



The Status of Utah Asian Women

Last year, the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute released a landmark databook on race, ethnicity, and sex. In that report they noted that Utah is becoming increasingly diverse, and this has brought wide disparities between most minority groups and the White population in terms of education, housing, and health outcomes.¹ Although the Institute presented critical data to start the conversation more broadly, the Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) wanted to expand and deepen this discussion by focusing a series of research snapshots on Utah women of color. As the UWLP focuses on strengthening the impact of *all* Utah girls and women, research that increases our understanding of the status, condition, and experiences of girls and women within all social and identity groups—including race and ethnicity—is crucial.

Often, research entities publish data on gender and race separately, leaving a gap of information and understanding on the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity. Yet, separate data do not give the community, decision makers, and policy makers the depth of information needed to design programs and policies that meet the diverse needs of all Utah women. To begin to close the data gap, this research snapshot is the second of five that detail the available data on Utah women of each Census race/ethnic category: Pacific Islander, Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American women. The data presented here include information from, among other sources, the 5-year US Census Microdata, Utah System of Higher Education, Utah Department of Corrections, and a number of Utah Department of Health offices, including Health Disparities, Vital Records and Statistics, and Public Health Assessment.

Setting the Stage

This research snapshot highlights the gender and race interaction for Utah Asian women. It highlights both the available data and the information gaps that can, if filled, help local and state decision-makers and leaders to understand and address the needs of Utah Asian girls and women. Researchers use the US Census description for “Asian,” which is “A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.”² Thus, while widely-used Census

categories allow for data to be comparable across entities, the categories represent many different countries, cultures, and experiences and, in fact, the term “Asian” represents more than 20 different ethnicities and multiple geographical regions. This is important to remember as we describe data for the Asian subgroup, which represents a range of economically developing to higher-income nations.

We sought data across broad categories that impact Utah women, such as civic engagement, childcare access, utility connectivity, domestic violence, caregiver status, unpaid care work, housing, transportation, access to healthy food, and food insecurity. Unfortunately, much of this information is unavailable for a variety of reasons: specific data have not been collected or are not available at needed levels, the sample sizes are too small to generalize, the origin of the data is underresourced, the data have sharing limitations, or the data collection methods are unsubstantiated. Yet, UWLP researchers collected data in these five categories: general demographics, health, basic needs, education, and income and employment.

Demographics

Available demographic data on Utah Asian women include population size, household size, family household type, and marital status.

Population Size: The Utah Asian population has seen steady growth over time and now comprises 2.5% of the Utah population. In 2010, 55,265 Utahns were Asian; by 2020 the number had increased to 83,583. Demographers project the Asian population to grow significantly through 2065, when the Asian population is expected to comprise 4.0% of Utah’s population (rising to more than 200,000).³ Currently, 37,747 Asian women live in Utah, representing 1.2% of the state population, a smaller percentage than the 2.9% share of the US population.⁴

Household Size: The average household size of Asian women in Utah is 2.8 persons, which is slightly larger than the average of 2.7 for Asian women across the US and in between 3.0 for Utah women and 2.5 for US women.⁵

Family Household Type: Almost 3 in 4 (79.9%) Utah Asian households consist of married couple families (compared to 81.7% of all Utah families and 82.1% of US Asian

families). Of Asian family households, 13.9% are led by women with no spouse present (12.3% for all Utah women and 11.9% for US Asian women) compared to 6.2% of Utah Asian men with no spouse present (5.9% for Utah men and 6.1% for US Asian men).

Marital Status: Just over 60.0% of Asian women in Utah are married, which is significantly higher than all US women (48.7%) and similar to all Utah women (56.9%). Twenty-seven percent have never been married, similar to 27.3% of all Utah women and 30.4% of all US women. Asian women have separation rates similar to those of all Utah women (1.7% vs. 1.6%) and comparable rates of widowhood (5.5% vs. 5.6%); however, divorce rates for Asian women in Utah are much lower than for all Utah women (5.8% vs. 10.2%). That trend holds nationally as well, where 6.3% of US Asian women are divorced compared to 12.1% of US women.⁶ See Table 1 for a summary of household and marital status findings.

