evenly

mental load report

Sarah & Tom

16 November 2026

This report is a mirror, not a verdict. Read it yourself first, then decide when to share it.

SAMPLE REPORT

This is what an Evenly report looks like. Sarah and Tom do not exist and the messages are made up. Your own report contains your own messages.

before you read on

Preface

Most conversations about mental load end in the same place: at the question of whether it even exists. Whether it really is that heavy. Whether it isn't, perhaps, just a matter of perception.

You probably know that question.

This report answers it. Not with an opinion, but with your own messages. What was said, by whom, and what happened next.

What you have after this is a new starting point. The conversation no longer has to be about whether the mental load exists. It can be about what you are going to do about it.

Read this report yourself first. Then decide when to share it.

at a glance

The distribution



SARAH CARRIES

74%

of the coordination in your messages

TOM CARRIES

26%

of the coordination in your messages

The four dimensions

Anticipating

Thinking ahead: seeing what is coming before it turns urgent.



Identifying

Noticing what is needed right now.



Deciding

Weighing options and making the call.



Monitoring

Keeping track of whether it actually happens.



Further on you can read where these numbers come from, with the messages to go with them.

how it works

What this report is

This report rests on two sources. The first is your WhatsApp conversation from 15 June to 13 November 2026, in which every message about home and family was looked at separately: who raised something, who responded, and what happened next. The second is the questionnaire in which you both indicated who usually carries which tasks. The score weighs both, with the messages as the heavier voice.

Mental load is the thinking work behind a household: remembering that something needs to happen, planning it, and keeping track of whether it does. The report builds on the research of sociologist Allison Daminger, who distinguishes four forms of that thinking work, and is inspired by Eve Rodsky's Fair Play framework.

who carries what

74% against 26%

Sarah carries 74% of the coordination that is visible in your messages, Tom 26%. This is how Evenly approximates the mental load: through the coordination it demands. Of every four moments when something had to be thought of, planned or followed up, about three sat with Sarah.

Work and time with the children

Sarah works 32 hours a week, Tom 36. A difference of 4 hours does not explain a split of 74 against 26. Research shows that practical tasks shift along with working hours, while the thinking work tends to stay with the same person, even when both partners work almost the same amount.

Sarah has considerably more time alone with the children than Tom. These are approximations based on your own answers. Whoever is alone with the children more often becomes the default point of contact sooner, and that shows up under Anticipating.

What you told us yourselves

In the questionnaire you estimated the split at roughly 66 against 34. Your messages show 79 against 21. Your own picture is more equal than what happens in the chat, and that is common among couples. The clearest example is dinner: according to the questionnaire you do that together, while in the messages the question of what to eat almost always ends up with Sarah.

Together those two sources produce the 74 and 26 in this report.

by topic

Where the load sits

The number is not spread evenly across everything. Below you can see which topics you message about, and which of you usually opens the conversation.

TOPIC	SHARE OF THE MESSAGES	WHO STARTS IT · SARAH / TOM
Children and school	30%	81% / 19%
Food and groceries	24%	77% / 23%
Planning and calendar	18%	74% / 26%
Social and family	10%	78% / 22%
Home, car and money	9%	34% / 66%
Holidays and free time	6%	55% / 45%
Other	3%	too few messages to split

The imbalance sits in the topics that come back every day. On home, car and money Tom starts two out of three conversations, and holidays you organise almost together.

the other side

What Tom also carries

Tom carries 26% of the coordination in your messages, and it is worth seeing what that contains. The car, the insurance, the tax return and the upkeep of the house are entirely Tom's: from thinking of it to finishing it, without anyone asking.

Wednesday 14 October, 12:31

Tom

Car's due its annual service next month. Booked it in for 12 November, I'll drop it off before work

Sarah

Great, thanks

Deciding is Tom's strongest dimension, and once a task has been named, Tom picks it up reliably. The difference is in the kind of work: Tom holds work with a beginning and an end, Sarah holds the work that starts again every day.

why this matters

What this means in daily life

For Sarah, 74% means a head that is rarely empty. Research links carrying a large share of the mental load to more stress, poorer sleep and less room for your own work and recovery. The tasks themselves are small, and because they never stop they keep asking for attention, during work and during rest.

