

Marriage means faster wage growth for men, but not for women

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(Phys.org) —Saying "I do" at a young age isn't always the best career option for women.

After the wedding vows are said, [gender inequality](#) with wages begin as marriage is associated with fast wage growth for [men](#) but slow growth for women, a new University of Michigan study found.

Indeed, the cumulative effects of marriage are driven by different factors. For men, the positive wage link is attributed to increased participation in productivity-enhancing work experience. Women's negative association between marriage and wage growth is usually caused by childbearing, said Siwei Cheng, the study's author and graduate student in the U-M Department of Sociology.

"Marriage in today's American society operates as a de-equalizing force that drives up the [gender wage gap](#) over individuals' lives," said Cheng, who will present her findings Saturday (Aug. 16) at the annual American Sociological Association in San Francisco.

Marriage is "a major turning point that shapes the individual's trajectory in subsequent years," she said. The wage effect of marriage occurs through a cumulative process that unfolds slowly over life, which results in the gender wage gap widening every year.

"This could be a reason why some women nowadays 'rationally' choose to delay their marriage for the benefits of their careers," said Cheng, who is also a [graduate student](#) in the Population Studies Center at the Institute for Social Research.

Cheng analyzed data from a national sample of more than 12,600 people who reported their hourly wage, marital status, years of [marriage](#) and work experience.

According to this sample, at age 23, women married three years earlier than men, whose median age was 26 years. Men have a longer tenure with their employer and work more hours, the respondents reported.

On average, men and women's wages both increased over time, but men experienced faster growth.

Childbearing, the study noted, substantially impedes [women's](#) advancement, especially when compared to her single counterparts. Factors such as psychological strain due to work-life conflict or discrimination from the employer may pose extra impediments to married mothers' wage growth, Cheng said.

Provided by University of Michigan

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