

# Hard at Work

## Women in the Utah Labor Force



An informal report on the status of Women in the Utah Labor Force.



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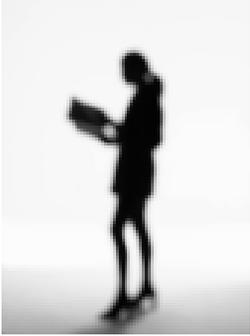


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# Just the Facts, Ma'am

## Executive Summary

### Population

*"That great events are about to transpire in which women will perform an active and important revolutionary part we are not afraid to predict. The great question is, is she preparing herself for the position she is destined to occupy and the work which will consequently devolve upon her?"*

*Emmeline B. Wells,  
Editor of Utah's The  
Woman's Exponent,  
1880*

- *In a change from previous years, men outnumbered women in Utah based on Census 2000 data. Males numbered 1,119,000 compared to females at 1,114,000. This change occurred primarily because of an influx of work-age male Hispanics. According to the 2008 American Community Survey, that relationship still holds true.*
- *In the 65 years-or-older category, women far outnumber men in Utah.*
- *With 31 percent of its population under the age of 18, Utah has the youngest population in the nation.*

### Marriage and Family

- *According to the 2008 American Community, 56 percent of Utah's women 15 years and older are married—down from 69 percent in 1950. A higher percentage of Utahns are married than in any other state in the nation.*
- *The share of Utah women who are divorced has increased from 2 percent in 1950 to 10 percent in 2008.*
- *The median age at first marriage in Utah measures 26.1 for the groom and 23.5 for the bride—lowest in the nation. The median age at first marriage in United States measures 28.0 for the groom and 26.2 for the bride.*
- *Utah women who have never married comprised 26 percent of all marriageable age women in 2008 compared with 19 percent in 1950.*
- *Utah's divorce rate typically runs slightly higher than the U.S. average and has done so for decades. In addition, the method of determining divorce rates understates Utah's figures. In 2007, there were 3.5 divorces in Utah per 1,000 population—only the second time since 1960 that Utah's divorce rate has measured below the national average.*
- *Divorce rates reached their peak in the early 80s and have since moderated.*
- *Utahns are more likely than their national counterparts to marry and re-marry .*

- *Utah's birthrate of 20.4 births per thousand population far outstripped the national average of 14.3 births per thousand population in 2007. Utah's birth rate has remained higher than the national average for decades and ranks as one of the highest in the nation.*
- *Roughly 14 percent of Utah's households with children are headed by women (with no husband present)—far lower than the national average of 24 percent.*
- *Utah's families are larger than the U.S. norm. Families in Utah include 3.67 persons compared to 3.22 nationally. In 1960, the average Utah family included 3.99 persons.*
- *About 5 percent of Utah families include seven or more members compared to only 2 percent nationally.*

## Education

- *In 2008, 91 percent of Utah women aged 25 and older had graduated from high school. Utah men showed a high school graduation rate of 90 percent. Together, Utah men and women rank seventh highest in the nation for high school graduation rates.*
- *Roughly 26 percent of Utah women had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2008 compared to 27 percent of U.S. women. Utah men showed a 32 percent rate of college graduation in contrast to the U.S. average of 28 percent.*
- *While prior to 1990, Utah women showed a higher rate of college graduation than U.S. women, by 2000, Utah women had lost their "bachelor's degree or higher" educational edge.*
- *Utah shows **by far** the largest gap in the nation between male and female college-graduation rates.*
- *Utah women are getting more education, but are not keeping up with their male or U.S. counterparts.*

## Labor Force

- *In 2008, roughly 62 percent of Utah women over the age of 16—were participants in the labor market. Nationally, 60 percent of women were in the labor force.*
- *In 1900, 13 percent of Utah women worked outside the home; in 1940, about a fourth; in 2000, 61 percent.*

- *The influx of women into the labor market has been relatively steady. Participation rates have increased by about 8 percentage points each decade.*
- *Women comprise about 44 percent of the Utah labor force.*
- *Utah women fell behind U.S. women in labor force participation until 1980. Since that point, Utah women have shown higher participation rates than the national average.*
- *Labor force participation is higher for Utah women partially because of the state's young labor force (younger women are more likely to work).*
- *Utah women aged 20 to 24 are most likely to work.*
- *Almost 59 percent of married Utah women work outside the home.*
- *Roughly 74 percent of Utah's mothers with school-age children work.*
- *About 59 percent of Utah's mothers of preschool-age children work.*
- *Utah women generally experience higher unemployment rates than do Utah men. The exception is during recessionary periods when male jobless rates exceed those of females.*
- *Women make up the largest share of discouraged workers both in Utah and the U.S. Discouraged workers are those which have stopped looking for work because they believe they cannot find a job..*
- *About 27 percent of Utah women in the labor force work part-time compared to 18 percent of U.S. women.*
- *Utah women in metropolitan areas are more likely to work outside the home than those living in more rural settings.*
- *Summit, Grand, Salt Lake, and Davis counties exhibit the highest female labor force participation in Utah.*
- *Piute, Rich, San Juan, and Washington counties show the lowest female labor force participation.*
- *The average Utah woman worked 33 hours per week in 2008—behind Utah men with an average of 41 hours per week.*

## Occupations

- *In 1980, one-fourth of Utah women worked in an occupation where at least 90 percent of the profession was held by women. By 2000, the comparable share had dropped to 10 percent.*
- *Roughly 84 percent of Utah healthcare-support occupations are held by women. Healthcare-support occupations include lower-skilled healthcare positions such as aides, orderlies, assistants, and massage therapists.*
- *Utah women hold only 2 percent of construction and mining positions. In addition, women constitute only 3 percent of installation/maintenance/repair workers.*
- *A higher percentage of computer/mathematical jobs, healthcare practitioners, business/financial operation occupations, life/physical/social scientists, and architecture/engineering occupations are held by U.S. women than by Utah women.*
- *Some female-dominated occupations have become even more concentrated with women. For example, in 1980, roughly 66 percent of all elementary school teachers in Utah were female. By 2000, Utah women had increased their share of this occupation to 78 percent. Female cosmetologists increased their occupation share from 89 percent in 1980 to 95 percent in 2000..*
- *During 2002 (the most recent data available), women owned one-fourth of all Utah businesses.*

## Earnings

- *A number of different data series make providing an ultimate figure for the gap between men's and women's earnings difficult.*
- *Data from the 2008 American Community Survey for Utah shows the median earnings for year-round, full-time male workers at \$45,000. The comparable figure for female workers measures \$31,200.*
- *On average, Utah women made 69 percent of male earnings.*
- *Nationally, the American Community Survey shows a male/female wage ratio of 78 percent.*
- *Utah had the fourth largest wage gap in the nation in 2008, bettering its 1990 performance when Utah showed the widest gap in the nation.*

- *Regardless of the data series used, the wage gap statewide and nationally has decreased since 1980.*
- *By age, the wage gap is smallest for women between 20 and 24.*
- *The largest wage gap occurs for Utah men and women with less than a high school education*
- *The smallest wage gap occurs for Utah men and women with advanced degrees.*
- *White women and men in Utah show a much larger wage gap than those from minority ethnic or racial groups.*
- *Many of the occupations with the smallest wage gap are those which require math, science, or analytical skills or are jobs dominated by men.*
- *Occupational choice is the largest factor in the wage gap. Other demographic factors—less education, less occupational tenure, etc. also contribute to the difference in men’s and women’s earnings.*
- *No study has explained away the wage gap using the differing demographic characteristics of men and women suggesting that institutional discrimination does exist.*
- *In 2008, according to the American Community Survey, 30 percent of Utah female-headed families with children had incomes below the poverty line. In comparison, only 6 percent of married couple families with children and 13 percent for single male-headed families were in poverty.*

## **Data Resources:**

### **U.S. Census Bureau:**

[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

### **Women-Owned Businesses:**

<http://www.census.gov/csd/sbo/women2002.htm>

### **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics:**

[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

### **Earnings by Education and Occupation:**

[www.census.gov/hhes/income/earnings/earnings.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/earnings/earnings.html)



# Who are They?

*"We believe that women are useful, not only to sweep houses, wash dishes, make beds and raise babies, but that they should stand behind the counter, study law or physics, or become good book-keepers and be able to do the business in any counting house, and all this to enlarge their sphere of usefulness for the benefit of society at large."*

Brigham Young  
First Governor of Utah  
1869

## The Demographics of Utah's Women

Recent changes in the labor force experience of Utah women cannot be fully understood without examining the state's demographics. Variations in population, marital status, and fertility all affect or are affected by the migration of women into the labor force. A woman's marital status, whether or not she has children, and her educational level all shape her labor force experience.

### Surprise! Surprise! More Guys than Gals

It's "tradition." Women typically outnumber men in the population. The 2000 Census tallied only 96 men for every 100 women in the U.S. After all, even though more boy babies are born each year, women outlive men by an average of six years.

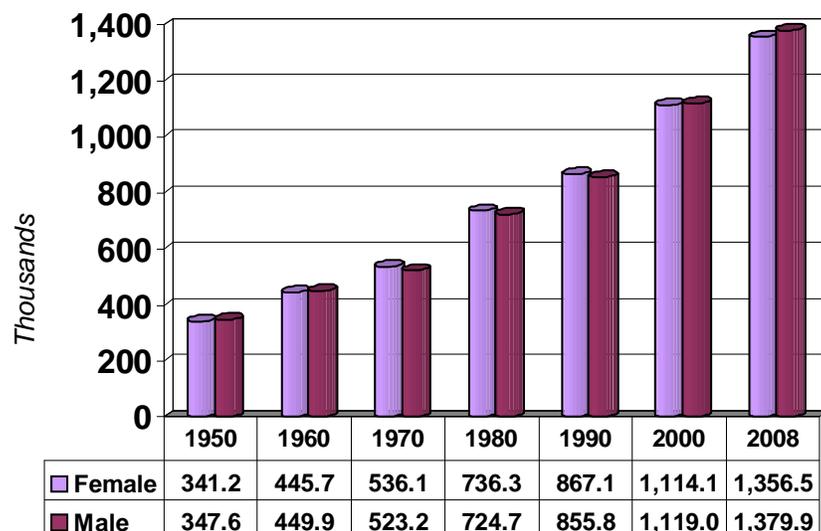
This "rule of thumb" generally holds true in Utah, too. In 1990, Utah showed 99 men per 100 women. However, when the 2000 Census was taken, males actually outnumbered females in the Beehive state—100.4 men for every 100 women.

What happened? An influx of Hispanic or "Latino" men bolstered the male ranks. From 1990 to 2000, Utah's Hispanic population increased by 138 percent—doubling its share of the total population. The male/female ratio for the non-Hispanic population measured 99.9. The male/female ratio for the Hispanic population registered 125.7. In other words, an influx of Hispanic men—particularly in the "working" ages—pushed the number of males above the number of females in Utah.

Estimates from the 2008 American Community Survey suggest that men in Utah still hold the numerical edge with 101.7 men for every 100 women.

Another way to look at this number? Roughly 50.4 percent of the Utah population is male.

## Utah Population by Gender

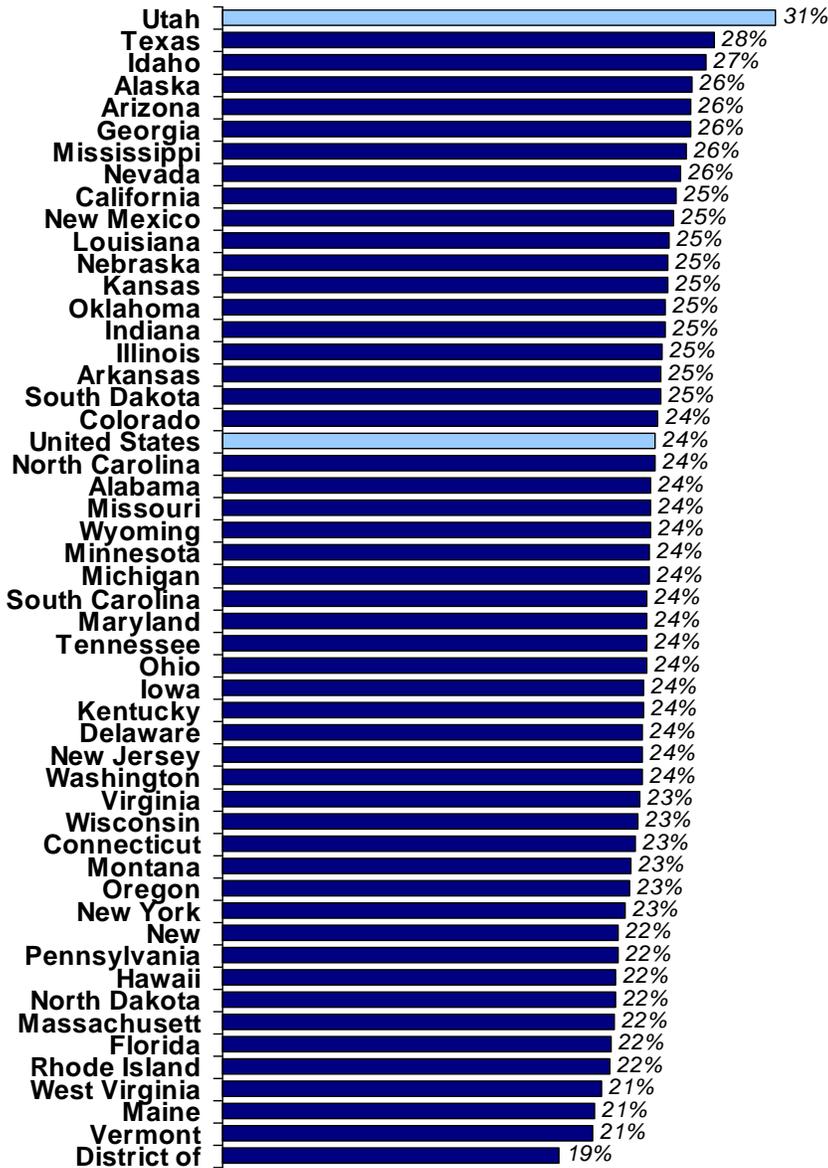


\*Includes only household population.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## The Baby of the Country

Unless you've been living in a media vacuum, you've probably heard that Utah has the youngest population in the nation. According to the American Community Survey, almost 31 percent of Utah's population was under the age of 18 in 2008—the highest rate of any state in the nation. Yes, there are lots of kids in Utah. (Someone once said that in Utah you have a greater chance of

# Share of Population Under 18—2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

being run over by a stroller than anywhere else in the country.) Of course, lots of kids translates into lots of moms or moms with lots of kids.

You might suppose that with such a young population, Utah has a hefty birth rate. Good guess. In 2007, Utah's birth rate measured roughly 20 births per 1,000 population compared to a U.S. birth rate of only 14 births per 1,000.

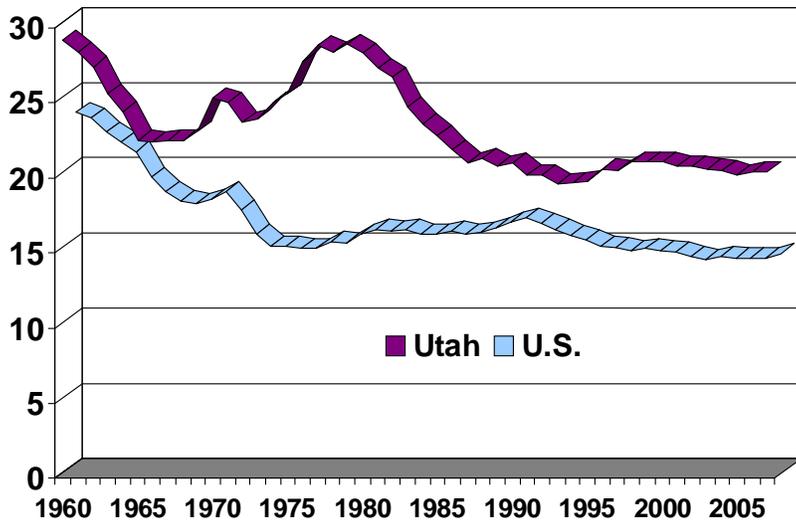
Since 1950, Utah's birth rate has continually surpassed the national average. The gap stretched widest in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. In recent years, the gap has closed somewhat. Yes, even in Utah, birth rates have dropped substantially from their 1950 levels. However, since 1990 rates have remained relatively flat on a state and national basis.

## A Family Affair

Not surprisingly, Utah's family size is larger than the average U.S. family. In 2008, the average Utah family (two or more persons living together related by birth, marriage, or adoption) measured 3.67 persons. That's down about four-tenths of a person since 1960. Nationally, the average family size measures just 3.22 persons.

Yes, Utahns have large families. In 2008, 26 percent of Utah families had five or more members compared to only 14 percent nationally.

# Births Per 1,000 Population



Source: Utah Department of Health.

# Here Comes and There Goes the Bride

In 1950, 69 percent of Utah’s marriageable-age women were joined in the bonds of wedlock. By the 2008, the share of the married females had dropped to 56 percent. Nevertheless, Utahns are still much more likely than their U.S. counterparts to be married. Only 48 percent of U.S. women are married.

