BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Who does the housework?

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil
Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Pippa
And I'm Pippa. When it comes to household **chores**, jobs like cleaning, washing clothes or looking after the kids, it's often women who do most of the work. Here, two female listeners of BBC World Service programme People Fixing the World share their experiences. Do they sound familiar to you?

Listener 1
I do everything. I do all the house **chores**, I do the food shopping, I do all the cooking, I clean the bathroom.

Listener 2
Are the **chores** done equally between me and my husband? No, they're not done equally. I do most of the **chores**.

Pippa
So, you're a family man, Neil. Do you do your **fair share** of household **chores**?

Neil
I think so. My wife works part time and I work full time, so when I'm not working, I do things, and when she's not working, she does things.

Pippa
Yeah, it's similar in my house, so me and my husband try to split things, but it's difficult, isn't it?

Neil
It is.

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Pippa
Of course, no one enjoys cleaning the toilet or taking out the bins, but there is a serious side to the issue. Figures from UN Women, an organisation promoting gender equality, suggest that every day women around the world spend three hours more than men on unpaid care and domestic work. So, in this episode, we'll be hearing about two projects helping husbands and wives share the housework more fairly.

Neil
And as usual, you'll find a quiz and a worksheet to go with this episode on our website, bbclearningenglish.com. But now I have a question for you, Pippa. According to a survey conducted by Good Housekeeping magazine earlier this year, what is the most hated household **chore** in Britain? Is it:

a) deep cleaning the oven,
b) scrubbing the toilet, or
c) cleaning the windows?

Pippa
Hmm. I'm going to say deep cleaning the oven because I really hate that job. I hardly ever do it.

Neil
I don't like any of those, but we'll find out the answer at the end of the programme. Now, the first project we're going to look at is on the remote Indonesian island of Rote. Here, men traditionally work as rice farmers or fishermen, while women look after the home, the children and older people. But with few washing machines and no running water, these domestic **chores** take a long time.

Pippa
The NGO ARUNGI runs a project trying to change attitudes about the role of the island's women. They work alongside community leaders like Mama Shilpa, who spoke with BBC World Service reporter Ade Mardiyati.

Mama Shilpa
It is expected that the tasks done in the house, like holding the child, feeding the child, washing dishes, cooking, will all be done by the mother.

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Ade Mardiyati
Shilpa tells me these are all considered **women's work**. And you might be thinking, "Well, the man is busy in the fields, so it's just a fair **division of labour**." But Shilpa tells me women also help out in the fields.

Neil
On Rote, cleaning, cooking and sweeping are considered **women's work** – a negative term for boring and repetitive tasks which are traditionally done by women.

Pippa
Many cultures have a **division of labour** – a way of organising work where different tasks are done by different groups of people. But on Rote this means women work even harder, helping out with the farming and fishing too.

Neil
You might think this only happens in traditional societies, but research suggests that women in wealthy countries also spend much more time on unpaid care work than men. One such country is Croatia, where the NGO Status M run their Superdads project. Project worker Anamarija Sočo leads workshops encouraging dads and sons to take some of the pressure off mums. Here, she explains the benefits of this to the BBC World Service.

Anamarija Sočo
Mothers have, you know, of course, more space for their careers, or hobbies, or just simply to rest – I mean, just to **take a breather**. Women tend to especially appreciate men who do these kinds of **chores**. And when they start **pulling their weight**, then they jokingly say that, "Uh yeah, women tend to nag less."

Pippa
Sometimes mums need to **take a breather** – an informal way of saying stop and rest a while.

Neil
Anamarija also thinks women appreciate it when their husbands **pull their weight**. If you **pull your weight**, you work as hard as everyone else.

Pippa
Both these NGO projects agree about one thing – men doing more to help around the house results in happier homes, even if that means cleaning the toilet now and

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then. And speaking of cleaning the toilet, what was the answer to your quiz question, Neil?

Neil
I asked you what **chore** is the most hated in Britain.

Pippa
I thought it was cleaning the oven.

Neil
Well, I'm afraid that's not the right answer. People hate cleaning the windows even more than scrubbing the oven. Apparently, 23% of the people who did the survey said cleaning the windows. OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **chores** – household tasks like cleaning, washing and ironing that have to be done regularly.

Pippa
If you do your **fair share** of work, you do a reasonable amount.

Neil
Women's work is a negative term for the boring and repetitive tasks which are stereotypically done by women.

Pippa
The **division of labour** is a way of organising work where different tasks are done by different groups of people.

Neil
The idiom **take a breather** means to stop what you're doing for a short time and rest.

Pippa
And finally, if you **pull your weight**, you work as hard as everyone else doing the same job. Once again, our six minutes are up, but remember, you can find a free transcript including all the vocabulary on our website, at bbclearningenglish.com. Goodbye for now.

Neil
Goodbye!

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VOCABULARY

chores
tasks around the home, such as cleaning, washing and ironing, that have to be done regularly

fair share
reasonable amount

women's work
negative term for the boring and repetitive tasks which are traditionally or stereotypically done by women

division of labour
way of organising work where different tasks are done by different groups of people

take a breather
(idiom) stop what you are doing for a short time to rest

pull your weight
work as hard as everyone else doing the same job

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