

Research & Policy Brief

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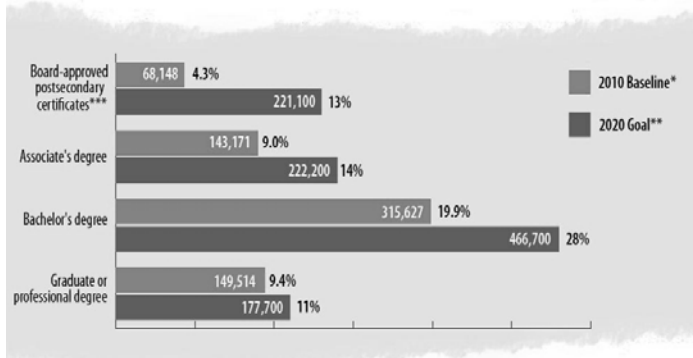


Educational Attainment: A Utah Women and Education Update

Keeping Utah Competitive

Utah leaders created a big goal: 66% of Utah’s population will have postsecondary degrees or vocational certificates by the year 2020.¹ This goal is based on a report from the *Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce* that projected Utah’s economy will need 66% of its population with some form of postsecondary education by 2018 to remain competitive. Currently, 38.3% of Utahns hold associate degrees or higher.² This baseline underscores the urgency of working toward the 66% goal. Figure 1 highlights the current gap in educational attainment.

Figure 1: Utah’s Big Goal: Postsecondary Educational Attainment Levels by 2020 • Ages 25-64



* 2010 Census
 ** Goal based on 66% completion rate
 *** 2010 estimate of 4.3% holding a certificate as highest postsecondary award

Central to Utah’s big goal are strategies to increase higher education enrollment and graduation rates across the state for both men and women. As Utah strives to do this, it is critical to acknowledge that each gender faces its own unique barriers. Hence, gender-specific strategies and efforts should be considered. The Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) and the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) have already designed and implemented a host of resources for all students. In 2012, the *Utah Women and Education Initiative* (UWEI) was established specifically to assist the state in increasing the number of Utah women entering college and completing degrees and certificates. This focus does not devalue the need for additional work to address the challenges Utah men face in completing certificates and degrees.

This is the first of a series of UWEI *Research and Policy Briefs* that will help state leaders, educators, legislators, and community members understand the current state of higher

education for women in Utah. The purpose of this first brief is to highlight educational attainment data.

Educational Attainment

Table 1 outlines the highest level of education achieved by Utah adults. In terms of residents holding at least a high school diploma or its equivalent, Utah is doing well compared to the U.S. average. Only 9.3% of Utahns have less than a high school diploma compared to nearly 15% nationally. Yet, Utah has a particularly high percentage (compared to other states) of Utah adults in the “some college, no degree” category. Women make up a major portion of this group in all age categories. For example, 28% of females have “some college, no degree” in the 35–44 age category, with men close behind (24%). The 25–34 age group reports 28% women and 29% men.³

Table 1: Educational Attainment of Utah Adults⁴
 (Highest level)

Educational Level	Utah	Nation
8th grade or less	3.0%	6.2%
Some high school, no diploma	6.3%	8.7%
High-school diploma	25.0%	29.0%
Some college, no degree	27.0%	20.6%
Associate degree	9.2%	7.5%
Bachelor's degree	19.9%	17.6%
Master's degree	6.6%	7.2%
Doctoral degree	1.3%	1.2%
Professional degree	1.7%	2.0%

Source: *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2012, November 23). *Data and analysis: The state of academe*. Almanac of Higher Education 2012: Utah.

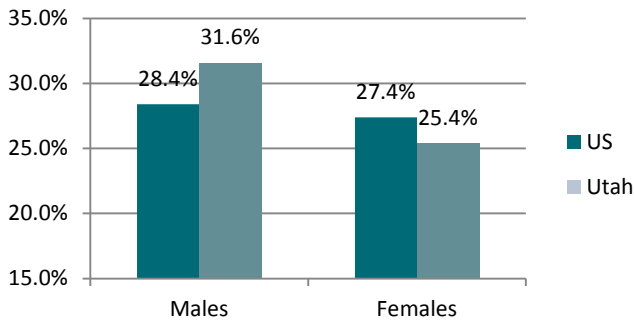
Utah adults are slightly more educated than their national counterparts, with more earned associate and bachelor’s degrees. Yet, data show that these percentages are significantly influenced by the degrees held by older residents, not degrees earned in the younger age categories. Finally, Utah is slightly below national levels in terms of graduate degrees, which can be attributed in part to lower numbers of women participating in these programs. Assisting Utah women and men to finish degrees is an important goal.

The American Community Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census provides educational attainment levels of the Utah population by county. Five-year estimates (2006–2010) of this data are found in the Appendix. While increasing attainment is a statewide goal, the data show it is a particular challenge in rural counties.⁵ Providing all Utah communities with access to quality higher education is imperative.

