



**DO FAMILY DEMOGRAPHICS EXPLAIN MIDDLE CLASS STATUS?
UTAH VS UNITED STATES**
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Using United States Census data from 1980 to 2010, I analyze the role demographics play in a family attaining middle/upper-class status versus being economically lower-class. My study looks at age, race, education, parental structure, and family size, the influence each has on a family's status, and how that influence changed over the study period. I find that families in Utah are more likely to attain middle-class status than families living elsewhere in the United States. This has been true for all Census years. However, prior to the 2000 Census, when adjusting for head-of-household (HOH) demographics, family size, and family structure, it appears that Utah's demographics were the driving force in this differential. Beginning with the 2000 Census there has been a noticeable shift. By 2010, a family was 5.8% more likely to be in the middle or upper class if living in Utah than in the U.S. on average. However, adjusting for demographic factors reduced this difference to .2%, indicating that while families of all demographics were more likely to be in the middle/upper class in Utah than in the U.S. as a whole, demographics remain a factor, but are no longer the defining factor of Utah's success.

Comparing the demographic changes in the U.S. and Utah over the study period, alongside a review of the regression results, points to family type and education not only as key drivers of middle/upper class status, but determining factors in the ability to weather an economic downturn. With education and family structure having a growing importance in a family's likelihood of being middle/upper class, policies that promote post-high school education (trade and college) and provide support for at risk categories - like single female HOHs with children - will be key to maintaining Utah's robust middle class and lifting additional families out of poverty.

Policymakers should not underestimate the role demographics play in the robust middle/upper class of Utah. As Utah's demographics continue to change, understanding the linkage between demographics and attaining middle/upper class status will become even more important. An update of this study after the 2020 Census should provide additional insight into the trends in Utah and their impact on class status.