Utah Women Stats
Research Snapshot

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

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The Status of Utah Pacific Islander Women: A 2026 Update

In 2021, the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute reported that "Utah ranks as the 34th most racially and ethnically diverse state in the nation, with 22% of the state identifying as other than non-Hispanic White."[1] As Utah's population becomes increasingly diverse, it is important to understand the status and experiences of women and girls across the state's racial and ethnic communities. Because the Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) is committed to strengthening the impact of *all* Utah girls and women, understanding the status and experiences of women and girls across Utah's diverse racial and ethnic communities is essential.

This research snapshot update is the first in a series of five examining the status of Utah women across US Census race and ethnicity categories: Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Asian, Native American, Hispanic/Latino, and Black women. The series updates the original set published by UWLP in 2022 and brings together available data from a range of sources, including US Census microdata from the American Community Survey (ACS), the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the US Department of Justice, and several Utah and US Department of Health offices.

Setting the Stage

Researchers often publish data on gender and race separately, leaving gaps in our understanding of how these identities intersect. Yet examining race and gender independently does not provide communities, decision makers, and policymakers with the depth of information needed to develop programs and policies that address the diverse needs of Utah women. And although the current political environment—both in Utah and across the nation—often discourages nuanced conversations about identity, extensive scholarly research confirms that it is difficult to effectively support and serve residents without considering their unique experiences, including gender, race, and other intersecting factors.[2]

This snapshot, as did the 2022 version,[3] examines the intersection of race and gender for Utah Pacific Islander women, bringing together the available data while also identifying important gaps in what is known. Filling these gaps could help state and local decision makers and community leaders better understand and address the needs of Utah girls and women.

This research uses the US Census definition of "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander": "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands."[4] While standardized Census categories make it possible to compare data across sources, it is important to recognize that these categories encompass people from many different countries, cultures, and lived experiences.

We sought data across a broad range of areas that affect the wellbeing of Utah women, including civic engagement, access to child care, domestic violence, utility connectivity, caregiving and unpaid care work, housing, transportation, access to healthy food, and food insecurity. However, important information is often unavailable for a variety of reasons: the data have not been collected; they were not collected with sufficient detail; sample sizes were too small to produce reliable or generalizable estimates; data-sharing limitations exist; or the methods used to collect the data were not sufficiently documented. UWLP researchers ultimately identified and compiled data across five broad categories: general demographics, health, basic needs, education, and income and employment.

Demographics

Available demographic data on Pacific Islander women and households in Utah include population size, household size, household type, and marital status.

Population Size: The Utah Pacific Islander population has been relatively stable over time, comprising around 1.0% of the Utah population. In 2020, 29,450 Utahns were Pacific Islanders, and by 2024 the number had increased to 31,743 (0.9% of the population).[5] Population demographers project slight growth through 2065, when Pacific Islanders are expected to make up 1.2% of Utah's population.[6] In 2024, 14,783 Pacific Islander women resided in Utah, representing 0.44% of Utah's general population, compared with 0.09% of the general US population.[7]

Household Size: The average household size among Utah households in which the householder identifies as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander is 4.3 people, up slightly from 4.1 in 2020, larger than the US average of 3.3 people for Pacific Islander households. For comparison, the average household size is 2.9 people among all Utah households

and 2.5 people among all US households.[8] The US Census uses the term *householder* to refer to the person, or one of the people, in whose name a home is owned, being purchased, or rented; historically, this person was described as the "head of household."[9]

Household Type:[10] More than half (61.0%) of Utah Pacific Islander households consist of married-couple families, compared to 59.0% of all Utah households and 45.3% of US Pacific Islander households (see Table 1). Among Utah Pacific Islander family households, 71.2% of households have a married-couple household structure. Overall, 16.7% of Utah Pacific Islander households are family households with a female householder and no spouse present, compared with 18.1% of US Pacific Islander households. This share is higher than the corresponding share among all Utah households (8.8%) and all US households (12.2%).

Table 1. Household Structure, 2020–2024[11]

	Utah		US	
	NHPI[a]	All	NHPI[a]	All
Family Households				
Married couple householders	61.0%	59.0%	45.3%	47.0%
Male householder/head, no spouse present	8.0%*	4.9%	9.6%	5.1%
Female householder/head, no spouse present	16.7%	8.8%	18.1%	12.2%
Nonfamily Households				
Single-person households	13.5%	20.4%	19.9%	28.7%
Two or more unrelated people	0.8%*	7.0%	7.1%	7.1%
Household Size[b]	4.3	2.9	3.3	2.5

*Use caution in interpreting; sample sizes may be too small for generalizability. [a]NHPI households are those in which the householder identified their race as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander only. [b]Average number of people in the household.

