

# Workforce Development

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

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### INTRODUCTION

During the fall of 2023, Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) researchers conducted a statewide study to establish a baseline for public perceptions related to the awareness, understanding, and attitudes about challenges that Utah women and girls face (see [Background & Methods](#) for details). The study was created to support the work of 18 areas of focus (spokes) within the movement called [A Bolder Way Forward](#), which is dedicated to helping more Utah girls and women thrive. One of the 18 areas of focus is workforce development, and this summary shares findings that highlight Utahn's present perspectives and establishes a baseline to track progress in key areas.

### BACKGROUND

On December 6, 2023, the UWLP published a research snapshot titled "[Labor Force Participation Among Utah Women: A 2023 Update](#)" that shared the latest available data on the topic. According to the most recent US Census Bureau estimates (2021), women in Utah now comprise 44.2% of the state workforce. Because of this, Utah must focus on identifying, creating, and clearing pathways for women into better jobs. Although data that measures progress has been difficult to obtain, four related survey items in this study provide additional insight that can improve workforce development opportunities for Utah women and girls.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

Participants responded to each survey item using a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=some-what disagree, 4=neither disagree nor agree, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree). For Sample 1 (non-probability), 2,449 Utahns responded to these four questions, and for Sample 2 (representative), there were 650 participants (Total=3,099).

**1. Access:** The first survey item was "I am aware of and know how to access resources and support to attain a quality job." The statistical mean was 5.33 (SD 1.48) for the non-probability sample and 4.73 (SD 1.59) for the representative sample. This means that Utahns "somewhat agree" with the statement. In the representative sample (Sample 2), 44.0% disagreed at some level or neither agreed nor disagreed. While most agreed, there are still a significant number of Utahns who need better access to information and support. See the combined demographics below.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

*Gender:* There were no significant differences in levels of agreement.

*Age:* Although all statistical means were in the "somewhat agree" range, the strongest agreement included the 50–69-year-old ranges.

*Education:* The more the education, the stronger the agreement.

*Marital Status:* Respondents who were married or living with a partner/cohabitating had the strongest agreement.

*Income:* Those who had higher incomes had stronger agreement.

*Children:* Parents had stronger agreement than did nonparents.

*Race & Ethnicity:* Those who identified as Asian and White had stronger agreement levels.

*Religion:* There were no significant differences among affiliations, but those who selected "very active" in their religions had significantly stronger agreement.

*Employment:* Full-time homemakers and the unemployed agreed less.

*Residency:* There were no significant differences among categories.

*Counties:* There were no significant differences among counties.

**2. Employability:** The second survey item was "I believe that I am currently employable, or I can become employable within the next 12–24 months." The statistical mean was 6.54 (SD .99) for the non-probability sample and 5.39 (SD 1.84) for the representative sample. There was a substantial difference between samples and much more variability from the mean with the second sample. With the combined samples, 2,040 respondents (65.8%) selected "strongly agree," which is good news for Utah. Yet, there are still thousands across the state who remain concerned. See the combined demographics below.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

*Gender:* Women's agreement levels were stronger than men's (6.36 and 6.05, resp.).

*Age:* As may be expected, those over 64 responded with lower agreement than all other categories.

*Education:* The higher the educational attainment level, the stronger the agreement.

*Marital Status:* Married participants had the most agreement, while widows had the least.

*Income:* Those who had higher incomes agreed more strongly.

*Children:* There were no significant differences between parents and nonparents. There were also no significant differences among parents with differing numbers and ages of children.

*Race & Ethnicity:* Although still high, the lowest agreement came from those who selected American Indian or Black as their race or ethnicity.

*Religion:* Respondents who selected agnostic were significantly more likely to strongly agree than all others.

*\*Denotes statistically significant differences within the demographic categories.*

*\*Employment:* Full-time homemakers, the unemployed, and retirees had significantly lower agreement.

*Residency:* There were no significant differences among categories.

*\*Counties:* Residents in Summit/Wasatch, Davis, Cache, Weber, and Box Elder agreed the most strongly.

