

The Status of Women Leaders in Utah Nonprofits: A 2018 Update

In 2014, the Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) published a research and policy brief titled “The Status of Women Leaders in Utah Nonprofits.”¹ The document was the second of four Utah studies published that year; the others focused on the status of women’s leadership in politics, education, and business. This brief gives a four-year update to decide what, if any, progress has been made in women’s leadership within Utah’s nonprofit sector. The brief compares Utah data with national data, reviews the applicable literature, and compares these results to the data in the 2014 brief.

The nonprofit sector “consists of entities or organizations that are neither part of government nor generate a profit.”² Nonprofits typically encompass voluntary, charitable, independent, third, or nongovernmental agencies, associations, and foundations. According to the IRS, the U.S. nonprofit sector is the third-largest employing industry after retail trade and manufacturing. This brief provides data regarding the gender of nonprofit chief executives (e.g., CEO, president, executive director) and board members. But first, we outline details of the statewide study we conducted.

Study Background

The study was based on a list of 1190 organizations provided by the Utah Nonprofits Association (UNA), which included both UNA and non-UNA members. Although the list did not include all the nonprofits in the state, it did provide a helpful sample from which to conduct this research. After contacting organizations on the list via websites, email, and phone, it was found that 193 did not fit the study criteria for various reasons (e.g., closed, merged, moved, not a nonprofit, entity of a larger organization such as a university). After these 193 organizations were removed from the list, the final number of potential nonprofits for our study was 997. Researchers then attempted to find the needed data on the entities’ websites. If this information was not available, the agency was contacted via email and/or phone multiple times, as needed. Researchers were able to collect data on 80.9% (807 of 997) of these organizations.

Nonprofit Chief Executives

National

The *BoardSource 2017 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices*³ surveyed nonprofit chief executives (e.g., president, CEO, executive director) across the country. They found that women occupied 72% of chief executive roles, an increase of 10% from their report five years earlier. The report stated that 42% of board chairs (down from 46% in 2015)⁴ and 48% of board member positions (up from 45% in 2012)⁵ were occupied by women. Although research shows greater representation of women in leadership roles, gender disparity remains in

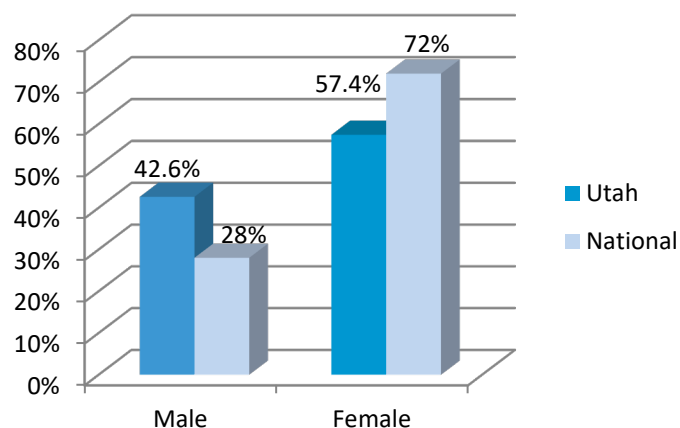
terms of size and types of nonprofit organizations in which women hold executive positions.

The *BoardSource* study reported that women were chief executives 77% of the time for small organizations (less than \$1 million), 69% for medium (\$1–99 million), and 62% in large (\$10+ million). In terms of type of nonprofit, women were chief executives 73% of the time in charities and foundations, 69% of the time for associations, and 69% in their “other” category. In terms of service areas, women were chief executives 76% of the time in local, 72% in regional within state or statewide, 60% in multistate or national, and 60% for international and global nonprofits. The *GuideStar Nonprofit Compensation Reports* through the years have also noted that, as the agencies’ budget size increases, the proportion of female chief executives declines precipitously.⁶ Although the trend remains, the 2017 report stated that the proportion of female chief executives has increased at nonprofits of all sizes, with the most dramatic gains in organizations with budgets between \$25 million and \$50 million, an increase from 20% in 2005 to 30% in 2015.⁷ In addition, although there remain gender pay discrepancies, the gap appears to be narrowing.

