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KEEPERS OF THE FLAME

UTAH'S OLYMPIC-SIZED OPPORTUNITY

Natalie Gochnour | Phil Dean | Jennifer Robinson

Kem C. Gardner POLICY INSTITUTE
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
DAVID ECCLES SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

10 YEARS OF IMPACT 2015-2025

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KEEPERS OF THE FLAME MONOGRAPHS

At the dawn of the 21st century, Utah leaders placed a time capsule below the front steps of the Utah State Capitol. The historic cache included a leather-bound book with letters to the future from 124 executive, legislative, and judicial branch leaders. Former governor Mike Leavitt's opening letter memorialized the solemn responsibility of Utah leaders to serve as "keepers of the flame." The flame symbolizes all that is great about Utah and the light it shares with the world.

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute prepares and shares economic, demographic, and public policy research that helps policymakers keep Utah's flame burning bright. This monograph, the second in a series called "Keepers of the Flame," focuses on the catalyzing impact of the 2034 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Utahns have the opportunity between now and 2034 to build upon the nation's strongest economy to address troubling challenges facing the Beehive State. This is Utah's Olympic-sized opportunity.

Special thanks to the entire team of researchers at the Gardner Institute for their assistance in synthesizing the data and reviewing the contents of this monograph.

INTRODUCTION

At 7 p.m. MST on Friday, February 10, 2034, the opening ceremony for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will begin at Rice-Eccles Stadium on the University of Utah campus in Salt Lake City, Utah. An estimated three billion people from more than 200 countries will watch the event.

FEW SINGLE EVENTS IN UTAH HISTORY COMPARE IN REACH AND SIGNIFICANCE.

The Beehive State will be the global center of attention for 17 days of Olympic competition and pageantry, followed by 10 days of Paralympics.

During this time an estimated 15 billion viewer hours of Olympic coverage will feature extraordinary feats of athletic accomplishment and human excellence…

- A come-from-behind curling team victory.
- A courageous downhill ski racer beating the odds.
- A women's figure skater skating the performance of her life.

While athletic excellence, international friendship, and global connection will be the undeniable focus of the 2034 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the event also poses an extraordinary opportunity for Utahns.

Even with Utah's well-documented exceptional economy, our state is changing fast. And even as Utah prospers, serious challenges pose a threat to Utah's long-term success.

How can Utah leverage the Olympics to sustain the state's nation-leading prosperity in the face of rapid change and mounting challenges?

Fortunately, the 2034 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games serve as a powerful catalyst to make Utah even better. This catalyzing Olympic pressure is Utah's Olympic-sized opportunity.

This monograph shares data on Utah's economic successes, growth and change, and troubling challenges.

It ends with insights, along with seven ideas, that serve as a starting point for a statewide discussion about how Utah can seize its Olympic-sized opportunity.

OLYMPICS AS A CATALYST

Chemists use a catalyzing agent to speed up a chemical reaction. Catalysts in public policy work in a similar way—they accelerate a desired outcome.

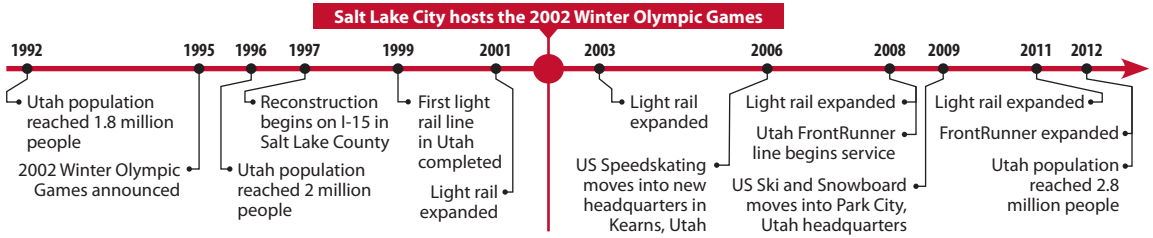
Across the globe, the Olympic and Paralympic Games catalyze host communities to improve. The Olympic spotlight incentivizes and provides a deadline for communities to 1) make strategic investments they otherwise would not or could not make, 2) find new ways to collaborate and break through impasses on tough challenges, and 3) apply creative solutions to complex issues. Importantly, the Olympics also provide resources to manage growth that will occur with or without the Games.

Utahns understand the Olympics' catalyzing impact. The 2002 Olympic Winter Games helped state leaders accelerate and innovate the rebuild of I-15 in Salt Lake County, prioritize construction and expansion of TRAX light rail, turn an up-and-coming winter sports industry into a winter sports capital, and invest in public and private infrastructure beneficial to the Games and the community.

The 2002 Olympic Winter Games resulted in approximately $7.25 billion (2024 dollars) of investment beneficial to the community and the Games. Many point to the 10 years prior to and after the event as important building blocks in Utah's event success.

> *"The spotlight of the 2002 Winter Olympics was so bright it made Utah better in every way. Every corner of the state improved in preparation to host the world and that improvement remained long after the athletes departed."*
>
> **– Gov. Mike Leavitt**

Figure 1: Pre- and Post-2002 Olympic Winter Games Timeline



Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Estimated Public and Private Investment Beneficial to the 2002 Olympic Winter Games

(Millions of 2024 Dollars)

	Project/Infrastructure Description	Total Cost
Transportation	I-15 Reconstruction	$2,859.2
	Light Rail North/South Line	$561.9
	Light Rail U of U Line	$213.1
	Intelligent Transportation System	$56.8
	Snowbasin/Trappers Loop Road	$28.4
	Soldier Hollow Access Road	$18.0
	Winter Sports Park Road	$7.9
	Temporary Park and Ride Lots	$64.7
	Permanent Park and Ride Lots	$12.4
	Bus Maintenance Facility	$10.4
	SR248 Reconstruction	$14.9
	I-80 Silver Creek & Kimball Junction	$93.5
	US89 & I-84 (Corina Drive) Interchange	$44.6
	SR173 Railroad Bridge	$9.4
	I-215 & 3500 South Interchange	$3.4
	Venue Loading/Unloading	$20.5
	Transportation Studies	$12.2
	Park City Infrastructure Improvements	$20.5
	Subtotal	**$4,051.9**
Resort Additions, Expansions, or Lease Fees	Snowbasin Facilities	$222.4
	Snowbird Expansion	$9.0
	Park City Expansion	$299.0
	The Canyons Phase 1 Hotel, Lifts & Village	$363.2
	Deer Valley (Deer Crest) Resort	$211.8
	Brighton Resort	$3.6
	Solitude Resort	$179.8
	Zermatt Swiss Resort	$71.9
	Subtotal	**$1,360.9**

	Project/Infrastructure Description	Total Cost
Venues	E-Center Hockey Arena	$104.8
	Delta Center Figure Skating	$9.2
	Oquirrh Park Speed Skating Oval	$64.9
	Utah Olympic Park	$174.6
	Soldier Hollow	$56.1
	Seven Peaks Ice Sheets (Provo)	$23.0
	Ogden Ice Sheet	$10.6
	Accord Practice Sheet	$7.2
	Steiner Center Ice Sheets	$27.0
	U of U Rice-Eccles Stadium	$94.4
	Medals Plaza	$7.0
	Subtotal	**$578.8**
Housing	U of U Olympics Village Phase I & 2	$216.0
	Camp Williams Army Reserve Facilities	$22.8
	Media Housing	$19.8
	Subtotal	**$258.6**
Hotels	Hotel Monaco	$57.5
	Marriott Hotel	$89.9
	Grand America	$332.7
	Stein Erikson Lodge	$53.9
	Subtotal	**$534.1**
Miscellaneous	Telecommunications and UCAN	$318.8
	Forest Service Funds	$18.9
	Soldier Hollow Water/Sewer	$21.4
	Salt Palace Expansion	$84.5
	Alf Engen Museum	$18.0
	Subtotal	$461.6
	TOTAL	**$7,245.9**

Note: All dollar amounts have been adjusted for inflation to 2024 dollars from their original values in 2000. Some amounts include a mix of state and local government and private monies. With the exception of a portion of the ski area expenditures and the $106.1 million sales tax diversion for Olympic facilities, these monies went to projects which are beneficial to hosting the Games, but are not expenditures because of the Games. Long-term investments in transportation infrastructure, hotels, sporting arenas, and recreation facilities are not made exclusively for a 17-day event.
Source: "2002 Olympic Winter Games: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Impacts," Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, November 2000.

Utah begins its preparation for the 2034 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games from an extraordinary starting point.

Utah currently benefits from the most successful economy in the nation. Our economic success story includes seven major achievements. We call them "Utah's Magnificent Seven."

However, in the years leading up to the Games, Utah also faces seven challenges that threaten our long-term success. We call these "Utah's Troubling Seven."

How the state magnifies these achievements and addresses these challenges will determine if Utah achieves its Olympic-sized opportunity.

Utah's Magnificent Seven

Major Achievements in Utah's Economic Success Story

1. Economic dynamism and diversity
2. High household income and low poverty
3. Upward mobility
4. Widespread prosperity
5. Well-trained and educated workforce
6. Fast growing population and youthfulness
7. Social cohesion

Utah's Troubling Seven

Challenges Threaten Utah's Long-term Success

1. Housing affordability and homelessness
2. Traffic congestion
3. Third grade reading proficiency
4. College graduation rates
5. Water and Great Salt Lake
6. Energy supply
7. Behavioral health

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Utahns have built the most impressive economy in the nation.

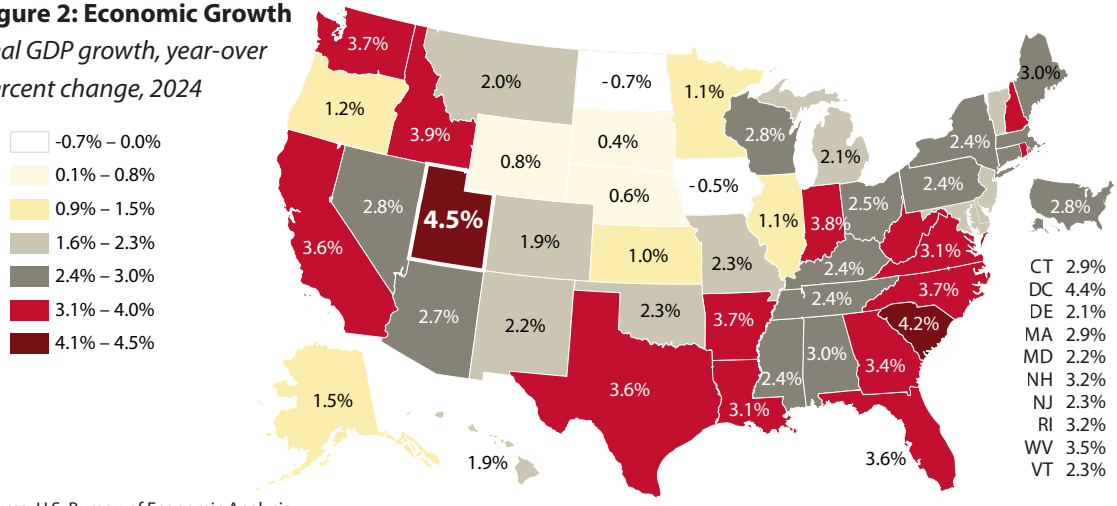
Among other striking accomplishments, Utah leads the nation in real GDP growth, household income (after adjusting for cost-of-living), upward mobility, income equality, population growth, and social capital, all while achieving the lowest poverty rate in the country and the third most well-trained and educated workforce in the country.[1]

Drawing from the terminology used to describe major technology stocks in U.S. equity markets, we call the state's major economic achievements Utah's "Magnificent Seven."[2] These accomplishments exemplify Utah's exceptional economic performance and signal the state's promising future.

1 Economic dynamism and diversity

Utah's nation-leading real GDP growth in 2024 tallied 4.5% year-over growth, more than 1.6 times the national growth rate of 2.8%. Only one other state and the District of Columbia achieved greater than 4% growth over the same period.