Gender Gap

In the past, Utah has been known for its educated citizenry. Utah has ranked high on residents graduating from high school. In 2009, Utah graduated 89.8% of its males (compared to 84.5% nationally) and 91% of its females (compared to 85.9% nationally).⁶ However, preliminary data recently released by the U.S. Department of Education has now put Utah’s overall high school graduation rate ranking in the bottom half of the country.⁷ Utah women start college at the same rate or slightly above the national average, and the share of the Utah population with an associate’s degree is actually higher for females than males.⁸ This is true in the 18–24, 25–34, and 35–44 age categories. This is no surprise, as the majority of students attending two-year colleges and earning associate degrees across the nation are women. However, Utah women have been less likely to complete bachelor’s degrees. There is currently a 6% gap in Utah’s population (ages 25 and over) with bachelor’s degrees held by men versus women, which is the largest gap in the nation. As Figure 2 illustrates, the share of Utah’s male population with bachelor’s degrees is above the U.S. average (31.6%), and Utah females are below the national average (25.4%).

Figure 2: Utah Educational Attainment at the Bachelor’s Degree Level by Sex (Ages 25 or Greater)



Source: Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Utah, 2009 American Community Survey.

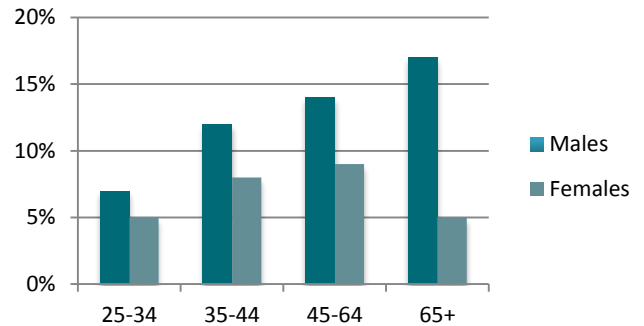
A recent national study⁹ reported adults ages 25 and older with bachelor’s degree or higher attainment in 2011 by major metropolitan area. Of the 51 areas studied with at least one million people, the greatest differences between the sexes were found in the Salt Lake City-Ogden-Clearfield area, where men (37.5%) surpassed women (28.3%) by 9.3 percentage points, and the Orlando, Florida, area, where women surpassed men by 6.8 percentage points.

The good news is that in the younger age categories, women are now obtaining bachelor’s degrees at the same rate, if not higher, than Utah men. In the 25–34-year-old category, the ACS (2008–2010 three-year estimates) reports that 22% of Utah women have bachelor’s degrees compared to 21% of men. The bad news is that graduation rates of both women and men who attend Utah colleges and universities are behind

national numbers (see UWEI Brief 2013 No. 2). In addition, these percentages are currently well below Utah’s 66% goal.

At the graduate level, a greater percentage of the male population holds degrees than the female population in Utah within all age categories (see Figure 3). Women do not pursue graduate degrees at the same rate as men.¹⁰

Figure 3: Utah Graduate Degrees by Age & Gender



Conclusion

While Utah women do have more associate’s degrees than men, there is still a significant gender difference at the bachelor and graduate levels in Utah’s population. Although women in the younger generations are now making progress, there is still much work that needs to be done to change the trend in college completion rates. Utah needs to continue to aggressively focus efforts on increasing the enrollment and completion rates for both women and men. This will produce the college educated workforce that is critical to Utah’s ability to remain competitive and be a great place to live and prosper.

¹ USHE (2011). *HigherEdUtah2020: 2011 Report*. Retrieved from http://www.higheredutah.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/2011_Report_FEB13_FINAL_WEB_version.pdf

² *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2012, Nov 23). *Data and analysis: The state of academe. Almanac of Higher Education 2012: Utah*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/section/Almanac-of-Higher-Education/615/>.

³ The American Community Survey (n.d.). 2008–2010— Three-year estimates.

⁴ *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2012, November 23).

⁵ Lumina Foundation (2012). *A stronger nation through higher education: How and why Americans must achieve a big goal for college—Utah* (pp. 117–18).

⁶ Bureau of Economic and Business Research, (2009). Many Utah women and men not completing college (American Community Survey). University of Utah.

⁷ Schencker, L. (2012, November 27). *Utah ranks in bottom half of country for high school grad rates: State’s rate for Latinos is fourth lowest in nation. The Salt Lake Tribune*.

⁸ USHE (2012, August). Analysis of Utah women in education.

⁹ *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2012, November 23).

¹⁰ USHE (2012, August). Analysis of Utah women in education.

