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Nutz, Theresa; Schmid, Lisa; Pollak, Reinhard

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Nutz, T., Schmid, L., & Pollak, R. (2023). The Division of Routine and Non-Routine Housework Among Migrant and Native Couples in Germany. *Comparative Population Studies - Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft*, 48, 369-394. <https://doi.org/10.12765/CPoS-2023-15>

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## The Division of Routine and Non-Routine Housework Among Migrant and Native Couples in Germany\*

Theresa Nutz, Lisa Schmid, Reinhard Pollak

**Abstract:** Gender inequality in the division of household chores is a persistent issue over time and across country contexts, while differences within and between native and migrant couples remain largely unclear. Relying on the German country case, this study examines the association between partners' migration constellations and the division of housework. We differentiate between natives and first-generation migrants, and within first-generation migrants, we differentiate by their regions of origin. For the division of housework, we analyse traditionally female routine tasks and male non-routine tasks. Following gender and resource explanations, this study expects gendered variation in the way native, migrant, and mixed (i.e., native/migrant) couples divide housework. Utilising novel data from the German Family Demography Panel Study (FReDA-GGS sample, 2021), the paper employs OLS regression models to predict the division of housework among 11,223 cohabiting different-sex couples. The study finds a gender-traditional divide in routine household tasks among migrant couples, with heterogeneity across regions of origin. Specifically, women in Asian and Eastern European couples tend to do more routine tasks than their native counterparts, while the division of routine housework in couples from Western countries is more egalitarian. In mixed couples, the division of routine tasks is highly unequal if the male partner is a migrant. Non-routine tasks in mixed couples are, however, mostly performed by the native partner, irrespective of gender. The results suggest that the division of routine housework conforms to traditional gender roles across most migrant groups, while non-routine housework, such as financial tasks that require country-specific knowledge, is influenced by the native status, which serves as a resource in itself.

**Keywords:** Couples · Division of housework · Migration · Germany · FReDA

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\* This article belongs to a special issue on "Family Research and Demographic Analysis – New Insights from the German Family Demography Panel Study (FReDA)".

\*\* This article has an Online Appendix with supplementary material URL: <http://www.comparativepopulationstudies.de/index.php/CPoS/article/view/552/385>.

## 1 Introduction

Despite the convergence of the gender gap in housework over time, women still shoulder the majority of household responsibilities (Cooke/Baxter 2010; Kan *et al.* 2011; Mandel *et al.* 2020; Pailhé *et al.* 2021). This is also the case in Germany, the country case of this study, where women still do considerably more housework than men (Hank/Steinbach 2021; Nitsche/Grunow 2016; Steinbach/Schulz 2022). This disparity is exacerbated by the fact that – on average – women in Germany face lower rates of labour market attachment, irregular work patterns, lower working hours, and lower wages than men (Leuze/Strauß 2016; Trappe *et al.* 2015). These labour market-related gender inequalities are echoed within the area of unpaid labour. Women tend to handle the more tedious and inflexible routine tasks, like cooking and cleaning. Non-routine tasks, such as finances and repairs as part of housework, and the dimension of heterogeneity within unpaid work, have received less attention. Non-routine tasks, being less frequent and more time-flexible, are typically performed by men (Coltrane 2000). This division of household tasks not only contributes to the persistence of the gender gap in housework but also increases women’s time constraints by restricting their opportunities to engage in paid work. The time-consuming nature of women’s routine household duties likely impacts their career and financial opportunities in the long term.

Prior research on Germany has widely examined gendered determinants of the division of housework within couples (e.g., gender ideologies (Zoch 2021), parenthood (Kühhirt 2012), or unemployment (Fauser 2019; Voßemer/Heyne 2019)) as well as developments over time (Leopold *et al.* 2018; Steinbach/Schulz 2022). However, prior studies have mainly focused on the native German population. The few quantitative studies that specifically studied migrant couples in the German context primarily compared the division of housework among native and Turkish couples (Diehl *et al.* 2009; Kan/Laurie 2018; Steinbach 2009). Following studies from other countries (for Australia, see Ting *et al.* 2016; for Britain, see Kan/Laurie 2018; for European countries, see Carriero 2021; for Italy, see Brini *et al.* 2022; for the US, see Blau *et al.* 2020; Sayer/Fine 2011), Fendel and Kosyakova (2023) recently examined variations in the within-couple division of housework of migrants in Germany depending on source-country cultural determinants. The present study goes a step further by differentiating routine and non-routine household tasks in different-sex couples with diverse origin constellations (considering whether one or both partners are migrants) and across different regions of origin. Our study thus seeks to address this often-overlooked heterogeneity inherent in the distribution of domestic tasks and asks: 1) *How is the division of routine and non-routine housework structured between women and men in native, migrant, and mixed different-sex couples in Germany?* and 2) *How much variation do we find in the division of routine and non-routine housework in Germany when we include different regions of origin for mixed and migrant couples?*

Prior research on Germany put considerable effort into analysing migrants’ partnership behaviour (e.g., Kuhnt/Krapf 2020) and the division of housework around the event of migration (e.g., Krieger/Salikutluk 2023). However, a comprehensive

understanding of the division of housework across multiple ethnic groups has been limited by a scarcity of data sources. We contribute to eliminating this shortcoming by using novel survey data from the German Family Demography Panel Study (FReDA-GGS sample), a nationally representative panel study from Germany framework, objectives, and design of the new data infrastructure “FReDA – The German Family Demography Panel Study”, which has been funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF that provides rich information on partnership, family, and migration. First, we differentiate between constellations of native and migrant partners and, second, between couples of different regions of origin. We compare natives and first-generation migrants, defined as individuals who migrated to Germany themselves at some point in their lives. FReDA data additionally differentiate between typically female routine and typically male non-routine domestic tasks. Routine tasks encompass the majority of household chores, including meal preparation, housecleaning, dishwashing, and laundry activities that consume a significant amount of time (*Coltrane 2000*). For non-routine tasks, FReDA covers financial tasks (e.g., paying bills, doing taxes) and small repairs.

The focus of the paper is on the relationship of the division of housework and different origin-compositions of mixed and migrant couples in reunified Germany. Admittedly, there are persistently different gender ideologies between eastern and western Germany (*Zoch 2021*), but these differences within native couples are not the focus of this paper.<sup>1</sup>

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Gender and resource perspectives on the division of housework

Although gender differences in housework converge over time, women still contribute more time to housework on average than men across countries, which is due to their greater contributions to routine tasks like cooking and cleaning (*Kan et al. 2011; Pailhé et al. 2021; Perry-Jenkins/Gerstel 2020; Sullivan 2021*). In Germany, gender inequality in housework is relatively high compared to other European countries (*Leopold et al. 2018; Schulz/Raab 2022; Steinbach/Schulz 2022*). Two main theoretical approaches guide the understanding of gender inequality in housework: the resource and the gender perspective. While the resource explanation argues that men’s advantage in economic resources is commonly exchanged for avoiding housework, gender explanations address gender ideology as the central determinant of a gender-unequal division of housework.