Utah

Of the 807 Utah agencies in this study, 787 provided information about the gender of their chief executives. Currently, 452 (57.4%) of these nonprofits have female chief executives, about the same as in 2014. That year, 57.8% was only slightly below the national data; however, the national percentage of female executives has increased significantly, so there is now a wider gap between Utah and the nation (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Nonprofit Chief Executives by Gender (Utah vs. Nation)



To better understand the presence of female chief executives in Utah, we provide descriptive data related to organizational budgets (see Table 1), regions (see Table 2), and nonprofit classifications (see Table 3).

Table 1: Utah Chief Executives by Gender and Budget

Budget	Female	Male	Total	% Female
\$49,000 and less	165	114	279	59.1
\$50,000–\$199,999	93	54	147	63.3
\$200,000–\$499,999	69	55	124	55.6
\$500,000–\$999,999	54	40	94	57.4
\$1,000,000–4,999,999	56	42	98	57.1
\$5,000,000 plus	14	28	42	33.3
Total⁸	451	333	784	57.5

As previously mentioned, national data do show that there are fewer female chief executives in agencies as budget size increases. Although this trend cannot be statistically confirmed in this sample, there is a notable decrease of female leadership in the largest nonprofit category (\$5 million plus). The highest percentages of female chief executives are clearly in nonprofits with annual budgets of less than \$200,000. Only two categories changed significantly in the past four years: \$500,000–\$999,000 from 62.0% to 57.4% (down 4.6%) and \$5,000,000 plus from 37.8% to 33.3% (down 4.5%).

Table 2: Utah Chief Executives by Gender and Region

Counties	Female	Male	Total	% Female
Cache, Box Elder	23	9	32	71.9
Davis, Weber, Morgan	48	32	80	60.0
Salt Lake	267	213	480	55.6
Summit, Wasatch	32	17	49	65.3
Utah	28	29	57	49.1
Tooele, Sanpete, Carbon	6	4	10	60.0
Iron, Sevier, Grand, Garfield, Wayne, Emery	20	11	31	64.5
Washington, San Juan, and Kane	27	16	43	62.8
Total⁹	451	331	782	57.7

The percentage of female chief executives ranges from 49.1% in Utah county (64.4% in 2014) to 71.9% in Cache and Box Elder counties combined (62.1% in 2014). However, there appears to be no statistical link between the budgets of nonprofits and specific counties and regions within the state. Currently, the Cache–Box Elder region has significantly more female chief executives than other areas of the state.

Table 3: Utah Chief Executives by Gender and Classification

Focus	Female	Male	Total	% Female
Arts, Culture, and Humanities	94	56	150	62.7
Children’s Services	9	6	15	60.0
Education	61	40	101	60.4
Environment/Animals	37	36	73	50.7
Health	49	38	87	56.3
Human Services	106	62	168	63.1
Other	93	94	187	49.7
Total¹⁰	449	332	781	57.5

There are more female chief executives than males in all but one of the classification areas. The categories with the most significant changes were Human Services and Health. Human services had the largest percentage of female chief executives (63.1%) in 2018, a four-year increase of more than 10%. Female leaders in Health decreased from 64.9% in 2014 to 56.3% in 2018 (down 8.6%). In terms of the others, Arts, Culture, and Humanities increased the percentage of female chief executives by 1.2%, Children’s Services by 0.9%, and Education by 0.6%. Both Environment/Animals and Other decreased by 3.0% and 5.1%, respectively.

Nonprofit Boards

National

The *BoardSource 2017 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices*¹¹ stated that gender distribution on nonprofit boards has remained stable over time. The board composition had remained relatively steady since 1994, with about 10% more men than women (55% vs. 45%). However, in recent years the gap has narrowed by six percentage points, with men making up 52% of nonprofit board positions and women’s representation increasing to 48%. A recent study from the Urban Institute titled *The State of Nonprofit Governance*¹² also found that, on average, boards were composed of 48% women. Studies also show that organizations of any size that are headed by men will have more males in board positions, and those headed by women will have higher percentages of female board members.¹³

BoardSource also reported that women board members made up 50% of the board positions for small organizations (less than \$1 million annually), 47% for medium (\$1–99 million), and 41% for large (\$10+ million). The Urban Institute report showed a similar trend. They found that gender is inversely related to organizational size—meaning that nonprofits with budgets under \$100,000 have approximately 48% female board members, while the percentage of women on boards of nonprofits with budgets over \$40 million drops to 26%. The findings are consistent with other current literature and illustrate the general trend in the nonprofit sector: women tend to occupy leadership roles on boards with smaller budgets.

