The Political Consequences of the Mental Load

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Abstract

How do levels of cognitive household labor – the "mental load" involved in anticipating, fulfilling, and monitoring household needs – affect political interest? The mental load is distinct from the physical tasks of e.g., cooking and cleaning, and thought to be disproportionately undertaken by women. I argue that while low levels of mental load can foster political interest, at high levels the mental (over)load crowds out cognitive space for political issues, especially issues seen to be distant from family life. To test this argument, I field a novel survey on politics and household work to a sample of parents in the United States. I find a large gender gap, with mothers reporting primary responsibility for 71 percent of cognitive household labor, compared to fathers' 45 percent. Low levels of mental load are positively linked to political interest, while high levels of mental load decrease interest in certain issues, including national politics and inflation. I report similar effects for fathers and mothers, but due to the gendered distribution of mental load (mothers carrying more load, on average), negative consequences are more common among mothers. The findings offer new evidence about a gender gap too often hidden, and its consequences for political life.

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Gender gaps in political life are intractable. In the United States, women report less political interest, participate less in political discussions and public actions, and show less political ambition than men (Burns et al., 2002; Lawless and Fox, 2010; Preece, 2016). Similar patterns are observed worldwide, including Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America (Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010; Desposato and Norrander, 2009; Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer, 2012; Prillaman, 2023). Scholars are increasingly examining the role of gender in the household as a factor influencing political activity (Bernhard et al., 2021; Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2010; Naurin et al., 2022). To date, however, little attention has been given to one hidden source of political inequality: the mental load.

The mental load is the cognitive labor of anticipating, fulfilling, and monitoring household needs (Daminger, 2019). It includes remembering schedules, arranging services, managing finances, finding child care, and juggling priorities (Robertson et al., 2019). The concept gained attention after the 2017 comic by French feminist cartoonist Emma,[1] and sociological research has since explored it conceptually (Daminger, 2019). So far, few studies measure the mental load quantitatively (but see Aviv et al., 2024; Weeks and Ruppanner, 2024; Haupt and Gelbgiser, 2023; Helgøy and Weeks, 2023), and none examine its descriptive link to political interest, a key form of political engagement. This matters because we might be underestimating gender gaps in household labor and their implications for equality in public life.

As a first step, this study uses an original survey of 3,000 U.S. parents. While the mental load persists across the life course (Dean et al., 2022), parents are a relevant group due to significant mental loads and widening gender gaps in political engagement (Naurin et al., 2022; Voorpostel and Coffé, 2012). I focus on the following research questions. First, how does the mental load differ by gender? Second, how does it affect political interest

[1] "You Should've Asked," by Emma, 20 May 2017.

among mothers and fathers? The United States, a liberal welfare state with scant federal support for parents, offers an extreme case. I expect the gender gap in the mental load is large. Building on Greenlee's (2014) conception of 'politicized motherhood' as a complex identity that can both reinforce traditional gender norms and create new, politically relevant skills and interests, I argue that the relationship between domestic mental load and political engagement is nonlinear. Taking some responsibility for mental tasks can build certain skills, social capital, and efficacy relevant to political life. However, such cognitive labor has diminishing returns and eventually leads to overload, crowding out space for political interests.

I find evidence of a large gender gap in cognitive household labor among parents. Mothers report primary responsibility for 71 percent of cognitive household labor, while fathers report responsibility for 45 percent. This gender gap of 26 percentage points is larger than the gender gap estimated in share of physical household labor, and it has important implications for politics. As expected, I find that high levels of the mental load are linked to decreases in certain forms of political interest among parents, such as interest in national issues and inflation. Because mothers take on the majority of mental load work, these negative consequences tend to impact mothers more than fathers. At the same time, the mental load can have positive impacts as well. Among mothers, for example, it is positively linked to interest in gun control – an issue with clear links to family care given the US epidemic of school shootings. And at low levels, I find that the mental load is often positively linked to political engagement among both mothers and fathers.

In summary, the main contributions of the study are: 1) to offer a new quantitative method of measuring the mental load; 2) to deepen our understanding of the political consequences of gendered household work by examining the link between the mental load and political interest, and; 3) to consider how the impacts of the mental load vary by the nature

of the political issue. Overall, the results highlight the enduring relevance of the household division of labor to equality in political life and the need to move beyond time-based measures in order to measure such unpaid labor accurately.

Gender and the Mental Load

Women continue to do the bulk of household labor across nearly every context in the world. According to data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, globally women spend between two and ten times more time on unpaid care work than men. These gender gaps narrow with women's education and employment, relative income in the household, and when the gender wage gap is relatively smaller (Ferrant et al., 2014; Fuwa, 2004; Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2010). According to household bargaining theories, when women have greater outside options, they have more negotiating power at home, and men begin to take on some of the physical household work (Becker, 1985; Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2010).

The same dynamics might not hold for gender gaps in cognitive household labor. This is because cognitive labor is harder to outsource than physical household labor, and it does not require women's physical presence in the home. Instead, it can always be in the back of one's mind. Even very affluent families with full-time child care and other household help require someone to manage all of the services and the day-to-day schedules of family members – typically, the mother (Sherman, 2017). Further, the work itself tends to be invisible. As Daminger (2019) explains, cognitive labor is "diffuse, disjointed, and often invisible even to the doer" (p. 9). This could make it more difficult to identify and reallocate within households than physical labor, even if very gender-egalitarian partners want to do so.

In addition, the rise of intensive mothering has affected middle and upper class women in particular (Hays, 1996). This dominant paradigm in Western democracies suggests that 'good' mothers ought to be highly involved in all aspects of their children's lives, but the same social pressures are not placed on fathers (Damaske, 2013). Women but not men are socialized to be the ones ultimately responsible for family life – and likely to be judged by their peers if they do not adhere to these norms (Thébaud et al., 2021).

Men, conversely, face different social pressures. The role of fatherhood is shifting quickly; many fathers want to be more involved in their children's lives (for an overview, see Grau Grau et al., 2022). Yet men still face intense pressure to be 'ideal workers' and breadwinners, and often feel unable to take up policies such as flexible working or parental leave (when available) due to risks of stigmatization (Tanquerel and Grau-Grau, 2020).

In other words, although norms are changing, women and men still face different social pressures about how much to engage at home versus in public life. Some research argues that maternal 'gatekeeping' reifies such gender divisions (Allen and Hawkins, 1999), while other scholars suggest that men strategically perform incompetence in order to avoid such work (Miller, 2018). While the drivers of ongoing inequalities are debated, scholars agree that it tends to take up more of women's attention. The first hypothesis is thus:

H1: Women report higher mental loads than men.

The Mental Load and Political Engagement

In the current study, I concentrate on how cognitive household labor might impact interest in a range of political issues. Like cognitive household labor, political interest is a mental state. If the mental load affects political participation, I expect to observe it first in feelings about wanting to pay attention to politics, an important first step that sets the stage for

further political participation (Verba et al., 1997).

Previous studies find consistent gender gaps in political engagement in countries around the world, with women reporting less interest (Burns et al., 2002; Fraile and Gomez, 2017a; Fraile and Sánchez-Vítores, 2020; Verba et al., 1997; Wolak, 2020), lower levels of political knowledge (Carpini and Keeter, 2016; Dolan, 2011; Ferrín et al., 2019; Fraile and Gomez, 2017b), and lower internal political efficacy (Fraile and de Miguel Moyer, 2022; Oser et al., 2023) than men. Scholars have long theorized that gender-based inequalities in the division of household labor are part of the explanation: if women spend more time on household tasks, this leaves them with fewer opportunities to engage with politics. Yet, the few studies that link household labor to political participation directly report mixed findings. Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (1997; 2002) find no link between the percentage of housework done and political activity in the United States; however, having more leisure time is associated with greater participation for men. Sartori, Tuorto, and Ghigi (2017)'s study of Italy reports a negative link between time spent in domestic work and political activities for women, but not for men. Finally, in the study perhaps most closely related to the current investigation, Helgøy and Weeks (2023) take an experimental approach, priming some survey respondents to to think about their own mental loads. They find a strong negative effect of mental load priming on intentions to engage in politics and at work among parents in the UK.

Other research shows that becoming a parent and the presence of young children affect mothers and fathers in different ways – potentially, due to gender differences in unpaid work following the birth of a child. Analysis of political engagement in 27 European countries finds that gender differences in political interest are largest among couples with children (Quaranta and Dotti Sani, 2018). Having a child is associated with less voting frequency for women but not men (Voorpostel and Coffé, 2012). Even becoming pregnant leads to

significant declines in women's levels of political participation, but this is not true for their partners, expectant fathers (Naurin et al., 2022). The dampening effect of parenthood for women is also seen at higher levels of political participation, like running for office. For example, mothers with breadwinning responsibility, who despite this still tend to undertake more housework than their partners, are especially unlikely to run for office (Bernhard et al., 2021).

While past studies have perceived household constraints mainly in terms of time spent in physical household labor or parenthood, I propose that cognitive household labor also matters to political engagement. How might the political consequences of mental household work differ from the physical side of this labor? While I expect both to affect political engagement, I offer two main points of distinction here which provide good reason to study the mental dimension. First, physical labor is discrete and often confined to the home. The mental load, conversely, is carried with us throughout the day and often performed outside of the home (on the commute, at work, when trying to sleep). Therefore, because it cannot easily be compartmentalized or left behind, the mental load may have a more pervasive impact on an individuals cognitive bandwidth and energy.

Second, while gender differences in physical household work have been decreasing in recent decades (Altintas and Sullivan, 2017) and tend to narrow or equalize when women are the primary breadwinners (Chesley and Flood, 2017), I do not expect this to be true for mental household labor. Instead, awareness of the concept of mental household work is only emerging and studies suggest it is deeply gendered even among egalitarian couples who strive to share physical household work (Daminger, 2020). This leads one recent study to conclude that, "even among equally sharing parents, mothers keep track of the calendar and remain 'in charge' of work at home" (Pinho and Gaunt, 2021, pp. 319); that is, the mental load can be viewed as another way of performing gender (Weeks and Ruppanner, 2024). The mental

load thus illuminates a different aspect of inequality which cannot be captured by measuring physical household labor alone. Together, these distinct characteristics of the mental load suggest that it might have unique implications for political engagement and deserves closer empirical attention.

Building on Greenlee's (2014) theory of 'politicized motherhood', I argue that the relationship between the mental load and political engagement is complex and nonlinear. Greenlee claims that motherhood can both reify traditional, feminine identities through gendered social expectations regarding care and housework, and at the same time create new politically relevant skills and interests (see also Elder and Greene, 2012). For example, taking responsibility for household financial management builds knowledge about the family's economic situation which can inform policy attitudes related to e.g., economic security, employment, health, and education (Hacker et al., 2013). The work of maintaining social relationships or 'kinkeeping', as well as mental work related to child care and scheduling (organizing, "for instance, the 'school run', childcare 'swaps', baby-sitting, shared childrens outings, emergency care, and the taking and fetching and watching of children in their school and club activities" (Lowndes, 2000, p.534) can create networks, trust, and social capital, and form the basis of community organization (Lowndes, 2000; Sapiro, 2013).

