

INTRODUCTION

During the fall of 2023, Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) researchers conducted a statewide study to establish a baseline for public perceptions related to the awareness, understanding, and attitudes about challenges that Utah women and girls face (see [Background & Methods](#) for details). The study was created to support the work of 18 areas of focus (spokes) within the movement called [A Bolder Way Forward](#), which is dedicated to helping more Utah girls and women thrive. One of the 18 areas of focus is entrepreneurship, and this summary shares findings that highlight present perspectives and establishes a baseline to track progress in key areas.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, the UWLP partnered with the Women's Business Center of Utah to conduct research on "[Women-Owned Business in Utah: Status, Challenges, and Opportunities](#)," and a few years ago the UWLP released a research and policy brief titled "[The Status of Women and Entrepreneurship in Utah: A 2020 Update](#)." While Utah has seen substantial growth in women-owned businesses and ranks high in some aspects, the state ranks poorly on others, including WalletHub's entrepreneurship rate disparity between men and women. Four items from this new study provide additional insight that guide changes to improve women's aspirations, experiences, and success in starting and growing businesses in Utah.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Participants responded to each survey item using a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=neither disagree nor agree, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree). For Sample 1 (non-probability), 2,453 Utahns responded to these four questions, and for Sample 2 (representative), there were 650 participants (Total=3,103).

1. Start a Business: The first survey item was "If I had the opportunity and resources, I would like to start a business." The statistical mean was 4.38 (SD 2.07) for the non-probability sample and 4.71 (SD 1.94) for the representative sample. There was a significant difference between the statistical means of the samples, and both had substantial standard deviations. Overall, 51.9% of respondents agreed at some level with the statement. See the combined demographic findings below.

DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

**Gender:* Women's agreement levels were significantly lower than men's (4.37 and 4.86, resp.).

**Age:* Respondents ages 18–24 had the highest agreement, followed by 40–44-year-olds, with 60 and older having the lowest.

**Education:* The highest agreement was from respondents who had not finished high school, followed by those who had some college but no degree or were current college students.

Marital Status: There were no significant differences among categories.

**Income:* Those with lower income had higher agreement.

**Children:* Nonparents had higher agreement than parents, while parents with multiple younger children had higher agreement than other parents.

**Race & Ethnicity:* Those who identified as Asian or White had the lowest levels of agreement.

**Religion:* Spiritual but not religious and Catholics had the highest agreement, while Protestants had the lowest. Respondents who selected "1 (not at all)" and "2" had higher agreement levels than others.

**Employment:* Full-time students and the unemployed had the highest agreement, while full-time home-makers had the lowest.

**Denotes statistically significant differences within the demographic categories.*

**Residency:* Respondents who had lived in Utah 2–5 years had the highest agreement, followed by 6–10-year residents.

Counties: There were no significant agreement differences among counties. However, the statistical means ranged from 4.14 (Cache) to 4.90 (Iron).

2. Approval: The second survey item was "If I started a business, my family and friends would approve/support my decision." The statistical mean was 5.83 (SD 1.31) for the non-probability sample and 5.53 (SD 1.40) for the representative sample. With both samples combined, only 6.1% disagreed, with 12.0% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 81.9% agreeing at some level. See the combined demographic findings below.

DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

Gender: Agreement levels were similar between women and men (5.74 and 5.67, resp.).

**Age:* Those ages 55–59 had the highest agreement, followed by 18–24-year-olds.

**Education:* Interestingly, those who selected less than high school or had graduate degrees had the highest levels of agreement.

**Marital Status:* Married and those living with partner/cohabitation had the highest agreement.

**Income:* Respondents who made \$100,000 or more had the highest agreement.

**Children:* Nonparents and parents had similar agreement. Parents with only one child in the 0–5 range and who had older children had higher agreement than other parents.

Race & Ethnicity: There were no significant differences by category.

Religion: There were no significant differences among religious affiliations or by religious activity levels.

**Employment:* Full-time students had the highest agreement, while retirees and the unemployed had the lowest.

Residency: There were no significant differences among categories.

