

# Utah County Community Assessment

# 2011

Executive Summary



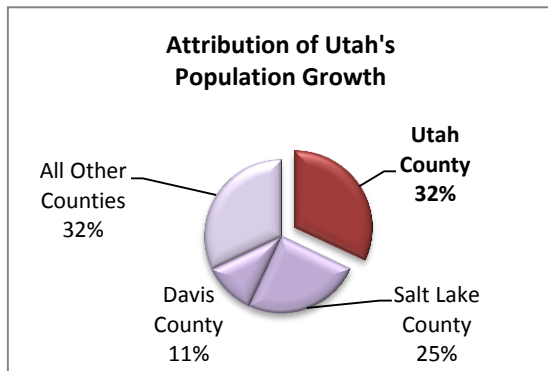
United Way  
of Utah County



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## Executive Summary

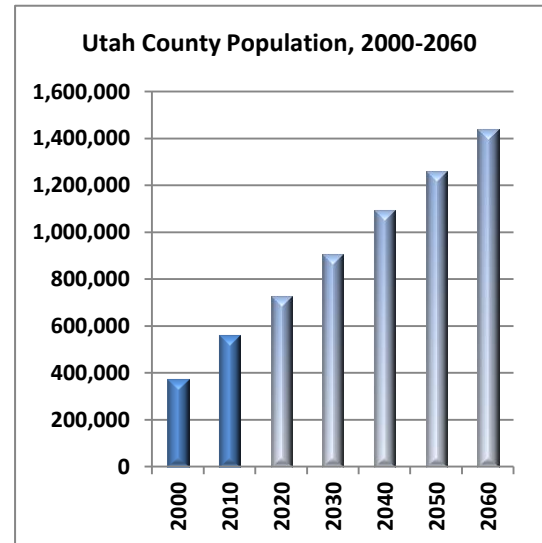
Utah County, situated just south of Salt Lake County in central Utah, is experiencing tremendous growth. Since 2000, the population has grown to nearly



550,000 residents—an increase of 47 percent: the fastest of any county in Utah. Indeed, of the total population increase in the state of Utah the past decade, nearly one-third is attributable to Utah County.

And this growth is expected only to continue. By 2040, Utah County's population will exceed 1 million, and by 2060 it will top 1.4 million residents. With rapid population growth comes economic development and opportunities for jobs, education, entrepreneurship, and cultural and social vitality. But rapid growth can also bring increased demands on infrastructure, education, healthcare, and human services.

In the fall of 2010, as the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century was coming to a close, a group of public and private human service providers in Utah County combined resources to complete this Community Assessment. Civicus Consulting Group, from Richmond, Missouri, was contracted to conduct the assessment, with particular emphasis on hard data as opposed to perceptions or opinions of community members, community leaders, or human service providers. Although invaluable



input from such groups was sought and provided, the core of this assessment is hard data.

In order to provide adequate context for this study, the assessment analyzes Utah County from two perspectives. First, it compares Utah County of today with the Utah County of the recent past; this approach allows trends to be identified. Second, it compares Utah County to other geopolitical units, most notably Salt Lake County and Davis County. Salt Lake County was selected because of its proximity to Utah County; Davis County was selected because of its demographic similarities with Utah County. However, for some data, comparisons are also made to the State of Utah and to national figures as well. In addition, some data is best compared by considering Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

This assessment is divided into three distinct sections: The Place, The People, and Looking Forward. The largest section—The People—is further divided into an Overview, followed by Education, Income, and Health. The final section—Looking Forward—provides projections from the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget, as well as projections calculated by

researchers at Civicus Consulting Group, to provide a glimpse into the possible Utah County of 2040. A companion Appendix with hundreds of data tables is presented as Volume II of this assessment.

After culling through this data, a number of observations can be made, among them

- **Utah County has tremendous assets.** Parks, recreation, cultural activities, public and private education, and access to outdoor activities abound.

Despite the area’s rapid population growth, crime has remained remarkably low, and public education indicators such as graduation rates, test scores, and educational attainment are remaining steady for the time being.