These stronger community attachments tend to enhance political participation (Strate et al., 1989). One recent example is parents organizing against children's mobile phone use, where parent groups originating in local WhatsApp chats have started nation-wide movements and informed policy decisions to ban phones at schools.[2] While I expect that the mental load is disproportionately done by women, I see no reason to believe that women and men who carry similar mental loads respond to this differently. For both men and women, then, I expect:

[2]E.g., Wilson, Joseph and Laurie Kellman. "Should young kids have smartphones? These parents in Europe linked arms and said no," *AP*, 21 June 2024.

H2: At low levels, the mental load is positively linked to political interest.

However, scholars note that these household management roles, associated with adulthood, are likely to have different effects for men and women (Ferrín et al., 2019). As discussed above, becoming a parent and parenting small children especially tends to reduce women but not men's engagement. I argue that one reason for these observed differences could be that taking on most, or all, of the work to manage a family and household brings negative consequences. At a certain point the benefits associated with household management – increased skills, efficacy, networks, awareness – diminish and cognitive *overload* can decrease political engagement. High levels of mental load can "crowd out" cognitive space for other activities, including but not limited to engaging with political life. The notion of "bounded rationality" holds that individuals have only limited knowledge and computational capacity, and therefore must be selective in searching for information (Simon, 1956). Similarly, cognitive load theory suggests that humans have finite working memory, and so there are constraints on how much new information individuals can register and use in conscious activities (Miller, 1956). The mental load, as one form of cognitive fatigue, could reduce the desire to acquire new information – particularly if politics is considered a hobby or leisure activity (Hjermitslev and Johnston, 2023). With more of one's head space taken up by household management, it could be more difficult, and less rewarding, to follow political issues.

At what point does the mental load become too high and begin to negatively impact political engagement? Previous studies do not offer a specific threshold, and this remains an empirical question (one I return to in the analysis). However, equity theory suggests that individuals tend to value, if not necessarily parity, fairness in the division of labor (Rapson and Hatfield, 2012). Fairness perceptions can take into account overall time availability, such that individuals might believe it is fair for one partner to work more hours in the home if

the other works more hours outside the home (Koster et al., 2022). Yet, the mental load is not measured in units of time and not restricted to the home. This ambiguity can make it hard to assess its fairness – which might actually increase the psychological burden, if mental work goes unrecognized within the family. Recent research demonstrates that individuals are more accepting of mental loads centered around the halfway mark as one indicator of equity (Petts et al., 2025). Taking on significantly more than this (e.g., two-thirds or three-quarters of the load) might be perceived as less fair and more overwhelming. Therefore, the more mental load increases from parity, the more we might expect it becomes a psychological burden that can impact investment in other interests.

Because cognitive household labor is a relatively new concept, I find little previous evidence directly related to how it might affect political interest. However, in focus groups preceding the 2005 British general election, Campbell and Winters (2008) report that several women mentioned "the responsibility of child-rearing" as a reason why they do not keep up with politics, whereas no men mentioned it (p. 55). Interestingly, these women brought up mental work related to care. One said, "I think after two kids my brain kind of goes funny. I swear you know I've lost half of it," and another said, "I felt that when I had children and they were young I just really had no time to think about anything else" (p. 71). These remarks are consistent with the idea that mental (over-)load demands can drain energy and attention away from taking an interest in politics:

H3: At high levels, the mental load is negatively linked to political interest.

Further, I expect that H3 is conditioned by the nature of the specific political issue. Gender gaps in political interest often do not persist when considering interest in local issues, as opposed to national or international issues (Campbell and Winters, 2008; Coffé, 2013). This might be because women's greater involvement in household work gives them more exposure to certain kinds of local politics, like schools and local health issues. Studies also

find that women report higher levels of political interest and knowledge when asked about specific political issues, especially those that are particularly relevant to women's lives, such as abortion, as opposed to more general issues (Ferrín et al., 2020; Kraft and Dolan, 2023; Tormos and Verge, 2022). Further evidence comes from the mothers interviewed in Greenlee's (2014) study. For example, one mother said, "... I used to subscribe to Ms. Magazine, and it was all about national politics, And I think 'wow, I used to read that?'... And I still do, but its on the back burner to the local stuff" (Greenlee, 2014, p180). Others brought up public schools, the right to breastfeed, and gun control as political issues activated by different stages of parenthood. I thus expect:

> H4: High levels of mental load are more likely to decrease political interest in general political issues perceived to be distant from family life than local political issues well-connected to family life.

In summary, I argue that the effects of the mental load are curvilinear: while low levels of the mental load are generally positive for political interest, high levels of mental load crowd out cognitive space for political issues, especially general issues perceived to be distant from family life. These relationships should operate similarly for mothers and fathers; that is, fathers who take on the vast majority of mental load can also be expected to reduce political engagement. Yet, given the unequal distribution of mental load in households (women carrying more load than men, on average), the negative political impacts of the mental load ought to affect more women than men.

An Original Survey on Politics and Household Work

In order to understand the role of the mental load in politics, the first step is measuring it. Few existing studies measure the mental load quantitatively. This type of labor is not

captured well by time-use studies which ask respondents to indicate how many minutes they spend on different tasks, because the planning and monitoring that goes into managing a household are often secondary or tertiary activities. It is very hard to identify how much time such nebulous and ongoing work takes, but easier to identify who tends to do different mental tasks.

To make progress on this, I designed a novel task-based measure of the mental load, which was fielded to a sample of parents in the United States. As the liberal welfare state offering the lowest level of state support for parents among its peers (White, 2009), the United States is an extreme case. This is useful for studying a relatively new and invisible concept like the mental load, because I expect to find larger mental loads in a context where the state provides virtually no support for caring work. The current study focuses on parents. While the mental load endures throughout the life course, and not just among parents, this labor naturally compounds when there are dependent children to be cared for. In addition, gender gaps in pay and promotion intensify on the birth of a child (Goldin, 2021; Kleven et al., 2019), suggesting that it is a critical life stage for understanding gender-based inequalities.

The survey was fielded in February and March of 2023 via the survey firm Dynata. The sample of 3,000 respondents was selected to mirror the US population of parents with respect to age, race/ethnicity, gender, and education. Unlike previous work which tends to focus on different-sex couples, the sample includes individuals from same- and different-sex couples, as well as single parents. It thus offers new evidence that reflects the diverse population of US parents on certain Census-based characteristics; at the same time, because the data is not drawn from a probability-based sample it might be unrepresentative on other variables. Tables A1 and A2 in the SM provide an overview of the representativeness of the sample and summary statistics.

The survey starts by asking respondents a series of questions about their interest in different political issues. I ask the political questions first because questions about household labor might prime gender and parenthood status, affecting responses to political questions in an undesirable way (Klar, 2013). Because thus far we know very little about the consequences of the mental load for political engagement, I investigate a range of potential issues. Some of these are more abstract (local, national, and international issues), while some are specific (abortion, gun control, inflation). Per H4, I expect high mental load to negatively influence abstract issues or those which are not clearly related to family life (national issues, international issues, inflation), whereas I expect high mental load can positively influence interest in issues seen to be deeply connected to family life (local issues, gun control). Abortion is included as an interest particularly relevant for women (Yildirim, 2022; see also Figure 2), but the potential impact of high mental load is unclear. While most parents are likely to consider the problem of guns in schools, abortion might be perceived as less relevant to the day-to-day lives of families with dependent children.

After the questions about political interest, I introduce the idea that household work can have physical and mental aspects. I ask respondents to estimate the hours they spend doing care and other types of household work on a typical day, and to estimate the share of physical household labor that they personally do within their household. These questions allow me to assess how gender differences in household physical labor compare to those in cognitive household labor.

Next I instruct respondents, "Now think about the **mental** work involved in managing your household and caring for children, not the physical aspect." To measure the mental load, I draw on previous qualitative research describing the cycle of cognitive labor in the household: anticipating needs, identifying options and making decisions, and monitoring progress (Daminger, 2019). The questionnaire asks a series of questions that correspond

with these three components, for seven types of cognitive household labor: scheduling, child care, social relationships, cleaning, food, finances, and home maintenance (21 items in total).[3] These categories are not exhaustive, but represent the majority of the nine cognitive labor domains identified by Daminger (2019).[4] Respondents are asked, "In your family, who typically handles" each task, with a range of options given: "Mostly me", "Mostly my partner", "Partner and I share equally", "Someone else (Includes friends and family)", and "NA". For example, the questions related to scheduling include: Remembering to schedule appointments, such as dentist appointments (*anticipating*); Planning a family event, like a birthday party (*identifying options and making decisions*); and Keeping track of the family calendar, such as kids' medical appointments (*monitoring*).[5]

I then construct a composite measure of the mental load for each person by summing the total number of items that an individual says is done by "Mostly me" and dividing this by the number of items overall (removing "not applicable" items from the denominator).[6] A similar approach has been found to be effective at measuring issue preferences (Ansolabehere et al., 2008). The basic idea is that multiple questions – here of different aspects of the mental load, which mirror accounts from qualitative studies – reduce measurement error. Cronbach's Alpha of the 21 items making up the mental load scale is 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Relying on primary responsibility ('mostly me' responses only) means losing some information, but it offers important advantages. First, it provides a straightforward measure

[3]I randomly vary the order of the types of cognitive household labor.

[4]To save space / avoid survey fatigue, I leave out "shopping/purchasing" and "travel/leisure." Both are domains which tend to be women-led (Daminger 2019), meaning that if anything my measure could underestimate the share of mental load done by mothers.

[5]See SM section A for the full list of mental task survey items.

[6]The average number of "not applicable" responses among the 21 items is 0.7, suggesting that the vast majority of items are relevant.

of (perceived) individual responsibility for cognitive labor tasks. Second, previous studies of couples find inconsistencies in the amount of household work reported by husbands, but less so for wives (Lee and Waite, 2005; Yavorsky et al., 2015). While men view household work as equally shared, this is not borne out in the time diary data. The same overestimation among fathers is found for the domestic mental load (Helgøy, 2024; Weeks and Ruppanner, 2024). This could suggest that fathers feel social desirability bias to inflate levels of household work, and using the 'shared equally' category is one way of doing so. Therefore, I believe relying on 'mostly me' responses is more accurate. Nonetheless, and because it is impossible to observe the reality of this work that goes on within one's mind, I also provide results using a different operationalization of the mental load which includes 'shared equally' responses (see SM Tables C11 – C12).

