuous monitoring of the state of cleanliness and household supplies, and of timely reacting to the observed needs, ensuring seamless functioning of the household.

Table 6.
Maintaining of Order, Cleanliness and Supplies, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
24. Noticing when something is dirty and needs to be cleaned (e.g. curtains, windows, toilet bowl, etc.)	W	1.2%	52.0%	28.6%	15.4%	2.3%	0.6%
	M	0.4%	3.3%	9.0%	32.2%	43.6%	11.5%
46. Noticing that the bathroom needs cleaning	W	0.4%	54.3%	25.0%	16.9%	3.3%	0.2%
	M	0.2%	3.8%	11.9%	31.7%	39.9%	12.5%
47. Noticing when the bed linen needs to be changed	W	0.0%	62.0%	22.1%	12.9%	2.9%	0.2%
	M	0.2%	3.3%	5.8%	28.4%	45.5%	16.7%
48. Noticing that toilet paper is running out and needs to be replaced	W	0.4%	39.3%	25.1%	30.5%	3.1%	1.5%
	M	0.0%	5.6%	17.5%	49.5%	21.7%	5.6%
49. Noticing that detergent or other cleaning supplies are running out	W	0.0%	59.7%	23.0%	14.0%	3.1%	0.2%
	M	0.2%	3.8%	10.9%	31.1%	39.2%	14.8%

7. Monitoring and Anticipation of Household Members' Needs (items 4, 22, 23, 53–55)

The monitoring and anticipation of the needs of the household members encompasses the recognition and anticipation of emotional, health and practical needs of the family members. These tasks include noticing when the partner or the child needs support or help, recognition of stressful situations and potential conflicts, and deciding upon the changing or repairing of broken things. The data suggest that this domain of mental labour is also marked by gender inequality. Women much more often take the responsibility for the recognition of and reaction to the needs of the household members, while men more often perceive these tasks as equal or do not notice them at all. Thus, the noticing when the partner or child needs emotional support is in 58% of the cases the task taken over by women, while the same is done by only 12% of men. Reminding the partner when to visit the doctor is also more often a women's responsibility: 53% of women report doing this mostly or exclusively by themselves, while the same goes for 18% of men. Women are the primary carriers of the mental labour focused on emotional well-being and health of the household members. They not only notice other household members' needs, but also take responsibility for a timely reaction and support, which further contributes to their load in the family life sphere. Men, on the other hand, are often unaware of this invisible segment of mental labour or consider it as something that is done spontaneously and without greater engagement.

Table 7.

Monitoring and Anticipation of Household Members' Needs, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
4. Putting the interests of family members before one's own	W	9.2%	14.4%	28.8%	42.6%	3.8%	1.2%
	M	9.0%	3.1%	9.2%	63.3%	14.0%	1.5%
22. Reminding the partner that he/she needs to go to a medical check-up	W	3.8%	24.0%	29.4%	34.9%	6.5%	1.3%
	M	3.8%	3.8%	14.4%	52.8%	21.9%	3.3%
23. Taking care of everything the partner needs for the next day	W	4.2%	21.9%	25.5%	37.8%	9.0%	1.5%
	M	2.9%	2.9%	8.6%	56.2%	25.3%	4.2%
53. Noticing when the partner or child needs emotional support	W	4.8%	24.4%	33.2%	35.3%	2.1%	0.2%
	M	4.8%	3.8%	8.4%	62.2%	18.8%	2.1%
54. Noticing when the partner or child is upset/under stress and may need help	W	6.1%	24.6%	31.9%	35.7%	1.5%	0.2%
	M	6.1%	4.0%	11.1%	61.0%	15.9%	2.1%
55. Noticing problematic behaviours of household members and deciding whether something needs to change	W	5.6%	21.7%	25.1%	44.5%	2.9%	0.2%
	M	8.8%	3.3%	10.6%	64.5%	11.7%	1.0%

8. Planning of Free Time, Family and Social Activities (items 40–45, 56)

The planning of free time, and family and social activities includes the organisation of mutual time of the partners and the family, planning of celebrations, vacations, field trips, and socialising with friends and relatives. It also includes deciding upon how to spend quality time with the partner or family. The data show that this segment of mental labour is somewhat more equally distributed compared to other segments, nevertheless, here also women are those who more often take the initiative and carry a greater responsibility for the organisation and realisation of joint activities. Men more often perceive that these tasks are shared equally, while women more often report their own greater engagement. For example, the planning of celebrations and anniversaries is mostly or exclusively done by 37% of women, while the same goes for 9% of men. The planning of vacation and trips shows a somewhat more equal picture, but here also women take over this responsibility: 26% of women stated that they were doing this task, compared to 14% of men. Although the planning of free time and social activities is often perceived as a joint task, women are still somewhat more often responsible for these activities to even happen, which includes the caring about the deadlines, arrangements with other families, preparation or provision of necessary things and coordination of family and social schedules.

Table 8.

Planning of Free Time, Family and Social Activities, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
40. Planning how to spend quality time with the partner	W	9.0%	8.3%	19.6%	59.9%	2.3%	1.0%
	M	4.4%	1.3%	9.4%	75.2%	8.1%	1.7%
41. Planning evening outings with the partner	W	17.9%	5.8%	15.7%	54.7%	5.0%	1.0%
	M	7.9%	2.3%	9.2%	66.2%	12.3%	2.1%
42. Deciding where to go on a date as a couple	W	21.7%	4.0%	13.4%	54.7%	5.4%	0.8%
	M	10.2%	1.5%	8.1%	66.2%	12.1%	1.9%
43. Planning socialising with family and friends	W	2.9%	10.0%	24.4%	57.2%	5.0%	0.6%
	M	2.3%	2.5%	6.3%	71.0%	16.7%	1.3%
44. Planning celebrations and anniversaries	W	5.0%	12.3%	24.8%	54.1%	3.3%	0.6%
	M	3.1%	1.9%	7.1%	63.9%	21.3%	2.7%
45. Planning annual vacations and trips	W	8.4%	7.9%	16.9%	62.2%	3.5%	1.2%
	M	3.5%	2.7%	11.5%	69.1%	11.5%	1.7%
56. Planning what needs to be packed for a family trip	W	3.3%	37.6%	32.2%	23.2%	3.1%	0.6%
	M	2.1%	3.1%	7.1%	49.3%	32.8%	5.6%