Figure 2: Economic Growth
Real GDP growth, year-over percent change, 2024

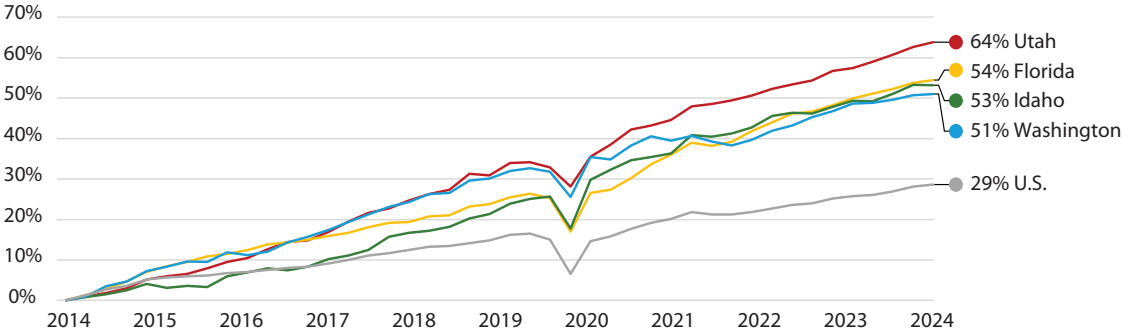


Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Utah's nation-leading economic success extends for well over a decade. Since 2014, Utah's real GDP growth of 64% more than doubled the national average of 29%. Utah's growth far exceeds the next three most rapidly growing economies in the country: Florida (54%), Idaho (53%), and Washington (51%). Utah also ranks among the top six most economically well diversified states in the nation. This economic diversity contributes to Utah's economic stability year to year.

Figure 3: Real GDP Growth

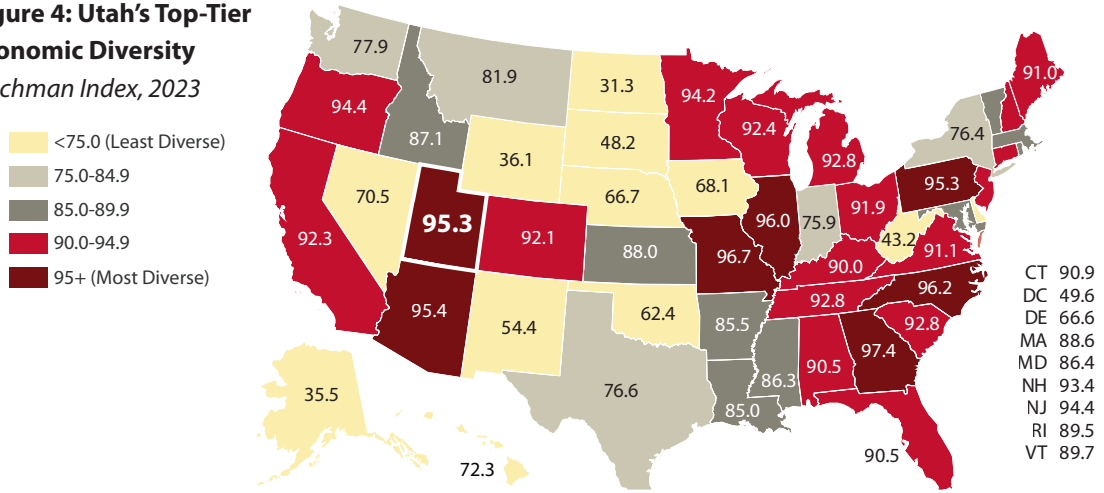
U.S. and top four states, cumulative percent change



Note: Estimates adjusted to 2024 dollars.
Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data

Figure 4: Utah's Top-Tier Economic Diversity

Hachman Index, 2023



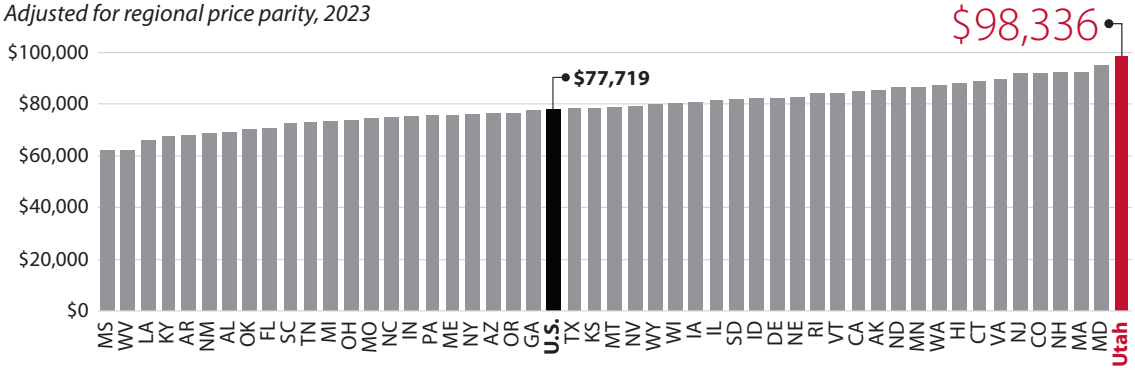
Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

2 Nation-leading household income, coupled with lowest poverty

Utah's 2023 household income, after adjusting for regional price parity, ranks highest in the nation. Utah's cost-of-living-adjusted household income tallies $98,336 — 27% higher than the U.S. average of $77,719. Utah's three-year average poverty rate from 2021 to 2023 of 6.7% measures lowest in the nation and 4.7 percentage points lower than the U.S. average of 11.4%.

Figure 5: Median Household Income

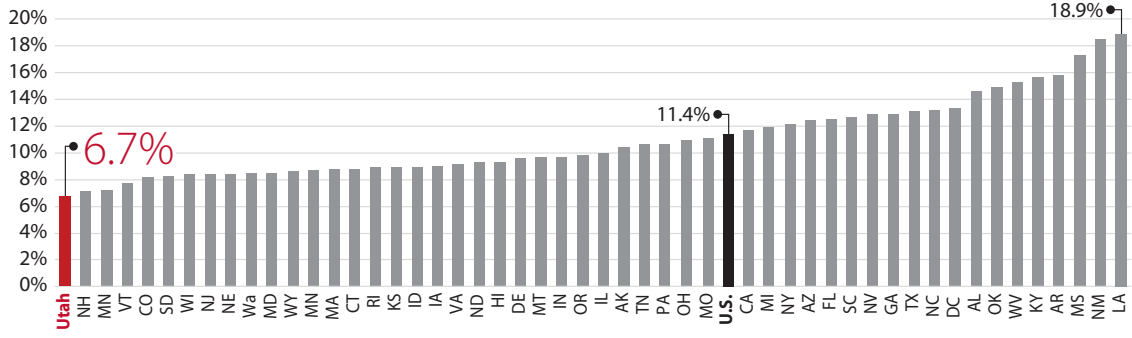
Adjusted for regional price parity, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Figure 6: Poverty Rate

2021-23 average



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

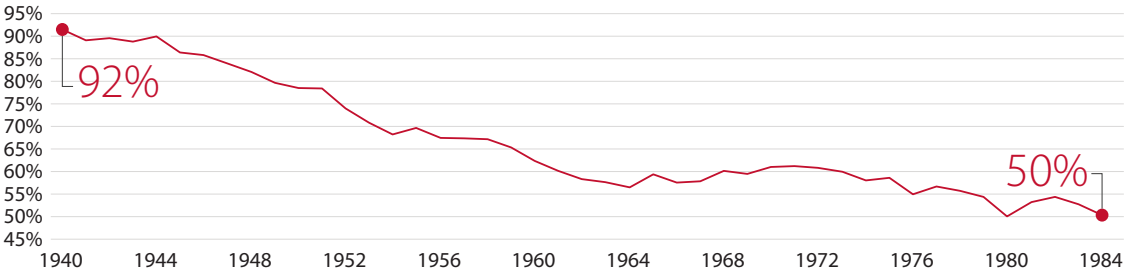
3 Upward mobility

Many define the American dream as the portion of children who in adulthood earn more than their parents. By this definition, the American dream is fading for many. Ninety percent of children who grew up in the 1940s earned more than their parents. Today, half of children achieve this same outcome.

Utah's upward mobility stands out among states. Opportunity Insights at Harvard University estimates that Utah achieves top levels (top four deciles) of upward mobility in every county, one of only three states to achieve this outcome.

Figure 7: The Fading American Dream

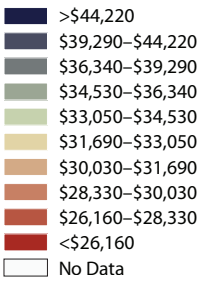
Percent of children earning more than their parents by year of birth

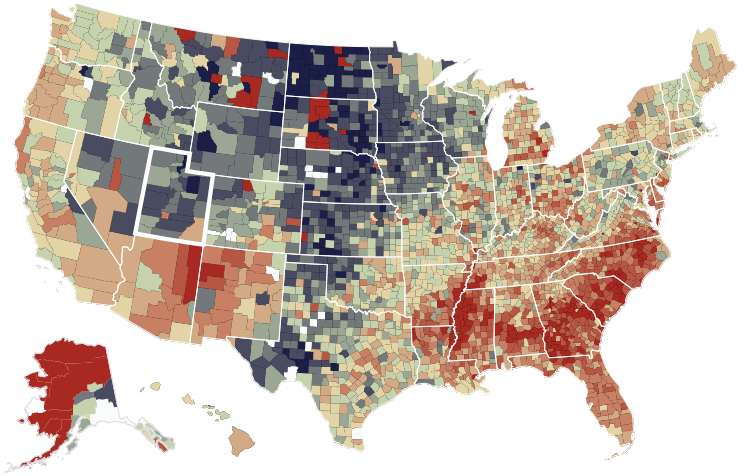


Source: Opportunity Insights

Figure 8: Upward Mobility

Mean income at age 35 for children whose parents earned $27,000, 2018





Source: Opportunity Insights (Chetty, Hendren, Jones, Porter)

4 Widespread prosperity

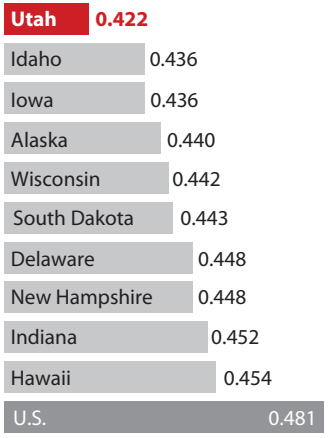
A widespread distribution of income can lead to many positive outcomes such as an increased sense of connection, shared purpose, and strengthened social fabric. These benefits prove particularly gainful when shared prosperity combines with overall higher incomes, low poverty, and economic growth and dynamism.

The Census Bureau estimates that Utah, with a Gini coefficient of 0.422 in 2024, exhibits the most equal distribution of income in the nation. A Gini coefficient of 0 equates with perfect income equality and a coefficient of 1 means perfect inequality.

Economists note that some level of income inequality is necessary to reward innovation, hard work, and risk taking. Utah's innovation index – which includes five core indices of human capital and knowledge creation, business dynamics, business profile, employment and productivity, and economic well-being – ranks highest among states. Utah achieves the triple play of high levels of economic success (economic growth, high incomes, and low poverty), high levels of income equality, and innovation.

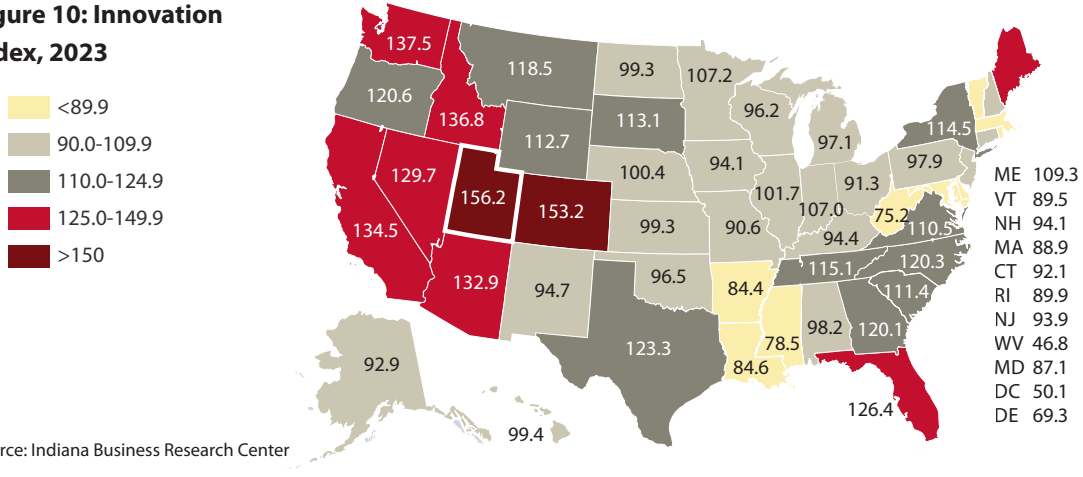
Figure 9: Income Equality (Gini Coefficient), 2024

U.S. and top ten states



Note: A higher Gini coefficient indicates greater income inequality. Axis starts at 0.4 to show differences.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Figure 10: Innovation Index, 2023



Source: Indiana Business Research Center

5 Well-trained and educated workforce

Utah ranks third highest among states in 2023 for the share of adults aged 25-64 with postsecondary training, including trade and technical school training.[3] Utah's public system of higher education includes 16 public colleges and universities (two research universities, four regional universities, two comprehensive community colleges, and eight technical colleges).

