



The Status of Utah American Indian Women

In 2021, the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute reported that “Utah ranks as the 34th most racially and ethnically diverse state in the nation, with 22% of the state identifying as other than non-Hispanic White.”¹ As the state continues to become more diverse, it is critical that the Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) conducts and reports research focused on women of color. As the UWLP focuses on strengthening the impact of *all* Utah girls and women, research that increases our understanding of the status and experiences of girls and women within all social and identity groups—including race and ethnicity—is crucial. This research snapshot is the fifth in a series of five that detail the available data on Utah women of each Census race/ethnic category: Pacific Islander, Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaskan Native women. The data presented here include information from, among other sources, the 5-year US Census Microdata, the Utah System of Higher Education, the Utah Department of Corrections, and a number of Utah Department of Health offices including Health Disparities, Vital Records and Statistics, and Public Health Assessment.

Setting the Stage

Often, research entities publish data on gender and race separately, leaving a gap of information and understanding on the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity. Yet, separate data do not allow the community, decision makers, and policy makers the depth of information needed to design programs and policies that meet the diverse spectrum of needs of all Utah women. This snapshot highlights the gender and race intersection for Utah American Indian women. It highlights both the available data as well as the gaps in the information that could, if filled, help local and state decision makers and leaders to understand and address the needs of all Utah girls and women.

This research uses the US Census description for “American Indian or Alaska Native,” which is “a person having origins in any of North or South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliations or community attachment.” This category includes people who indicate their race as “American Indian or Alaska Native or report entries such as Navajo, Blackfeet, Inupiat, Yup’ik, or Central American Indian Groups or South American Indian Groups.”² Importantly, while widely used

Census categories allow for data to be comparable across entities, the categories represent many different cultures and experiences. Keeping this description central to the snapshot, “American Indian” will be used as an abbreviation for the remainder of this document.

We sought data across broad categories that impact Utah women, such as civic engagement, childcare access, domestic violence, utility connectivity, caregiver status, unpaid care work, housing, transportation, access to healthy food, and food insecurity. Unfortunately, vital information is unavailable for a variety of reasons: specific data have not been collected or are not available at needed levels, the sample sizes are too small to generalize, the origin of the data is underresourced, the data have sharing limitations, or the data collection methods are unsubstantiated. Yet, UWLP researchers collected data in these five categories: general demographics, health, basic needs, education, and income and employment.

Demographics

Available demographic data on American Indian Utah women include population size, household size, family household type, marital status, and religious affiliation.

Population Size: The Utah American Indian population has been relatively stable over time, comprising around 1.0% of the Utah population. In 2010, 27,213 Utahns were American Indians, while by 2020 the number had increased to 31,648. Population demographers project a slight decrease of population share by 2065, at which point American Indians are expected to be 0.9% of Utah’s population (at 51,740).³ Currently, 17,851 American Indian women reside in Utah, which represents 0.58% of the general Utah population and is larger than their 0.43% share of the general US population.⁴

Household Size: The average household size of American Indian women in Utah is 3.3 people, which is larger than the average of 2.8 for American Indian women across the US, 3.0 for Utah women, and 2.5 for women in the US.⁵

Family Household Type: Utah American Indian households consist of 56.0% married-couple families (compared to 81.7% of all Utah families and 36.2% of US American Indians). Of all Utah American Indian households, 30.8% are led by women with no spouse present (12.3% for all Utah

women and 30.9% for US American Indian women) compared to 13.2% of Utah American Indian households with male householders with no spouse present (5.9% for Utah men and 7.5% for US general men population).

Marital Status: The share of American Indian women in Utah who are married (37.8%) is lower than shares for all US women (48.7%) and all Utah women (56.9%). Almost 45.7% have never been married compared to 27.3% for all Utah women and 30.4% for all US women. Utah American Indian women have higher separation rates compared to all Utah women (2.5% vs. 1.6%) but have lower rates of widowhood (4.7% vs. 5.6%). Additionally, divorce rates for American Indian women in Utah are lower than for all Utah women (9.3% v. 10.2%). That trend is the opposite nationally, where 14.1% of US American Indian women are divorced compared to 12.1% of all US women.⁶ See Table 1 for a summary of household and marital status findings.

