

USU UWLP Releases Latest Research on Status of Utah Women and Girls

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The [Utah Women & Leadership Project \(UWLP\)](#), part of [USU Extension](#), released [The Current Status of Utah Women & Girls: A 2026 Research Synopsis](#). The report highlights key research areas, including political and civic engagement, education, health and well-being, safety and security, and the workplace.

The updated research helps Utahns identify and change environments where women's perspectives, representation, and leadership remain underrepresented or missing. These findings shift the conversation away from individual perceptions of women's experiences and toward what the data show. This reveals patterns, disparities, and opportunities for meaningful change.

"This comprehensive report offers an important overview of the current status and experiences of women in Utah in a variety of areas," said Susan Madsen, UWLP founding director and lead author of the report. "By bringing research together across multiple areas, we can better understand where progress is being made, where challenges remain, and what opportunities exist to strengthen outcomes for Utah women, families, communities, and the state as a whole."

Data that Show Continued Challenges

Although Utah performs well on many statewide metrics unrelated to women, the picture changes dramatically when examining indicators focused specifically on Utah women. Across multiple data sources, a consistent pattern emerges – while many Utahns are thriving, women's experiences with economic opportunity, leadership pathways, safety, and even basic belonging diverge significantly. These data make it clear that the state's overall success masks deep and persistent disparities in

how opportunity is distributed – and who has access to it. Of the 63 focus areas in the study, several stand out:

1. For the 11th consecutive year, WalletHub has ranked Utah the worst state in the nation for women's equality in its "Best & Worst States for Women's Equality" report.
2. U.S. News & World Report placed Utah 46th of 50 for gender equality in 2025.
3. The 2025 U.S. Women, Peace, and Security Index ranked Utah 36th of 51, showing no improvement since 2020.
4. Utah continues to lag behind the nation in women's inclusion, justice, and security indicators.
5. One in three Utah women will experience contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking in her lifetime.
6. Over 41% will experience psychological aggression.
7. One in five Utah girls and women reports experiencing child sexual abuse.
8. Homelessness among Utah women is rising, increasing from 11,585 in 2022 to 12,823 in 2025.
9. Over 36% of Utah single mothers with children under age five live in poverty, and in a state known for its family-oriented values, one in three women will experience some form of domestic violence or sexual assault.

Metrics that Have Improved

Despite these challenges, several indicators show meaningful progress:

1. Political representation is improving. In WalletHub's 2025 "Best & Worst States for Women's Equality," Utah ranked 28th in political empowerment – a notable rise from 42nd in 2022, 49th in 2023, and 41st in 2024.
2. Women's participation in STEM is increasing. The share of STEM certificates and degrees awarded to women at Utah's public degree-granting institutions rose from 20.7% in 2017 to 23.2% in 2022.

"Even with these modest gains, the latest research on Utah's women and girls shows clearly where improvement is still needed," said Madsen. "To sustain Utah's long-term success – and to ensure that communities remain places where children and families can truly thrive – meaningful, data-informed change is essential."

Corinne Clarkson, Utah Women & Leadership Project research associate, co-authored the report.

The mission of the UWLP is to strengthen the impact of Utah girls, women, and families. Its premier initiative – [A Bolder Way Forward](#) – creates opportunities for Utahns to learn, engage, and contribute to meaningful change across 18 areas of focus.

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