- **Utah County is experiencing growing pains.**

The skyrocketing population growth has significantly stressed certain elements of infrastructure, housing, education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and human services.

### Observations

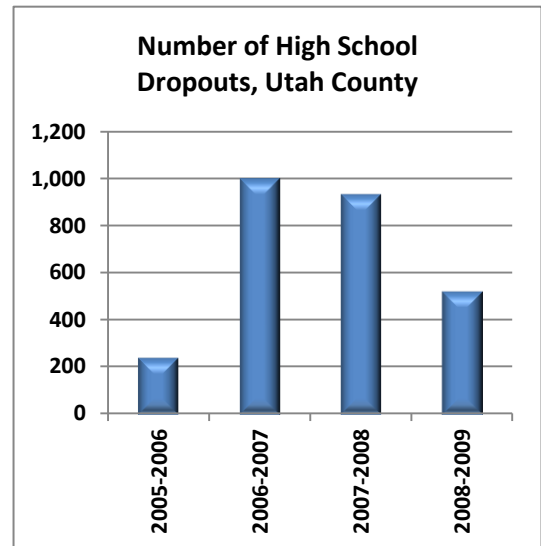
- *Utah County has **tremendous assets***
- *Utah County is experiencing **growing pains***
- ***Gaps in education, income, and healthcare** are more pronounced among low-income and minority populations*
- *Lack of **affordable housing** is a barrier that will exacerbate other problems for low- and moderate-income families*
- *Utah County is becoming **more cosmopolitan**, with all the accompanying pros and cons*

- **Affordable housing is lacking.** The rapid population growth, which has caused greater housing values as demand has increased, has combined with the recent worldwide economic downturn beginning in 2008 to squeeze lower- and lower-middle income individuals and families out of clean, safe, affordable housing.
- **Gaps in education, income, and healthcare are becoming more pronounced among low-income and minority populations.** As Utah County becomes more diverse, these gaps will become more pronounced, resulting in increased crime, higher unemployment, and greater reliance on welfare.
- **Utah County is becoming more cosmopolitan, with all the pros and cons that come with this metamorphosis.** With growth and prosperity comes a higher standard of living; however, this growth also damages sense of community and can bring increased crime, poor education, and other barriers to health and happiness.

### Education

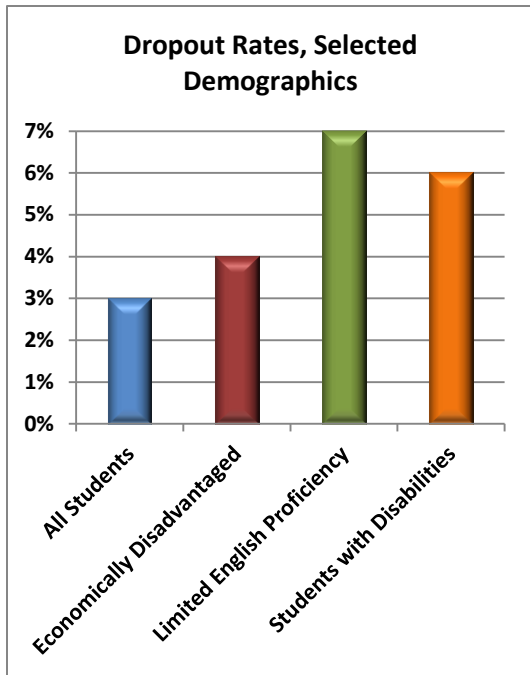
Utah County is well known for citizens with exceptionally high educational attainment. In almost every measurement, Utah County fares better than other counties throughout Utah when it comes to adults with post-secondary education.

However, in recent years the number of students who drop out of high school has increased dramatically. In 2006, just over 200 students dropped out of high school in Utah County. That number increase to slightly more than 1,000 to following year, and declined to about 950 in 2008 and 500 in 2009. Although the most recent numbers suggest a downward trend, the cumulative effect of this statistic is alarming: between 2006 and 2009, nearly 2,700 students have dropped out of high school. These residents are now more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system, more likely to be a victim of domestic violence, less likely to be gainfully employed, and more likely to be on welfare.



