

Is women's competitiveness expressed through their husband's income?

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We test for the influence of heterosexual individual's competitiveness on their partner's income using a recently validated measure of competitiveness incorporated in 2017 within a large representative sample survey with income data from 2015-2021. First, we show that in aggregate, the past (before 2017) and future (after 2017) income levels of men and women increase with their own competitiveness when we do not control for contemporaneous (2017) income. When we control for contemporaneous income to eliminate the potential influence of past success on surveyed competitiveness, we find that only the future income of single men increases on own competitiveness, but not that of cohabiting men or women regardless of marital status. Remarkably, the change in coupled men's future income increases only on their partner's competitiveness, not their own. By contrast, the change in women's future income level decreases on their partner's competitiveness. We investigate the potential channels for our results with a reduced sample of years (2015-2019) for which we have work hours data. Men's own work hours do increase on men's own competitiveness. However, the longer hours apparently do not increase their income. Inconsistent with standard models of household specialization contributing to men's labor market productivity, men's work hours do not increase on women's competitiveness. We explore the possibility that women's competitiveness increases their partner's income by increasing their aggressiveness in wage bargaining.

Keywords: competitiveness; household income; marriage wage premium; gender wage gap;

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