The resource-bargaining perspective posits that the division of housework results from negotiations between partners based on their personal resources (*Breen/*

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<sup>1</sup> We assess differences between natives in eastern and western Germany in supplementary analyses.

Cooke 2005; Brines 1993; Lundberg/Pollak 1996). The partner with greater economic resources has more bargaining power to avoid unpaid housework, which may be perceived as unpleasant (Blood/Wolfe 1960). Economic resources functioning as bargaining tools are frequently measured with partners' educational levels, income, or labour force participation (Nitsche/Grunow 2016). However, particularly routine tasks are less pleasant, more time-consuming, and less flexible regarding when they are completed (Coltrane 2000). Men's average resource advantage should therefore chiefly explain why they contribute less to routine household chores than women.

As the resource perspective is gender-neutral in principle, it cannot explain adequately why an increase in women's resources does not accordingly lead to a more egalitarian division of housework. Women and men use their resources differently to negotiate the division of paid and unpaid labour, shaped by their gender role attitudes (Brines 1993; Grunow et al. 2012; Kan et al. 2011; Mandel et al. 2020). Accordingly, women and men divide housework strongly based on their gender role attitudes and the associated *doing* of gender (West/Zimmerman 1987). Doing gender means that individuals behave as normatively expected with regard to their gender role, which is embedded in social interactions and institutional contexts (Mandel et al. 2020). In line with traditional gender perceptions, women are more likely to take on routine household chores as the primary carer of the family, which they provide in return for economic support from the male breadwinner (Brines 1993; Carriero/Todesco 2018). Men are normatively expected to be the main earner, allowing them to avoid doing unpaid regular housework. In return, women with greater economic resources may even increase their routine housework duties to align with their gender roles (Fahlén 2016). Men might instead focus on more pleasant and male-connnotated non-routine tasks, such as small repairs, to conform to their gender role.

## 2.2 Migration groups in Germany

Germany is one of the largest immigration countries in Europe with a strong history of migration and it has consistently seen an increase in the number of immigrants over time (BMI/BAMF 2022). The composition of migrants has undergone fundamental changes over the years, moving from Southern and Eastern European migrants during the guest worker movement of the 1970s to a diverse range of migration groups from the European Union (EU), economic migrants, and refugees from across the world. In 2020, 55 percent of all migrants came from EU countries, including mostly Eastern European countries (BMI/BAMF 2022). The largest groups originated from Romania (16 percent), Poland (9 percent), and Bulgaria (6 percent). Migrants from outside the EU came mostly from other European countries (26 percent) and the Asian continent (22 percent).

The changing nature of migration streams is also reflected in the current composition of migrant groups in Germany. Comparing the immigrant generation across migrant groups, most economic migrants are foreign-born and thus have a direct migration experience. By contrast, most individuals from the former guest worker recruitment states – or their descendants – were born in Germany.

This is reflected in official statistics showing that, in 2020, about 50 percent of the individuals with Turkish or Italian migration backgrounds were second-generation migrants born in Germany, whereas around 85 percent of the migrants from Syria were first-generation migrants born in their country of origin (*BMI/BAMF 2022*). As our analytical sample is limited to foreign-born migrants, this study does not examine large “migration” groups of the second or higher-order immigrant generations.

### 2.3 Within-couple division of housework among migrants in Germany

According to the socialisation perspective, exposure to traditional or egalitarian values during childhood shapes individuals’ gender role attitudes across adulthood (*Davis/Greenstein 2009*). Migrants tend to adopt gender attitudes prevalent in their country of origin, where they experienced early socialisation, and reproduce them in their destination country (*Frank/Hou 2015; Pessin/Arpino 2018*). A key factor of socialisation is the intergenerational transmission of values (*Davis/Greenstein 2009*). Thus, individuals who migrated as children are also significantly influenced by gender attitudes of the country of origin through the intergenerational transmission of gender attitudes from their family of origin (*Kretschmer 2018*).

From a comparative perspective, countries differ in the degree of traditionalism of gender role attitudes. Data from the European Value Survey (EVS) from 2017 show that average gender role attitudes in the largest origin countries of our study from Eastern Europe and Asia (see Appendix Table A1) are more traditionalist compared to Germany (*EVS 2023*). Thus, most migrants in this study were born in countries with more traditional prevalent gender ideologies than natives (*Hipp/Leuze 2015*). This is also reflected in more traditional average gender role attitudes among migrants compared to natives in Germany (*EVS 2023; Kretschmer 2018; Norris/Inglehart 2012*).

These measures at the country level, however, conceal differences across ethnic groups as well as heterogeneity within origin countries. In terms of sociodemographic characteristics, migrants tend to be better educated, younger, and more likely to be male compared to the non-migrating population in their origin countries; aspects that altogether shape their gender values. In particular, individuals with more egalitarian gender values than their country of origin self-select into migration (*Norris/Inglehart 2012*). As migrants, however, have more traditional values than natives in Germany (*EVS 2023; Kretschmer 2018; Norris/Inglehart 2012*), we assume that the influence of migrants’ socialisation in the country of origin remains relevant for their gender ideologies and the distribution of housework, as we discuss below.

As a consequence of migrants’ more traditional gender role attitudes, they should also divide housework tasks in a more gender-traditional way than natives. According to the “doing gender” perspective, gender ideologies in favour of traditional gender roles are associated with a higher share of housework done by the partner who aims to reinforce his or her gender identity by complying with prevalent norms. Prior literature has shown that a gender-traditional division of routine housework, where women do most tasks, is positively associated with gender traditionalism across countries (*Davis et al. 2007; Fahlén 2016; Treas/Tai*

2016). Furthermore, compared to the destination country, migrants from countries with highly traditional gender ideologies also divide routine housework more gender-traditionally than migrants from more egalitarian countries (*Brini et al. 2022; Diehl et al. 2009; Fendel/Kosyakova 2023; Frank/Hou, 2015*). This might also apply to foreign-born men who might perform non-routine tasks to express and consolidate their gender role attitudes. For instance, migrant men in Italy are found to be more involved in non-routine household tasks than women, although their involvement does not vary with the level of gender equity in their country of origin (*Brini et al. 2022*).

Comparing partners' origin constellations, the division of labour should be particularly strong in migrant couples (i.e., with two migrant partners) because migrants are, on average, more traditionalist than natives. Although partners in migrant couples can be a heterogeneous unit stemming from different countries, in our analytical sample around two-thirds stem from the same country of origin (see Appendix Table A2). Thus, most migrant couples might consolidate the similarity of their gender role attitudes over time. In mixed couples with a migrant and a native partner, the gender-traditional division of labour might be mitigated due to the more egalitarian gender role attitudes of the native partner. The division of labour might also be less traditional in mixed couples because Western migrants with higher education levels and from predominantly Christian countries are more likely to be in mixed couples than lesser-educated migrants from predominantly Muslim countries (*Dribe/Lundh 2011; Kulu/González-Ferrer 2014*). Furthermore, partners from different regions of origin might also have contrasting gender ideologies, which likely initiate negotiation processes about the division of housework in mixed couples.

