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FOR DEMOGRAPHY AND
GLOBAL HUMAN CAPITAL



VIENNA INSTITUTE
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European couples' division of domestic labor: the role of work from home and gender

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VID Ambiguous consequences of flexible work

- Rapid increase in work from home due to COVID-19 (Eurostat, 2026)
- Division of housework and childcare remains unequal within couples (Churchill et al., 2023; Román & Ophir, 2024)
- Work from home could reduce gender inequality by enabling men to participate more in domestic labor, especially childcare (Kuang et al., 2025; Petts et al., 2023)
- So far, evidence shows that women keep doing even more domestic labor when working from home (Cao & Wang, 2025; Wang & Cheng, 2023)
- However, previous evidence was constrained by a number of limitations

Our contribution

- Focus on the post-pandemic labor market and the situation at home
- Examination of the couple-level work-from-home arrangement
- Consideration of contextual characteristics: 9 European countries
- Exploration of the role of individual gender ideology

How do couples' work-from-home arrangements shape the division of household and childcare tasks across European countries?

Work from home and division of domestic labor

**New opportunities
for flexibility model**
(Huws et al., 1996)

Exploitation model
(Haddon & Silverstone, 1993)

Hypothesis 1.1 =

The division is more equal when only the male partner works from home compared to when both, or no one does

Hypothesis 1.2 ≠

The division is more unequal when only the female works from home compared to when the male, both, or no one does

Housework vs Childcare

- Childcare is more rewarding and central to building parent-child relationships (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020; Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009)
- Men's housework time remained stable, while women's declined (Pailhé et al., 2021)
- Mothers' and fathers' childcare time increased (Steinbach & Schulz, 2022)
- Intensive parenting, helicopter parents (Hays, 1996; Vigdal & Brønnick, 2022)
- 54% of fathers feel they spend too little time caring for their children, compared to 38% of mothers (Berghammer & Milkie, 2021)

Hypothesis 2

Work from home is more strongly associated with childcare than housework

The role of gender ideology

- Gender role attitudes shape the division of domestic work (Wang & Hu, 2025)
- They can also shape how individuals use work from home
- When both spouses were egalitarian, men's contribution to housework increased with the use of flexible working (Cao & Wang, 2025)
- Egalitarian men increased their childcare contributions when they started working from home, while traditional men did not (Leshchenko & Chung, 2025)

Hypothesis 3

Work from home status is associated with a more unequal division when one of the partners holds traditional attitudes compared to egalitarian ones

Data and Methods (1)

Data: Generations and Gender Survey (Round 2)



Years: 2021-2024

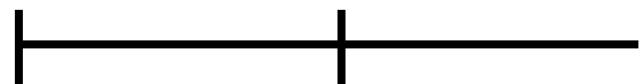
9 Countries: the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, the UK, Denmark, France, Estonia, Czechia, Croatia

Observations: Dual-earner couples aged 25-59

Housework (22,422 observations): who prepares meals, does laundry, and vacuums

Childcare (11,605 observations): who is responsible for dressing children, staying home when they are ill, playing with them, doing homework, and putting them to bed

Who does the tasks?



(1) Always him Equal Always her (5)

Data and Methods (2)

Work from home (WFH): Thinking about the last four weeks, did you do any work at home, including using the internet for professional purposes, checking emails, or having professional phone calls?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|----------|
| (1) yes, twice or more per week | } | She |
| (2) yes, less than twice a week | | He |
| | } | Both WFH |
| (3) no | | None |

Gender ideology: egalitarian if disagree that the child suffers when the mother works

Method: linear regressions, pooled (with country fixed-effects), and per country

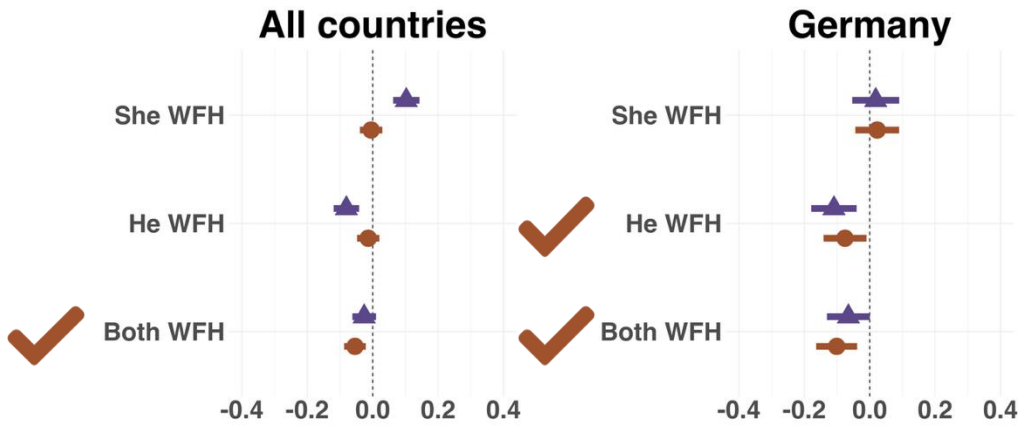
Controls: flexitime, education, managerial status, age, working hours, number of children, youngest child's age, and marital status.