Gaps in educational attainment are more pronounced among the area's low-income, non-English-speaking, and disabled populations. While the overall dropout rate for Utah County is around 3 percent, the

rate for low-income students is about 4 percent. For those students who have

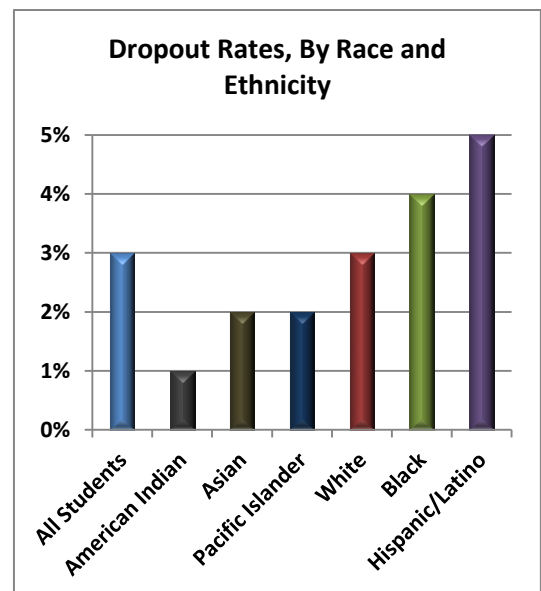


limited English proficiency, the dropout rate is the highest, at about 7 percent.

Utah County’s Hispanic students have a more difficult time staying in school and graduating from school than other racial or ethnic groups. This is not surprising, given that students with limited English proficiency are more likely to drop out of school than students with English proficiency. Hispanic or Latino students drop out of high school at nearly twice the rate of all students, at 5 percent. This compares to black students—the minority with the next highest dropout rate—at 4 percent. White students are on par with the average, at 3 percent; Asian and Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students at two

percent, while American Indians are the minority with the lowest dropout rate—1 percent.

With the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in Utah County, the ability of non-English-speaking students to be ready for school at age 5, stay in school, and graduate from school is of tremendous concern. Projections show that by 2040, nearly 20 percent of Utah County’s population will be Hispanic or Latino. Certainly the raw number of non-English-proficient students in Utah County schools will continue to increase; unless changes are made to help these students be ready for school at age five, stay in school, and graduate from school, our community will face the challenges of an ever-increasing

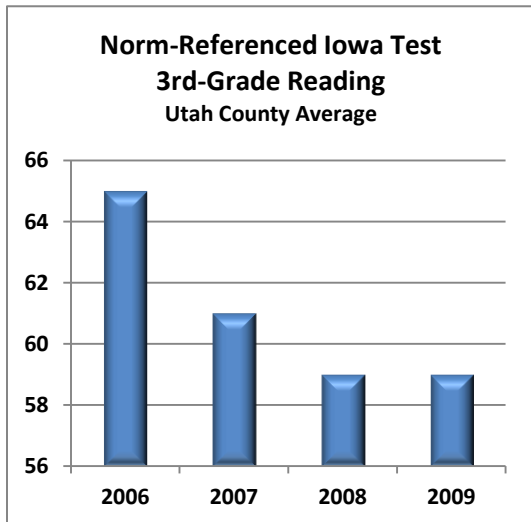


number of high school dropouts: increased crime, higher unemployment, higher rates of under-employed residents, and increased

reliance on public welfare and other forms of assistance.

Student drop out of school for a variety of reasons: peer pressure, family circumstances, or personal issues such as addictions or abuse. But the most common reason students drop out of school is because they don't believe they will be able to stay in school and graduate from school due to falling behind academically. They have lost hope and confidence that they can succeed.

Studies show that students who are able to read at grade level by third grade will be able to stay on par with peers and with curriculum expectations throughout their school years. For an increasing



number of Utah County students, the likelihood of being at grade level by third grade is becoming less of a reality. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills shows that, on average, third-grade reading scores are dropping in Utah County.