Appendix: Educational Attainment by County (highest level attained)

County		No H.S. Diploma	HS Diploma or GED	Some College, No Degree	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate/ Professional Degrees
Beaver	Male	11%	38%	33%	7%	7%	3%
	Female	8%	48%	28%	6%	9%	1%
	Total	10%	43%	30%	6%	8%	2%
Box Elder	Male	8%	32%	27%	6%	17%	9%
	Female	9%	34%	29%	9%	15%	4%
	Total	9%	33%	28%	8%	16%	6%
Cache	Male	8%	20%	28%	7%	21%	16%
	Female	7%	24%	26%	9%	24%	8%
	Total	8%	22%	27%	8%	23%	12%
Carbon	Male	15%	30%	29%	9%	10%	6%
	Female	13%	31%	30%	14%	10%	2%
	Total	14%	30%	29%	12%	10%	4%
Daggett	Male	13%	44%	19%	6%	11%	7%
	Female	19%	26%	23%	12%	16%	3%
	Total	15%	36%	21%	9%	13%	5%
Davis	Male	5%	20%	26%	9%	26%	14%
	Female	5%	25%	31%	11%	21%	6%
	Total	5%	23%	29%	10%	24%	10%
Duchesne	Male	15%	39%	22%	7%	9%	8%
	Female	15%	35%	28%	7%	12%	3%
	Total	15%	37%	25%	7%	10%	6%
Emery	Male	9%	40%	27%	10%	10%	4%
	Female	10%	38%	27%	11%	9%	4%
	Total	10%	39%	27%	11%	9%	4%
Garfield	Male	11%	32%	30%	5%	15%	7%
	Female	5%	32%	34%	11%	14%	4%
	Total	8%	32%	32%	8%	14%	5%
Grand	Male	15%	33%	22%	5%	17%	7%
	Female	17%	23%	29%	7%	14%	10%
	Total	16%	28%	26%	6%	15%	9%
Iron	Male	9%	24%	27%	6%	23%	11%
	Female	9%	30%	29%	9%	19%	4%
	Total	9%	27%	28%	8%	21%	7%
Juab	Male	8%	39%	31%	7%	10%	5%
	Female	9%	40%	27%	12%	8%	4%
	Total	8%	40%	29%	10%	9%	4%
Kane	Male	12%	29%	29%	5%	19%	6%
	Female	9%	27%	34%	8%	17%	5%
	Total	11%	28%	32%	6%	18%	6%
Millard	Male	14%	29%	26%	9%	13%	8%
	Female	13%	32%	29%	8%	14%	3%
	Total	14%	31%	28%	9%	14%	6%
Morgan	Male	2%	30%	29%	8%	19%	13%
	Female	4%	30%	30%	13%	17%	5%
	Total	3%	30%	29%	11%	18%	9%
Piute	Male	10%	41%	23%	8%	14%	4%
	Female	12%	37%	33%	3%	8%	7%
	Total	11%	39%	28%	5%	11%	5%

Rich	Male	5%	34%	35%	7%	15%	4%
	Female	5%	35%	26%	8%	20%	6%
	Total	5%	34%	31%	7%	17%	5%
Salt Lake	Male	12%	23%	25%	8%	20%	12%
	Female	10%	25%	27%	9%	20%	8%
	Total	11%	24%	26%	8%	20%	10%
San Juan	Male	18%	35%	19%	11%	10%	8%
	Female	18%	31%	22%	12%	11%	5%
	Total	18%	33%	20%	12%	11%	6%
Sanpete	Male	13%	30%	27%	9%	14%	7%
	Female	10%	32%	28%	14%	12%	4%
	Total	12%	31%	27%	11%	13%	5%
Sevier	Male	11%	33%	27%	9%	12%	7%
	Female	9%	35%	30%	12%	9%	5%
	Total	10%	34%	29%	10%	11%	6%
Summit	Male	7%	19%	16%	6%	31%	21%
	Female	6%	17%	18%	9%	33%	17%
	Total	6%	18%	17%	8%	32%	19%
Tooele	Male	8%	30%	31%	10%	15%	6%
	Female	9%	32%	31%	12%	13%	3%
	Total	8%	31%	31%	11%	14%	4%
Uintah	Male	18%	36%	25%	5%	9%	7%
	Female	13%	38%	29%	6%	11%	2%
	Total	15%	37%	27%	6%	10%	5%
Utah	Male	7%	16%	26%	10%	25%	15%
	Female	7%	20%	32%	12%	24%	6%
	Total	7%	18%	29%	11%	25%	11%
Wasatch	Male	9%	23%	27%	7%	19%	15%
	Female	10%	22%	30%	10%	21%	7%
	Total	9%	23%	28%	9%	20%	11%
Washington	Male	10%	26%	28%	8%	18%	11%
	Female	9%	31%	31%	10%	14%	5%
	Total	9%	28%	30%	9%	16%	8%
Wayne	Male	9%	35%	28%	7%	15%	7%
	Female	11%	27%	26%	12%	16%	8%
	Total	10%	31%	27%	9%	15%	7%
Weber	Male	11%	28%	26%	9%	17%	9%
	Female	11%	32%	28%	10%	15%	5%
	Total	11%	30%	27%	10%	16%	7%

Source: American Community Survey, Five-year estimates (2006–2010).

Note: Percentages are rounded up; hence, totals do not always add up to 100%.