Table 1. Household and Marital Status Characteristics, 2015–2019⁷

Demographic	Utah		US	
	Asian	All	Asian	All
Average people per household	2.8	3.0	2.7	2.5
Marital Status for Women				
Never married	27.0%	27.3%	27.0%	30.4%
Married	60.1%	56.9%	58.3%	48.7%
Separated	1.7%	1.6%	1.3%	2.2%
Widowed	5.5%	5.6%	7.1%	8.8%
Divorced	5.8%	10.2%	6.3%	12.1%
Family Household				
Married couple family household	79.9%	81.7%	82.1%	73.6%
Male householder, no spouse present	6.2%	5.9%	6.1%	7.5%
Female householder, no spouse present	13.9%	12.3%	11.9%	19.0%

Health

The Utah Department of Health’s Office of Health Disparities (OHD)⁸ exists to shed light on disproportionate health disparities by race, ethnicity, geography, and income, and thus has multiple reports comparing and analyzing health disparity profiles of Utah’s racial and ethnic minority communities. The following data on Asian women includes access to healthcare as well as various physical, reproductive, and mental health indicators.

Access to Healthcare: Asian women in Utah are more likely to have health insurance (91.7%) than Utah women in general (88.8%).⁹ Further, they have greater access to medical care, with only 12.6% of Asian women in Utah reporting that they forgo medical care due to cost (vs. 13.8% of women in Utah generally) but do report having no

personal doctor at a slightly higher rate (21.3% for Asian women vs. 20.2% for all Utah women).¹⁰

Physical Health: Utah Asian women are more likely to receive most preventative care and less likely to experience poor health outcomes compared to Utah women in general. For example, Utah Asian women are more likely to receive pap smears (70.4% vs. 60.3% of all Utah women)¹¹ and less likely to receive a diagnosis of cervical cancer (3.5% vs. 5.2% of all Utah women).¹² Utah Asian women receive mammograms (72.5%) more than Utah women in general (63.2%)¹³ and are far less likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer (83.5 per 100,000 vs. 114.6 per 100,000 for all Utah women, adjusted for age)¹⁴ and to die from breast cancer (6.7% vs. 19.3% of Utah women).¹⁵ Higher rates of physical activity are reported by Asian women in Utah (21.9% vs. 19.4% of all Utah women)¹⁶ as well as lower rates of obesity (15.3% vs. 28.4% of all Utah women).¹⁷

Table 2. Health Indicator Summary

Health Indicator	Utah Women	
	Asian	All
Access to Healthcare		
Uninsured	8.3%	11.2%
Unable to get care due to cost	12.6%	13.8%
No personal doctor	21.3%	20.2%
Physical Health		
Pap smear	70.4%	60.3%
Cervical cancer	3.5%	5.2%
Breast cancer rates per 100,000 females	83.5	114.6
Mammograms	72.5%	63.2%
Breast cancer death	6.7%	19.3%
Obesity	15.3%	28.4%
Reproductive Health		
Birth rate	10.5	10.6
Gestational diabetes	14.8%	6.8%
Postpartum depression	14.5%	14.8%
Mental Health		
Bad mental health*	17.9%	23.6%
Depression	11.8%	29.7%

*7 or more days out of the past 30 where respondent noted their mental health was “not good.” See citations in this section for the data sources.

Reproductive Health and Wellbeing: The birth rate per 1,000 Asian women in Utah is 10.5, aligned with the rate of 10.6 for all Utah women.¹⁸ Utah Asian women also receive prenatal care in their first trimester (89.0%) at rates similar to those of all Utah women (88.7%)¹⁹ and have a far greater rate of gestational diabetes during pregnancy (14.8%) than all Utah women (6.8%).²⁰ After giving birth, Utah Asian women have similar rates of postpartum depression (14.5%) to Utah women in general (14.8%).²¹

