



GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL TIES TO HAWAI'I

Responses from the KS Alumni Survey

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P A S E R E P O R T

Purpose of Our Study

Using data from the KS Alumni Survey (2002), this report looks at the residential migration patterns of KS alumni and examines the reasons some choose to leave Hawai'i.

What We Learned

- More than 70 percent of KS alumni currently live in Hawai'i. Of these, 84 percent reported that they are unlikely to leave the islands.
- About half (49 percent) of KS alumni who expect to leave Hawai'i cite economic reasons such as jobs and housing.
- Nearly half (47.5 percent) of KS alumni who currently live or previously lived outside the state left to attend college. More than two-thirds (67.4 percent) of returnees cited family as the primary reason for coming home.
- KS alumni who leave Hawai'i and later return are more likely to hold professional or management positions than are alumni who have never relocated outside the state. KS alumni who currently reside outside of Hawai'i have higher incomes than do alumni living within the state.

Key Implications

- Migration to the continent is an effective way for KS alumni to increase their human capital and bolster their earnings potential.
- Expanded economic opportunities are needed in Hawai'i so that Native Hawaiians will have more options to remain on their island home and increase their occupational and socioeconomic status.

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Geographic and Social Ties to Hawai'i: Responses from the KS Alumni Survey

Koren Ishibashi

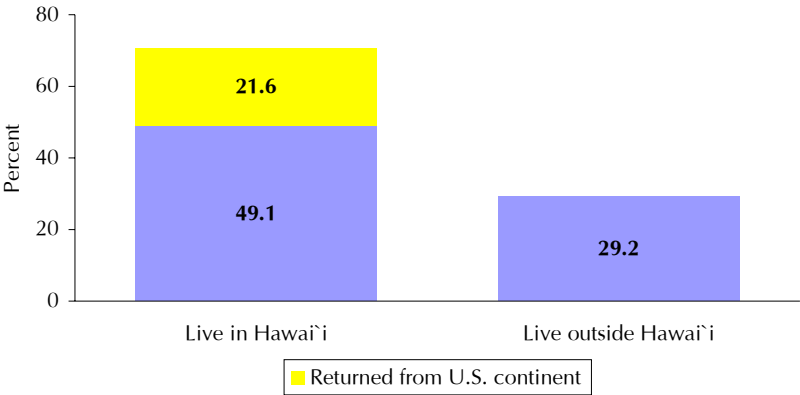
INTRODUCTION

Are graduates of Kamehameha Schools (KS) remaining in the state of Hawai'i where they can contribute to the local community, or are they migrating out of the state as part of a broader "brain drain" to the U.S. continent? Using data from the KS Alumni Survey (2002), this report looks at the residential migration patterns of KS alumni and examines the reasons some choose to leave Hawai'i. The 3,952 survey respondents ranged in age from 18 to 92 years, representing the graduating classes of 1930 through 2002. Our findings suggest that KS graduates exhibit strong ties to Hawai'i and prefer to remain in the islands to raise their families in the local community, but that the lure of educational opportunities and the weight of economic pressures prompt many to relocate to the continent.¹

Figure 1 shows that the majority of alumni respondents (70.7 percent) currently reside in Hawai'i. Nearly half of all respondents (49.1 percent) have always lived in Hawai'i, while 21.6 percent moved away temporarily but have since returned.

¹ For additional findings from the 2002 KS Alumni Survey, see the following articles in *I Mua*, Kamehameha Schools' alumni magazine: "Living Pauahi's Vision" (April 2004, http://www.ksbe.edu/newsroom/imua/april04/imua_april04.pdf) and "Asking the Questions" (spring 2003, http://www.ksbe.edu/allpdfs/spring03/imua_spring03.pdf).

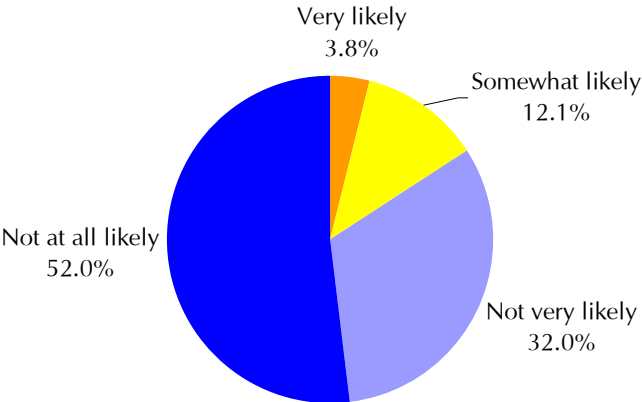
Figure 1. KS alumni: Current place of residence



Source: KS Alumni Survey 2002.

Figure 2 shows that 84.0 percent of respondents who currently live in Hawai'i said they are unlikely to leave the islands (52.0 percent responded that they are not at all likely and 32.0 percent that they are not very likely). Just one in eight alumni in Hawai'i (15.9 percent) reported being very likely or somewhat likely to leave the state.