Common sense and a little observation suggest that a larger share of the Utah population is now divorced—or just hasn’t gotten around to getting married. In 1950, only 2 percent of the population was divorced compared to 10 percent in 2008. In addition, women and men are postponing or foregoing marriage. In 1950, only 19 percent of

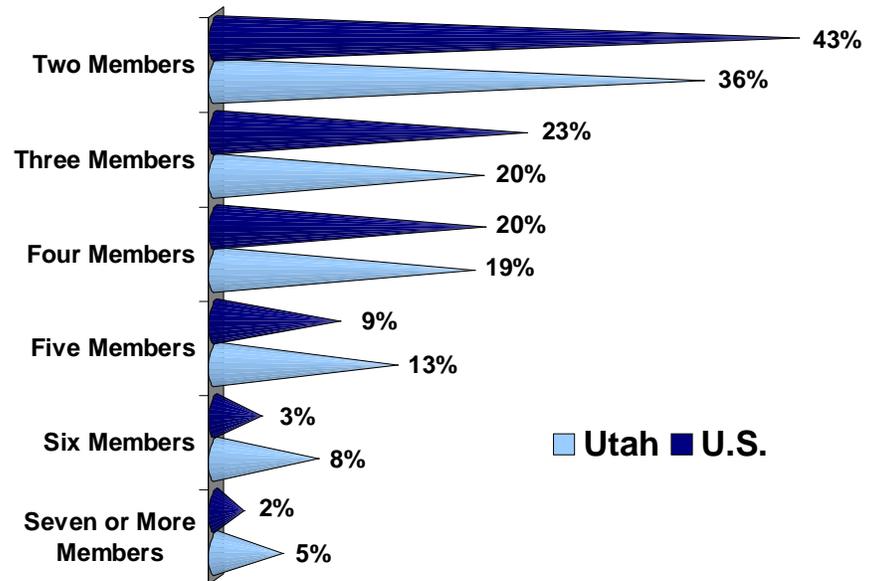
the adult population had never been married contrasted to 26 percent in 2008.

After hitting their peak in the early 80s, divorce rates have moderated. In 1950, Utah displayed a divorce rate (divorces per 1,000 population) of 3.0. By 1981, the rate peaked at 5.5 only to taper off to 3.5 by 2007.

Incidentally, Utah almost always shows a higher divorce rate than the national average—even back in 1950. In addition, the rate understates Utah’s divorce rate because of its large under-marriageable-age population.

Utah’s higher-than-average divorce rate may be connected to its young marriages. In 2008, Utah showed the lowest age of women at first marriage of any state in the nation. On the other

# Members Per Family—2008



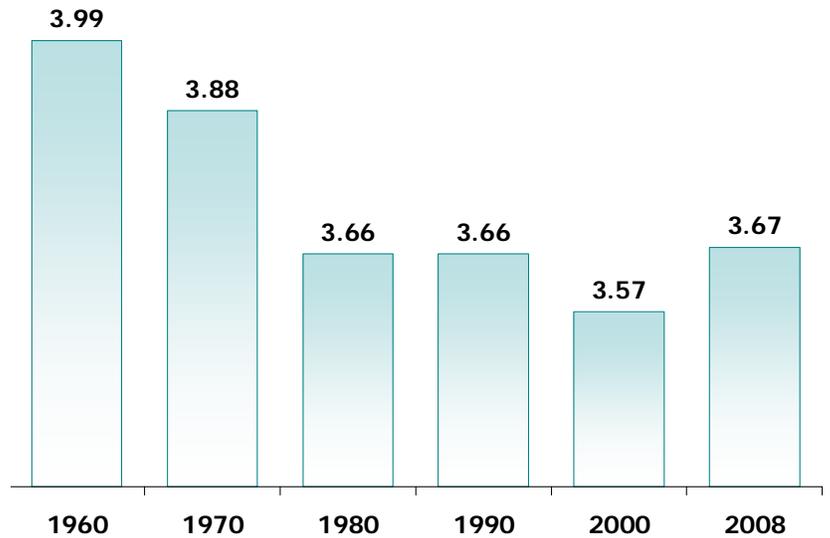
Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey.

hand, Utah women are much more likely to marry and remarry than their U.S. counterparts.

### A Strong Influence

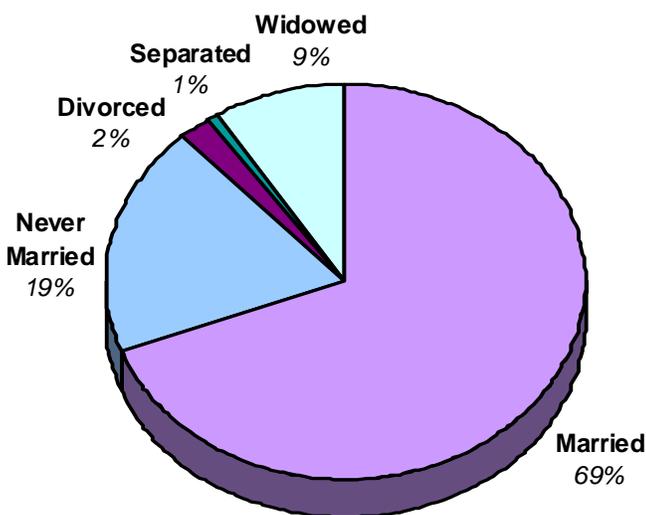
Many of Utah's atypical demographic statistics—high birth rates, larger families, more and younger marriages—reflect the culture of Utah's dominant religion. Approximately 60 percent of Utah's population belongs to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Cultural and religious beliefs about marriage, family, and working mothers have a strong influence on Utah's demographics.

## Average Members Per Utah Family

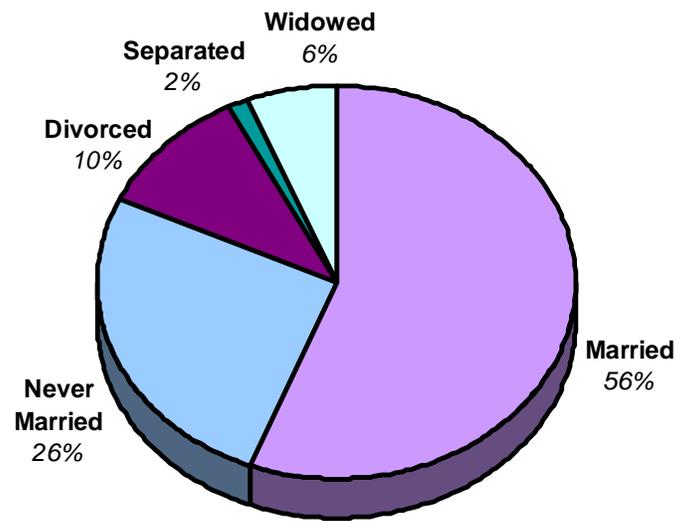


Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## Marital Status of Utah Women, 15 Years and Older



1950



2008

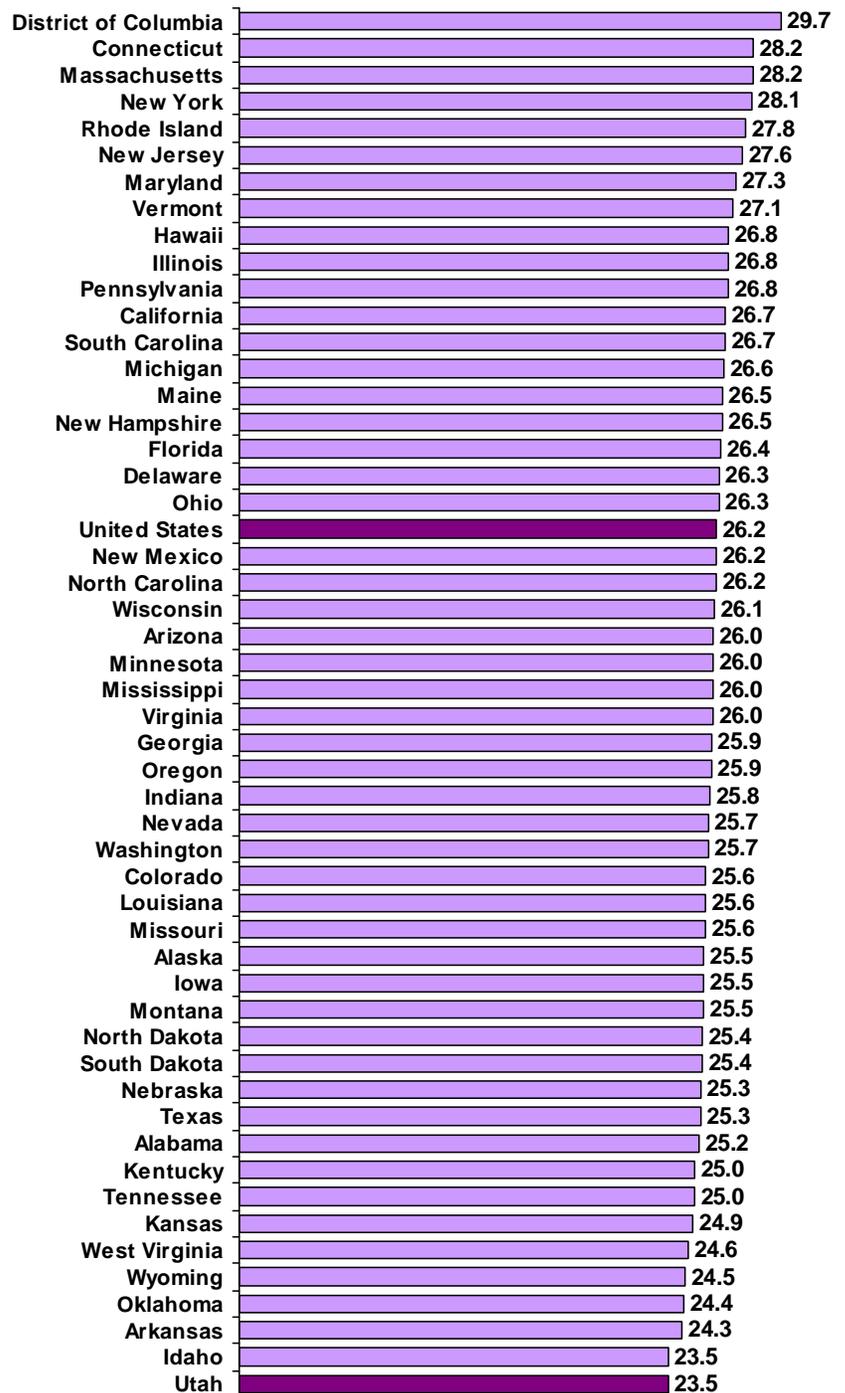
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## The Working Connection

Why are these demographic numbers important in a report about Utah women's labor market experience? Here are some relationships that can explain certain labor market trends.

- *Unmarried women are more likely to be labor force participants.*
- *Marriage postponement provides more time for women to get an education.*
- *Women are less likely to continue their education after marriage than are men.*
- *Women with employment and income have the financial independence to leave bad marriages.*
- *The fewer children a woman has, the more likely she is to work outside the home.*
- *Women who have children tend to earn less than childless women.*
- *The higher a woman's educational attainment, the fewer births she has or expects to have.*
- *The closer a wife's earnings are to her husband's, the more likely she is to delay having children.*

## Female Median Age at First Marriage, 2008



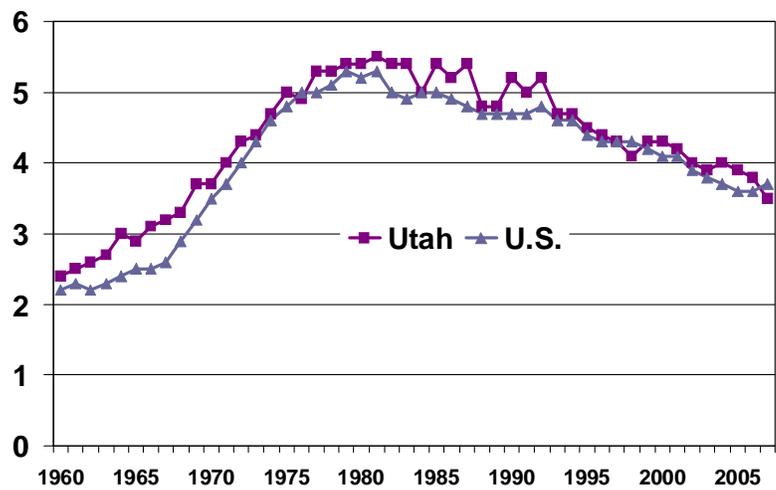
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## Educating Emily

We Utahns like to give ourselves a pat on the back because of our well-educated workforce—particularly given the monetary restraints of our public and higher education systems. Perhaps, rightly so. Back in 1990, Utah had the second highest percentage of adults with a high school education in the nation. Our ranking slipped somewhat when the 2000 Census was taken (to fourth), but we're still head-and-shoulders above most of the nation. However, by 2008, Utah had slipped to number seven in the state rankings

We can boast of a high percentage of college graduates, too. In 2008, 29 percent of the Utah population over the

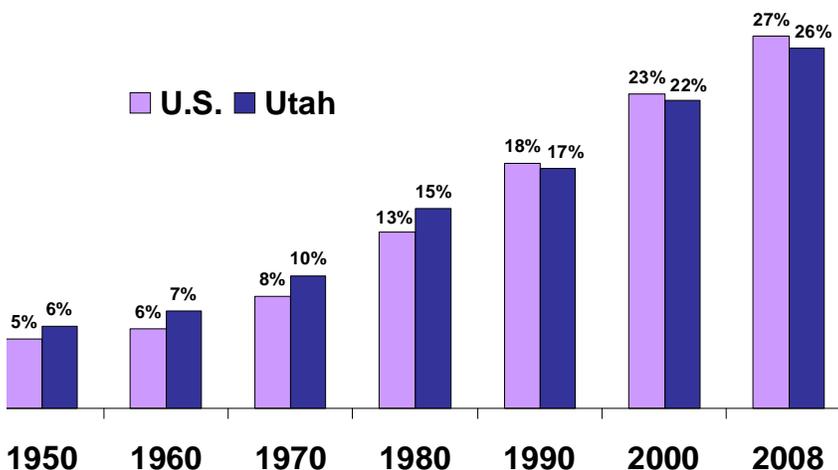
## Divorces Per 1,000 Population



Source: Utah Dept. of Health.

age of 25 had a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 27 percent of the U.S. population.

## Share of Women 25 Years and Older With At Least a Bachelor's Degree



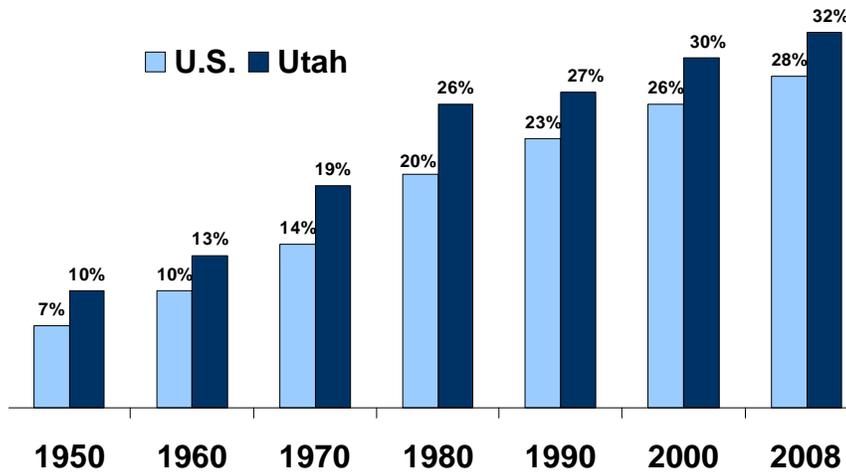
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

But, Utah used to significantly outstrip the U.S. average when it came to the college-educated. In 1980, instead of a 2-percentage-point gap for college graduates, Utah could claim a 4-percentage-point lead over the nation. Why is Utah losing its educational edge?

## Somebody's Just Not Keeping Up

Of course, more and more of Utah's population continues to receive a four-year degree. It's just that one group isn't expanding its share of college graduates as rapidly as the nation. Who is in that group? Utah women.

## Share of Men 25 Years and Older With At Least a Bachelor's Degree



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

As you can see on the graph that plots the share of Utah and U.S. men with at least a bachelor's degree, Utah men have sustained an educational lead over the past 50 years. In 2008, roughly 32 percent of Utah adult men had obtained at least a bachelor's degree compared to 28 percent of U.S. men.

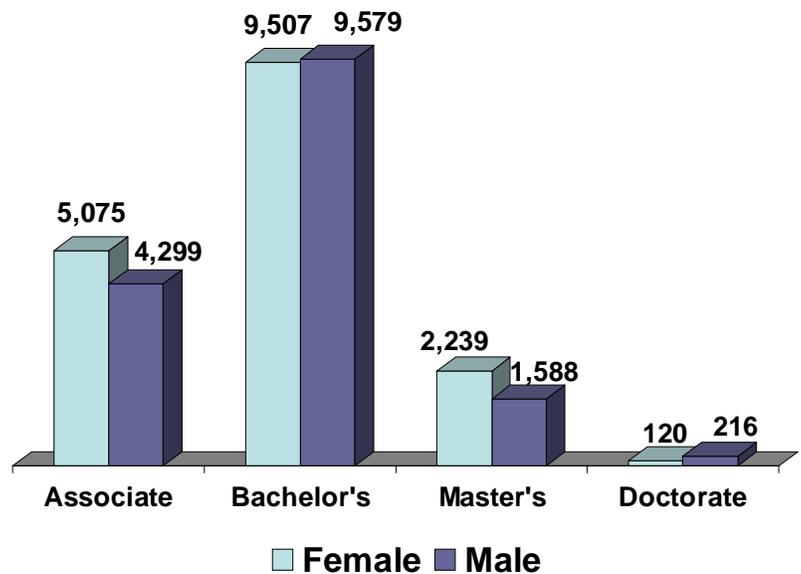
On the other hand, while Utah women started out with a lead in 1950, they lost the high ground in 1990. By 2000, they lost even a little more ground. At last count in 2008, 26 percent of Utah women over age 25 had at least a bachelor's degree—slightly below the comparable 27 percent of U.S. women.

The difference in Utah women and men's comparative educational levels also shows up dramatically when they

are ranked against other states. In 2000, Utah's overall ranking for individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher was 15. However, for men, Utah ranked number nine. Women slipped down halfway to number 25 in the nation.

In addition, this large difference in education must surely factor into Utah's large male-female wage gap. Typically, depending on the data series, Utah shows one of the largest wage gaps in the nation.