Describing the Mental Load among U.S. Parents

I begin by providing evidence to support the expectation that the mental load is highly gendered. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the mental load among fathers and mothers. In line with H1, mothers report primary responsibility for 71 percent of the mental load on average, while fathers say that they are mostly responsible for 45 percent (a gender gap of 26 percentage points). A T-test shows that this gender difference is statistically significant. As Figure 1 shows, the distribution of mental load is skewed differently for fathers and mothers: for fathers, the median mental load (38%) is lower than the mean, while for mothers the median mental load (76%) is higher than the mean. The task-based measure of the mental load is also highly correlated with respondents' own assessments of their overall share of mental load (see section A of the SM for a discussion of this validation check).

How do gender gaps in cognitive household labor compare to gender gaps in phys-

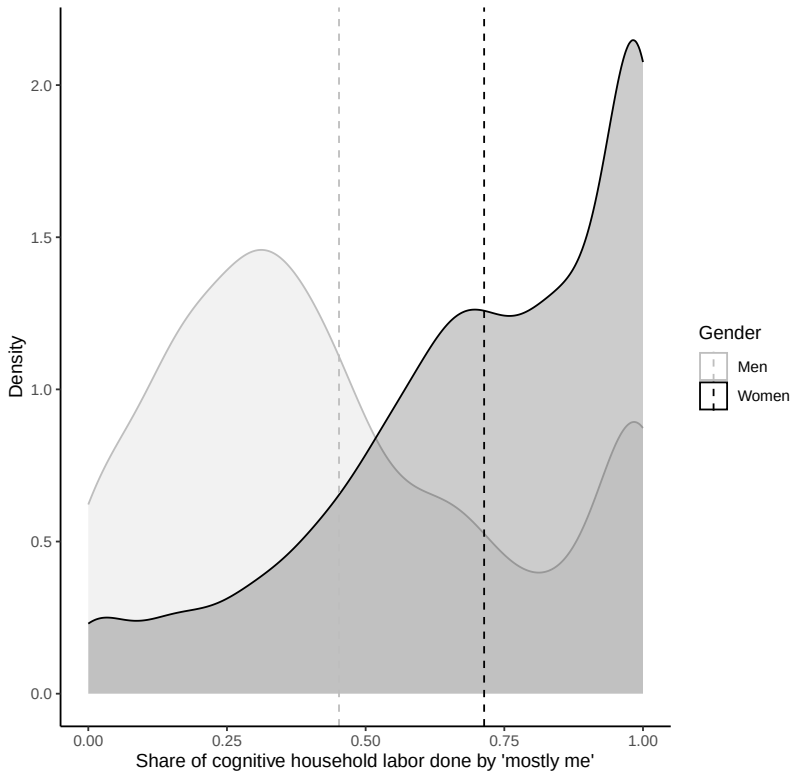

Figure 1: Gender differences in mental household labor

Notes: Vertical lines show means for fathers and mothers.

ical household labor? On average, mothers report doing 75% of physical household labor compared to fathers' 62%, a gender gap of 13 percentage points. Considering instead time spent in both care and other household work, the mean gender difference in hours per week is 25 hours, which translates into 15 percentage points.[7] While both gender gaps are thus sizable and statistically significant, they are smaller than the 27-percentage-point gender gap reported for cognitive household labor. The gender gap in mental load work appears even larger than gender gaps in physical household labor.

The Mental Load and Political Engagement: Empirical Strategy and Results

So far, I have established that gender gaps in the mental load among parents are large. How does this matter for political interest? To describe and compare average gender gaps in political life, I estimate OLS regressions separately for different types of political interest.[8] For ease of interpretation, I rescale these variables to range between 0 and 1, where higher values refer to greater interest. To measure baseline gender gaps in political engagement, I deliberately do not control for other covariates such as education or income because these can be considered "post-treatment," occurring after gender identity is "assigned" (Sen and Wasow, 2016).

Figure 2 presents the gender differences in political interest, based on bivariate OLS regressions (see Table C1 in SM). Figure 2 shows that mothers report less interest in local, national, and international political issues, and inflation / prices compared to fathers, but more interest in abortion. No significant gender difference is reported for interest in

[7]Welch Two Sample t-tests find that these gender differences are both statistically significant.

[8]The text of survey questions can be found in the SM, section A.

gun control. These results are consistent with previous research showing that gender gaps narrow when respondents are asked about specific issues, especially those related to women's life experiences (Kraft and Dolan, 2023; Tormos and Verge, 2022).

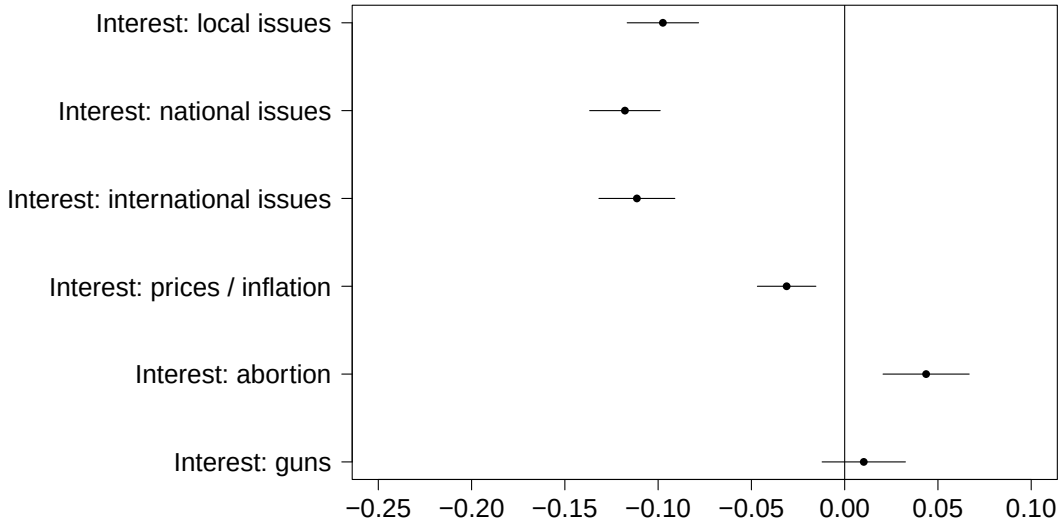

Figure 2: Impact of Gender (Woman) on Political Engagement Among U.S. Parents

Notes: Coefficients from OLS Analysis with 95% CIs (regressions shown in Supplemental Material Table C1).

Given the starkly different distributions of mental load observed for fathers versus mothers in Figure 1, I split the sample by gender in subsequent multivariate analyses. The median values of mental load differ substantially between mothers and fathers 76% for mothers and 38% for fathers and so stratifying the sample ensures that the distinct distributions of mental load are appropriately accounted for in the analysis. Pooling the samples and relying solely on interaction terms assumes comparability in mental load levels across genders, which is not reflected in the data (i.e., there are few mothers at the bottom of the mental load distribution, and few fathers at the top of it) and thus might miss nuances in these relationships. Further, the stratified approach offers a clear interpretation of how the mental load relates to political interest among mothers and fathers, allowing me to calculate quantities of interest relevant to the appropriate underlying distributions of the mental load

for each group.

I estimate a series of OLS models regressing political interest on share of the mental load among mothers and fathers. To account for the curvilinear form of the relationship hypothesized, I include a quadratic transformation of the mental load variable for the majority of specifications. I confirm that the quadratic term improves model fit by comparing the AIC information criterion in models with and without this transformation.[9] This is the main explanatory variable.

My theoretical argument makes the case for a causal relationship between the mental load and political engagement which is very difficult to prove with observational data. While I cannot resolve this problem – and the analysis here should be interpreted as descriptive – I carefully identify and control for potential confounding variables which could affect both mental load and political engagement. These include significant determinants of the mental load among mothers and fathers: having a partner, age, ethnic identity, young children, sexual orientation, and voting Democrat (to save space, analysis of the determinants of mental load is presented in section B of the SM). I also control for a battery of characteristics that previous studies suggest could impact political interest: number of children, employment, income, and higher education (Coffé, 2013; Verba et al., 1997). Finally, I control for the self-reported share of physical household labor, as my argument makes the case that this is conceptually distinct from the mental load.[10]

In order to translate the results into meaningful quantities of interest (King et al., 2000), I calculate the predicted values of the dependent variables – interest in different political issues – across values of the mental load. The predicted values plots shown in

[9]Model fit improves for every issue except gun control for mothers and abortion for mothers and fathers. For these specifications, no quadratic transformation is included (see Tables C2 and C3 in SM). Scatterplots of the raw data confirm the same curvilinear trends.

[10]As with cognitive household labor, the relationship between physical household labor and political engagement is often curvilinear, particularly for mothers (see SM section C for details).

Figures 3 (mothers) and 4 (fathers) are calculated from OLS regression specifications that include all covariates listed above (regressions shown in Tables C2 and C3 of SM). The dot and lines at the bottom of the plots in Figures 4 and 5 display the median (dot), interquartile range (solid line; 25th to 75th percentile), and spread (dotted line; 5th to 95th percentile) of mental load.

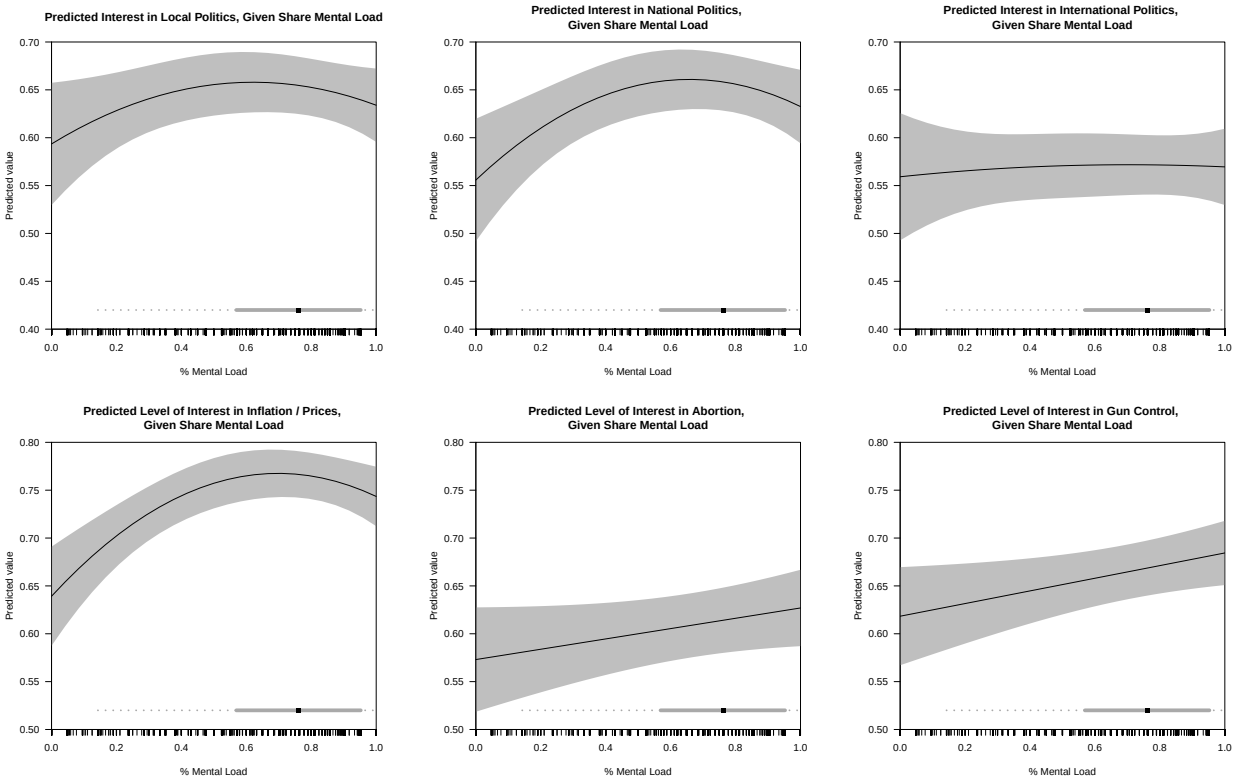

Figure 3: Predicted Values of Political Interest by Share of Mental Load, Mothers

Predicted values calculated from regression models shown in Supplemental Material Table C2.