Countries in the sample

Country	Work from home (WFH) 2023		Part-time employment 2023		Egalitarian gender role index 2022
	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Netherlands	60	60	14	59	3.84
Austria	30	29	10	51	3.38
Germany	26	25	10	48	3.86
UK (2019)	29	29	7	37	n.a.
Denmark	41	43	10	28	4.20
France	34	38	6	24	4.02
Estonia	27	33	7	15	n.a.
Czechia	16	14	2	11	3.18
Croatia	12	14	2	4	2.81

Her contribution to housework and childcare

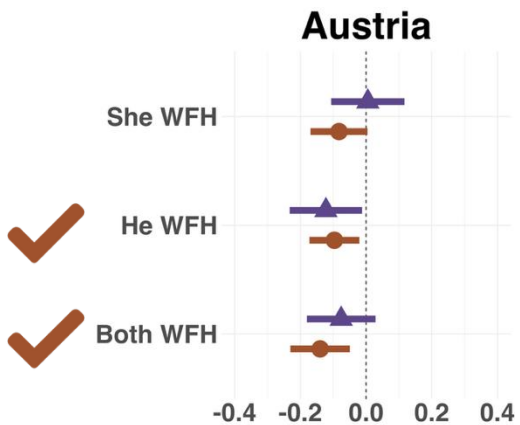
● Housework ▲ Childcare



Hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2

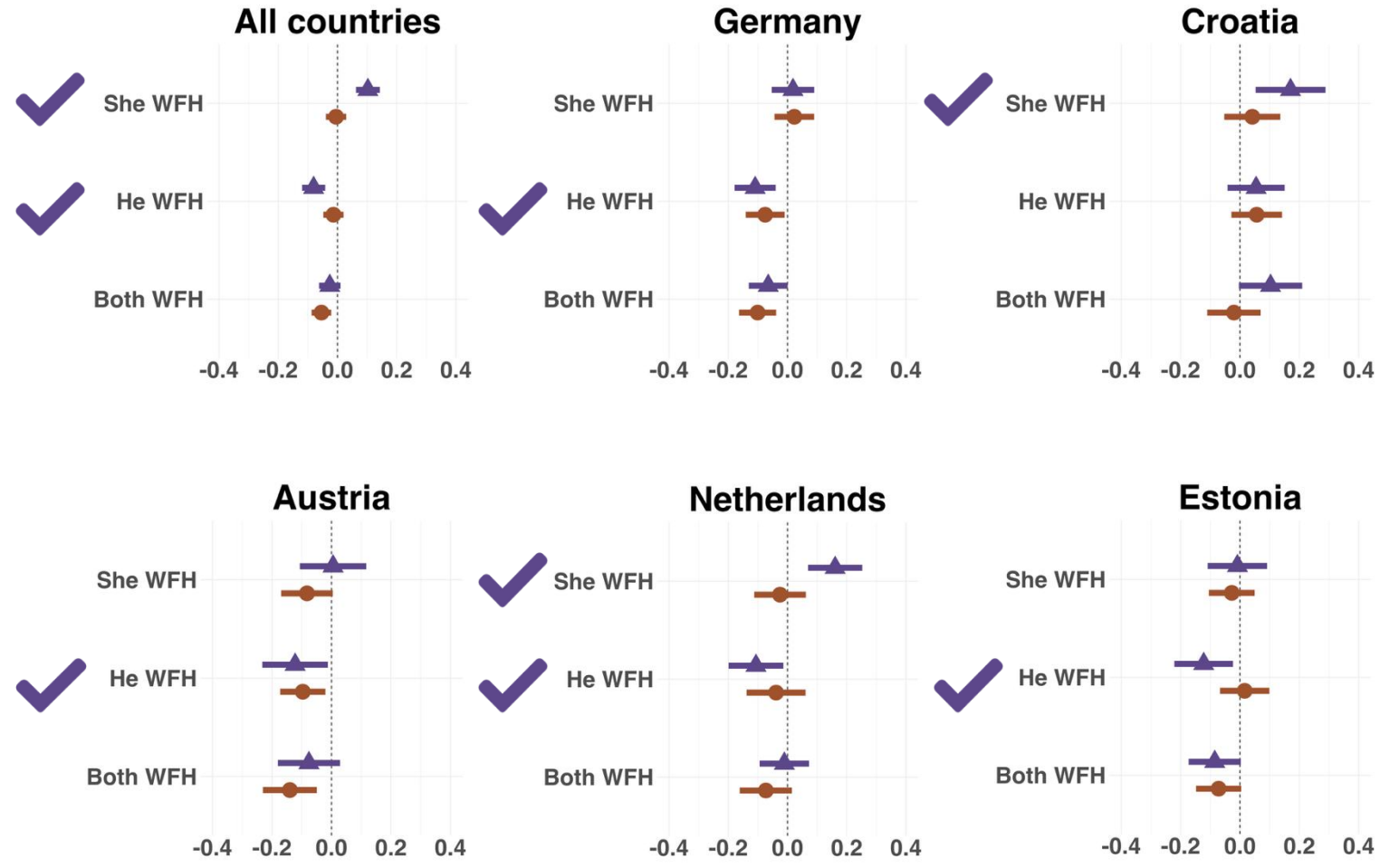
Housework

Only when both WFH less unequal



Her contribution to housework and childcare