Table 1. Household and Marital Status Characteristics, 2015–2019⁷

Demographic	Utah		US	
	Am. Indian	All	Am. Indian	All
Average people per household	3.3	3.0	2.8	2.5
Marital Status for Women				
Never married	45.7%	27.3%	39.1%	30.4%
Married	37.8%	56.9%	36.2%	48.7%
Separated	2.5%	1.6%	3.0%	2.2%
Widowed	4.7%	5.6%	7.6%	8.8%
Divorced	9.3%	10.2%	14.1%	12.1%
Family Household				
Married couple family household	56.0%	81.7%	56.3%	73.6%
Male householder, no spouse present	13.2%	5.9%	12.8%	7.5%
Female householder, no spouse present	30.8%	12.3%	30.9%	19.0%

Health

This section reviews age-adjusted data for access to healthcare, physical health, reproductive health and wellbeing, and mental health (see Table 2). Importantly, findings from a US American Indian population study⁸ indicate that the disparate health rates of this population may be underestimated.

Access to Healthcare: American Indian women in Utah are more likely to lack health insurance (13.3%) than Utah women in general (11.2%).⁹ Further, they face greater barriers to medical care, with 29.5% of American Indian women reporting that they forgo medical care due to cost (vs. 13.8% of Utah women generally) and having no personal doctor (24.5% for Utah American Indian women vs. 20.2% for Utah women).¹⁰

Physical Health: Utah American Indian women are more likely to receive most preventative care and less likely to experience poor health outcomes compared to all Utah women. For example, Utah American Indian women are more likely to receive pap smears (67.2% vs. 60.3% of all Utah women)¹¹ and less likely to receive a diagnosis of cervical cancer (4.7% vs. 5.2% of all Utah women).¹² Further, Utah American Indian women receive more mammograms (64.6%) than all Utah women (63.2%)¹³ and are much less likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer (48.3 per 100,000 vs. 114.6 for all Utah women)¹⁴ and to die from breast cancer (11.5% vs. 19.3% of Utah women).¹⁵ There are similar rates of physical activity reported by American Indian women in Utah to all Utah women (19.1% vs. 19.4%),¹⁶ but American Indian women have greater rates of obesity (42.0% vs. 28.4% of all Utah women).¹⁷ Another poor health outcome is an increased rate of heart disease among American Indian women in Utah (6.4% vs. 5.0% of all Utah women).¹⁸

Table 2. Health Indicator Summary

Health Indicator	Utah Women	
	Am. Indian	All
Access to Healthcare		
Uninsured	13.3%	11.2%
Unable to get care due to cost	29.5%	13.8%
No personal doctor	24.5%	20.2%
Physical Health		
Pap smear	67.2%	60.3%
Cervical cancer	4.7%	5.2%
Breast cancer rates per 100,000 females	48.3	114.6
Breast cancer death	11.5%	19.3%
Obesity	42.0%	28.4%
Heart disease	6.4%	5%
Reproductive Health		
Birth rate	11.0	10.6
Gestational diabetes	14.8%	6.8%
Postpartum depression	27.9%*	14.8%
Mental Health		
Bad mental health*	26.2%	23.6%
Depression	31.8%	29.7%

*7 or more days out of the past 30 where respondent noted their mental health was “not good.” See citations in this section for the data sources.