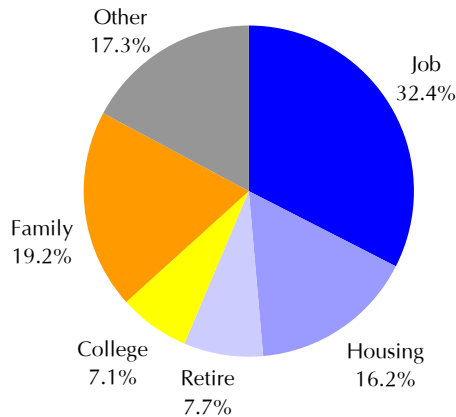
Figure 2. KS alumni living in Hawai'i: Likelihood of leaving the islands



Source: KS Alumni Survey 2002.

Of the 15.9 percent of KS alumni who expect to leave Hawai'i at some point, nearly half (48.6 percent) cited economic reasons such as jobs (32.4 percent) or housing (16.2 percent), suggesting that financial considerations are the primary motivator for alumni migration out of the islands (see Figure 3). Nearly one of every five respondents (19.2 percent) pointed to family as a reason to consider leaving, and another 7.1 and 7.7 percent cited college and retirement, respectively.²

Figure 3. KS alumni who are likely to leave Hawai'i: Reasons for leaving



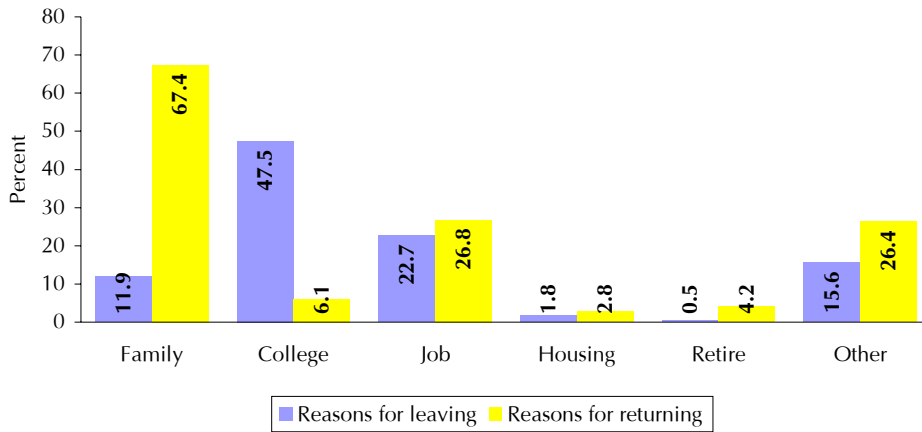
Source: KS Alumni Survey 2002.

Figure 4 shows the reasons for migration among KS alumni who have left the state at some point in their lives. Alumni who currently reside or previously resided outside the state were asked why they left. Alumni who had left and subsequently returned to Hawai'i were asked their reasons for returning. Results indicate that economic conditions and the pursuit of educational opportunities play a significant role in the migration of KS alumni to the continental United States.

Nearly half (47.5 percent) of all alumni who either currently live or previously lived outside Hawai'i left the state to attend college. Approximately one of every four (24.5 percent) was driven by economic reasons such as jobs (22.7 percent) or housing (1.8 percent). In contrast, family was the predominant reason for returning to the islands. Of the respondents who had temporarily left Hawai'i and later returned, more than two-thirds (67.4 percent) were drawn back for family.

² Within the Hawai'i population, relocations for retirement often represent a financial and economic decision, due to the high cost of living in the state.

Figure 4. KS alumni who currently/previ­ously live(d) outside Hawai'i: Reasons for leaving and/or returning

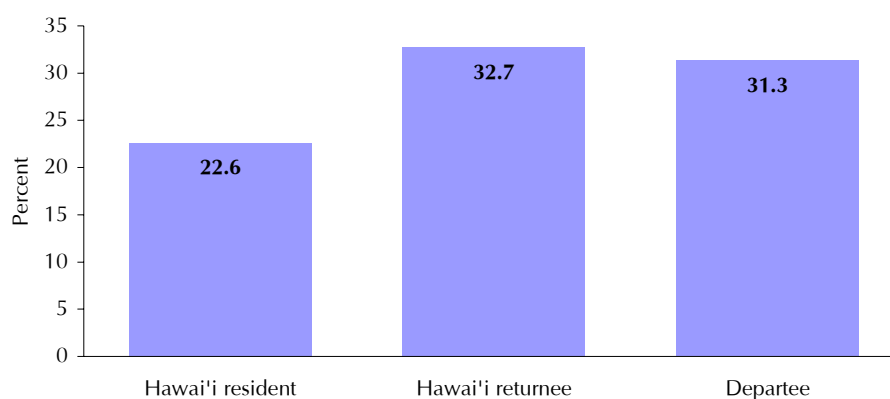


Source: KS Alumni Survey 2002.

Does relocating to the continent yield financial payoffs for KS alumni in search of economic opportunities? Are the jobs of migrant KS alumni higher paying and/or more prestigious than those of alumni who reside in Hawai'i?