9. Managing of Information and Remembering of Key Dates (items 57, 58, 71)

The managing of information and remembering of key dates encompasses the tasks related to the monitoring of important forthcoming events, birthdays and family anniversaries, reminding the household members on arrangements, and taking care of organisational details such as timely registration of the car or packing of the things for a family trip. In this domain as well, women dominantly take over the responsibility. The tasks often considered as “small” and “insignificant”, such as reminding on birthdays or packing for a trip, in practice represent another form of mental load, which predominantly lies on women. Men more often perceive these tasks as equal or do not recognise them as a separate segment of labour at all, but the numerical data suggest a different picture. For example, the reminding of the household members on birthdays and important dates is mostly or exclusively done by 70% of women, while the same goes for only 12% of men. This gender inequality implies that women are the holders of not only the practical, but also the symbolic mental labour in the family, or that it is them who maintain the “family threads” of connectedness, by nurturing social relations through caring about anniversaries and important events.

Table 9.

Managing of Information and Remembering of Key Dates, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
57. Reminding household members of important upcoming events	W	2.5%	34.9%	34.4%	25.5%	1.9%	0.8%
	M	1.5%	3.8%	10.2%	55.3%	25.9%	3.3%
58. Reminding household members of birthdays of close friends and relatives	W	3.1%	35.5%	34.2%	23.6%	3.5%	0.2%
	M	2.7%	2.7%	9.6%	46.8%	33.2%	5.0%
71. Writing Christmas and birthday cards	W	21.1%	31.7%	23.2%	20.9%	2.5%	0.6%
	M	14.4%	2.5%	8.8%	36.7%	30.5%	7.1%

10. Technical Knowledge, Household Maintenance and Skills (items 20, 50, 51, 59–66, 68–70)

Technical knowledge, household maintenance and skills encompass tasks that require specific knowledge and practical skills, such as knowing how to clean the kitchen or bathroom correctly, how to use household appliances, sort waste, maintain and take care of the clothes, repair household objects or devices, as well as monitor and arrange vehicle maintenance. This domain of mental labour is also marked by a traditional gender division. The tasks related to cleaning, maintaining of the clothes and daily functioning of the kitchen are mostly in the domain of women, while tasks related to repairs, electronic devices and vehicle maintenance are more often in the domain of men. This division reflects a broader pattern by which women carry the burden of permanent household maintenance through daily, repetitive tasks, while men take over occasional, technically more demanding tasks, which are often more visible and socially better valued. For example, knowing how to correctly wash and care for the clothes is mostly or exclusively done by 82% of women, while the same is reported by 8% of men. Repairs of devices and household items are seen as their own duty by 66% of men, while the same was confirmed by 19% of women. Similarly, arranging car repairs is predominantly or exclusively performed by 68% of men, compared with 13% of women. This division points to different, strongly gendered sets of household knowledge, skills and responsibilities, reflecting traditional expectations regarding what women and men are expected to know and take responsibility for within the household. However, given the larger number and more continuous and repetitive nature of the tasks predominantly performed by women, this division may nevertheless contribute to an unequal distribution of mental load between women and men.

Table 10.
Technical Knowledge, Household Maintenance and Skills, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
20. Arranging of car repairs	W	4.4%	5.6%	7.1%	20.3%	36.7%	25.9%
	M	3.1%	43.0%	24.8%	21.3%	6.5%	1.3%
50. Remembering when the car needs to be registered/serviced or its tyres changed	W	4.4%	6.1%	10.4%	24.8%	30.7%	23.6%
	M	4.2%	45.1%	22.3%	21.5%	5.8%	1.0%
51. Noticing that the car needs oil or air	W	4.4%	6.0%	6.3%	19.0%	32.8%	31.5%
	M	3.5%	49.9%	20.3%	19.2%	5.6%	1.5%
59. Knowing how to effectively clean the bathroom (e.g. removing limescale and soap deposits, cleaning the inside of the toilet bowl, sink, mirror, etc.)	W	0.8%	53.7%	23.6%	19.4%	1.9%	0.6%
	M	0.6%	4.0%	7.7%	34.9%	37.4%	15.4%
60. Knowing how to properly clean the kitchen (e.g. inside the oven, stove, sink, floor, etc.)	W	0.4%	53.9%	25.3%	17.7%	2.1%	0.6%
	M	0.4%	3.5%	7.5%	38.0%	38.6%	11.9%
61. Knowing where individual things/items are located in the kitchen	W	0.0%	37.0%	34.7%	26.1%	1.7%	0.4%
	M	0.2%	3.1%	8.4%	56.8%	26.5%	5.0%
62. Knowing how to use small household appliances (e.g. washing machine, iron, vacuum cleaner, etc.)	W	0.2%	32.1%	27.8%	35.1%	4.0%	0.8%
	M	0.2%	2.9%	11.7%	55.5%	25.1%	4.6%
63. Knowing how to properly wash and care for clothes (e.g. which items of clothing can be washed together)	W	1.0%	57.0%	24.8%	15.2%	1.5%	0.6%
	M	0.6%	3.5%	4.6%	32.6%	39.9%	18.8%
64. Knowing how to repair household items/appliances	W	6.5%	8.3%	10.4%	20.2%	38.0%	16.7%
	M	4.0%	32.6%	33.4%	24.0%	3.3%	2.7%
65. Learning how to do something in the household if other household members do not know how	W	1.9%	23.2%	26.3%	37.4%	9.2%	1.9%
	M	2.5%	7.7%	23.6%	52.8%	10.9%	2.5%
66. Knowing how to set up electronic devices in the household (e.g. modem, router, computer, etc.)	W	4.4%	14.2%	11.3%	30.1%	27.1%	12.9%
	M	2.7%	32.8%	30.7%	26.1%	5.8%	1.9%
68. Knowing all the household chores that need to be done	W	0.0%	32.8%	31.9%	31.3%	3.1%	1.0%
	M	0.8%	3.3%	10.4%	54.9%	27.6%	2.9%
69. Knowing how to properly separate waste	W	2.7%	16.5%	25.3%	49.9%	4.4%	1.2%
	M	1.9%	4.2%	16.5%	64.9%	11.3%	1.3%
70. Remembering when to take out the rubbish due to a different collecting schedule for different types of waste	W	1.5%	25.0%	24.4%	34.7%	10.7%	3.6%
	M	2.7%	9.4%	24.2%	44.7%	15.9%	3.1%

