

Health Across the Lifespan: What Utahns Need to Know

RESEARCH SUMMARY

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

NO. 62 | AUGUST 14, 2026

At every stage of life, women and girls have unique health needs and opportunities to optimize their physical and mental well-being. A comprehensive approach, from adolescence to the reproductive years, through midlife and older years, can improve health outcomes and quality of life. Utah ranks low in women's overall preventive healthcare, however, and the state faces a growing mental health crisis. Additionally, substance use, disordered eating, and suicidal behaviors require expanded, accessible, and responsive health services. Improving women's health across the lifespan will strengthen families, support economic stability, and help ensure all Utah women can fully participate in their communities.

PREVENTIVE CARE

Utah consistently ranks among the nation's top states for healthcare overall, ranking 16th overall and 6th in healthcare outcomes. However, when it comes to women's health, Utah ranks 46th for women's preventive healthcare and is among the three lowest states for mammography screening rates. Only 63% of Utah women age 40 and older have received a mammogram within the two previous years, compared to 69% of U.S. women. Women in rural communities experience lower screening rates and higher breast cancer mortality than those living in urban areas.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is essential for good health. While 28% of Utah's boys meet the state's recommended levels of physical activity, only 14% of Utah's girls do. Most physical education classes emphasize competitive sports, even though many women and girls prefer activities such as walking, yoga, biking, and dancing. However, 82% of adult women in Utah report being physically active, earning Utah the highest ranking in the nation for the share of physically active women.

DEFINITION

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

World Health Organization

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

In 2024, Utah reported 591 overdose deaths. While men are more likely to die of a drug overdose, women are more likely to be prescribed opioids and develop an addiction. Of the state's substance use disorder clients, 37% are women. The majority (68%) are White Utahns and between the ages of 25-44 years old (62%). 9% of women used opioids during pregnancy, which is higher than the average of 6% across the U.S. Death from substance use disorder is a primary cause of pregnancy-related death in Utah—nearly 90% of pregnancy-related deaths occur in the postpartum period, and approximately 80% of these are due to opioid use. Utah women are more likely to enter outpatient treatment, followed by detox programs, intensive outpatient programs, and residential treatments.

KEY FACTS

- Utah ranks 27th for Best States for Women's Health.
- For Women's Life Expectancy at Birth, Utah ranks 17th.
- Utah ranks 32nd for Female Uninsured Rates.

MENTAL HEALTH

Utah ranks 44th in the nation for the depression rate for women and has the second-highest percentage of adults living with any mental illness in the U.S., at almost 30%, just below Oregon. 700,000 adults in Utah have a mental health condition, 192,000 of which are serious mental illnesses, and 62,000 Utah adolescents experience a major depressive episode each year.

43% of Utah women who deliver a live infant report depression and/or anxiety before pregnancy, while pregnant, or shortly after giving birth. Younger mothers report postpartum depression symptoms more than older mothers do. Specifically, 33% of mothers 18-19 years old report postpartum depression symptoms, compared to 15% and 8% of mothers who were 35-39 and over 40 years old, respectively.

Among Utah women of color, the lack of mental health resources is a significant unmet need. A major barrier is finding therapists of the same race or ethnicity who can relate to their experiences as minority women in Utah.



EATING DISORDERS

Worldwide, eating disorders are more common in women than in men, and the same is true for Utah. Up to 91% of Utahns diagnosed with eating disorders are female. Both child sexual assault and the influence of mother-daughter dynamics can impact disordered eating. LGBTQ+ individuals are more vulnerable.

SUICIDE

Utah consistently ranks higher in suicide rate than the national average, and Utah's female suicide rate is 45th in the nation. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Utahns ages 10–17, 18–24, and 25–44. Overall, suicide was the ninth-leading cause of death for Utahns. While males have a significantly higher age-adjusted suicide rate compared to females, females aged 45–54 had the highest suicide rates among female age groups (15.3 per 100,000 population). In Utah, American Indian or Alaska Native people died by suicide at a higher rate than any other race.

THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF BETTER HEALTH

Prevent health issues. Regular preventive care, screenings, and routine checkups detect diseases earlier, improve treatment outcomes, reduce healthcare costs, and save lives. Increasing participation in preventive healthcare, particularly mammogram screenings and other cancer screenings, can have a meaningful impact.

Strengthen families, workplaces, and communities. Women who are physically and mentally healthy are better equipped to care for their families, contributing to greater stability at home and improved well-being. Healthier women are better able to participate in education and the workforce, increasing productivity and strengthening local economies.

Increase longevity and quality of life. Closing gaps in women's healthcare can help women live longer, healthier lives while improving quality of life across every stage of adulthood. Addressing the women's health gap could add years to many women's lives.

Improve economic security and reduce poverty. Better health enables women to be employed, advance in their careers, pursue educational opportunities, and maintain financial independence. Reducing preventable illness and improving access to healthcare can decrease lost wages and medical expenses, supporting long-term economic stability.

ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

Learn how you can help ensure that Utah girls and women prioritize their health so they can better thrive. See below for calls to action and resources to support women and girls' mental and physical health.

Data Sources: [UWLP Research Snapshot No. 45 \(2023\)](#), [UWLP Research Snapshot No. 64 \(2025\)](#), [UWLP White Paper No. 25 \(2026\)](#)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Learn More:** Explore resources in the UWLP Health Across the Lifespan [Resource Kit](#).
- **Review:** Find goals, advisors, and community partners on the Health Across the Lifespan [Spoke webpage](#).
- **Get Involved:** Connect to the grassroots movement, [A Bolder Way Forward](#).
- **Take Action:** Help move the needle and discover additional [Calls to Action](#) for individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.



Educate yourself and others on the health risks of unhealthy relationships and intimate partner violence. Share [resources](#).



Encourage all women you know age 40 or older to schedule an annual mammogram.



Initiate candid conversations with girls and young women about issues that impact their health and well-being.

Learn more at www.utwomen.org

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