● Housework ▲ Childcare



Hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2

Housework

Only when both WFH less unequal

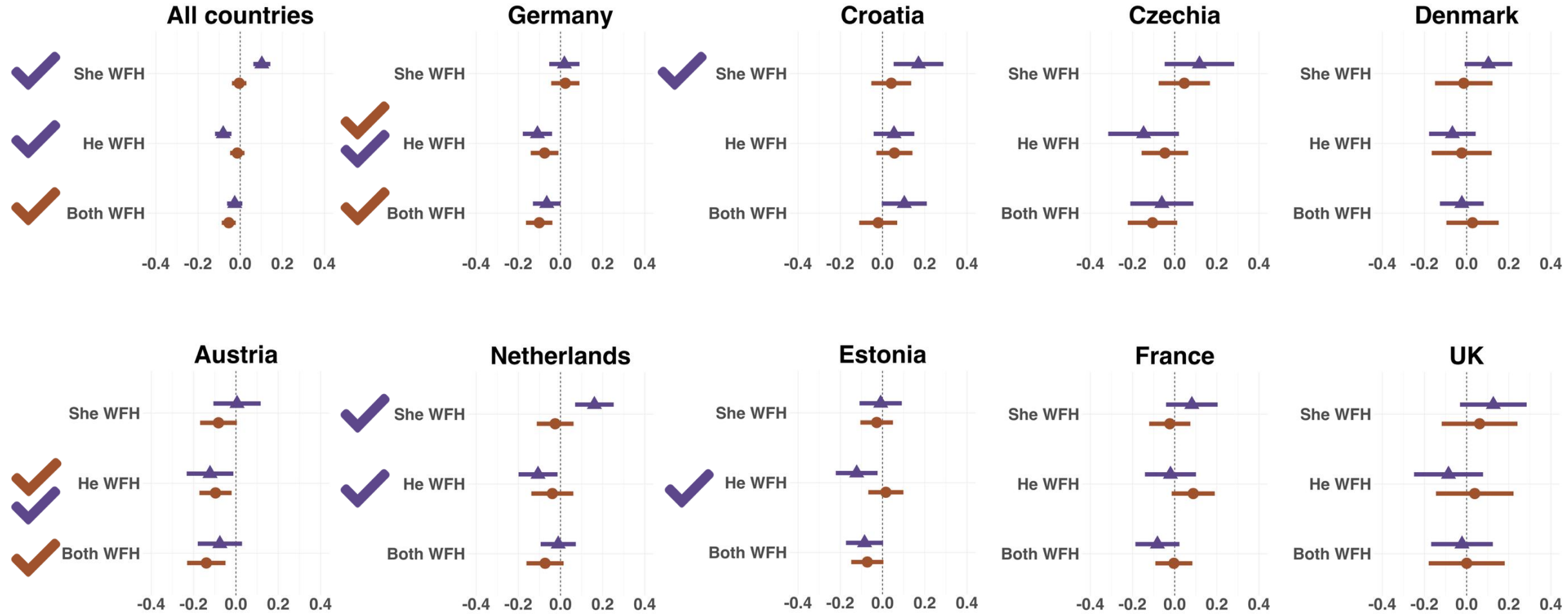
Childcare

Less unequal when he WFH
More unequal when she WFH



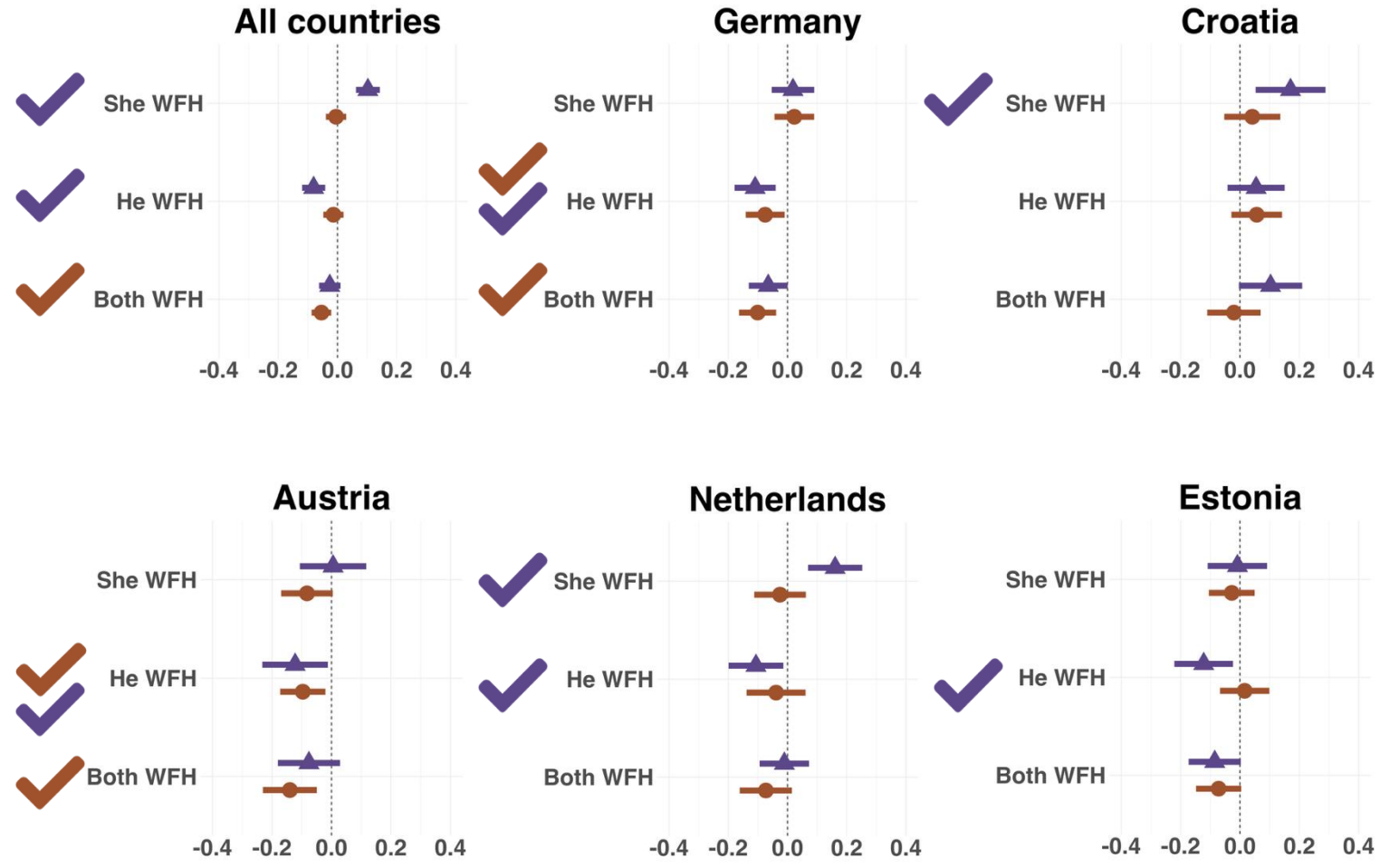
Her contribution to housework and childcare

