Contents

01 Welina: Native Hawaiian Wellbeing and Wehe Ke Ala: Strategic Vision 2045

02 Early Childhood Indicators

03 Youth Development Indicators

04 Other Wellbeing Indicators

05 Long-Term: Systems Engagement Indicators

06 Ka Wā Ma Mua, Ka Wā Ma Hope: Summary and Data Sources
On our journey toward breaking cycles of poverty for Native Hawaiians, Liliʻuokalani Trust envisions increased numbers of thriving kamaliʻi living healthy, joyful, and prosperous lives while positively contributing to their families, communities, and the world.

To measure thriving, LT tracks a range of wellbeing outcomes. This report, to be produced annually, provides a snapshot of Native Hawaiian wellbeing based on the indicators in Wehe Ke Ala: Strategic Vision 2045.
Native Hawaiian Wellbeing and Wehe Ke Ala: Strategic Vision 2045

The 2045 Strategic Vision is of improved Native Hawaiian wellbeing across multiple indicators and outcomes.

Native Hawaiian serving organizations have been compiling and publishing data on wellbeing since at least the early 1960s. Some reports are focused on single issues and some, like those published by Kamehameha Schools or the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, are more comprehensive.

The purpose of this report is to provide information relevant to the indicators identified in Wehe Ke Ala: Strategic Vision 2045. These indicators represent our primary focus areas. The data reported here serve as a baseline for monitoring change in Native Hawaiian wellbeing over time and as reference points for assessing the impact of our overall strategy for those we serve and for the broader Hawaiian population.

To learn more about the 2045 Strategic Vision and the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, visit www.onipaa.org.

Data sources for this report are listed in the References section. All data represent residents of Hawai‘i only. Trend data are limited to the years 2015 to 2020. For certain data points, only a single year data is available such as 2020 or 2021. With few exceptions, data points contrast Native Hawaiians with Statewide totals.
Enriched, nurturing experiences in early childhood are strongly related to positive outcomes as an older child or adult. Although later experiences can help children overcome the challenges of a beginning that is not rich in social, emotional, and cognitive stimulation, it requires substantially more resources and time to regain ground than it does to provide a solid foundation.
Early Childhood Indicators

Ready for Kindergarten

Readiness for kindergarten includes cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development. However, these data are not collected at the population level. What we can access is data on participation in preschool.

Preschool provides our youngest kamali‘i with experience with classroom environments and expectations and may provide opportunities for cognitive and social development not available in their homes or in ‘ohana-based care.

Historically, Native Hawaiian children have participated in preschool programs at a higher rate than the statewide population. The data portrayed here suggest a multi-year decline in preschool participation among Native Hawaiian children, which raises concerns about their readiness to transition to formal schooling.

Source: US Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 1-year PUMS files
Parental Education

Higher levels of parental education are correlated with better health outcomes and increased school and economic success for their children. Further, research has shown that increasing parent education while children are young has a greater impact on child outcomes than the same increases in parent education when the children are older.

Native Hawaiian children between the ages of 0-5 are less likely to live in families where an adult has an Associate’s degree or higher. However, the proportion of young Hawaiian children who do live in such families trended upward between 2015 and 2019.

Source: US Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 1-year PUMS files
Financial stressors often lead to a lack of resources to support child development and may lead to stress in relationships between parents or caregivers and their children. A livable income provides for basic necessities plus a small amount for "wants" (e.g., an occasional meal or enrichment activity outside the home).

In 2015 about 1-in-3 Native Hawaiian children between the ages of 0-5 years lived in a family that had a livable income. In 2019, that number had declined to fewer than 1-in-4.

Further, what was a 1 percentage-point gap between Native Hawaiian and all young children in 2015 increased to a 5-point gap in 2019.

Source: US Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 1-year PUMS files
Youth Development Indicators

Timely high school graduation | Post-secondary education, enrollment, and attainment

Timely progress through formal education and successful transitions to post-secondary training and education are key milestones on the pathway to becoming thriving, contributing adults and breaking the cycle of poverty.
Timely High School Graduation

Timely high school graduation (within 4 years of first entering Grade 9) is associated with social, emotional educational, economic, and health benefits to individuals, their families, and their communities.

On-time high school graduation rates for Native Hawaiians increased by five percentage points between 2015 and 2019 and are tracking closer to statewide total graduation rates.
Among the benefits of timely high school graduation is an increased likelihood of post-secondary enrollment and degree completion, which are associated with better social, economic, and health outcomes. The data show that post-secondary enrollment among young Native Hawaiians declined slightly in 2019. However, the change is within the margin of error for the estimates for prior years. More data are needed to determine whether this is a trend or an anomaly in the data. Post-secondary degree completion data suggest that more Native Hawaiian adults are successfully completing their degree programs, although a substantial gap still exists compared to adults statewide.

Source: US Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 1-year PUMS files
Opportunity Youth

At the other end of the spectrum from those who complete high school within 4 years and those go on to successfully complete post-secondary education or training are Opportunity Youth.