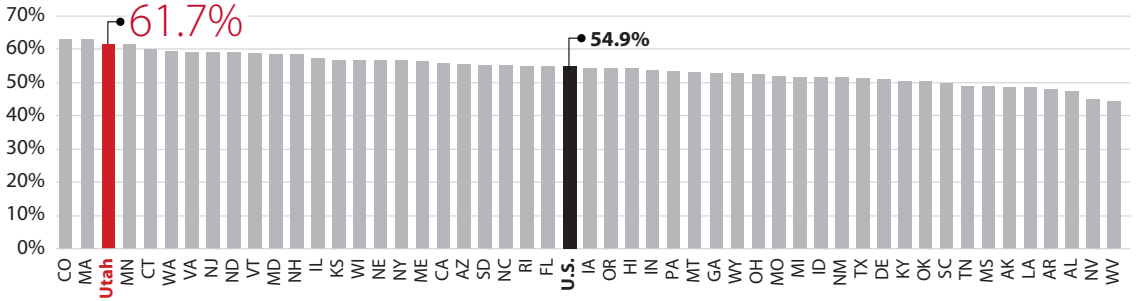
In recent years, Utah lawmakers advanced policies to make higher education more affordable, accessible, and efficient. They passed major reforms to streamline programs, including reinvesting dollars in high-performing programs, capping most bachelor's degrees at 120 credits, and authorizing three-year degree options and accelerated pathways. Together, these actions reduce time to degree, cut student costs, and better align programs with workforce demand.

The results of these and other actions speak for themselves. Utah's well-trained workforce meets the demands of a rapidly growing and changing economy. Utah simply could not be at the top of the economic leaderboard without skilled labor. Rapid technological advancement, the rise of artificial intelligence, and the growing need for career and technical education make a well-trained workforce even more essential.

Utah's well-educated workforce enables a citizenry capable of sustaining a diverse and resilient democracy. Thomas Jefferson famously stated, "Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government."[4] An educated citizenry empowers people with the attributes necessary to participate effectively in the democratic process and a well-functioning society.

Figure 11: Workforce Quality, 2023

Percentage of population ages 25 to 64 with a postsecondary credential



Note: Credentials include degrees, certificates, and high-value certifications.
Source: Lumina Foundation

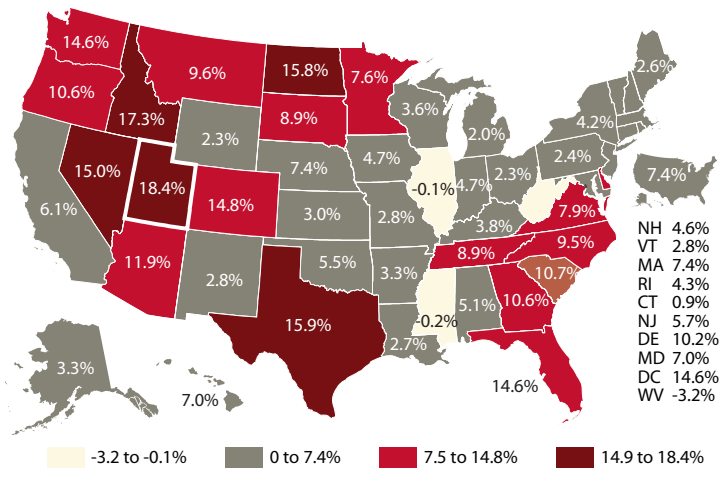
6 Nation's fastest growing and youngest population

In the 2020 Census, Utah's decadal population growth increased at a faster rate than any state in the nation. Over the decade, Utah's population increased by 18.4%, 2.5 times faster than the national increase of 7.4%. Utah's population growth remains strong, increasing by over 7% between 2020-2024.

While not without challenges, population growth provides a "demographic cushion" for the Utah economy. This happens in two major ways. First, businesses benefit from a growing consumer base and supply of labor. Second, a growing population contributes to productivity and economic dynamism by incubating and producing more and better ideas.

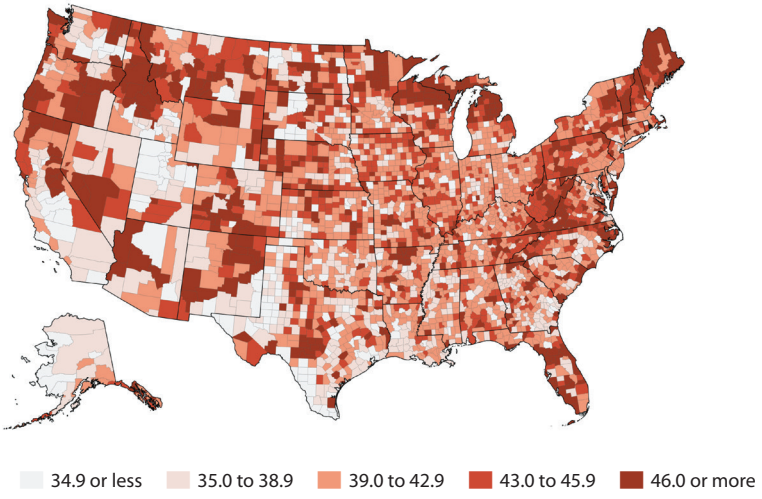
Utah also features the nation's youngest population. Utah's median age of 32.4 in 2024 ranked lowest in the nation and 6.7 years younger than the national average. Youthful populations provide three major benefits to the economy: they are healthier, less expensive, and more tech savvy than their older counterparts.

Figure 12: Population Percent Change, 2010-2020



Source: 2020 Apportionment Data, U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 13: Median Age by County, 2024



Note: Utah's median age of 32.4 ranks youngest in the nation. U.S. median age: 39.1
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

7 Nation-leading social cohesion

Economists often measure social cohesion through a concept known as social capital. Just like physical capital (e.g. public capital such as transportation, water, and utility infrastructure and private capital such as buildings and equipment) and human capital (e.g. a healthy, well-trained and educated population) produce economic value, so does social capital.

Social scientists define social capital as society's ability to form networks of support and mutual cooperation that benefit the individual and the community. A form of civic virtue, social capital includes established networks of trust, institutional effectiveness, goodwill, and fellowship.

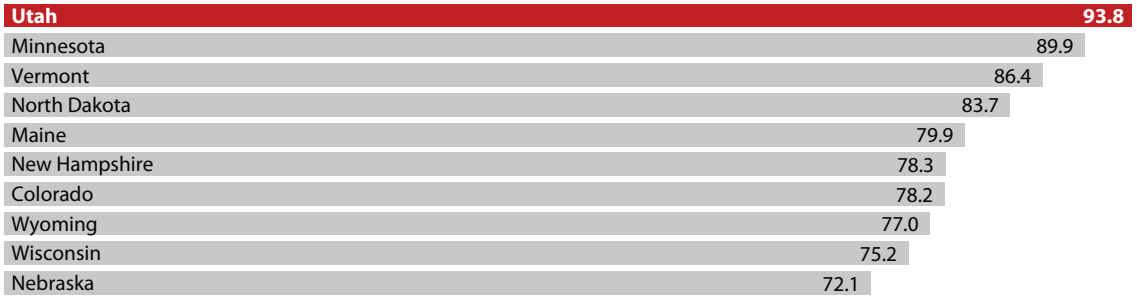
The Utah Foundation assembled over 30 measures related to social capital in the broad categories of family structure, community participation, and economic mobility. Utah exhibited the highest level of social capital in 2021 among the states.

According to the Utah Foundation, "High levels of social capital are associated with better resource allocation and social cohesion, accelerated economic development and mobility, improved education and health outcomes, stronger community engagement and disaster resilience, and reduced reliance on government services."[5]

> *"Utah is a bit like Sweden might be if it were run by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce."*
>
> **– Megan McArdle, *"How Utah Keeps the American Dream Alive"***
> Bloomberg, March 28, 2017.

Figure 14: Social Capital, 2021

Social Capital Index, top ten states



Source: Utah Foundation

UTAH'S GROWTH AND CHANGE

The adage that it is harder to stay on top than to reach the top resonates. As Utah strives to maintain an enviable economic position among states, policymakers must also understand the dynamics and extent of Utah's rapid growth and change.

If you had to pick one word to describe Utah over the past three-plus decades, "growth" emerges as a top contender.

In 1990, Utah's population tallied over 1.7 million residents. Today, Utah is home to over 3.5 million people, more than doubling in 34 years.[6] From 1990 to 2024, Utah's annual average rate of population change increased 2.10%, more than twice the national rate of 0.93%.[7]

Said another way, the Utah of 2025 must provide food, water, housing, transportation, education, public safety, social services, recreation, and more to 1.8 million additional people than just three decades ago. That population equates to the current size of Davis, Salt Lake, and Weber counties combined.

Importantly, there is no new land for Utah to build houses on, no new water sources to draw from, no new airsheds, less agricultural lands to harvest from, and ever more people using largely fixed transportation corridors.

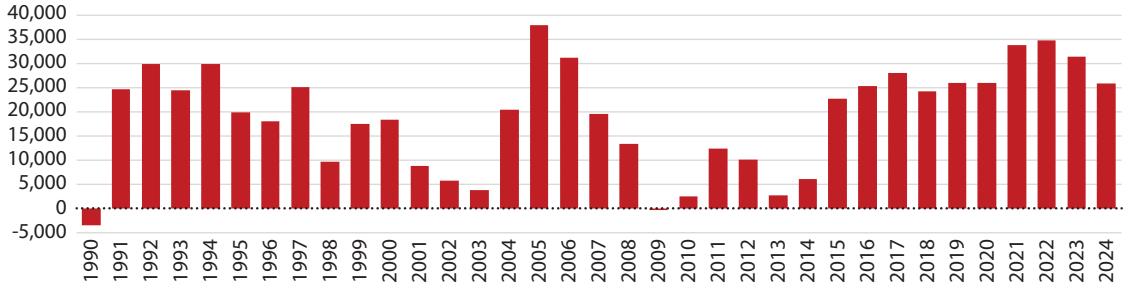
And, growth comes with a hefty price tag. As examples…

- Utah's state water agent estimates Utah faces $40 billion in future water infrastructure costs.[8]
- Utah's long-range transportation plan also identifies nearly $40 billion in unfunded transportation costs.[9]

Select Indicators of a Changing Utah

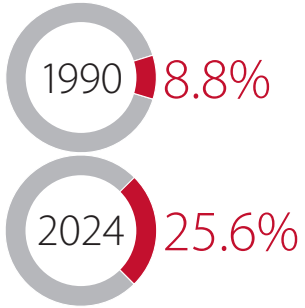
1. **Doubling –** Utah's population more than doubled in the past 34 years, increasing from 1.7 to 3.5 million Utahns.
2. **Twice the national rate –** Utah's population growth rate from 1990 to 2024 more than doubled the nation's.
3. **In-migration –** Utah experienced net in-migration in 33 of the past 35 years.
4. **Racial and ethnic makeup –** Utah's racial and ethnic minority population share increased from nearly one in 10 to one in four from 1990 to 2024.
5. **Declining fertility –** Utah's total fertility rate (a measure of births per woman) now ranks 10th highest in the nation.
6. **No longer LDS majority –** Utah ceased to be a majority LDS state in 2007

Figure 15: Utah Net Migration



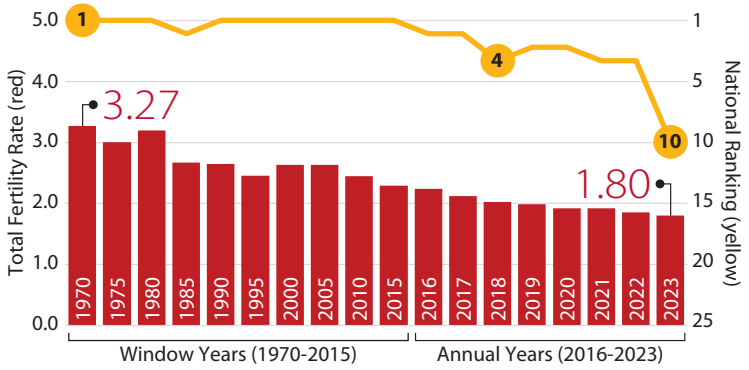
Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Figure 16: Utah Racial/ Ethnic Minority Population Shares, 1990 and 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 17: Utah Total Fertility Rate and Ranking



Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

Each year the state adds approximately 50,000 more people, a population about the size of Murray City. Utah demographers frequently share the phrase: "Growth is Utah's constant companion."

