

The Wage Effects of Same-Sex Marriage Legalization

A Difference-in-Differences Analysis Using the American Community Survey



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Motivation & Research Question

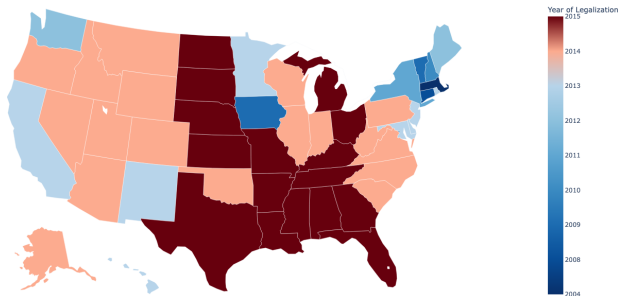


Figure: Legalization Timeline 2004–15

(Source: Own illustration, MAP, 2023)

quasi-experimental timing variation for DiD

Motivation & Research Question

Why focus on wage?

- Price of labor - human capital, bargaining power, inequality...
- Marriage equality changes access to concrete economic rights
- Marriage equality alters household specialization, bargaining
- Marriage equality shifts discrimination and employer wage setting
- Underexplored in the literature

How did legalization of same-sex marriage affect wages?

Through which channels do they operate?

Data & Methods

ACS, 2000–2019; cohabiting couples.

Difference-in-Differences Design

- On extensive margin and intensive margin
- By male and female group
- Heterogeneity: earner roles and parental status

Main Results

On the extensive margin: no meaningful participation response

On the intensive margin: $+ \approx 3\%$ men, $- \approx 2.3\%$ women

	Men	Women
Same-sex couple	-0.096^{***} (0.006)	0.066^{***} (0.003)
Legalization	-0.002 (0.005)	0.000 (0.005)
Same-sex \times Legalization	0.029^{**} (0.012)	-0.023^{***} (0.006)
Observations	6,121,193	5,197,634
R^2	0.242	0.217

Heterogeneity & mechanisms

Among men, primary earners drive the gains; secondary earners do not move.

Among women, both roles decline, with bigger losses for secondary earners.

Pattern aligns with household specialization, or employer beliefs updating.

	Male		Female	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Same-sex \times Legalization	0.030**	0.004	-0.014**	-0.036***
Observations	4,674,971	1,268,483	1,902,473	3,118,156
R^2	0.293	0.123	0.273	0.179

Conclusion

- Marriage equality didn't affect labor participation.
- Within employment adjustment: modest gains for same-sex cohabiting men, modest losses for women.
- Heterogeneity by earner role is consistent with a household specialization mechanism.