Opportunity Youth are between the ages of 16 and 24 and are neither in school nor employed. A seminal study estimated the lifetime cost of a typical Opportunity Youth to themselves, their families, and society to be in excess of $750,000.

The percentage of young Native Hawaiians who are neither in school nor employed has declined over the most recent 5 years of data and the gap in the rates between Native Hawaiians and all youth statewide may be narrowing.
At Lili‘uokalani Trust we believe that a positive cultural identity is critical to addressing the effects of personal and cultural/historical trauma and to finding pathways to thriving. This is supported by an emerging body of evidence from the healing professions and from Indigenous culture-based education.
Spiritual Connectedness

Spirituality has a prominent role in traditional Native Hawaiian cultural beliefs and practices. Many Hawaiians define spirituality as connection to the mana that is present in all things and find it a source of strength and resilience.

As shown in these figures, Native Hawaiians responding to the 2020-2021 ‘Imi Pono survey were more likely than non-Hawaiians to report that spirituality was “quite a bit” or “extremely” important to their wellbeing. They were also more likely to report that they feel strongly connected to a spiritual or religious community.

No comparable data are currently available for youth although Lili‘uokalani Trust will be collecting similar data from kamali‘i we serve.

Source: 2021 ‘Imi Pono Hawai‘i Wellbeing Survey
Cultural Connectedness

Like spirituality, a positive connection to one’s cultural heritage and a cultural community are often identified as sources of strength and resilience by Native Hawaiians.

Native Hawaiians were more likely than non-Hawaiians to report that their cultural heritage was “quite a bit” or “extremely” important to their wellbeing. They were also more likely to report a strong connection to an ethnic or cultural community.

No comparable data are currently available for youth. As with spiritual connectedness, Liliʻuokalani Trust will be collecting data on cultural connectedness from kamaliʻi we serve.

Source: 2021 ʻImi Pono Hawaiʻi Wellbeing Survey
The Hawaiian cultural renaissance and subsequent forward movement for Native Hawaiians has relied upon Hawaiian leadership. When asked to describe Native Hawaiian leadership, Hawaiians and others typically identify service to others, humility, grounding in traditional values, and commitment to perpetuation of a Hawaiian way of life as key traits. The ‘Imi Pono survey results suggest that Native Hawaiians are more likely than non-Hawaiians to provide servant leadership to their ‘ohana, in their communities, and on the ‘āina and kai.

Source: 2021 ‘Imi Pono Hawai‘i Wellbeing Survey
Healthy Life Choices: Anxiety/Depression and Supportive Adults

Although it is inaccurate to identify being sad or depressed as a choice, it is helpful to know that contemporary self-reported rates of depression among Native Hawaiian high schoolers are comparable to those of all students statewide (and not higher as was found in prior research). What is concerning is the increase in rates in 2019 (which are consistent with the nationwide trend toward a greater prevalence of anxiety and depression among teens and young adults). In 2019 Native Hawaiian students were more likely to report that they had a trusted adult they could talk with when they have a problem.
Healthy Life Choices: Physical Activity and Sleep

To some extent, kamaliʻi do have choices about their level of physical activity and sleep. Data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey consistently show that Native Hawaiian high schoolers are more likely to meet federal recommendations for physical activity than are their peers statewide. (Federal recommendations are physically active for at least 60 minutes on 7 of the past 7 days and muscle-strengthening activities on 3 or more of the past 7 days). Rest is also important for developing bodies and minds. Native Hawaiian kamaliʻi are just as likely as their peers to report they average at least 8 hours of sleep on school nights.

Source: Hawaii State Departments of Health and Education, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey
Early family formation often makes it difficult for kamali‘i to obtain the education or training they need to meet the material and financial, education, and health needs of their keiki. Birth rates to teens (ages 15-19) have consistently declined since at least 2000. However, rates for Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders continue to be at least 5 times the statewide rate. Native Hawaiian students are less likely to report they abstained from sexual activity during the past 3 months, although their responses are consistent with statewide and national trends which indicate more students abstain. 2019 data suggest that Native Hawaiian students may now be as likely as students statewide to use birth control when they are sexually active.

Sources: Hawaii State Department of Health, Vital Statistics and Hawaii State Departments of Health and Education, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey
The over-representation of Native Hawaiians in systems intended to provide support and care for vulnerable kamali‘i is an indicator of the depth of challenges these kamali‘i face as they struggle to thrive and provide for their own keiki and communities. Eliminating disproportionate representation of Native Hawaiians in these systems is a key marker of success in our pursuit of our mission and promoting thriving for Native Hawaiian kamali‘i.
**Foster Care**

It is sometimes necessary to remove kamali‘i from their birth families to ensure their safety. However, foster care itself is often yet another adverse experience. Children who spend time in foster care are much less likely than their peers to thrive as adults.

