

Gender Pay Gap

RESEARCH SUMMARY

NO. 12 | JANUARY 17, 2024

INTRODUCTION

During the fall of 2023, Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) researchers conducted a statewide study to establish a baseline for public perceptions related to the awareness, understanding, and attitudes about challenges that Utah women and girls face (see [Background & Methods](#) for details). The study was created to support the work of 18 areas of focus (spokes) within the movement called [A Bolder Way Forward](#), which is dedicated to helping more Utah girls and women thrive. One of the 18 areas of focus is the gender pay gap, and this summary shares findings that illuminate present perspectives and establishes a baseline to track progress in a few key areas.

BACKGROUND

In 2021, UWLP published reports titled [“Utah Gender Wage Gap: A 2021 Update”](#) and [“Addressing the Gender Pay Gap in Utah with State Equal Pay Laws,”](#) along with a related [infographic](#). Each provides insight into the current status of women and outlines recommendations on how Utah can improve. As the nation has made progress in narrowing the gap, Utah has not done so for years, and in 2023 Utah ranked 50th as the state with largest income gap. To help leaders better understand the perspectives of Utahns on this issue, four gender pay gap questions (survey items) were asked in this new study. The data provide some additional insight that will guide changes to improve support for more Utah women and families.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Participants responded to each survey item using a 7-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=some-what disagree, 4=neither disagree nor agree, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree). For Sample 1 (non-probability), 2,455 Utahns responded to these four questions, and for Sample 2 (representative), there were 650 participants (Total=3,105).

1. Existence: The first survey item was “I believe a gender pay gap exists in Utah.” The statistical mean was 6.22 (SD 1.29) for the non-probability sample and 5.02 (SD 1.67) for the representative sample. In combining the results of both samples, 1,645 Utahns (53.0%) responded that they “strongly agree” with the statement, and another 965 (31.1%) “agree” or “somewhat agree.” Only 15.9% disagreed at some level. Thus, there is strong agreement that the pay gap exists in Utah. See the combined demographic findings below.

DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

**Gender:* Women’s agreement levels were significantly higher than men’s (6.00 and 4.98, resp.).

**Age:* Although most respondents agreed, the lowest statistical means included those who were 18–29 and 70+; the highest category was 55–59.

**Education:* The more education, the stronger the agreement.

**Marital Status:* Although still agreeable, the single and widowed categories had the lowest means.

**Income:* The higher the income, the stronger the agreement.

**Children:* There was no statistically significant difference between parents and nonparents, and among parents with different numbers and ages of children.

**Race & Ethnicity:* Although still agreeable, American Indian and Pacific Islanders did not agree as strongly.

**Religion:* Although still agreeable, Latter-day Saints and Catholics, as well as more active people, had less agreement.

**Employment:* Full-time homemakers, unemployed, and retirees had the lowest agreement levels.

Residency: There were no significant differences among categories.

**Counties:* Salt Lake County respondents had the highest agreement, followed by Summit/Wasatch.

2. Less Money: The second survey item was “Utah women make less money than their male counterparts even when they have the same/similar experience, education, and position.” The statistical mean was 6.09 (SD 1.35) for the non-probability sample and 4.98 (SD 1.70) for the representative sample. In combining the results of both samples, 2,537 Utahns (62.1%) responded that they agreed with this statement at some level, with 1,489 selecting “strongly agree.” Only 18.1% disagreed. See the combined demographic findings below.

DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

**Gender:* Women’s agreement levels were significantly higher than men’s (5.91 and 4.83, resp.).

**Age:* Participants in the 18–24 and 70+-year-old ranges did not agree as strongly, while those in the 55–59 range had the strongest agreement.

**Education:* The more education, the stronger the agreement.

**Marital Status:* Women in the divorced category had the strongest agreement, followed by married and living with partner/cohabiting.

**Income:* The higher the income, the stronger the agreement.

**Children:* There were no significant differences between those who had children or not, but those who had children in the 0–5 age range were less agreeable.

**Race & Ethnicity:* Those who identified as White had the strongest agreement to the statement, and Pacific Islander the least.

**Religion:* Although they still agreed, Latter-day Saints and those more active in any religion agreed the least with the statement.