## Utah Degrees Conferred by Title IV Institutions, 2003-2004 Academic Year



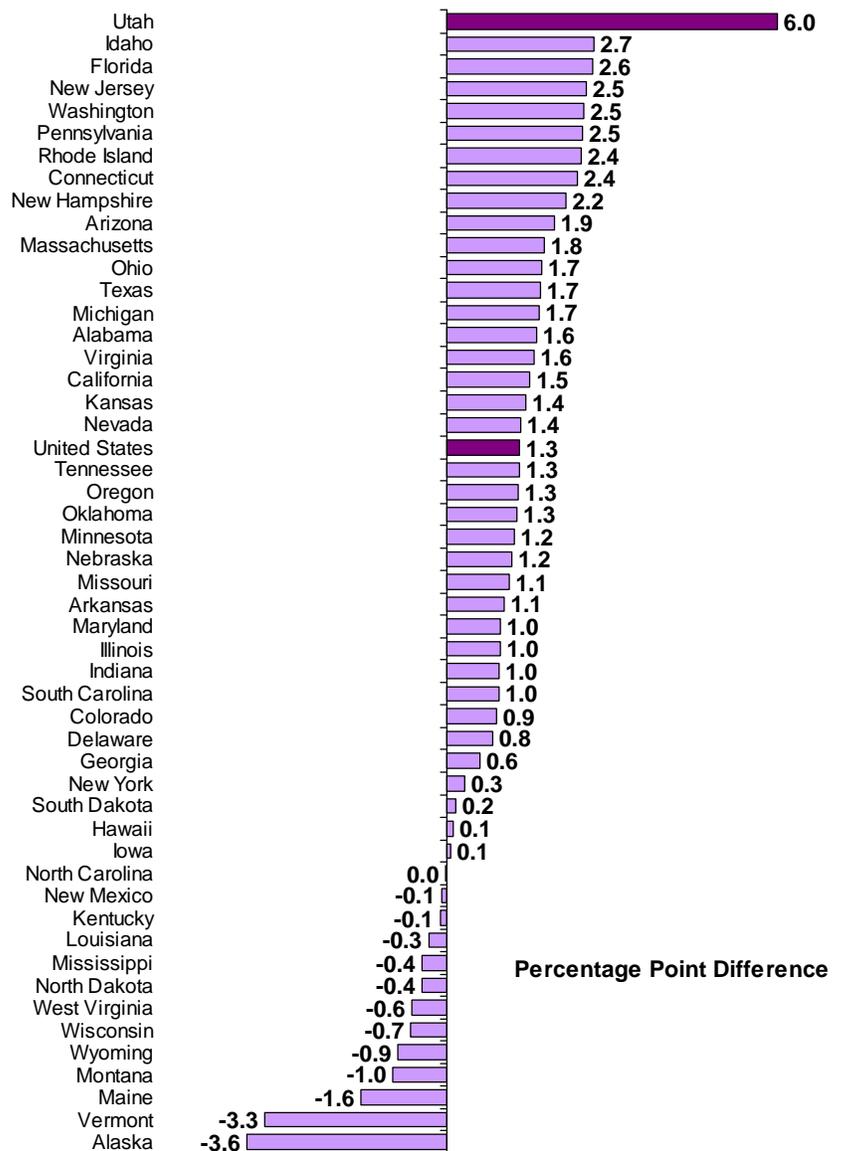
Source: U.S. Department of Education

Perhaps the most troubling ranking is this: At more than 6 percentage points, Utah has the largest college-degree gap for women and men of any state in the nation—next closest ranks Idaho with less than a 3-percentage-point gap. In other words, in Utah, women are farther behind men in obtaining a college education—considerably more than in any other state.

### The Issues

Of course, this widening education gap has many policy implications. It bears mentioning that as education increases, so do wages—especially for women. In Utah, where most mothers and wives work, less education for women means less income for families.

## Difference in the Share of Adult Males and Females with at Least a Bachelor’s Degree 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



# Working for a Living

## Labor Force Participation of Utah's Women

*"Woman has always had one opportunity—the opportunity to work; this one thing has never been denied her. Man has never considered that she was out of her sphere when she toiled in the fields and factories; he has never criticized her for leaving her home for any kind of drudgery. But when she began to enter the professional field and when she began to compete with men in the great work of the world, she was reminded that she was going out of her own sphere and was neglecting her home."*

Annie Wells Cannon,  
Member of the Utah  
State Legislature, 1913

They're here. In 2007, 63 percent of Utah's women 16 years and older were working or actively seeking employment. Even though record numbers of women are now employed, they have played an important part in America's paid labor force since before the turn of the century.

In 1890, 18 percent of U.S. working-age women were part of the labor force. From that point, female participation rates have grown at a steady speed—except for the swell experienced in World War II as women filled the employment gaps left by soldiers.

The influx of women into the labor market has occurred gradually. Since the post WWII years, women's participation rates have increased about 8

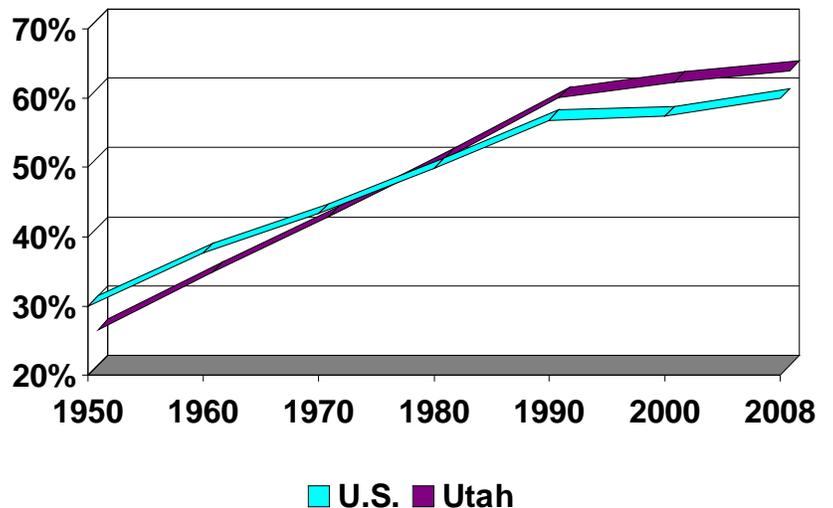
percentage points every decade. (A participation rate is the share of the working-age population working or looking for work.)

### A Utah Participation History

The Census for 1950 indicated that 25 percent of Utah's working-age women had joined the labor force. This rate fell significantly below the national average of 30 percent for the year. Now, the Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us that more than 63 percent of Utah women work outside the home—more than double the 1950 rate.

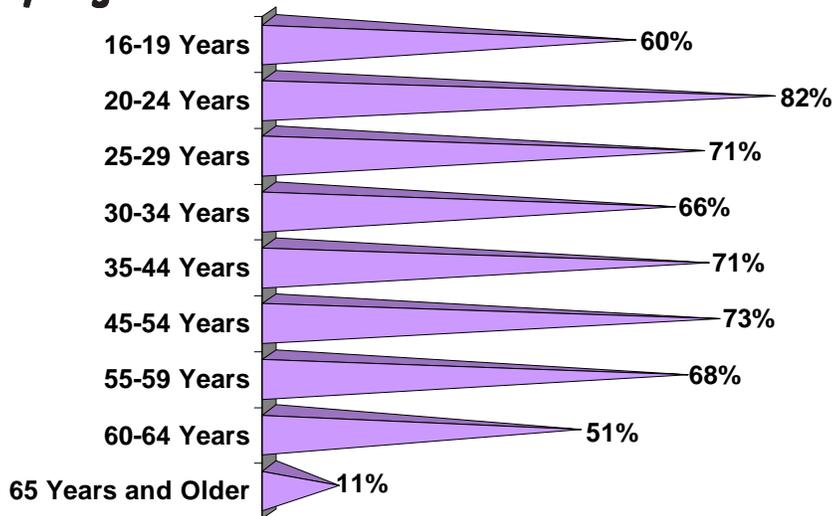
Utah played catchup in 1980, when its participation rate of 50 percent equaled the national average. Since that point, Utah has consistently shown **higher** participation rates than the U.S.

## Female Civilian Labor Force Participation Rates



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## Utah 2008 Female Participation Rates by Age



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

average. People may think that a smaller share of Utah women work than the national average, but it's just not so. In 2008, Utah's rate measured more than 62 percent compared to a 59-percent rate for the United States.

Behind this higher-than-average rate lies Utah's unusual demographics. Younger women are more likely to work outside the home and Utah has a lot of young women.

### Men Losing Ground

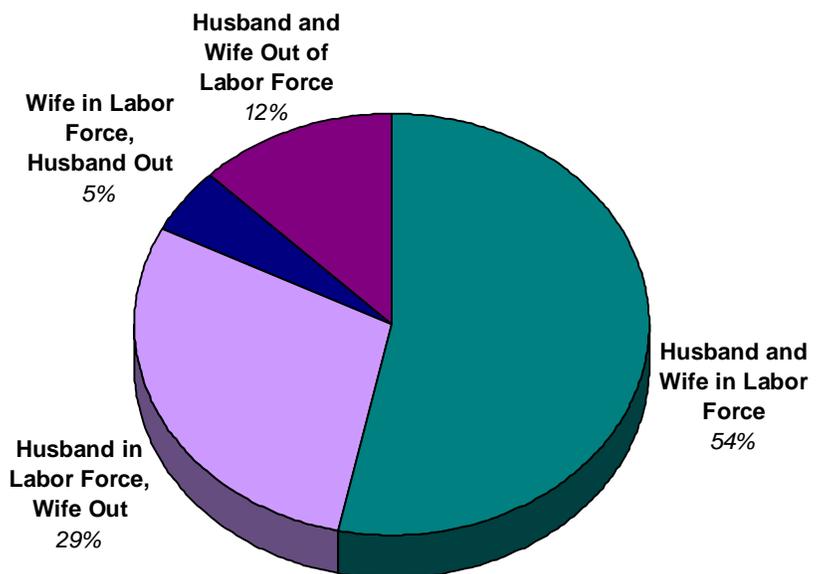
While Utah women's rate of labor force participation had climbed steadily upwards, Utah men have actually decreased their participation. In 1950, almost 83 percent of Utah men were in the labor force compared to 77 percent in 2000. This drop in the male

workforce participation has resulted largely from the trend toward early retirement.

### It's an Age Thing

Age has a definite bearing on a Utah woman's likelihood of working. In 2008, Utah women between the ages of 20 and 24 were most likely to work—82 percent worked outside the home. Females between the ages of 45-54 are next most likely to work. During the adult years, Utah women are least likely to work between the ages of 60 and 64. This may reflect a trend toward earlier retirement for this group also. However,

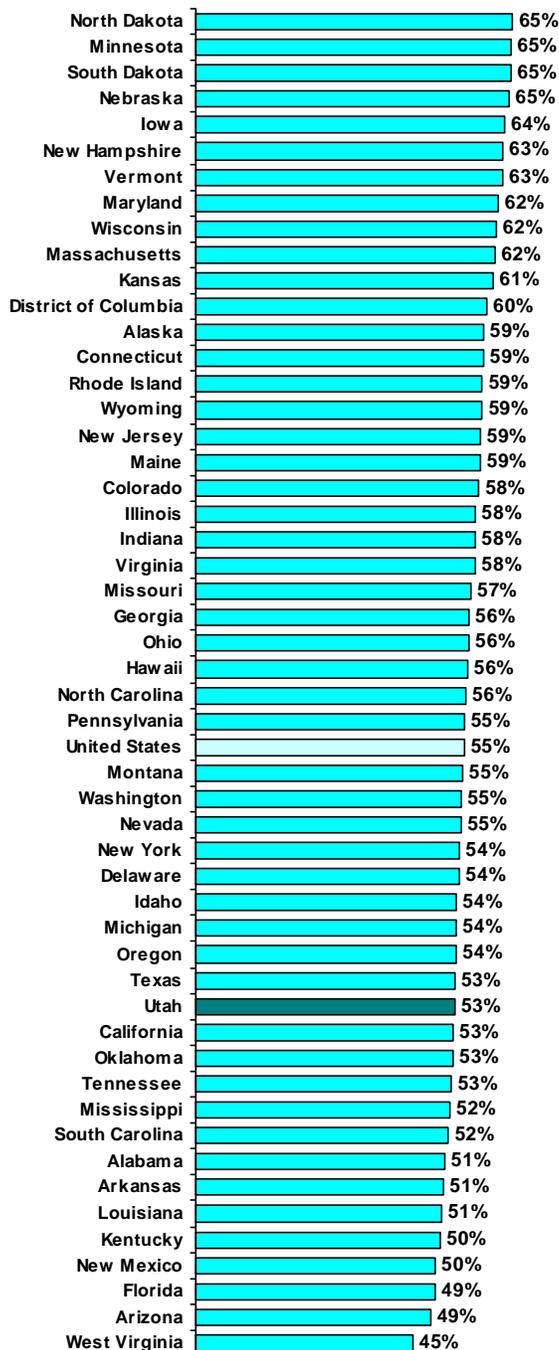
## Utah Labor Force Status of Married Couple Families



2008

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

# 2008 Married Couple Families with Both Spouses in the Labor Force



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

it's probably a generational characteristic, too. Many of these women have had careers in the home, rather than outside the home.

While female teens show a 57-percent participation rate, 11 percent of women 65 years and older are still making money in the labor market. Compared to the U.S., a smaller-than-average percentage of Utah women participates in the labor force between the ages of 30 and 34—a time when many women leave the labor market for home and maternal duties.

## Utah's Families at Work

Gone are the days of the traditional working father and stay-at-home mom as the prime family type. In 2008, most of Utah's married couple families (53 percent) included both a working husband and working wife. Keep in mind that 13 percent of married-couple families have neither wife nor husband in the workforce (many are retired). In addition, 5 percent of these families have a wife who works and a husband who does not.

In a ranking of states, Utah falls below average in the percentage of married couple families with both spouses in the labor force. Many of the other low-ranking counties are in the southern part of the country. In addition, several of these low-ranking states are retirement meccas which undoubtedly contributes to their lower-than-average figures since retirees have removed themselves from the labor force.

## Dead Last

While Utah certainly reflects the trend toward more working mothers, it ranks dead last for the percentage of children in 2008 with both parents in the labor force. Nevertheless, notice that half of Utah's children still have both parents working outside the home.

## Mom's Working, Too.

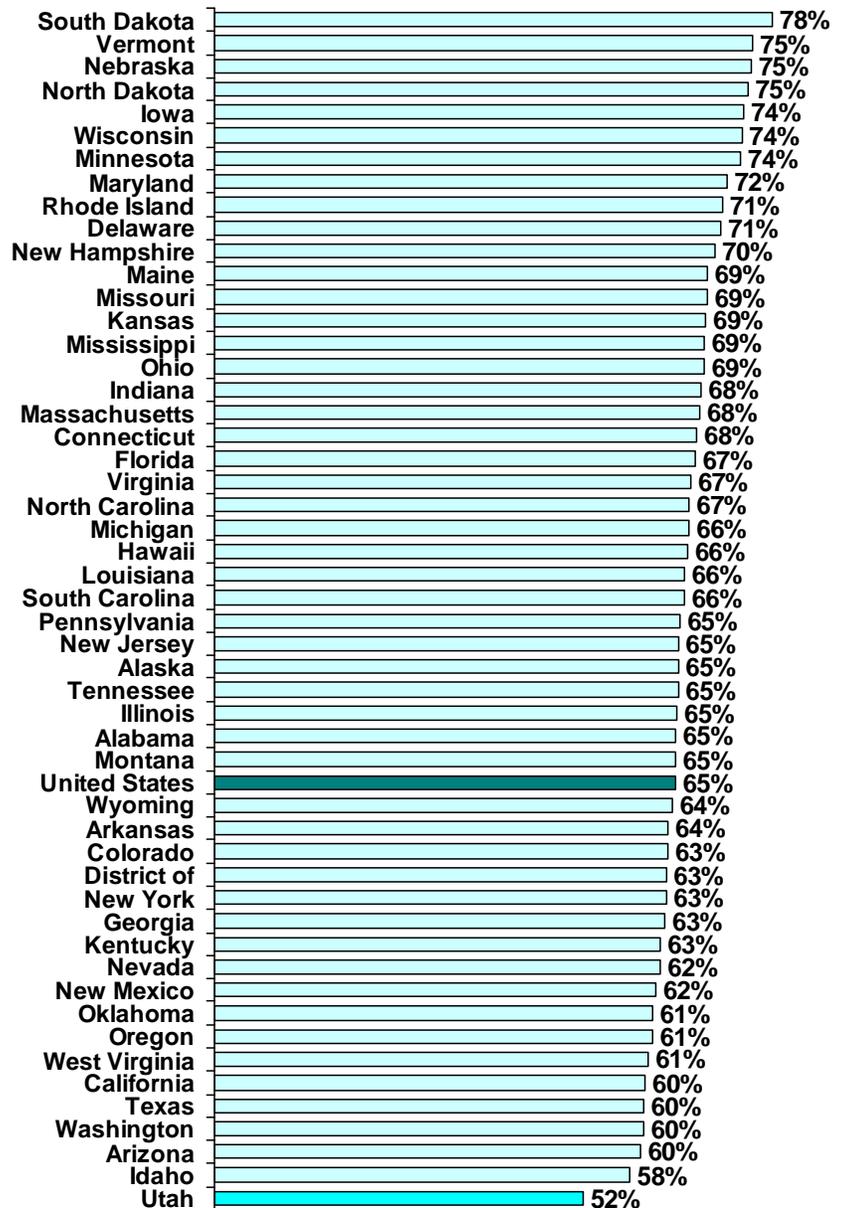
Most moms work. In Utah during 2008, 59 percent of mothers with only pre-school-age children worked outside the home. That figure measures noticeably lower than the U.S. average. However, Utah almost closes the gap with the U.S. in the participation rankings for mothers with children 6-17. Roughly three-fourths of both Utah and U.S. mothers of only school-age children work outside the home.