Net in-migration plays an increasingly dominant role in Utah's growth. Utah serves as a destination pulling people like a magnet from all 50 states and around the world. Utah has now experienced 33 of 35 years of net in-migration.[10]

Utah's only net out-migration during this period occurred in 1990, when an estimated 3,480 more Utahns moved out of Utah than moved in, and in 2009, when a mere 325 more people moved out than moved in. From 1990 to 2020, an estimated 671,000 more people moved into Utah than moved out. That's about the size of Utah's second-largest county (Utah County) at the time of the 2020 Census.

And while an estimated one in four of these migrants were born in Utah, they bring with them out-of-state experiences and sensibilities that contribute to a new Utah.[11] In a nutshell, the Utah most Utahns grew up in completely differs in size and composition.

We see evidence of these changes in Utah's racial and ethnic makeup. In 1990, racial and ethnic minorities comprised an estimated one in ten Utahns. Today, that number stands at more than one in four.

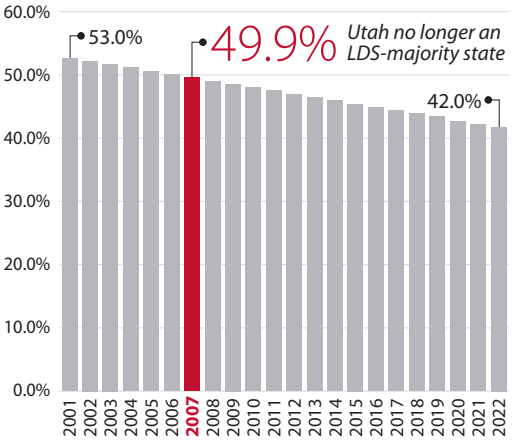
Utah's changing fertility patterns also indicate a rapidly changing state. In 1990, Utah's total fertility rate tallied 2.65 births per woman and ranked highest in the nation. Today, Utah's total fertility rate stands at 1.80 births per woman and ranks tenth in the nation.[12]

Utah's religious makeup is also changing. In 2007 the percent of Utahns who self-identified as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) dropped below 50% for the first time since the Mormon pioneers entered the Salt Lake Valley. At 42.0% in 2022, Utah is no longer an LDS majority state.

According to the U.S. Religion Census, from 2010 to 2020, other major faith traditions grew at a rapid pace, notably Muslim (408%), National Baptist Convention (106%), Buddhism/Theravada (80%), non-denominational Christian (68%), and Catholic (33%). The Hindu, Traditional Temples grew at the fastest rate, increasing from 50 to 2,500, a 4,900% growth. From a much larger base population, LDS adherants in Utah over the same period increased by 11%.

Figure 18: Utahns Who Self-Identify as LDS

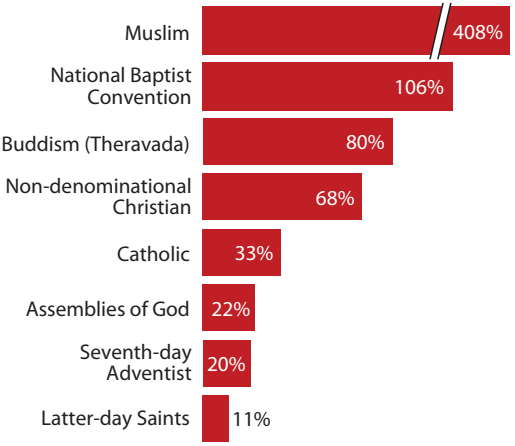
Share of population



Source: Cragun, R. T., Gull, B., & Phillips, R. (2023) Journal of Religion and Demography

Figure 19: Change in Utah Adherents by Major Religion

Percent change, 2010-2020



Source: U.S. Religion Census and Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

THE TROUBLING SEVEN

With an understanding of the scale and pace of growth and change occurring in Utah, many leaders ask the question, "How can Utah continue to grow and change and still maintain the attributes that make Utah great?" Of particular interest are seven troubling challenges currently facing Utah.

Frank Hachman, a distinguished Utah economist was known to say, "A successful state like Utah must be careful not to sniff its own fumes." This somewhat humorous and even colorful idiom contains a wise caution: Be careful not to be caught in an echo chamber of positivity that neglects very real challenges that threaten the future.

We call these challenges Utah's "Troubling Seven."

And while reasonable people may disagree about the right number of challenges and which challenges to include, we selected these seven challenges because of their impact on families, life quality, and future economic success.

Utah's Troubling Seven include housing affordability and homelessness, traffic congestion, third grade reading proficiency, higher education graduation rates, water and the Great Salt Lake, energy supply, and behavioral health.

1 Housing affordability and homelessness

Housing plays a critical role in a state's economic success. Housing not only provides shelter, but it also provides stability and security for families, serves as a major social indicator of a person's health and well-being, and functions as society's primary tool for wealth creation. To realize these benefits, housing must be accessible.

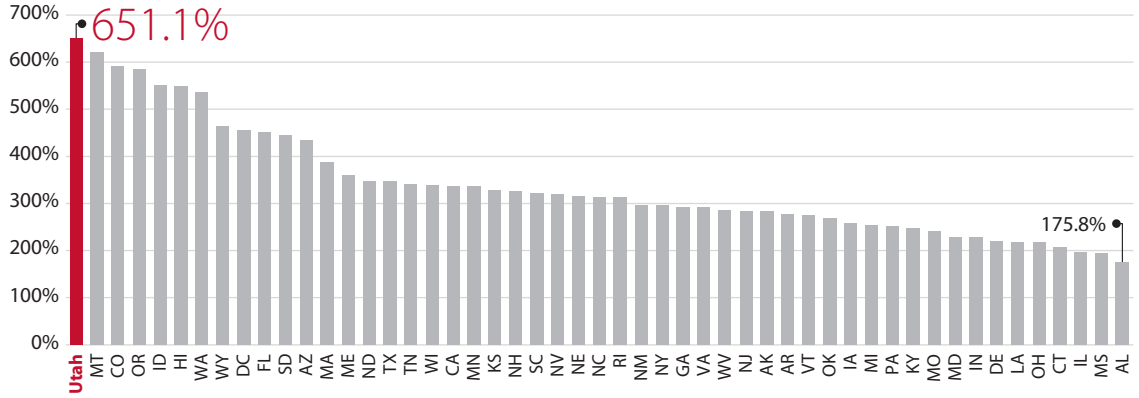
Utah's housing market is no longer affordable for new buyers and continues to appreciate rapidly. Utah's five largest counties currently rank seriously to severely unaffordable according to the median-multiple ratio, a common measure of housing affordability that compares the median sales price of a home to the median household income.[13]

From 1991 to 2024, Utah led the nation in price growth as measured by the percent increase in Federal Housing Finance Agency's (FHFA) housing price index. The quarterly median sales price in Utah of a single-family home for second quarter 2025 ranked tenth highest in the nation at $525,000.

While providing wealth to current homeowners, Utah's expensive housing market denies or significantly delays a whole cohort of (mostly younger) Utahns' access to home ownership and wealth accumulation. Unaffordable housing also constrains economic growth by constraining labor availability.

Figure 20: Housing Price Growth

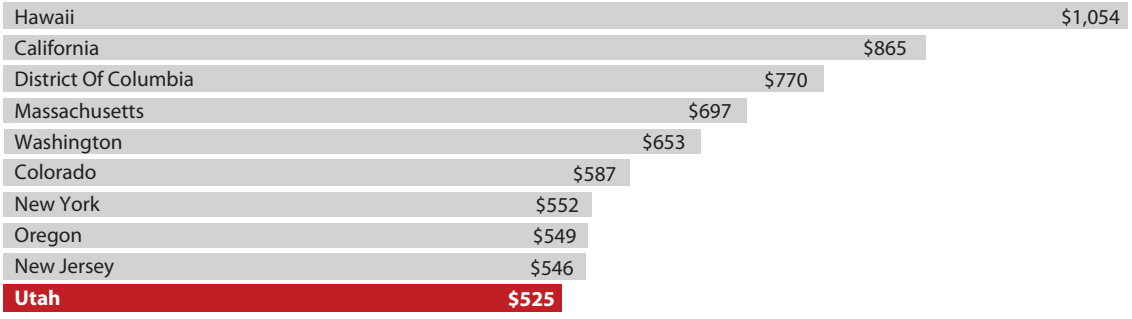
Percent increase in FHFA's housing price index, 1991-2024



Source: Federal Housing Finance Agency Housing Price Index

Figure 21: U.S. Ten Most Expensive Housing Markets

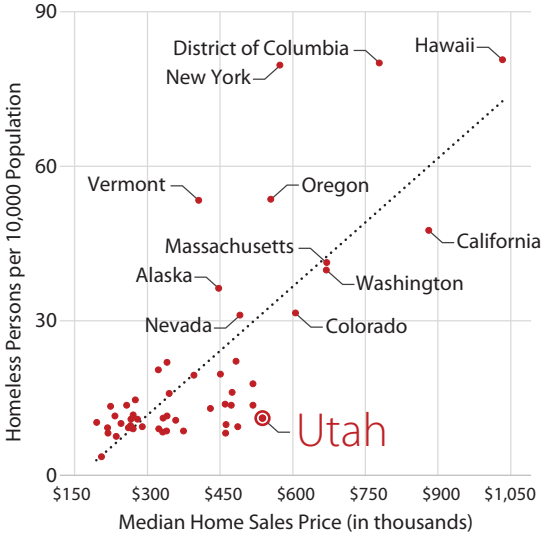
Quarterly median sales price of single-family home, in thousands, 2025 Q2



Source: National Association of Realtors

Figure 22: Homeless Rates and Home Prices, 2024

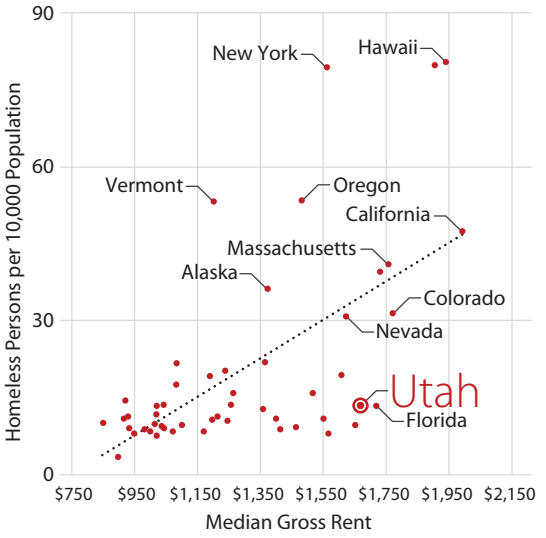
States with higher home prices tend to have higher homelessness rates



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, National Association of Realtors

Figure 23: Homeless Rates and Rents, 2024

States with more expensive rent tend to have higher homelessness rates



Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, National Association of Realtors

Analysts also observe a positive correlation between home prices and rental rates and rates of homelessness.[14]

The 2025 Utah Office of Homeless Services Annual Data Report included sobering findings[15]:

- **New record** – The number of homeless Utahns in 2025 surged to its highest level ever.
- **Rapid increase** – The 2025 point-in-time count identified approximately 4,600 homeless Utahns, an 18% increase from the prior year.
- **Children** – Children now make up 14% of Utah's homeless population.
- **First time homeless** – A total of 10,261 individuals in Utah experienced homelessness for the first time, an increase of 5%.

As added perspective, Utah's homelessness rate of 13 per 10,000 people remains well below the 2024 national rate of 23 per 10,000.

2 Traffic congestion

Mid-sized states and metros like Utah and Salt Lake City offer tremendous quality of life appeal. Among others, the ability to travel from one destination to another without spending significant time stuck in traffic offers one of the most attractive features. Unfortunately, congestion in Utah continues to rise at worrisome levels impairing the life quality of many Utahns.