11. Active Involvement of the Partner and Organisational Tools (items 72–74)

This group of tasks includes the activities focused on encouraging the partner to participate in household obligations and family decision-making, as well as the use of digital tools and applications for a better organisation of family chores and reminders. The data reveal that in this domain of mental labour women take more responsibility, particularly for actively involving their partners in household and family matters. For example, active efforts to include the partner in household chores are mostly or exclusively undertaken by 52% of women, while the same is reported by 12% of men. In contrast, the use of applications or other digital tools for organising family obligations is almost equally distributed between women and men (30% in both groups).

Table 11.

Active Involvement of the Partner and Organisational Tools, by gender

		Neither I nor the partner do it	Only I do it	I do it more often than the partner	The partner and I do it equally	The partner does it more often than me	Only the partner does it
72. Active attempt to include the partner in the family decision-making	W	6.9%	13.4%	27.8%	50.5%	1.2%	0.2%
	M	5.2%	3.8%	7.9%	73.9%	7.9%	1.3%
73. Active attempt to include the partner in the household chores	W	10.6%	17.7%	33.8%	36.1%	1.5%	0.4%
	M	6.1%	3.3%	9.0%	62.2%	17.1%	2.3%
74. Use of applications or programmes that help better plan and organise household and family duties (e.g. Excel, Keep Notes, Google Calendar, etc.)	W	36.1%	15.7%	14.4%	24.4%	8.1%	1.3%
	M	24.2%	9.2%	20.7%	36.5%	8.1%	1.3%

Upon examining mental labour across eleven thematic groups, our analysis now shifts from the content of these activities to their gendered distribution. The following sections distinguish between typically women's, typically men's, and equally shared mental labour according to the described criteria. Detailed distributions of the activities included in these groups are provided in the Appendix (Tables A1–A3).

Typically Women's Mental Labour

The analysis of the tasks that can, in line with the set criteria, be considered typically "women's", point to a clear pattern of gender division of labour in the sphere of mental labour in the household. Out of 74 examined activities, 27 meet the criterion of being

mostly or exclusively performed by more than a half of women, with a strong discrepancy in relation to the partners (Table A1). These types of mental labour are perceived by the majority of women as their own primary responsibility, while men recognise them as part of their obligations to a much lesser extent.

A more in-depth analysis of this group of tasks shows that the largest number of them is related to the caring about cleanliness, food, emotional needs of the household members, and the maintaining of social and family bonds. To be concrete, the first seven tasks with the highest gender discrepancy refer precisely to the maintenance of cleanliness and hygiene in the household, which is reported by 84% of women as their own exclusive or mainly their own responsibility, while only 9% of men report the same, thus creating a difference of a high 75%. Similar can be said for the noticing that the detergent or other cleaning agents are running out (83% of women, compared to 15% of men), and noticing when something is dirty and needs cleaning, which is done by 81% of women and 12% of men.

The next set of tasks with a strong gender difference relates to the planning of diet and providing of supplies for the household. The planning of when to start cooking is thus performed mostly or exclusively by 77% of women and 17% of men, and the writing of the shopping list is the task performed by women in 72% of the cases, compared to 18% of men. Monitoring of the reserves of supplies and household necessities is also dominantly the task of women, which is confirmed by 74% of women, while the same goes for 18% of men. These activities involve not only the physical performance such as cooking or shopping, but also the mental effort of constant monitoring of the supply reserves, planning of meals, and organisation of provision, which further points to persistent inequality in this sphere of labour.

The care about the emotional state and health of the household members also greatly relies on women. The noticing when the partner or the child needs emotional support is done by 58% of women, while the same is done by 12% of men. The reminding of the partner to see the doctor is the responsibility of 53% of women, and 18% of men.

Finally, a part of the tasks refers to the maintenance of family and social bonds, and the inclusion of the partner in the household chores. The reminding of the household members on birthdays and important forthcoming events is done by 70% of women and 12% of men, and the similar can be observed for the writing of Christmas and birthday cards (55% of women and 11% of men). It is particularly interesting that as many as 51% of women actively try to include their partners in the household chores, while such effort is invested by only 12% of men. This further supports the notion that advocating for equality in the household is, paradoxically, mainly women's mental labour.

Altogether, the data reveal that the tasks defined as typically women's cover a broad spectrum of activities: from the daily maintenance of hygiene and organisation of diet, over the caring for the emotional needs of the household members, to the symbolic maintenance of family relations. Nevertheless, the thing these tasks have in common is that they are continuous, often invisible and require ongoing mental attention (Daming, 2019; Dean et al., 2022), which further contributes to the women's feeling of being overloaded. On the other hand, men do not recognise the majority of these tasks as their own responsibility or consider them equally shared, which further confirms the prevalence of gender inequality in the sphere of mental labour in Croatian households.