Marital Status:[12] In Utah, 48.5% of Pacific Islander women are married. This is similar to the percentage of all US women who are married (46.2%) but lower than the percentage of all Utah women who are married (54.6%). Among Utah Pacific Islander women, 36.2% have never been married, compared with 29.2% of all Utah women and 31.7% of all US women. The share of Utah Pacific Islander women who are separated is somewhat higher than the share among all Utah women (3.2% versus 1.2%), while the share who are widowed is similar (4.5% versus 5.3%). In contrast, the share of Pacific Islander women in Utah who are divorced is lower than that of all Utah women (7.6% versus 9.8%). A similar pattern is evident nationwide: 8.7% of US Pacific Islander women are divorced, compared with 11.9% of all US women. See Table 2 for a summary of marital status findings.

Table 2. Marital Status of Women, 2020–2024[13]

	Utah Women		US Women	
Demographic	NHPI (%)	All (%)	NHPI (%)	All (%)
Marital Status				
Never married	36.2	29.2	39.5	31.7
Married	48.5	54.6	41.9	46.2
Separated	3.2*	1.2	2.4	1.9
Widowed	4.5*	5.3	7.5	8.3
Divorced	7.6*	9.8	8.7	11.9

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

Health

In 2024, Utah had the fourth-largest Pacific Islander population of any US state and ranked third for the percentage of the population that is Pacific Islander.[14] Given the size and concentration of Utah's Pacific Islander population, the Utah Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Health Equity[15] has historically paid particular attention to the health of Pacific Islander communities.[16] While the health of Pacific Islander women in Utah has improved in almost every category, there is still considerable room for improvement. The data below detail the health of Pacific Islander women in Utah, highlighting differences and similarities compared with all Utah women across four areas: access to healthcare, physical health, reproductive health, and mental health.

Access to Healthcare: Access to healthcare is an important foundation for maintaining health and preventing and treating illness. Pacific Islander women in Utah are more likely to lack health insurance (15.9%) than Utah women overall (7.7%).[17] They also report greater barriers to accessing medical care: 19.2% report forgoing care because of cost, compared with 13.0% of Utah women overall, and 18.5% report having no personal doctor, compared with 16.3% of Utah women.[18]

Physical Health: Differences in access to care are reflected in several measures of preventive care and physical health. Utah Pacific Islander women are less likely than Utah women overall to receive several types of preventive care and experience differences in several health outcomes. For example, 40.5% of Pacific Islander women report receiving a Pap smear, compared with 58.2% of all Utah women.[19] Data on cervical cancer incidence among Pacific Islander women were not available because of small sample sizes;[20] among Utah women overall, the cervical cancer incidence rate was 5.8 per 100,000.[21] Other measures show a different pattern. A slightly higher percentage of Pacific Islander women receive mammograms than Utah women overall (67.1% vs. 65.1%).[22] Pacific Islander women also have a lower breast cancer incidence rate (102.2 vs. 126.3 per 100,000 women) but a higher breast cancer mortality rate (14.1 vs. 9.2 per 100,000 women).[23]

Pacific Islander women also report lower levels of physical activity and higher rates of obesity. Among Pacific Islander women in Utah, 70.9% reported exercising at least once in the past 30 days, compared with 81.7% of Utah women overall,[24] while 62.6% were classified as obese, compared with 30.2% of Utah women.[25] Despite these differences, the prevalence of heart disease among Pacific Islander women is relatively similar to that among Utah women overall (2.2% vs. 3.3%).[26]

Table 3. Health Indicator Summary

Health Indicator[a]	Utah Women	
	NHPI	All
Access to Healthcare		
Uninsured	15.9%	7.7%
Unable to get care due to cost	19.2%	13.0%
No personal doctor	18.5%	16.3%
Physical Health		
Pap smear	40.5%[b]	58.2%
Cervical cancer per 100,000	†	5.8
Breast cancer rates per 100,000	102.2	126.3
Breast cancer death per 100,000	14.1	9.2
Obesity	62.6%	30.2%
Heart disease	2.2%[b]	3.3%
Reproductive Health		
Birth rate per 1,000	21.4	13.3
Gestational diabetes	8.6%	6.5%
Mental Health		
Poor mental health (7+ days)	28.5%[b]	29.7%
Depression	19.0%[b]	32.1%

†Sample size too small to report. [a]See citations in the text for the data sources. [b]Use caution in interpreting; sample sizes may be too small for generalizability.