The Utah Department of Transportation tracks delay on interstates, highways, and arterials. They measure delay as the difference between actual travel time and free-flow travel time.

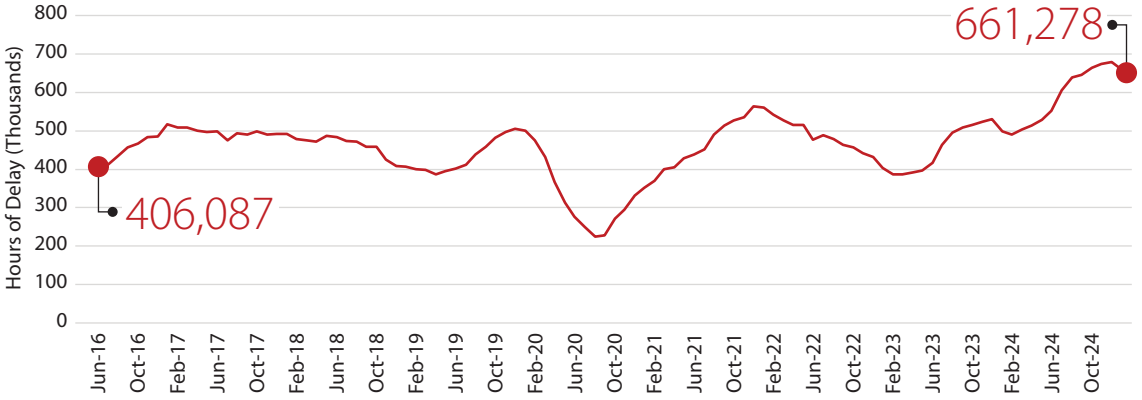
While significant variation occurs in the month-to-month indicators, delay on Utah roads increased on a six-month moving average from 406,087 hours in June 2016 to 661,278 hours in January 2025, a 5.9% annual average rate of change. That's nearly four times faster than Utah's current rate of population growth.

Notably, current delay (again measured as a six-month moving average to adjust for fluctuations) of over 660,000 hours stands at record levels and includes a significant upward trend since winter of 2024.

Perhaps no congestion indicator sounds the alarm bells more than the ability to travel up Little and Big Cottonwood Canyons in Salt Lake County. Taming the "red snake" as locals call it – the miles-long line of red taillights – remains an unsolved Utah challenge that affects tens of thousands of Utahns and visitors each year.

Figure 24: Delay on Utah Roads

Hours of delay, six-month moving average



Source: Utah Dept. of Transportation

3 Public education – third grade reading

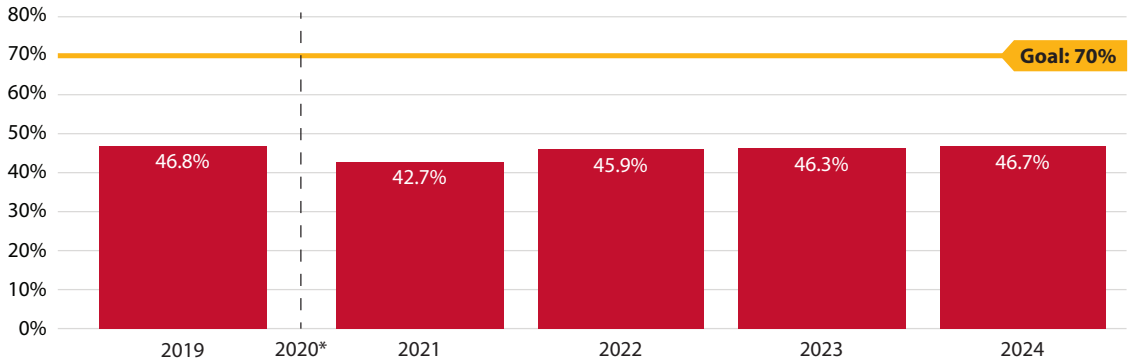
Third grade reading proficiency serves as a leading indicator for future educational success. During this crucial year, students transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Students who struggle with reading in third grade often fall behind in subsequent years. Many never receive a high school diploma, severely limiting career opportunities and earning potential.

The Utah Legislature recognizes the importance of third grade reading and in 2022 established in statute a statewide goal of 70% third grade reading proficiency by 2027.[16] The bill requires many interventions, including, but not limited to the following:

- Adoption of evidence-based "science of reading" curriculum and instruction in all schools
- Professional development in early literacy for all K-3 teachers
- Literacy coaches for schools with low literacy achievement
- Diagnostic assessments
- Creation of a repository of evidence-based strategies for schools and teachers to use

Unfortunately, third grade reading proficiency remains below 50%. In 2024, 46.7% of Utah third graders scored proficient on the Readiness, Improvement, Success, Empowerment (RISE) test, falling well short of the state's goal.

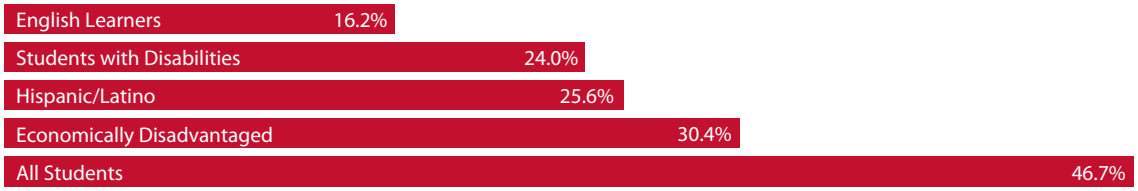
Figure 25: Utah 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency



* Data for 2020 unavaliable due to pandemic.
Note: The share of third graders scoring proficient on the RISE reading test.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

Figure 26: Utah 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

By student category, 2024



Note: The share of third graders scoring proficient on the RISE reading test.
Source: Utah State Board of Education

Reading outcomes also show wide variations by race and ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, and English learners. Less than one-third (30.4%) of socio-economically disadvantaged students read at grade level.

Among race and ethnic groups, results range from 53.9% proficiency for the White population to 18.1% for the American Indian population. Utah's Hispanic population – the state's second-largest racial/ethnic category with 21.6% of Utah's population under age 18 in 2024 – shows reading proficiency of 25.6%.

Similar variations occur geographically, ranging from 66.8% proficiency in the Park City School District to 29.4% in the San Juan School District.

These low proficiencies signal trouble ahead.

4 Higher education – graduation rates

Utahns with higher educational attainment benefit from increased earnings, higher economic mobility, better health, and an improved life outlook.[17] Far too many Utah students fail to finish their formal schooling and obtain the benefits conferred by a degree and the associated skill and knowledge development.

Utah's higher education enrollment rate (measured as the share of Utah high school graduates who enroll within three years) has fallen in two of the past three years, dropping from 65.1% in 2021 to 62.4% in 2024.

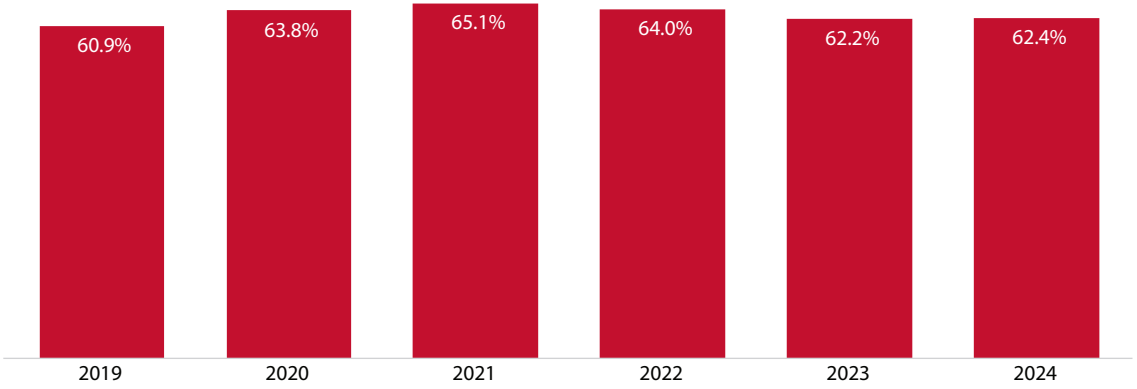
Even more, Utah's completion rates significantly lag other states. Six-year completion rates for the 2018 cohort show Utah at 57.5%, ranking Utah 37th among states.

"Meeting this moment demands the most well-trained and well-educated workforce in human history. Utah must be ready."

- Taylor Randall
President, University of Utah

Figure 27: Utah Higher Education Enrollment Rate

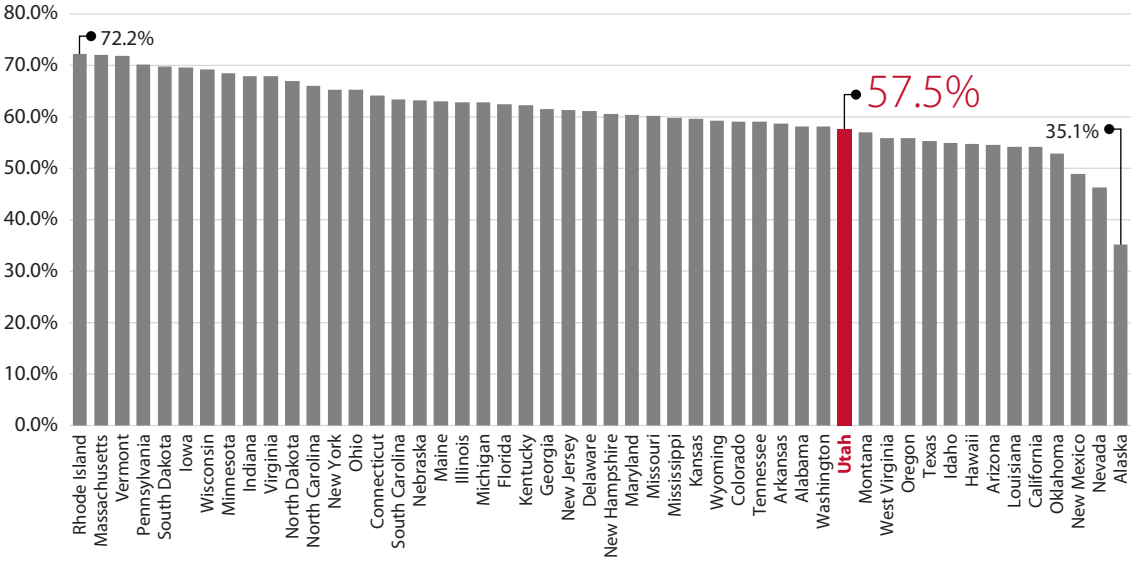
Share of Utah High School Graduates who Enroll in College within 3 Years, 2019-2024



Note: Includes USHE, in-state private, and out-of-state institutions.
Source: Utah System of Higher Education

Figure 28: Higher Education Completion Rates

Six-year, degree-granting, 2018 cohort



Source: National Student Clearinghouse Center

Within the state, completion rates at Utah's public degree-granting institutions range in 2024 from highs of 69% at Snow College and 65% at the University of Utah to a low of 36% at Utah Tech University. Half of Utah's eight degree-granting institutions report completion rates below 50% – Salt Lake Community College, Utah Tech University, Utah Valley University, and Weber State University.

Low graduation rates pose a particularly daunting challenge because of the profound and unrelenting economic changes occurring in our world right now. The economic transition from an analog, industrial economy to a digital, knowledge economy, demands a well-trained and educated populace. States that fail to offer an attractive labor force will be left behind.

"Today's leaders are stewards of this great state. The future is watching."

- Clark Ivory
Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute
Advisory Board Member

5 Water and Great Salt Lake

Great Salt Lake confers substantial economic, environmental, and life quality benefits to Utah, the nation, and the world. Lower water levels put at risk the benefits created by the lake and threaten Utah's long-term economic, ecological, and human health.