**Employment:* Full-time homemakers, unemployed, and retirees had the lowest agreement levels.

**Denotes statistically significant differences within the demographic categories.*

**Residency:* Those who had lived in Utah fewer than 2 years were less agreeable.

**Counties:* Salt Lake and Summit/Wasatch counties had the strongest agreement to this question.

3. Women's Choices: The third survey item was "Utah's pay gap exists because of women's own choices (e.g., career breaks, educational choices, lack of experience, job industry)." The statistical mean was 2.35 (SD 1.61) for Sample 1 and 3.10 (SD 1.78) for Sample 2. For this question, 71.7% of Utahns in the combined sample disagreed with the statement at some level, with 40.2% responding that they "strongly disagree." Only 12.6% selected "neither agree or disagree," and 15.6% chose any of the "agree" options. See the combined demographic findings below.

DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

**Gender:* Women more strongly disagreed than did men (2.47 and 3.42, resp.).

Age: There were no significant differences among age categories.

**Education:* The higher the educational level, the stronger the disagreement.

**Marital Status:* Divorced and living with a partner/cohabitating categories had the strongest disagreement with the statement.

**Income:* The highest income levels had the strongest disagreement with the statement.

**Children:* There were no significant differences between parents and nonparents; those who had teens disagreed less.

Race & Ethnicity: There were no significant agreement differences.

**Religion:* Although they still disagreed, participants who identified as Catholic and Latter-day Saint disagreed less strongly. In addition, people in the "very active" category disagreed less strongly than other religious activity options.

**Employment:* Those in the full-time student category had the strongest disagreement responses.

Residency: There were no significant disagreement differences.

**Counties:* The counties with the strongest disagreement to the statement were Salt Lake, Summit/Wasatch, and Cache. The least disagreement was found in Box Elder and the region that included Millard, Sevier, Beaver, and Juab.

4. Leaders Should Act: The final survey item was "Utah leaders should take action to close the gender pay gap." The statistical mean was 6.14 (SD 1.34) for Sample 1 and 5.39 (SD 1.78) for Sample 2. In the combined sample results, 52.3% (1,622) selected "strongly agree," while another 32.3% chose either "agree" or "somewhat agree." Although there was a significant difference between Sample 1 and 2, respondents in both agreed with the statement. See the combined demographic findings for this item below.

DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

**Gender:* There were significant differences among the responses of women (6.02) and men (5.10).

**Age:* Although still agreeable, participants in the 65–69 and 70 and older categories had the lowest agreement levels.

**Education:* The more education, the stronger the agreement.

**Marital Status:* Respondents who were divorced were significantly more agreeable.

**Income:* Those who had household incomes of \$150,000 or more had significantly stronger agreement levels.

Children: There were no significant differences between parents and nonparents and among the number and ages of children.

Race & Ethnicity: There were no significant agreement differences among the race/ethnicity categories.

**Religion:* Although all agreed, agnostic, atheist, and "spiritual but no affiliation" agreed the most, and respondents who selected religious activity at "not at all active" or minimally active were the most agreeable.

**Employment:* Full-time homemakers and retirees had lower levels of agreement than did all others.

Residency: There were no significant differences among categories.

**Counties:* Most survey participants around the state agreed with this statement. The highest statistical means (highest first) included Salt Lake, Tooele/Morgan/Rich, Summit/Wasatch, and Cache counties. The lowest came a group of ten rural eastern counties and another group of five central rural counties in Utah.

CONCLUSION

This summary highlights key findings related to four gender pay gap questions. Respondents from across the state participated in the study. Sample 1 was a non-probability sample, and Sample 2 was a representative sample. Although the second aligns more closely with the awareness, understanding, and attitudes of the general Utah population, Sample 1 provides insight into the views of a distinct set of Utahns (see [Background & Methods](#) for the demographic details on both samples). Each is useful in understanding Utahns' perceptions of and attitudes toward the gender pay gap.

Through the years, Utah's gender pay gap has been a frequent topic covered in the news media and discussed among women and top business leaders around the state. Yet, the topic has been excused and dismissed by many Utah decision makers. However, this research has found that Utahns' perspectives are clear. There is wide recognition that there is not only a pay gap, but that Utah leaders need to address it. The negative impact of the gender pay gap on Utah women and families has been well-documented. Let's take action now!

For questions and information:

- uwl@usu.edu
- utwomen.org
- abolderwayforward.org