Typically Men's Mental Labour

The analysis of the tasks that, according to the set criteria, can be considered typically men's shows that out of 74 examined activities, 7 of them can be placed in this category, due to them being performed mostly or exclusively by more than a half of men, with a simultaneously significant difference in relation to their partners (Table A2). Unlike the typically women's tasks, which mostly refer to the daily functioning of the household and require continuous mental presence, the typically men's tasks mostly refer to occasional technical tasks related to repairs, home maintenance and car maintenance, thus belonging to different areas of household responsibility than most typically women's tasks. These tasks often include external actors (handymen), and their visibility can contribute to the perception that they are "greater" or "more important", despite not being as continuous and frequent as the majority of typically women's activities.

The data show that the tasks involving the car are the most prominent men's domain. Thus, the noticing that the car needs oil and air refillment is reported by 70% of men as their sole responsibility, while the same is reported by 12% of women, which makes a difference of 58%. A similar picture is visible in the arranging of car repairments, which is done by 68% of men, compared to 13% of women, as well as the reminding on the car registration, mending or changing of tyres, which is in 67% of the cases taken over by men, and in 17% of the cases by women. Gender division is visible in technical tasks and housing repairments also. The knowing of how to repair items and devices in the household is a task done by 66% of men, while the same goes for 19% of women. The knowing of how to adjust electronic devices in the household (modem, router, computer, etc.) is also mainly men's domain: 64% of men versus 26% of women.

The tasks around the organisation of repairments and works in the household are also more often done by men, although to a somewhat lesser extent than the tasks related to the car and technical matters. The arrangements of house repairments with

handymen are done by 59% of men, and the same is done by 22% of women. The organisation of works and repairments that need to be done in the house or apartment is taken over by 54% of men, compared to 28% of women. The analysing of the typically men's mental labour through the previously defined thematic domains of mental labour reveals that all these tasks are in the domain of planning and managing of household obligations.

Although far fewer in number compared to the typically women's tasks, the typically men's tasks show a distinctive pattern: they are primarily related to vehicle maintenance, household repairs and technical skills. In contrast, typically women's tasks encompass a much broader range of activities related to the everyday functioning of the household, including cleaning, food provision, anticipating of household members' needs, remembering and organising. Thus, the findings indicate a clear gender differentiation in both the number and types of mental labour tasks performed, reflecting more deeply rooted gender patterns in Croatian households.

Equally Shared Mental Labour

The analysis of the tasks that can, according to the set criteria, be considered as equally shared reveals that out of 74 explored activities 14 of them meet the condition that none of the sexes does not significantly dominate in their performance, or that the difference between the women and men performing these tasks is lower than 20 per cent (Table A3).

Unlike the typically women's and typically men's tasks, these are to a much greater extent considered as a joint responsibility, which is confirmed by the fact that both women and men mostly assess them as equally shared. However, a more detailed analysis of the answers reveals that for these tasks there is also a gender difference in perception: men are more prone to assessing that these tasks are shared equally, while women think the same somewhat less often. This discrepancy can be observed for all the tasks in this group, suggesting that men perceive the division of mental labour in the household as more egalitarian than women.

The highest level of consensus on equality is visible regarding the use of applications or programmes for the organisation of the housing or family obligations, which is recognised as a joint task by 30% of women and 30% of men. The deciding upon whether the family can afford to go on vacation is also considered an equal responsibility: 21% of women and 18% of men report doing this mostly by themselves, while the majority find this to be a mutual task. This group also encompasses the tasks related to the financial planning and management of the housing budget, such as the planning of future household costs (30% of women, 23% of men), and the collecting and paying of utility bills (54% of women, 48% of men), where the differences

between the sexes are relatively small, suggesting that these tasks are shared in the majority of the households.

Nevertheless, certain tasks that also fall into this group, such as deciding whether something that has been broken in the household needs replacing or not (35% of women, 44% of men) and the concern over the rationalisation of energy resources (32% of women, 47% of men), show a slight inclination towards men, suggesting that the technical or consumer tasks are slightly more in their domain, although still mostly perceived as mutual. On the other hand, certain tasks related to the organisation of family life, such as the planning of vacation and trips (25% of women, 14% of men) or the planning of how to spend quality time with the partner (28% of women, 11% of men), slightly incline towards women, suggesting that it is still women who more often take the initiative of organising mutual free time, although these tasks are also mostly perceived as equally shared.

Finally, it is important to point out that, despite these tasks falling into the group of the equally shared, there is also a discrepancy in their perception. For all the tasks in this category, women less often than men choose the answer “we do it equally“, suggesting that women more often see their greater engagement in pursuing these tasks, while men are maybe not aware of the mental labour behind their performance. This difference in the perception can be partially explained by the fact that men do not recognise some of these activities as those that require mental labour, or they do not perceive them as the tasks that require effort, monitoring and organisation. For example, remembering when to take out the rubbish due to different schedules of collecting waste is seen as an equally shared task by 49% of women and 34% of men. However, it is possible that men do not perceive this task as a demanding mental labour, while women see it as part of the continuous caring for the household.

Therefore, although all these tasks at first glance reflect a greater equality in pursuing mental labour, a more detailed insight into the data and differences in perception reveals that these tasks also carry along the hidden inequalities and gender-based differences in the perception of load. Women more often perceive their greater contribution, even in the tasks that men consider as equally shared.

5. Discussion

The findings of the present research enable a more precise theoretical positioning of mental labour in the household as a separate dimension of social reproduction, although deeply intertwined with other forms of unpaid work. If physical household labour refers to the execution of tasks, and emotional to the regulation of relations, feelings and interpersonal climate (Hochschild, 1989; 2003), the obtained results suggest that mental labour functions as a level of daily living that enables these different

forms of labour to be incorporated in an operating unit. Its theoretical meaning is therefore not focused on the marking of another “type of a household task“, but on the grasping of the organisational, anticipatory and coordination infrastructure without which daily life could not flow smoothly. In that sense, the results directly support the starting point from the theoretical part suggesting that mental labour cannot be reduced neither on the physical execution of household tasks, nor on the subjective feeling of overload, but rather denotes a processual set of the activities of planning, monitoring, remembering, decision-making, aligning and anticipating, which connects various segments of family life (Daminger, 2019; Dean et al., 2021). It is this level of interpretation that already shows that the findings answer the first research question referring to the very structure of mental labour, thus confirming its multidimensionality and processuality.

