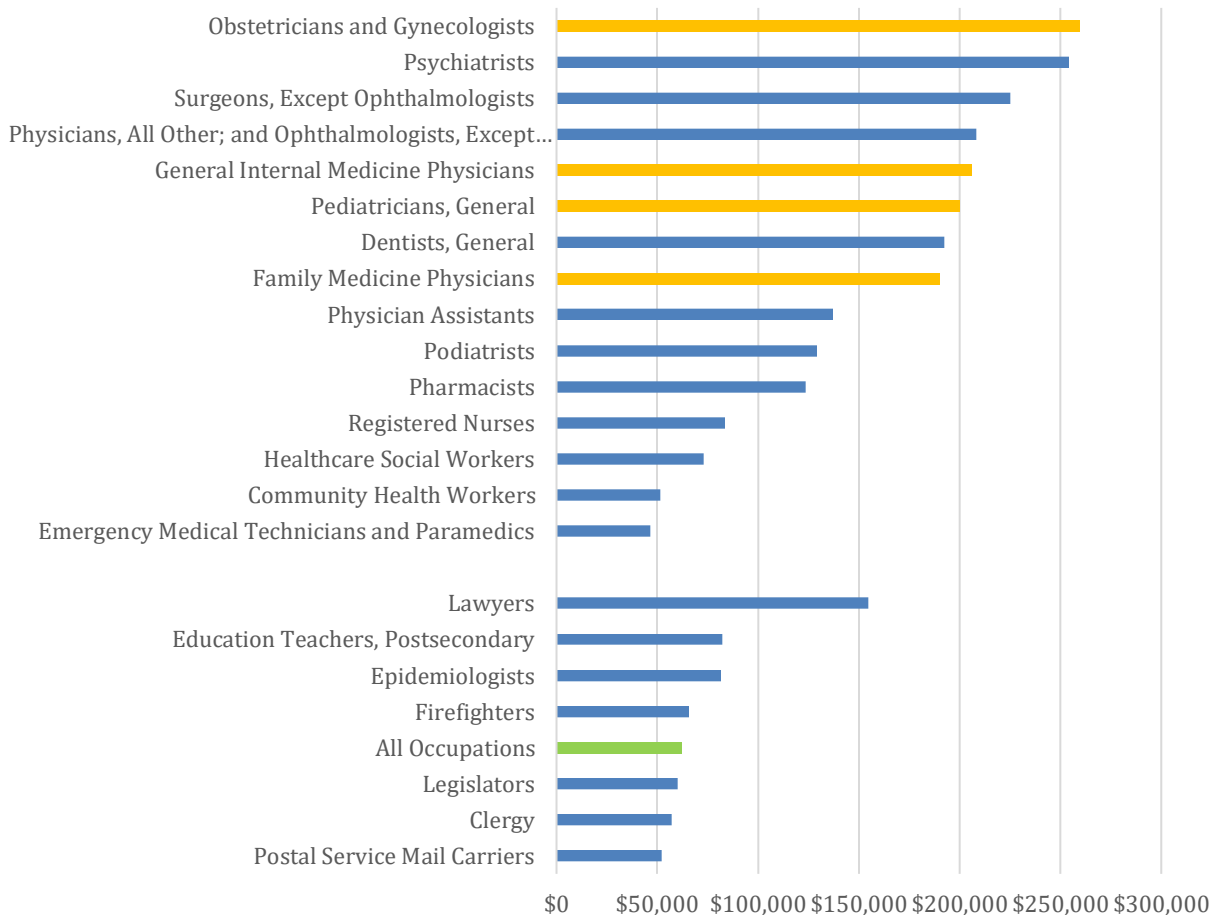


Fact Check: Are primary care doctors underpaid?

A statement was made in a recent Connecticut state public meeting that primary care physicians are paid less than specialists. The statement was made a recent Technical Team meeting for the Office of Health Strategy’s cost cap project considering a substantial increase in spending on primary care. The facts, however, are more nuanced. Context is important.

While, in general, primary care physicians in Connecticut make less than their specialist colleagues, it is not universally true. All physicians make far more than most Connecticut workers, many with equivalent or more educational requirements, and most other healthcare professionals. Other variables not related to specialty have significant impact on physician wages.

CT Mean Annual Wage, May 2019
US Bureau of Labor Statistics



According to the [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), in May 2019 Connecticut primary care physicians' average mean wages varied from \$190,440 for family medicine physicians, \$206,200 for general internists, \$ 200,090 for pediatricians, to \$259,810 for obstetricians and gynecologists. In contrast, Connecticut surgeons (except ophthalmologists) made \$225,150, psychiatrists made \$ 254,310, and podiatrists made \$129,330. These salary numbers are very similar to more recent numbers from [Indeed.com](#), [Salary.com](#), and [Ziprecruiter.com](#) for Connecticut physicians.

Connecticut Ob-Gyns' wages were higher than other physicians, including specialists. The Connecticut state employee plan considers Ob-Gyns to be primary care providers, but other plans do not. Researchers vary on this point.

In contrast, comparing primary care physicians' wages with other Connecticut workers finds they are higher than other health professions and much higher than most other jobs. Connecticut primary care physicians make more than EMTs and paramedics, community health workers, healthcare social workers, registered nurses, pharmacists, podiatrists, physician assistants, and dentists.

A [Medscape analysis of US physician compensation](#) found that other variables than specialty have a significant impact on salaries. Male primary care physicians make 25% more than their female colleagues and self-employed physicians make 14% more than employed physicians.

[Medscape](#) also found that primary care and specialty physicians spend approximately the same amount of time seeing patients (37.6 and 38.0 hours per week, respectively).

Connecticut workers' average wages were \$ 62,350, less than a third of primary care physicians' wages. Firefighters, legislators, clergy and mail carriers all make less than a third what Connecticut primary care physicians do. Connecticut college professors and epidemiologists make less than half and lawyers make 39% less than Connecticut primary care physicians do.