

Gay Men Now Earn More Than Straight Men, Study Finds

Attitudes about homosexuality have changed dramatically in recent decades, and the change appears to have had economic consequences for gay men—for the better.

A new [study](#) conducted by researchers at Vanderbilt University found that gay men make considerably more than straight men, on average. The findings are a dramatic shift from results of previous studies, wrote Kitt Carpenter, an economics professor at Vanderbilt University who is also director of the university's [LGBT Policy Lab](#).

“Economists and management scholars have been crunching the numbers on this question for over 20 years, and until very recently, nearly all the studies have found an identical result,” Carpenter wrote in [an article](#) published at Harvard Business Review. “[If] you compare the earnings of two men with similar education profiles, years of experience, skills, and job responsibilities, gay men consistently earns less than straight men (between 5% and 10% less).”

Until now. Carpenter and a PhD student crunched the numbers and discovered that the gay wage gap did not disappear, it *flipped*.

“[It] turned into a 10% premium,” Carpenter wrote, “meaning that gay men in recent years earned substantially more than straight men with similar education, experience, and job profiles.”

The change in the wage gap likely stems, to some degree, from changing attitudes about homosexuality, which have shifted sharply in recent decades.

A 2013 Pew [survey](#), for example, showed that 92 percent of

people who identified as LGBT said society had become more accepting of the LGBT community in the last decade.

Prior to 2003, same-sex marriage was illegal in all 50 states. Today it is legal in in the vast majority of U.S. states (see below).



(Credit: [NCSL](#))

This change likely played some role in the shift in wages, assuming the labor market was discriminating against gay men. Yet there are also problems with this theory, the authors noted.

For one, it doesn't explain why gay men are now making *more* than straight men. Secondly, lesbians—who historically [make more](#) than straight women—did not see a change at all. Why would gay men experience a benefit from the change in attitudes about homosexuality but not gay women? The authors aren't sure.

“In the end, we don't have a great way to explain why the gay male earnings penalty disappeared and turned into a premium,” Carpenter wrote.

I hesitate to opine on such matters, since I'm not a trained economist, but one possible explanation did occur to me.

Last month, [we wrote](#) about a hiring manager who in an email to colleagues noted that “cisgender straight white males” need not apply. Most hiring managers and human resource officials are not so clumsy, of course to frame their hiring bias this way, which is likely a violation of federal law.

But if companies are (quietly) prioritizing the hiring of non-“cisgender straight white males,” could this account for the 10 percent premium the authors discovered? Or is it more likely gay men are simply better negotiators or more skilled workers?

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