**3. Circumstances:** The third survey item was “My current circumstances permit me to maintain successful employment over the next 5 years.” The statistical mean was 6.09 (SD 1.53) for Sample 1 and 4.67 (SD 2.01) for Sample 2 (representative). This second sample had a wide range of responses—respondents answered very differently from each other. Nearly half (45.1%) of Sample 2 participants either disagreed at some level or selected “neither agree nor disagree.” See the combined demographic findings below.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

*Gender:* There were no significant differences between women’s and men’s responses to this statement.

*\*Age:* The strongest agreement levels were from respondents whose ages were within the 40 to 59 age categories.

*\*Education:* The more education, the stronger the agreement.

*\*Marital Status:* Married participants had the strongest agreement levels, while respondents in the divorced and widowed agreed the least.

*\*Income:* The higher the annual household income of respondents, the stronger the agreement.

*Children:* There were no significant differences between parents and non parents; there were no differences among parents with various numbers and ages of children.

*\*Race & Ethnicity:* The highest agreement came from those who identified as Pacific Islander or White.

*\*Religion:* Agnostics and atheists were significantly more likely to strongly agree than all other religious affiliations. Yet, those who were most active in their religions also had stronger agreement.

*\*Employment:* Full-time homemakers, unemployed individuals, and retirees had lower levels of agreement than those who were employed.

*Residency:* There were no significant differences among the categories representing the number of years respondents had lived in Utah.

*\*Counties:* The Millard, Sevier, Juab, Beaver, and Piute region, as well as the 10 eastern counties combined, had the lowest agreement.

**4. Successful Employment:** The final survey item was “I believe that in Utah I can find successful employment that works for me and my family.” The statistical mean was 5.75 (SD 1.41) for Sample 1 and 5.00 (SD 1.74) for Sample 2 (representative). For the second sample, which is more generalizable to the Utah population, slightly over one-third (35.8%) of the participants either disagreed or selected “neither agree nor disagree,” while 64.2% agreed. See the combined demographic findings below.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

*\*Gender:* Men’s agreement levels were significantly higher than women’s (5.71 and 5.57, resp.). Although this is one of the few survey items where this occurred, it makes sense for this question.

*Age:* There were no significant agreement differences by age range categories.

*\*Education:* The higher the educational attainment, the stronger the agreement.

*\*Marital Status:* Married respondents had the strongest agreement, while divorced and widowed had the weakest.

*\*Income:* The higher the reported annual household income, the stronger the agreement.

*\*Children:* Parents were significantly more likely to agree than were non-parents. There was no statistical significance on this question among parents who had children of different ages and numbers.

*\*Race & Ethnicity:* There was a significant difference between Black respondents (lower agreement) and all other categories.

*\*Religion:* Latter-day Saints and Protestants had stronger agreement than all others. Also, those who selected “very active” had stronger agreement to this survey item.

*\*Employment:* Full-time homemakers, unemployed individuals, and retirees had the lowest levels of agreement.

*\*Residency:* The more years respondents had lived in Utah, the more likely they selected higher agreement options.

*Counties:* There were no statistical differences among counties.

## CONCLUSION

This summary highlights key findings related to the four survey questions focused on workforce development in Utah. Respondents from across the state participated in the study (see [Background & Methods](#) for the demographic details on both samples). Overall, Utahns were optimistic about their employability, their ability to maintain successful employment, and their confidence that they can find successful employment that works for themselves and their families.

Although each sample is useful in understanding the perceptions and attitudes of Utahns on this topic, Sample 2 (representative sample) is more likely to represent the perceptions of Utahns more broadly. In Sample 2, there was still a significant percentage of respondents who were not fully confident that they were aware of and knew how to access resources and support to attain a quality job. Women who have been out of the workforce for many years are among these individuals. In addition, individuals in this sample had less confidence that they are currently employable or could become so in the next year or two. There is still work to be done with these individuals.

The goal of [A Bolder Way Forward](#) is to make Utah a place where more women and girls can thrive. When more Utah women and men experience economic stability, Utah families will thrive, flourish, and prosper.

#### For questions and information:

- [uwl@usu.edu](mailto:uwl@usu.edu)
- [utwomen.org](http://utwomen.org)
- [abolderwayforward.org](http://abolderwayforward.org)



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