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

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides information on communities' social, demographic, and economic characteristics. The ACS began in 2008 and replaced the Census Long Form in 2010. Each year, the Census Bureau provides a new update to both the 1 and 5-Year Estimates.

This release is particularly relevant for Utahns because the 5-Year Estimates are available for all geographies, from the state down to census tracts. The 1-Year ACS Estimates are limited to populations over 65,000. This Fact Sheet presents a selection of the statistically significant changes between the 2010-2014 and 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates. All data points included are available from the Census Bureau at data.census.gov.

Utah in the National Context

This ACS release is the first that allows for comparison across three estimate periods: 2005-2009, 2010-2014, and 2015-2019. Comparing these periods provides new opportunities for smaller communities to understand how their characteristics have changed over time.

Distinctive characteristics of Utah remain:
- Largest average household size (3.12) and youngest median age (30.8)
- 13th highest median household income ($71,621) and
- 5th lowest poverty rate for the total population (9.8%)
- 10th highest share of owner-occupied homes (70.2%)
- 15th highest share of the population age 25 or older with a Bachelor's degree or higher (34%)

Trends throughout the decade

Since the ACS provides annual estimates, trends emerge, and changes can be tracked throughout the decade. This approach reduces the likelihood of surprising findings. However, the data reveal the continuation of trends and lends itself to expected findings from the 2020 Census. Some of the significant events that have influenced Utah's demographics since 2010 include declining births and fertility rate, an aging population, increasing racial and ethnic diversity, and a strong economy. The ACS data support these trends.

Summary of Statistically Significant Changes for Selected Characteristics in Utah

	2010-2014	2015-2019
Median Age	29.9	30.8
Share of population under age 18	31.1%	29.8%
Share of population over age 65	9.5%	10.8%
Language Spoken at Home, Language other than English	14.6%	15.4%
Share of population over age 25 with a Bachelor's degree or higher	30.6%	34.0%
Share of population over age 25 with some college, no degree	27.6%	25.7%
Median household income (dollars)	$64,651	$71,621
Median family income (dollars)	$73,113	$81,525
Median nonfamily income (dollars)	$36,342	$40,973
Share of Utahns in poverty	12.8%	9.8%
Owner-occupied households	69.7%	70.2%
Median monthly rent	$944	$1,037

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables CP02, CP03, and CP05

The findings presented do not include Daggett, Piute, Rich, or Wayne counties. These counties do not appear in the Census Bureau's comparison tables, which analyze differences between estimate periods. These counties have small populations, translating to small sample sizes and high margins of error on many of the attributes shared in the comparison tables.

Changing Age Structure

Two factors have impacted Utah's overall age structure: declining births and an aging population. As previous Gardner Institute analysis has noted, both the total number of births and total fertility rate in Utah have been declining since 2008.[1] Meanwhile, the population in the Baby Boom generation is aging. Although this population is a smaller share of Utah's total population than in other states, the magnitude of this large aging group still impacts Utah's age structure.

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The most recent data indicate that Utah remains the youngest state in the nation, despite the median age increasing from 29.9 to 30.8. The share of the population under age 18 decreased statewide from 31.1% to 29.8%. The share of the population aged 65 and older increased statewide from 9.5% to 10.8%.

Linguistic Diversity

Since 2010, net migration has become a more stable component of Utah's population growth.[2] Migration-driven growth in the 1990s and 2000s brought in new populations to Utah.[3] These new populations have increased diversity in Utah across race, ethnicity, ancestry, cultural backgrounds, and more.

Statewide, an estimated 261,851 Utahns were born outside the United States. While this population did not experience a significant change between the two estimate periods, the share of the population speaking a language other than English at home increased from 14.6% to 15.4%.

Educational attainment, income, and poverty

Like the nation, the share of Utah's population aged 25 or older with a Bachelor's degree or higher increased (30.6% to 34%). The share of Utahns with some college, no degree decreased from 27.6% to 25.7%.

Median household incomes increased statewide, from $64,651 to $71,621. Family median household incomes increased the most, from $73,113 to $81,525, while nonfamily households had the smallest increase from $36,342 to $40,973. While median household incomes were increasing, the statewide share of Utahns in poverty decreased. One factor to consider is that this is the first set of comparable estimates that do not include the Great Recession, which ended in 2009.

Housing and rent costs

In Utah, the share of owner-occupied homes increased from 69.7% to 70.2%. While housing costs decreased for homeowners, they increased for renters statewide. Housing costs changes did not affect every county, impacting fewer than half of all counties. Median monthly mortgage costs decreased in eight of the nine counties with mortgage cost changes, while median rent increased in 10 of the 11 counties with rental cost changes. The largest median rent increases were in Morgan ($833 to $1,182) and Wasatch ($1,147 to $1,364) counties.

Endnotes

1. Hollingshaus, M., Bateman, M., Harris, E., & Perlich, P. S. (2017). *Fertility in Utah since the Great Recession: The New Normal or a Pregnant Pause* . Salt Lake City: Gardner Business Review, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute.
2. Harris, E. (2019). *State and County Population Estimates for Utah: 2019.* Salt Lake City: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute.
3. Hollingshaus, M., & Perlich, P. S. (2016). *Migrant Today, Parent Tomorrow: A Zero Migration Simulation.* Salt Lake City: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, David Eccles School of Business, University of Utah.

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