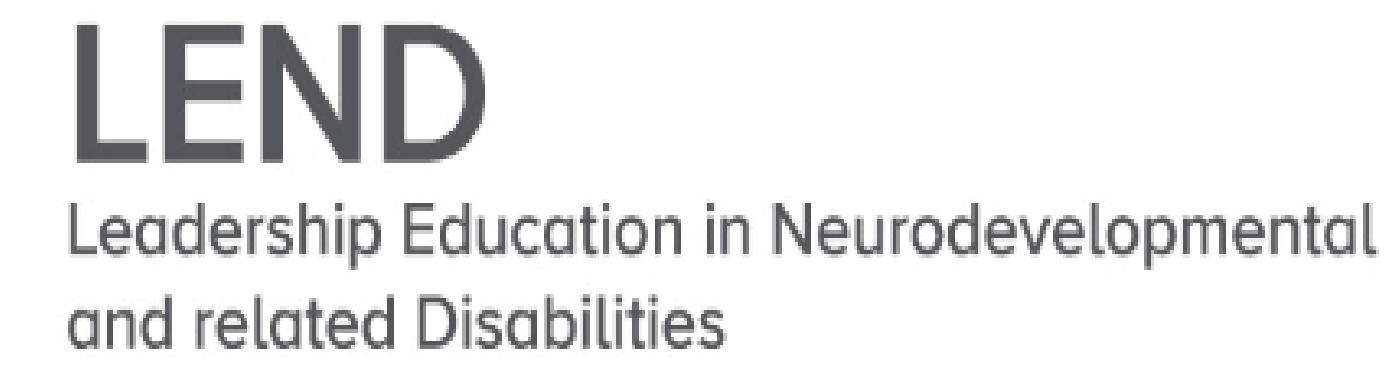


# The Gendered Pay Gap in Genetic Counseling

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**Background**

Gendered inequity in pay for the same job is demonstrated throughout society. It has been over 50 years since the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, yet women only make 80 cents for every dollar that a man earns<sup>1</sup>.

Societal explanations for this pay gap include higher rates and success of negotiation attempts for males, a disproportionately higher rate of males in leadership positions, and higher rates of females working part-time and/or shouldering a greater proportion of family care requirements<sup>2-7</sup>.

The genetic counseling field is 95% female, yet men in the field consistently earn more than women<sup>8-9</sup>. In 2019, male genetic counselors earned an average of \$9,846 more than female genetic counselors across all position types<sup>9</sup>.

The degree to which the aforementioned factors contribute to the pay gap in genetic counseling had not been explored prior.

**Aims**

- To identify demographic factors and career experiences that may impact salary differently for male and female genetic counselors.
- To measure genetic counselors' perceptions of the pay gap as well as their attitudes about their own salary.

**Methods**

**Participants and Procedures**  
355 respondents  
Data collection: June-September, 2019

**Instrumentation**  
Online survey administered through RedCap Sent through the NSGC listserv and through direct contact (males) batched by state

- Demographic information
- Pay information
- Negotiation characteristics and leadership experiences
- Additional career experiences
- Perception and attitudes

**Data Analysis**

- Descriptive Statistics
- Univariate regression analysis
- Multivariate regression analysis
  - Three different models, two stratified by position type (direct patient care vs. non-direct patient care) and one with the interaction term gender-position
  - Nominal *p* value threshold (*p* < 0.05) applied for significance