It is this processuality that is one of the fundamental aspects made visible by the results. The most prominent gender differences were not found in the tasks having a clearly bounded beginning and end, but in the activities of “permanent alert“: noticing that something is missing, that something needs cleaning, that someone needs support, that a deadline is approaching, that schedules are overlapping, that the child needs new clothes, medical check-ups or preparation for the next day. This is theoretically important because it confirms that the core of mental labour lies less in a particular task, and more in the permanent responsibility for the supervision of possible problems and needs. Daminger’s elaboration of anticipation, identification, decision-making and monitoring of execution here receives a strong empirical confirmation, because it is the anticipation and identification components – those in which labour has not even emerged as a “visible task“ – that have the strongest gender asymmetry (Daminger, 2019). In other words, women are not just those who more often “do“ something, but also the ones who more often have to notice that something needs to be done. This is a key difference, because it is the recognition of the task that precedes every possibility of its distribution, whereby the later phases of labour are also implicitly structured.

In that sense, the findings strongly support the theoretical distinction between mental labour and mental load. While mental load or tiredness was not assessed in this study, the results reveal a clearly gendered structure of mental labour: women much more often carry the continuous processes of anticipating, monitoring and organising of daily life. Such an unequal distribution of mental labour may provide a basis for understanding how a greater subjective sense of burden could emerge, although this relationship was not examined in the present study. This interpretation is consistent with the conceptualisation of mental load not as a self-standing phenomenon, but as a consequence of a certain division of labour (Robertson et al., 2019; Dean et al., 2021). It arises from a constant responsibility to think about things in advance, to remember deadlines, to connect unrelated obligations, to react before a problem occurs, and to ensure that the household functions continuously. Conceptually, this is important

because it prevents the reduction of the phenomenon to the psychologised language of stress and “subjective feeling“, and instead situates it within the sphere of socially organised labour, thereby directly addressing the conceptual uncertainties pointed out in the theoretical framework.

The results across thematic groups further reveal that mental labour is not a homogenous unit, nevertheless that its gender structuredness is consistent across various domains. In the domain of emotional and developmental caring for children, and managing of the tasks and needs related to children, perhaps the theoretically clearest example of the intersection of anticipation, relational labour and normative responsibility was obtained. Women are much more often responsible for the monitoring of child's emotions, learning about nurturing, contacting of educational institutions, planning of diet, medical care, clothes, monitoring of school success and child's social activities. These findings not only suggest that motherhood is still more burdened than fatherhood; they show that it is the cognitive-managing dimensions of parenthood that are strongly feminised, which is in line with the research on intensive parenting and gender differentiated expectations (Walzer, 1998; Ciciolla and Luthar, 2019). In that sense, mental labour related to children is not merely about organisation, but a normatively saturated labour. Women carry not only more tasks, but also a greater responsibility for the outcome: that the child is emotionally well, developmentally monitored, adequately fed, equipped, enrolled, appointed, prepared and socially included. It is this bond between the managing and the moral responsibility that makes this dimension a particularly dense hub of gender inequality, by which it is concretely elaborated how gender power relations are reproduced through daily practices (Walby, 1990; Fraser, 2016).

It is important to connect the latter with conceptual discussions on the symbolic dimension of mental labour. A part of the activities related to children, as well as a part of the activities in the domain of maintaining of family relations, is not performed just to ensure that the household functions well in the technical sense, but also to ensure that it meets the socially accepted standards of good parenting and good family life. The maintaining of contact with the teachers, monitoring of development, organisation of children's activities, remembering of birthdays, planning of celebrations, packing for trips or maintaining of family bonds are not just logistic tasks; these are also the practices through which the moral order of the family is reproduced (Ciciolla and Luthar, 2019). The mental labour here comes closer to the point that Hochschild (2003) also makes for the emotional labour: it is not only functional, but also normatively structured. Women bear not only the technical obligation for something to happen, but also the symbolic burden that this happens “as it should“. Therefore, the activities such as remembering birthdays, sending cards and organising anniversaries need not to be read as trivial or marginal, but as a part of the reproduction of family bonding and relational continuity. The finding that such tasks are strongly feminised confirms that the symbolic maintenance of the family is gender-divided.

The group of results related to the planning of diet and provision of supplies for the household strongly illustrates the way mental labour precedes and structures physical labour. If cooking is traditionally viewed as a physical household chore, the findings here show that there is a complex chain of cognitive activities behind it: monitoring of reserves, making of lists, assessment of the household members' needs, deciding on what to cook with existing supplies, determining of the time of the beginning of preparation, and long-term considering of the quality of diet (Meier et al., 2006; Stamp, 2021). In other words, cooking is not merely an act of food preparation, but the final point of a series of previous mental operations. The results thus support the argument from the theoretical part that the focus on exclusively "visible" executive activities underestimates the real extent of the work behind them. Indeed, the strong feminisation of this dimension shows that the traditional gender division of labour is not reproduced only through the assignment of physical tasks, but through the assignment of responsibility for their conceptualisation and coordination (Bianchi et al., 2000; Sayer, 2005). Women not only cook more often, but are also more often the ones who carry the cognitive infrastructure of food-related reproduction of the household.

