

USU UWLP Releases Research on Utah Women in the Workplace

Emmalee Chastain and Julene Reese

01/08/2026

```
$(document).ready(function(){ $(''.pdf-wrapper').hide();
$('').pageTitle').addClass('text-bold'); });
```



The Utah State University [Utah Women & Leadership Project](#) (UWLP) recently released the [first of five white papers](#) sharing the results of a comprehensive statewide study conducted in the fall of 2025. The study supports the efforts of “[A Bolder Way Forward](#),” a statewide movement focused on ensuring that more Utah girls, women, and their families thrive.

The first white paper shares the findings from four topic areas: [Organizational Strategies & Workplace Culture](#), [Childcare/Pre-K Programs](#), [Gender Pay Gap](#), and [Sexual Harassment & Gender-Based Discrimination](#). The 83-item survey, administered from Oct. 1 to Nov. 19, 2025, included two samples (representative and convenience) totaling 5,212 Utah participants.

“For those who want to more deeply understand the perceptions and attitudes around the challenges Utah women and girls face, this 39-page report contains a significant amount of critical data that can help,” said lead researcher and co-author Susan Madsen, UWLP founder/director and professor of organizational leadership in the [USU Jon M. Huntsman School of Business](#). “We invite the public to [view the report in its entirety](#). This is our third year of data collection, so the report addresses how data may have changed from the 2023 and 2024 surveys.”

Organization Strategies & Workplace Culture survey statements:

1. My organization offers family-friendly policies to meet my needs.
2. In my organization, I have opportunities for advancement.
3. My organization has strategies that advance women in the workplace.
4. I feel a sense of belonging at work.

When respondents were asked if they agreed that their organization offered family-friendly policies to meet their needs, the results hovered around “somewhat agree” (5.05 on a scale of 1 to 7). Even though 63% of Utahns work for employers with at least some family-friendly policies, 37% were unsure or disagreed. An open-ended question asked about participants’ concerns for women, and one woman stated, “I’ve worked with several companies that say they support gender equality, then completely skip women for promotions and advancements.”

About 45% of the open-question responses raised concerns about the lack of opportunities for advancement or a desire for increases in equal opportunity for advancement, regardless of gender. Statements about opportunities were often intertwined with concerns about the gender pay gap, cultural influences, and leadership.

“Although it is great that many Utah companies have family-friendly policies, so many of our residents, including those among our most vulnerable, don’t have the workplace policies they need to properly support their families,” Madsen said.

Childcare & Pre-Kindergarten Programs survey statements:

1. Access to childcare is an issue Utah families face.
2. Childcare providers are professionals.
3. Childcare and Pre-K programs play an important role in early childhood education.
4. The government has a role in addressing childcare in Utah.

Madsen said Utah families face significant challenges navigating the childcare landscape, with issues related to accessibility, affordability, and quality.

When respondents were asked if they believe government has a role in addressing childcare, the findings hovered between “somewhat agree” and “agree” (5.54). Utahns agreed, with 1,573 participants strongly agreeing and 2,166 participants agreeing or somewhat agreeing. Only

9.1% of participants disagreed with the statement at any level. One participant stated, "Utah claims to be a family-friendly state, but does little or nothing about available and affordable childcare."

Those most likely to agree with the statement were women respondents, individuals ages 25–39, those with higher levels of education and income, and full-time employees and students. Agreement was also stronger among those living in the Wasatch Front and rural regions, particularly in Garfield, San Juan, and Salt Lake counties.

Gender Pay Gap survey statements:

1. I believe a gender pay gap exists in Utah.
2. Utah women make less money than their male counterparts, even when they have the same or similar experience, education, and position.
3. Utah's pay gap exists because of women's own choices (e.g., career breaks, educational choices, lack of experience, job industry).
4. Utah leaders should take action to close the gender pay gap.

Respondents believe that the gender pay gap exists in Utah, with a statistical mean of 6.21 (on an agreement scale of 1 to 7) for the convenience sample and 5.78 for the combined samples. Most Utahns agreed, with 2,174 participants strongly agreeing and 1,695 participants agreeing or somewhat agreeing. Only 7.6% of participants disagreed at any level.

When asked if Utah women make less money than their male counterparts, even with the same/similar experience, education, and position, most Utahns agreed. In fact, 1,936 participants strongly agreed, 1,829 participants agreed/somewhat agreed, while only 8.5% disagreed.

"The results make it clear that most Utahns understand the gap is not a myth and that it is not all about women's own choices," said Madsen.

One woman who took the survey stated, "Regarding pay, men in Utah think they don't have to pay as much to a woman because they'll just get married, pregnant, and leave. I've heard that several times as the reason I wasn't promoted or paid as well as my male counterparts."

Sexual Harassment & Gender-Based Discrimination survey statements:

1. Sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination are problems in Utah.

2. People make a bigger deal out of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination than is warranted.
3. I know what steps to take or what resources are available if a friend or I experienced sexual harassment.
4. I trust that most Utah companies would appropriately handle a sexual harassment report.

When asked if they trusted that organizations in Utah would appropriately handle a sexual harassment report, responses hovered slightly below "neither agree nor disagree" (statistical mean of 3.31). Many Utahns (60%) selected a level of disagreement or ambivalence, while 18.2% chose "somewhat agree," and 21.7% agreed or strongly agreed.

One participant stated, "I think there are still a lot of gendered expectations placed on Utah women. It puts unfortunate personal tension on them, where their ambitions may not match cultural norms."

Madsen said, "The findings tell us that sexual harassment and other types of gender-based discrimination against women are serious concerns for Utahns."

She concluded that the reports can be useful for anyone who wants to help their workplaces and communities find ways to ensure that more girls, women, and families in Utah thrive.

April Townsend, UWLP research fellow, co-authored the report. The UWLP is affiliated with [USU Extension](#).

Contact

Emmalee Chastain
Emmalee.Chastain@usu.edu

More Extension Updates

- [Extension News](#)
- [Gardening](#)
- [Recipes](#)
- [Personal Finance](#)
- [Relationships](#)
- [Our Impact](#)

[Tips Sign Up](#)[Take a Course](#)[Donate to Extension](#)