Reproductive Health and Wellbeing: The birth rate per 1,000 American Indian women in Utah is 11.0, which is similar to the rate of 10.6 for Utah women generally.¹⁹ Utah American Indian women are less likely to receive prenatal care in their first trimester (83.1%)²⁰ and have a far greater rate of gestational diabetes during pregnancy (14.8%) than all Utah women (88.7% and 6.8%, respectively).²¹ After giving birth, Utah American Indian women have greater rates of postpartum depression (27.9%) than Utah women in general (14.8%).²²

Mental Health: According to the data, Utah American Indian women fare slightly worse in mental health outcomes than Utah women generally. They are more likely to report poor

mental health (26.2% vs. 23.6% of all Utah women),²³ as well as receive a diagnosis of major depressive disorder (31.8% vs. 29.7% of all Utah women).²⁴

Basic Needs

“Basic needs” include access to water, internet, safety, and freedom. First, considerably more American Indian women report no access to water (27.3% for Utah American Indians and 25.8% for the US American Indians) than all women (10.6% for all Utah women and 14.4% for all US women). Second, internet access has become increasingly critical to accessing information, services, and education. Similar rates of American Indian women in Utah report having no internet access at home (23.8%) to US American Indian women at 21.7%. It is a much higher rate than Utah women in general (5.1%) and all US women (10.4%).²⁵ Third, the Utah Office for Victims of Crime reports that of individuals who have applied for crime victim reparations between 2019 and 2021, 81.6% were women. Of those, 1.7% have been American Indian (it is important to note that the race/ethnicity of 28% of these women was classified as “unknown”).²⁶ And finally, Utah American Indian women made up 5.7% of the female prison population between 2010 and 2021,²⁷ compared to their 0.9% share of the total female population in Utah.²⁸

Education

In most states and in the US in general, women earn the majority of college degrees. In fact, women earn 57.0% of bachelor-level diplomas, 60.0% of master’s degrees, and 51.7% of doctorates.²⁹ While we were not able to determine the same detail for Utah women of color, this section highlights educational attainment rates in general as well as the share of enrollment at Utah’s public universities.

According to the 5-Year American Community Survey Integrated Public Use Microdata of the US Census Bureau, American Indian women in Utah end their education with a high school diploma (33.2%) more than Utah women generally (23.8%), and, transversely, they have lower rates of attaining bachelor’s degrees (11.2% vs. 29.0% of all Utah women) (see Table 3).³⁰ In addition, there are more American Indian women in Utah (17.6%) and the US (18.3%) who end their education without a high school diploma than attain bachelor’s degrees (11.2% and 15.1%, respectively).

Table 3. Educational Attainment, 2015–2019³¹

Educational Attainment	Utah Women		US Women	
	American Indian	All	American Indian	All
Less than HS	17.6%	7.1%	18.3%	10.9%
HS diploma	33.2%	23.8%	29.7%	26.2%
Some college	38.0%	40.2%	36.9%	32.0%
Bachelor’s	11.2%	29.0%	15.1%	30.9%

Income and Employment

The US Department of Labor recently released a report³² showing that women of color were more disproportionately impacted by the economic crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. Report authors argued that the longstanding disparities in the labor force between men and women, and especially women of color—exacerbated by pandemic-related issues—intensified the persistently lower wages, fewer workplace benefits, and underinvestment in policies around childcare and paid leave. Although data limitations in this report made it difficult to discern the diverse experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native women specifically, UWLP researchers conducted a survey of over 3,000 Utah women regarding their experiences with work during the pandemic and that found women of color were more likely to agree that they were exhausted and struggling to balance work and home life, as well as report financial worry.³³

This section provides information regarding income, occupation, and business ownership among American Indian women in Utah.

Income: The median personal income for Utah American Indian women (\$12,719) is lower than the median for Utah women generally (\$19,245), similar to national trends where US women have a higher median income (\$23,106) than US American Indian women (\$16,480) (see Table 4). Similarly, the median personal wage of American Indian women in Utah is lower than for all Utah women (\$26,483 vs. \$28,374), as well as for household income (\$40,904 vs. \$70,838). Moreover, American Indian women in Utah face considerably greater rates of poverty (27.5% vs. 10.8% of all Utah women), which is commensurate with national trends.³⁴ Utah American Indian women earn \$0.52 on the dollar compared to White Utah men (compared to \$0.70 for all Utah women³⁵), a wider gap than is seen nationally for American Indian women (\$0.60 cents on the dollar).

