



Degrees to Somewhere

Does Utah follow national trends in regards to young adults?

In 2009 the American Community Survey (ACS) added a new education data item: field of study for those who have at least a bachelor's degree. Respondents with a degree are asked to list their specific field(s) of study. The Census Bureau codes the responses and accumulates them into 5 general fields and 15 more detailed categories (see Table 1). Field of study can be compared to other characteristics such as gender, age, occupation, industry of employment and income to enable those who are concerned with the relationship between higher education and our economy to better understand the educational preparation and attainment of the labor force according to occupation and industry.

The ACS, administered monthly, elicits responses from almost two million United States households each year. The survey questions are designed to provide demographic, social, economic and housing data for communities, counties, states, the nation and other geographic and politically based areas of interest. Most importantly, leaders in business and industry, government at all levels, education and other areas use the information collected to plan and provide the infrastructure, goods and services that constitute our economy.

TABLE 1:

Bachelor's Degree Fields of Study by Percent
For Persons 25 Years of Age and Over With at Least a Bachelor's Degree

FIELD OF STUDY	UTAH	UNITED STATES
Science and Engineering ↴		
Computers, Mathematics and Statistics	4.4%	4.2%
Biological, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences	6.3%	6.1%
Physical and Related Sciences	2.9%	3.4%
Psychology	4.6%	4.6%
Social Sciences	7.5%	7.8%
Engineering	6.8%	7.8%
Multi-disciplinary Studies	0.7%	0.6%
Science and Engineering Related Fields	8.8%	8.9%
Business	18.7%	20.2%
Education	15.0%	13.9%
Arts, Humanities and Other ↴		
Literature and Languages	5.3%	4.5%
Liberal Arts and History	3.6%	5.2%
Visual and Performing Arts	3.6%	4.0%
Communications	4.1%	3.6%
Other	7.6%	5.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010.

Men are much more likely to have degrees in science while women are more likely to have degrees in education.



TABLE 2:
Bachelor's Degree Major Field of Study by Gender
 For Persons 25 to 39 Years of Age With at Least a Bachelor's Degree

The most current tabulated ACS survey results, from 2010, show that 57.6 million Americans 25 years of age and older, or 28.2 percent, had at least a bachelor's degree. In Utah, 29.3 percent of the 25-and-older population had at least a bachelor's degree, an estimated 465,000 individuals. Table 1 illustrates these differences between the United States and Utah according to field of study, categorized by the fifteen subsets provided in the ACS tabulations.

Table 2 provides a comparison of the five major fields of study according to gender, illustrating some significant differences. Men are much more likely to have degrees in science, engineering and related fields while women are much more likely to have degrees in education. This holds true nationally and in Utah.

However, Utah does not follow national trends in regards to young adults between the ages of 25 and 39. Nationally there are 24.6 percent more women with a bachelor's degree than men with the same, 10.6 million compared to 8.5 million, respectively. In Utah, the trend is reversed as an estimated 94,438 men compared to 92,090 women hold a bachelor's degree.

ACS labor market, education and demographic data provide industries, communities and public policy leaders an invaluable source of information that examines the characteristics of the labor force. 

UTAH				
	Male		Female	
Field of Study	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
25 to 39 years:	94,438	100.0%	92,090	100.0%
Science and Engineering	39,560	41.9%	21,221	23.0%
Science and Engineering Related Fields	5,116	5.4%	12,405	13.5%
Business	24,511	26.0%	12,221	13.3%
Education	2,996	3.2%	16,041	17.4%
Arts, Humanities and Other	22,255	23.6%	30,202	32.8%
UNITED STATES				
	Male		Female	
Field of Study	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
25 to 39 years:	8,529,489	100.0%	10,623,674	100.0%
Science and Engineering	3,767,837	44.2%	3,317,871	31.2%
Science and Engineering Related Fields	452,804	5.3%	1,142,183	10.8%
Business	1,943,392	22.8%	1,948,481	18.3%
Education	376,813	4.4%	1,408,994	13.3%
Arts, Humanities and Other	1,988,643	23.3%	2,806,145	26.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010.