In terms of type of nonprofit, 48% of the board members of charities were women, 45% for foundations, and 47% for associations and “other.” In terms of service area, 48% of board members for local and regional within state or statewide nonprofits were women, while 45% were women in multistate or national, and 44% in international/global nonprofits. In addition, it continues to be more likely that women serve on nonprofit boards of smaller arts, cultural, health, human services, environmental, or educational organizations.¹⁴ It is important to note that the percentages of women in board roles has increased significantly since the 2012 *BoardSource* report, which we cited in our 2014 brief.

In terms of board chairs, according to the *BoardSource* national study, 42% are now women, with 44% in small organizations, 42% in medium, and 32% in large. Women appear to be board chairs most often in associations (48%) and charities (41%), and less often in foundations (33%). Research also shows women are chairs slightly more often in local (45%) and regional (41%), rather than in multistate/national (36%) or international (40%).

A 2007 report¹⁵ provided insight into additional factors that were positively associated with higher percentages of women on nonprofits boards:

- A higher percentage of female clientele is served by the nonprofit;
- Funding sources for the nonprofit are more likely to be from government and foundations instead of reliance on endowment funding;
- The nonprofit board has term limits and has a local or regional geographical focus;
- The organization places emphasis on board members’ willingness to give time and on their knowledge of the organization’s mission area;
- The nonprofit uses racial and ethnic diversity as a recruitment criterion for board members; and
- The organization is not located in a metropolitan statistical area.

Utah

Of the 807 nonprofit agencies in this study, 735 provided information on the gender of their board members. Within these organizations, there were 4,351 males (54.7%) and 3,599 females (45.3%), totaling 7,950 nonprofit board member seats. This is a slight decrease in terms of women’s representation from 2014 (45.8%). In 2014, Utah was 0.8% above the national average, but now Utah is 2.7% below. As mentioned, the *BoardSource* 2017 report stated that there are still more men serving on nonprofit boards, although the gap is decreasing (52% to 48%). Utah numbers are close, but as the national percentage increases, the gap between Utah and nation could widen (see Figure 2).

Consistent with the national data, statistics show that Utah nonprofits that have female chief executives are significantly more likely to have a higher percentage of women serving on their boards, while those headed by males have fewer. To

demonstrate the presence of nonprofit female board members in Utah, we present descriptive data related to organizational budgets (see Table 4), regions (see Table 5), and nonprofit classification (see Table 6). Not all organizations presented the same information, so total numbers vary slightly among these tables.

Figure 2: Nonprofit Board Members (Utah vs. Nation)

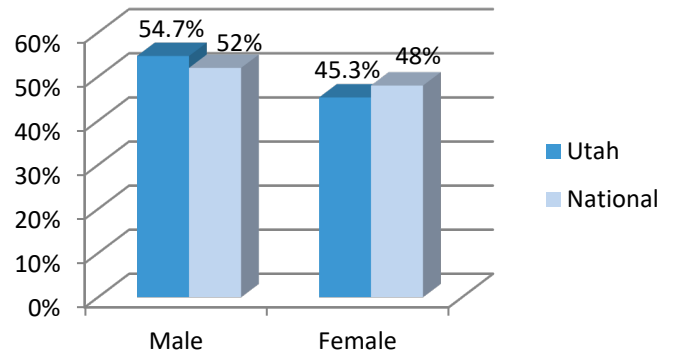


Table 4: Utah Nonprofit Board Members by Gender and Budget

Budget	Female	Male	Total	% Female
\$49,000 and less	960	907	1867	51.4
\$50,000–\$199,999	677	676	1353	50.0
\$200,000–\$499,999	498	714	1212	41.1
\$500,000–\$999,999	501	574	1075	46.6
\$1,000,000–4,999,999	701	1037	1738	40.3
\$5,000,000 plus	261	436	697	37.4
Total	3598	4344	7942	45.3

There is a statistical correlation between the percentage of women on boards and the entities’ budgets. More women board members are found in nonprofits with small budgets in Utah. Although the difference is not statistically significant, there are more female board members in Utah agencies with the smallest budgets (51.4% women; down from 54.2% in 2014) compared with those having mid-sized (41.1–50.0%) and larger budgets (37.4–40.3%). Significant changes during the past four years include the following: female representation in the \$50,000–\$199,000 category increased 5.7% from 44.3% women to 50%, decreased 5.5% in the \$200,000–\$499,000 category from 46.5% to 41.1%, and increased 3.9% in the \$500,000–\$999,999 category from 42.7% to 46.6%. Figure 3 illustrates the percentages highlighted in Table 4 by budget category. Hence, Utah may follow, at least somewhat, the national trend that shows gender is inversely related to organizational size—the larger the agency budget, the lower the percentage of female board members.