Without the ability to read adequately by the third grade, Utah County students are more likely to fall behind throughout the rest of their time in public education. And as students fall farther behind, they lose hope that they can succeed in and graduate from school—making them more likely to drop out of school.

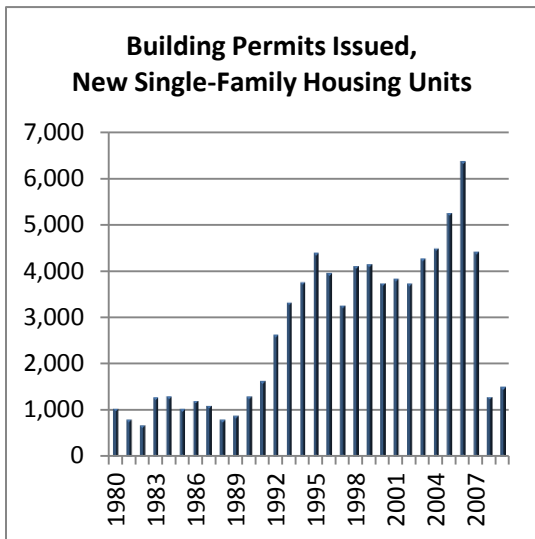
In order to maintain our current standing as a county with high educational attainment, low crime, and strong communities, we must unite as residents to assure that all children are ready for school by the time they enter school; that all children stay in school; and that all children graduate from high school.

### Income and Housing

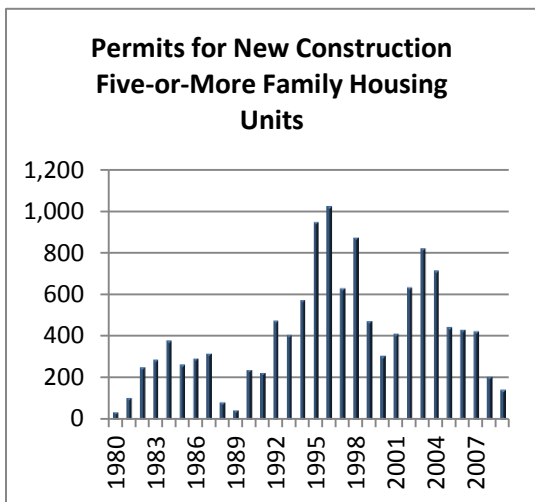
This study shows that because of a variety of factors, the cost of housing in Utah County has become a barrier to family and community vitality.

How? The housing industry in Utah County has been in a boom for nearly 20 years. Permits for new single-family housing units have been growing since 1989, reaching a peak of nearly 6,400 in 2006. But in 2007, that number began to fall, and by 2009, Utah County issued the fewest permits for new single-family housing units since 1990. Construction of multiple-family units has followed a similar trend, with some notable differences. Prior to 1990, the highest number of five-or-more family

housing units constructed was 380 in 1984. This number dropped over the next five years, with only 44 permits issued in 1989.



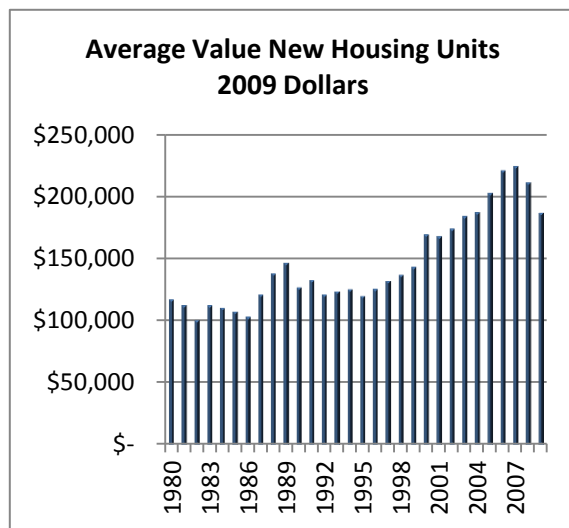
Rapid growth followed for the next nine years, with a high of 1,026 permits being issued in 1996; however, by 2000 that



number had dropped by more than two-thirds to only 307. Again a resurgence began, with just over 800 permits issued in 2003; this number has dropped to 144

permits issued in 2009—the lowest since 1989.