In mixed couples, the gender composition in interplay with the type of housework might further shape the division of housework. As women traditionally do routine tasks, female migrants in particular, who tend to be more traditional than their native counterparts on average (*EVS 2023*), might prioritise these tasks. This might not only align with their own but also with their native male partners' gender ideology, as men also prefer a traditional division of unpleasant routine housework (*Ting et al. 2016*). Additionally, natives tend to have greater economic resources than migrants (*Halbmeier 2019*), and men in particular have greater average economic resources than women (*Perry-Jenkins/Gerstel 2020*). This might provide native men in mixed couples with more bargaining power, which tends to promote a traditional division of routine tasks. In mixed couples with female natives, gender differences in routine housework should be reduced due to native women's more egalitarian gender role attitudes and their greater economic resources (*Halbmeier 2019*). The division of non-routine tasks should also be more traditional in mixed couples with male than with female migrants. In mixed couples with male migrants, the gender structure aligns with the traditional behaviour and male partners might focus on these tasks to conform to their gender ideologies. The focus on non-routine tasks might also constitute a way for migrant men with native female partners to compensate for their potential disadvantage in economic resources by fulfilling tasks typically done by the male breadwinner (*Brines 1993*).



Despite migrants' stronger average traditionalism compared to natives, migrants are composed of heterogeneous ethnic groups with varying gender role attitudes. As one of the largest groups, migrants from Eastern Europe stem from countries with highly traditional gender ideologies (EVS 2023; Hipp/Leuze 2015), being socialised in a (post-)communist environment with a strictly gendered division of housework (Hofäcker et al. 2013). Migrants from Asian countries partly share the (post-)communist socialisation while being more culturally distant from Germany – for instance, due to differences in their historical, geographical, and religious background. As the largest Asian country of origin in the analytical sample, average gender role attitudes are most traditional in Russia (EVS 2023; see Appendix Table A1). By contrast, migrants from Northern and Western Europe and America might have more egalitarian gender norms than Germans, as seen in their lower gender gaps in society and their more progressive attitudes towards female employment (EVS 2023; Hipp/Leuze 2015).

## 2.4 Expectations

Building on prior evidence showing that migrants are overall more traditionalist than natives in Germany (e.g., Kretschmer 2018; Norris/Inglehart 2012), we expect to observe similar findings for their division of housework. We expect *the most traditional division of routine and non-routine tasks in couples with two migrant partners, followed by mixed and native couples (expectation 1)*. Differentiating by gender in mixed couples, migrant women in particular should take over routine tasks due to more traditional gender ideology paired with lower economic resources than their male native partners. Thus, we expect *gender inequality in the division of routine housework to be greater in mixed couples with female compared to male migrants (expectation 2A)*. This should also apply to non-routine tasks for male migrants, leading us to expect *gender inequality in the division of non-routine housework to be greater in mixed couples with male compared to female migrants (expectation 2B)*.

Although examining these expectations with pooled migrant groups already provides valuable insights, the results are significantly determined by the influence of the largest migrant groups. Since the largest migrant groups, originating from Eastern Europe and Asia, stem from countries with highly traditional gender ideologies and can thus be considered among the most traditional groups on average (e.g., Hipp/Leuze 2015), we anticipate greater heterogeneity in the additional differentiation by region of origin. The strength of the FReDA data, apart from the differentiation of Eastern migrant groups into migrants from Eastern Europe and Asia, lies in being able to examine further ethnic groups while additionally considering the gender constellation within the couple. We extract a further group of migrants from Western countries that has not received much attention in prior literature due to their comparably small group size. Western migrants differ considerably from Eastern migrants in their demographic characteristics and gender role attitudes, being better educated and expressing more egalitarian values on average (BMI/BAMF 2022; EVS 2023). Based on these considerations, we expect that *the division*



*of both routine and non-routine housework is more egalitarian in couples from Western countries compared to natives, whereas Eastern European and, even more, Asian couples should divide these tasks in a more traditional way (expectation 3).*

### 3 Data, measures, and method

#### 3.1 Data

The German Family Demography Panel Study (FReDA) is a novel, nationally representative panel study from Germany that comprises two different samples (Bujard *et al.* 2023; Hank *et al.* 2023). From panel wave 1 in 2020 onwards, FReDA constitutes the German contribution to the Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS). We consider the FReDA-GGS sample in this study. FReDA additionally continues the German Family Panel (pairfam) with the FReDA-pairfam sample from wave 2 onwards. A detailed study description for FReDA can be found in Schneider *et al.* (2021). FReDA is a biannual panel study that surveys the population aged 18 to 49 years in Germany and is designed as a self-administered, mixed-mode study (computer-assisted web and paper-and-pencil interviews). The data are well-suited for the present study, as they include comprehensive information on partnership, family, and household characteristics, complemented by a rich set of indicators on migration and socio-demographic background.

This study uses data from subwave W1A, which has been complemented by information on respondents' migration experience from the recruitment subwave W1R. Among those respondents who participated in both subwaves, we excluded 451 (2.7 percent) observations living in same-sex couples and 2,732 (16.5 percent) respondents living in non-cohabiting couples. We further excluded 1,379 (10.2 percent) respondents who had at least one household task always or usually being done by someone else, as well as 900 (9.2 percent) observations with missing information on independent or control variables. The final sample size comprises 11,223 observations. See Appendix Table A3 for an overview of the number and share of missing values of all variables. Please note that we only refer to anchor data and therefore use proxy information provided by the anchor about their partners.

#### 3.2 Measures

##### 3.2.1 Dependent variables

The outcome variables are arithmetic mean indices of the division of routine and non-routine housework.<sup>2</sup> The first index on the division of routine housework is composed of the four items "Preparing daily meals," "Vacuum cleaning the house,"

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<sup>2</sup> The arithmetic mean indices are extracted by principal component factor analyses. See Appendix Section A1 for further information on the factor analyses.

“Cleaning and mopping,” and “Doing the laundry.” The second index on the division of non-routine housework is captured using the two items “Doing small repairs in and around the house” and “Paying bills and keeping financial records.” All items are assessed on a 5-point Likert scale of responsibilities ranging from 1 “Always me” to 5 “Always my partner” that is complemented by the sixth category “Always or usually someone else,” which we excluded before calculating the mean indices. The items have been recoded so that 1 indicates that the male partner takes over the respective task and 5 that the female partner conducts the task. For the analyses, we calculate the mean indices ranging from 1 (“Always man”) to 5 (“Always woman”). It is important to consider that a high average value of routine tasks indicates a gender-traditional division of labour with women taking over most routine tasks typically ascribed as female-typed housework. However, a high average value of non-routine tasks indicates a non-traditional division of labour, as women take over tasks typically done by men.