For Tom, it means that taking part depends on what Sarah names. As long as one of you holds the overview, the other can only act after a question, and so one keeps asking while the other keeps waiting. A different split gives both of you more room.

where the numbers come from

Per dimension

The four forms of thinking work, each with a moment from your own chat.

thinking ahead

Anticipating

Thinking ahead: seeing what is coming before it turns urgent.



Tuesday 8 September, 20:41

Sarah

School's closed next Thursday for a teacher training day, so Lola's home. Can you work from home or shall I ask my mum?

Tom

Oh, didn't know that. I'll check my calendar tomorrow

The training day was still nine days away and nobody had mentioned it. This is anticipating: seeing a need before it presents itself.

seeing what's needed

Identifying

Noticing what is needed right now.



Monday 21 September, 08:47

Sarah

Finn's wellies don't fit any more, just noticed at drop-off

Tom

Ah ok. What size is it now?

Nobody had asked. Sarah saw it and named it, and with that the task existed. The question about the size puts the next step back with Sarah as well.

making the call

Deciding

Weighing options and making the call.



Saturday 3 October, 10:15

Sarah

Lola's party: at home or at the playground?

Tom

Playground. Less hassle and we don't have to clean up

Sarah

Deal, I'll send the invitations

This is your most shared dimension: when a choice is on the table, Tom actively thinks along. It does stand out that the question usually comes from Sarah.

keeping track

Monitoring

Keeping track of whether it actually happens.



Thursday 29 October, 16:20

Sarah

Have you paid for the school trip yet? Tomorrow's the last day

Tom

Oh yes, I'll do it tonight

The payment was Tom's, remembering the last day was Sarah's. This is monitoring: keeping track of whether something happens, even when it sits with the other.

Every day or now and then

Sarah carries 79% of the thinking work around tasks that come back every day, such as meals, school things and the children's rhythm. Tom carries a larger share of what comes up now and then, such as the car and the money matters. Daily work cannot be saved up for a quiet moment, and that makes it heavier than work you can schedule.

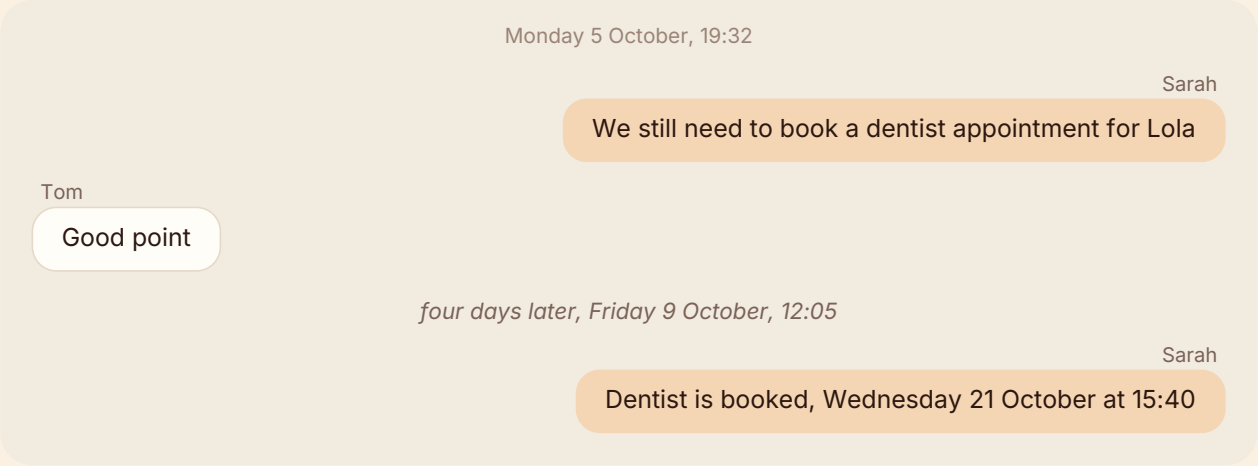
what your messages show

Patterns from your chat

Five patterns that kept coming back in these months.