Starting with mothers, in line with H2 Figure 3 suggests that at low levels the mental load is positively linked to several types of political interest. For example, the link between the mental load and interest in national politics is positive and significant until

the share of the mental load reaches 54%.[11] Given the skewed distribution of mental load among mothers (the median value is 76%), this finding applies to 24% of mothers. Turning to high levels of the mental load (H3), Figure 3 shows that high levels of the mental load are negatively correlated with interest in several issues. The slope at the median value of mental load for mothers is negative for 4 of the 6 forms of political interest (see also Table 1). This negative link becomes statistically significant at high levels for interest in national issues and prices / inflation. These significant negative effects emerge for levels of mental load of: 96% (interest in national issues) and 88% (interest in prices / inflation). Given the left-skewed distribution of the mental load among mothers, these shares of the mental load reduce political engagement for between 28% and 52% of mothers in my data. Partially confirming H3, high mental loads significantly decrease some types of political engagement among mothers.

To give a sense of relative effect size of cognitive 'overload', moving from the mean share of the mental load share to one standard deviation above reduces mothers' interest in national politics and inflation / prices by 2 percentage points each. Considering the size of the gender gap on these issues, such a change corresponds to 17% of the gender gap in interest in national politics and 66% of the smaller gender gap in interest in inflation / prices. It is important to note that high levels of physical household labor are also linked to lower political interest, particularly in local and national issues. However, the average marginal effects across values of physical household labor reveal no significant negative relationship even at high levels. While the relationship is in the expected direction, without including the mental load one would have an incomplete picture about the significant consequences of domestic work for political interest.

Figure 3 also demonstrates that high levels of mental load are *positively* linked

[11] Thresholds are calculated from average marginal effects and associated confidence intervals at specified values of the mental load, holding all other covariates at their means or modes.

to interest in gun control. The regression on interest in gun control does not require a quadratic transformation of the mental load; the model fit is better without it. For interest in gun control then, a one unit increase in mental load is associated with a 0.07 unit increase in interest. Gun control is an issue that resonates strongly with women's social roles as mothers as a child-protection measure, and this has spurred many U.S. mothers to political activism – see, e.g., the Million Mom March and Moms Demand Action (Goss, 2003). It follows that mothers who bear the primary responsibility for the mental load, which likely includes thinking about their children's safety, would be all the more interested in gun control. Together, the results provide partial evidence for H4, that high levels of mental load decrease interest especially in general, abstract political issues (for mothers, effects are found for national issues and inflation) but not in issues interconnected with family life (the reverse effect is found for gun control).

Finally, no statistically significant link is reported between the mental load and interest in local issues, international issues, or abortion. The patterns observed for interest in local issues follow the same reverse U-shape observed for national issues, and the quadratic term is significant at the p=0.06 level. Contrary to H4, high mental load is associated with less interest in local politics, rather than more, and this warrants further consideration. While local governments in the U.S. play an important role in administering some services directly tied to family needs (e.g., public schools), mothers experiencing high mental load may perceive these institutions as less effective in addressing their concerns. We might find different results in countries where local governments offer more family policies, such as child care or early childcare education, but this is not typically the case in the US. Alternatively, 'local' issues might be perceived as too abstract and not sufficiently related to family well-being in the way that, e.g., gun control is. Future research could explore how perceptions of local politics might shape these dynamics. Considering international issues and abortion, these are the issues characterized by the lowest level of interest among those tested (see Table

A2 in SM), and so it is perhaps not surprising that the mental load does not significantly influence attention towards these issues which might seem less relevant to day-to-day life.

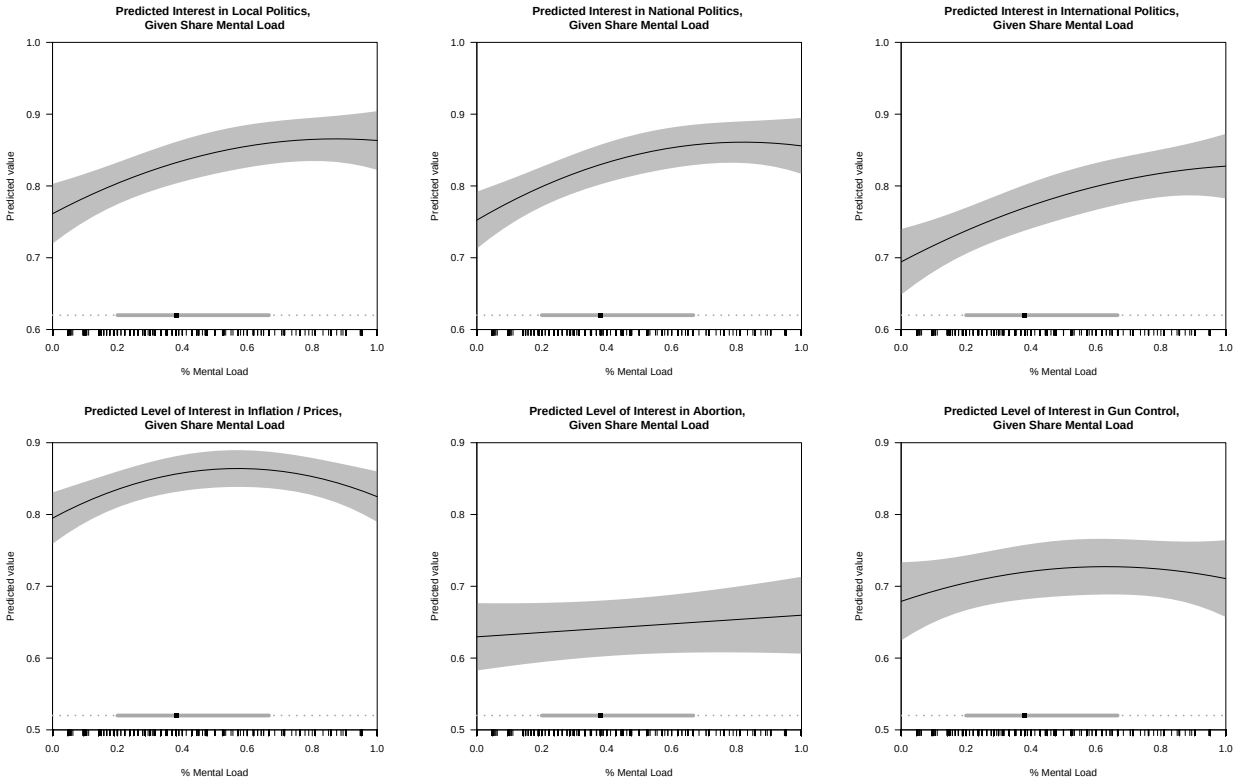

Figure 4: Predicted Values of Political Interest by Share of Mental Load, Fathers

Predicted values calculated from regression models shown in Supplemental Material Table C3.

Turning to fathers, recall that for fathers the distribution of relative mental load is reversed – the median share is 38%. Keeping this in mind, as observed among mothers and in line with H2, at low levels the mental load is positively linked to political interest. The slope at the median value of mental load for fathers is *positive* for each of the 6 forms of political interest. Significant effects are observed for 4 of the 6: interest in local, national, and international issues, and inflation / prices.[12] Figure 4 shows that very high levels of

[12]The thresholds of mental load below which these positive effects are significant are as follows: local issues (65%); national issues (64%); international issues (73%); inflation / prices (47%).

mental load also tend to decrease political interest, and among fathers this is statistically significant for interest in inflation / prices (above 72% of mental load) – offering partial evidence for H3. Finally, no significant link is observed between the mental load and interest in abortion or gun control among fathers.

Table 1 summarizes the results, reporting the average marginal effects (slopes) of the mental load at median and high values (80th percentile), for mothers and fathers. The results in Table 1 highlight the importance of considering the gendered *composition* of mental load – the level of mental load borne by mothers and fathers – when interpreting the relationship between mental load, gender, and political engagement. For mothers, the median value of mental load is 76% and 80th percentile is 100%, while for fathers the median value is 38% and 80th percentile is 76%. This disparity reflects deep inequalities in household management work, which is overwhelmingly socially ascribed to mothers.

Table 1: Average Marginal Effects of Median and High Mental Load on Political Engagement

	Median Mental Load		*High Mental Load (80th %ile)*	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Interest: local issues	-0.047	0.135***	-0.127	0.031
	(0.043)	(0.030)	(0.081)	(0.043)
Interest: national issues	-0.050	0.142***	-0.166*	0.0195
	(0.043)	(0.029)	(0.081)	(0.041)
Interest: international issues	-0.003	0.158***	-0.015	0.079
	(0.045)	(0.033)	(0.084)	(0.048)
Interest: prices / inflation	-0.033	0.081**	-0.160*	-0.081*
	(0.035)	(0.026)	(0.065)	(0.038)
Interest: abortion	0.054	0.003	0.054	0.003
	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.032)
Interest: guns	0.066*	0.061	0.066*	-0.032
	(0.031)	(0.040)	(0.031)	(0.057)

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 1 reveals important gender differences in the slopes and thresholds of the mental loads 'effects'. While fathers tend to experience positive associations between mental load and political interest at median levels, mothers' median mental load (which is double that of fathers) is already associated with negative effects for most forms of engagement. The exceptions are abortion and gun control, neither of which are characterized by a traditional gender gap. This divergence in slopes suggests that fathers may benefit from taking on a moderate share of the household burden, as it potentially fosters civic awareness and engagement, but without crossing into the high mental load levels that are linked to negative effects. Mothers, conversely, are more likely to experience the high mental load levels that are shown to reduce certain types of political engagement, such as interest in national issues and inflation/prices. These findings suggest that mental load functions as a pathway through which gendered differences in political engagement emerge, as mothers are disproportionately

likely to bear the extreme levels of mental load that hinder engagement. Further, because the highest levels of political interest for both mothers and fathers tend to be found at middling levels of mental load (40 - 60%; see Figures 3 and 4), a more equitable mental load divide is likely to have positive consequences for political engagement among both mothers and fathers.