## Not That Different

Probably every working mother wants to know how her labor force participation affects her children. Suzanne M. Bianchi, a well known demographer and researcher has surveyed the current research literature. Bianchi points out:

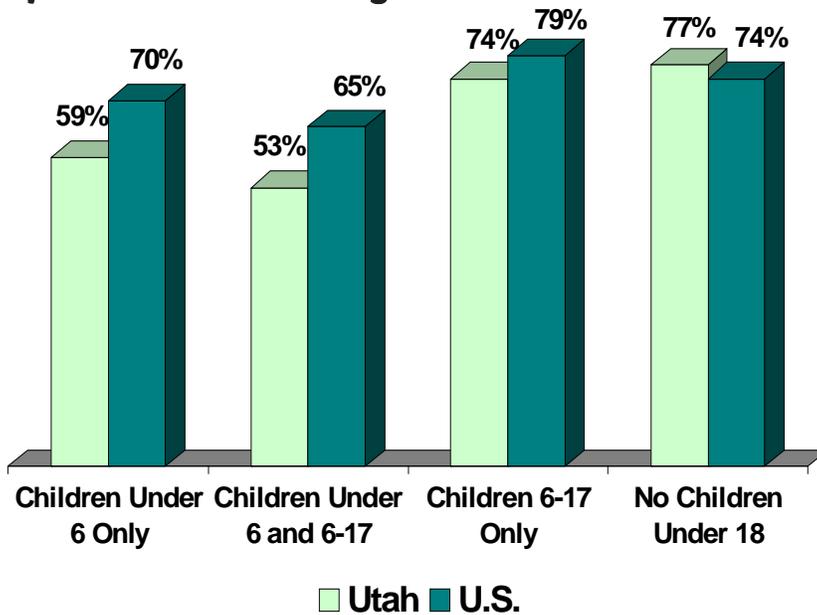
- *Despite the fact that more women are in the paid labor force than ever before, the time mothers spend with their children has changed very little over time.*
- *Although much effort has been devoted to searching for negative results from mom working outside the home, there has been relatively little negative consequence for children.*

## 2008 Children with Both Parents in the Labor Force



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## Women in the Labor Force in 2008 by Presence and Age of Children



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

- On the other hand, the lack of two-parent families does cause problems for children—both behaviorally and monetarily.
- Research by Cathleen Zick and Keith Bryant indicates that mothers today report spending as much time with their children as did mothers during the Baby Boom.
- Per family, Zick and Bryant estimate mothers in the 1920s spent the same time in child care activities as those in the 1970s.

- In the early twentieth century, mothers spent much of their time involved in unpaid family work and housework. In addition, larger families meant older children could mind younger children.

- Because families today are smaller, mothers actually spend more care time per child than mothers in previous generations.

- Although mothers who work outside the home do spend slightly less time with their children than nonworking mothers, the amount of time is not significant.

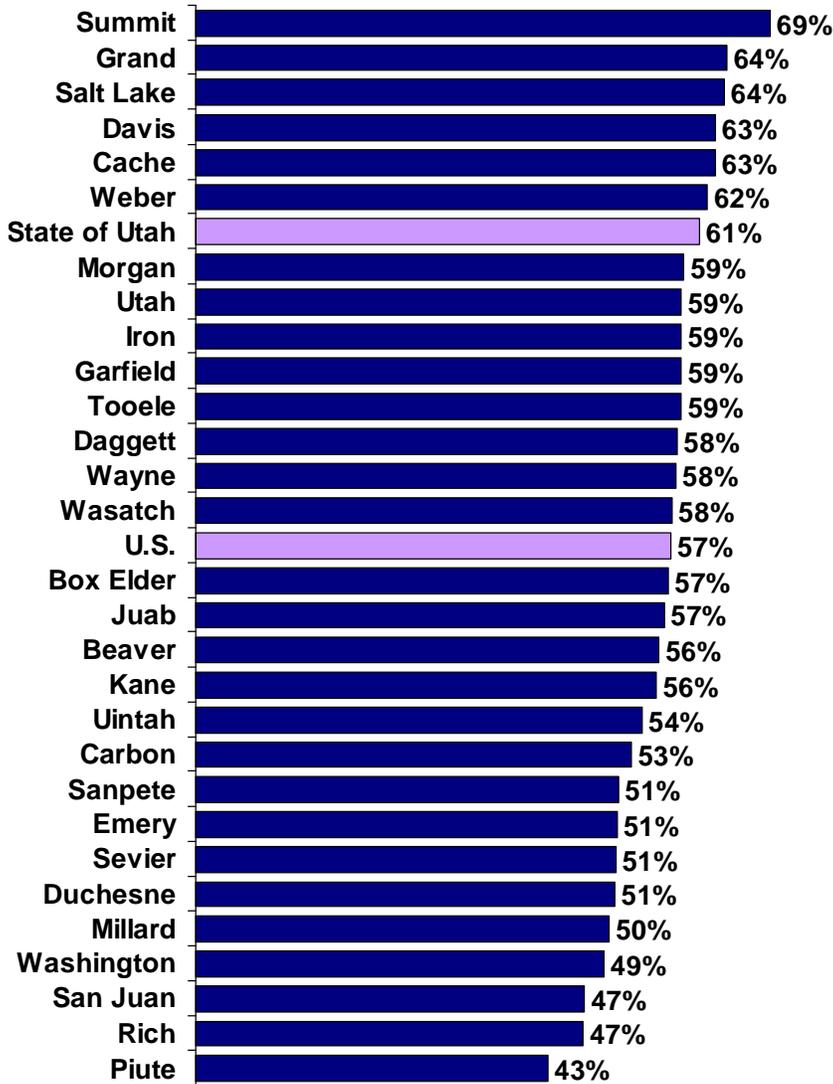
- Research suggests that working mothers protect time with their children by reallocating their priorities. They may do less housework or volunteer work and at the same time give up leisure time and sleep.

- Evidence suggests that mothers, on average, have not reduced their time with children, while fathers (at least married fathers) have significantly increased the time they spend with their children.

### The Country Mouse and the City Mouse

In general, more densely populated areas have higher labor force participation rates. Utah's most metropolitan counties all rank near the top of the

# Utah 2000 Female Participation Rates by County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

participation rankings. However, two less-populated counties—Summit and Grand show the highest participation rates—69 and 64 percent respectively. Coincidentally, these two economies are heavily invested in the tourism trade.

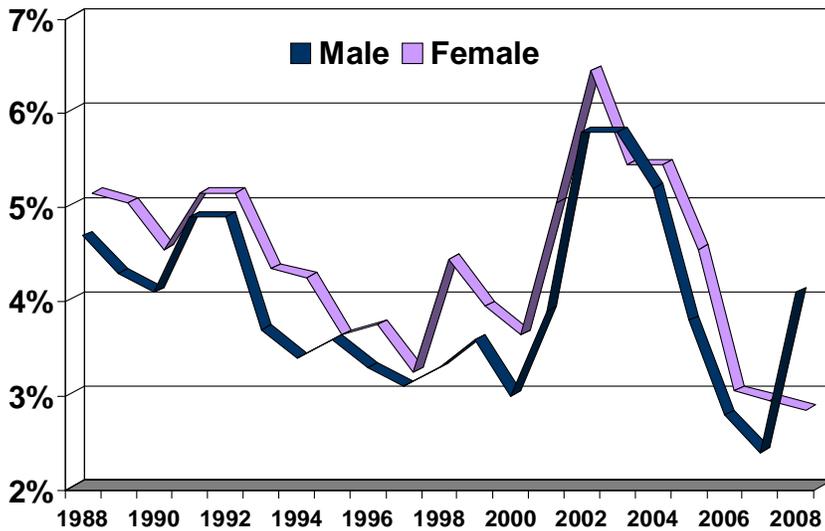
Counties where the population is less dense and older tend to have the lowest participation rates. Piute County is one of the smallest counties in the state and also has the oldest population. It shows the lowest female participation rate in 2000 in Utah—only 43 percent.

## A Dubious Honor

While more and more women are a part of the labor force, they are more likely than men to be unemployed. Typically, female unemployment rates have exceeded male unemployment rates. For example, in 2007, Utah women's unemployment rate measured 2.9 percent compared to the male figure of 2.4 percent. The fact that women tend to move in and out of the labor market more than their male counterparts accounts for much of this pattern.

Since 1988, Utah female unemployment rates have surpassed male jobless rates—except during economic downturns. The recessionary year of 2008 proved no different—male jobless rate proved higher (4.1 percent) than that of women (2.8 percent).

## Utah Unemployment Rates by Gender



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Utah women are much more likely to work part-time than their U.S. counterparts. Roughly 38 percent of Utah's female labor force works part-time compared to 25 percent of the U.S. female labor force. Larger families may make working longer hours more difficult in Utah. Of course, Utah's males are also more likely to work part-time (15 percent compared to 11 percent nationally). Why? Utah has a high participation rate among its teenage population—both male and female. These young people are more likely to engage in part-time work.

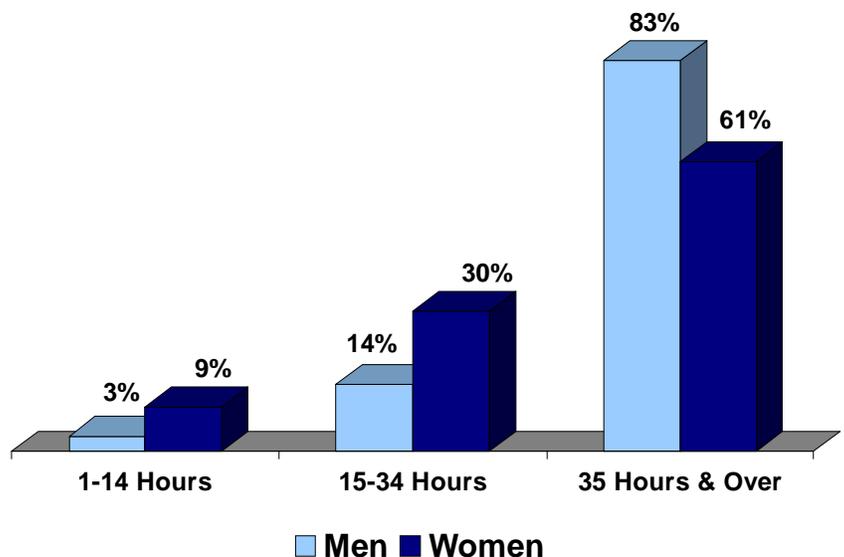
Nevertheless, women are working longer hours than ever before. The average Utah woman worked 33 hours

In recessions, industries which typically employ higher percentages of men—like manufacturing—are hardest hit. Therefore, male jobless rates typically rise above those of women.

### Working Nine to Five

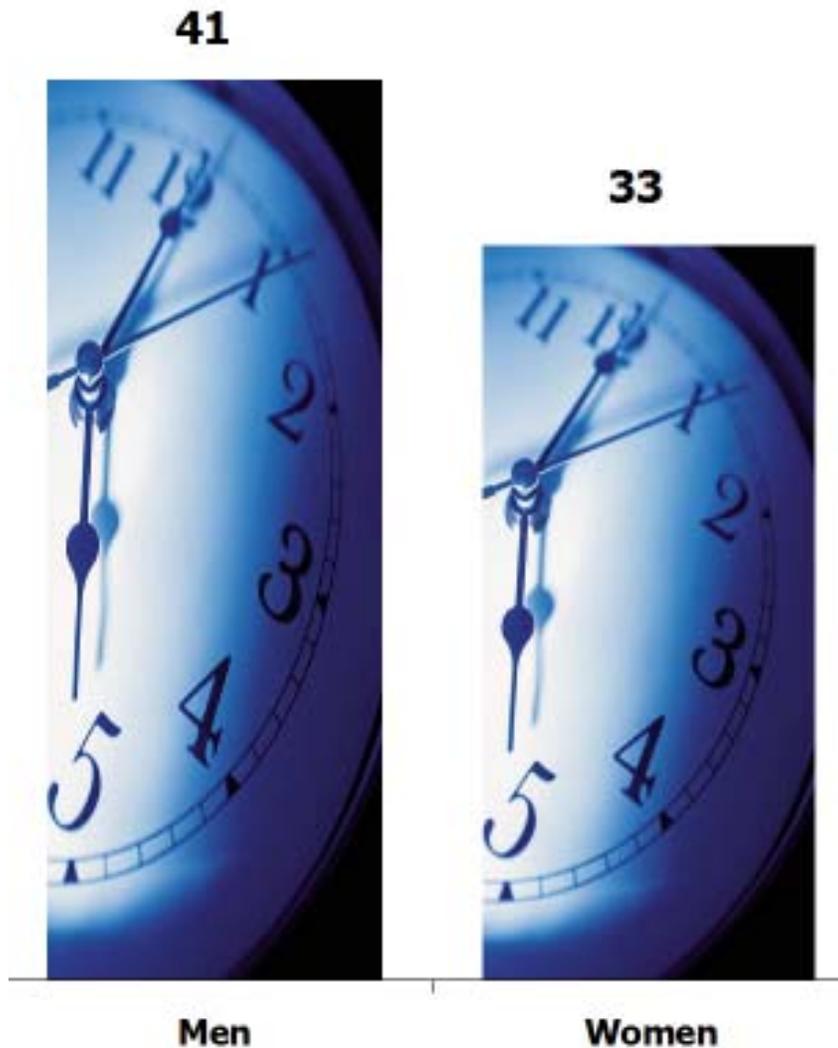
Even though the gap between male and female participation in the labor force may be narrowing, the work patterns of women and men still differ significantly. For one thing, women are much more likely to work part-time than men. In 2002, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 38 percent of Utah's women employees worked part-time—only 15 percent of men registered in that same category. In fact, Utah women account for over two-thirds of those working less than full-time.

## Utah Average Weekly Hours at Work 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

# Utah Average Weekly Hours at Work 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

per week in 2008—not all that far behind men with an average of 41 hours per week.

## Why are More and More Women Working?

- *Because of their marital status, workforce participation has become an economic necessity.*
- *Many work to provide families with a higher standard of living.*
- *Smaller families and delayed child birth make it easier for women to combine home and work responsibilities.*
- *Women are obtaining more education providing access to more interesting and better paying jobs.*
- *The opportunity cost of foregoing employment for better educated women is higher.*
- *Women find paid employment offers them opportunities to use and develop skills and talents not necessarily needed in the home.*
- *Changes in social morés or norms make employment more acceptable for women.*
- *Economic expansion has provided employment.*

The times they are a-changing. Labor force participation for Utah women has now become the norm rather than the exception.



# What's My Line?

## Occupations of Utah Women

*"An incident which calls up the privileges which the women of Utah enjoy, lately occurred in Salt Lake City, Miss Phoebe Couzens, of St. Louis and Miss Georgie Snow, daughter of the Attorney General of the Territory, were admitted to the bar in the District, and the ceremonies were imposing."*

*Excerpt from The Missouri Republican, "The Oppressed Women of Utah," 1872*

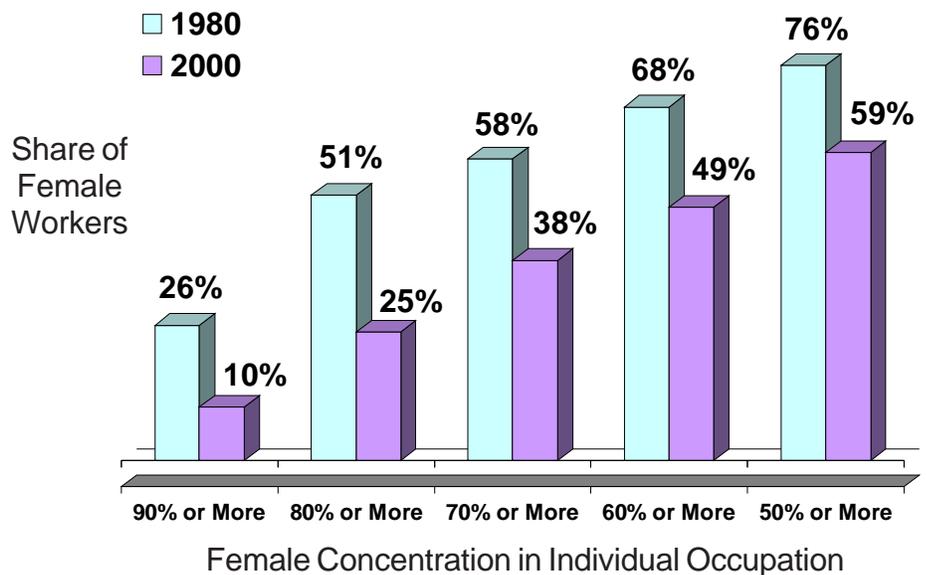
For years, feminists have talked about the "pink collar ghetto." They aren't referring to a physical location, but instead the segregation or "crowding" of women—through tradition, culture, discrimination, or personal choice—into certain occupations.

Women have certainly begun to break out of those traditional jobs into employment that in the past was typically held by men. We've had female Supreme Court justices, female astronauts, women construction workers, female engineers, female doctors and on infinitum. But, can casual observation tell the whole story? The data suggests not.