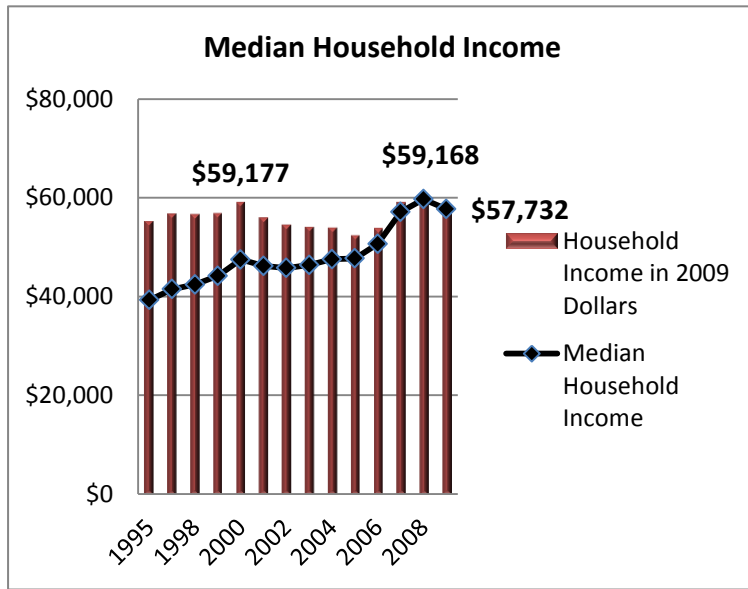
To more fully understand the effects of this rapid rise and decline in new single-family and multiple-family housing construction, we also looked at the value of these homes, as well as families' capacity to purchase the homes.



The data is staggering. In 1980, the average value of a new single-family home in Utah County—in 2009 dollars—was \$117,378. By 2000, that figure had grown to more than \$170,000. But this was just the beginning over the past decade, the average value of newly constructed single family homes, in 2009 dollars, increased to more than \$225,000—an increase of 92 percent since 1980. By 2009, the average value dropped to \$187,633, for an overall increase of nearly 60 percent since 1980.

This is all well and good, assuming that annual household income followed the

same or a similar rate of growth. However, in Utah County, such is not the case. Annual household income in 1995 was \$39,285; by 2009, the annual household income was \$57,732. However, when analyzing annual household income in 2009 dollars, we can see that the number has remained virtually flat, increasing from \$55,302 in 1995 to \$59,168 in 2008—an increase of only 4.4 percent over the course of 14 years.

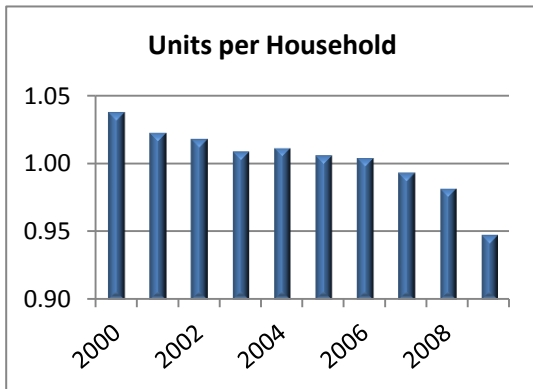


and households are “doubling up,” sharing housing with other households, presumably in order to reduce overall expenses for all families in the unit.

