

# UWLP Releases Research Update on the Utah Gender Pay Gap

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Across the United States, the gender pay gap continues to affect women in nearly every industry and occupation. While progress has been made in some areas, Utah women working full-time, year-round, still earn significantly less than men by about 27%. This is the worst pay gap in the nation. Among all workers, including part-time and seasonal employees, Utah women earn just 61 cents for every dollar paid to men, compared to 75 cents for every dollar nationally.

The [Utah Women & Leadership Project](#) (UWLP) at Utah State University recently published a research snapshot, "[Utah Gender Pay Gap: A 2025 Update](#)." The update to 2017 and 2021 reports gives an overview of the gender pay gap, defining what it is, its components, and why it matters. It also examines the unique economic, cultural, and structural factors that contribute to Utah's especially wide gap.

**National Gender Pay Gap Overview:** In 2023, women in the U.S. earned 82.7 cents for every dollar earned by men for full-time, year-round work, and just 74.8 cents per dollar when including all workers. This means the female-to-male earnings ratio was .827, which was a 1.5 percent decrease from the 2022 ratio (.840). Contributing factors to the gender pay gap include occupational segregation, underrepresentation in leadership, caregiving responsibilities, bias, and limited access to flexible work and childcare. Over a 40-year career, this gap can cost

women in general an average of \$462,000, with even greater losses for women of color.

**The Pay Gap in Utah:** Utah is consistently among the states with the worst gender pay gap in the nation, with the most recent data showing that for full-time, year-round workers, women earned just 73 cents to every dollar earned by men. Utah also has the worst lifetime pay gap in the nation, with a loss of \$755,120 for a woman over her 40-year career compared to a man. This means the average Utah woman would need to work until she is 75 years old to earn what a Utah man makes by age 60. Utah's gender pay gap is driven by occupational segregation, underrepresentation in higher-wage male-dominated roles, part-time employment, and cultural expectations around family and caregiving, as well as limited access to childcare and the influence of social and religious norms. Despite these challenges, Utah women participate in the workforce at rates above the national average, and women-owned businesses in Salt Lake City grew 26% between 2022 and 2023, compared to 17% nationally.

**Utahns' Perceptions:** In 2023 and 2024, the UWLP surveyed Utahns to better understand their perspectives on the gender pay gap, asking whether it exists, if women earn less than men with similar experience, whether it results from women's choices, and if leaders should take action to address this gap.

"The majority of Utahns agree that the gender pay gap exists," said Susan Madsen, founder of the UWLP and co-author of the report. "Furthermore, 82.6% of the 2024 sample agreed on some level that Utah leaders should take action to close the gender pay gap."

**Closing the Gap in Utah:** Closing Utah's gender pay gap requires both policy and cultural change. Family-friendly workplace policies, stronger childcare infrastructures, pay transparency, and stronger worker protections can help women pursue higher-paying careers while balancing caregiving responsibilities. Also expanding access to growing industries, addressing occupational segregation, and supporting women-owned businesses further promotes equitable opportunities and lasting pay equity. Finally, acknowledging and understanding that women's decisions (as well as men's) are inseparably tied to cultural norms, structures, and attitudes.

"There's a tendency to dismiss the gender pay gap, explaining it away by pointing to women's 'choices.'" says Kolene Anderson, co-author of the report and UWLP's associate director. "But to do so negates the impact of messaging about the socially and culturally acceptable

roles of women and men. Long before a woman makes her first dollar, her occupational 'choice' is influenced by years of socialization, education, mentoring, and messaging about her competency and responsibility, as well as the expectations of others."

Madsen said addressing the gender pay gap and the various factors that influence it is imperative to gender equality in Utah and the nation.

"We need to overcome stereotypes about what constitutes 'men's' and 'women's' work, both in and out of the home, to begin achieving gender wage parity," she said. "Working to find solutions at the local, state, and national levels will contribute to making Utah a state where girls, women, and our communities can thrive."

Robyn C. Blackburn, UWLP research fellow, is a third author of the report.

The "A Bolder Way Forward" initiative provides opportunities for Utahns to learn and contribute to meaningful change across 18 focus areas. For more information, visit the UWLP website at [utwomen.org](http://utwomen.org). The UWLP is affiliated with the [Jon M. Huntsman School of Business](#) and [USU Extension](#).

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