A similar pattern is even more clearly visible in the dimension of maintaining order, cleanliness and supplies. It is this group that is marked by some of the most pronounced gender differences in the whole research: the noticing that bed linen needs changing, that there is no detergent, that the bathroom is dirty or that something needs washing. These findings are exceptionally theoretically significant because they hit the core of the question of how gender inequality is naturalised. These tasks are routine and "small" to such an extent that they are often not even recognised as work. It is their smallness and frequency that makes them a paradigmatic example of invisible work (DeVault, 1991; Offer, 2014). When women *en masse* take over the responsibility for these tasks, they do not only take over their execution, but also the permanent perceptual alertness regarding the state of the household. This is what Bourdieu's (2001) framework of symbolic power helps explain: certain competences and responsibilities become naturalised as if they arise from "women's meticulousness", "tidiness" or "feelings for the home", although they are in fact the socially produced division of labour. Such naturalisation is particularly powerful because this type of labour is often "assigned" to women by no one explicitly; it is self-understandable. It is not negotiated who the first to notice that there is no toilet paper will be or whether it is time to change the bed linen. Rather, it is assumed that someone – woman as a rule – will keep that under control.

The dimension of monitoring and anticipating of the household members' needs further reveals that mental labour does not only encompass the logistic, but also the relational intelligence of the household. The noticing of emotional needs of the partner or child, of the anxiety, stress, health problems or problematic behaviours shows that

mental labour is deeply rooted in the maintenance of the daily well-being of household members. This is important for its demarcation from emotional labour: despite these domains being related, the results suggest that here mental labour does not primarily mean “the control of one’s own emotions because of others”, but rather a permanent cognitive involvement in the monitoring of other people’s state, assessment when intervention is necessary, and timely reaction (Hochschild, 2003; Daminger, 2019). In other words, it is a relational anticipation, which further confirms the multidimensionality of the mental labour construct.

In the domain of strategic managing of the household, the findings reveal an important internal differentiation that is particularly relevant for the second research question referring to the patterns of mental labour distribution. On the one hand, women more often take over the prioritisation of obligations, distribution of tasks, deciding upon what is most urgent when obligations are piling up, and the aligning of schedules. On the other hand, men more often take over the organisation of works, repairs, car services and technical interventions. This division does not only show that there are “women’s” and “men’s” tasks, but also that the types of responsibilities are different. The women’s part of this dimension is marked by continuity, diffusiveness and daily presence, while the men’s part is characterised by occasionality and clear visibility, which is in line with the findings on selective involvement of men in the housing labour (Kamp Dush et al., 2018). This is precisely where the key theoretical question of justice and perception of egalitarianity lies (cf. Koster et al., 2022).

The financial planning and management of the housing budget appears as a relatively more equal zone, but it is this relative equality that requires more careful interpretation. At first sight, the findings might be read as an indicator of greater egalitarianity in the sphere of economic decisions, especially large investments and decisions on taking vacation. However, a more detailed view reveals that the gender division is again present once the finances are broken down into different layers. The strategic decisions are more often mutual, but everyday administrative aspects, such as monitoring of the bills and daily costs incline more towards women, while the monitoring of energy resources is more inclined towards men. This points to segmented egalitarianity, which was already noted in the literature on housing chores (Bianchi et al., 2000), where equality often referred to the visible and discrete decisions, while the continuous aspects of labour were less easily redistributed.

It is very important that the results are not interpreted only as a confirmation of gender inequality in labour distribution, but also as an indicator of gender inequality in the very perception of this distribution, by which the third research question is directly addressed. The discrepancy between the women’s and men’s assessments spreads almost across all dimensions, and is particularly significant in the group of tasks classified as equally shared. Also, there where the differences are not big enough for the

task to be labelled as typically women's or men's, men systematically more often report that the task is shared equally. This finding strongly supports the literature on the perception of equality in the household (Braun et al., 2008; Bartolac and Kamenov, 2013), nevertheless opening a broader epistemological question of labour visibility. Mental labour is by definition diffuse, fragmented, and often internalised; a large part of it happens "in the head", between tasks, in the background of other activities (Offer, 2014.). The one who does not do it does not have a direct access to it, especially if he/she never had to develop the habit of continuous monitoring of the needs and deadlines. This is why men's blindness (Klasnić and Degač, 2024) can be interpreted as a structural impact of the gender division of labour, and not only as an individual characteristic.

This blindness also has a normative dimension. If mental labour is not recognised as work, inequalities in its distribution may also be more difficult to recognise. However, the present data allow us to identify inequalities in the number and types of mental labour activities predominantly performed by women and men, rather than differences in the overall burden associated with these activities. The study did not measure the frequency, duration, intensity or perceived difficulty of individual tasks, and therefore does not allow conclusions about the total amount or burden of mental labour performed by either partner. Nevertheless, the systematic gender differences in the distribution and perception of mental labour raise an important question about the relationship between egalitarianity and justice, which has been recognised in the literature as a key mechanism of inequality stabilisation (Koster et al., 2022; Braun et al., 2008). A division of labour can be objectively unequal, and still subjectively perceived as just if the expectations are already gender-structured. In the context of postsocialism and re-traditionalisation, as in Croatia (Brajdić-Vuković et al., 2007; Čeriman and Vučković Juroš, 2023; Galić, 2022; Tomić-Koludrović, 2003), formal support to equality coexists with the presumptions of "natural" gender competences. This is why mental labour, as a diffuse and difficultly visible dimension of household labour becomes a particularly appropriate setting for the reproduction of gender power relations.

At that point, it is of utmost importance to get back to the question of conceptual uncertainties and methodological choice of the mapping of activities. One of the often emerging difficulties in the exploration of mental labour is its diffuseness, which hinders direct measuring. The risk of each instrument by which mental labour is operationalised into a set of activities is that mental labour might be implicitly turned into a sum of discreet tasks and thus its processual nature might be lost. However, the findings of this research show that it is exactly the mapping of activities that enabled an empirical approach to an otherwise hard-to-grasp phenomenon, which is in line with the recent attempts of operationalisation (Meier et al., 2006; Ciciolla and Luthar, 2019; Stamp, 2021). The present research did not reduce mental labour to a list of tasks, but opened an opportunity to reconstruct its structure through the

patterns among the activities. In other words, single items function here as indicators of a broader process, by which the heuristic value of such an approach is confirmed.