Table 5 shows that Utah county has the lowest percentage of female board members in nonprofit agencies at 40.6% (down from 42.6% in 2014), while nonprofits in Iron, Sevier, Grant, Garfield, and Wayne counties top the list again in 2018 with a

58.8% average representation of female board members (up from 57.0% in 2014). One additional change was that the Cache–Box Elder region increased from 40.1% in 2014 to 45.6% in 2018 (this aligns with the increase in female chief executives). Again, national research confirms that as women become chief executives, the number of women on their boards increases. Other regions changed only slightly. It does appear that the Wasatch Front has lower numbers of women on boards, but this region is where the largest nonprofits in the state are housed.

the highest percentage of women board directors (51.4%), while “Other” had the lowest (39.2%). Women’s representation on boards in certain nonprofits slightly decreased (Children’s Services, Education, Health, and Other), while there were slight increases in Human Services and Arts, Culture, and Humanities. Environment and Animals remained the same.

Figure 3: Percentage of Utah Female Board Members Compared with Nonprofit Budgets

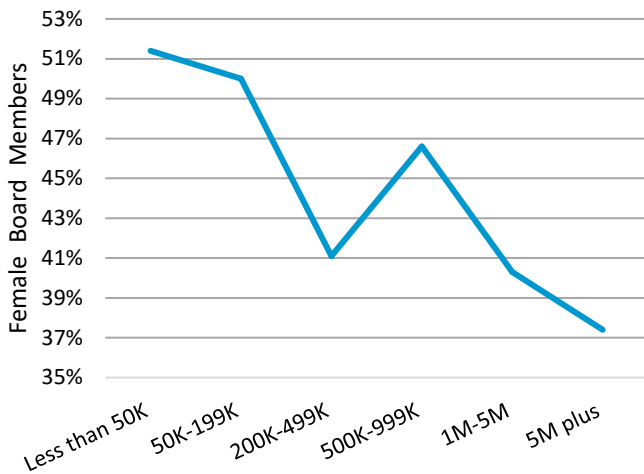


Table 5: Utah Nonprofit Board Members by Gender and Region

Counties	Female	Male	Total	% Female
Cache, Box Elder	136	162	298	45.6
Davis, Weber	393	461	854	46.0
Salt Lake	2286	2879	5165	44.3
Summit, Wasatch	245	243	488	50.2
Utah	203	297	500	40.6
Tooele, Sanpete, Carbon	18	21	39	46.2
Iron, Sevier, Grand, Garfield, and Wayne	133	93	226	58.8
Washington, San Juan, and Kane	169	158	327	51.7
Total	3583	4314	7897	45.4

As previously mentioned, national reports note that women are more likely to serve on nonprofit boards of smaller arts, cultural, health, human services, environmental, or educational organizations. In the Utah data, however, there was not a statistically significant difference in the presence of female board members among the classifications analyzed (see Table 6). Interestingly, the majority of the nonprofits analyzed in Utah were the types of organizations mentioned as having boards with a higher female presence nationally. Human Services had

Table 6: Utah Nonprofit Board Members by Gender and Classification

Classification	Female	Male	Total	% Female
Arts, Culture, and Humanities	741	788	1529	48.5
Children’s Services	56	66	122	45.9
Education	495	620	1115	44.4
Environment and Animals	275	348	623	44.1
Health	366	476	842	43.5
Human Services	871	824	1695	51.4
Other	777	1207	1984	39.2
Total	3581	4329	7910	45.3

Conclusion

In summary, this study finds that Utah is significantly below the national average in terms of the presence of women as chief executives (14.6% lower than nation) and only slightly below in terms of board members of nonprofit organizations (2.7% lower than nation). It is also clear that Utah agencies led by women also have more female board members. Utah mirrors national data in terms of having higher percentages of female leaders (chief executives and board members) in nonprofit organizations that have smaller budgets.