Sensitivity checks

I conduct several sensitivity checks. First, results are robust to specifications excluding controls (see SM Tables C4 C5). Second, results are robust to models that use ordered logistic regression instead of OLS (Tables C6 and C7). Third, I make the case that while the relationship between mental load and interest is curvilinear, mothers and fathers respond similarly to different levels of load; the gender difference I expect is in the composition of mental load, rather than the functional form of the relationship between mental load and political interest. That is, mothers are more likely to reach high levels of mental load, which are associated with disengagement, whereas fathers are more likely to remain in the range where mental load has positive or neutral effects. I confirm this by presenting models including interactions between gender and mental load (base and quadratic terms) in Table C8 of the SM. The same curvilinear patterns persist, and are statistically significant for local issues, national issues, and inflation prices, but the interaction terms are never significant. This suggests that high mental loads similarly impact mothers' and fathers' political interest; yet, mothers disproportionately bear the bulk of this load. Therefore, a greater share of mothers are impacted by these household dynamics.

Fourth, one concern might be that the findings are driven by single parents. Having a partner increases political engagement (e.g., Verba et al., 1997), and is negatively correlated with mental load (see section B of the SM)). I rerun all models showing significant effects

with the subsample of mothers and fathers who have a partner. The findings are largely robust to this test (SM Tables C9 - C10).[13]

Fifth and finally, my measure of the mental load uses primary responsibility for domestic cognitive labor. This approach is theoretically appropriate tasks done mostly by one person are likely to feel more burdensome and empirically sound, as social desirability bias might lead some respondents to over-report shared responsibilities. However, this method could undercount work that is truly shared between partners. To address this, I rerun the analysis using an alternative measure where mostly me is coded as 1, shared equally as 0.5, and mostly partner and someone else as 0. This adjusted scale still ranges from 0 to 1, but the revised averages are 80% for women and 59% for men. Including shared equally responses raises the mean by 8 points for women and 14 points for men. Notably, the same curvilinear patterns appear with this measure, except that high mental load is no longer significantly linked to interest in national issues among mothers or fathers (see SM Tables C11 - C12 for further details).

Conclusion

Despite advances in women's access to education and employment, women continue to take on a second shift at home (Hochschild and Machung, 2012). This study offers a quantitative method to measure the cognitive aspect of this labor and explores its political consequences among parents. I find a large gender gap of 27 points among U.S. parents, about double the size of the gap in physical household labor. Previous time-use studies that include some cognitive household labor find smaller gender gaps, comparable to those in physical tasks (Lee and Waite, 2005; Offer and Schneider, 2011). This is likely because estimating the

[13]The exception is that the negative effect of high mental load on interest in national politics for mothers is significant at the 0.1 level.

time spent on ongoing, diffuse mental work is challenging. My task-based mental load scale supports qualitative findings that women bear most of this work (Daminger, 2019). Future studies can use this measure to explore other topics, such as how the mental load affects paid labor or leisure.

Examining how the mental load relates to political interest reveals a nuanced relationship. Low levels of cognitive household labor encourage political interest, possibly by enhancing skills, efficacy, and social ties. However, as the mental load increases, it crowds out energy and mental space for political engagement. Since fathers are more often at the low end of the mental load, it tends to positively affect them. Conversely, mothers, who bear more mental load, experience more negative impacts on political engagement, especially on general issues that seem distant from family life. The highest political interest appears at moderate levels of mental load. These findings suggest that redistributing the mental load more equally could enhance overall political engagement.

This study has several limitations. First, the data are cross-sectional and cannot assess household-level mental load (including agreement between partners) or changes in mental load over time and their impact on political interest. As quantitative measures of mental load are emerging, such longitudinal data are not yet available. Additionally, the study focuses on parents of dependent-age children, leaving the dynamics among non-parents or parents of older children under-explored. The sample also lacks several relevant variables, such as urban/rural status, state indicators, migration status, religion, family structure, working hours, parenting norms, and disability. Future research using panel studies, partner perspectives, and diverse samples with a broader range of covariates could deepen our understanding of the mental load and its political implications.

Second, while this study measures the cognitive dimension of household labor, the mental load also includes an emotional component (Dean et al., 2022). Future research

should investigate how to better capture this emotional aspect. As one indicator of well-being, the survey used here asks how satisfied respondents are with the division of mental labor in their household. While 66 percent of fathers report satisfaction, only 42 percent of mothers agree. Further research should examine how cognitive labor inequalities affect psychological well-being (Haupt and Gelbgiser, 2023; Petts and Carlson, 2023).

Finally, comparative studies are needed to understand how gender gaps in the mental load vary across countries, cultures of care, and welfare systems. As the U.S. represents an extreme case due to its lack of federally mandated parental support, findings may differ in contexts with more generous policies like shared parental leave and subsidized childcare. Evidence that paternity leave can increase fathers' household participation (Patnaik, 2019) and promote gender-egalitarian norms (Tavits et al., 2023) suggests such policies could reduce gender disparities.

Data availability

Replication data for this article can be found in Harvard Dataverse at:

https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/QR51A8

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Supplemental Material for 'The Political Consequences of the Mental Load'

Contents

A Information about the Survey

Ethical Considerations

The study was reviewed and approved by my university's relevant ethics committee. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Data was collected by the survey provider Dynata (formerly Survey Sampling International), and like other providers Dynata recruits participants through small monetary or reward incentives. Before participants could proceed to the survey, they were directed to an information and consent page. Participants were provided with information about the purpose of the scientific study, eligibility, that participation is entirely voluntary and they can exit at any time, that no identifying information is collected, expected duration of survey, and contact information (name and email address) for the principal investigator. Participants are then given a choice between providing their informed consent and proceeding with the survey, or not providing consent and choosing not to participate in the study.

Survey Question Items: Politics and Mental Load

Respondents first answer the following series of questions about their level of interest in politics and how often they discuss politics. How interested would you say you personally

are in the following types of political issues:
- Local issues
- National issues
- International issues

Response options are: "Not at all interested", "Not very interested", "Fairly interested", and "Very interested."

Please indicate your level of interest in each of the following political issues, on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no interest at all" and 10 means "a lot of interest":
- Inflation / prices
- Abortion
- Gun control

Questions Composing the Task-Based Measure of the Mental Load

After answering questions about politics and physical household labor, respondents are told the following:

"Now think about the **mental work** involved in managing your household and caring for children, not the physical aspect.

You will see a series of 7 questions which ask about some different aspects of household and care work. **Please respond who in our household (yourself or someone else) typically handles this kind of mental work.**"

The response options given are: "Mostly me", "Mostly my partner", "Partner and I share equally", "Someone else (Includes friends and family)", and "NA". The seven categories

shown below were randomly varied.

Care for children: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Researching options for new items children need, like school supplies or shoes
- Deciding on a child care provider (e.g., babysitter, daycare, camp)
- Noticing when children's nails need to be cut

Cleaning: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Keeping track of when sheets and towels need to be washed
- Cleaning out kids' clothes that no longer fit
- Noticing when the house needs to be tidied

Finances: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Researching options for financial products like bank accounts or insurance
- Deciding how to allocate money (such as paying off credit cards or increasing savings)
- Keeping track of household expenses

Food: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Keeping rack of which groceries need to be purchased
- Deciding what meals to cook
- Monitoring food for "sell-by" dates, or noticing when foods need to be thrown away

Home maintenance: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Noticing when something like a dishwasher or faucet needs repair
- Booking a repair professional like a plumber or mechanic
- Remembering when items like a boiler or car need servicing

Social relationships: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Finding social options for children's enrichment (sports classes, clubs, etc)
- Coordinating a playdate
- Checking in with family and friends

Scheduling: In your household, who typically does the following?

- Keeping track of the family calendar, such as kids' medical appointments
- Planning a family event, like a birthday party
- Remembering to schedule appointments, such as dentist appointments

Table A1: Representativeness of Sample of U.S. Parents

	Dynata	2021 Census (ASEC)
Woman	55.3%	55.3%
Man	44.7%	44.7%
Age 18–24	3.1%	3.1%
Age 25–34	25.7%	25.7%
Age 35–44	40.8%	40.8%
Age 45–54	24.1%	24.1%
Age 55 +	6.3%	6.3%
White	76.2%	76.2%
Black	12.3%	12.3%
Asian	7.6%	7.7%
Mixed race or other	3.9%	3.9%
Education, less than high school degree	8.8%	8.9%
Education, high school degree	24.2%	24.2%
Education, some college or Associates	25.0%	25.1%
Education, Bachelors or more	41.9%	41.8%

Census data source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2021 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Internet Release Date: November 2021. Note that Census reference figures were compiled using data for parents with children under 18.

Table A2: Summary Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Woman	3,000	0.553	0.497	0	1
Age 18–24	3,000	0.031	0.172	0	1
Age 25–34	3,000	0.257	0.437	0	1
Age 35-44	3,000	0.408	0.492	0	1
Age 45–55	3,000	0.241	0.428	0	1
Age 55 +	3,000	0.063	0.243	0	1
White	3,000	0.762	0.426	0	1
Black	3,000	0.123	0.328	0	1
Asian	3,000	0.076	0.265	0	1
Mixed or other race	3,000	0.039	0.194	0	1
Lesbian, gay, or bisexual	3,000	0.067	0.251	0	1
Higher education	3,000	0.419	0.494	0	1
Share mental load	2,989	0.597	0.315	0	1
Share physical HH labor	3,000	0.693	0.242	0	1
Partner	3,000	0.785	0.411	0	1
Democrat	3,000	0.398	0.489	0	1
Republican	3,000	0.306	0.461	0	1
Not employed	3,000	0.318	0.466	0	1
Low income (< $50,000)	3,000	0.217	0.412	0	1

Medium income ($50,000 – $100,000)	3,000	0.249	0.432	0	1
High income (> $100,000)	3,000	0.212	0.409	0	1
Youngest child 0 or 1	3,000	0.121	0.326	0	1
Youngest child 2 or 3	3,000	0.131	0.337	0	1
Youngest child 4 or 5	3,000	0.128	0.334	0	1
Youngest child over 5	3,000	0.590	0.492	0	1
Number of children	3,000	1.725	0.931	0	5
Interest in local issues	3,000	0.737	0.270	0.000	1.000
Interest in national issues	3,000	0.744	0.269	0.000	1.000
Interest in international issues	3,000	0.660	0.288	0.000	1.000
Interest in inflation/ prices	3,000	0.798	0.218	0.000	1.000
Interest in abortion	3,000	0.608	0.321	0.000	1.000
Interest in guns	3,000	0.682	0.310	0.000	1.000

Notes: Missing data in mental load is due to a small number of respondents (N=11) reporting NA for each item included.

