

Gender-based Compensation and Career Advancement Disparities in 2023 in Orthopedic Surgery

Dhun Chauhan, Joshua Kenneth Deyoung, Ezra Rae Goodrich, Charles S Day¹

¹Henry Ford Health System

INTRODUCTION: Women account for more than half of all medical school graduates and 38% of all medical school faculty positions; yet, women earn less in every specialty, at every academic rank, and make up a majority of faculty only at the instructor rank. In 2018, women physicians earned 75 cents on the dollar compared with their male counterparts after accounting for specialty, location, and years of experience. These differences are even more pronounced within specialties that are historically male-dominated, such as orthopedic surgery. The goal of this study was to examine gender-based discrepancies in compensation in academic orthopedic surgery for fiscal year 2023.

METHODS:

Demographic and faculty compensation data were obtained from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Faculty Salary Report from fiscal year 2023. Mean compensation for instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, professors, chiefs, and chairpersons was compared by gender. Two-sample t-tests were used to compare the salary between men and women within their respective ranks.

RESULTS:

Men had significantly higher total compensation than women for all ranks except Chair. At the instructor level, male orthopedic surgeons earned roughly \$554,245 (SD = \$410,687) annually, compared with \$229,204 (SD = \$115,799) for female orthopedic surgeons—a \$325,041 gap ($p = 0.0019$). At the assistant professor, associate professor, and professor levels, there were \$152,489 ($p < 0.0001$), \$156,504 ($p < 0.0001$), and \$271,682 ($p < 0.0001$) pay gaps, respectively. Lastly, at the chief position, men earned roughly \$1,185,873 (SD = \$1,267,728) annually, compared to \$596,270 (SD = \$177,805) for women —a \$589,603 pay gap ($p = 0.0006$). Further, women were underrepresented at every faculty rank in comparison to their male counterparts.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: Income disparity between male and female orthopedic surgeons remains significant. Although the representation of women in orthopedic surgery is improving, equal and fair compensation for women in academic orthopedics lags behind. Future research should seek to identify and address false narratives utilized to justify the gender pay gap, and identify actionable steps to close the gap.

Mean Compensation of Orthopedic Surgeons Stratified by Academic Rank and Gender