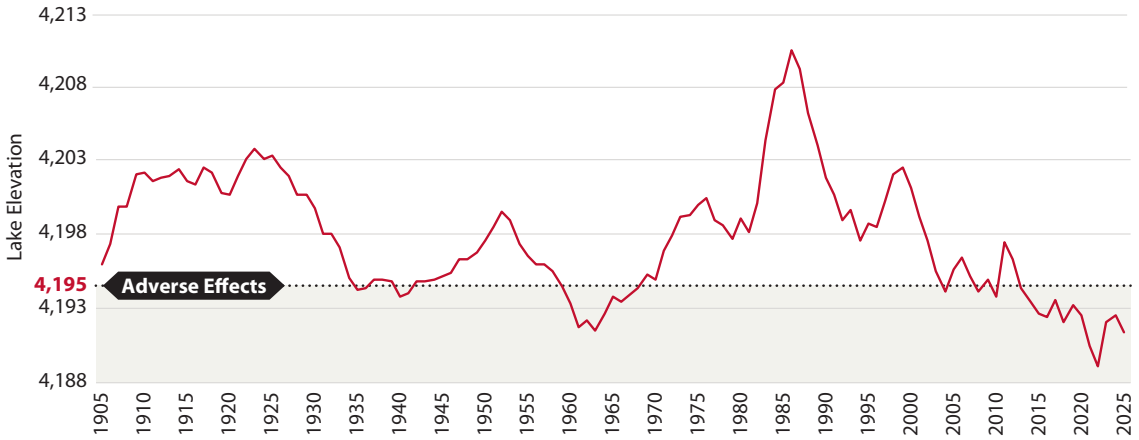
The current elevation of Great Salt Lake remains in what the state categorizes as "adverse effects," where the level negatively impacts the ecosystem, mineral production, recreation, and human health.

State leaders understand the challenge and continue to make substantial progress. The governor, Legislature, water professionals, and researchers have put in place the data, resources, policies, and organizational structure to return the lake to healthier levels. The Utah Legislature changed state water law, invested in new infrastructure and conservation projects, and enacted data-informed regulations on mineral extraction. But more must be done. Wise stewardship of Great Salt Lake requires even greater levels of investment, behavioral change, and collaboration from government, industry, and the public.

Great Salt Lake represents one of Utah's greatest international and national reputational risks, especially as the state approaches the 2034 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Figure 29: Great Salt Lake Water Level

South arm water-year-end elevation



Note: The causeway berm closed in 1966. Data for 2025 is for September 7, 2025
Source: US Geological Survey historical elevation at Saltair Boat Harbor and Saline, Utah

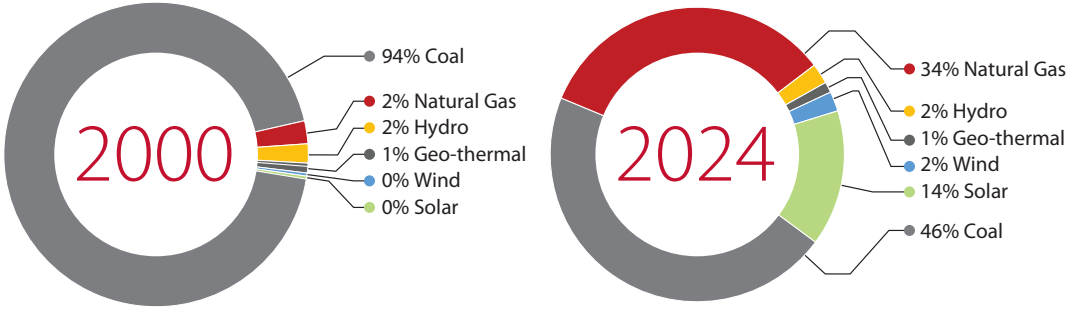
6 Energy supply

Utah leaders endorse a smart, any-of-the-above energy strategy focused on reliable, dispatchable, and affordable supply. Natural gas weighs prominently in Utah's current electric generation mix with 24% of the total. State leaders also recognize the value of clean, renewable energy as part of Utah's diverse energy mix. Solar now contributes approximately 14% of Utah's total electric generation.

Energy experts warn that Utah, like other places, may experience an energy deficit because of increased power demand and constraints on supply. Electricity generation in Utah hit a 27-year low in 2023 (33,497 GWh) and generation and consumption for the past two years approximately equal each other after more than two decades of surplus. Four major factors contribute to energy supply concerns:

- **Population and economic growth** – Utah's population and economy significantly outpace the national average. In 2024 Utah's population increased by 1.5% compared to the national rate of 1.0%. Similarly, in the same year, Utah's economy as measured by GDP increased by 4.5%, compared to a 2.8% increase nationally.
- **Electrification** – Society continues to electrify, particularly in the transportation sector as demand for electric and hybrid vehicles grows. A rigorous study by the U.S. Department of Energy's primary national laboratory found that widespread electrification will likely lead to 20% to 38% increases in U.S. electricity consumption by 2050.[18] Utah will likely follow a similar pattern.

Figure 30: Utah Net Generation Mix



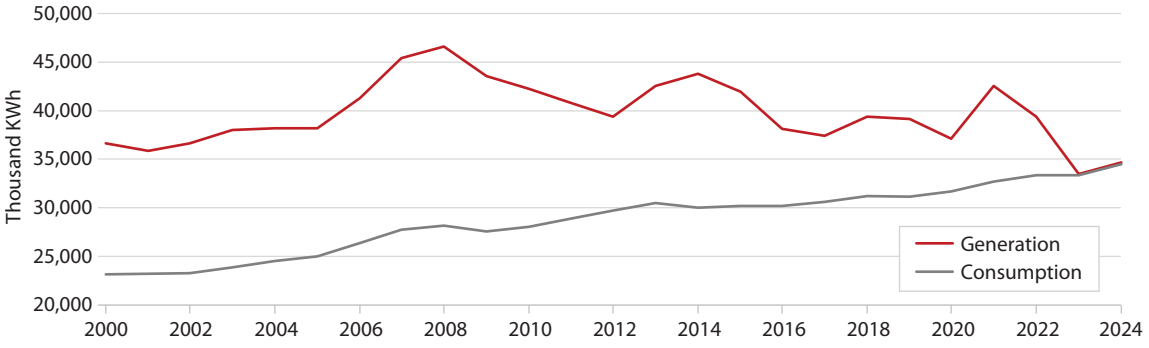
Source: Utah Geological Survey, U.S. Energy Information Administration

- **Artificial intelligence** – Analysts expect energy-intensive industries and artificial intelligence (AI) to transform the energy sector in the coming decade. A recent report by the International Energy Agency projected that global electricity demand from data centers will more than double by 2030, reaching approximately 945 terawatt-hours. This slightly exceeds the entire electricity consumption of Japan, the world's fifth-largest economy. The U.S. will account for approximately half of this growth.[19]
- **Baseload retirement** – Energy-generating plants capable of providing 24/7 electricity continue to be retired. Global Energy Monitor, a nonprofit organization focused on tracking energy infrastructure, estimates that approximately 780 coal units globally have retired since 2000.[20] Utah leaders desire to maintain baseload electricity generation. They worked with the state's major investor-owned utility to extend the life of the Hunter and Huntington Power Plants in Emery County. Utah state leaders are also exploring opportunities to keep the coal-fired Intermountain Power Plant in Millard County functioning.

In 2024, Gov. Cox unveiled Operation Gigawatt, an initiative to double Utah's power production over the next ten years from 34,684 GWh in 2024 to 69,268 GWh in 2034. Plans call for increasing investment in transmission capacity, developing new energy production, and investing in innovation and research.

Utah's diverse energy and mineral portfolio sets Utah apart from other states. Utah faces an exciting opportunity to harness the state's energy strengths in fossil fuels, nuclear, geothermal, wind, solar, salt/hydrogen storage, critical minerals, and other assets to support Utah's long-term prosperity.

Figure 31: Utah Electricity Supply and Demand



Source: Utah Geological Survey, U.S. Energy Information Administration

7 Behavioral health

Utah, like places all around the country, faces a growing behavioral health crisis. State leaders feel a sense of urgency to create a more equitable, aligned, and effective behavioral health system in Utah.

Utah's Behavioral Health Master Plan guides state efforts to serve Utahns suffering from mental health and substance use disorders. The plan makes clear the many behavioral health challenges facing Utah:[21]

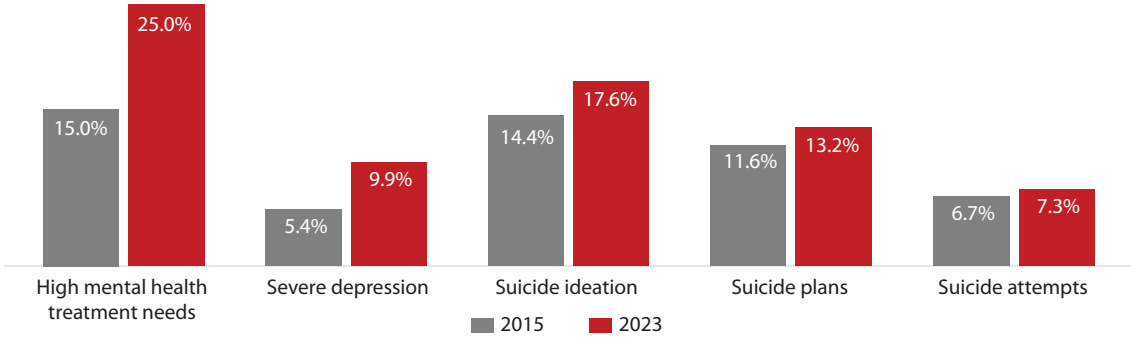
- Utah ranks 11th highest among states in the share of adults with any mental illness.
- The share of Utah young adults with poor mental health more than doubled in the past 10 years.
- Utah ranks 3rd highest for adults with serious mental illness, and 4th highest for adults with serious thoughts of suicide.
- And perhaps most troubling, the share of Utah middle and high school students with mental health needs is rising for a variety of salient indicators.

By addressing these and other behavioral health challenges, Utah can limit significant human suffering and loss, crime, lost productivity, and other individual and societal costs.

The Troubling Seven demand urgent attention. This urgency creates an imperative to act.

Figure 32: Utah Youth Mental Health Indicators

Share of Utah middle and high school students with select mental health needs



Note: Survey responses include students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12.
Source: Student Health and Risk Prevention: Prevention Needs Assessment Survey. Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health

INSIGHTS AND IDEAS

On Monday, February 26 and March 19, 2034, when the last applause occurs and the Olympic flame dims at the 2034 Olympic and Paralympic Closing Ceremonies, what will the world have experienced, observed, and learned about the Beehive State?

It's a rousing question with an even more pointed follow-on question:

How can Utah leverage the spotlight and deadline of the 2034 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games to sustain Utah's elite economy in the face of rapid change and mounting challenges?

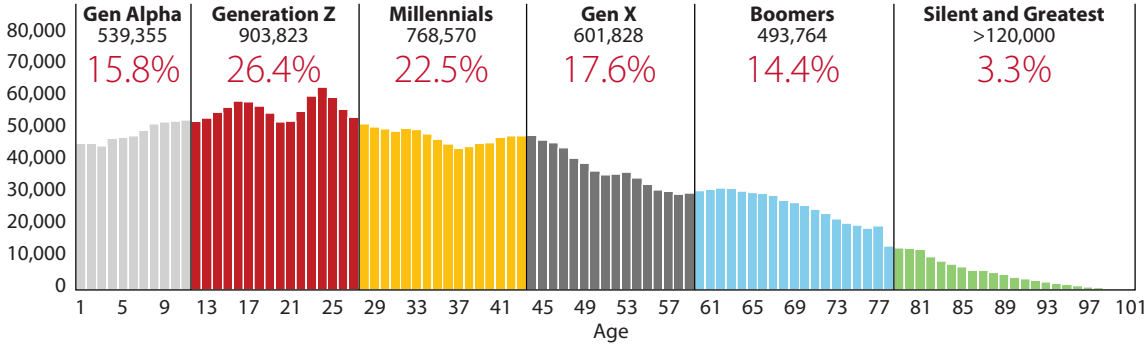
Utahns hold the answer to that question in the individual and collective actions taken between now and 2034. It's helpful to consider several insights and ideas.

INSIGHTS

The Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute offers four overarching insights to help guide Utah and leverage the Games during this period of prosperity, fast-paced change, and troubling challenges.

- **Lead with dignity** – We live during a time of significant polarization and mean-spirited, sometimes even violent, expression and actions. Too often contempt, in all its forms, permeates public policy discussions and prevents progress. To make full use of the intelligence, creativity, ingenuity, and love that have always been the authors of great human achievements, we must infuse greater dignity into our lives. When we treat others with contempt it makes it difficult to prevent and solve problems. When we treat each other with dignity – speaking respectfully, listening carefully, asking for more information, focusing on facts – our differences enrich us, inform us, guide us, and exalt us. This is not only true in public policy, but also in our families, workplaces, communities, and country. Utah will be advantaged if we lead with dignity.[22]
- **Capitalize on Utah's youth** – Today's difficult challenges will benefit from youthful courage, vigor, and imagination. One of Utah's most distinctive characteristics is its youthfulness. At 42%, a higher proportion of Utahns are in the Gen Z generation (born from 1997 to 2012) and Gen Alpha generation (born from 2013 to 2024) than any other state. Nationally, these generations tally 30% of the population. Whether it is youth volunteerism, service corps, educational opportunities, or other forms of youth engagement, Utah would do well to tap into Utah's young changemakers.[23] Think of it like a youthquake.

