



The Status of Utah Black Women

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 Last year, the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah released a report on race, ethnicity, and sex that started the conversation more broadly, and now the Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) is expanding and deepening 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 third 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 Black 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 Black girls and women. Researchers use the US Census description for “Black,” which is “A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.”² Thus, while widely-used Census categories allow for data to be comparable across entities, the categories represent many different countries, cultures, and experiences.

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 Black women include population size, household size, family household type, and marital status.

Population Size: The Utah Black population has seen steady growth over time and now comprises 1.2% of the Utah population. In 2010, 26,436 Utahns were Black; by 2020 the number had increased to 38,639. Demographers project the Black population share to double by 2065, comprising 2.1% of Utah’s population (rising to almost 125,000).³ Currently, 16,072 Black women live in Utah, representing 0.5% of the state population, a much smaller share than their 6.6% share of the US population.⁴

Household Size: The average household size for Black women in Utah is 3.0 persons, which is the same as all Utah women (3.0). The national comparison between groups is similar as well, where US Black women have an average household size of 2.4 compared to 2.5 for all US women.⁵

Family Household Type: Almost 60% of Utah Black households consist of married couple families, compared to 81.7% of all Utah families and 45.4% of US Black families. Of Black family households in Utah, 25.1% are led by women with no spouse present (12.3% for all Utah family households and 44.4% for US Black family households) compared to 15.2% of Black families in Utah led by men with no spouse present (5.9% for all Utah family households and 10.2% for US Black family households).⁶

Marital Status: Just under 35.0% of Black women in Utah are married, which is significantly lower than all US women (48.7%) and all Utah women (56.9%). Almost 45.0% have never been married, much higher than the 27.3% of all Utah women and 30.4% of all US women, but similar to all US Black women (48.1%). Black women have somewhat higher separation rates to those of all Utah women (3.7% vs. 1.6%) and comparable rates of widowhood (6.0% vs. 5.6%). Divorce rates for Black women in Utah are also comparable to all Utah women (10.7% vs. 10.2%), but a bit higher nationally, where 13.4% of US Black women are divorced compared to 12.1% of US women.⁷ See Table 1 for a summary of household and marital status findings.

Table 1. Household and Marital Status Characteristics, 2015–2019⁸

Demographic	Utah		US	
	Black	All	Black	All
Average people per household	3.0	3.0	2.4	2.5
Marital Status for Women				
Never married	44.9%	27.3%	48.1%	30.4%
Married	34.8%	56.9%	26.3%	48.7%
Separated	3.7%	1.6%	3.9%	2.2%
Widowed	6.0%	5.6%	8.3%	8.8%
Divorced	10.7%	10.2%	13.4%	12.1%
Family Household				
Married couple family household	59.7%	81.7%	45.4%	73.6%
Male householder, no spouse present	15.2%	5.9%	10.2%	7.5%
Female householder, no spouse present	25.1%	12.3%	44.4%	19.0%

Health

The Utah Department of Health’s Office of Health Disparities (OHD)⁹ 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 Black women includes access to healthcare as well as various physical, reproductive, and mental health indicators.

Access to Healthcare: Black women in Utah are much more likely to be uninsured than all Utah women (20.0% vs. 11.2%).¹⁰ Further, they have worse access to medical care, with 24.5% of Black women in Utah reporting that they forgo medical care due to cost (vs. 13.8% of women in Utah generally) and more reporting no personal doctor (25.1% for Black women vs. 20.2% for all Utah women).¹¹

Physical Health: Utah Black women are more likely to receive most preventative care but more likely to experience poor health outcomes compared to Utah women in general.

For example, Utah Black women are more likely to receive pap smears (71.2% vs. 60.3% of all Utah women)¹² yet slightly more likely to receive a diagnosis of cervical cancer (7.7% vs. 5.2% of all Utah women).¹³ Utah Black women receive mammograms (72.4%) more than Utah women in general (63.2%)¹⁴ and are far less likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer (76.4 per 100,000 vs. 114.6 per 100,000 for all Utah women, adjusted for age),¹⁵ but more likely to die from breast cancer (22.3% vs. 19.3% of Utah women).¹⁶ Higher rates of physical activity are reported by Black women in Utah (26.4% vs. 19.4% of all Utah women),¹⁷ while also having higher rates of obesity (41.3% vs. 28.4% of all Utah women).¹⁸