Mental Health: According to the data, Utah Asian women fare better in mental health outcomes than Utah women generally. They are less likely to report bad mental health (17.9% vs. 23.6% of all Utah women)²² or a diagnosis of

major depressive disorder (11.8% vs. 29.7% of all Utah women).²³

Basic Needs

The term “basic needs” describe data regarding access to water, internet, safety, and freedom. First, Asian women in Utah are more likely to report no access to water (13.9%) than US Asian women (11.0%) and all Utah women (10.6%) but less than all US women (14.4%). Second, internet access has become increasing critical to accessing information, services, and education. Fewer Utah Asian women report having no internet access at home (3.4%), a smaller share than Utah women in general (5.1%) and rates that are lower than those seen nationally for women (4.8% of US Asian women; 10.4% of all US women).²⁴ Third, the Utah Office for Victims of Crime report that, of individuals who have applied for crime victim reparations between 2019 and 2021, 81.6% were women. Of those, 0.8% were identified as Asian (it is important to note that the race/ethnicity of 28% of these women was classified as “unknown.”).²⁵ And, finally, Utah Asian women made up an average 1.1% of the female prison population between 2010 and 2021,²⁶ compared to the 2.5% share of the total Utah female population.²⁷

Education

In most states and in the US in general, women earn the majority of college degrees. In fact, women earn 57.0% of bachelor-level diplomas, 60.0% of master’s degrees, and 51.7% of doctorates.²⁸ While we were not able to determine the same detail for Utah women of color, this section highlights educational attainment rates in general as well as share of enrollment at Utah’s public universities.

According to the 5-Year US Census Microdata, Asian women in Utah end their education with a high school diploma (19.8%) less than Utah women generally (23.8%) and have much higher rates of attaining a bachelor’s degree (44.3% vs. 29.0% of all Utah women) (see Table 3).²⁹ Of the population aged 18–35 in 2018, the enrollment rate for Utah Asian women was 13.4% compared to the Utah female average of 12.5%.³⁰ The 5-year average completion rates of college-enrolled Asian women in Utah aged 18–35 is 31.2% compared to all Utah women at 27.9%.

Table 3. Educational Attainment, 2015–2019³¹

Educational Attainment	Utah Women		US Women	
	Asian	All	Asian	All
Less than HS	11.2%	7.1%	13.3%	10.9%
HS diploma	19.8%	23.8%	15.6%	26.2%
Some college	24.8%	40.2%	21.0%	32.0%
Bachelor’s	44.3%	29.0%	50.0%	30.9%

Income and Employment

The US Department of Labor recently released a report³² that documented how women of color were more disproportionately impacted by the economic crisis of the pandemic. Report authors argued that the longstanding disparities in the labor force between men and women, and especially women of color—exacerbated by the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic—have intensified the persistently lower wages, fewer workplace benefits, and underinvestment in policies around childcare and paid leave. However, data limitations made it difficult to discern the diverse experiences of Asian women, specifically, areas in which certain subgroups of Asian women were more disproportionately impacted by the economic crisis than White women. Yet, UWLP researchers did find some differences in a 2021 survey of more than 3,000 Utah women regarding their work experiences work during the pandemic. Generally, women of color were more likely to agree that they were exhausted and struggling to balance work and home life.³³ More specifically, Asian women with household incomes between \$25,000 and \$30,000 were among the highest to report financial worry.³⁴

This section provides information regarding income, occupation, and business ownership among Asian women in Utah.

Income: The median personal income³⁵ for Utah Asian women (\$21,856) is similar to the median income for Utah women generally (\$19,245), which contrasts national trends, with US women having a higher median income (\$23,106) than US Asian women (\$20,842) (see Table 4). Similarly, the median personal wage of Asian women in Utah is slightly higher than for all Utah women (\$32,004 vs. \$28,374) but lower for household income (\$66,036 vs. \$70,838). However, Asian women in Utah face greater rates of poverty (14.1% vs. 10.8% of all Utah women), which directly contrasts national trends (11.2% for US Asian women vs. 14.7% for all US women). Asian women in Utah earn \$0.66 on the dollar as compared to White Utah men (compared to \$0.70 for all Utah women³⁶), a wider gap than is seen nationally for Asian women (\$0.87 cents on the dollar).

Table 4. Income, 2015–2019³⁷

Characteristic	Utah Women		US Women	
	Asian	All	Asian	All
Labor force participation rate	64.6%	61.7%	60.0%	59.4%
Median household income	\$66,036	\$70,838	\$82,399	\$59,250
Median income	\$21,856	\$19,245	\$20,842	\$23,106
Median wage	\$32,004	\$28,374	\$41,683	\$34,543
Poverty rate	14.1%	10.8%	11.2%	14.7%
Wage gap	66.0%	70.0%	87.0%	82.0%
Unemployment	2.8%	3.3%	4.2%	5.0%

Occupation: Utah Asian women are represented at different rates across occupational settings as compared to Utah women generally (see Table 5).