1. Agreement without follow-up

Sarah mentions something that needs to happen, Tom agrees, and then Sarah arranges it. This happened 14 times in this period, with an average of three to four days between the first message and the moment it was arranged.



2. The question that comes back

A question like 'what's for dinner' sounds like joining in. In the messages we see that the question places the decision with Sarah, including on days when you are both at work.

Thursday 17 September, 16:52

Tom
What's for dinner tonight?

Sarah
No idea, what's left in the fridge?

Tom
Don't know, still at the office

Sarah
I'll pick something up then

3. Doing it from a list

Tom regularly does the shopping. What needs to come into the house sits in Sarah's head at that moment, and making the list is the work that comes before the shopping.

Saturday 26 September, 11:08

Tom
At the supermarket, need anything?

Sarah
Milk, bread, peanut butter and something for the lunchboxes

Tom
Can you send it as a list?

4. The thinking work knows no time or place

Sarah sends 76% of the messages about home and family, spread across the whole week. During working hours that comes at the cost of concentration, and outside them at the cost of the moments meant for rest.

Tuesday 10 November, 10:23

Sarah

Lola finishes at noon today, can you pick her up or do I need to move things around?

Tom

Can't, stuck in a meeting until 1

Sunday 1 November, 21:47

Sarah

PE kit for Lola tomorrow, and Finn needs to bring fruit for the teacher

Tom

Great

5. Who starts the conversation

Sarah opens 73% of the conversations in which something needs to be decided. You then often make the decision together, which is why it feels shared. Realising that something needs to be decided is thinking work too.

to be fair

What this report doesn't measure

This report looks at what is in your messages, and not everything reaches a message. Whoever quietly puts the bins out or keeps an eye on the tyre pressure leaves no trace.

A response we often hear: I think about a lot of things too, I just don't say them. That may well be true, and the questionnaire exists precisely to count that side. What it does not change: the organising that is visible also had to be done, and it sat largely with one person.

Doing tasks and organising tasks are two different things. Whoever carries out something after the other thought of it, planned it and sent the reminder shares the doing, while the thinking work stays with the other.

> With the Invisible Task Inventory in the Evenly Toolkit you put the work that leaves no trace next to this report, so you can count it and do not have to argue about it.

three steps

Three recommendations

Small enough to start this month, big enough to notice a difference.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Hand over one task completely

Choose one recurring task that now sits with Sarah, for example Lola and Finn's appointments: dentist, hairdresser, school photographer. Tom takes that task over fully for two weeks, from realising that something needs to be booked to checking that it happened. Sarah does not remind and does not check. Something will probably go wrong once, and that is part of handing over.

RECOMMENDATION 2

One fixed moment in the week

Set aside twenty minutes every Sunday evening to walk through the week together: who picks up whom, what needs to come into the house, which appointments are coming. That way thinking ahead becomes something you do together, and it no longer has to happen unnoticed in one head.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Swap who asks the question

You already decide together. Agree that twice a week Tom raises dinner, with a suggestion attached. 'What's for dinner tonight?' then becomes 'I'm making pasta tonight, okay?'

start here

Where to begin

Start with recommendation 1. Choosing where to start is exactly the kind of thinking work we do not want to place with one person, so the report makes that choice for you.

The first step is a conversation. Open the Couple Conversation Script in the Evenly Toolkit and plan half an hour this weekend to go through the report together. In ninety days, around 14 February 2027, a free second report follows based on a new export, and then you will see what has shifted.

continue together

Evenly Toolkit

The report comes with an online toolkit of eight parts. The link is in your email.

01	Couple Conversation Script How to talk about this report.	02	Invisible Task Inventory The work that never reaches a message.
03	CPE Task Breakdown Move tasks completely, not halfway.	04	Rebalancing Workbook For the partner who is letting go.
05	The Two-Week Agreement Two weeks, one agreement, a role for both.	06	For Your Partner The report seen from the other side.
07	3-Month Check-in Guide The free second report after 90 days.	08	Recommended Reading The research behind Evenly.

This is a sample report. Sarah and Tom do not exist and the messages are made up. A real report contains your own messages, which are deleted after the report is created and are not stored.