Table 2. Health Indicator Summary

Health Indicator	Utah Women	
	Black	All
Access to Healthcare		
Uninsured	20.0%	11.2%
Unable to get care due to cost	24.5%	13.8%
No personal doctor	25.1%	20.2%
Physical Health		
Pap smear	71.2%	60.3%
Cervical cancer	7.7%	5.2%
Breast cancer rates per 100,000 females	76.4	114.6
Mammograms	72.4%	63.2%
Breast cancer death	22.3%	19.3%
Obesity	41.3%	28.4%
Heart disease	5.0%*	5.0%
Reproductive Health		
Birth rate	13.8	10.6
Gestational diabetes	7.4%	6.8%
Maternal morbidity	145.7	115
Postpartum depression	21.9%*	14.8%
Mental Health		
Bad mental health**	29.1%	23.6%
Depression	34.6%	29.7%

*Use caution in interpreting; the estimate has a coefficient of variation > 30% and is therefore deemed unreliable by Utah Dep. of Health standards.

**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 Black women in Utah is 13.8, slightly more than the rate of 10.6 for all Utah women.¹⁹ Utah Black women receive prenatal care in their first trimester (81.9%) at rates slightly less than those of all Utah women (88.7%)²⁰ and have a slightly higher rate of gestational diabetes during pregnancy (7.4%) than all Utah women (6.8%).²¹ Maternal morbidity rates for Utah Black women are much higher than all Utah women (145.7 vs. 115 per 10,000 pregnancy-associated hospitalizations).²²

Mental Health: According to the data, Utah Black women fare worse in mental health outcomes than Utah women generally. They are more likely to report bad mental health (29.1% vs. 23.6% of all Utah women),²³ or receive a

diagnosis of major depressive disorder (34.6% vs. 29.7% of all Utah women).²⁴

Basic Needs

The term “basic needs” describe data regarding access to water, internet, safety, and freedom. First, Black women in Utah are much more likely to report no access to water (32.5%) than all Utah women (10.6%), all US women (14.4%), and US Black women (23.9%). Second, internet access has become increasingly critical to accessing information, services, and education. More Utah Black women report having no internet access at home (8.3%), compared to Utah women in general (5.1%), but fewer than those seen nationally (16.3% of US Black women; 10.4% of all US women).²⁵ 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, 1.7% were identified as Black (it is important to note that the race/ethnicity of 28% of these women was classified as “unknown.”).²⁶ And, finally, Utah Black women made up an average 2.8% of the female prison population between 2010 and 2021,²⁷ compared to their 1.0% share of the total Utah female population.²⁸

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.²⁹ 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, Black women in Utah end their education with a high school diploma (26.0%) slightly more often than Utah women (23.8%) and have much lower rates of attaining a bachelor’s degree (19.0% vs. 29.0% of all Utah women; see Table 3).³⁰ Of the population aged 18–35 in 2018, the enrollment rate for Utah Black women was 14.6% compared to the Utah female average of 12.5%.³¹ The 5-year average completion rates of college-enrolled Black women in Utah aged 18–35 is 24.8% compared to all Utah women at 27.9%.

Table 3. Educational Attainment, 2015–2019³²

Educational Attainment	Utah Women		US Women	
	Black	All	Black	All
Less than HS	11.0%	7.1%	12.4%	10.9%
HS diploma	26.0%	23.8%	28.7%	26.2%
Some college	43.9%	40.2%	36.6%	32.0%
Bachelor’s	19.0%	29.0%	22.3%	30.9%

Income and Employment

The US Department of Labor recently released a report³³ that documented how women of color were 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. 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.³⁴

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

Income: While Utah Black women have a higher labor force participation rate compared to Utah women (67.7% vs. 61.7%), the median personal income³⁵ for Utah Black women is much lower than the median income for Utah women generally (\$15,438 vs. \$19,245) (see Table 4). The median personal wage of Black women in Utah is a bit less than for all Utah women (\$26,368 vs. \$28,374), and household income is much lower than all Utah women (\$38,174 vs. \$70,838). Additionally, Black women in Utah face concerning higher rates of poverty (33.6% vs. 10.8% of all Utah women), which is also higher than national trends (24.5% for US Black women vs. 14.7% for all US women). Black women in Utah earn \$0.51 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 Black women (\$0.63 cents on the dollar). Utah Black women also experience higher unemployment rates than Utah women generally (6.5% vs. 3.3%), which holds true nationally as well (8.3% vs. 5.0%).