Table 4. Income, 2015–2019³⁶

Characteristic	Utah Women		US Women	
	Am. Indian	All	Am. Indian	All
Labor force participation rate	58.9%	61.7%	56.6%	59.4%
Median household income	\$40,904	\$70,838	\$42,841	\$59,250
Median income	\$12,719	\$19,245	\$16,480	\$23,106
Median wage	\$26,483	\$28,374	\$28,617	\$34,543
Poverty rate	27.5%	10.8%	26.3%	14.7%
Wage gap	52.0%	70.0%	60.0%	82.0%
Unemployment	10.6%	3.3%	9.4%	5.0%

Occupation: Utah American Indian women are represented at different rates across occupational settings as compared to Utah women generally (see Table 5).

Table 5. Occupational Type, 2015–2019³⁷

Occupation	Utah Women		US Women	
	Am. Indian	All	Am. Indian	All
Officials and Administrators	6.2%	11.6%	9.4%	12.2%
Professionals	11.5%	22.1%	15.6%	23.3%
Technicians	4.5%*	3.0%	3.2%	3.4%
Protective Services	2.0%*	0.8%	1.6%	1.0%
Paraprofessionals	0.6%*	0.8%	1.4%	0.8%
Administrative Support	31.1%	35.0%	31.3%	31.0%
Skilled crafts	2.5%*	1.8%	1.8%	1.5%
Service & Maintenance	36.4%	24.3%	33.5%	25.8%

*Use caution in interpreting; sample sizes may be too small for generalizability.

Industry: Utah American Indian women are also employed by industries at different rates than Utah women generally (see Table 6).

Table 6. Industry, 2015–2019³⁸

Industry	Utah Women		US Women	
	Am. Indian	All	Am. Indian	All
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	13.7%	17.3%	16.1%	15.9%
Natural Resources & Mining	1.2%*	0.7%	1.1%	0.8%
Construction	1.4%*	1.4%	1.6%	1.4%
Manufacturing	8.9%	6.6%	5.2%	6.2%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	6.4%	7.7%	4.6%	7.3%
Professional & Business Services	10.1%	11.0%	7.1%	10.4%
Health & Education	27.9%	34.3%	32.6%	35.4%
Leisure & Hospitality	17.0%	9.4%	15.1%	10.2%
Other Services	3.6%*	4.9%	4.2%	5.5%
Public Admin.	4.6%	4.3%	9.2%	4.4%

*Use caution in interpreting; sample sizes may be too small for generalizability.

Business Ownership: The Women’s Business Center of Utah reports that, of their majority of women clients (95.0%), only

¹ Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. (2021, May 6). *Data book. Diversity in Utah: Race, ethnicity, and sex. Analysis in brief.* University of Utah. <https://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/DiversityDataBook-AIB-May2021.pdf?x71849>

² US Census Bureau. (2022). *About the topic of race.* <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>

³ Hollingshaus, M., Harris, E., & Perlich, P. (2019). *Utah’s increasing diversity: Population projections by race/ethnicity.* Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, University of Utah. <https://gardner.utah.edu/demographics/population-projections/raceethnicity-projections/>

1.0% are American Indian.³⁹ Nationally, as of 2019, 50.0% of all women-owned businesses in the US were owned by women of color, and firms owned by American Indian women grew 26.0% between 2014 and 2019.⁴⁰

Conclusion

As noted in a seminal report—*Diversity in Utah: Race, Ethnicity, and Sex*—published by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah, demographic, economic, education, and health data by race, ethnicity, and sex are extremely complex.⁴¹ Yet, we agree with these report authors that data can be used as a “source of light” instead of a source of division that impedes progress.

