

Utah Women in Politics: What Utahns Need to Know

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Women play important roles at every level of government, from Congress and the state legislature to county commissions, city councils, and school boards. Research consistently shows that when women and men serve together in public office, communities benefit from a wider range of perspectives and experiences. Although Utah has made gradual progress in increasing women's representation in elected office, women remain underrepresented in many political leadership roles. Understanding where progress has occurred—and where gaps remain—can help communities, organizations, and leaders create pathways that encourage more women to participate in public service.

NATIONAL PRESENCE

Women continue to increase their presence in elected office across the U.S., although progress has slowed in recent years. In 2026, women hold 28.6% of seats in Congress, including 26.0% of the US Senate and 29.7% of the U.S. House of Representatives. Women also hold 31.3% of statewide executive offices and 33.6% of state legislative seats nationwide. Despite these gains, the 2024 congressional election marked the first election since 2016 without an increase in women's representation, suggesting that progress toward gender parity has begun to level off.

UTAH'S SITUATION

Utah continues to trail national averages in several areas of political representation, although recent elections have brought modest improvement. Women hold 16.7% of Utah's seats in Congress, with one woman serving among the state's six members of Congress. Women currently hold 40.0% of Utah's statewide executive offices, including the lieutenant governor and the state's first female auditor. In the Utah Legislature, women hold 32.7% of legislative seats, placing the state close to the national average. Even with these gains, Utah has never elected a woman governor or U.S. senator.

WHY THIS MATTERS

"American democracy is grounded in the idea of representation. However, the lack of women running for and serving in elected roles (and the systems, processes, and culture that keep them from doing so) prevents our communities from reaping the benefits of men and women working together toward the greater good."

*Dr. Susan R. Madsen,
UWLP Founding Director*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Women's representation varies considerably across local government positions. Women hold 24.3% of county commission and council seats, while they fill 64.8% of elected county administrative positions, such as clerk, auditor, treasurer, recorder, and assessor. Among Utah's 255 municipalities, women serve as 23.9% of mayors, and 31.8% of city council members are women. Although 72 cities have councils that are at least half women, 51 cities still have no elected women serving on their city councils, demonstrating that opportunities for representation differ widely across the state.

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

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WOMEN IN POLITICS

- Strengthen representative government.
- Improve community decision-making.
- Are underrepresented in many elected offices.

EDUCATION

State and local school boards are important political positions that have direct impacts on their community members. The U.S. has more school board members than any other group of elected leaders. Although women constitute the overwhelming majority of teachers, principals, and school administrators, elected positions in district leadership does not reflect this fact.

Women have achieved greater representation in education governance than in many other areas of politics. Women hold 66.7% of seats on the Utah State Board of Education and 52.8% of local school board seats statewide, closely matching national trends. Several Utah school districts have boards composed primarily or entirely of women, while a small number continue to have little or no female representation. These figures illustrate that women have made larger gains in representation on school boards than in many other elected offices.



CHALLENGES

Utah has made gradual progress over time, but advances have been uneven across different levels of government. Since the early 1970s, the share of women serving in the Utah Legislature has grown from 8.2% to 32.7%, bringing the state much closer to the national average. At the same time, representation remains much lower in offices such as Congress, county commissions, and mayoral positions. These differences suggest that while more women are seeking and winning elected office, barriers to equal representation remain throughout the political pipeline.

FUTURE GROWTH

Research suggests that increasing women's political participation requires more than simply waiting for representation to improve over time. Recruiting women to run for office, providing mentorship and community support, encouraging civic engagement, and creating leadership opportunities can all help strengthen the pipeline of future candidates.

THE PATH FORWARD

Expand leadership opportunities. Women remain underrepresented in many elected offices despite steady progress over the past several decades. Increasing awareness of public service opportunities, encouraging qualified women to run for office, and providing leadership development opportunities can help build a stronger pipeline of future candidates.

Strengthen support for women candidates. Research shows that mentorship, community networks, and public encouragement can make a meaningful difference for women considering elected office. Building supportive environments before, during, and after campaigns can help increase participation and long-term success.

Work together to build representative government. Community organizations, educators, civic leaders, policymakers, political parties, and voters all play a role in expanding opportunities for women in politics. By encouraging broader participation and supporting diverse leadership, Utah can strengthen its communities and create a government that more fully reflects the people it serves.

SUPPORT WOMEN IN UTAH POLITICS

You can help increase women's representation in elected office and on state boards and commissions by increasing women's awareness of public service opportunities and supporting mentorship programs that strengthen women as political candidates. See below for calls to action and resources that can help expand the number of Utah women holding elected positions.

Data Sources: [UWLP Research Brief No. 69 \(2026\)](#), [UWLP White Paper No. 25 \(2026\)](#)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

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



Promote informed community conversations about the value of diverse representation in government.



Nominate qualified women to serve on municipal, county, and state boards, commissions, and committees. Review this [webpage](#) to find links to potential opportunities.



Encourage women within your spheres of influence to run for public elected office at the local or state levels. Share [resources](#) and visit [Utah Women Run](#).

Learn more at www.utwomen.org

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