

# Marriage, children tied to earnings penalty for female physicians

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Being married with children is associated with a greater earnings penalty

for female physicians, according to a study published online March 24 in *JAMA Health Forum*.

Lucy Skinner, from Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth in Hanover, New Hampshire, and colleagues investigated differences in earnings and hours worked for male and [female physicians](#) at various ages and family status. Analysis included responses from 95,435 physicians aged 25 to 64 years participating in the American Community Survey from 2005 to 2019.

The researchers found that compared to [male physicians](#), female physicians were more likely to be single (18.8 versus 11.2 percent) and less likely to have children (53.3 versus 58.2 percent). With age, male-female earnings gaps grew, and were approximately \$1.6 million for single physicians, \$2.5 million for married physicians without children, and \$3.1 million for physicians with children, when totaled from age 25 to 64 years.

However, gaps in earnings per hour did not vary by [family structure](#), with male physicians earning between 21.4 and 23.9 percent more per hour than female physicians. For hours worked, the male-female gap was 0.6 percent for single physicians, 7.0 percent for married physicians without children, and 17.5 percent for physicians with children.

"Addressing the barriers that lead to women working fewer hours could contribute to a reduction in the male-female earnings gap while helping to expand the effective physician workforce," the authors write.

**More information:** Lucy Skinner et al, Marriage, Children, and Sex-Based Differences in Physician Hours and Income, *JAMA Health Forum* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamahealthforum.2023.0136](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamahealthforum.2023.0136)



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