Validation check of the mental load scale

In Figure A1, I provide a validation check on my task-based measure of the mental load. Figure A1 shows that the task-based measure (on the x-axis) is strongly correlated with respondents' own assessments of the share of mental load they are personally responsible for in their household (on the y-axis). This is true for both mothers and fathers, with correlation coefficients very similar among the sub-samples. Note that in the self-reported estimates, both fathers and mothers say that they do a greater share of the mental load than I find using the task-based measure, and this difference is larger for men. The average self-estimate of household mental load among fathers is 61% (16 percentage points higher than the task-based mean of 45%), compared to mothers' 78% (6 percentage points higher than the task-based mean of 72%). The task-based measure has the advantage of asking respondents about specific activities, rather than relying on respondents to remember all of the mental work they do (which could increase over-reporting). Because of this, I rely on the task-based measure for the current study.

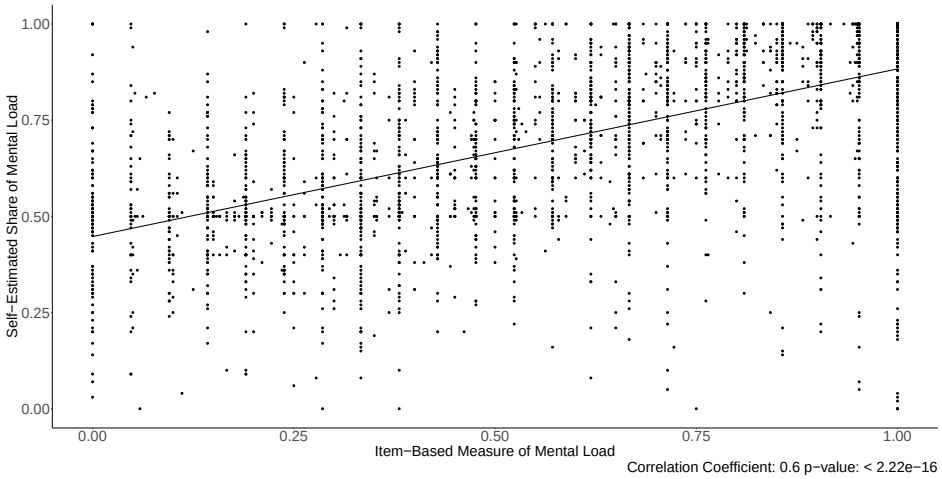

Figure A1: Validation Check on Mental Load Scale

B Determinants of the Mental Load

In order to examine how the mental load relates to political engagement for mothers and fathers, an important first step is understanding "selection" into the mental load. Table B1 reports Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions of the relative share of cognitive household labor on a battery of independent variables, separately for fathers and mothers.

Table B1 shows that the most important determinant of cognitive household labor is having a partner that lives in the same household, which reduces the share of the mental load by 37 percentage points for fathers and 18 percentage points for mothers. Among mothers, the next most important determinant is age, with mothers between 35 and 55 years of age taking on significantly more mental load than younger or older mothers. In line with studies finding a more equal division of household labor within same-sex couples (e.g., Bauer 2016; Doan & Quadlin 2019), lesbian or bisexual mothers take on less primary responsibility for the mental load compared to heterosexual mothers. Ethnicity also matters, in different ways for fathers and mothers. Notably, none of the important factors linked to women's household bargaining power in previous studies (e.g., Ferrant, Pesando & Nowacka 2014; Fuwa 2004; Iversen & Rosenbluth 2010) reduce mothers' mental load: education, employment, level personal income (reference category: no income / not employed), and relative income in the household are all not significant determinants of the share of mothers' mental loads. Among fathers, having very young children is linked to lower levels of mental load compared to having older children, while voting Democrat in the last election is linked to taking on more of the mental load. Models of political engagement in the main text thus include these potential confounders as controls.

Table B1: Determinants of Cognitive Household Labor by Gender

	Dependent variable:	
	% Cognitive Household Labor	
	Mothers	Fathers
	(1)	(2)
Higher education	0.001	0.032
	(0.016)	(0.019)
Low income	0.031	-0.054
	(0.016)	(0.029)
Medium income	0.009	-0.036
	(0.018)	(0.027)
High income	-0.009	-0.002
	(0.025)	(0.028)
Relative HH income (earns more)	-0.011	0.022
	(0.022)	(0.017)
Black	-0.034	-0.075**
	(0.020)	(0.027)
Asian	-0.077***	0.008
	(0.023)	(0.035)
Mixed / Other race	0.016	-0.052
	(0.031)	(0.045)
Age 25–34	0.060	-0.013
	(0.033)	(0.081)
Age 35–44	0.099**	-0.052
	(0.034)	(0.081)
Age 45–54	0.107**	-0.127
	(0.036)	(0.082)
Age 55+	0.088*	-0.092
	(0.043)	(0.086)
Partner	-0.178***	-0.375***
	(0.016)	(0.024)
Youngest child 4 - 5	-0.016	-0.035
	(0.021)	(0.024)
Youngest child 2 - 3	-0.039	-0.078**
	(0.021)	(0.025)
Youngest child 0 - 1	0.001	-0.119***
	(0.021)	(0.028)
Number of children	0.011	0.001
	(0.007)	(0.009)

Democrat	0.006	0.056***
	(0.014)	(0.017)
Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual	-0.058*	0.017
	(0.024)	(0.037)
Constant	0.757***	0.833***
	(0.039)	(0.087)
Observations	1,606	1,279
R^2	0.119	0.214
Adjusted R^2	0.108	0.202
Note:	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

C Regressions

Table C1: Bivariate Regression Results, Gender and Political Interest

	Dependent Variable	Coefficient	Std Error	t-value	p-value
Model 1	Interest: Local issues	-0.097	0.010	-9.986	0.000
Model 2	Interest: National issues	-0.118	0.010	-12.221	0.000
Model 3	Interest: International issues	-0.111	0.010	-10.731	0.000
Model 4	Interest: Inflation / prices	-0.031	0.008	-3.890	0.000
Model 5	Interest: Abortion	0.044	0.012	3.707	0.000
Model 6	Interest: Gun control	0.010	0.011	0.899	0.369

Notes for Tables C2 and C3

Tables C2 and C3 show the full model specifications used to create Figures 3 and 4 in text. Note that income refers to personal annual salary (not household), and the reference category is no income / not employed. As with mental load, the relationship the relationship between physical household labor and political engagement is often curvilinear, especially for mothers. Following the same procedure used with mental load, then, I test whether physical household labor requires a quadratic term by comparing the AIC information criterion in models with and without this transformation. I find that quadratic terms improve the model fit in each specification shown in Table C2 (mothers) except for gun control. For fathers, the quadratic term for physical household labor only improves model fit for interest in abortion (see Table C3).

Table C2: Determinants of Political Interest among Mothers

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mental load	0.208	0.319**	0.036	0.368***	0.054	0.066*
	(0.106)	(0.106)	(0.110)	(0.086)	(0.033)	(0.031)
Mental load^2	-0.167	−0.243**	-0.025	−0.264***		
	(0.089)	(0.089)	(0.093)	(0.072)		
Physical HH labor	0.624***	0.553***	0.414**	0.167	0.233	0.107**
	(0.150)	(0.150)	(0.156)	(0.122)	(0.176)	(0.035)
Physical HH labor^2	−0.335**	−0.285*	-0.167	0.022	-0.091	
	(0.114)	(0.115)	(0.119)	(0.093)	(0.134)	
Higher education	0.035*	0.064***	0.077***	-0.003	0.003	0.009
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.018)
Low income	0.051**	0.038*	0.034	0.041**	-0.010	-0.010
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Medium income	0.139***	0.112***	0.080***	0.087***	0.002	0.042*
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.022)	(0.021)
High income	0.090***	0.094***	0.055*	0.054*	0.013	0.026
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.021)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Age 25–34	-0.053	−0.078*	-0.016	-0.005	-0.045	0.027
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.027)	(0.040)	(0.038)
Age 35–44	-0.060	−0.089*	-0.048	0.032	-0.058	0.031
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.028)	(0.041)	(0.039)
Age 45–54	-0.030	-0.047	-0.029	0.073*	-0.018	0.082*
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.030)	(0.044)	(0.041)
Age 55+	0.061	0.056	0.061	0.166***	0.067	0.134**
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.046)	(0.036)	(0.052)	(0.049)
No. children	0.011	0.011	0.001	-0.002	0.006	-0.007
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Child under 4	-0.012	-0.005	0.001	0.031*	0.041*	0.036
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Partner	0.009	0.008	0.036	0.022	0.009	-0.003
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Democrat	0.076***	0.092***	0.094***	0.008	0.143***	0.145***
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.017)
Black	0.029	0.021	0.039	-0.007	-0.020	0.057*
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.016)	(0.024)	(0.022)
Asian	-0.005	-0.006	0.062*	-0.005	0.001	0.069**

	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.028)	(0.026)
Mixed / other race	-0.046	-0.001	0.053	-0.004	-0.0003	0.042
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.026)	(0.038)	(0.036)
LGB	0.002	0.013	0.027	-0.010	0.071*	-0.022
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.029)	(0.027)
Constant	0.310***	0.309***	0.285***	0.449***	0.425***	0.443***
	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.067)	(0.053)	(0.074)	(0.052)
Observations	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645	1,645
R^2	0.121	0.141	0.118	0.110	0.070	0.103
Adjusted R^2	0.111	0.130	0.107	0.099	0.059	0.093
Note:						*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C3: Determinants of Political Interest among Fathers