Are there segments of Utah County who are more prosperous than others? Absolutely. In Utah County, the racial or ethnic group with the highest annual household

income is non-Hispanic Whites, at \$60,578. The next highest is householders of two or more races, at \$60,486. The group with the lowest annual household income is Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, whose households earned only \$31,636 in 2009,

In other words, the cost of new single-family home increased more than 13 times the rate of increase in annual household income. The surge in new construction, combined with the rapid increase of population and the only slight increase in annual household income, results in a severe housing problem for many in Utah County. In fact, the situation has become so bad that the ratio of housing units to households has decreased to the lowest level since 2000. In 2009, there were only 0.95 housing units per household in Utah County. In other words, more families



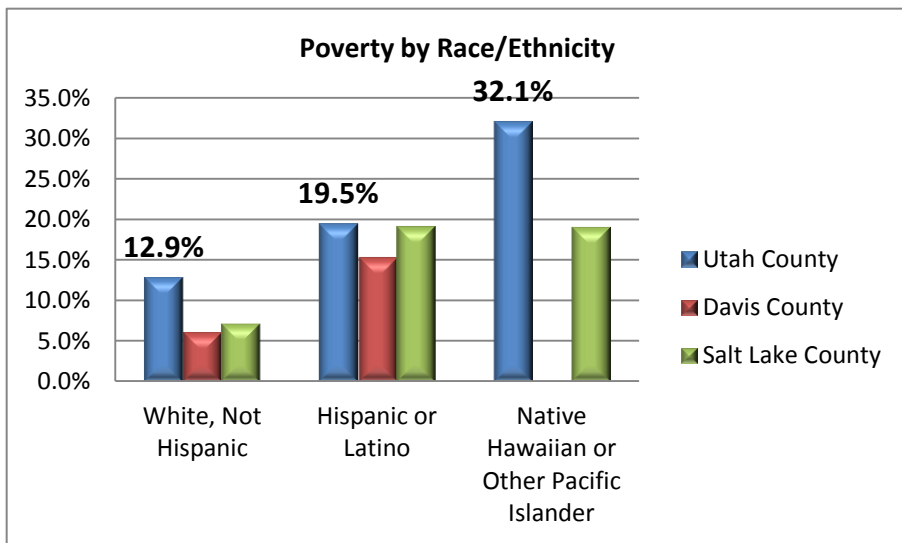
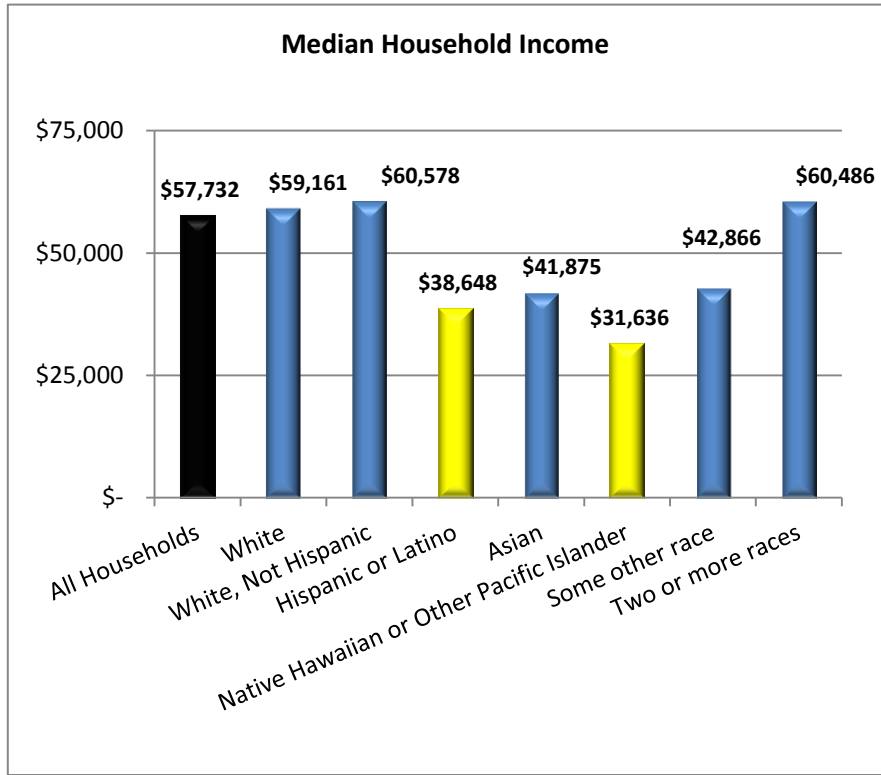
followed by Hispanic- or Latino-headed homes, which made \$38,648.