**Results: Demographic Characteristics, Negotiation Experiences, and Leadership Scores**

	Male, N (%) Total N=72	Female, N (%) Total N=283	P-value		
<b>Race</b>			0.09		
White or Caucasian	64 (88.8)	267 (94.3)			
Asian	5 (6.9)	11 (3.9)			
Asian Indian	2 (2.8)	5 (1.8)			
Black or African American	1 (1.4)	3 (1.1)			
<b>Ethnicity</b>			0.03		
Hispanic or Latino/a	4 (5.6)	3 (1.1)			
Not Hispanic or Latino/a	68 (94.4)	278 (98.2)			
<b>Disability status</b>			0.47		
Identify as having a disability	1 (1.4)	11 (3.9)			
Do not identify as having a disability	71 (98.6)	272 (26.1)			
<b>Licensure</b>			0.33		
Licensed	39 (54.2)	171 (60.4)			
Not licensed	33 (45.8)	112 (39.6)			
<b>Certification</b>			0.67		
Certified	65 (90.3)	259 (91.5)			
Not Certified	7 (9.7)	23 (8.1)			
<b>Degrees in addition to genetic counseling MS</b>			0.67		
Yes	10 (13.9)	34 (12.0)			
No	62 (86.1)	249 (88.0)			
<b>Type of patient care position</b>			0.02		
Direct	47 (65.3)	221 (78.1)			
Non-direct	25 (34.7)	61 (21.6)			
	median	range	median	range	
<b>Age (years)</b>	32	23-66	30	22-68	0.08
<b>Year of graduation</b>	2014	1975-2019	2014	1979-2019	0.59
<b>Years of experience</b>	5.6	0-43.9	5.0	0-40.0	0.35
<b>Negotiation attempts</b>	2	0-35	2	0-20	0.18

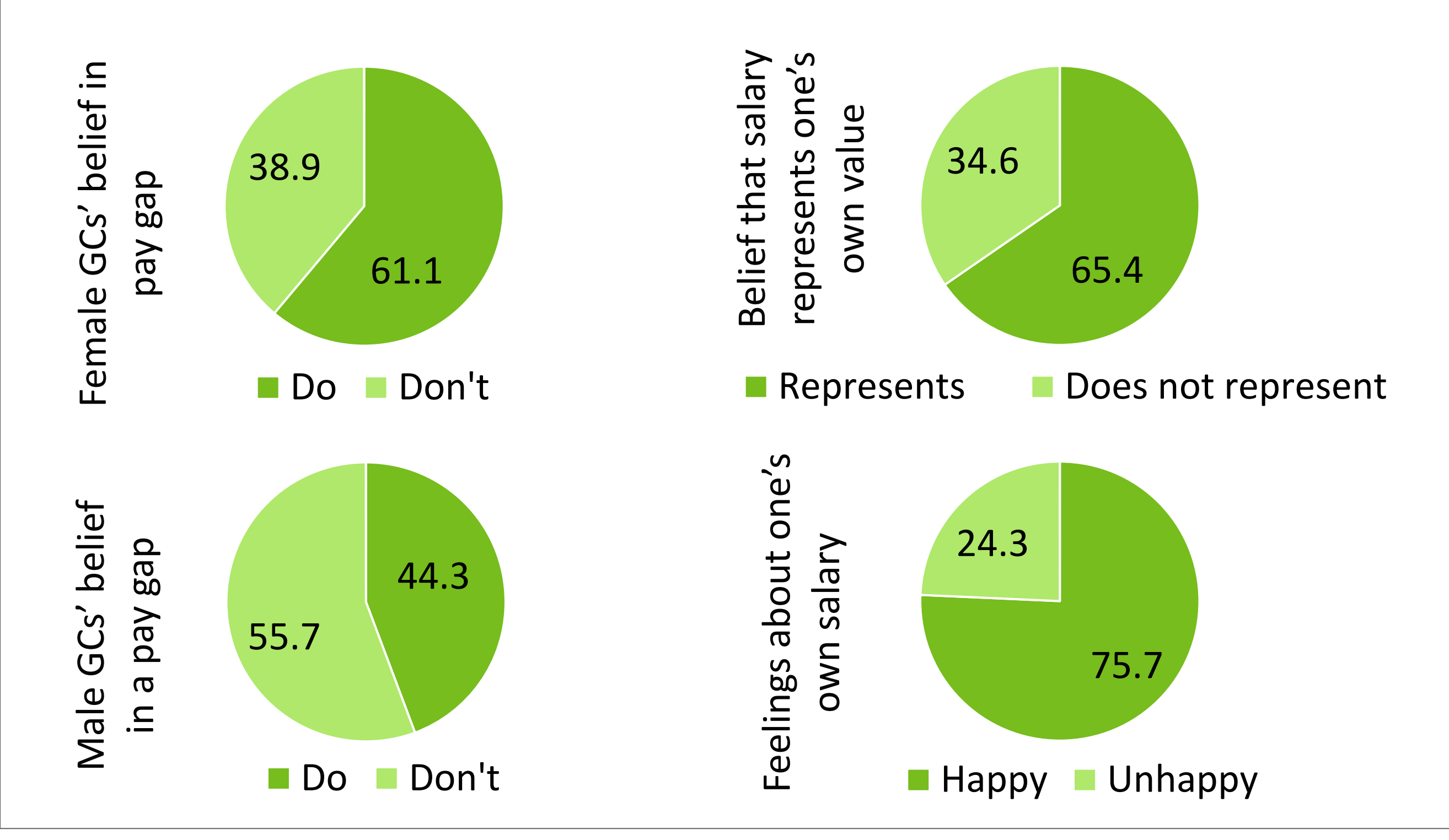
**Results: Association of Respondents' Characteristics with Annual Salary**