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mental load	0.239**	0.265***	0.238**	0.242***	0.030	0.153
	(0.079)	(0.075)	(0.087)	(0.068)	(0.032)	(0.103)
Mental load^2	-0.137	−0.161*	-0.104	−0.212***		-0.122
	(0.074)	(0.070)	(0.081)	(0.063)		(0.097)
Physical HH labor	0.068*	0.047	0.059	0.162***	0.332*	0.051
	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.030)	(0.024)	(0.168)	(0.036)
Physical HH Labor^2					-0.212	
					(0.138)	
Higher education	0.073***	0.064***	0.087***	0.013	0.0003	0.006
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Low income	0.019	0.019	0.028	-0.002	-0.026	-0.021
	(0.023)	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.019)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Medium income	0.069**	0.075***	0.078***	0.022	-0.004	-0.009
	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.023)	(0.018)	(0.028)	(0.028)
High income	0.095***	0.071***	0.124***	0.057**	0.040	0.033
	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.025)	(0.019)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Age 25–34	-0.026	0.073	0.007	0.025	-0.054	0.058
	(0.067)	(0.064)	(0.073)	(0.057)	(0.090)	(0.087)
Age 35–44	-0.024	0.092	0.013	0.037	-0.054	0.060
	(0.066)	(0.063)	(0.073)	(0.057)	(0.089)	(0.087)
Age 45–54	-0.039	0.113	0.005	0.058	-0.110	0.041
	(0.067)	(0.064)	(0.074)	(0.058)	(0.090)	(0.088)
Age 55+	0.017	0.149*	0.086	0.084	-0.063	0.061
	(0.070)	(0.067)	(0.078)	(0.061)	(0.095)	(0.092)
No. children	0.003	0.001	-0.010	0.006	-0.001	-0.002
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Child under 4	-0.014	-0.001	-0.008	0.001	-0.026	-0.031
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.022)	(0.021)
Partner	0.035	0.030	0.032	0.006	0.041	0.047
	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.017)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Democrat	0.049***	0.046***	0.065***	-0.018	0.156***	0.137***
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Black	0.029	0.024	0.005	-0.018	-0.00002	0.091**
	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.029)	(0.028)
Asian	−0.077**	-0.045	-0.012	-0.036	-0.037	0.036

	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.031)	(0.024)	(0.038)	(0.037)
Mixed / other race	−0.118**	-0.020	0.065	0.005	-0.056	0.072
	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.031)	(0.049)	(0.048)
LGB	0.009	0.008	0.042	0.020	0.069	0.034
	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.033)	(0.026)	(0.040)	(0.039)
Constant	0.560***	0.479***	0.433***	0.588***	0.421***	0.445***
	(0.075)	(0.072)	(0.083)	(0.065)	(0.110)	(0.099)
Observations	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331	1,331
R^2	0.155	0.124	0.164	0.080	0.107	0.094
Adjusted R^2	0.142	0.111	0.152	0.067	0.094	0.081
Note:					*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C4: Mental Load and Political Interest among Mothers, No Controls

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mental load	0.301**	0.437***	0.203	0.461***	0.061*	0.094***
	(0.106)	(0.107)	(0.110)	(0.085)	(0.030)	(0.028)
Mental load^2	-0.217*	-0.314***	-0.150	-0.291***		
	(0.086)	(0.087)	(0.089)	(0.069)		
Constant	0.605***	0.564***	0.555***	0.626***	0.585***	0.621***
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Observations	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652	1,652
R^2	0.006	0.011	0.002	0.029	0.003	0.007
Adjusted R^2	0.004	0.010	0.001	0.027	0.002	0.006
Note:						*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table C5: Mental Load and Political Interest among Fathers, No Controls

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mental load	0.400***	0.372***	0.398***	0.324***	0.058*	0.250*
	(0.081)	(0.076)	(0.089)	(0.067)	(0.028)	(0.104)
Mental load^2	−0.275***	−0.260***	−0.240**	−0.252***		−0.193*
	(0.074)	(0.069)	(0.082)	(0.061)		(0.095)
Constant	0.693***	0.719***	0.614***	0.745***	0.558***	0.622***
	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.022)
Observations	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337	1,337
R^2	0.030	0.028	0.034	0.020	0.003	0.005
Adjusted R^2	0.028	0.026	0.033	0.019	0.002	0.004
Note:						*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Notes for Tables C6 and C7 Tables C6 and C7 address the concern that the nonlinear relationships I hypothesize and find are a consequence of treating limited dependent variables as continuous through the use of an OLS model (relevant for interest in local, national, and international politics, where the response options range from not at all interested to very interested rather than a numeric scale). This is not the case; I continue to find an improvement in AIC when I include a polynomial term modeling ordinal outcomes using an ordinal logistic regression. Additionally, Tables C6 and C7 show that key findings are robust to models that use ordered logistic regression instead of OLS.

Table C6: Determinants of Pol. Interest among Mothers, Ordered Logistic Regression

	Dependent variable:		
	Interest		
	Local	National	International
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Mental load	1.290	1.920*	0.078
	(0.750)	(0.748)	(0.743)
Mental load^2	-0.982	-1.378*	0.035
	(0.633)	(0.633)	(0.626)
Physical HH labor	4.104***	3.473**	2.744*
	(1.070)	(1.084)	(1.077)
Physical HH labor^2	-2.161**	-1.661*	-1.068
	(0.819)	(0.828)	(0.821)
Higher education	0.196	0.425***	0.489***
	(0.119)	(0.119)	(0.118)
Low incme	0.355**	0.240*	0.228
	(0.119)	(0.120)	(0.119)
Medium income	1.091***	0.866***	0.567***
	(0.138)	(0.138)	(0.133)
High income	0.732***	0.715***	0.396*
	(0.189)	(0.188)	(0.182)
Age 25–34	-0.373	-0.573*	-0.138
	(0.237)	(0.242)	(0.238)
Age 35–44	-0.428	-0.651**	-0.347
	(0.246)	(0.250)	(0.246)
Age 45–54	-0.219	-0.299	-0.231
	(0.262)	(0.266)	(0.262)
Age 55+	0.582	0.619	0.443
	(0.320)	(0.328)	(0.312)
No. children	0.080	0.079	0.013

	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)
Child under 4	-0.116	-0.011	0.049
	(0.121)	(0.121)	(0.120)
Partner	0.055	0.028	0.262*
	(0.130)	(0.130)	(0.127)
Democrat	0.513***	0.653***	0.631***
	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.107)
Black	0.292*	0.178	0.270
	(0.147)	(0.149)	(0.146)
Asian	-0.037	-0.064	0.428*
	(0.168)	(0.168)	(0.166)
Mixed / other race	-0.386	-0.016	0.378
	(0.230)	(0.232)	(0.232)
LGB	0.013	0.078	0.156
	(0.173)	(0.172)	(0.172)
Observations	1,645	1,645	1,645
Note:			*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C7: Determinants of Pol. Interest among Fathers, Ordered Logistic Regression

	Dependent variable:		
	Interest		
	Local	National	International
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Mental load	2.164**	2.472***	1.881**
	(0.701)	(0.700)	(0.678)
Mental load^2	-0.975	-1.303*	-0.700
	(0.669)	(0.664)	(0.641)
Physical HH labor	1.372	1.958	0.169
	(1.123)	(1.134)	(1.085)
Physical HH labor^2	-0.719	-1.348	0.219
	(0.927)	(0.935)	(0.892)
Higher education	0.626***	0.547***	0.664***
	(0.134)	(0.135)	(0.130)
Low income	0.112	0.143	0.197
	(0.197)	(0.197)	(0.188)
Medium income	0.492**	0.592**	0.577**
	(0.186)	(0.185)	(0.176)
High income	0.819***	0.658***	0.989***
	(0.200)	(0.198)	(0.190)
Age 25–34	-0.309	0.791	0.119
	(0.630)	(0.550)	(0.557)
Age 35–44	-0.349	0.903	0.145
	(0.628)	(0.548)	(0.554)
Age 45–54	-0.531	1.085	0.018
	(0.634)	(0.555)	(0.560)
Age 55+	0.021	1.448*	0.639
	(0.665)	(0.590)	(0.591)
No. children	0.024	-0.002	-0.082
	(0.066)	(0.065)	(0.062)
Child under 4	-0.154	0.009	-0.094
	(0.144)	(0.145)	(0.138)
Partner	0.381*	0.291	0.315
	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.174)
Democrat	0.440***	0.429***	0.483***
	(0.121)	(0.122)	(0.116)
Black	0.278	0.267	0.068
	(0.197)	(0.199)	(0.187)

Asian	-0.638**	-0.252	-0.079
	(0.247)	(0.257)	(0.238)
Mixed / other race	-0.794*	-0.102	0.491
	(0.323)	(0.321)	(0.309)
LGB	0.119	0.002	0.333
	(0.275)	(0.272)	(0.261)
Observations	1,331	1,331	1,331
Note:			*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C8: Determinants of Pol. Interest, Interactions between Gender and Mental Load

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Woman	-0.047	−0.110***	-0.019	−0.084**	0.016	0.005
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.040)
Mental load	0.254**	0.245**	0.234*	0.261***	0.019	0.174
	(0.086)	(0.084)	(0.091)	(0.071)	(0.030)	(0.102)
Mental load^2	-0.163*	-0.161*	-0.116	-0.230***		-0.158
	(0.079)	(0.078)	(0.084)	(0.066)		(0.094)
Mental load x Woman	-0.048	0.089	-0.182	0.117	0.051	-0.088
	(0.128)	(0.126)	(0.136)	(0.106)	(0.040)	(0.152)
Mental load^2 x Woman	0.013	-0.081	0.088	-0.040		0.151
	(0.110)	(0.108)	(0.117)	(0.091)		(0.131)
Physical HH labor	0.378***	0.341***	0.189	0.118	0.270*	0.009
	(0.098)	(0.096)	(0.104)	(0.081)	(0.120)	(0.116)
Physical HH labor^2	-0.197*	-0.180*	-0.044	0.051	-0.136	0.059
	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.082)	(0.064)	(0.095)	(0.091)
Higher education	0.057***	0.066***	0.084***	0.006	0.006	0.011
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.009)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Low income	0.042**	0.035**	0.028*	0.030**	-0.017	-0.010
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Medium income	0.107***	0.099***	0.072***	0.063***	-0.003	0.020
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.016)
High income	0.110***	0.087***	0.098***	0.073***	0.035	0.042*
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Age 25–34	-0.046	-0.053	-0.016	0.001	-0.056	0.030
	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.030)	(0.024)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Age 35–44	-0.048	-0.050	-0.031	0.028	-0.063	0.034
	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.024)	(0.036)	(0.034)
Age 45–54	-0.040	-0.014	-0.023	0.060*	-0.070	0.051
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.032)	(0.025)	(0.037)	(0.036)
Age 55+	0.038	0.057	0.061	0.124***	-0.003	0.093*
	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.036)	(0.028)	(0.042)	(0.040)
No. children	0.007	0.005	-0.003	0.0004	0.003	-0.006
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Child under 4	-0.013	-0.0001	-0.001	0.018	0.011	0.007
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.014)
Partner	0.020	0.016	0.038**	0.015	0.022	0.016

	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Democrat	0.066***	0.072***	0.081***	-0.002	0.153***	0.145***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Black	0.028	0.022	0.025	-0.011	-0.014	0.071***
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Asian	-0.034	-0.020	0.036	-0.018	-0.016	0.056**
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.022)	(0.021)
Mixed / other race	-0.071**	-0.001	0.058*	-0.002	-0.025	0.052
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.020)	(0.030)	(0.029)
LGB	0.005	0.010	0.033	-0.002	0.067**	-0.007
	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Constant	0.451***	0.488***	0.393***	0.565***	0.419***	0.464***
	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.050)	(0.039)	(0.056)	(0.056)
Observations	2,976	2,976	2,976	2,976	2,976	2,976
R^2	0.151	0.166	0.160	0.094	0.084	0.092
Adjusted R^2	0.145	0.160	0.153	0.087	0.077	0.085
Note:						*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24. Model 5 (abortion) does not include the quadratic transformation of mental load because it does not improve model fit among fathers or mothers. For Model 6 (gun control), I include the quadratic term because it improves model fit for fathers, but I also performed the analysis without it. The results do not change.