### 3.2.2 Independent variables

We build two measures based on both partners’ own migration experience. First, partners’ origin constellations are measured by differentiating between the four categories of 1) *native couples* with both partners being born in Germany (native/native), 2) *mixed couples* with a male foreign-born partner (native woman/migrant man), 3) *mixed couples* with a female foreign-born partner (native man/migrant woman), and 4) *migrant couples* with both partners being foreign-born (migrant/migrant).

The second independent variable differentiates between partners’ different geographical regions of origin by relying on the combinations of women’s and men’s regions of birth. We rely on FReDA’s generated variable country of birth that differentiates between 14 countries and regions, following the coding by the United Nations (*UN Statistics Division 2022*).<sup>3</sup> After summarising these categories further, we obtained a measure including couples’ ten most frequent constellations of regions of origin: 1) native/native, 2) both Eastern European, 3) Eastern European woman/native man, 4) native woman/Eastern European man, 5) both Asian, 6) Asian woman/native man, 7) native woman/Asian man, 8) Western woman<sup>4</sup>/native man, 9) native woman/Western man, and 10) other combination (including countries from Southern Europe, Africa, and Oceania). Appendix Table A1 provides an overview of women’s and men’s most frequent birth countries included in the regional categories.

<sup>3</sup> FReDA summarises anchors’ and partners’ countries of birth in the Scientific Use File (SUF) into broader categories for anonymisation reasons. A description of the generated variable in the SUF data that is used to construct the independent variable “couples’ regions of origin” can be found in Appendix Table A4.

<sup>4</sup> Western countries include countries from Western Europe, Northern Europe, and North and South America.

### 3.3 Method

We conduct ordinary least square (OLS) regression models to examine the association between couples' migration constellation and the division of housework. We separately examine the association between couples' migration constellation and the division of routine and non-routine housework. As the Breusch-Pagan and the White test reject the null hypothesis of homoskedasticity, we add robust standard errors to the regression models to account for heteroskedasticity. We used design weights in the regression analyses to correct for individuals' unequal inclusion probabilities in the sampling process.

To examine the association between couples' migration constellation and the division of housework, we follow a stepwise inclusion of control variables in the multivariate analyses. First, we employ bivariate models to assess the main associations under study. In the second step, we control for the family characteristics of partnership type (married/cohabiting), relationship duration (in years), and the number of children living in the household because long-term married couples and parents divide their housework more traditionally (*Davis et al.* 2007). We additionally control for anchors' gender (female/male) to reveal differences in the way women and men assess the division of housework. In the third step, we include measures of resources to control for relative resource differentials among partners. We include women's and men's employment status (employed/not employed)<sup>5</sup>, age differences between partners (man older, similar age ( $\pm 3$  years), woman older), and educational differences (man higher education, both similar education, woman higher education). Lastly, we control for gender role attitudes, as individuals with more traditional attitudes tend to divide housework in a more gender-traditional way than couples with more egalitarian views, who instead aim for equal division. Gender role attitudes are measured as an arithmetic mean index of five items ranging from 1 (reverse traditional) to 5 (traditional), with 3 indicating egalitarian attitudes. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics of the dependent, independent, and control variables in the analytical sample.

In light of the small proportion of missing values on the dependent variable, we use listwise deletion under the assumption of missing completely at random (MCAR). There is no reason to expect the probability of missing values on the independent and the dependent variables to depend on the division of housework, so we expect unbiased regression estimates.

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<sup>5</sup> For supplementary analyses, we generated a more detailed measure of the employment status that distinguishes between different types of part-time employment based on the average weekly working hours (categories: "no paid employment," "part-time employed (<28 hours)," "almost full-time employed (28-35 hours)," and "full-time employed (>35)").

**Tab. 1:** Descriptive statistics of dependent, independent, and control variables

	Mean/ Prop	SD	Min	Max	N
<i>Dependent variables: Division of housework</i>					
Routine housework (mean index)	3.67	0.65	1.00	5.00	11223
Non-routine housework (mean index)	2.38	0.75	1.00	5.00	11223
<i>Independent variable: Origin constellations</i>					
Native/native	0.82				9258
Native woman/migrant man	0.05		0.00	1.00	561
Migrant woman/native man	0.07				739
Migrant/migrant	0.06				665
<i>Independent variable: Regions of origin</i>					
Native/native	0.82				9258
Both Eastern European	0.02				177
W Eastern European/M native	0.02				221
W native/M Eastern European	0.01				138
Both Asian	0.03				331
W Asian/M native	0.03		0.00	1.00	294
W native/M Asian	0.02				168
W Western/M native	0.01				151
W native/M Western	0.01				152
Other	0.03				333
<i>Gender, anchor</i>					
Male	0.43				4790
Female	0.57		0.00	1.00	6433
<i>Marital status</i>					
Married	0.66				7359
Unmarried	0.34		0.00	1.00	3864
Relationship duration (in years)	12.05	7.42	0.08	36.25	11223
Number of children in household	1.16	1.08	0.00	8.00	11223
Age, woman	35.75	7.58	18.00	71.00	11223
Age, man	38.20	8.28	18.00	73.00	11223
<i>Woman's employment status</i>					
Not employed	0.31				3494
Employed	0.69		0.00	1.00	7729
<i>Man's employment status</i>					
Not employed	0.11				1201
Employed	0.89		0.00	1.00	10022

**Tab. 1:** Continuation

	Mean/ Prop	SD	Min	Max	N
<i>Age difference</i>					
Man older	0.33				3659
Similar age	0.63		0.00	1.00	7028
Woman older	0.05				536
<i>Educational difference</i>					
Man higher education	0.14				1537
Both similar education	0.63		0.00	1.00	7108
Woman higher education	0.23				2578
Gender role attitudes	3.15	0.29	1.00	5.00	11223
<i>Region in Germany</i>					
Western Germany	0.84		0.00	1.00	9481
Eastern Germany	0.16				1742

Note: W refers to women, M refers to men. Western countries include Western Europe, Northern Europe, North and South America.

