

Men, not women, better multitaskers: Swedish study

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File picture shows a man looking at his watch in front of a digital thermometer showing the unofficial current temperature in Los Angeles, California, in September 2010. Working mothers may have to juggle more tasks than their husbands, but the long-held belief that women are better than men at multitasking is a myth, according to new Swedish research.

Working mothers may have to juggle more tasks than their husbands, but the long-held belief that women are better than men at multitasking is a myth, according to new Swedish research.

"On the contrary, the results of our study show that men are better at [multitasking](#) than women," Timo Maentylae, a psychology professor at Stockholm University, said.

Men are sometimes better than women at handling multiple tasks simultaneously, but the performance gap is correlated to the female menstrual cycle, according to his study, to be published in US peer-reviewed journal [Psychological Science](#).

In line with previous research, men and women with good so-called [working memory](#) were also better than others at multitasking.

However, Maentylae found that the ability to combine several different tasks at once was also linked to [spatial ability](#) which, for women, is linked

to their menstrual phase.

"Previous studies have shown that women's spatial skills vary across the menstrual cycle with high capacity around menstruation and much lower around ovulation, when oestrogen levels are high," he said.

"The results showed a clear difference in multitasking between men and women in the ovulation phase, while this effect was eliminated for women in the menstrual phase."

The participants, 160 men and [women](#) between 20 and 43 years of age, were instructed to keep track of three digital "clocks", or counters, that displayed different times at different speeds.

While registering certain times displayed by the clocks, defined by a simple set of rules, they also had to watch a scrolling ticker featuring common Swedish names, pressing the mouse button when one of the names was repeated.

Differences in spatial ability and working memory were based on separate tests.

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