Factors Associated With Differences in Income of Dentists in the US

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To evaluate the impact of dentist gender, age, and other demographic and household characteristics on personal annual income from wages and/or self-employment.

METHODS: The analytic dataset (n=148,878 active dentists who worked ≥40 weeks/year; ≥350 hours/week) was drawn from the US Census Bureau’s 2014-2018 American Community Survey. Data were weighted to be representative of the US population. Descriptive statistics and multilevel Poisson regressions (Prevalence Ratios [PR], 95% Confidence Intervals [95% CI]) were conducted to estimate associations between dentists’ annual income (≤$100,000 vs >$100,000) and their sociodemographic and family factors, adjusting for employment characteristics.

RESULTS: Female dentists (31.1%) had a significantly lower average annual income than male dentists ($157,509 vs $210,097) and were proportionally more likely to earn <$100,000 yearly (33.7% vs 22.4%). Female dentists aged 35–44 were more likely to earn lower personal annual incomes than male dentists, indicating the presence of a gender income gap. Adjusting for dentists’ characteristics, female dentists under 35 were more likely to earn lower personal annual incomes than their male counterparts (PR=1.70, 95% CI=1.38-2.10). Black African American dentists (PR=1.39, 95% CI=1.11-1.73) were more likely to earn lower incomes than White non-Hispanic dentists. Dentists with 3 or more children and/or a non-dentist spouse/partner were less likely to earn a lower income than dentists without a spouse/partner (PR=0.76, 95% CI=0.62-0.93) to earn lower incomes than dentists without any older dependents (PR=1.25, 95% CI=1.10-1.42).

CONCLUSIONS: On average, female dentists had lower personal annual incomes than male dentists, indicating the presence of a gender income gap. Adjusting for dentists’ characteristics, female dentists under 35 were more likely to earn lower personal annual incomes than male dentists. Racial income disparities were uncovered, with Black African American, non-Hispanic, Asian, non-Hispanic, and other non-Hispanic dentists less likely to earn lower personal annual incomes than their White counterparts. Dentists with 3 or more children or a non-dentist spouse/partner were less likely to earn lower personal annual incomes than dentists without any older dependents. Dentists’ gender, age, and racial disparities contribute to the likelihood of earning a lower income.

REFERENCE & ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Langelier M, Surdu S, Gundavaru S, Sabourini S. Evaluating the impact of dentists’ personal characteristics on workforce participation. Rensselaer, NY: Oral Health Workforce Research Center, Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany; December 2021. This work is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling $449,915. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, HRSA, HHS, or the US Government. For more information, please visit HRSA.gov.