

# Native Hawaiian Economic and Health Status

Celeste Chung • University of Washington • School of Public Health • Maternal & Child Health Program

## Public Health Concern

Native Hawaiians have worse socioeconomic and health status than all Asian and Pacific Islanders combined. This fact is obscured in public health data that combines Native Hawaiians with the racial category “Asian and Pacific Islander.” To illustrate the magnitude of the differences, select Native Hawaiian (NH) economic and health indicators will be compared to the Japanese (J) in Hawai’i (one of the largest ethnic groups). Comparison to the State of Hawai’i (HI) and the U.S. will provide additional insight into the health status of Native Hawaiians.

## Economic Indicators

	NH	J	HI	U.S.
Income \$0-24,999 %	39.9	15.8	25.6	N/A
Income >\$75,000 %	14.4	28.5	21.7	N/A
Not making livable income %	37.9	22.3	30.7	23.1
Homeless per 1,000	8.4	0.6	4.7	N/A

Source: Toward a Health Hawai’i 2010: Checking the Health of Hawai’i Statewide

## Health Indicators

	NH	J	HI	U.S.
Obesity %	37.5	8.9	17.1	22.1
Adult Smoker %	33.8	15.6	21	23
Heart Disease Deaths per 100,000	232.7	96.6	113.1	241
Breast Cancer Deaths per 100,000	31.5	11.9	17.3	14.5

Source: Toward a Health Hawai’i 2010: Checking the Health of Hawai’i Statewide

Source: CDC Heart Disease Facts and Statistics

Supported in part by Project #T76 MC 00011 from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (Title V, Social Security Act), Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

## MCH Indicators

	NH	J	HI	U.S.
Infant Mortality %	11.2	6.9	6.7	7.0
Late Prenatal Care %	24.5	11.0	18.0	16.3
Smoking during 3 <sup>rd</sup> Trimester %*	15.3	N/A	8.4	N/A
Births to Unmarried Women %	56.7	19.2	33.7	34
Teen Births %	39.3	7.1	16.7	23.2

Source: Toward a Health Hawai’i 2010: Checking the Health of Hawai’i Statewide

\*Source: Smoking and Tobacco Use in Hawai’i: Facts, Figures, and Trends

## Implications

Compared with the Japanese living in Hawai’i, residents of Hawaii overall, and the U.S. population, Native Hawaiians have higher rates of poverty, morbidity and mortality. Including Native Hawaiians in the racial group Asian and Pacific Islander masks the true health status of the population. As a result, health interventions that would benefit Native Hawaiians, such as smoking cessation resources and prevention among youth, may not reach the population.

## Recommendations

The rates of morbidity and mortality among Native Hawaiians are closer to Black and Native American/Alaskan Native populations than to Asian populations. Acknowledging high rates of morbidity and mortality in public health practice and research can further support the efforts, led by organizations and the state government, to improve the health status of Native Hawaiians.