Table C9: Determinants of Political Interest among Mothers, Excluding Singles

	Dependent variable:		
	Interest		
	National	Prices	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Mental load	0.265*	0.395***	0.074*
	(0.115)	(0.096)	(0.036)
Mental load^2	-0.174	-0.290***	
	(0.097)	(0.081)	
Physical HH labor	0.631***	0.189	0.120**
	(0.169)	(0.141)	(0.043)
Physical HH labor^2	-0.363**	-0.013	
	(0.129)	(0.108)	
Higher education	0.053**	-0.007	0.017
	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.021)
Low income	0.034	0.032*	-0.007
	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.022)
Medium income	0.109***	0.080***	0.030
	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.024)
High income	0.115***	0.062**	0.029
	(0.027)	(0.022)	(0.031)
Age 25–34	-0.078*	-0.010	0.026
	(0.034)	(0.029)	(0.040)
Age 35–44	-0.085*	0.026	0.046
	(0.036)	(0.030)	(0.041)
Age 45–54	-0.030	0.077*	0.065
	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.045)
Age 55+	0.067	0.127**	0.072
	(0.050)	(0.042)	(0.058)
No. children	0.014	-0.004	-0.005
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.009)
Child under 4	-0.003	0.029	0.021
	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.022)
Democrat	0.091***	-0.007	0.160***
	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.019)
Black	0.040	-0.011	0.086**
	(0.025)	(0.021)	(0.029)
Asian	0.003	-0.004	0.067*
	(0.024)	(0.020)	(0.028)

Mixed / other race	-0.030	-0.028	0.024
	(0.038)	(0.032)	(0.044)
LGB	0.012	-0.007	0.008
	(0.027)	(0.023)	(0.032)
Constant	0.297***	0.490***	0.416***
	(0.070)	(0.058)	(0.053)
Observations	1,233	1,233	1,233
R^2	0.150	0.090	0.108
Adjusted R^2	0.136	0.076	0.095
Note:	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001		

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C10: Determinants of Political Interest among Fathers, Excluding Singles

	Dependent variable:
	Interest Prices
	(1)
Mental load	0.241**
	(0.074)
Mental load^2	-0.209**
	(0.072)
Physical HH labor	0.142***
	(0.026)
Higher education	0.010
	(0.014)
Low income	-0.025
	(0.024)
Medium income	-0.008
	(0.021)
High income	0.037
	(0.022)
Age 25–34	0.037
	(0.060)
Age 35–44	0.048
	(0.059)
Age 45–54	0.068
	(0.060)
Age 55+	0.089
	(0.063)
No. children	0.007
	(0.007)
Child under 4	0.004
	(0.015)
Democrat	-0.021
	(0.013)
Black	-0.025
	(0.022)
Asian	-0.044
	(0.026)
Mixed / other race	0.032
	(0.037)

LGB	0.012
	(0.029)
Constant	0.619***
	(0.067)
Observations	1,105
R^2	0.073
Adjusted R^2	0.058
Note:	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C11: Determinants of Pol. Interest among Mothers, Alternative Mental Load

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mental load	0.071	0.274	-0.093	0.700**	0.050	0.091.
	(0.271)	(0.269)	(0.282)	(0.217)	(0.055)	(0.051)
Mental load^2	-0.072	-0.189	0.032	−0.431**		
	(0.190)	(0.189)	(0.198)	(0.153)		
Physical HH labor	0.596**	0.493*	0.381.	0.374*	0.264	0.079.
	(0.200)	(0.198)	(0.208)	(0.160)	(0.237)	(0.043)
Physical HH labor^2	−0.344*	-0.262.	-0.169	-0.108	-0.086	
	(0.148)	(0.146)	(0.153)	(0.118)	(0.174)	
Higher education	0.039*	0.059**	0.088***	-0.007	0.006	0.003
	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.022)	(0.021)
Low income	0.037.	0.020	0.023	0.028.	-0.005	-0.038.
	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.016)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Medium income	0.116***	0.091***	0.065**	0.084***	0.007	0.016
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.017)	(0.025)	(0.023)
High income	0.067*	0.072**	0.027	0.057*	-0.001	0.013
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.022)	(0.033)	(0.031)
Age 25–34	−0.081*	-0.077.	-0.022	-0.021	-0.041	0.050
	(0.040)	(0.039)	(0.041)	(0.032)	(0.047)	(0.044)
Age 35–44	−0.092*	-0.102*	-0.064	0.002	-0.061	0.049
	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.033)	(0.049)	(0.046)
Age 45–54	-0.051	-0.041	-0.034	0.042	-0.001	0.138**
	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.045)	(0.035)	(0.052)	(0.049)
Age 55+	0.016	0.035	0.024	0.121**	0.026	0.156*
	(0.056)	(0.055)	(0.058)	(0.045)	(0.066)	(0.062)
No. children	0.015.	0.010	0.005	-0.001	0.007	0.004
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Child under 4	-0.018	-0.010	-0.012	0.024	0.055*	0.036.
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.021)
Partner	0.019	0.006	0.029	0.016	0.028	-0.004
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.022)
Democrat	0.059***	0.076***	0.061***	-0.007	0.126***	0.108***
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Black	0.023	0.016	0.037	0.001	-0.023	0.062*
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.028)	(0.026)
Asian	-0.008	-0.003	0.053*	0.013	-0.013	0.062*

	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.020)	(0.030)	(0.028)
Mixed / other race	-0.042	-0.003	0.040	-0.009	0.009	0.028
	(0.039)	(0.038)	(0.040)	(0.031)	(0.046)	(0.043)
LGB	0.010	0.012	0.010	-0.034	0.073*	-0.015
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.023)	(0.034)	(0.031)
Constant	0.427***	0.383***	0.434***	0.257**	0.399***	0.444***
	(0.113)	(0.112)	(0.117)	(0.091)	(0.101)	(0.068)
Observations	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137
R^2	0.099	0.114	0.095	0.119	0.070	0.086
Adjusted R^2	0.083	0.098	0.079	0.103	0.054	0.071
Note:						.p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Table C12: Determinants of Pol. Interest among Fathers, Alternative Mental Load

	Dependent variable:					
	Interest					
	Local	National	Int'l	Prices	Abortion	Guns
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mental load	0.390*	0.276	0.208	0.395**	0.061	0.138
	(0.158)	(0.152)	(0.174)	(0.141)	(0.045)	(0.210)
Mental load^2	-0.234	-0.123	-0.028	-0.298**		-0.079
	(0.123)	(0.118)	(0.136)	(0.110)		(0.164)
Physical HH labor	0.045	0.037	0.052	0.164***	0.135	0.014
	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.026)	(0.183)	(0.039)
Physical HH labor^2					-0.053	
					(0.148)	
Higher education	0.067***	0.054***	0.085***	0.006	-0.008	0.011
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Low income	-0.002	0.006	0.018	-0.012	-0.033	-0.019
	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.028)	(0.023)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Medium income	0.064**	0.091***	0.101***	0.033	0.001	-0.003
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.026)	(0.021)	(0.032)	(0.031)
High income	0.098***	0.090***	0.150***	0.070**	0.025	0.049
	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.027)	(0.022)	(0.034)	(0.033)
Age 25–34	-0.012	0.077	-0.013	0.055	-0.018	0.047
	(0.070)	(0.067)	(0.077)	(0.062)	(0.095)	(0.093)
Age 35–44	-0.013	0.089	-0.020	0.061	-0.010	0.048
	(0.070)	(0.067)	(0.077)	(0.062)	(0.094)	(0.093)
Age 45–54	-0.048	0.102	-0.038	0.070	-0.085	0.012
	(0.070)	(0.068)	(0.077)	(0.063)	(0.096)	(0.094)
Age 55+	0.010	0.143	0.052	0.117	0.042	0.019
	(0.076)	(0.073)	(0.084)	(0.068)	(0.103)	(0.101)
No. children	-0.003	0.0004	-0.011	0.007	0.002	0.007
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Child under 4	-0.019	0.005	-0.002	0.005	-0.017	-0.027
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Partner	0.022	0.030	0.049*	-0.001	0.051	0.047
	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Democrat	0.044**	0.042**	0.055***	-0.007	0.157***	0.128***
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Black	0.018	0.026	0.024	-0.028	0.008	0.102***
	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.031)	(0.030)
Asian	-0.087**	-0.066*	-0.019	-0.048	-0.039	0.029

	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.026)	(0.039)	(0.038)
Mixed / other race	-0.120**	-0.013	0.079	0.021	-0.082	0.109*
	(0.039)	(0.038)	(0.043)	(0.035)	(0.054)	(0.053)
LGB	0.006	0.021	0.063	-0.0004	0.085	0.079
	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.036)	(0.029)	(0.045)	(0.044)
Constant	0.545***	0.451***	0.418***	0.492***	0.418***	0.445***
	(0.090)	(0.086)	(0.099)	(0.080)	(0.119)	(0.119)
Note:						.p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

The reference category for income is not employed / no income, and the reference category for age range is 18 – 24.

Tables C11 and C12 rerun the analysis using an alternative measure of the mental load where mostly me is coded 1, shared equally 0.5, and mostly partner and someone else 0. The resulting scale again ranges from 0 to 1, but the adjusted means are 80% for women (increase of 8 points compared to original measure) and 59% (increase of 15 points) for men.

Reassuringly, the same curvilinear patterns persist, with some differences compared to the main models. The mental load is no longer significantly correlated with interest in national issues among mothers or fathers, although the signs remain in the expected directions (positive for the main term and negative for the quadratic). Among mothers, the mental load is associated with interest in gun control at the 0.1 level of significance, rather than 0.05. Finally, among fathers, low levels of mental load are no longer associated with interest in international issues, although the sign remains positive as expected. These differences could relate to what is likely to be a less accurate estimation of the mental load, given the potential for social desirability to influence responses in the 'shared equally' category.

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