Counties: There were no significant differences among counties. However, the statistical means ranged from 5.56 (Cache) to 6.08 (Summit/Wasatch).

3. Growth: The third survey item was “If I started a business, it would grow to be big enough to employ others.” The statistical mean was 4.93 (SD 1.51) for Sample 1 and 4.81 (SD 1.51) for Sample 2. With the combined samples, 12.7% disagreed, 32.2% neither agreed nor disagreed, 55.1% agreed but only 18.4% did so strongly. See the combined demographic findings below.

DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

**Gender:* Women’s agreement was significantly lower than men’s (4.76 and 5.18, resp.).

Age: There were no significant differences among age categories.

Education: There were no significant differences among categories.

Marital Status: There were no significant differences among categories.

**Income:* Respondents who had annual household incomes less than \$35,000 or more than \$150,000 had the highest agreement.

**Children:* Parents had higher agreement than nonparents, and parents with multiple children living at home had stronger agreement than parents with only one child.

**Race & Ethnicity:* The highest agreement came from those who identified as American Indian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and Black (in that order).

**Religion:* Catholics and those who selected “spiritual but no affiliation” had the highest agreement, followed by Protestants and Latter-day Saints. There were no differences among activity levels.

**Employment:* The unemployed and full-time students had the highest agreement, while retirees and full-time homemakers had the lowest.

**Residency:* Respondents who had lived in Utah 2–5 years had the strongest agreement.

Counties: There were no significant agreement differences among counties. However, the statistical means ranged from 4.60 (the Tooele, Morgan, and Rich group) to 5.36 (Summit/Wasatch).

4. Support: The final survey item was “If I were to start a business, I would know how/where to access resources and support.” The statistical means were similar, with 3.99 (SD 1.81) for Sample 1 and 4.00 (SD 1.78) for Sample 2. Overall, 41.6% disagreed at some level, 14.7% neither agreed nor disagreed, 20.3% somewhat agreed, 14.3% agreed, and only 9.1% strongly agreed. Even though there are resources and support to help Utahns start businesses, many Utahns were either unsure or did not know where to find them. See the combined demographic findings below.

DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

**Gender:* Women’s agreement levels were statistically lower than men’s (3.85 and 4.43, resp.).

**Age:* Between the ages of 40 and 64, agreement to this statement increased significantly. Those in the 18–24 age range (college-aged respondents) had slightly higher agreement than those who were 25–39.

Education: There were no significant differences among category.

Marital Status: There were no significant differences among category.

**Income:* Respondents with annual household incomes at \$150,000 or higher had stronger agreement.

**Children:* Parents had stronger agreement than nonparents, and parents reported no differences based on the number and ages of their children.

Race & Ethnicity: There was no significant difference among categories.

**Religion:* Protestants had significantly higher agreement than all other affiliation choices, and respondents who were “not at all” active had lower agreement than all other categories.

Employment: There were no significant differences among categories.

Residency: There were no significant differences among categories.

**Counties:* Residents who responded from the following counties had the highest agreement: Washington; Iron; the Tooele, Morgan, and Rich group; and Cache. The lowest agreement came from respondents in Box Elder and Weber counties.

CONCLUSION

This summary highlights key findings related to four entrepreneurship questions. Respondents from across the state participated in the study (see [Background & Methods](#) for the demographic details of both samples). Each sample is useful in understanding the perceptions and attitudes of Utahns on this topic; however, Sample 2 (representative sample) may provide a better understanding of the perspectives of Utahns more generally.

In sum, many Utah residents responded that they would start businesses if they had resources and opportunities, yet many were not aware of the support that is currently available to all Utahns, particularly for women. Also, most respondents—between somewhat agree to agree—felt that their family and friends would approve and support such a decision. Finally, women, more than men, do not aspire to start businesses that would employ others.

[A Bolder Way Forward](#) aims to make Utah a place where more women and girls can thrive in any setting, and that includes as entrepreneurs. Utah has the potential to outpace the nation if more women understand that support is currently available.

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