

Reading

1 You are going to read an article comparing how much European men from various European countries help in the house. Before you read it, say who in your household is or would be willing to do the following?

Write **M** (man), **W** (woman), **M/W** (either) or **N** (neither) against each of the following items.

shop
drive the children around
cook
clean

wash-up
iron
dress the children
tidy up

2 Read the article through quickly to decide which country you most admire and why.

Women beware, British man about the house

by David Utting

Percentage of men who will NOT take responsibility for chores

Country	They say	Partners say
Belgium	60.8	61.0
Denmark	51.1	47.5
Former W. Ger.	60.7	71.1
Former E. Ger.	42.7	62.7
Greece	47.2	49.8
Spain	76.6	79.7
France	58.4	60.7
Ireland	84.0	31.9
Italy	55.6	60.2
L'bourg	58.9	64.9
N'lands	45.7	46.2
Portugal	69.3	71.9
UK	74.2	70.6
EU average	61.6	65.4

Europe's legion of working women who long for a caring 'new man' to share their duvet and the household chores would be ill-advised to start searching in the United Kingdom.

10 Researchers dispatched by Brussels to far corners of the European Union have found that few husbands are quite so disinclined to lift a finger round the house as the British. Even the stereotyped chauvinists of France and Italy emerge as better disposed to visit the supermarket or escort children to playschool.

20 Challenged with a list of six common domestic tasks, three out of four fathers in Britain claimed not to be in charge of any of them - a proportion larger than for the European Community as a whole. They left it to women to take the lead in shopping, washing-up, cooking, cleaning, transporting children or helping them to dress.

30 Ex-Communist Eastern Germany, the Netherlands and Greece emerge as the only places where a majority of fathers, interviewed about the years before their children went to school, agreed they were responsible for at least one of the items. In the case of Greek men it emerged that their burst of domesticity was overwhelmingly confined to visiting shops.

40 Spanish husbands, meanwhile, topped the league for all-round household hopelessness, with almost 8 out of 10 admitting to no responsibilities at all - an assessment which was more than confirmed by the views of Spanish wives and partners who took part in the survey. The strangest results were from

50 Ireland, where 84 per cent of men stoutly maintain that they take no responsibility whatsoever for shopping, cleaning, cooking, washing-up, and dressing the children or driving them to school.

60 Yet the Irishmen's view of themselves as devil-may-care, unliberated, macho sort of fellows appears to be sheer fantasy. According to their wives and partners, nearly 70 per cent of their menfolk take responsibility for at least one household task, putting them among the most domesticated men in Europe.

The 'Family and Work' survey, one of a series commissioned by the European Commission's Employment

and Social Affairs Directorate, was based on almost 17,000 interviews in the 12 member states. The results are due for publication in Britain this summer.

70 Looking at the domestic tasks where European men - albeit the minority - are prepared to take a lead, the survey identifies a North-South divide. Men in Portugal and the Mediterranean countries appear more concerned with the "public" duties of shopping or dressing and driving their children; further north it is the "private" chores such as dish-washing, cooking and cleaning which are treated with above-average enthusiasm.

80 Those British husbands who do anything are at their best when clutching a dishcloth or tea towel at the kitchen sink, although their willingness to act as family chef is greater even than Frenchmen's.

90 The survey authors, Marianne Kempeneers of Montreal University and Eva Lelièvre of the London School of Economics, found that British women were unusual in Europe because of the extensive availability of part-time jobs. Their working lives were marked by interruptions to care for children and they were more prone to feel that promotion had been sacrificed as a consequence.

Former West German, Dutch and Irish women were more likely to mark motherhood with a prolonged or permanent exit from the labour force. But women living in Denmark and southern Europe found less difficulty reconciling work with their family responsibilities - possibly because childcare was easier to obtain.

3 Read the article again, this time in detail, to decide whether the following statements are accurate. Mark them **T** (true), **F** (false) or **?** (don't know).

- 1 75% of British men take no responsibility for the six common domestic tasks.
- 2 Greek, former East German and Dutch men take on about the same amount of responsibilities as one another.
- 3 Spanish women think their men are hopeless round the house.
- 4 Irish men spend little time helping at home.
- 5 Each country presents very distinctive trends.
- 6 Frenchmen cook more than British men.
- 7 British women tend to sacrifice their careers once they have children.
- 8 Southern European women give up work once they have children.

4 Look at the two lists of words below. List A contains words and phrases taken from the text. In list B, there are synonyms for each of these words. Look at how the words in A are used in the text and then match them to an appropriate synonym in B, for example *chores* = *boring domestic work*. (N.B. List B contains more words than you need.)

A
 disinclined
 lift a finger
 emerge
 take the lead
 overwhelmingly
 confined
 top the league
 all-round
 stoutly maintain
 chores
 fellows
 prone

B
 limited
 harmonise
 come first
 be revealed
 general
 join
 strongly
 unwilling
 fat
 help/work
 take on responsibility
 above all
 lazy
 men
 boring domestic work
 willing
 strongly affirm
 inclined

KEY

3	1 T	3 T	5 F	7 T
	2 T	4 ?	6 F	8 F
4	<i>disinclined</i>	=	<i>unwilling</i>	
	<i>lift a finger</i>	=	<i>help/work</i>	
	<i>emerge</i>	=	<i>be revealed</i>	
	<i>take the lead</i>	=	<i>take on responsibility</i>	
	<i>overwhelmingly</i>	=	<i>above all</i>	
	<i>confined</i>	=	<i>limited</i>	
	<i>top the league</i>	=	<i>come first</i>	
	<i>all-round</i>	=	<i>general</i>	
	<i>stoutly maintain</i>	=	<i>strongly affirm</i>	
	<i>fellows</i>	=	<i>men</i>	
	<i>chores</i>	=	<i>boring domestic work</i>	
	<i>prone</i>	=	<i>inclined</i>	