Source: FReDA v.2.0.0, W1R and W1A

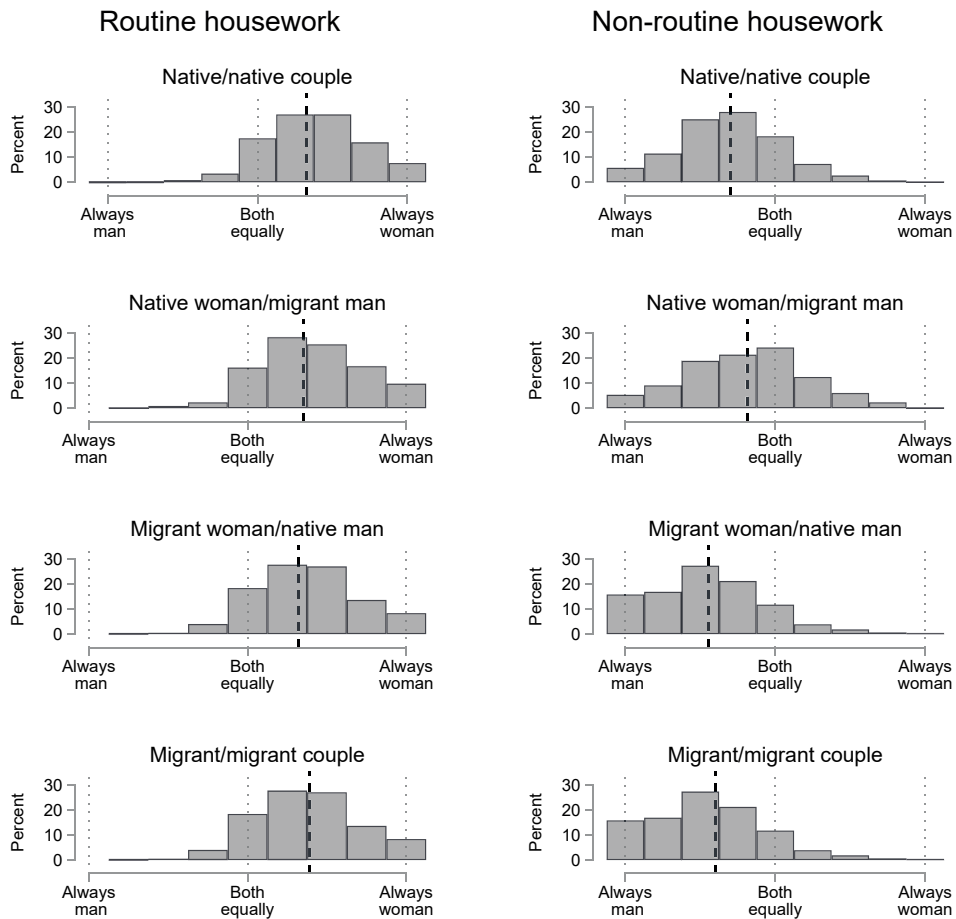
## 4 Results

### 4.1 Descriptive results

#### 4.1.1 Division of routine and non-routine housework by partners' origin constellations

Figure 1 shows that women do most routine tasks (left panel), with an average of 3.67 on the scale from 1 ("Always man") to 5 ("Always woman"; see also Appendix Table A5 for descriptive statistics on partners' origin constellations), which remains relatively stable across partners' origin constellations. The results, however, indicate that women do slightly more routine housework tasks in migrant couples ( $\bar{x} = 3.78$  migrant/migrant) than with a male native partner ( $\bar{x} = 3.66$  native/native,  $\bar{x} = 3.64$  female migrant/male native; all differences  $p < .05$ ). Considering non-routine housework (right panel), we observe that men do most non-routine tasks, with an average of 2.38 on the same scale. Couples with native women seem to behave less traditionally, as non-routine tasks are distributed significantly more equally between both genders in these couples ( $\bar{x} = 2.40$  native/native,  $\bar{x} = 2.62$  female native/male migrant) compared to female migrant couples ( $\bar{x} = 2.11$  female migrant/male native,  $\bar{x} = 2.20$  migrant/migrant; all differences  $p < .01$ ). The results indicate overall that gender differences in the division of housework prevail across partners' origin constellations, with stronger variation of non-routine tasks.

**Fig. 1:** Histograms of the division of routine and non-routine housework by partners' origin constellations



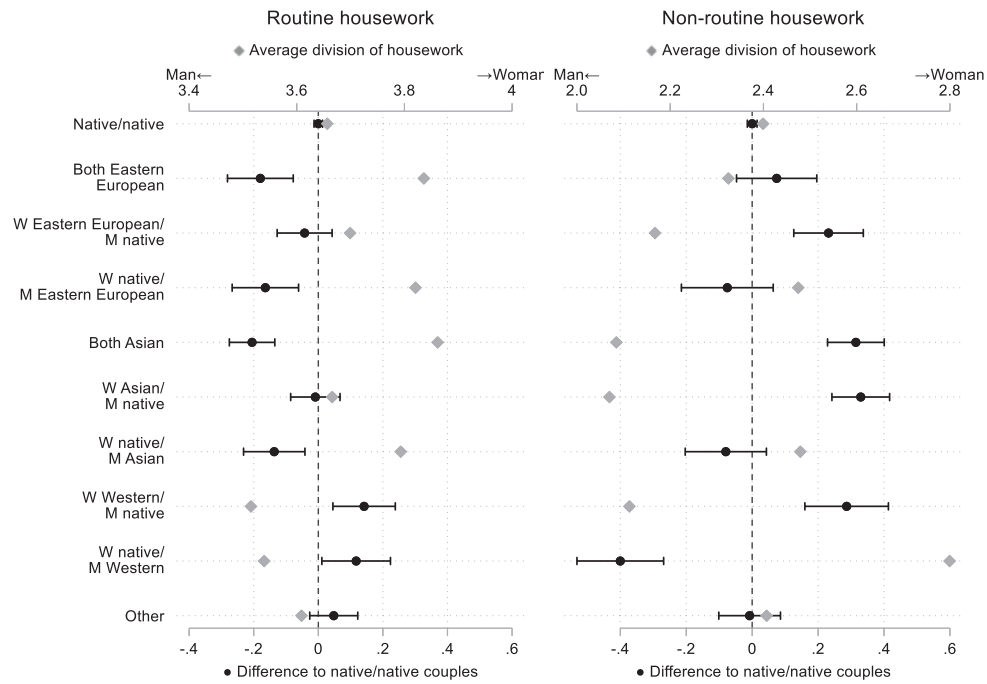
Note: Dashed lines indicate group-specific arithmetic means.

Source: FReDA v.2.0.0, W1R and W1A

#### 4.1.2 Division of routine and non-routine housework by couples' regions of origin

Differentiating between the female and male partners' regions of origin, Figure 2 depicts the average division of routine and non-routine housework (upper x-axis) as well as differences in the division of housework to native couples (lower x-axis). The results reveal that migrants from Eastern Europe and Asia tend to divide housework tasks more gender-traditionally than native couples, whereas the division of housework in migrants from Western countries is more egalitarian on average. Couples with both partners from Asia divide both routine and non-routine tasks significantly more traditionally than native couples on the scale from 1 ("Always

**Fig. 2:** Differences in the division of routine and non-routine housework to native couples and average division of housework by couples' regions of origin



Note: Depicted lines indicate 95% confidence intervals of the difference measure. Arrows indicate the gender that is doing more of the respective housework type. W refers to women, M refers to men. Western countries include Western Europe, Northern Europe, North and South America.

