Hong Kong's housework gender gap

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Synovate survey shows Hong Kong's housework gender gap

HONG KONG â€" The majority of both women and men in Hong Kong agree that women do most of the work around the home, but both sexes have greatly differing perceptions on exactly who does what, and how much of it, according to a recent survey by global market research company Synovate.

Exploring the housework gender divide, Synovate surveyed 997 respondents in Hong Kong currently living with a partner of the opposite sex to see just how much housework men believe they do, how much housework women believe they do, and how that matches up with the amount of work they believe their partners do.

So, who does the housework?

Women continue to keep the large majority of homes running smoothly in Hong Kong with 68% of all respondents of both sexes nominating the woman in their partnership as the person who does most of the work around the home. Eighteen percent believe that the work is shared, 8% say they have paid domestic help and 5% believe that the man in the partnership does the most housework.

When it comes to specific tasks around the home, 66% of both sexes believe it is the woman who does the cooking, 63% believe the woman does the washing, 61% believe the woman does the grocery shopping, 44% believe the woman handles paying the bills and 41% believe the woman handles most of the childcare.

In comparison, although 41% of both sexes believe the man handles paying the bills, only 7% believe the male does most of the grocery shopping, 6% believe the male does most of the cooking and washing and a very small 4% nominate the man as the person who does most of the general housework.

Some couples do share the workload around the home with 32% of respondents saying that both partners share childcare, 27% share the grocery shopping and 20% believing they share general housework.

Synovate's Managing Director of Hong Kong, Jill Telford, said that although a small number of families in Hong Kong are fortunate enough to have paid help, the majority of the housework in the average Hong Kong home is still performed by the female partner in a relationship.

"Despite the fact that many women in Hong Kong hold down either full-time or part-time employment, Synovate's survey shows that they still do the lion's share of work around the home, from the cooking to the cleaning, to washing the clothes and paying the bills.

"This is also reflected in the time spent on household tasks, with 22% of female respondents believing they do twenty to thirty hours of housework a week compared to 7% of men, and a further 20% of women believing they do more than thirty hours of housework a week compared to just 3% of men claiming the same thing."

The gender divide

Both sexes may agree that women perform the bulk of the household work, but the survey results show that they disagree significantly by gender on their perceptions of just how much work that actually is.

While 75% of women believe they do the bulk of the work around the home, only 60% of men agree with them and for the 8% of men who believe they do most of the housework, only 2% of women consider this true. Furthermore, although 22% of men are convinced that they share the housework equally with their female partner, only 14% of women believe this to be the case.

The only category where female and male responses on the person who performs the majority of the household work do agree is for the 8% of respondents who have paid domestic help.

Ms Telford said the discrepancy between sexes is consistent across all areas of work around the home, including the time spent on such tasks.

"Eight percent of men believe that they handle the majority of the general housework tasks and 54% believe that their

female partner does most of the general housework.

"However, when it comes to the female responses, only 1% of women believe their male partners do most of the general tasks around the home and 74% believe the responsibility falls on their slighter shoulders," she said.

"Moreover, when it comes to cooking, grocery shopping and washing clothes, although one in ten men say that they perform the bulk of all these activities, only 3% of women agree that this is the case.

"Playing with or educating children received the most extreme results of all, with 9% of men believing they primarily handle these activities but no women agreeing with their men," she added.

Perceptions of a partner's time spent doing household chores also differs between the sexes, with women much less likely to believe their male counterparts' estimates of time spent working around the home.

While one quarter of men surveyed believe they spend three to ten hours a week on household tasks, only 9% of women believe their male partners do actually spend this amount of time on housework.

On the other hand, male perceptions of the amount of time their female partner spends on housework closely mirror women's own estimates of the time they spend themselves. So where 21% of women estimate they spend three to ten hours a week on housework, 21% of males also believe their female partners spend three to ten hours a week on housework.

"The discrepancy between the amount of work one person believes they do and their partner's perception of that work could be a significant source of conflict in a relationship," Ms Telford added.

"It seems that both sexes in Hong Kong are at fault here, with better communication regarding who does what around the house something both partners in a relationship may need to work upon for a more contented home environment."

About Synovate

Synovate, the market research arm of Aegis Group plc, generates consumer insights that drive competitive marketing solutions. The network provides clients with cohesive global support and a comprehensive suite of research solutions. Synovate employs over 5,500 staff in 108 cities across 50 countries.

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