## Change can be Slow

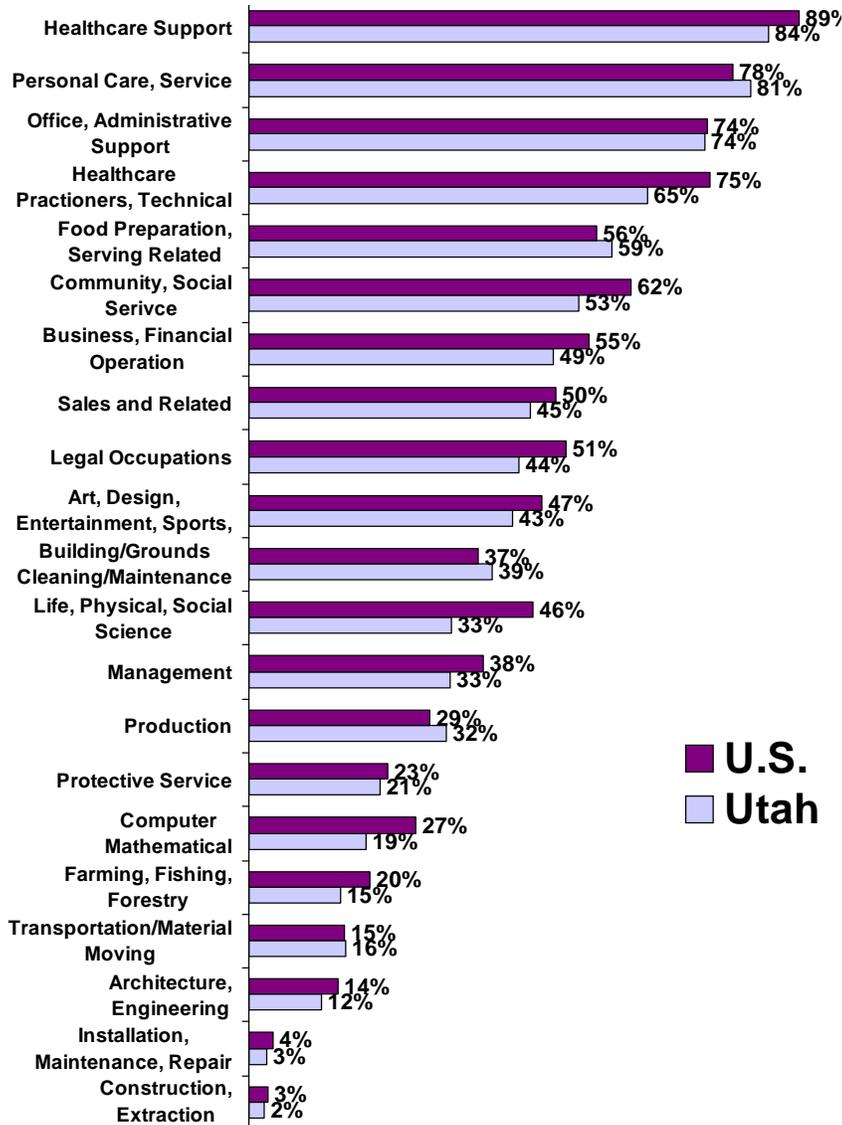
Of course, when you're talking about almost half the labor force, change will probably be slow. And, the times, they are a-changin'. Back in 1980, one-fourth of Utah women worked in an occupation where at least 90 percent of the profession was held by women. By 2000, the comparable share had dropped to 10 percent. Yet, even in 1980, three-fourths of all women worked in occupations where at least 50 percent of the occupation was female compared to 60 percent in 2000. In other words, even though traditional female occupations continue

## Utah Female Share of Total Occupation



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

# Female Percentage of Major Occupational Groups, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

to attract many women, many other women are moving out into occupations previously dominated by men.

## Group Hug

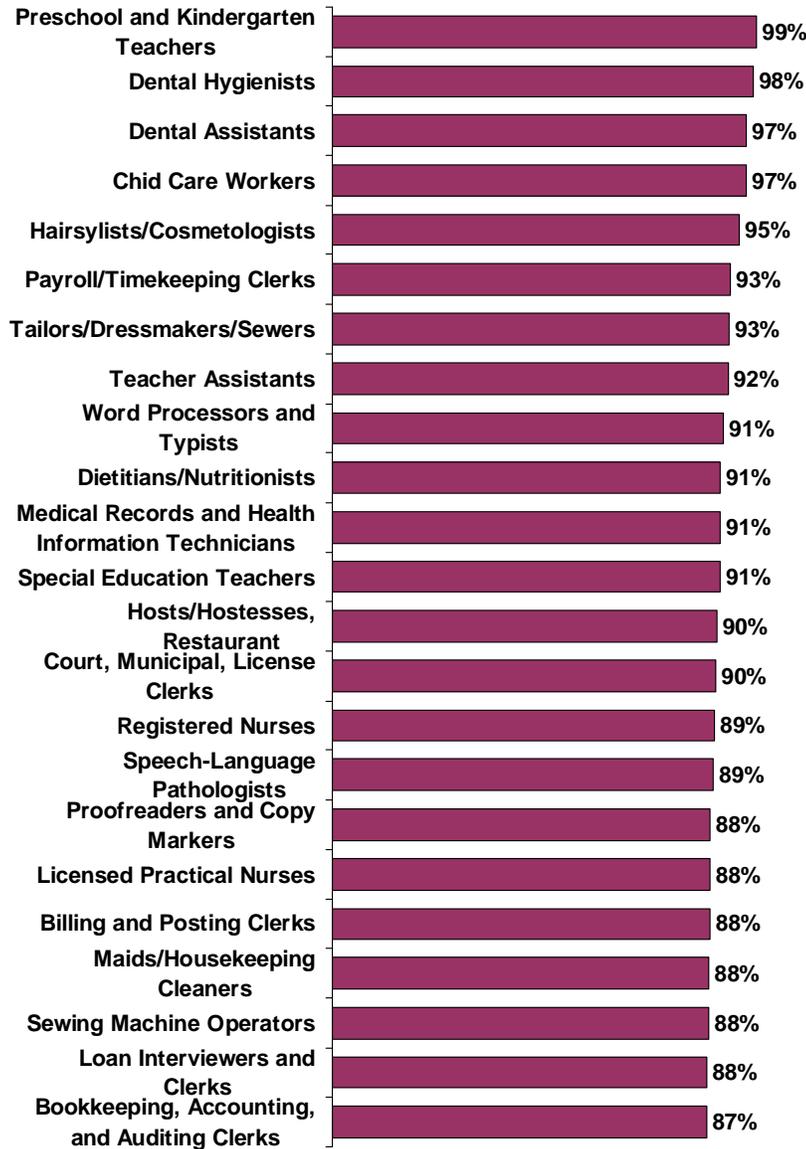
A change in the occupational coding structure and the way in which the Census Bureau publishes data makes comparisons over time problematic—particularly since the major groups have changed dramatically. However, data from the 2008 American Community Survey certainly reveals that women are still concentrated in certain occupational groups.

Which major occupational group is most dominated by females? Roughly 84 percent of Utah healthcare-support occupations are held by women. Healthcare-support occupations include lower-skilled healthcare positions such as aides, orderlies, assistants, and massage therapists. These occupations are typically the lowest-paying jobs in healthcare.

Close behind is the personal care and service occupations group. This group includes cosmetologists, amusement/recreation attendants, child care workers, flight attendants, etc. Again, many of these positions are low-paying.

Other major occupational groups that contain high concentrations of women are administrative support (secretaries, receptionists, etc.), healthcare practitioners (such as nurses and doctors), food preparation occupations,

# Utah Female Share of Certain Female-Dominated Occupations, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

and community/social service occupations (such as social workers and counselors).

## Men's Club

Several major occupational groups constitute almost a "men only" club. For example, women hold only 2 percent of construction and mining positions. In addition, women constitute only 3 percent of installation/maintenance/repair workers. Also, only 12 percent of architects and engineers are women.

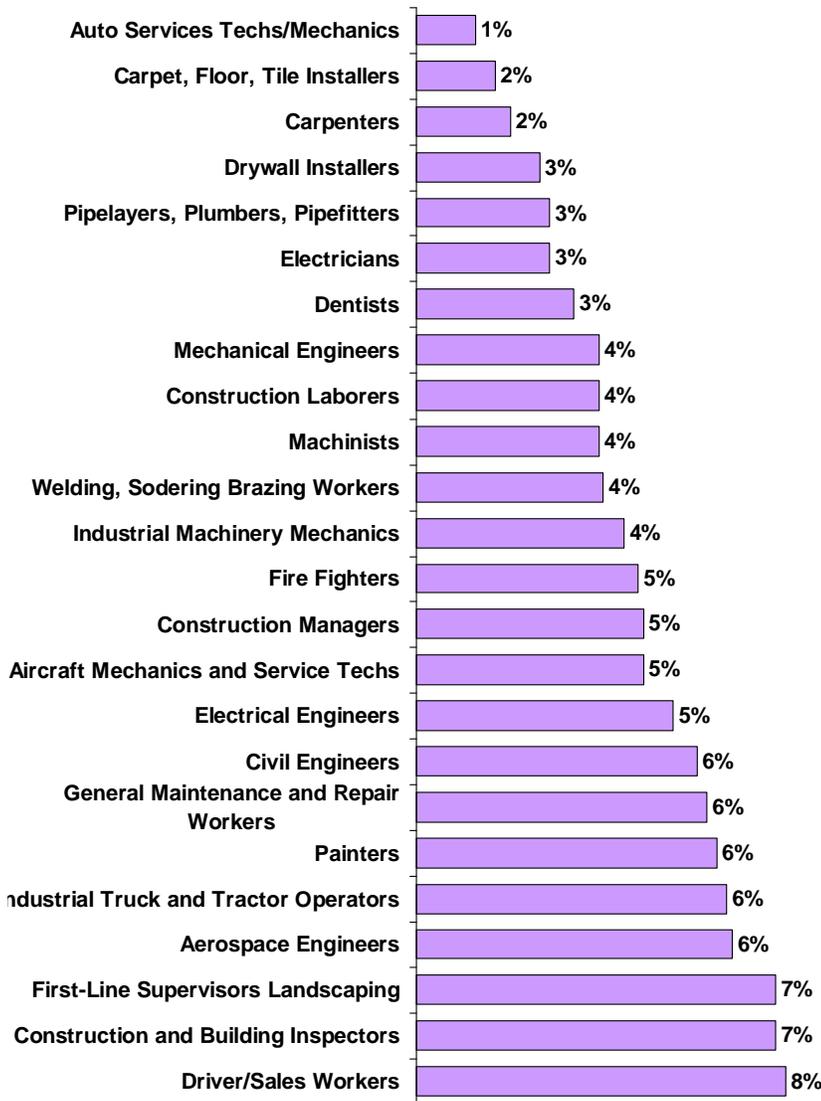
## It's in the Details

Which *detailed individual* occupations are dominated by Utah women? The current sample size of the American Community Survey only publishes data for a limited number of individual occupations. So, first we'll examine the data from the 2000 Census.

For the most part, female-dominated occupations can be found within the major occupational groups dominated by women. Preschool/kindergarten teachers are 99 percent female and women hold 98 percent of all dental hygienist positions. Other occupations that are at least 90 percent female include child care workers, hairstylists/cosmetologists, payroll clerks, tailors/dressmakers, teacher assistants, word processors/typists, dietitians, medical records technicians, special education teachers, hosts/hostesses, and court/municipal clerks.

Which occupations exhibit a dearth of women workers? Only 1 percent of auto services techs/mechanics are female.

# Utah Female Share of Certain Male-Dominated Occupations, 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Other occupations with few women include many construction occupations, dentists, machinists and mechanical engineers. All these occupations are less than 5 percent female.

## Utah Versus the U.S.

How does Utah's occupational segregation stack up against the U.S. figures? For the most part, there's not a whole lot of difference. However, a higher percentage of U.S. computer/mathematical jobs, healthcare practitioners, business/financial operation occupations, life/physical/social scientists, and architecture/engineering occupations are held by women. The difference is particularly striking in computer/mathematical positions where females make up only 20 percent of Utah workers compared to 30 percent of U.S. workers.

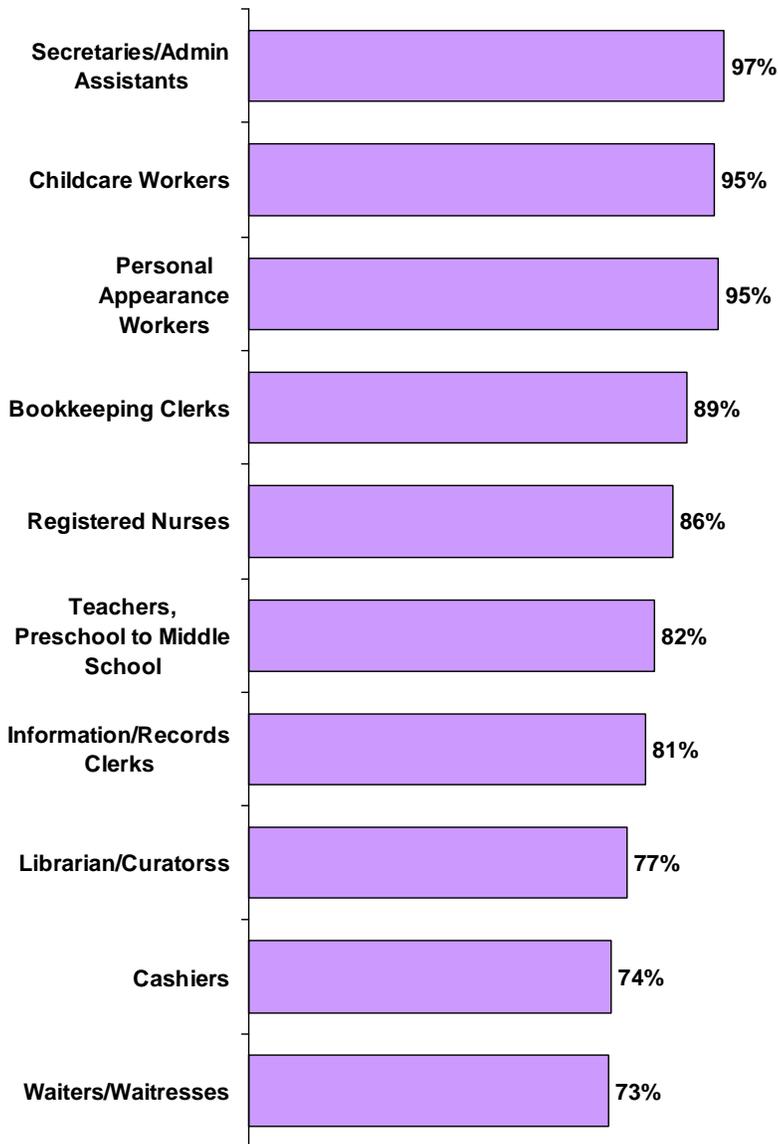
This data seems to suggest that Utah women have been slower to enter male-dominated occupations than their U.S. counterparts. This difference may account for at least part of the larger-than-average male/female wage gap experienced by Utah.

## Making a Change

Now, let's take a quick look at a handful of male-dominated occupations and female-dominated occupations to see how Utah women's occupational choices have changed over the past 20 years.

Interestingly, some female-dominated occupations have become even more concentrated with women. For ex-

# Utah Female Share of Certain Female-Dominated Occupations, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

ample, in 1980, roughly 66 percent of all elementary school teachers were female. By 2000, Utah women had increased their share of this occupation to 78 percent. Female cosmetologists increased their occupation share from 89 percent in 1980 to 95 percent in 2000. On the other hand, many female-dominated occupations have incorporated more men between 1980 and 2000.

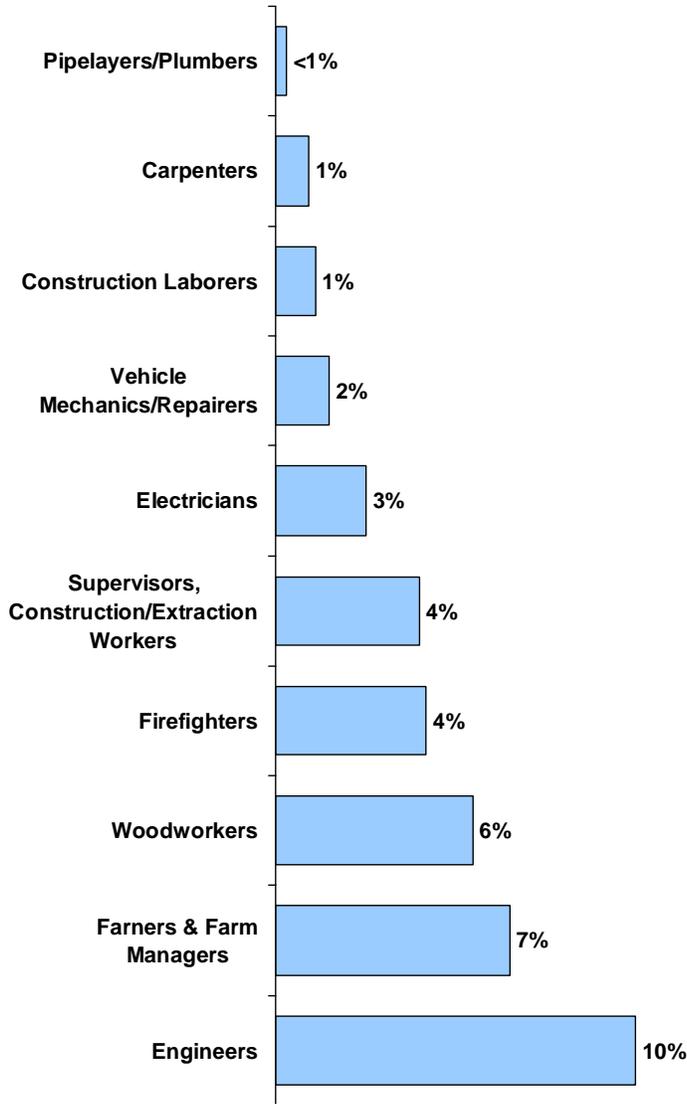
On the flip side, women are making inroads into many male-dominated occupations. For example, between 1980 and 2000, Utah women doubled their share of the mail carrier occupation to 30 percent. Utah women also account for a higher share of physicians, engineers, lawyers, and police/detectives.

Nevertheless, Utah women held a smaller share of auto mechanic and truck driving jobs in 2000 than they did in 1980. It appears, in general, that college-educated women are making more inroads into male-dominated occupations than are non-college-educated women.