Reproductive Health and Wellbeing:[27] Reproductive health measures also show important differences between Pacific Islander women and Utah women overall. The birth rate among Pacific Islander women in Utah is 21.4 births per 1,000 women, compared with 13.3 births per 1,000 Utah women overall. This is an increase from 2019 (18.2 per 1,000). Pacific Islander women are less likely to receive prenatal care during their first trimester (52.1% vs. 77.0%), while rates of gestational diabetes are relatively similar (8.6% vs. 6.5%). Together, these measures point to differences in both reproductive health outcomes and access to prenatal care.

Mental Health: Mental health measures show a more mixed pattern. The percentage of Pacific Islander women reporting poor mental health is similar to that of Utah women overall (29.7% vs. 28.5%).[28] However, a smaller percentage of Pacific Islander women report a diagnosis of major depressive disorder (19.0% vs. 32.1% of Utah women overall).[29] These findings illustrate the importance of examining multiple measures of mental health rather than relying on a single indicator to characterize the experiences of Pacific Islander women.

Basic Needs

Basic needs include the fundamental resources and conditions individuals and families need to live safely and participate fully in their communities. In this snapshot, we examine four basic-needs indicators: access to running water, internet access, safety, and freedom from incarceration. Together, these measures provide a limited but important picture of whether Utah women and girls have access to essential resources and live in safe and secure circumstances.

Access to Running Water:[30] Very few Utah households (0.25%) report lacking access to water in the ACS data, representing approximately 140 households. Overall, 0.2% of Utah women and girls—approximately 3,399 individuals—live in households without access to water. Among Pacific Islander women and girls in Utah, the share is higher: 0.5%, or approximately 82 individuals. Across the nation, 0.3% of women and girls and 1.1% of Pacific Islander women and girls lack access to water.

Internet Access:[31] Internet access has become increasingly important for accessing information, services, education, employment opportunities, and other resources. In Utah, Pacific Islander women report rates of no internet access at home similar to those of Utah women overall (1.7% vs. 1.8%). Both rates are lower than national rates, where 4.8% of Pacific Islander women and 4.4% of all US women have no internet access at home.

Safety:[32] The Utah Office for Victims of Crime reports that, among individuals who applied for crime victim reparations between 2022 and 2024, 65.7% were women and 1.5% were Pacific Islanders. Data were not available for Pacific Islander women.

Freedom from Incarceration:[33] Pacific Islander women made up an average of 2.6% of Utah's female prison population between 2013 and 2023, compared with approximately 0.9% of Utah's total female population during this period. This difference indicates that Pacific Islander women were represented in Utah's female prison population at a higher proportion than their share of the state's female population.

Education

Women earn the majority of college degrees in the United States. In 2024–2025, women earned 58.5% of bachelor's degrees, 61.2% of master's degrees, and 59.0% of doctoral degrees.[34] Despite these overall patterns, educational attainment and college enrollment vary by race and ethnicity. The following section examines educational attainment among Utah Pacific Islander women, as well as college enrollment and degree completion.

Among Utah Pacific Islander women ages 25 and older, 40.9% reported a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest level of educational attainment.[35] This percentage is

substantially higher than the share among Utah women overall (22.5%). Conversely, Utah Pacific Islander women are less likely to have earned a bachelor's degree: 17.4% have attained a bachelor's degree, compared with 36.2% of Utah women overall (see Table 3). While high school graduation rates have improved since 2019, higher levels of attainment have remained the same.

Table 4. Educational Attainment, 2020–2024[36]

Educational Attainment	Utah Women		US Women	
	NHPI (%)	All (%)	MHPI (%)	All (%)
Less than HS	8.2*	6.1	12.1	9.6
HS diploma	40.9	22.5	33.7	24.7
Some college	33.6	35.3	33.6	28.8
Bachelor's	17.4	36.2	20.6	36.8

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

Differences also emerged in college enrollment. Among Utah women ages 18–24, 32.8% of Pacific Islander women were enrolled in college, compared with 44.2% of all Utah women.[37] Among students who begin college intending to earn a bachelor's degree, 42.7% of Utah Pacific Islander women complete their degree within six years of enrollment (150% of normal time), compared with 40.7% of Utah Pacific Islander men and 60.9% of all Utah women.[38]

Income and Employment

This section examines income, the gender and racial wage gaps, occupation, and business ownership among Pacific Islander women in Utah.

Income:[39] The median personal income of Utah Pacific Islander women is $19,076, lower than the median personal income of Utah women overall ($24,000). Nationwide, the pattern is similar: Pacific Islander women have a median personal income of $23,554, compared with $28,600 for US women overall (see Table 4).