Figure 33: Generations in Utah, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 Population Estimates

- **Focus on long-term community goals** – While this monograph focuses on state-level trends and issues, life occurs within communities. Communities form the building blocks of statewide success. Every community in Utah will benefit from setting and pursuing long-term community goals. A great starting point is an assessment of each community's Magnificent Seven and Troubling Seven, as well as a review of the pace and direction of change. By engaging in long-term reflection and community engagement, each of Utah's 29 counties and 255 cities and towns will seize their Olympic moment and add up to a statewide success.

- **Catalyze private investment** – Utah's private sector comprises 89% of the Utah economy as measured by GDP. Intractable societal challenges like Utah's Troubling Seven scream for private sector innovation. As former Utah Senate President Wayne Neiderhauser once said, "It took me five years to figure this out, but I've concluded that most solutions come from outside of government."

  As an example, Utah can catalyze private innovation and investment by creating an impact fund. Impact funds seek to generate both a beneficial societal impact *and* a positive financial return. Limited partnerships and philanthropists invest in these funds to spur innovation and serve the common good. The Sorenson Impact Institute at the University of Utah specializes in impact investment and could sponsor and lead this fund, while simultaneously training thousands of colleges students to become the next generation of leaders in global finance from right here in Utah.

IDEAS

In addition to these insights, seizing Utah's Olympic-sized opportunity will require well-crafted and complementary ideas combined with the leadership and wherewithal to turn ideas into action.

As a starting point, the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute offers seven consequential ideas associated with each of the Troubling Seven. These ideas serve as a conversation starter for a statewide dialogue that will benefit from more ideas, large and small. Utah's public policy table will then become "bigger and rounder" as ideas are explored, developed, heard, debated, prioritized, and implemented.

Let's begin the conversation!

STARTING SEVEN

Starting point for a statewide dialogue:

1 **Housing Affordability**
Create statewide community land trust.

2 **Traffic Congestion**
Prioritize connected autonomous vehicles.

3 **Third Grade Reading**
Place a reading pro in K-3 classrooms.

4 **Higher Education Graduation Rates**
Expand catalyst centers into SLC.

5 **Great Salt Lake**
Conserve 250 KAF to 500 KAF annually.

6 **Energy Supply**
Invest in a state energy research fund.

7 **Behavioral Health**
Align behavioral health efforts and investments with Utah's strategic plan.

1

Housing Affordability

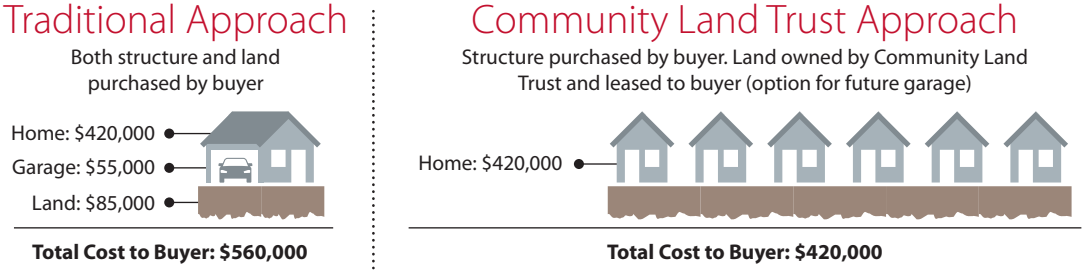
Create statewide community land trust

Community land trusts offer a quick and effective way to lower housing costs. A state-wide community land trust would do the following:

- **Land donations** – Accept land for affordable housing from public, private, and nonprofit entities, including state agencies (e.g. Utah Department of Transportation), federal land within municipal boundaries, municipalities, school districts, special service districts, faith institutions, and philanthropic organizations.
- **Long-term ground lease** – Separate the land and building ownership with a long-term (usually 99 years), renewable ground lease.
- **Pricing and debt savings** – Remove the per-unit land cost from the pricing and permanent debt.
- **Deed restrictions** – Deed restrict the land to affordable housing (such as a small cottage home with no garage) and include resale restrictions to keep homes affordable across generations.

As an illustration, 20 acres of deed-restricted land with a land value of $500,000 per acre developed at 6 dwelling units per acre, no garage (but an option for one in the future), and reasonable building requirements would yield 100 units (on a net buildable acre adjusted basis) with an estimated per unit savings of $140,000 ($85,000 for the cost of land and $55,000 by eliminating the garage). This means a $560,000 home would sell for $420,000, representing a substantial savings to a buyer and accelerating home ownership for thousands of Utahns.

Figure 34: Illustrative Example of a Statewide Community Land Trust



Source: Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute

2 Traffic Congestion

Prioritize connected autonomous vehicle advancements

Utah transportation leaders made the decision in the early 1990s to place fiber conduit under every new transportation project. While today this seems like an obvious choice, three decades ago it was an act of faith. Fast forward to today and Utah is the only state with a connected signal system. Even more, the fiber under Utah roads will facilitate Utah's emergence as a leader in connected autonomous vehicles.[24] Expected benefits include convenience, efficiency, and safety. When you combine Utah's connected autonomous vehicle readiness with record levels of investment in the state's multi-modal system (roads, transit, and active) – including over $24 billion and 2,616 projects in Utah's current State Transportation Improvement Program – Utah will be on the move.

3 Third Grade Reading Proficiency

Place a reading pro in K-3 classrooms

A review of education literature reveals an effective early literacy intervention — put reading pros in classrooms.[25] Paraprofessionals, in classroom with low literacy rates, would focus on reading—delivering small-group lessons, practicing decoding and fluency, and reinforcing skills aligned with the science of reading. To be effective, paraprofessionals should complete targeted science of reading training before entering the classroom and collaborate closely with the students' teacher.

Having two adults in every classroom allows for both full-class coverage and individualized instruction—at a lower cost than hiring a second certified teacher or significantly reducing class size. It gives students access to high-impact tutoring with more time to read, more chances to get help, and more opportunities to build confidence.

Utah invested in research-backed approaches through LETRS training and statewide coaching. Adding trained reading paraprofessionals extends that investment—offering daily, embedded support where students need it most. Research shows that schools embedding trained reading assistants achieve stronger early literacy gains, especially for students needing the most support. Paraprofessional tutoring produces larger gains than parent or volunteer tutoring, tutoring during school hours yields greater impact than after-school programs, and reading tutoring is most effective when delivered in the early grades. And students who read proficiently by third grade are far more likely to succeed in later grades, avoid remediation, and graduate on time.

4

Higher Education Graduation Rates

Expand catalyst centers into Utah's capital city

The Salt Lake City School District (SLCSD) proposes a new career-oriented learning center called "Ignite Campus." Through innovative programs in health sciences, information technology, advanced manufacturing, and public service—as well as emerging fields shaped by industry and community need—the center will prepare students to take their next steps on college and career pathways that lead to family-supporting jobs and further education that will improve graduation rates.

As background, catalyst centers deliver advanced, industry-aligned career and technical programs to high school students. Built on the nationally recognized Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS) model launched in Blue Valley, Kansas in 2009, these centers enroll students part-time in real-world, project-based coursework co-designed with business, government, and nonprofit partners.

Utah programs include the Davis Catalyst Center, Wasatch CAPS, Provo CAPS, Park City's PCCAPS, Nebo CAPS, Basin CAPS, and the recently launched Cache CAPS serving Box Elder, Cache, Logan, and Rich school districts. State grant funding through HB 447 (2025) supported the launch of Cache CAPS and helps districts create or expand similar centers statewide.

The proposed Ignite Campus will equip learners not only with career-ready certifications and college credit, but also with the problem-solving skills, collaboration, and civic responsibility essential for success in the modern workforce and society. Designing the center as a regional hub would also open specialized pathways to students from surrounding and rural districts. Such an investment strengthens pipelines into high-demand industries and signals the state's commitment to innovative education and higher graduation rates across Utah.

5

Water and Great Salt Lake

Conserve 250 KAF to 500 KAF water annually

Great Salt Lake Commissioner Brian Steed frequently says, "We are all in this together." A healthy Great Salt Lake will require a suite of interventions from every Utahn. A "silver buckshot" approach includes water conservation (municipal, industrial, and agricultural), adaptive management of water within the lake, control of water-intensive invasive plant species, and policy tools to better manage water in wet and dry years.

A variety of tools exist to increase water conservation efforts by 250 to 500 thousand-acre-feet (KAF) annually from municipal, industrial, and agricultural sources. Some of the more promising conservation levers include the following:

- **Greater incentives** – Incentivize water rights holders to file change applications for conserved water to flow to the lake.
- **Secondary metering donations** – Dedicate a portion of conservancy district conserved water from secondary metering to the lake via change applications.
- **Pricing** – Utilize market forces to better align supply and demand. Economists estimate that for every 10% increase in water rates, water consumption declines by 2.5%-7.5%.
- **Agricultural water leases** – Facilitate additional purchases of voluntary and temporary water leases that can be delivered to the lake from ranchers and farmers. The Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner compensates producers at market rates and adapts each lease to the needs of the producer (partial-season, single season, desired crop rotation or switches, and irrigation schedule).
- **Water donations** – Seek additional donations of water rights. Compass Mineral and Morton Salt donated 255,298 acre-feet of permanent water rights to the state as part of newly signed voluntary agreements. In addition, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints permanently donated 20,000 acre-feet (about the size of Little Dell Reservoir) to permanently flow into Farmington Bay.
- **Voluntary agreements** – Seek additional voluntary agreements. Four voluntary agreements with Compass Minerals, Morton Salt, North Shore Limited Partnership, and Earth's Elements ensure that these companies reduce water diversions at low lake levels.

By embracing a future-changing conservation mindset, Utah can return Great Salt Lake to healthy levels.

6

Energy

Invest in a state energy research fund

The simultaneous emergence of technological breakthroughs, high demand, and a favorable federal regulatory environment in Washington, D.C. has led some to call this "the energy decade." Utah possesses a full energy portfolio – oil, gas, coal, wind, solar, geothermal, and more – and faces a strategic opportunity to benefit from the increased focus on energy, especially at a time when many federal functions shift to states.

Utah already stands at the forefront of energy research, with expertise in geothermal, coal, and nuclear technologies. For example, the world's most advanced field laboratory for geothermal research is in Milford, Utah (the Frontier Observatory for Research in Geothermal Energy, otherwise known as FORGE.) FORGE develops, tests, and accelerates breakthroughs in enhanced geothermal systems technologies.

Utah Gov. Cox set a statewide goal through his Operation Gigawatt initiative to double Utah's power output by 2035. The plan explicitly promotes the development of advanced nuclear technologies, including small modular reactors (SMRs) and micro-reactors. The proposed energy research fund could help accelerate energy advancements in nuclear and other "all of the above" energy opportunities that serve Utah.

7

Behavioral Health

Align behavioral health efforts and investments with Utah's strategic plan

"The world doesn't need more ideas. It needs better execution of ideas."

This common management couplet applies to the state's behavioral health challenge. By aligning behavioral health efforts and investments with Utah's strategic plan, Utah can make measurable progress toward improving our behavioral health.

Behavioral health solutions require a multifaceted approach. The Utah Behavioral Health Commission, Utah's central authority for coordinating behavioral health initiatives, is developing a five-year strategic plan that addresses high-priority behavioral health issues for Utah. This plan will serve as a basis for aligning private and public payers, health systems, providers, other stakeholders, and policymakers to ensure that Utah's behavioral health systems are accessible, aligned, effective, and efficient.

The plan will include tactics and performance measures that reflect Utah's full continuum of behavioral health services and supports. These extend from prevention and reducing stigma, to emotional resiliency, to crisis/acute/stabilization services, to improving the availability of services and supports for individuals with serious and complex behavioral health needs and their families.

This unified approach can strengthen the system, improve coordination, reduce silos, and help ensure all Utahns have better behavioral health.