## Up to Date

While the 2008 American Community Survey doesn't supply the occupational detail level of the 2000 Census, it still shows that the most heavily dominated occupations by females have remained basically the same. The opposite is also true. Occupations dominated by men in the past continued to be mostly held by males. With the exception of

# Utah Female Share of Certain Male-Dominated Occupations, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

engineers, most of these jobs tend to be what is commonly thought of as "blue collar" positions.

## So What?

It's obvious from the graphs in this section that some occupations continue to be dominated by men and others by women—despite some notable movement. So what? Why should anyone care if occupational segregation remains in the workplace?

The argument may be that women are just more suited for these kinds of jobs. But, one research laboratory found there are no gender differences in 14 of 22 inherent aptitudes and knowledge areas; in the remaining areas, women excel in six, men excel in two.

## Everyone's Problem

In reality, occupational segregation creates a number of problems for the entire economy. For women, jobs that are typically associated with their gender generally rank near the bottom of the pay scale (nurses and dental hygienist are the exceptions that prove the rule).

In a society where a substantial number of households are headed by single women, this issue soon becomes everyone's issue. If these women are unable to support their families because they tend to choose low-paying traditional female jobs, society ends up providing the necessary additional sustenance for these families.

Moreover, most married women in Utah work outside the home. A married woman's earnings affect not only her well-being but the well-being of her husband and children. In other words, if women are relegated—for whatever reason—to certain low-paying jobs, it affects the community at large.

In addition, sex stereotyping of jobs yields other unfavorable consequences. When women are concentrated into certain occupations, regardless of their abilities, talents, or knowledge, the whole economy

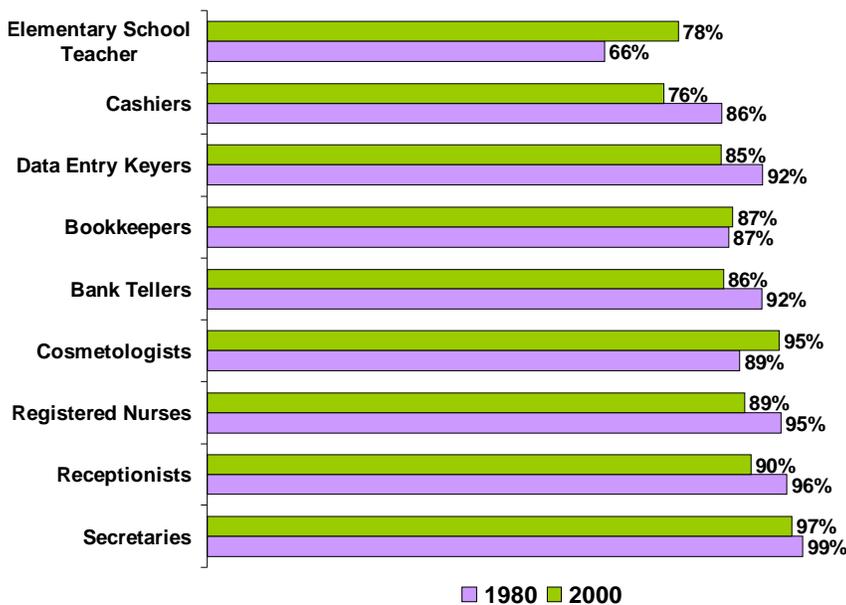
loses through an under-utilization of resources or the inefficient allocation of those resources. The country ends up with substantially less productivity than is possible at a notable economic cost. Underemployment or less productive employment of women deprives everyone of increased economic well-being—not just women and their children.

### Who Built the Walls?

Why do women congregate in specific occupations? After all, Utah women are hardly forced as part of some great diabolical governmental plan into certain positions. Why do they tend to flock together? Here are some possible answers:

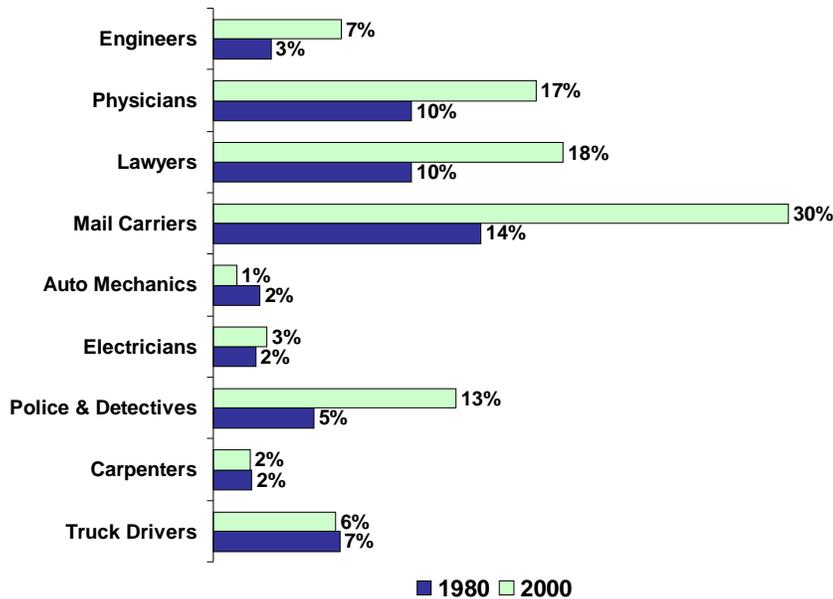
- Women may consciously trade higher wages, chances for greater advancement, and job status for the flexibility and reduced demands they believe female occupations usually offer. *In other words, women may choose these jobs because they want to—in order to integrate home and work life. Unfortunately, many nontraditional jobs actually offer more flexibility plus the advantage of a higher wage.*
- Despite evidence to the contrary, many women underestimate substantially the chances that they will work. *Remember, in Utah, most married women and moth-*

## Utah Female Share of Selected Female-Dominated Professions



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

# Utah Female Share of Selected Male-Dominated Professions

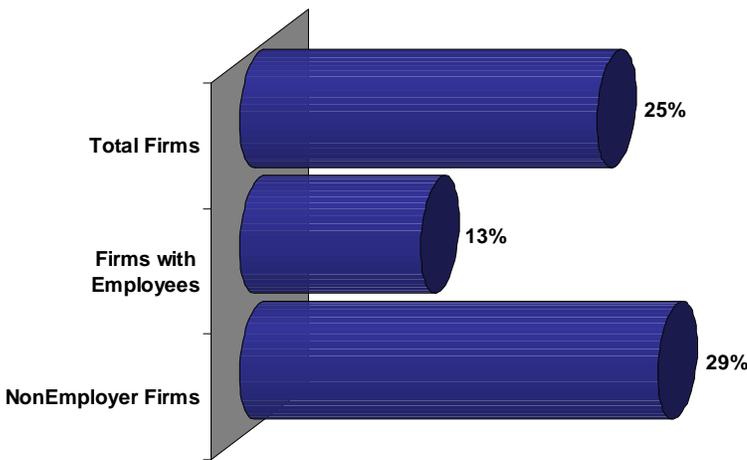


Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

ers work outside the home. Yet, many young women fail to make a good occupational choice early in life based on that reality. They have the “Prince Charming Syndrome”—the belief that someone will take care of them financially. Many women fail to plan adequately for the future.

- Women may select predominately female occupations because they think they are the only positions open to them. *Socialization may lead women to believe that they qualify only for certain jobs.*
- Women may be afraid (because of low self-esteem) to choose a job outside the norm. *Fears of sexual harassment, of trying something different, of having to work mostly with men or of failing in a “man’s world” often keep women out of male-dominated occupations. They choose a more comfortable path.*
- Women may be denied access to certain jobs because of sexual discrimination. *Employers might prefer men for some jobs. These employers may believe women are not as committed to the job as men. They may believe that women shouldn’t be working at all. Male employers may prefer to hire men because they feel more comfortable with them.*

## Utah Women-Owned Businesses as Share of Total Firms, 2002



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

### Her Own Boss

Many women are bypassing employment in favor of running their own businesses. During 2002 (the most recent data available), women owned almost one-fourth of all Utah businesses. In addition, the number of women-owned businesses increased more than 70 percent between 1987 and 2002. Women owned 13 percent of all Utah businesses with paid employees in 2002.

Utah women-owned firms with employees tend to be concentrated in the service industry. In 2002, these firms accounted for 40 percent of all service industry businesses with employees.

### Finally

All in all, while many women are making progress into traditionally male-dominated occupations, the change is slow. College-educated women seem to be integrating more quickly than their less educated sisters. Since occupational choice is at the heart of the wage gap, occupational integration remains an important issue.



# Dollars & Sense

## The Income and Wages of Utah Women

*“The needle and the midnight candle are yet considered by too many, the proper appliances of woman’s sphere. Custom also says that if a woman does as much work as a man, and does it well, she must not receive equal pay for it, and therein a wrong is inflicted upon her by the deprivation of a right to which she is justly entitled.”*

*Eliza R. Snow  
Prominent Pioneer  
and Utah Author, 1872*

Talking about women’s wages—it’s a complex proposition. Especially when asking for that one piece of information that we really want to know—how do they compare to men’s wages?

Traditionally, economists refer to the wage gap as the difference between the wages of the average male and the average female. Typically, a female-to-male ratio is established. Just divide the average female wage by the average male wage.

Unfortunately, there exists a fairly large number of wage data series. Coming up with a definitive “wage gap” figure is problematic. Basically, wages are measured differently in each series. Therefore, ratios end up with different results. Truth is, the male/female wage gap is determined by which data series you choose to use. The hardest question is, “What series should we use?”

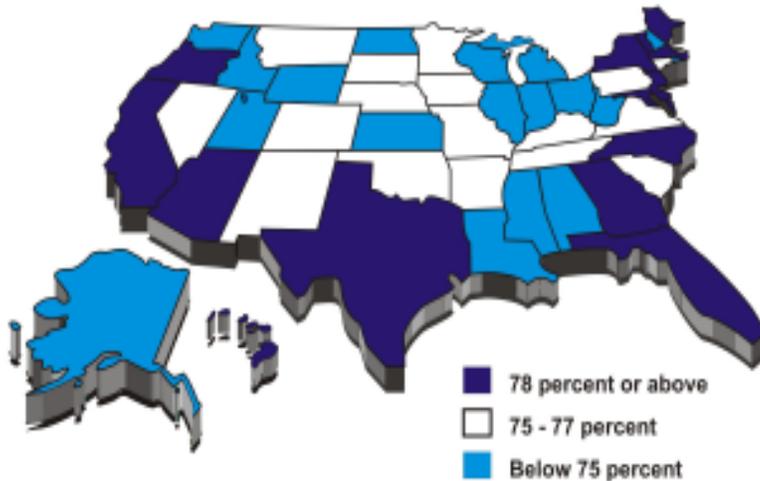
For Utah, until recently, a decent wage gap figure was only available once every ten years when the Census was

## Utah Median Earnings of Year-Round, Full-time Workers, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## Women's 2008 Median Earnings as a Percent of Men's Median Earnings



\*Year-round, full-time workers.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

show the median earnings for year-round, full-time male workers at \$36,935. The comparable figure for female workers measures \$24,872. In other words, the wage gap measured 67 percent.

You'll notice that we used data for year-round, full-time workers. So, seasonal workers and those who work part-time are excluded. It's best when making wage gap comparisons to keep the working characteristics of the two groups as equal as possible. In this way, we make sure we're comparing apples and apples—not apples and oranges.

### Trailing the Pack

Nationally, Census 2000 shows a male/female wage gap of 73 percent. That places the Utah near the middle of a

published. Currently, there are several data sources for Utah's wage gap. Again, which series to use?

There are so many data series with so many different figures; it's enough to make even a data queen's head spin. For example, for Utah, you can come up with wage gap figures ranging from 57 percent to 75 percent—for the same year!

### Census Rules

Because of its sheer size, the decennial Census provides some of the best earnings figures, and is therefore able to show the best detail. Let's start here. Census 2000 figures for Utah

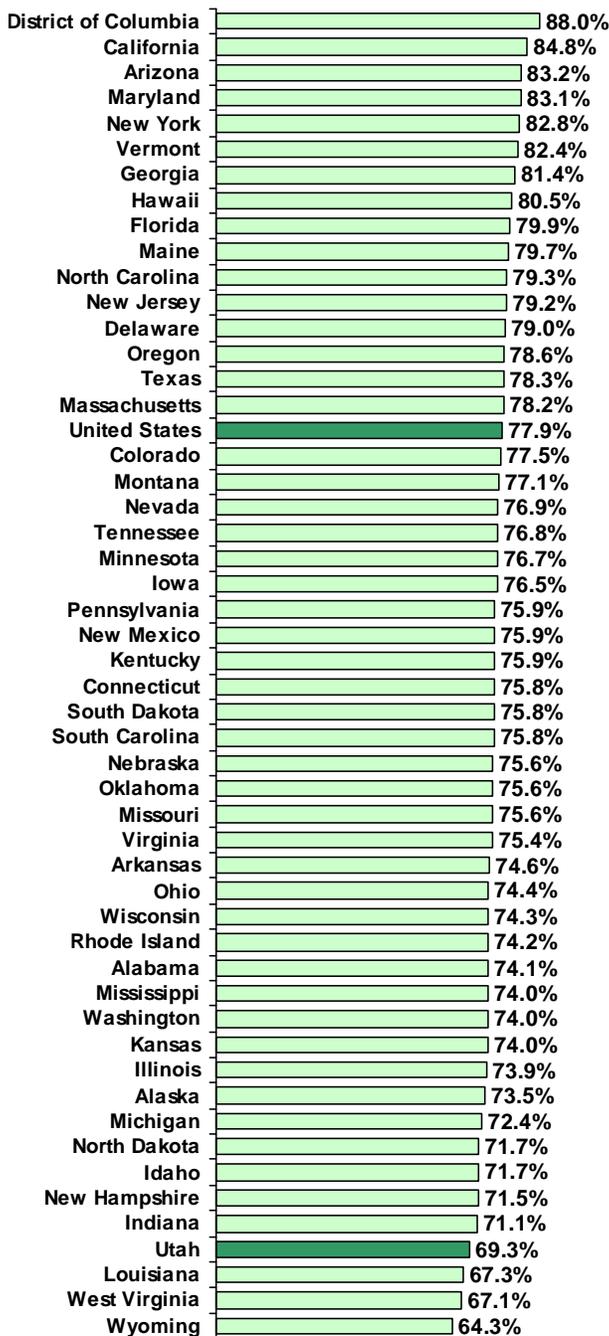
## Utah Female Median Annual Earnings As a Percent of Male Median Annual Earnings, 2008

69 Percent



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

# Female Median Annual Earnings as a Percent of Men's Full-Time, Year-Round Workers, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

state-by-state ranking. Yes, that means that Utah (where women make 67 cents on the male dollar) shows one of the largest wage gaps in the nation. In fact, Utah ranked fourth from the bottom—higher than only Michigan, Louisiana, and Wyoming.

Of course, Utah has made some progress. In the 1990 Census, it showed the **largest** wage gap in the United States.

Interestingly, with the exception of Wyoming, Utah was pretty much surrounded by states with smaller-than-average male/female wage gaps in 2000. California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado show male/female earnings ratios of 75 percent or higher.

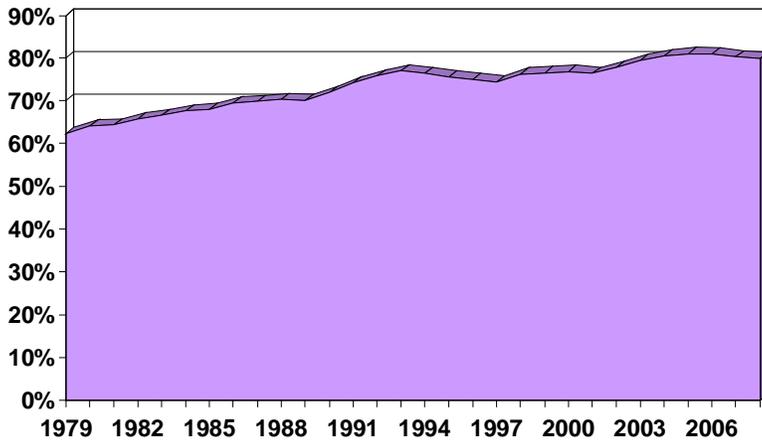
## Newer Numbers

Estimates from the 2008 American Community Survey show Utah's female/male wage ratio improving to 69.3 percent. However, Utah still shows the fourth-largest wage gap in the U.S. In addition, we're still pretty much surrounded by states with small wage gaps. Plus, keep in mind that American Community Survey samples are dominated by larger communities—where the wage gaps tend to be smaller.

## The Good News

The good news for women and their families? The wage gap is now narrowing. In the 30 years following 1950—a period when women made

# U.S. Female Median Weekly Earnings as a Percent of Men's, Full-Time Workers



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

gains in the “high paying” professions—very little changed. Data published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that before the early 80s, the U.S. male/female earnings ratio for full-time workers hovered around 60 percent. There was virtually no significant narrowing in the wage gap—until 1980.

In the last 20-plus years, the wage gap has slowly narrowed. According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics data series, in 1979, the ratio of female-to-male weekly earnings ratio measured about 63 percent. By 2006, the comparable figure registered almost 81 percent. Yes, the gap is narrowing.