It is the Croatian context that is important for the understanding of the strength and persistence of the observed patterns. The findings fit in the long-standingly documented persistence of gender-marked labour division (Galić, 2012; Klasnić, 2017), nevertheless at the same time revealing that this division is reproduced through more subtle and less visible forms of labour. In the postsocialist society, marked by the simultaneous processes of modernisation and retraditionalisation, mental labour functions as a stable mechanism of reproduction of inequality due to its invisibility. The latter is in line with the analyses showing that modernisation processes do not necessarily dissolve gender inequalities, but often transform them and relocate them into the less visible forms of everyday life (Tomić-Koludrović, 2003). A broader hypothesis of social reproduction is thus confirmed, the one suggesting that social power relations are maintained through everyday, often invisible practices (Federici, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2017; Fraser, 1989).

Indeed, there are limitations to the present study. Since it is based on self-assessments, the influence of selective perception and socially desirable answers cannot be ruled out. However, it is the differences in perception that represent an important finding, and not just a limitation. Furthermore, the classification of activities is conceptual, and the cross-sectional design does not allow to review the changes occurring with time. Future research should thus employ longitudinal and mixed approaches, as well as dyadic research that collects data from both partners and could directly compare their perspectives to better understand the dynamic of mental labour and its negotiation aspects.

Altogether, the present research suggests that mental labour is a key dimension of gender organisation of daily living. Its significance arises from its role in the coordination of social reproduction, while its invisibility represents a mechanism by which gender inequality is maintained and reproduced.

6. Conclusion

This research shows that mental labour represents a key, yet systematically not enough recognised dimension of gender inequality and organisation of everyday living in the household. The findings confirm that mental labour is structured as a multi-dimensional and processual set of activities encompassing anticipation, planning, coordination and monitoring, by which its role of the cognitive-managing infrastructure of daily life is empirically supported. At the same time, its division is clearly gender-marked: women much more often take over the continuous and diffuse forms of labour that ensure the functioning of the household, while men are more often involved in occasional and clearly bounded activities.

The results also point to systematical differences in the perception of mental labour distribution, with men more often assessing the relations as more egalitarian compared to women. This shows that mental labour is not only unevenly shared, but also unevenly visible, which has direct implications for the perception of justice, and the possibility of its redistribution.

In the broader theoretical sense, the findings confirm that gender inequality in contemporary households is not retracting, but transforming into more subtle and less visible forms. Therein, mental labour functions as the organisational dimension of social reproduction – the level at which everyday activities are coordinated, but also where the responsibility for their successful operating is implicitly assigned.

The empirical contribution of the paper lies in the first systematical mapping of mental labour in the Croatian context, while the theoretical contribution arises from the conceptualisation of mental labour as a separate, yet integrative dimension of household labour that connects the physical and emotional aspects of daily living. Thereby, the paper points to the need for extending the analytical framework of the household labour research in line with the models including its cognitive and organisational dimensions.

Finally, the results suggest that without the conceptual and empirical inclusion of mental labour, the analyses of gender inequality remain partial. It is due to its invisibility and diffuseness, that the mental labour represents a key, yet often neglected dimension by which gender power relations are reproduced on daily basis.

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Appendix

Table A1.
Typically women's mental labour*

Item rank	Item number		Share of the sum of the answers "Only I do it", "I do it more often than the partner"		Difference between the shares, pp
			Women	Men	
1	47	Noticing when bed linen needs changing	84.1%	9.2%	74.9
2	49	Noticing that the detergent or other cleaning supplies are running out	82.7%	14.6%	68.1
3	63	Knowledge of the correct way to wash and maintain clothes (e.g. which types of clothes can be washed together)	81.8%	8.1%	73.6
4	24	Noticing when something is dirty and needs cleaning (e.g. curtains, windows, toilet seat, etc.)	80.6%	12.3%	68.3
5	60	Knowledge of how to clean the kitchen correctly (e.g. inside of the oven, stove, sink, floor, etc.)	79.3%	11.1%	68.2
6	46	Noticing that the bathroom needs cleaning	79.3%	15.7%	63.6
7	59	Knowledge of how to clean the bathroom effectively (e.g. cleaning of limescale and soap scum, inside of the toilet, washbasin, mirror, etc.)	77.4%	11.7%	65.7
8	14	Planning of when to start cooking	77.2%	16.7%	60.5
9	11	Noticing when some of the supplies or household necessities are running out	73.7%	18.4%	55.3
10	15	Deciding upon what to cook with the supplies already in the house, i.e. already bought	72.6%	16.7%	55.9
11	12	Writing of the shopping list	72.2%	17.5%	54.6
12	61	Knowledge of where particular items are stored in the kitchen	71.8%	11.5%	60.3
13	56	Planning of what needs to be packed for a family trip	69.9%	10.2%	59.6
14	58	Reminding the household members of close friends' and relatives' birthdays	69.7%	12.3%	57.4
15	57	Reminding the household members of important forthcoming events	69.3%	14.0%	55.3
16	13	Taking care that there is enough food for all the household members	66.4%	18.6%	47.8
17	68	Knowledge of all the household chores that need to be done	64.7%	13.8%	50.9
18	48	Noticing that the toilet paper is running out and needs replacing	64.5%	23.2%	41.3
19	16	Long-term thinking about the quality of diet of the family members	64.1%	15.9%	48.2
20	62	Knowledge of how to use small kitchen utensils (e.g. washing machine, iron, vacuum cleaner, etc.)	59.9%	14.6%	45.3
21	53	Noticing when the partner or the child needs emotional support	57.6%	12.1%	45.5
22	54	Noticing when the partner or the child are upset/under stress and might need help	56.4%	15.0%	41.4
23	17	Assignment of household chores to the partner and other family members	55.3%	12.9%	42.3
24	71	Writing of Christmas and birthday cards	54.9%	11.3%	43.6
25	22	Reminding the partner that he/she needs to see the doctor/physician	53.4%	18.2%	35.2
26	27	Deciding upon which household chore has priority when there are too many chores to do	53.0%	15.2%	37.7
27	72	Active attempt to include the partner in the family decision-making	51.4%	12.3%	39.1

*Items are ranked according to the share of women who reported performing each task exclusively or more often than their partner, starting with the item with the highest share. Differences between women's and men's shares (W-M) are expressed in percentage points (pp).

