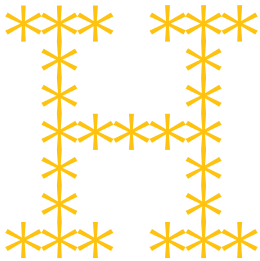
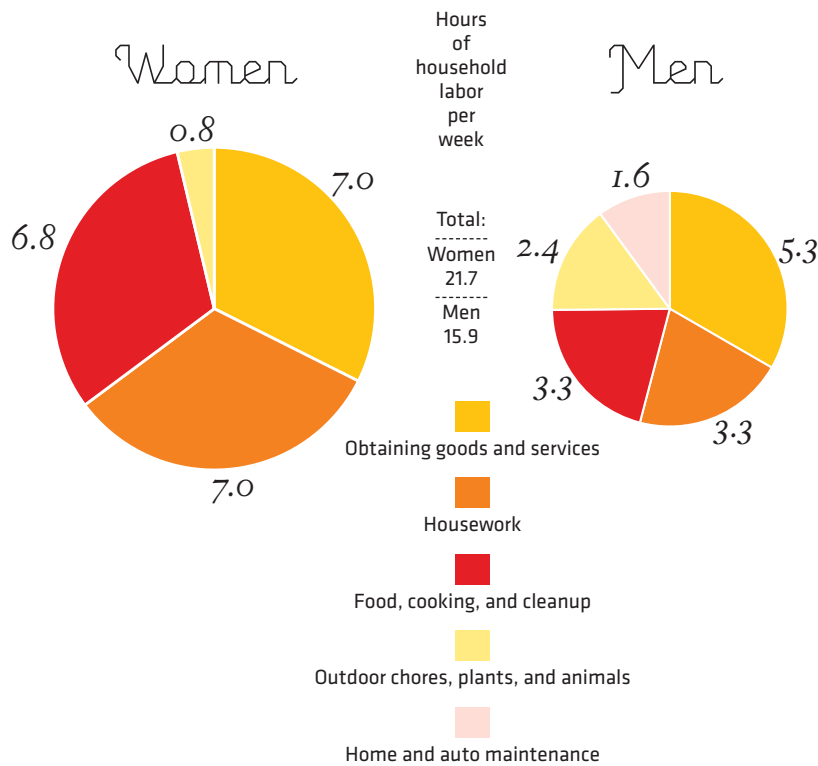




by CARRIE CONAWAY

where does the time go?





HOUSEHOLD LABOR IS ONE OF the primary battlegrounds over which the work-family conflict is fought. No matter how much time is spent at work, at the end of the day the house has to be reasonably clean, the kids fed, the yard mowed, and the shopping done. With a limited amount of time in the day, every family has to negotiate who will do which tasks and for how long.

For years, women have gotten the short end of this stick. In 1965, the heyday of the stay-at-home mom, women did an average of 30 hours of household labor per week—six times the 5 hours per week men logged. What little household labor men did was concentrated on repair and maintenance work, while women were responsible for cooking, cleaning, laundry, and so on.

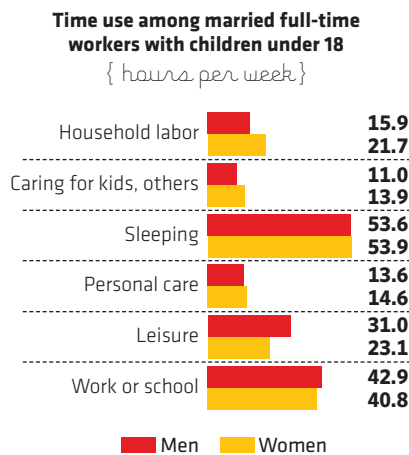
Times have changed, but household labor time hasn't changed nearly as much as one might expect. The most significant change since the 1960s is that about 50 percent less household labor is being done overall. To make up the difference, some families are now buying substitutes such as housecleaning and prepared foods. But other tasks simply go undone; the house is a little more dusty, the dinner less elaborate.

Nonetheless, women still do significantly more household labor than men. The chart at right shows a breakdown of time use

among married people who work full-time and have children at home—people who presumably have a similar amount of time available for household tasks. According to these data, these women spend about 10 more hours per week on household tasks, mostly on household labor and caring for children. To find the time for this, they sacrifice 8 hours of leisure per week relative to men and work about 2 hours less. Furthermore, it's not just the presence of children that creates the sex difference. Even married women who work full-time but don't have kids spend about 8 more hours per week on household labor and 10 hours less on leisure than equivalent men.

Furthermore, the kinds of work women do haven't changed much, either. Women still spend much more time than men on cleaning, cooking, and shopping—tasks which need to be completed promptly and frequently. Men have greater responsibility for outdoor and maintenance work, which can more often be done on a more flexible schedule and which tend to take less time overall.

It's hard to say how much this "second shift" matters for women's ability to reach the top of organizations. But it stands to reason that the more time anyone spends on tasks outside of work, the less time available for work itself—and therefore the less opportunity to move up. *



Source: Family Interaction, Social Capital, and Trends in Time Use Study, 1988-1999. Note: Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.