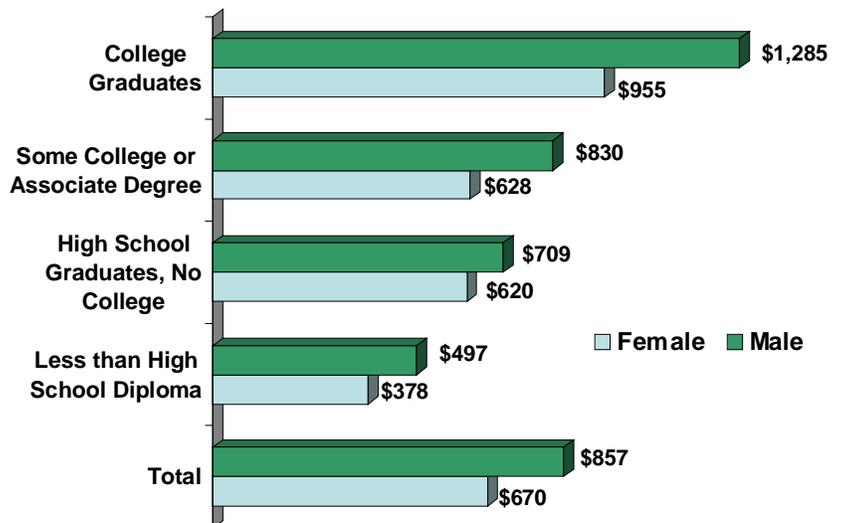
What about in Utah? Using 1980, 1990 and 2000 Census figures, we find that the female/male earnings ratio grew from about 53 percent in 1980 to 57

percent in 1990 to 67 percent in 2000. Yes, here in Utah, women are making earnings gains.

## Other Numbers

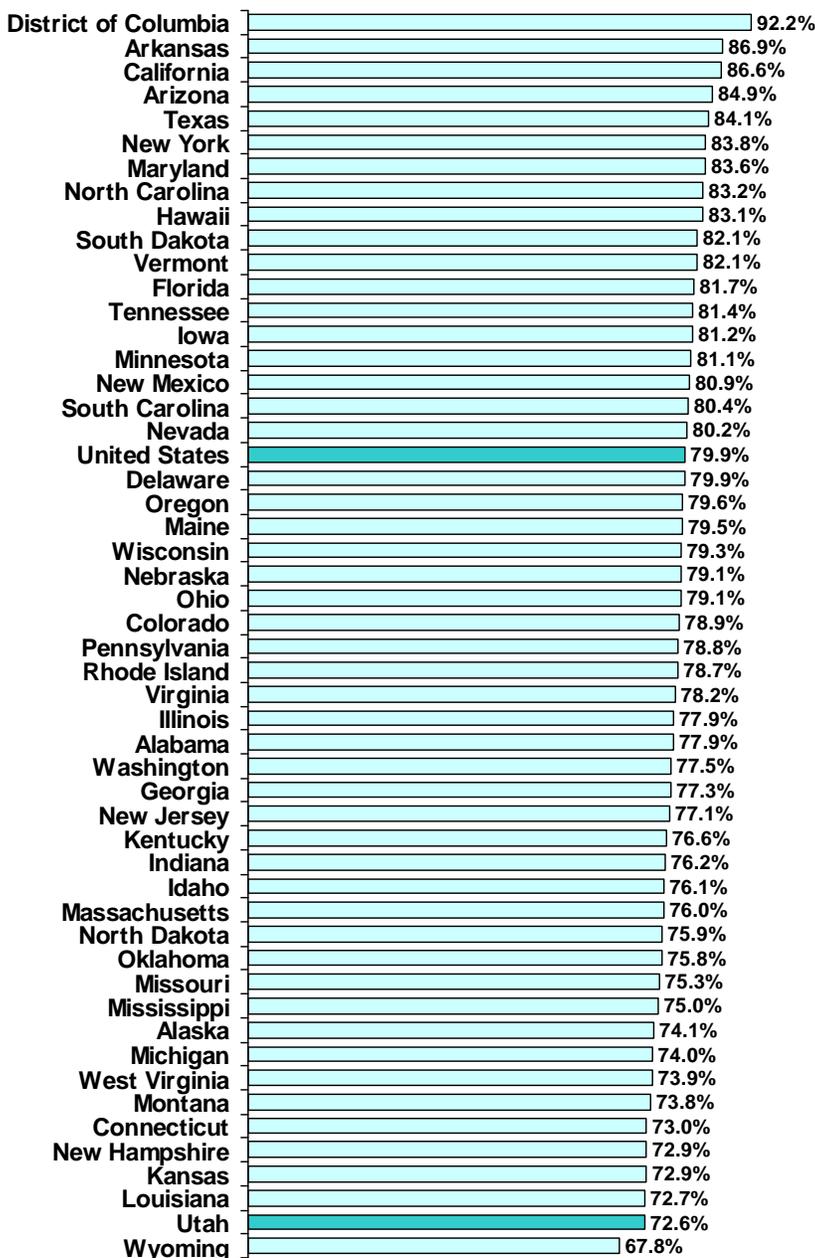
The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) also publishes male/female earnings information. However, instead of publishing annual data, BLS publishes *weekly earnings*. These figures would tend to be more reflective of actual difference in earnings than the annual figures because men tend to work more weeks and hours than women. When we can eliminate any differences in hours/weeks worked, we get a more accurate picture of the true difference in wages by gender. On the

# 2008 U.S. Average Weekly Earnings by Educational Level, for Full-Time Workers



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# Female Median Weekly Earnings as a Percent of Men's Full-Time Workers, 2008



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

other hand, the sample size is smaller than the American Community Survey which could lead to more bias.

In this case, Utah's female/male wage ratio measures 72.6 percent and in a state-by-state ranking Utah drops to second from the bottom. Only Wyoming shows a higher wage gap.

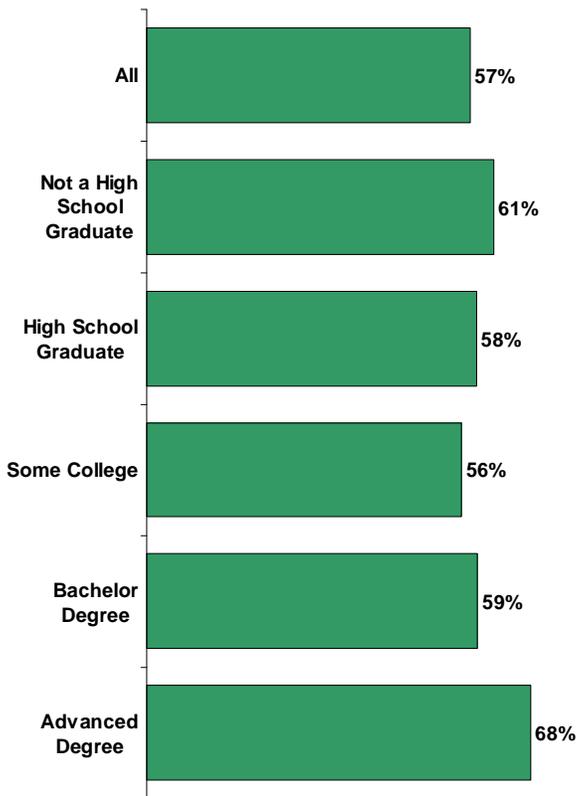
While the Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes wage gap figures for Utah, the series fluctuates dramatically. This is due to the relatively small sample size for this particular survey. However, it's becoming rather obvious that there is certainly no one wage-gap figure.

## Best-Paying Jobs

After perusing Census 2000 data, it becomes obvious that the best-paying jobs for men are also generally the best-paying jobs for women. Physicians, dentists, air traffic controllers, chief executives, lawyers, engineering managers, optometrists, and pharmacists are among the highest-paid positions for both men and women.

However, you just might notice that these jobs are typically dominated by men. For example, in Utah, physicians and surgeons are only 17 percent female, dentists are only 3 percent female, air traffic controllers are 15 percent female, chief executives are 13 percent female, engineering managers are 8 percent female, optometrists are 20 percent female, and lawyers are 18 percent female. Of these high paying occupations only one—pharmacists

# Utah Female/Male Earnings Ratio by Education Workers 25 and Older, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

(with 36 percent female)—has more than a one-fifth share of positions held by women.

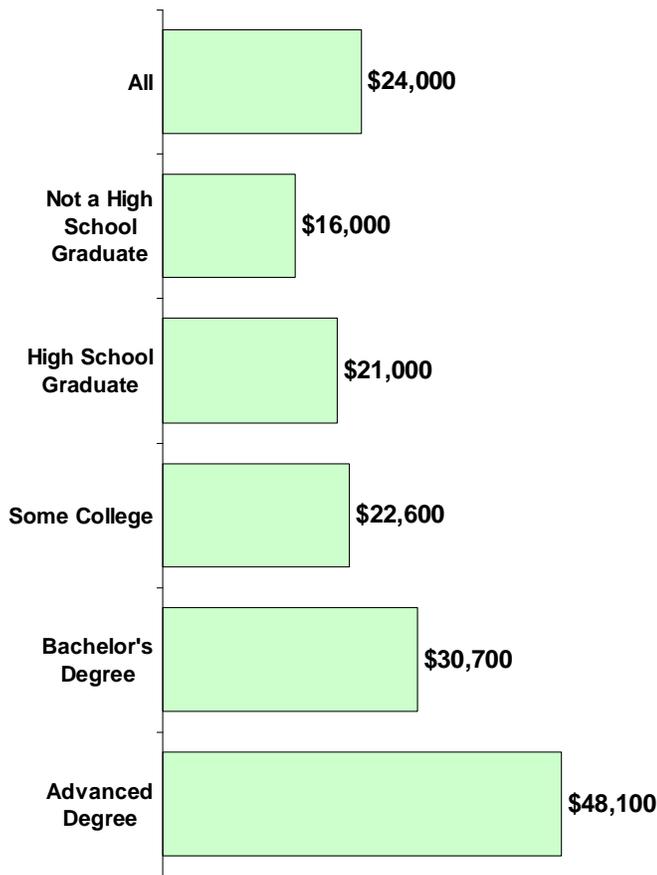
Interestingly, in these occupations women typically make more than 80 percent of the median wage of their male counterparts. In other words, the wage gap is smaller than average for these occupations. Of course, the wage gap often shrinks when individual occupations are examined. As we'll explain later, occupational choice is the primary reason for the male/female wage gap.

## Learning to Earn

How does the wage gap between men and women stack up by educational level? Contrary to what one might suppose, increased education does not necessarily shrink the wage gap. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, on average in 2008, U.S. women with at least a four-year degree made 74 percent of the median weekly wage of men with at least a four-year degree. However, women who only graduated from high school made 87 percent of the comparable male worker.

While comparable figures for Utah are not available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the American Community Survey data can shed some light on male/female earnings by educational attainment. However, these numbers reflect annual rather than weekly earnings. Also, these numbers are for the entire labor force, not just year-round full-time workers. This means the ratios

# Utah Female Median Annual Earnings by Education Workers 25 and Older, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

will be lower than in previously mentioned series—because women are much more likely to work part-time.

In Utah, women who only graduated from high school showed a slightly larger-than-average wage differential with their male counterparts—but smaller than that of college graduates. Getting an advanced degree seems to be the best road for women trying to close the wage gap. Women with an advanced degree in Utah most closely approximate their male counterparts' earnings.

## It Pays. . .

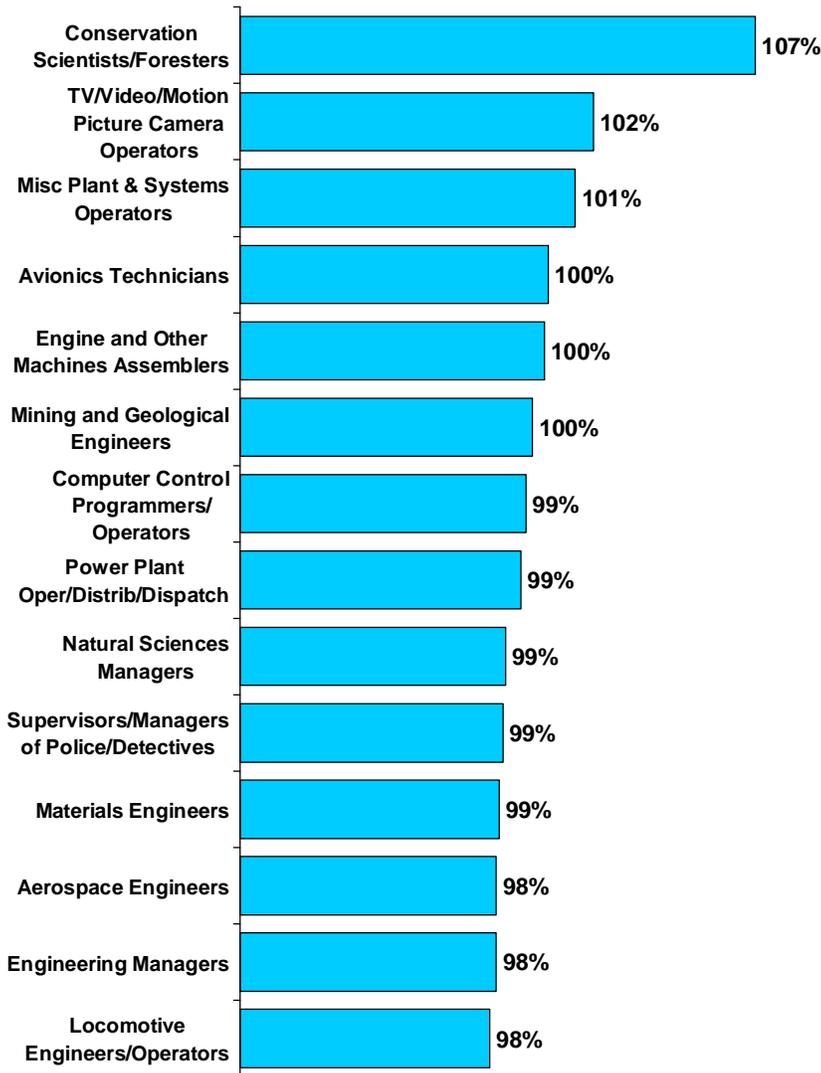
Continuing one's education increases one's earning power—male or female. The differences are particularly striking for women. American Community Survey data tells us that a Utah woman with a bachelor's degree made \$9,700 more a year than one with only a high school diploma.

National 2008 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that a college-educated woman makes **54 percent more** than her high school-only educated sister.

## Jobs with the Smallest Wage Gap

If you're a Utah woman and want a job in Utah where you're most likely to make as much as your male co-worker, what occupation should you choose? According to Census 2000 figures, choose a technical/science/math-related position or one that's typically dominated by men. There are

# Utah Occupations with a High Female/ Male Wage Ratio, Year-Round, Full-Time Workers, 1999



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

almost 60 occupations in Utah where the average woman makes 95 percent or more of the average man's wage.

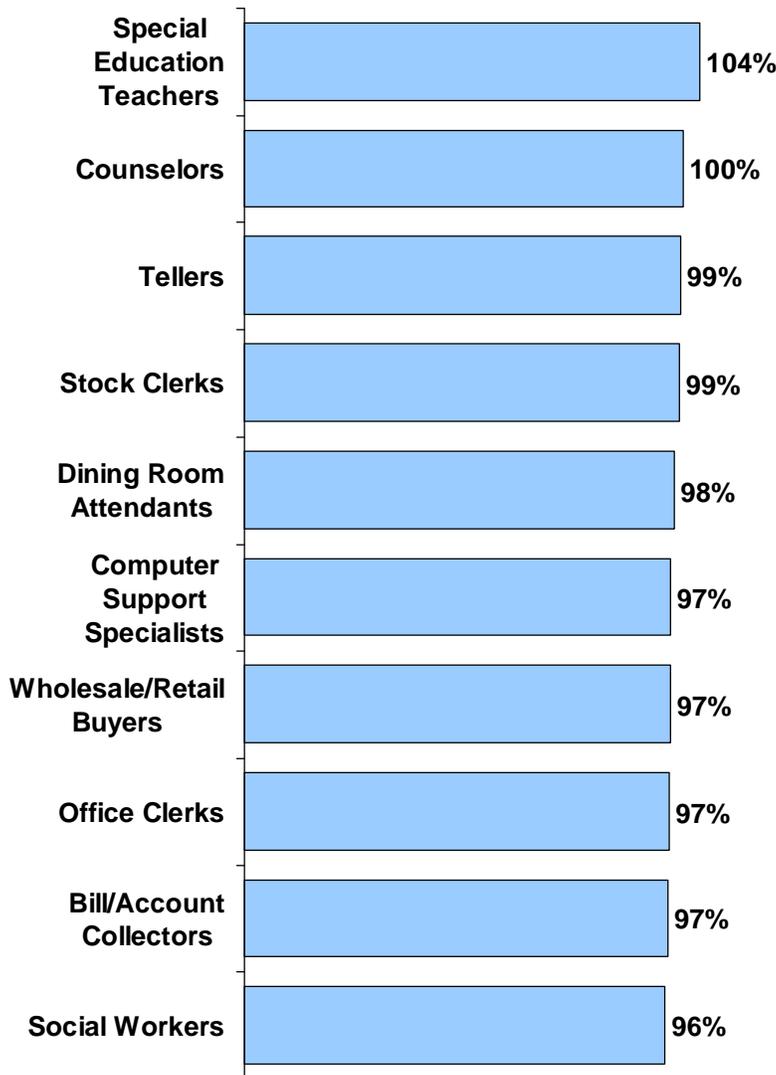
Many of these positions are in science, healthcare, and engineering fields (which also pay extremely well) and require at least a bachelor's degree. Others are technically oriented, requiring some post-high school training. Others require only on-the-job training, but are occupations traditionally held by men.

## Jobs with the Largest Wage Gap

Drilling down to the occupational level doesn't always narrow the wage gap. In some Utah occupations, the male/female wage gap is extraordinarily large. For instance, in Utah, Census 2000 reports that the average female model/demonstrator (working year-round/full-time) made only 15 percent of the average male model/demonstrator.

However, that occupation is an outlier. Where the wage gap is largest, the ratio of women's median annual earnings to men's median annual earnings measures about 35 percent.

# U.S. Occupations with a High Female/Male Wage Ratio, Full-Time Workers, 2008



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In contrast to low wage gap occupations, many of these professions are low-skilled and/or dominated by women. For example, child care workers, teacher assistants, hosts/hostesses, dining room attendants, door-to-door sales, and library clerical assistants are included in this group.

## Sometimes, It Pays to be Young

Does age make a difference when it comes to the wage gap? Yes, in general, the younger the age, the smaller the wage gap. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the U.S. makes it obvious that the wage gap increases with age.