Source: FReDA v.2.0.0, W1R and W1A

man”) to 5 (“Always woman”; difference<sub>routine</sub> = .21,  $p < .001$ ; difference<sub>non-routine</sub> = .31,  $p < .001$ ). Among mixed couples with native women and Eastern European or Asian men, native women tend to take over significantly more routine ( $p < .01$ ) but not non-routine tasks compared to native couples. Conversely, if the female partner migrated from Eastern Europe or Asia, native men tend to take over significantly more non-routine ( $p < .001$ ) but not routine tasks compared to native couples. The results align with a traditional behaviour of the native partner in mixed couples in fulfilling *their* gender-specific housework tasks – with women focusing on routine and men on non-routine tasks. As migrants from Eastern Europe and Asia hold more gender-traditional values than natives on average, their willingness to contribute to housework beyond the scope of their gender-specific tasks might be reduced.

Among mixed couples with at least one partner from Western countries, routine tasks are distributed more equally than among native couples (difference = .14,  $p < .01$  native man/Western woman; difference = .12,  $p < .05$  native woman/Western



man). Regarding non-routine tasks, we find men to take over significantly more non-routine tasks if they are native (difference = .29,  $p < .001$ ), while couples with male Western migrants divide non-routine tasks more equally than native couples (difference = -.40,  $p < .001$ ). The strong specialisation of native men in non-routine housework might counterbalance their comparably high commitment to routine tasks, which contradicts their rather gender-traditional socialisation in Germany.

## 4.2 Multivariate results

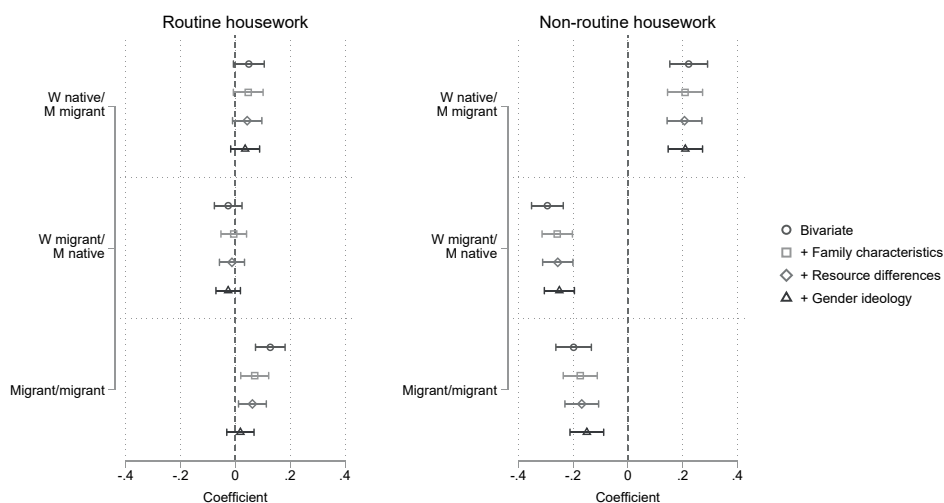
### 4.2.1 Partners' origin constellations and the division of routine and non-routine housework

To interpret the descriptive associations between partners' origin constellations and the division of routine and non-routine housework, Figure 3 adds results based on stepwise OLS regression models that include controls for marital status, relationship duration, and number of children in the household (Family characteristics), woman's and man's employment status, age, and educational differences between woman and man (Resource differences), and gender role attitudes (Gender ideology).

In line with expectation 1, routine housework is most traditionally divided among migrant couples. In mixed couples, the division of household chores shows slight variation based on the gender of the foreign-born partner, which contradicts expectations 2A and 2B that the division of routine and non-routine tasks aligns with the gender of the foreign-born partner. In the bivariate model, routine housework is more traditionally divided in couples with male migrant partners (difference = .05,  $p < .1$  for female native/male migrant couples; difference = .13,  $p < .001$  for migrant/migrant couples). Thus, native and particularly migrant women tend to do more routine tasks than their male migrant partners. In couples with female migrants, however, the division of routine housework is similar to that of native couples. The division of routine tasks might therefore depend on the migration status of the male partner, with male migrants seeming to be less inclined to do tasks traditionally assigned to women than their native counterparts.

The stepwise inclusion of control variables shows that the highly traditional division of routine tasks in migrant couples is partly attributable to differences in their family structure and gender attitudes. Migrant couples are more likely to be married, have a larger number of children, and more traditional gender values than other couples (see Appendix Table A5), which is positively associated with a traditional division of household tasks (e.g., *Brini et al. 2022; Fendel/Kosyakova 2023*). After considering other control variables in the full model, the slightly more traditional division of routine tasks in female native/male migrant couples is also reduced further.

In supplementary analyses, we further differentiate between native/native couples in western and eastern Germany (see Appendix Tables A12 and A13 and Fig. A1). We observe that the division of routine tasks is .03 points less traditional in the more egalitarian context of eastern Germany after including the full set of controls ( $p < .05$ ). Also, non-routine tasks are divided more equally in the former East

**Fig. 3:** Ordinary least square regression models on the division of routine and non-routine housework by partners' origin constellation

Note: Reference group native/native couples. Depicted are regression coefficients from arithmetic mean indices and 95% confidence intervals. Model 2 (Family characteristics) controls for marital status, relationship duration, and number of children in the household, Model 3 (Resource differences) additionally controls for woman's and man's employment status, age difference between woman and man, educational difference between woman and man. Model 4 (Gender ideology) additionally controls for gender traditionalism. Models 2 to 4 control for respondents' gender. See Appendix Tables A6 and A7 for the full regression results.

Source: FReDA v.2.0.0, W1R and W1A

in the bivariate model, although this association no longer holds after controlling for marital status and gender.

In couples with female migrants, non-routine household tasks are divided more traditionally, with men doing more of these tasks (difference =  $-.29, p < .001$  female migrant/male native; difference =  $-.20, p < .001$  migrant/migrant). In contrast to expectation 1, mixed couples with male migrants divide non-routine tasks more equally than native couples (difference =  $.22, p < .001$ ). The inclusion of control variables does not considerably contribute to the associations for non-routine tasks, indicating that being native is more relevant to the division of non-routine than routine housework. Supplementary analyses differentiating between financial tasks and small repairs as the two items of non-routine housework indicate that these results are primarily driven by the division of financial tasks (see Appendix Tables A14 and A15 and Appendix Fig. A2). Native partners in mixed couples are likely more experienced in managing the family finances and associated tasks like paying taxes, doing paperwork, or paying bills. These tasks not only require language skills but also country-specific knowledge about legal regulations, the tax system, and terms used in the respective field. Thus, even migrant partners with good language

skills might face greater insecurities than their native partners in dealing with these tasks.

#### 4.2.2 *Couples' regions of origin and the division of routine and non-routine housework*

Differentiating between couples' regions of origin, Figure 4 summarises regression coefficients of couples' regions of origin and the division of housework based on stepwise OLS regression models including controls for family characteristics, resource differences, and gender ideology.