Table A2.
Typically men's mental labour*

			Share of the sum of the answers "Only I do it", "I do it more often than the partner"		Difference between the shares, pp
Item rank	Item number		Women	Men	W-M
1	51	Noticing that the car needs oil and air refilling	12.3%	70.1%	-57.9
2	20	Arrangement of car repairs	12.7%	67.8%	-55.2
3	50	Remembering that the car needs to be registered, serviced or its tyres need changing	16.5%	67.4%	-50.9
4	64	Knowledge of how to fix household items/utensils	18.6%	66.0%	-47.4
5	66	Knowing how to adjust electronic devices in the household (e.g. modem, router, computer, etc.)	25.5%	63.5%	-37.9
6	19	Arrangement of household repairs with handymen	21.9%	58.9%	-37.0
7	18	Organisation of works and repairs that are necessary in the apartment/house	27.8%	54.3%	-26.4

* Items are ranked according to the share of men who reported performing each task exclusively or more often than their partner, starting with the item with the highest share. Differences between women's and men's shares (W-M) are expressed in percentage points (pp).

Table A3.
Equally shared mental labour*

			Share of the answer "The partner and I do it equally"		Difference between the shares, pp
Item rank	Item number		Women	Men	W-M
1	65	Learning how to do something in the household if other members do not know	49.5%	31.3%	18.2
2	40	Planning of quality time with the partner	27.8%	10.6%	17.2
3	70	Remembering when to take out the rubbish due to the different collecting schedule for different types of waste	49.3%	33.6%	15.7
4	8	Deciding if you can afford something as a couple/family (daily needs, not large financial expenses)	26.5%	14.2%	12.3
5	45	Planning of vacation and travel	24.8%	14.2%	10.6
6	41	Planning of nights out with the partner	21.5%	11.5%	10.0
7	42	Deciding upon where to go on a date as a couple	17.5%	9.6%	7.9
8	9	Planning of future expenses for the household and family	29.9%	22.8%	7.2
9	25	Collecting of utility bills and taking care that they are paid on time	53.9%	48.4%	5.5
10	6	Deciding if the family can afford financially to go on vacation	21.3%	17.5%	3.8
11	74	Use of applications or programmes that help better plan and organise household and family duties (e.g. Excel, Keep Notes, Google calendar, etc.)	30.1%	29.9%	0.3
12	5	Deciding upon where and how to make a large financial investment	19.0%	25.9%	-6.9
13	52	Deciding if something that has been broken in the household needs replacement or not	34.9%	43.6%	-8.7
14	10	Caring about the rational use of energy resources / monitoring of the use of gas, electricity and water	32.4%	46.6%	-14.1

* Items are ranked according to the difference between the shares of women and men who reported that each task was equally shared with their partner, starting with the largest difference in favour of women. Differences between women's and men's shares (W-M) are expressed in percentage points (pp); negative values indicate that a higher share of men than women reported the task as equally shared.

Mapiranje mentalnog rada kao nevidljive dimenzije socijalne reprodukcije: rodne nejednakosti u kućnom menadžmentu

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Sažetak

U istraživanjima rodne nejednakosti u privatnoj sferi dominantno se analiziraju fizički i emocionalni rad, dok mentalni rad – iako pervazivan – ostaje konceptualno i empirijski nedovoljno zahvaćen. Mentalni rad obuhvaća upravljačke procese predviđanja potreba, identifikiranja mogućih rješenja, donošenja odluka te praćenja njihove provedbe u svakodnevnom funkcioniranju kućanstva. Dosadašnja istraživanja pokazuju da je taj oblik rada izrazito rodno obilježen, pri čemu ga pretežito obavljaju žene, što može imati negativne implikacije za njihovu dobrobit i kvalitetu partnerskih odnosa, osobito u dvozaposlenim kućanstvima. Cilj rada jest analizirati rodnu dimenziju mentalnog rada u kućanstvima u Hrvatskoj na temelju prvog nacionalno reprezentativnog istraživanja ove tematike. Kvantitativni podaci prikupljeni su krajem 2022. godine metodom ankete na uzorku od 1000 osoba koje žive s intimnim partnerom. Rezultati ukazuju na izraženu rodnu nejednakost u obavljanju mentalnog rada: većinu aktivnosti preuzimaju žene, dok je manji broj poslova tipično “muški”, a određeni segmenti rada pokazuju relativno ravnopravnu podjelu. Uz to, identificirane su značajne rodne razlike u percepciji egalitarnosti, pri čemu muškarci češće nego žene procjenjuju raspodjelu mentalnog rada kao ravnopravnu. Nalazi doprinose razumijevanju mentalnog rada kao ključne, ali nedovoljno prepoznate dimenzije neplaćenog rada i socijalne reprodukcije te ukazuju na potrebu njegove integracije u analize rodne nejednakosti, osobito u kontekstu raspodjele svakodnevne odgovornosti, dobrobiti i društvene moći unutar kućanstva, te sugeriraju potrebu zagovaranja odmaka od esencijalno orođenog promatranja opozicije privatne i javne sfere.

Ključne riječi: kućni menadžment, mentalni rad, nevidljivi rad, neplaćeni reproduktivni rad, rodne nejednakosti u privatnoj sferi.