Figure 35: Utah's Continuum of Behavioral Health Services and Supports

Note: This continuum was developed as a part of the 2020 Roadmap for Improving Utah's Behavioral Health System and was used in the development of the Utah Behavioral Master Plan.
Source: Utah Hospital Association

UTAH CELEBRATES THE 2034 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES ANNOUNCEMENT

JULY 24, 2024

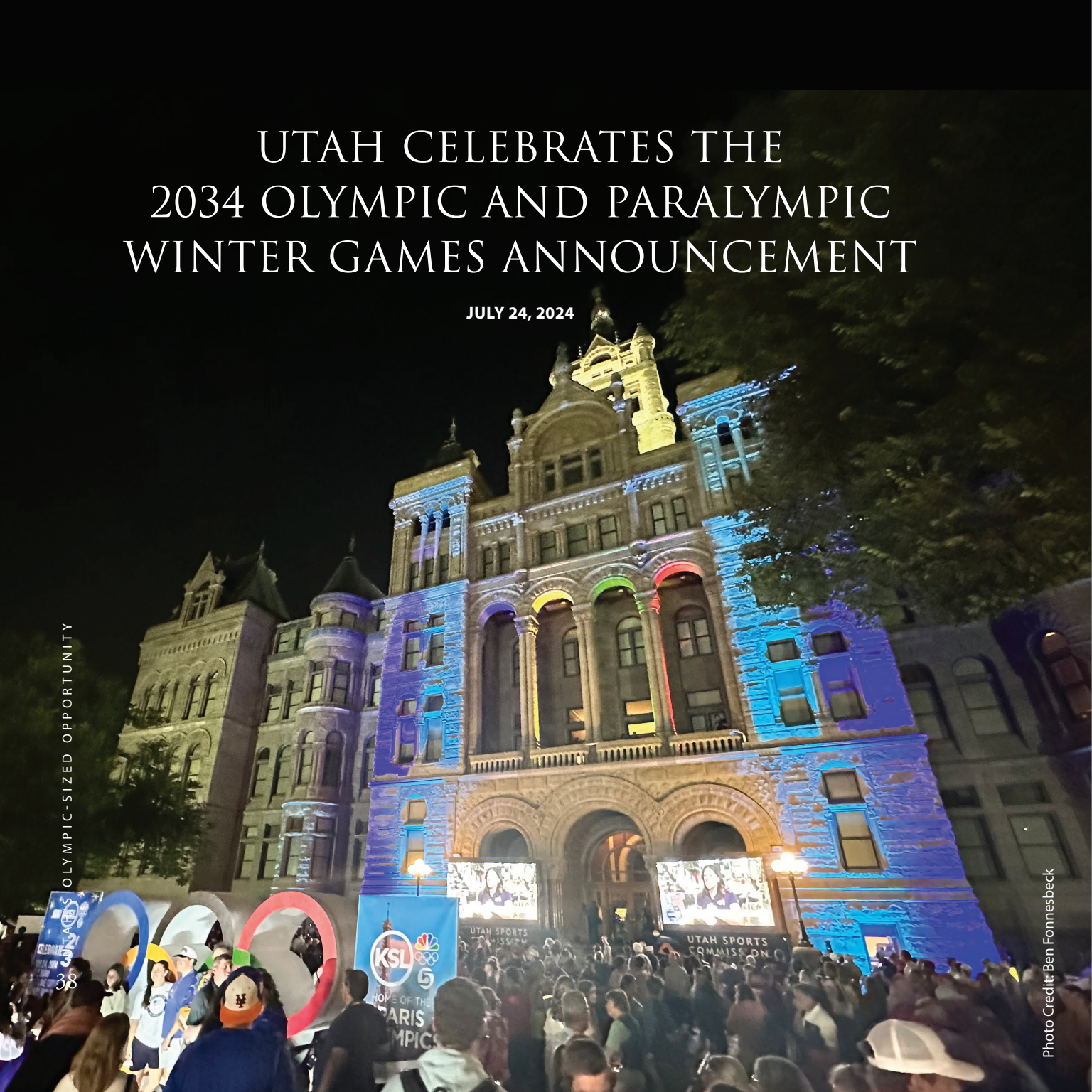


Photo Credit: Ben Fonnesbeck

AFTERWORD

In Spring 2024, the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute hosted an Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games panel that included current and past Olympic leaders, including Mitt Romney, Fraser Bullock, Lane Beattie, Rep. Jon Hawkins, and Sen. Mike McKell.

At a pivotal moment in the dialogue, Fraser Bullock, the president and CEO of the bid committee, emphasized two ways to approach the legacy of hosting the Games.

The first approach is "What do we get?"

The second, and more inspiring approach, is "What can we give?"

This call to service resonates with many Utahns, especially during this time of need.

Utah, along with other states and countries around the world, enters the next decade facing serious challenges, laced with uncertainty. Public unrest, international war and conflict, mental illness, social isolation, technological change/artificial intelligence, a changing climate, and more cause uneasiness and pain. We yearn for greater peace and togetherness.

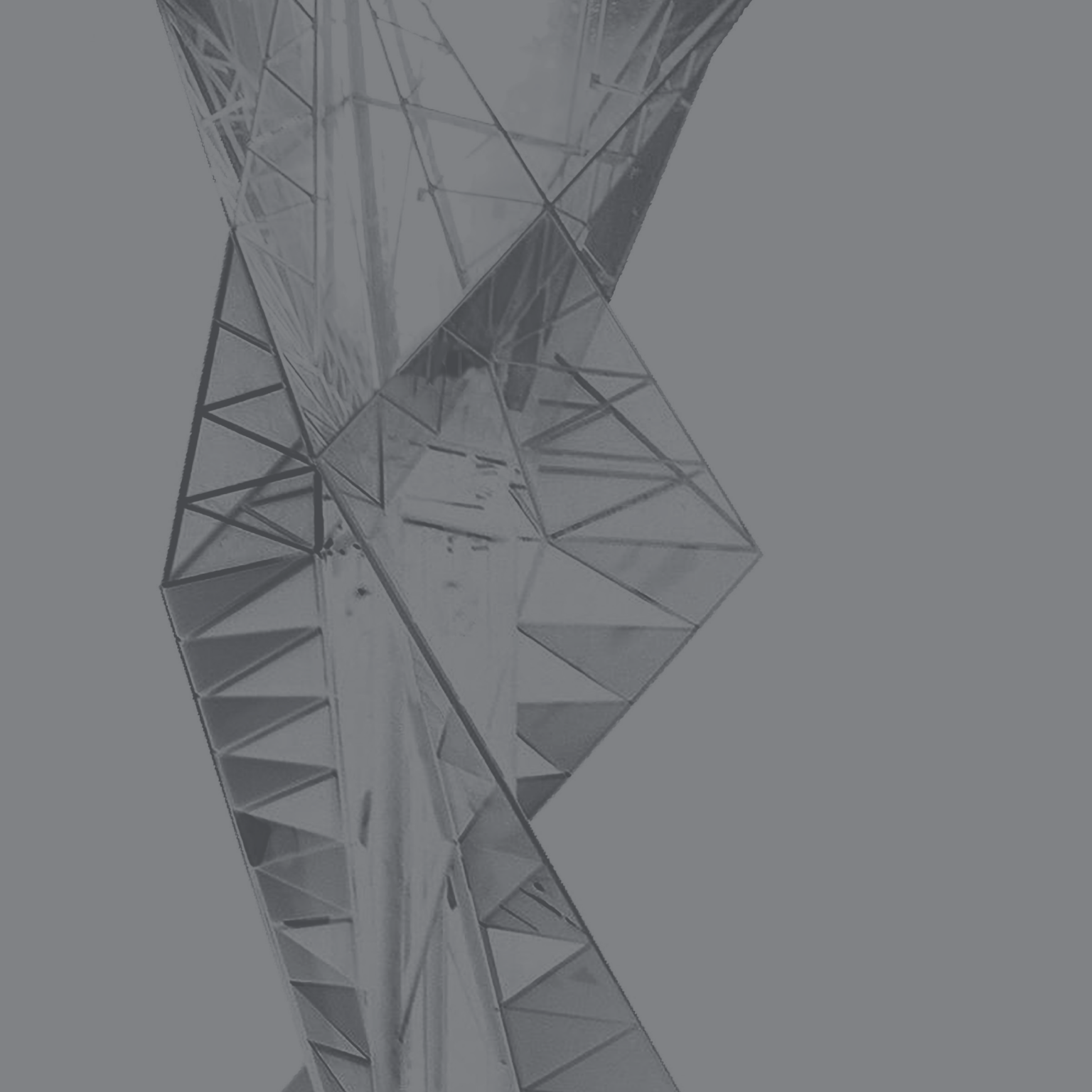
The English poet John Donne famously captured human connection, global citizenship, and the call to service when he wrote *No Man is an Island.* He said:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less…any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.[26]

The 2034 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games serve as a powerful catalyst to not only make Utah better, but the world better. This catalyzing Olympic pressure is Utah's Olympic-sized opportunity.

Endnotes

1. See detail in this monograph for the timeframe, measure, and source of these accomplishments.
2. The "Magnificent Seven" technology stocks in U.S. equity markets include Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Broadcom, Meta Platforms, Microsoft, and NVIDIA.
3. The measure used here is the share of adults with a post-secondary credential, including a certificate, certification, or degree.
4. Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Papers. See https://www.loc.gov/collections/thomas-jefferson-papers/articles-and-essays/selected-quotations-from-the-thomas-jefferson-papers/
5. Utah Foundation, "Foundations and Frameworks: A Primer on Social Capital and Why it Matters," p. 1, June 2025.
6. Utah Population Committee.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Comments made by Joel Ferry, BUILD Coordinating Council, July 22, 2025.
9. Utah's 2030-2050 Unified Transportation Plan. See https://unifiedplan.org/funding-the-plan/.
10. Utah Population Committee.
11. See "Keepers of the Flame: The New Utah," Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, October 2023.
12. Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute analysis of National Center for Health Statistics.
13. "State of the State's Housing Market: 2024-2025," James Wood, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, July 2025.
14. Other factors such as substance abuse disorder and behavioral health also play an important role.
15. 2025 Annual Data Report: Key Findings, Utah Office of Homeless Services, Department of Workforce Services, August 2025.
16. See S.B. 127 Early Literacy Outcomes Improvement, Sen. Ann Millner and Rep. Brad Last, 2022 General Session.
17. Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, The Benefits of Higher Education to Utah, February 2025.
18. See U.S. Department of Energy, National Renewable Energy Laboratory's most recent Electrification Futures Study at https://www.nrel.gov/news/detail/program/2018/analysis-demand-side-electrification-futures.
19. See Energy and AI, International Energy Agency, April 2025 at https://www.iea.org/news/ai-is-set-to-drive-surging-electricity-demand-from-data-centres-while-offering-the-potential-to-transform-how-the-energy-sector-works
20. See "Where Coal is Retiring, and Hanging On, In the U.S.," New York Times, February 6, 2025.
21. See Utah Behavioral Health Assessment and Master Plan, Utah Behavioral Health Coalition, January 2024.
22. The University of Utah partners with UNITE, an organization founded by Special Olympics Chairman and University of Utah Impact Scholar Dr. Timothy P. Shriver. Through this partnership, the university helped develop, assess, improve, and promote The Dignity Index, an eight-point scale designed by UNITE that measures what we do when we disagree. Learn more at www.diginity.us.com.
23. The One Utah Service Fellowship serves as a great example of engaging Utah's youth for the betterment of the state. Approved in the 2025 General Legislative Session, these fellowships place recent high school graduates from all backgrounds into service-oriented fellowships with local nonprofits, government agencies, and community organizations statewide. Eight Utah institutions of higher learning partner with the program, with over 600 fellows currently serving in 26 of Utah's 29 counties.
24. The authors make a distinction here between "autonomous vehicles" (analogous to a personal computer), and "connected autonomous vehicles" (analogous to a personal computer connected to the Internet).
25. See the following studies on reading improvements: Paraprofessional Instructional Assistants Raise the Reading Performance of Latina/o First Graders in a Low-Income District (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/07419325221134919?utm); The Effects of Paraeducator-Implemented Interventions on Student Literacy Skill Acquisition: A Review (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/07419325241234080?icid=int.sj-abstract.citing-articles.1&utm); and The Impressive Effects of Tutoring on PreK-12 Learning (https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w27476/w27476.pdf).
26. See https://allpoetry.com/No-man-is-an-island



UTAH'S NEXT OLYMPIC MOMENT

Kem C. Gardner
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