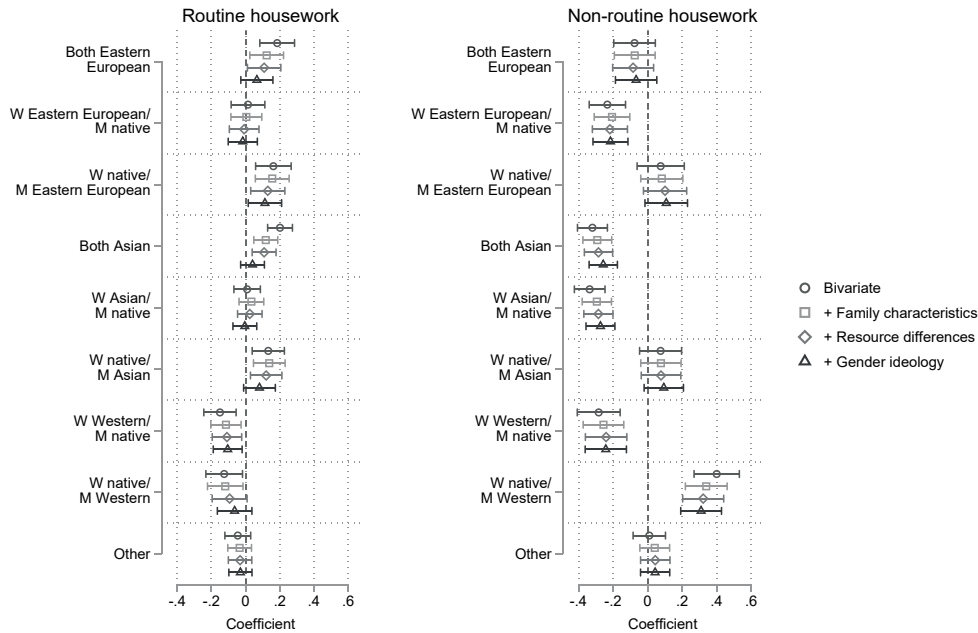
We observe three main findings. First, the division of housework differs based on migrants' regions of origin. Supporting expectation 3, couples from Eastern Europe and Asia tend to divide both routine and non-routine tasks more gender-traditionally, while couples from Western countries have a more equal division of housework compared to native couples. For example, couples with both partners from Asia divide routine housework more traditionally by .20 points and non-routine housework by -.32 points than native couples (both  $p < .001$ ). This supports previous research showing that migrants from countries with more unequal gender ideology tend to reproduce inequality in the division of housework (*Brini et al. 2022; Steinbach 2009*). Particularly couples with male migrants from the traditional regions Eastern Europe and Asia are less likely to perform routine tasks typically assigned to women. For instance, couples with a female native and a male Eastern European show a more traditional division of routine housework by .16 points ( $p < .01$ ) compared to native couples.

The inclusion of control variables reveals that differences in family characteristics and gender role attitudes are associated with the more traditional division of labour among Eastern European and Asian couples, particularly if both partners are migrants.<sup>6</sup> Partly contrary to expectation 3, no differences are observed between couples with at least one partner from Eastern Europe or Asia. In return, mixed couples with either women or men from Western countries have an around .13 points more equal division of routine housework ( $p < .05$ ), which aligns with expectation 3. However, we only observe a more equal division of non-routine housework when the woman migrated from a Western country, which we will discuss next.

Secondly, we observe stronger differences in the division of routine tasks, whereas native status appears to define the division of non-routine tasks in mixed couples. Considering mixed couples with male natives and female partners from Eastern Europe or Asia, we find that they divide non-routine tasks in a significantly more gender-traditional way, which aligns with gender-normative behaviour. This

<sup>6</sup> Although the control variables of differences in education and employment are statistically significant across models, their inclusion does not considerably change the association between migration and housework. Supplementary analyses measuring the employment status in more detail based on weekly working hours provide results similar to the main analyses, showing that both full-time and almost full-time employed women take over fewer routine tasks than non-employed women (see Appendix Tables A10 and A11).

**Fig. 4:** Ordinary least square regression models on the division of routine and non-routine housework by couples' regions of origin



Note: Reference group native/native couples. Depicted are regression coefficients from arithmetic mean indices and 95% confidence intervals. Model 2 (Family characteristics) controls for marital status, relationship duration, and number of children in the household, Model 3 (Resource differences) additionally controls for woman's and man's employment status, age difference between woman and man, educational difference between woman and man. Model 4 (Gender ideology) additionally controls for gender traditionalism. See Appendix Tables A8 and A9 for the full results.

Source: FReDA v.2.0.0, W1R and W1A

result is statistically significant, with a difference of  $-.23$  for Eastern European couples and  $-.32$  points for Asian couples (both  $p < .001$ ). Mixed couples with female natives and male partners from Eastern Europe or Asia however divide non-routine tasks similarly to native couples, suggesting that gender-traditional behaviour is weakened if the woman is the only native partner in the couple and has more country-specific knowledge.

Moreover, we find that mixed couples with native women and men from Western countries divide non-routine tasks more equally than native couples (difference =  $.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas the reverse is true for couples with native men and women from Western countries (difference =  $-.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These findings are robust even after controlling for other potential explanatory factors, implying that the migration status of both partners shapes the division of non-routine housework beyond gender and resource explanations. Native status seems to supersede the relevance of gender ideology in shaping the division of non-routine tasks, which aligns with findings of *Diehl et al.* (2009), who observed a more egalitarian division of

housework in Turkish couples with second-generation women and first-generation men. The role of gender ideology for the division of non-routine housework thus might be weakened among mixed couples from highly traditional regions, whereas it is less decisive among couples from more egalitarian regions.

Thirdly, our findings indicate that cultural proximity shapes the division of non-routine tasks among migrant couples (i.e., with two migrant partners). Specifically, we observe that Eastern European migrants divide non-routine tasks in a more gender-equal way than their Asian counterparts (difference =  $-.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This result is unexpected, given expectation 3 that Eastern European couples would exhibit a less traditional division of housework due to their comparably more egalitarian gender ideology. Our findings suggest that cultural proximity, rather than gender ideology, determines how gender predicts the division of non-routine tasks among migrant couples. When both partners are migrants from Asian regions that are culturally distant from Germany – for instance, due to differences in their historical, geographical, and religious background – gender is a stronger predictor of task division. By contrast, when both partners stem from Eastern Europe and might be more familiar with the destination country, both genders are more equally involved in non-routine tasks.