Young women working full-time between the ages of 19 and 24 make roughly 92 percent of the average weekly wage of their male counterparts. Of course, a younger woman's labor force experience is more likely to match that of the typical young man. Moreover, younger women are getting more education and many have not yet become mothers—another life event that affects labor market participation.

Sometimes as folks age, certain parts of their bodies start to sag; so, too does the wage gap. Nationally, the largest wage gap occurs for women

# U.S. Occupations with a Low Female/ Male Wage Ratio, Full-Time Workers, 2008



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

between the ages of 55 and 64. They typically make only 73 percent of their male counterparts' wage. Of course, these are the women who are least likely to have a labor market experience or educational attainment similar to their male counterparts.

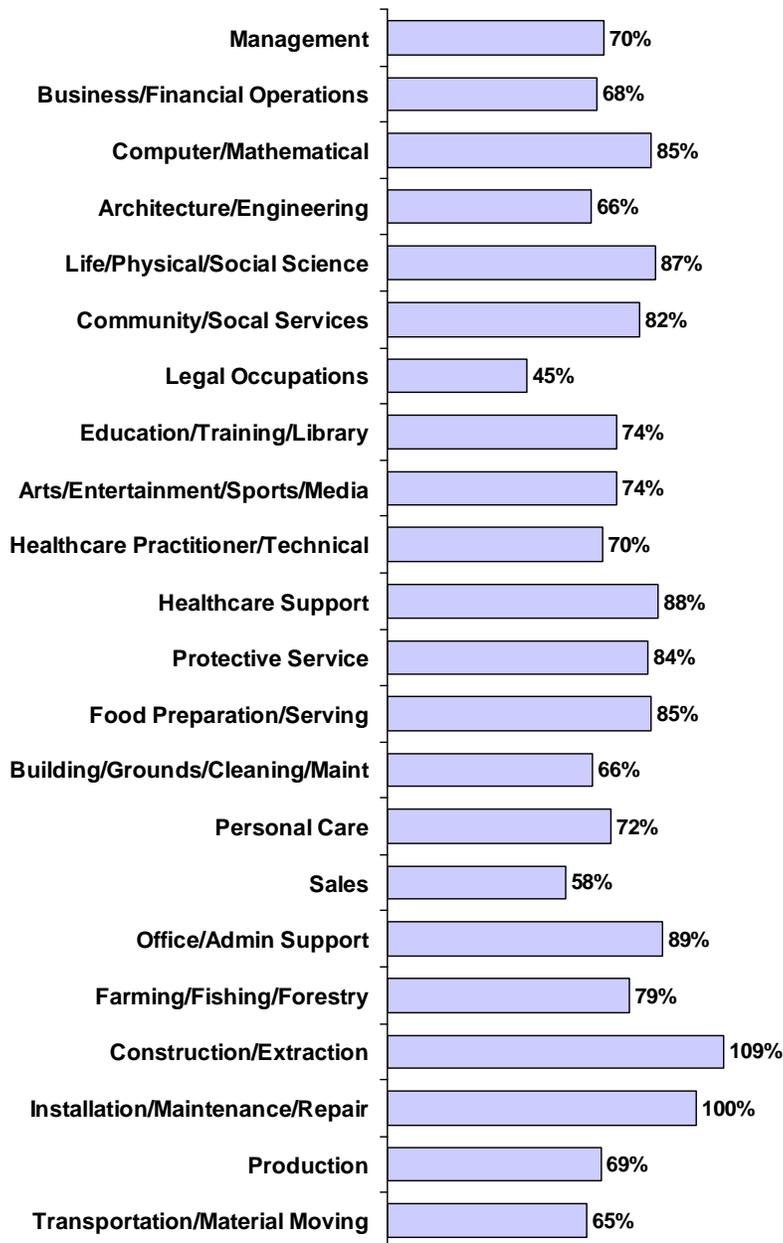
## The Rainbow Connection

Race and ethnicity make a difference when it comes to the wage gap. American Community Survey 2006-2008 data indicates that white men and women in Utah have the largest wage discrepancy. The median wage for year-round, full-time white women workers measures only 68 percent of the comparable figure for white men.

On the other hand, Asians show the smallest wage gap. The average female worker in this racial group makes 81 percent of the average male worker's wages. In fact, every nonwhite ethnic or racial minority group shows a smaller wage gap than does the white, non-Hispanic group.

This makes sense. In general, minority male wages fall noticeably behind white male wages. In other words, many minority workers make lower-than-average wages than do white males—regardless of gender. For example, the median annual wage for a white, full-

# Utah Occupations Female/Male Wage Ratio by Major Occupational Group Year-Round, Full-Time Workers 2006-2008 Average



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census; American Community Survey.

time, year-round *female* worker averaged \$32,500 in 2006-2008 compared to \$27,600 for the average *male* Hispanic worker.

## Sometimes Women Make More

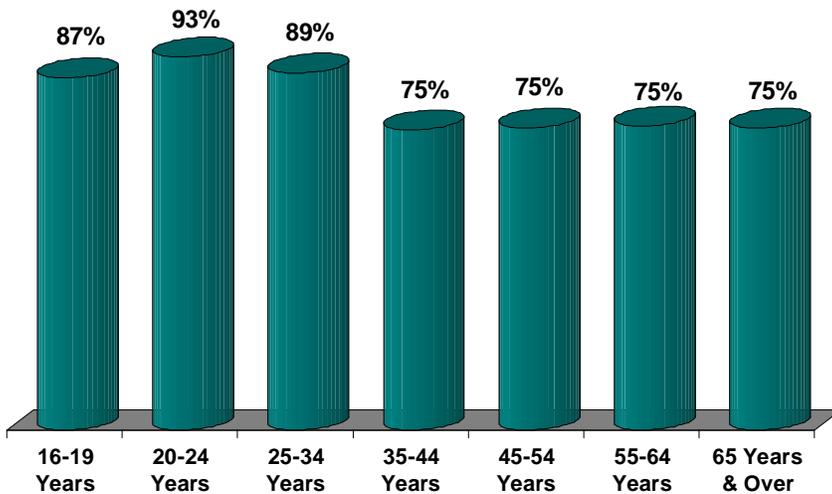
Women do sometimes make more than comparable males. For example, U.S. women who typically work less than 40 hours a week almost always out-earn men who work less than full-time.

Most part-time workers are women. Moreover, men who work part-time are typically at the very young end or post-retirement end of the labor market scale. So, it isn't surprising that older and more experienced part-time women workers out-earn male part-time workers.

## What's Going On?

Okay, in general, men make more than women. Why? After observing some of the figures here you want to precipitously leap to the conclusion that women are discriminated against in the workplace. Don't take make that leap. Remember that many factors determine a person's wage—age, education, profession, experience, time on the job. The discrepancy in male and female wages does not automatically imply discrimination in the labor market.

## U.S. Full-time Female Median Weekly Earnings as a Percent of Men's by Age, 2008



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

that women choose them regardless of their low pay. We've seen right here that in many occupations that are dominated by men—requiring technical/science/math/analytical skills—the wage gap often almost disappears.

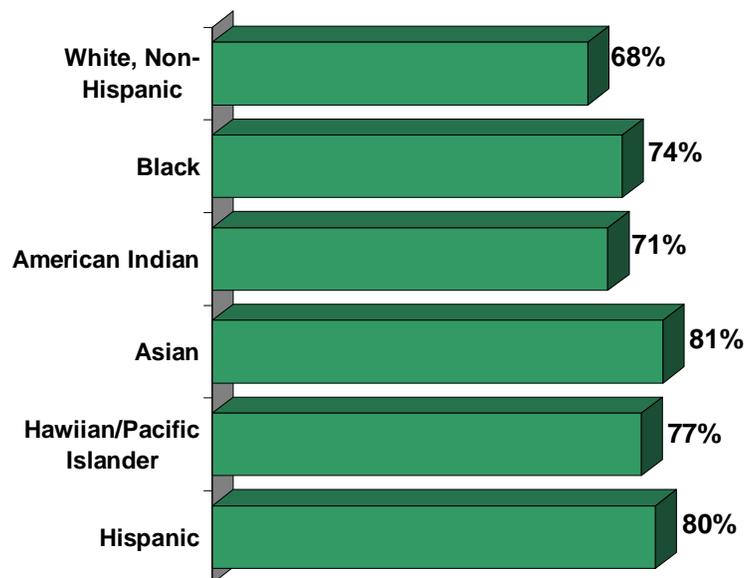
In fact, the general rule of thumb for women and wages? The more nontraditional the job, the higher the pay for a woman. There are two exceptions to this rule—nurses and dental hygienists.

## Occupational Choice

Much of the difference in men's and women's wages occurs because of occupational choice. Women tend to choose employment—for whatever reason (and we've covered a number of them in the previous section)—that is lower paying. This may be one reason that Utah shows a larger-than-average wage gap. Fewer Utah women have moved into male-dominated occupations than in the nation as a whole.

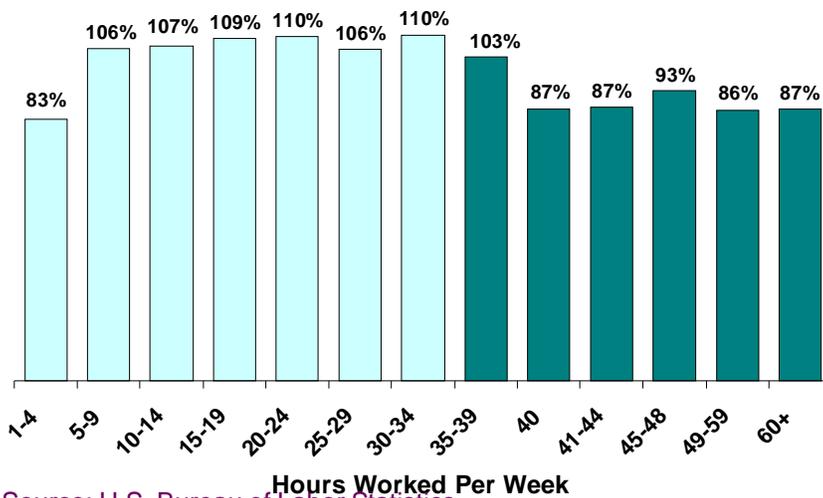
Some may argue that traditional female jobs pay less just because the market discriminates against those jobs. However, this does not remove the fact

## Utah Female Median Annual Earnings as a Percent of Men's, Full-time, Year-Round Workers, 2006-2008 Average



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

# U.S. Female Median Weekly Earnings as a Percent of Men's, by Hours Worked 2008



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Studies suggest that even for college-educated professionals, choice of occupation accounts for 30-70 percent of the entire wage gap.

## Other Factors

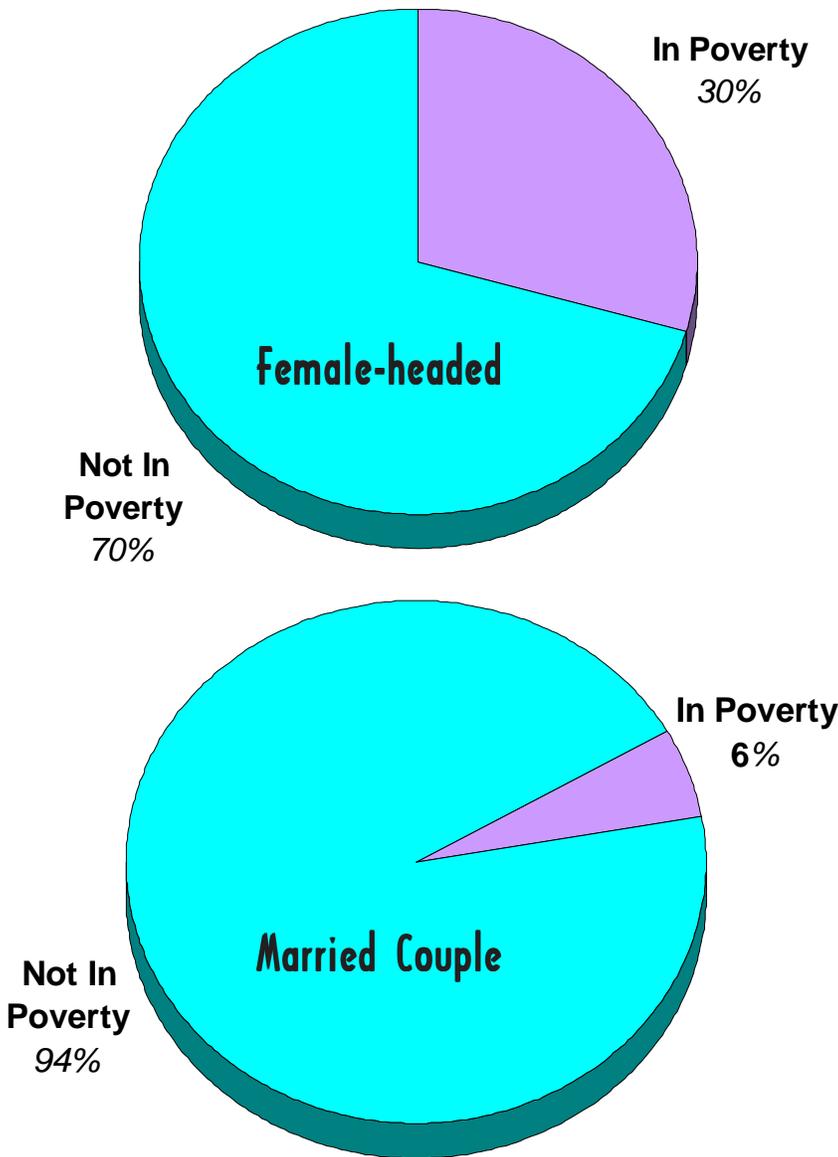
Other factors also influence the wage gap. The labor force experience of women may differ substantially from that of men as women strive to combine home and family responsibilities. Many women move in and out of the workforce choosing to remain at home while their children are young.

Because, in general, women are newer to the labor force than men, they tend to have spent less time in a particular job. Economists call this “occupational tenure.” In addition, because the share of women in the labor force keeps increasing, more women are at the bottom of the career ladder than men. In other words, recent female entrants may depress the average wage.

Women’s educational attainment falls below men’s thus limiting their earning power. Moreover, women remain disproportionately illiterate in mathematics, science, and engineering—the highest paying positions.

Certain groups of women may pull down the average female wage. While many women are delaying marriage/childbirth and obtaining a better education than their predecessors, others are not. Significant numbers of very young women still become pregnant early, marry early or not at all, or divorce with

# Poverty Status of Utah Families with Children Under 18, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

inadequate support for their children. Most of these women have few job skills, little education and no male support. They may have addiction problems. They are often relegated to the lowest-paying jobs in the economy. This significant group of women may pull down the average for all women.

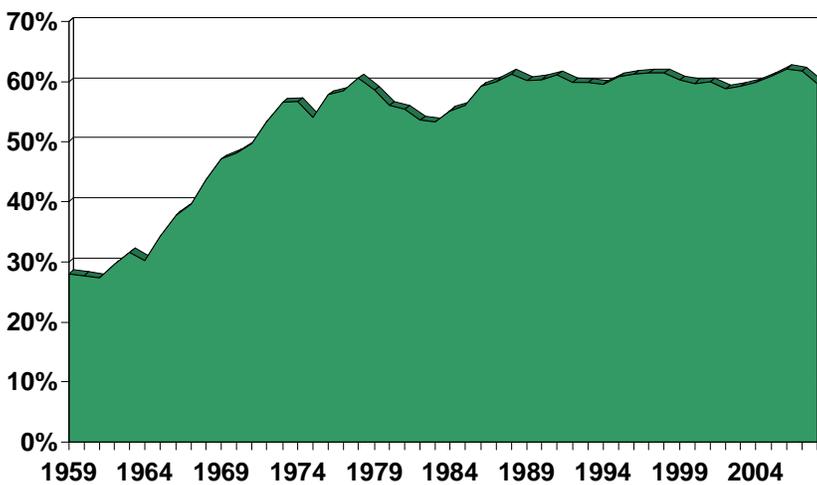
Another factor: women do not seem to advance as quickly as men. We've probably all heard of the "mommy track" where women are sidelined from promotions because of a perceived difference by employers. You may have also heard of the "glass ceiling." Employers, for various reasons, seem reluctant to advance women to the top echelons of corporate power.

## What's left?

However, after explaining away all the demographic characteristics and choices that make men's and women's labor force experience different, there's still some of that old wage gap left. While studies disagree on the level, one consistent finding does emerge from the literature: no analysis can completely account for the entire female/male wage gap. Researchers have estimated that 60 to 70 percent of the difference is attributable to the differences noted above. The remaining share could not be attributed to factors other than gender.

In other words, a large portion of the gap remains unexplainable and may indeed reflect some institutionalized discrimination against women in the workplace.

# U.S. Female-headed Families\* in Poverty as a Percentage of All Families\*



\* With Children under 18.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## Lower Wages Hurt

Lower wages impact our society and economy. In 2008, according to American Community Survey figures, roughly 30 percent of Utah female-headed families with children had incomes below the poverty line. In comparison, only 5 percent of married-couple families with children and 13 percent for single male-headed families were in poverty.

Despite lower-than-average wages, Utah manages to consistently experience a lower-than-average poverty rate. For example, the U.S. poverty rate from Census 2000 for female-headed families with children measured 35 percent to Utah's 29 percent. Nevertheless, poverty in Utah's female-headed households remains significant—putting a drain on government resources.

In addition, over time, women-headed families are making up a larger and larger share of all families in poverty. Back in 1960, U.S. female-headed families with children accounted for only 27 percent of total families in poverty. By 2008, they constituted 60 percent of families in poverty.

Whether through divorce, desertion, death, or remaining single, more than 85 percent of American women can expect to have to support themselves and/or their children at some time in their lives. If these women are improperly prepared for the labor force, they may find themselves in the ranks of the poor.

# Hard at Work

## Women in the Utah Labor Force

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