	Annual Salary (Lower CI, upper CI)	P-value
<b>Self-identified gender</b>		<0.001
Female	\$86,635 (84,273, 89,062)	
Male	\$97,626 (92,421, 103,124)	
<b>Licensure</b>		0.04
Licensed	\$90,762 (87,856, 93,763)	
Not licensed	\$85,937 (82,637, 89,368)	
<b>Certification</b>		<0.001
Certified	\$90,180 (87,884, 92,535)	
Not Certified	\$75,296 (69,178, 81,955)	
<b>Degrees in addition to genetic counseling MS</b>		0.01
Yes	\$96,565 (89,956, 103,661)	
No	\$87,707 (85,399, 90,077)	
<b>Type of patient care position</b>		<0.001
Direct	\$83,031 (80,968, 85,148)	
Non-direct	\$109,614 (104,851, 114,594)	
	% increase in annual salary per unit	
<b>Years of experience</b>	1.7	<0.001
<b>Negotiation attempts</b>	5.5	<0.001
<b>Leadership experience score</b>	3.7	<0.001

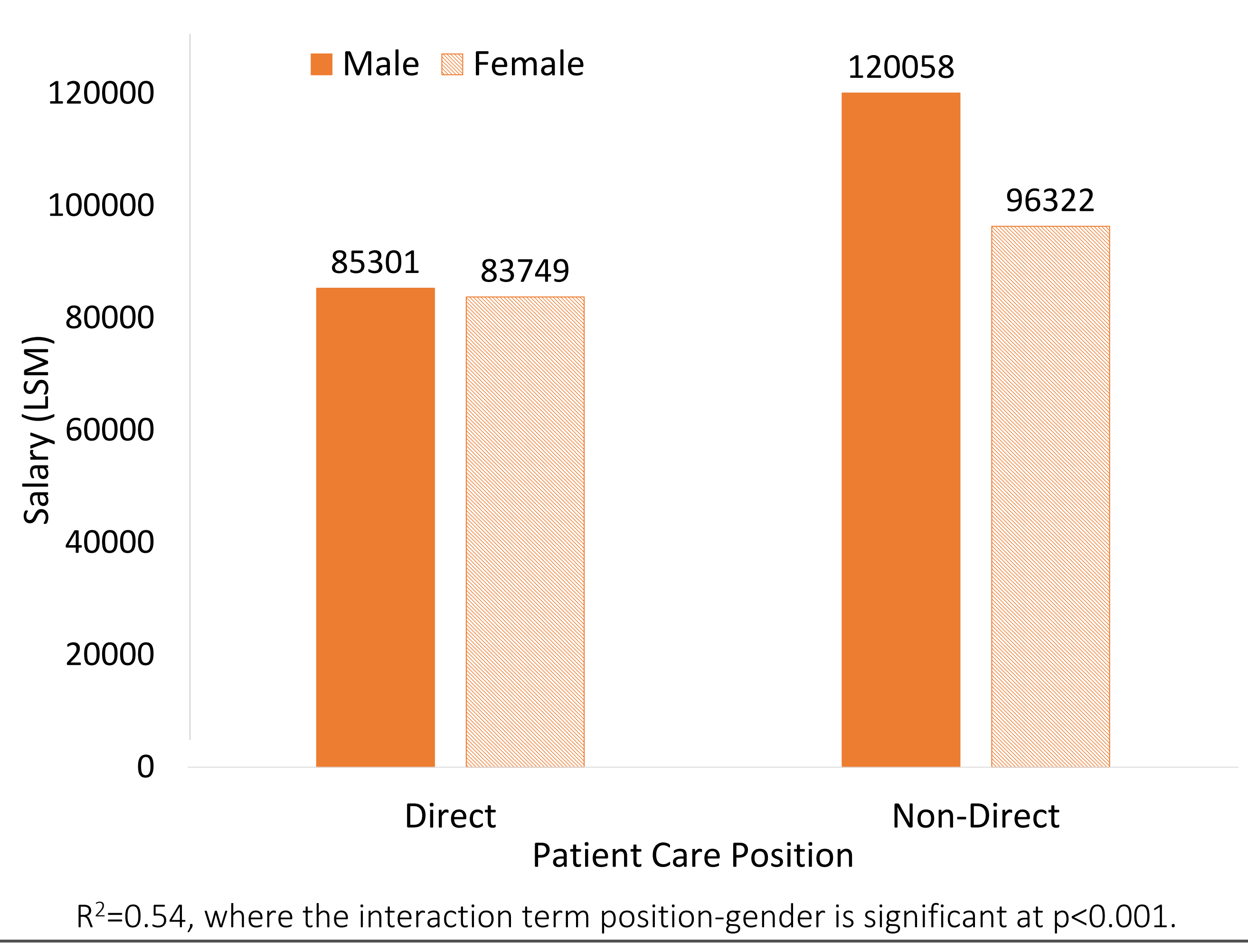
**Results: Distribution of Additional Career Experiences**

	Male, N (%) Total N=72	Female, N (%) Total N=283	P-value
<b>Had a break in full-time employment</b>			0.30
Yes	6 (8.3)	36 (12.7)	
No	66 (91.7)	247 (87.3)	
<b>Had maternity or paternity leave</b>			0.11
Yes	12 (16.6)	74 (26.1)	
No	58 (80.5)	206 (72.7)	
<b>Had worked part-time previously</b>			0.32
Yes	3 (4.2)	23 (8.1)	
No	69 (95.8)	258 (91.1)	
<b>Had additional earnings</b>			0.62
Yes	18 (25.0)	63 (22.3)	
No	54 (75.0)	220 (77.7)	

**Results: Respondent's Perceptions and Attitudes Around Salary (%)**



**Results: Regression Modelling with Position-Gender Interaction Term (\$)**



**Conclusions**

The pay gap between male and female genetic counselors appears early in genetic counselors' careers and increases over time.

Our respondents negotiated at the same rate and held the same number of leadership positions.

No demographic characteristics found to affect annual salary were distributed differently between our male and female respondents, **except for position**.

The pay gap is highly exaggerated within non-direct patient care positions and shrinks drastically within direct patient care positions.

Our best fitting model controlled for the gender-position interaction term yet was only able to predict about half of the variability in salary. Based on the large portion of variability that has yet to be identified, there must be something inherent within non-direct patient care positions that is giving male genetic counselors a significant salary advantage over their female colleagues.

However, most genetic counselors have limited knowledge of the pay gap and generally have positive feelings toward their own salaries.

Results from this study could impact employment practices, as well as genetic counselors' strategies in role- and salary-based conversations.

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