As is the case across the nation, a significantly higher percentage of Utah women occupy formal leadership roles in nonprofits than in other sectors (e.g., politics, higher education, public education, business). This leads to the following question: *Why are Utah women drawn to leadership within nonprofit organizations?* Although there are many reasons, this brief will address two. First, research has shown that women often have different motivations to lead than men have. Among a host of other motives for leadership roles,¹⁶ women are more often drawn to opportunities in which they can envision themselves or their organizations helping people in need, giving a voice to those who are not being heard, serving the community more broadly, and generally making a difference in people’s lives. Of course, individuals can do this in many ways and for many types of organizations or groups, but the nonprofit sector is often the most direct fit with the leadership motives of many Utah women. Second, another emerging area of leadership research focuses on the concept of “leadership calling.” Initial findings show that women are more likely to step forward to lead if they feel called to do so. *Calling* may or may not be related to spirituality, but either way it tends to include a feeling that leading

in a particular organization or for a specific effort or initiative is something they have been *made to* or *prepared to* do. Women are more likely to step forward to lead when they feel that it is their responsibility to do so—that their gifts and talents can be useful for important purposes. Some initial studies on leadership calling have found that this sense of vocation is a particularly strong motivator for women.¹⁷ Other motivations for women, as well as external challenges they face in various sectors, are discussed in the host of research and policy briefs and research snapshots that are available on the UWLP website at <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/research/briefs>.

There are many rewards for those who choose to work, volunteer, and lead within Utah nonprofit organizations today. Those involved may not always receive financial gains; they often focus on the internal satisfaction of knowing their voices and efforts have helped to make a difference in people's lives. Women continue to play an important role in doing nonprofit leadership throughout the state of Utah.

¹ Madsen, S. R., Backus, C., Jones, C., & Fischer, B. (2014, February 24). The status of women leaders in Utah nonprofits. *Research & Policy Brief No. 2, Utah Women & Leadership Project*. Retrieved from <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/files/briefs/7-status-of-women-leaders-in-utah-nonprofits.pdf>

² O'Neill, M. (2002). *Nonprofit nation: A new look at the third America* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

³ BoardSource. (2017). Leading with intent: 2017 national index of nonprofit board practices. Retrieved from <https://leadingwithintent.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/LWI2017.pdf>

⁴ BoardSource. (2015). Leading with intent: A national index of nonprofit board practices. Retrieved from <https://leadingwithintent.org/previous-reports/>

⁵ BoardSource. (2012). Nonprofit governance index 2012. Retrieved from <https://leadingwithintent.org/previous-reports/>

⁶ GuideStar. (2017, September). Nonprofit compensation report (17th ed.). Retrieved from <https://learn.guidestar.org/hubfs/Docs/2017CompReport-sample.pdf>

⁷ Coffman, S. (2017, September 12). Highlights of the 2017 GuideStar nonprofit compensation report. Retrieved from <https://trust.guidestar.org/highlights-of-the-2017-guidestar-nonprofit-compensation-report>

⁸ The numbers and percentages presenting state data vary slightly from that of the other tables because of missing data from some nonprofits in the sample.

⁹ See footnote 8.

¹⁰ See footnote 8.

¹¹ BoardSource. (2017).

¹² Blackwood, A., Dietz, N., & Pollak, T. (2014, September). *The state of nonprofit governance. The Urban Institute: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy*. Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/413229-The-State-of-Nonprofit-Governance.PDF>

¹³ BoardSource. (2017).

¹⁴ Lee Y.-J. (2014). The feminine sector: Explaining the overrepresentation of women in the nonprofit sector in the USA. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 41(7), 556–572.

¹⁵ Ostrower, F. (2007). Nonprofit governance in the United States: Findings on performance and accountability from the first national representative study. *The Urban Institute: Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy*. Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/46516/411479-Nonprofit-Governance-in-the-United-States.PDF>

¹⁶ Madsen, S. R. (2008). *On becoming a woman leader: Learning from the experiences of university presidents*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

¹⁷ Longman, K. A., Dahlvig, J., Wikkerink, R. J., Cunningham, D., & O'Connor, C. M. (2011). Conceptualization of calling: A grounded theory exploration of CCCU women leaders. *Christian Higher Education*, 10(3–4), 254–275. doi:10.1080/15363759.2011.576213

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