Native Hawaiian children are disproportionately represented in foster care, making up nearly half of all children in the system.

There was a gradual but steady decline in the percentage of children in foster care who are Native Hawaiian from 48% in 2015 to 45% in 2018. We will continue to monitor this trend as we implement collaborative programs focused on returning kamali‘i to their ʻohana or other permanent placements as quickly as is safe.

Youth Homelessness

Periods of homelessness or housing insecurity are other adverse experiences many kamali‘i encounter. The Point in Time count is an annual street and shelter count observed on a single night in January. The data shown here were collected on O‘ahu in January 2020.

A total of 702 children who were under the age of 18 and accompanied by their families were counted that night. 552 (79%) of the children were Native Hawaiian. Unaccompanied youth are individuals 24 or younger who are not accompanied by a parent, guardian. 105 (47%) of the total 222 sheltered or unsheltered unaccompanied youth who were observed were Native Hawaiian.

These results are far in excess of the percentage of youth who are Native Hawaiian (about 30%) or of Native Hawaiian kamali‘i who live in families with incomes that would qualify them for income subsidy benefits like TANF or SNAP (37%).

Source: 2020 O‘ahu Point in Time Count
Chronic Absenteeism (Truancy)

Chronic absenteeism is defined by the Hawai‘i Department of Education as missing school for 15 days or more in the school year. This includes any absence, excused or unexcused.

When students are chronically absent, they miss opportunities to learn and their attachment to school becomes weaker. As a group, students who are chronically absent have lower GPAs and are less likely to graduate high school in a timely manner.

Data from 2015-16 through 2019-20 show that Native Hawaiian students are more likely to be chronically absent than are all students statewide. Chronic absenteeism rates were very stable until the 2019-20 school year. Future data will help us understand if this recent reduction in chronic absenteeism is sustained and the extent to which Native Hawaiian students may be closing the gap with their peers.
A substantial body of research has demonstrated the strong relationship between use of exclusionary discipline in schools and later adverse life outcomes, including involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. In the 2016 and 2018 school years, students who were formally disciplined in Hawai‘i public schools were disproportionately Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI).* In 2016, NHOPI students comprised 30% of the students but were nearly 50% of those receiving suspensions, referrals to law enforcement (not shown), or arrests. Although the total number of exclusionary disciplinary actions decreased in 2018, the decrease was smaller for NHOPI students, resulting in them receiving a greater share of the sanctions.

*Data are not reported separately for Native Hawaiian students
Juvenile Justice: Arrests, Detentions, and Probations

Long Term Systems Indicators

From 2015 to 2017 juvenile arrests for Native Hawaiian kamali‘i (10-17 years-old) were not disproportionate, as Native Hawaiians comprise about 30% of the youth population in Hawai‘i and 29% of arrests.*

Disproportionality shows up in the results of the arrests. Native Hawaiian kamali‘i are much more likely than their peers to experience detention or probation as a result of their arrests. Research has consistently shown that neither the severity of the offense nor criminal history fully account for the disparities in outcomes between ethnic groups.

*The 2016 arrests statistic is a marked deviation from prior and subsequent years and is also inconsistent with 2016 statistics on detentions and probations.
As we seek to promote thriving and break the cycle of poverty, the data reported here provide a look back at our experiences as a lāhui.

Although the data in this report are relatively recent, the findings are generally consistent with portrayals of the conditions of Native Hawaiians in reports on wellbeing at least since the early 1960s.

Like our ancestors, we use the information about past challenges and historical cultural strengths to aid us in navigating toward our vision.
Conclusion

Summary: Where We Stand Today

As noted earlier, the purpose of this report is to provide information relevant to the indicators identified in Wehe Ke Ala: Strategic Vision 2045. The specific measures included here are a small sample of the data available for most of our wellbeing indicators.

In some cases, notably readiness for kindergarten and spiritual, emotional, and cultural identity, the existing data are scant. In the case of the latter indicators, these reflect dimensions of wellbeing that are rarely, if ever, found in Western conceptual models and that are hence not part of data collection by Western systems.

We believe that a return to thriving and abundance for Native Hawaiians and Hawai‘i must be grounded in traditional strengths manifested in our times. This requires a fuller understanding of Native Hawaiian wellbeing than Western-driven data can provide alone. We are working collaboratively with partners from other Hawaiian-serving organizations to develop “new and radical knowledge” about our wellbeing based on the Kūkulu Kumuhana dimensions. In 2022, we are putting data collection tools and procedures in place to allow us to more fully report on the accomplishments of our kamali‘i using many of the measures in this report.
Data Sources

The data in this report were pulled from a variety of sources at the federal and state level and much of it was compiled by Justin Hong, SCIMA. The following are the data sources referenced in this report. For additional inquiries, please contact researchandevaluationteam@onipaa.org.


Recommended Citation: Lili‘uokalani Trust (2022). Native Hawaiian Wellbeing Update. Honolulu, HI.