

USU UWLP Releases Research, "The Status of Women in Utah Politics: A 2026 Update"

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Utah continues to receive national recognition for its strong economy, outdoor beauty, and quality of life. Yet WalletHub, a leading aggregator of nationwide data, has ranked the state last in women's equality for 11 consecutive years. One specific area of concern is that women remain underrepresented across almost every level of elected office.

To better understand these patterns, the Utah State University [Utah Women & Leadership Project \(UWLP\)](#) recently published a research brief, "[The Status of Women in Utah Politics: A 2026 Update](#)" that explores national and state trends in women's political representation. It provides updated data across seven areas of leadership: Congress, Statewide Executive Offices, State Legislatures, Counties, Mayors, City Councils, and Boards of Education.

According to Susan Madsen, UWLP founding director and co-author of the report, progress has occurred in these areas in recent years, but gaps continue, especially in positions with the greatest influence and decision-making power.

"As the 2026 legislative session unfolds, understanding where women are represented in Utah government is more important than ever," she said.

Congressional and National Trends: Across state governments, women hold 31.3% of statewide executive offices and 33.6% of state legislative seats. While 44 states now have at least one woman in Congress, Utah has never elected a woman to the Senate and has historically elected only five women to the

House. Currently, Celeste Maloy is Utah's only female congressional representative.

Statewide Executive Offices: In 2026, women hold 96 statewide executive offices nationally (31.3%), including 14 governors and 2 territorial governors, with 21 states having female lieutenant governors and 12 states having female attorneys general. In Utah, Lt. Gov. Deidre Henderson and Auditor Tina Cannon serve in statewide offices. Utah has never elected a female governor; Olene Walker was appointed interim governor (2003 to 2005), and Jan Graham served as attorney general (1993 to 2001).

State Legislators: Nationally, a record 2,481 women (33.6%) serve in state legislatures in 2026, more than four times the share in 1971. In Utah, women comprise 32.7% of legislators (34 of 104), including 27.6% of the Senate and one-third of the House. Five of 11 House leadership roles and all four Senate minority leadership positions are held by women, including Angela Romero and Luz Escamilla.

Counties: Nationally, women hold roughly 27% of chief executive roles in large counties and 29% of county leadership overall. In Utah, women hold 20.5% of county commission seats and one-third of county council seats, while nearly two-thirds of clerks, auditors, treasurers, recorders, and assessors are women. All three commissioners in Kane County are women, yet statewide representation in higher-level county leadership is only 24.3%, with variation in larger counties such as Salt Lake and Washington.

Mayors: Nationally, women hold about 25.4% of mayoral offices in cities with over 30,000 residents. In Utah, 61 of 255 municipalities (23.9%) have women mayors, up from ~8% a decade ago. Women lead 15 of 36 cities with populations over 30,000 and three of five cities with populations over 100,000, meaning Utah's largest cities are disproportionately led by women compared to the statewide average.

City Councils: Women hold roughly 32.4% of municipal offices nationwide in cities with populations over 10,000. In Utah, women hold 31.8% of city and town council seats, a modest increase from 2025. Councils in Utah's five largest cities are now 51.4% women, yet 51 cities still have no women serving.

Boards of Education: Nationally, women's representation on school boards has grown, though leadership still does not fully reflect the female-majority education workforce. In Utah, women hold 10 of 15 seats (66.7%) on the State Board of Education and 124 of 235 district board seats

(52.8%), slightly exceeding national averages. Some districts, like Davis and Provo, have all-women boards, while only Kane and Rich have all-male boards, showing statewide variations.

"The 2026 data highlight a clear and persistent pattern: while Utah has made incremental gains in women's political representation, progress remains uneven, with substantial gaps at nearly every level of government," said Madsen. "Advancing women's representation in Utah is not merely a matter of fairness, but a catalyst for stronger communities, effective governance, and a more representative democracy."

Corinne Clarkson, research associate, and Jamie Faux, research assistant, both for UWLP, also co-authored the report.

The "[A Bolder Way Forward](#)" initiative provides opportunities for Utahns to learn and contribute to meaningful change across 18 areas of focus. For more information, visit the [UWLP website](#). The UWLP is affiliated with [USU Extension](#).

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