## 5 Discussion

Whereas the division of housework as a central dimension of gender inequality among the native population in Germany has received wide attention (e.g., *Hank/Steinbach 2021; Leopold et al. 2018*), research on the intersection of gender, migration, and housework in Germany has remained sparse (exceptions are studies by *Diehl et al. 2009; Fendel/Kosyakova 2023; Krieger/Salikutluk 2023; Steinbach 2009*). The present study examined the division of housework within and between different-sex native and migrant couples, differentiating between the female and male partners' migrant status and their regions of origin. Looking at routine tasks typically done by women and non-routine tasks typically done by men, the study provides some new descriptive insights into the gender-specific division of housework among different native-migrant constellations within cohabitating couples. The study uses novel survey data from the German Family Demography Panel Study (FReDA SUF, 2021). Focussing on first-generation migrants, the case numbers of the FReDA-GGS sample data still allow for a fine-grained analysis of the female and the male partners' regions of origin.

Our findings reveal a nuanced picture of the division of routine housework among migrant couples compared to natives. Routine housework is generally divided more traditionally in migrant couples, with strong variation across regional groups. As FReDA allows us to take a closer look at couples' regions of origin (following the coding by the *UN Statistics Division 2022*), we assess heterogeneity among migrants. Specifically, migrants from Asia and Eastern Europe exhibit a more gender-traditional division of routine tasks, whereas Western migrants divide routine tasks more equally than natives. These results extend prior research on Italy

(*Brini et al.* 2022), suggesting that migrants in Germany also divide routine tasks consistently with the gender ideologies prevalent in their countries of origin.

The results of the allocation of routine household tasks seem to speak to both a resource-based explanation and a doing-gender explanation. Partners in migrant, mixed, or native couples have different command of resources. Likewise, they are socialised in different contexts or with some cultural heritage of the origin country, so doing gender seems to account for variations in couples' division of housework as well. Couples composed of two migrants tend to divide routine tasks more traditionally compared to native couples, which can be attributed to their more traditional gender role attitudes and their family composition. In mixed couples, by contrast, the division of routine housework is shaped by the gender of the migrant partner. Particularly male migrant partners appear to undermine a more gender-equal division of routine tasks and supersede the gender role attitudes of their native female partners. This may result from migrant men's potential disadvantage in the couple in terms of economic resources and country-specific capital, increasing their efforts to avoid typically female housework tasks (*Brines* 1993).

This study finds that resource advantages are not used to avoid but rather to fulfil more desirable non-routine tasks. In couples with migrant partners, men do more non-routine tasks in line with a gendered division of housework, while it is the native partner who focuses on non-routine tasks in mixed couples. Supplementary analyses show that this is likely because natives have more country-specific knowledge that is required to manage the family finances as one dimension of non-routine tasks. Beyond language skills, financial tasks like paying bills or doing taxes also require knowledge about legal regulations or the tax system. Thus, being native might be a resource itself in mixed couples that is used to fulfil specific non-routine tasks. Whereas the nativity status levels out gender in the division of non-routine tasks among migrants from Western countries with prevalent egalitarian gender ideology, the influence of gender seems reduced in couples from more gender-traditional regional contexts of Eastern Europe and Asia. Complementing prior research on Germany by *Fauser* (2019) showing that a resource decline through unemployment leads to an increase in men's time spent on male-typed tasks, we emphasise that beyond their desirability, the knowledge required for fulfilling certain tasks should also be considered.

The study underscores a largely unrecognised dimension of gender inequality in the division of housework in mixed couples, namely native women facing a double burden in this constellation. Native women do both more routine and non-routine tasks by fulfilling their female gender roles and additionally taking on tasks that require country-specific knowledge. Native men, by contrast, only specialise in non-routine tasks as their area of expertise that corresponds to their gender ideology.

This work is not without limitations, which at the same time highlight promising avenues for future research with FReDA data. Firstly, due to the novelty of the FReDA panel, our study relies on cross-sectional data and cannot yet address the division of housework with a longitudinal study design. Therefore, our results should not be interpreted as causal and must be understood as purely descriptive. The results should especially be interpreted in light of the fieldwork period during

the COVID-19 pandemic, which might have deepened gender differences in the division of housework (*Hank/Steinbach* 2021). As the FReDA panel proceeds with a biannual survey design, it will be possible to conduct panel data analyses in the future. Further, we only include proxy information on the partner provided by the anchor person, which future research might complement by adding potentially contrasting information from partner interviews.

Secondly, the analytical sample of our study is restricted to first-generation migrants and thus includes migrants at different stages in the acculturation process, comprising newly arrived migrants as well as migrants of child age. As prior research has shown that differences in gender ideology are largest between first and second-generation immigrants (*Carriero* 2021), we assume that the migrants in our sample comprising different ages of migration are comparable in their stage of acculturation. However, our design potentially conceals differences between second-generation migrants and natives, which are both subsumed in the reference category.

Thirdly, since the focus of this study is on the comparison of natives and migrants, differences between eastern and western Germany have only been marginally addressed. The results of supplementary analyses still show a more traditional division of routine housework among couples in western Germany, which already illustrates the scientific potential resulting from Germany's unique historical development. While we have only considered respondents' place of residence, FReDA data also allow for the examination of the place of birth and place of residence during adolescence to assess the consequences of a socialisation in eastern or western Germany. Within couples, analysing mixed couples with an eastern and a western German partner constitutes a promising research avenue beyond the comparison of natives and migrants.

Overall, this study provides important insights into the intersection of gender, housework, and migration. It reveals stronger gender differences in the division of routine than non-routine tasks, particularly among couples with two migrant partners and those from Eastern Europe and Asia. Research is needed to explore the transferability of these results to childcare as the other main dimension of domestic labour. Whereas non-routine childcare activities are commonly perceived as more joyful than routine care tasks, childcare might require more overall country-specific knowledge than housework (*Steinbach/Schulz* 2022). This remains only one of many questions for future research that can be addressed with data from FReDA.

### **Acknowledgements**

We thank Anne-Sophie Oehrlein, Annika Stein, and Emely Ullrich for helpful comments. Tabea Auth provided excellent research assistance. This work was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of FReDA (grant number 01UW2001B). The computer code for the analysis is available at <https://osf.io/mpx9w>.



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*Date of submission: 06.11.2022*

*Date of acceptance: 01.06.2023*

Dr. Theresa Nutz (✉), Dr. Lisa Schmid, Prof. Dr. Reinhard Pollak. GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. Cologne/Mannheim, Germany.  
E-mail: [theresa.nutz@gesis.org](mailto:theresa.nutz@gesis.org); [lisa.schmid@gesis.org](mailto:lisa.schmid@gesis.org); [reinhard.pollak@gesis.org](mailto:reinhard.pollak@gesis.org)  
URL: <https://www.gesis.org/en/institute/staff/person/Theresa.Nutz>  
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## Comparative Population Studies

*www.comparativepopulationstudies.de*

ISSN: 1869-8980 (Print) – 1869-8999 (Internet)

### Published by

Federal Institute for Population Research  
(BiB)  
65180 Wiesbaden / Germany

### Managing Publisher

Dr. Nikola Sander



2023

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E-mail: [cpos@bib.bund.de](mailto:cpos@bib.bund.de)

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