

# Psychological, sexual impact of female breadwinners explored

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Noting that the traditional social norm of the male breadwinner is increasingly being challenged, Lamar Pierce, Ph.D., from Washington University in St. Louis, and colleagues examined the impact of wives outearning their husbands as reflected in sexual and [mental health problems](#). Wage and medication data were collected for more than 200,000 [married couples](#) from Denmark from 1997 to 2006.

The researchers found that husbands who earned less than their wives were more likely to use erectile dysfunction medication than those who had a traditional breadwinner role, even when there was only a small difference. Increased insomnia/anxiety medication usage was seen for female breadwinners, with a similar effect seen in men. These effects were not seen in [unmarried couples](#) or for men who earned less than their fiancée before marriage.

"If social norms against female breadwinners continue to be strong, increasing female income will produce real costs in marriage, including the anxiety, insomnia, and erectile dysfunction identified here," the authors write. "These costs may be understated in our study, given that many women may never pursue high-paying careers due to social pressure for them to either work in the home or serve as secondary earners."

**More information:** [Abstract](#)

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