Table 5. Occupational Type, 2015–2019³⁸

Occupation	Utah Women		US Women	
	Asian	All	Asian	All
Officials and Administrators	10.2%	11.6%	13.0%	12.2%
Professionals	24.8%	22.1%	31.9%	23.3%
Technicians	3.8%	3.0%	3.2%	3.4%
Protective Services	0.5%*	0.8%	0.3%	1.0%
Paraprofessionals	1.2%*	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
Administrative Support	25.3%	35.0%	23.2%	31.0%
Skilled crafts	4.8%	1.8%	1.8%	1.5%
Service & Maintenance	28.5%	24.3%	24.6%	25.8%

*Use caution in interpreting; sample sizes may be too small for generalizability.

Industry: Utah Asian women are also employed in industry at different rates than Utah women generally, with significantly higher participation in manufacturing and lower participation in health and education (see Table 6).

Table 6. Industry, 2015–2019³⁹

Industry	Utah Women		US Women	
	Asian	All	Asian	All
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	14.3%	17.3%	13.9%	15.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	0.2%*	0.7%	0.4%	0.8%
Construction	0.6%*	1.4%	0.7%	1.4%
Manufacturing	15.0%	6.6%	8.6%	6.2%
Information Services	1.5%*	1.8%	2.0%	1.7%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	8.6%	7.7%	7.4%	7.3%
Professional & Business Serv.	10.0%	11.0%	12.5%	10.4%
Health & Education	27.4%	34.3%	32.2%	35.4%
Leisure & Hospitality	10.4%	9.4%	10.4%	10.2%
Other Services	8.4%	4.9%	7.6%	5.5%
Public Admin.	3.0%	4.3%	3.4%	4.4%

*Use caution in interpreting; sample sizes may be too small for generalizability.

¹ Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. (2021, May 6). *Data book. Diversity in Utah: Race, ethnicity, and sex. Analysis in brief.* University of Utah. <https://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/DiversityDataBook-AIB-May2021.pdf?x71849>

² US Census Bureau. (2022). *About the topic of race.* <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>

³ Hollingshaus, M., Harris, E., & Perlich, P. (2019). *Utah's increasing diversity: Population projections by race/ethnicity.* Kem C. Gardner

Business Ownership: The Women's Business Center of Utah report that, of their majority of women clients (95%), 3.0% are Asian.⁴⁰ Nationally, as of 2019, 50.0% of all women-owned businesses in the US were owned by women of color, and firms owned by Asian women grew 37.0% between 2014 and 2019.⁴¹

Conclusion

The data in this report provide a snapshot of the existing disparities in several areas specifically related to Utah Asian women. Thus, the report provides a starting point for meaningful, targeted change. Although we were able to find existing data regarding the general demographics, health, wellbeing, education, and income and employment of Utah Asian women, usable information was not available in many categories we hoped to collect, such as housing, transportation, domestic violence, unpaid labor, caregiver status, childcare accessibility, civic engagement, and food insecurity. Additionally, data are not available for the diverse Asian subgroups, where experiences and data may vary greatly depending on ethnicity or regional origin. This demonstrates both a data gap and an opportunity for Utah universities, government, nonprofit, and other entities to do more to collaborate, gather, and report quality data that can help government, education, business, and nonprofit leaders and decision makers understand more deeply the circumstances and needs of Utah's Asian women. More generally, gender, race, and ethnicity, along with other important demographic data, can help Utahns create a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable culture for all.

Overall, Utahns can increase equity and equality within the state by utilizing data to recognize the impact of gender and race in our everyday lives. As we seek to provide greater access and opportunity to all residents, the state can use these data to better utilize the talents, ideas, and resources that Asian women have to offer the state, employers, and Utah families. Using data to create policies that support all Utah residents, including Asian women, can strengthen Utah's workplaces, educational institutions, communities, and the state as a whole.

Policy Institute, University of Utah. <https://gardner.utah.edu/demographics/population-projections/raceethnicity-projections/>

⁴ Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.

⁵ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.

- ⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.
- ⁷ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.
- ⁸ Office of Health Disparities. (2021). *Diabetes and gestational diabetes among racial and ethnic minority women in Utah*. Utah Department of Health. <https://health.utah.gov/disparities/data/profiles/Utah-HealthDisparitiesProfileDiabetesGestationalDiabetes2021.pdf>; Office of Health Disparities. (2021). Utah Department of Health. *Maternal mortality and morbidity among Utah minority women*. <https://health.utah.gov/disparities/data/profiles/UtahHealthDisparities-ProfileMaternalMortalityMorbidity2021.pdf>
- ⁹ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2020.
- ¹⁰ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2019.
- ¹¹ In past 3 years. Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2019 & 2020.
- ¹² Age adjusted. Utah Cancer Registry 2010–2019.
- ¹³ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2018–2020.
- ¹⁴ Utah Cancer Registry 2012–2016. Age-adjusted incidence per 100,000 females.
- ¹⁵ Age adjusted rate per 100,000 women. Utah Death Certificate Database, Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Utah Department of Health.
- ¹⁶ Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2018–2019.
- ¹⁷ Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2018–2019.
- ¹⁸ Birth rate per 1,000 Utah Residents. Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2017–2019.
- ¹⁹ Utah Birth Certificate Database, Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Utah Department of Health, 2018–2020.
- ²⁰ Utah Birth Certificate Database, Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Utah Department of Health, 2020.
- ²¹ Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2017–2019.
- ²² Seven or more days out of the past 30 where mental health is not good. Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2020.
- ²³ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2020.
- ²⁴ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.
- ²⁵ Utah Office for Victims of a Crime. (2022). Office statistics received for claims received between 01/01/2019 and 12/31/21.
- ²⁶ Utah Department of Corrections inmate population data for 2010–2021.
- ²⁷ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata
- ²⁸ Sawyer, K., & Valerio, A. M. (2018). Making the case for male champions for gender inclusiveness at work. *Organizational Dynamics*, 47(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2017.06.002>
- ²⁹ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.
- ³⁰ Utah System of Higher Education. (2019). Issue brief: Utah’s growing opportunity gap. <https://ushe.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Utahs-Growing-Opportunity-Gap-Final-updated-template.pdf>
- ³¹ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.
- ³² US Department of Labor. (2022, March). *Bearing the cost: How overrepresentation in undervalued jobs disadvantaged women during the pandemic*. <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/media/BearingTheCostReport.pdf>
- ³³ Hartwell, C., Hansen, J., & Madsen, S. R. (2021, June 2). *The impact of COVID-19 on Utah women and work: Childcare and homeschooling*. UWLP. <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/files/briefs/33-covid-19-childcare-homeschooling.pdf>
- ³⁴ Hansen, J., Hartwell, C., & Madsen, S. R. (2021, April 6). *The impact of COVID-19 on Utah women and work: Changes, burnout, & hope*. UWLP. <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/files/briefs/30-impact-of-covid-19-on-utah-women-work-changes-burnout-hope.pdf>
- ³⁵ The personal income category includes people who are not working in addition to people in the labor force.
- ³⁶ Winkel, R., Darowski, E. S., Christensen, M., & Madsen, S. R. (2021, October 5). *Utah gender wage gap: A 2021 update*. UWLP. <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/files/snapshot/31.pdf>
- ³⁷ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata; the gender wage gap data in the table is from Winkel et al. (above).
- ³⁸ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.
- ³⁹ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.
- ⁴⁰ Women’s Business Center of Utah. (2016–2017). Annual report. <https://wbcutah.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/WBC-AnnualReport-2017-Digital.pdf>
- ⁴¹ American Express. (2019). The 2019 state of women-owned businesses report, p. 4.

Acknowledgements: We would like to acknowledge the efforts of many universities, state agencies, and community organizations that contributed their expertise, data, and support to compile this report. A special thanks to Nubia Peña, Claudia Loayza, and Jenny Hor of the Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs; Dr. Paula Smith of the University of Utah; and Dr. Tasha Toy of Dixie State University for their coaching, direction, and reviews. In addition, thanks to Levi Pace of the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah and Brittney Okada at the Utah Office of Health Disparities for their invaluable help finding data. We are also grateful for the following students and community members for their assistance: Tatiana Leroy, Ciriac Alvarez, Melissa Hagan, Amber Stargell, and Anneka Cole.

Copyright © 2022 Utah Women & Leadership Project