● Housework ▲ Childcare



Her contribution to housework and childcare

● Housework ▲ Childcare

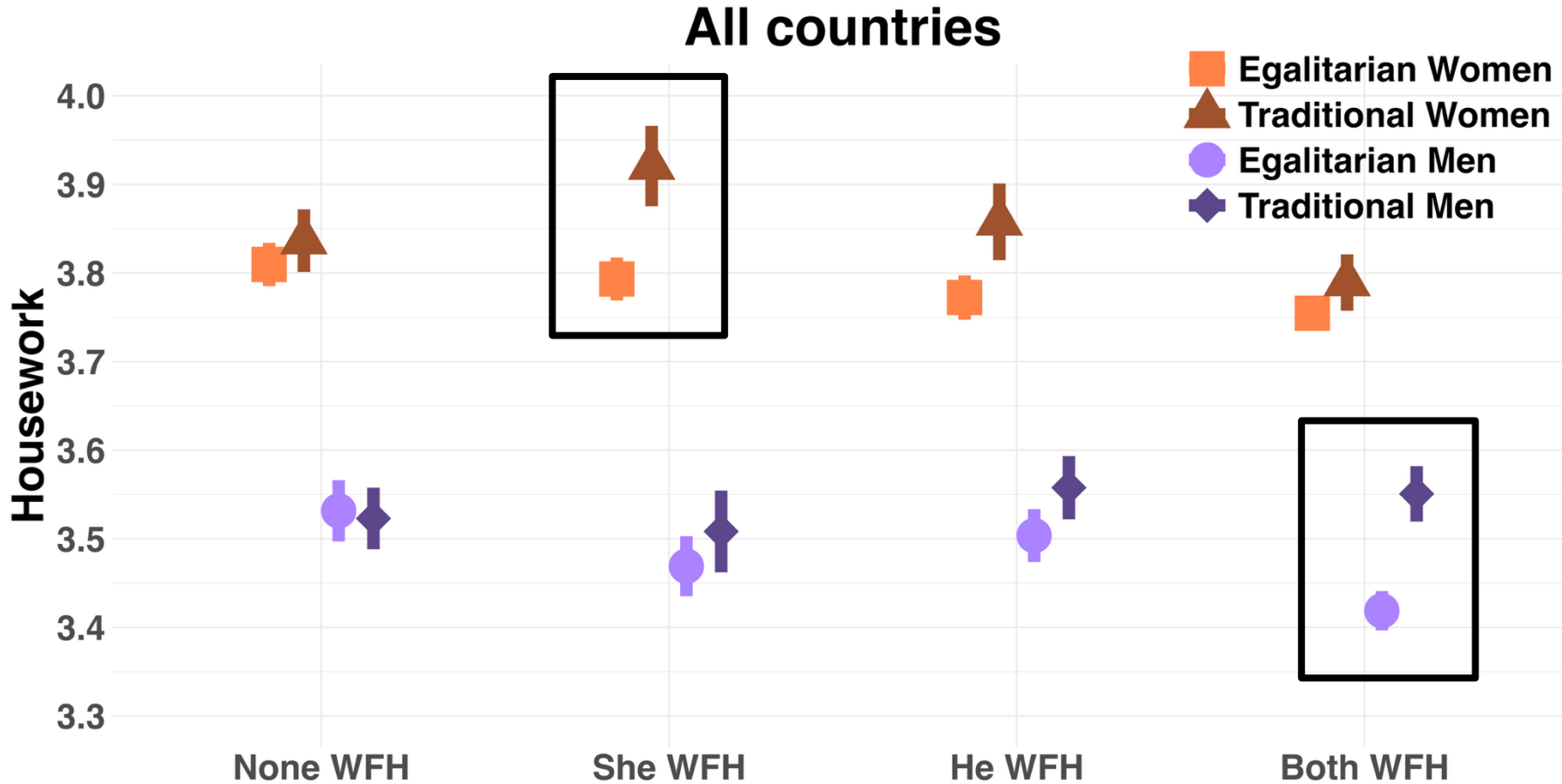


Hypothesis 2
Stronger association with childcare



The role of gender ideology: only housework

Mainly in Germany



Also in Austria
Croatia
Germany
Netherlands

Hypothesis 3

When she WFH and is **traditional**, the division of housework is more unequal

Hypothesis 3

When both WFH and men are **egalitarian**, the division of housework is less unequal

Conclusion

Working from home can decrease gender inequality in the division of domestic work,
BUT traditional gender role attitudes could constrain it (especially in housework)

Results were stronger for childcare than for housework because working from
home helped fathers to engage more in childcare tasks

Weakest results in
the UK, France, Denmark
Estonia, Czechia, Croatia

Strongest results in
Austria, Germany,
the Netherlands

*Thank
you*