

Gender Pay Gap: What Utahns Need to Know

RESEARCH SUMMARY

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

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The gender pay gap remains a persistent issue in Utah, affecting the economic well-being of women, families, businesses, and communities across the state. Although the gap is often measured by differences in earnings between women and men, it is shaped by a range of workforce, social, cultural, and structural factors. As Utah seeks to strengthen opportunities for all residents, addressing the gender pay gap requires examining the structures, beliefs, and systems that shape women's economic outcomes. Understanding these influences can help create more equitable outcomes for current and future generations.

PERSISTENT GAP

Utah continues to rank among the states with the largest gender pay gaps in the country. Women working full-time and year-round earn approximately 73 cents for every dollar earned by men, compared to the national average of 83 cents. Utah has consistently ranked near the bottom nationally for pay equity, highlighting the persistence of this issue despite broader economic growth and workforce participation across the state. These disparities affect not only individual earnings but also long-term opportunities for financial stability and wealth building.

LIFETIME IMPACT

The effects of the gender pay gap accumulate over time, resulting in substantial losses throughout women's careers. Current estimates indicate that Utah women lose approximately \$755,120 in earnings over a 40-year career compared to men. These losses can affect retirement savings, investment opportunities, homeownership, and overall financial security. The consequences are particularly significant because the gap compounds year after year, creating challenges that extend well beyond annual income differences.

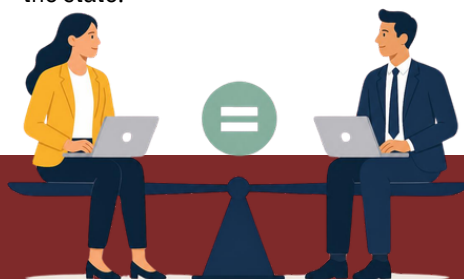
DEFINITION

"A number of figures are commonly used to describe the gender wage gap... The presence of alternative ways to measure the gap can create a misconception that data on the gender wage gap are unreliable. However, the data on the gender wage gap are remarkably clear and (unfortunately) consistent about the scale of the gap. In simple terms, no matter how you measure it, there is a gap. And, different gaps answer different questions."

Economic Policy Institute

WIDENING DISPARITIES

The gender pay gap is even larger for many women of color in Utah. Compared to White non-Hispanic men, Asian women earn 72%, Black women earn 55%, and Latina women earn 50% of comparable earnings. These disparities demonstrate how gender inequities often intersect with racial and ethnic inequities, resulting in even greater barriers to economic security and opportunity for many women across the state.



THE GENDER PAY GAP:

- persists in Utah.
- limits lifetime earnings.
- reflects occupational segregation.
- impacts families statewide.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Utah's cultural environment may shape many of the factors associated with the gender pay gap. The state has the nation's highest female marriage rate (54.8% compared to 46.5% nationally), the youngest average age of first marriage for women (25.2 years), and the highest share of residents with a religious affiliation (76.1%). These characteristics help create a unique social context where expectations surrounding education, career pathways, caregiving, and family responsibilities can influence women's workforce experiences and earning potential.

The influence of caregiving responsibilities is reflected in the unequal distribution of unpaid labor across Utah households. Utah women perform an average of 5.55 hours of unpaid work each day compared to 3.22 hours for Utah men, and nearly half (49%) report that they or another parent would work more if affordable, high-quality childcare were available. Caregiving responsibilities and limited childcare options can affect workforce participation, career advancement, work schedules, and long-term earnings, making them important considerations to narrow Utah's gender pay gap.

WORKFORCE PATTERNS

Occupational segregation remains one of the most significant contributors to Utah's gender pay gap. Women are disproportionately represented in lower-paying occupations, including healthcare support, personal care and service, and health technician roles, while men continue to dominate many of the state's higher paying industries. Research also shows that occupations with greater concentrations of women often experience lower average wages, reinforcing longstanding patterns in earnings. Expanding opportunities for women in higher-paying and rapidly growing fields may help reduce some of these disparities over time.

GROWING PROGRESS

While progress toward pay equity has been slow, public awareness and support for action appear to be increasing. Current estimates suggest it could take several decades to reach pay equity if progress continues at its current pace. However, 86.2% of Utahns agree that leaders should take action to address the gender pay gap, reflecting growing momentum to advance pay equity across the state.

CLOSING THE GAP

Family-friendly workplace policies can help reduce career barriers. Expanding access to flexible work arrangements, paid family and medical leave, and hybrid work options can help women remain connected to the workforce while balancing caregiving responsibilities. Creating workplace environments that support employees through different life stages can strengthen workforce participation and earning potential.

Affordable, high-quality childcare is essential for workforce participation. Childcare challenges continue to influence employment decisions for many Utah families, particularly mothers. Strengthening childcare infrastructure can help parents work the hours they desire, pursue advancement opportunities, and maintain long-term career growth while supporting the economic well-being of families and communities.

Greater pay equity requires both cultural and institutional change. Strategies such as pay transparency, regular pay equity reviews, increased opportunities for women in high-paying industries and leadership roles, and efforts to challenge stereotypes about women's and men's work can help address persistent disparities. Supporting women-owned businesses and expanding pathways into growing fields such as STEM and AI may also contribute to narrowing the gender pay gap over time.

SUPPORT PAY EQUITY IN UTAH

You can help Utah move closer to pay equity by increasing awareness, advocating for equitable workplace practices, and supporting policies and opportunities that help women thrive in the workforce. See below for calls to action and resources that can help advance pay equity and expand economic opportunities for women and families in Utah.

Data Sources: [UWLP Snapshot No. 61 \(2025\)](#), [UWLP White Paper No. 20 \(2026\)](#)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

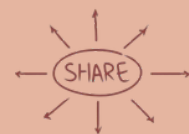
- **Learn More:** Explore resources in the UWLP Gender Pay Gap [Resource Kit](#).
- **Review:** Goals, perceptions, and community partners on the Gender Pay Gap Spoke [webpage](#).
- **Get Involved:** Connect to grassroots movement happening within [A Bolder Way Forward](#).
- **Take Action:** Help move the needle and discover additional [Calls to Action](#) for groups, organizations and communities.



Encourage your company or organization to conduct an annual pay equity audit. If needed, [share resources](#) that could be helpful.



Complete a salary negotiation training (4-part series or [AAUW](#)) and encourage others to do so.



[Share](#) a pay experience you've had in Utah. Encourage others to share their stories to help influence legislation around equal pay.

Learn more at www.utwomen.org

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