The racial or ethnic group with the highest poverty rate in Utah County is

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, at just over 32 percent. In other words, nearly one out of every three Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander living in Utah County is living in poverty.

The next highest poverty-stricken group is Hispanic or Latino, at 19.5 percent. Of the White, not

Hispanic population, nearly 13 percent are living below the federal poverty line—more than twice the rates for Davis County or Salt Lake County.



## Health

The third building block for successful living—health—is also experiencing some changes in Utah County. The groups that is most likely to be affected by inadequate access to healthcare, or poor choices when it comes to healthcare, is the Hispanic or Latino population. This comes as

well. But this is only one indicator of the overall gap in healthcare for residents of Utah County who are of Hispanic descent. The average number of prenatal care visits to a physician and other data suggest a growing gap between racial and ethnic groups, as well as income groups, in obtaining adequate care in Utah County.

Percent who Received Prenatal Care in 1 <sup>st</sup> Trimester of Pregnancy			
	Hispanic	Not Hispanic	Total
<b>Utah County</b>	66.4%	85.0%	82.8%
<b>Davis County</b>	72.4%	86.9%	85.6%
<b>Salt Lake County</b>	64.1%	80.7%	76.7%
<b>State</b>	65.3%	83.4%	80.2%

no surprise, as this population is among the lowest income earners, and healthcare has been shown to correlate to income in communities throughout the country.

In Utah County, an indicator of the gap in healthcare is the care that expectant mothers receive. Only 66.4 percent of Hispanic expectant women receive prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy—compared to 85 percent of the non-Hispanic population. This trend is also seen in Davis County and Salt Lake County as

## The Future

So, what will the Utah County of 2040 look like? While no one can predict with complete certainty what the demographics and socioeconomics of the future will be, we are able to see some trends that give an idea of the future. Utah County is becoming more and more metropolitan and cosmopolitan; if current trends continue, the Utah County of 2040 will look much like the Salt Lake County of 2010.

	Utah County, 2040	Salt Lake County, Today
Total Population	1,092,450	1,024,876
White, Not Hispanic	72.1%	73.0%
Hispanic or Latino	19.8%	17.2%
Black	2.4%	1.8%
American Indian or Alaska	1.0%	0.8%
Asian	2.3%	3.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.6%	1.5%
Population < Age 18	29.3%	29.1%
School-age Children	222,673	225,014
Population Density	548.4	1,403.6
Birth Rate	17.89	19.01
Median Household Size	2.91	2.88
Minority Students (Provo vs.	68.0%	55.3%
Students in Poverty	27%	20.7%
Students Limited English	51.8%	29.1%

## Conclusions

As United Way of Utah County, our partners, and the area's residents continue to seek a better life for all by advancing the common good, we must focus on three primary objectives.

*First*, we must assure that all children—regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status—are ready for school and stay in school. Otherwise, we risk increased numbers of dropouts, greater crime, increased poverty, and the accompanying societal ills.

*Second*, we must help residents of Utah County better understand and be committed to enjoying life and saving for the future, rather than striving to get ahead with material possessions now.

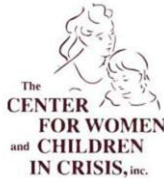
*Third*, we must help assure that all residents—especially children—have access to quality medical care.

Education, income, and health: the *building blocks of a strong quality of life*.





**Special thanks to the following partners who provided funding for this project:**



Copies of the full assessment may be purchased from

United Way of Utah County

by phoning 801-374-2588

or online at [UtahCountyCommunityAssessment.com](http://UtahCountyCommunityAssessment.com).



Civicus Consulting Group  
17612 Highway E  
Richmond, MO 64085  
[www.CivicusConsulting.com](http://www.CivicusConsulting.com)