The data in this report provide a snapshot of the existing disparities in several areas specifically related to Utah American Indian women. It also provides a starting point for meaningful, targeted change. Although we were able to find existing data regarding the general demographics, health, wellbeing, education, and income and employment of Utah American Indian women, usable information was not available in many of the categories we hoped to collect, such as housing, transportation, domestic violence, unpaid labor, caregiver status, childcare accessibility, civic engagement, and food insecurity. This demonstrates both a data gap and an opportunity for Utah universities, government, nonprofit, and other entities to do more to collaborate, gather, and report quality data that can help government, education, business, and nonprofit leaders and decision makers understand more deeply the circumstances and needs of Utah’s American Indian women. More generally, gender, race, and ethnicity, along with other important demographic data, can help Utahns create a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable culture for all.

Overall, Utahns can increase equity and equality within the state by utilizing data to recognize the impact of gender and race in our everyday lives. As we provide greater access and opportunity to all residents, the state can use these data to better utilize the talents, ideas, and resources that American Indian women have to offer the state, employers, and Utah families. It continues to be important to remember that when we strengthen the impact of all Utah residents, including American Indian women, we can strengthen Utah’s workplaces, educational institutions, communities, and the state as a whole.

⁴ Utah Women & Leadership Project analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.

⁵ Utah Women & Leadership Project analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

⁷ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.

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- ⁸ Indian Health Services. (2019, October). *Disparities*. The Federal Health Program for American Indians and Alaska Natives. <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/disparities/>
- ⁹ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2020.
- ¹⁰ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2019.
- ¹¹ In past three years. Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2019 & 2020.
- ¹² Age adjusted. Utah Cancer Registry 2010–2019.
- ¹³ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2018–2020.
- ¹⁴ Utah Cancer Registry 2012–2016. Age-adjusted incidence per 100,000 females.
- ¹⁵ Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 women. Utah Death Certificate Database, Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Utah Department of Health.
- ¹⁶ Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2018–2019.
- ¹⁷ Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2018–2019.
- ¹⁸ Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2020.
- ¹⁹ Birth rate per 1,000 Utah Residents. Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2017–2019.
- ²⁰ Utah Birth Certificate Database, Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Utah Department of Health, 2018–2020.
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- ²² Utah Department of Health Office of Health Disparities, 2017–2019.
- ²³ Seven or more days out of the past 30 where mental health is not good. Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Office of Public Health Assessment, Utah Department of Health, 2016–2020.
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- ²⁶ Utah Office for Victims of a Crime. (2022). *Office statistics received for claims received between 01/01/2019 and 12/31/21*.
- ²⁷ Utah Department of Corrections inmate population data for 2010–2021.
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- ³⁰ Utah Women & Leadership Project analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.
- ³¹ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.
- ³² US Department of Labor. (March 2022). *Bearing the cost: How overrepresentation in undervalued jobs disadvantaged women during the pandemic*. <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/media/BearingTheCostReport.pdf>
- ³³ Hartwell, C., Hansen, J., & Madsen, S. R. (2021, June 2). *The impact of COVID-19 on Utah women and work: Childcare and homeschooling*. Utah Women & Leadership Project. <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/files/briefs/33-covid-19-childcare-homeschooling.pdf>
- ³⁴ Utah Women & Leadership Project analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.
- ³⁵ Winkel, R., Darowski, E. S., Christensen, M., & Madsen, S. R. (2021, October 5). *Utah gender wage gap: A 2021 update*. Utah Women & Leadership Project. <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/files/snapshot/31.pdf>
- ³⁶ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata; the gender wage gap data in the table is from Winkel et al. (2021).
- ³⁷ Utah Women & Leadership Project analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.
- ³⁸ UWLP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year American Community Survey, Integrated Public Use Microdata.
- ³⁹ Women’s Business Center of Utah. (2016–2017). Annual report. https://wbcutah.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/WBC_AnnualReport_2017_Digital.pdf
- ⁴⁰ American Express. (2019). *The 2019 state of women-owned businesses report*. https://s1.q4cdn.com/692158879/files/doc_library/file/2019-state-of-women-owned-businesses-report.pdf
- ⁴¹ Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. (2021, May 6).

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