

# What hours are worked by women, men in dual-physician couples with kids?

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In dual-physician couples, women with children worked fewer hours than women without children but similar differences in hours worked were not seen among men, according to a new research letter published by *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Not much is known about how physicians in dual-physician couples adjust their work hours because of children.

The study by Anupam B. Jena, M.D., Ph.D., of Harvard Medical School, Boston, and coauthors estimated weekly hours worked for married, dual-physician couples from 2000 through 2015 using a nationally representative survey of about 3 million households annually. The authors included those individuals whose self-reported occupation and that of their spouse were physician or surgeon. Analyses were limited to physicians age 25 to 50 to focus on childbearing years. Same-sex couples were excluded because authors focused on sex differences in couples.

The study sample included 9,868 physicians in dual-physician couples (the average age for women was 38 and 39 for men).

According to the results:

- Among couples without children, weekly work hours were 57 hours for men and 52.4 hours for women.
- Compared to couples without children, there was no significant difference in hours worked among men whose youngest child was age 1 to 2 (55.3 hours, a difference of 1.7 hours less) but hours worked among women were significantly lower (41.5 hours, a difference of 10.9 hours less).
- Among men, there also was no significant difference in hours as the youngest child got older compared with men without children.
- Among women, the number of hours

worked remained lower compared to women without children as the youngest child got older.

"One possible reason for our results is that even within dual-physician couples, societal expectations for women to reduce hours worked to care for children still hold," the authors conclude.

Alternatively, the authors note, women in certain specialties may be more likely to both work fewer hours and have [children](#), which would impact the analysis because the authors were unable to adjust for specialty, which was not available.

**More information:** *JAMA Internal Medicine* (2017). [DOI: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2017.3437](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2017.3437)

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