Table 4. Income, 2020–2024[40]

	Utah Women		US Women	
	NHPI	All	NHPI	All
Labor force participation rate	65.1%	62.5%	61.8%	58.9%
Median household income	$76,056	$93,363	$82,142	$76,400
Median income	$19,076	$24,000	$23,554	$28,600
Poverty rate	13.0%	7.8%	14.7%	11.8%
Wage gap	56.9%	66.4%	65.3%	74.4%
Unemployment	8.0%*	3.7%	7.4%	5.1%

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

Household income provides a different measure of economic wellbeing. The median household income among Utah households with a Pacific Islander woman as the householder is $76,056. Despite these income levels, Pacific Islander women in Utah experience poverty at a higher rate than Utah women overall (13.0% vs. 7.8%). While individual income increased slightly since 2019, household income declined, and poverty rates increased from 11.8% to 13.0%.

Wage Gap:[41] Differences in earnings are also evident when comparing Pacific Islander women with Pacific Islander men and with White men in Utah. Utah Pacific Islander women earn approximately $0.78 for every $1.00 earned by Pacific Islander men and $0.57 for every $1.00 earned by White Utah men.[42] For comparison, Utah women overall earn $0.66 for every $1.00 earned by White Utah men. Across the nation, Pacific Islander women earn approximately $0.65 for every $1.00 earned by White men.

Occupation: Utah Pacific Islander women are represented at different rates across occupational settings than Utah women overall (see Table 5).

Table 5. Occupational Type, 2020–2024[43]

	Utah Women		US Women	
	NHPI (%)	All (%)	NHPI (%)	All (%)
Officials and Administrators	9.5*	14.0	12.0	14.9
Professionals	15.6	24.6	16.0	26.4
Technicians	4.8*	2.8	3.5	3.3
Protective Services	2.8*	0.9	2.2	1.2
Paraprofessionals	1.9*	3.1	2.7	2.7
Administrative Support	35.9	28.5	29.5	25.6
Skilled crafts	1.1*	1.0	1.4	0.8
Service and Maintenance	28.3	25.0	32.7	25.1

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

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

Table 6. Industry, 2020–2024[44]

	Utah Women		US Women	
	NHPI (%)	All (%)	NHPI (%)	All (%)
Trade, Transportation, Util.	19.0	16.1	20.3	15.4
Construction	0.1*	1.9	1.4	1.6
Manufacturing	14.5	6.8	6.9	6.1
Information Services	0.0*	1.4	1.2	1.6
Finance, Insurance, Real Es.	6.9*	7.4	6.8	7.4
Professional & Business Serv.	11.0*	11.3	7.9	11.4
Health & Education	31.4	35.1	31.1	36.3

Leisure & Hospitality	7.6*	9.7	12.3	9.3
Other Services	4.5*	5.1	4.7	5.3
Public Admin.	5.0*	4.4	7.0	4.8

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

Business Ownership: The Women's Business Center of Utah reports that, among its clients who are majority women-owned (95.0%), 3.0% are Pacific Islander.[45] Nationwide in 2024, Pacific Islander women owned 12,079 businesses with employees and 44,427 non-employer businesses, representing 0.1% of all women-owned employer businesses and 0.3% of women-owned non-employer businesses.[46]

Conclusion

As noted in a seminal report—*Diversity in Utah: Race, Ethnicity, and Sex*—published by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah, demographic, economic, education, and health data by race, ethnicity, and sex are extremely complex.[47] Yet, we agree with these report authors that data can be used as a "source of light" instead of a source of division that impedes progress.

The data in this report provide a snapshot of the existing disparities in several areas specifically related to Utah Pacific Islander women. It also provides a starting point for meaningful, targeted change. Although we were able to find existing data regarding the general demographics, health, wellbeing, education, income, and employment of Utah Pacific Islander women, usable information was not available in many of the categories we hoped to collect, such as housing, transportation, domestic violence, unpaid labor, caregiver status, childcare accessibility, civic engagement, and food insecurity. This demonstrates both a data gap and an opportunity for Utah universities, government agencies, nonprofits, 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 Pacific Islander 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.

To create meaningful change, Utahns can increase opportunity within the state by utilizing data to recognize the impact of gender and race in everyday life. As we provide greater access and opportunity to all residents, the state can use these data to better leverage the talents, ideas, and resources Pacific Islander women bring to the state, employers, and Utah families. It remains important to remember that when we strengthen the impact of all Utah residents, including Pacific Islander women, we strengthen Utah's workplaces, educational institutions, communities, and the state as a whole.

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