Table 4. Income, 2015–2019³⁷

Characteristic	Utah Women		US Women	
	Black	All	Black	All
Labor force participation rate	67.7%	61.7%	64.1%	59.4%
Median household income	\$38,174	\$70,838	\$40,211	\$59,250
Median income	\$15,438	\$19,245	\$21,533	\$23,106
Median wage	\$26,368	\$28,374	\$31,797	\$34,543
Poverty rate	33.6%	10.8%	24.5%	14.7%
Wage gap	51.0%	70.0%	63.0%	82.0%
Unemployment	6.5%	3.3%	8.3%	5.0%

Occupation: Utah Black 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	
	Black	All	Black	All
Officials and Administrators	8.7%	11.6%	9.3%	12.2%
Professionals	14.3%	22.1%	17.5%	23.3%
Technicians	1.3%*	3.0%	4.0%	3.4%
Protective Services	2.1%*	0.8%	2.3%	1.0%
Paraprofessionals	0.8%*	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%
Administrative Support	31.9%	35.0%	30.1%	31.0%
Skilled crafts	1.7%*	1.8%	1.7%	1.5%
Service & Maintenance	36.8%	24.3%	32.2%	25.8%

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

Industry: Utah Black women are also employed in industry at different rates than Utah women generally (see Table 6).

Table 6. Industry, 2015–2019³⁹

Industry	Utah Women		US Women	
	Black	All	Black	All
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	14.9%	17.3%	16.4%	15.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	0.3%*	0.7%	0.2%	0.8%
Construction	0.1%*	1.4%	0.6%	1.4%
Manufacturing	7.4%*	6.6%	5.4%	6.2%
Information Services	1.4%*	1.8%	1.5%	1.7%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	10.8%	7.7%	6.4%	7.3%
Professional & Business Serv.	9.4%	11.0%	8.6%	10.4%
Health & Education	27.3%	34.3%	38.8%	35.4%
Leisure & Hospitality	12.6%	9.4%	9.6%	10.2%
Other Services	4.7%*	4.9%	3.9%	5.5%
Public Admin.	9.0%	4.3%	6.8%	4.4%

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

Business Ownership: The Women’s Business Center of Utah report that, of their majority of women clients (95%), 2.0% are Black.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 Black women grew 50.0% 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 Black 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, basic needs, education, and income and employment of Utah Black 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 Black 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 Black 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 Black women have to offer the state, employers, and Utah families. Using data to create policies that support all Utah residents, including Black women, can strengthen Utah’s workplaces, educational institutions, communities, and the state as a whole.

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 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 U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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>

¹⁰ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2020.

¹¹ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2019.

¹² In past 3 years. Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2019 & 2020.

¹³ Age adjusted. Utah Cancer Registry 2010–2019.

¹⁴ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2018–2020.

¹⁵ Utah Cancer Registry 2012–2016. Age-adjusted incidence per 100,000 females.

¹⁶ Age adjusted rate per 100,000 women. Utah Death Certificate Database, Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Utah Department of Health.

¹⁷ Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2018–2019.

¹⁸ Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2018–2019.

¹⁹ Birth rate per 1,000 Utah Residents. Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2017–2019.

²⁰ Utah Birth Certificate Database, Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Utah Department of Health, 2018–2020.

²¹ Utah Birth Certificate Database, Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Utah Department of Health, 2020.

²² Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2017–2019.

²³ 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.

²⁴ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2020.

²⁵ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.

²⁶ Utah Office for Victims of a Crime. (2022). Office statistics received for claims received between 01/01/2019 and 12/31/21.

²⁷ Utah Department of Corrections inmate population data for 2010–2021.

²⁸ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata

²⁹ 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>

³⁰ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.

³¹ Utah System of Higher Education. (2019). Issue brief: Utah's growing opportunity gap. [https://ushe.edu/wp-](https://ushe.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Utahs-Growing-Opportunity-Gap-Final_updated-template.pdf)

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³² UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.

³³ 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>

³⁴ 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>

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-Annual-Report-2017-Digital.pdf>

⁴¹ American Express. (2019). The 2019 state of women-owned businesses report, p. 4. https://s1.q4cdn.com/692158879/files/doc_library/file/2019-state-of-women-owned-businesses-report.pdf

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