Figure 5 shows the percentage of KS alumni employed in professional or management positions by their resident status. Alumni who never relocated outside Hawai'i are significantly less likely to hold professional or management positions than are either returnees, who left Hawai'i but later returned, or departees, who remain away from the islands. About one in four permanent Hawai'i residents (22.6 percent) has a professional or management job, compared with approximately one in three returnees and departees (32.7 percent and 31.3 percent, respectively).

Figure 5. Prevalence of professional/management occupations among KS alumni by resident status



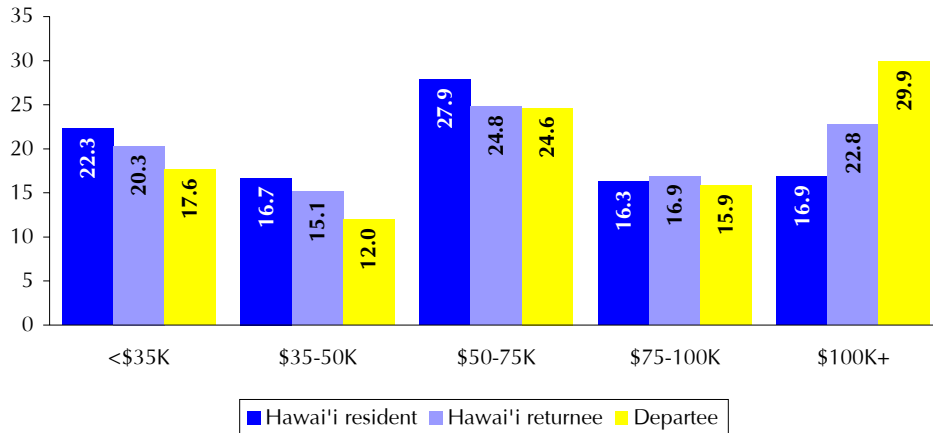
Source: KS Alumni Survey 2002.

However, because postsecondary education is one of the predominant reasons alumni leave Hawai'i, this pattern may reflect the close correlation between occupation and educational attainment, rather than increased human capital or improved economic conditions. Multivariate analyses allow us to confirm these descriptive findings while controlling for confounding factors. Using a logistic regression, we estimated the effect of migration status on the likelihood of an alumnus holding a professional or management position, net of any effects associated with educational attainment, gender, or age. Our findings show that, net of differences in education, age, and other explanatory factors, alumni returnees (those who leave Hawai'i but later return) are significantly more likely to hold professional or management positions than are permanent Hawai'i residents (alumni who have never relocated outside of Hawai'i). However, the likelihood that alumni departees (who continue to live outside Hawai'i) are employed in professional or management positions did not differ significantly from that of permanent Hawai'i residents or returnees. This finding suggests that either employment prospects are greatest for alumni returnees or that alumni in professional or management careers are more likely to return to Hawai'i. Residing in the continental United States does not result in greater occupational attainment for KS alumni than does residing in Hawai'i.

Where we find apparent benefits to living outside Hawai'i is in income differences. KS alumni living outside Hawai'i are significantly more likely to have incomes in the

highest bracket (\$100,000 or more) than are their counterparts residing in Hawai'i. Fully 29.9 percent of alumni departees have incomes of \$100,000 or more, compared with 22.8 percent of Hawai'i returnees and 16.9 percent of permanent Hawai'i residents. By contrast, permanent Hawai'i residents were most prevalent (27.9 percent) in the middle income range of \$50,000 to \$75,000.

Figure 6. Income distribution among KS alumni by resident status



Source: KS Alumni Survey 2002.

Our multivariate findings support the descriptive statistics. With a logistic regression similar to that used for occupation, we estimated the effect of migration status on alumni income, controlling for measures of educational attainment, gender, and age. We found that alumni departees who remain on the continent do, indeed, have higher incomes than do permanent Hawai'i residents but that the income levels of Hawai'i returnees do not differ significantly from those of Hawai'i residents. Neither our descriptive nor our multivariate analyses of alumni income account for Hawai'i's comparatively high cost of living, which may inflate the wages of island residents, relative to their comparably employed counterparts in the continental United States. However, this bias suggests that our findings represent a conservative estimate of the income differences between departees and alumni living in the islands.

These results suggest that when KS alumni choose to leave Hawai'i, whether temporarily (as is the case with returnees) or permanently (as with departees), the decision is often a calculated move with significant socioeconomic payoffs. It is important to note, however, that our findings differ somewhat from results obtained

elsewhere. Using Census data, Malone (2004) found that the effect of migration on income of Native Hawaiians disappears when other background characteristics and circumstances are accounted for. Unfortunately, we are unable to control for some of the factors in his study that could affect the relationship between migration and income, such as marital status, ethnic heritage, linguistic isolation, disabilities, veteran status, household size, labor force participation, and industry. The differences also may be attributable to the fact that the alumni sample used here is a small and demographically distinct subset of the larger Hawaiian population studied by Malone, who looked at the entire Native Hawaiian population, including individuals who did and did not complete high school.

Overall, these differences in findings underscore the need for further data and ongoing research. To track Hawaiian migration to the continent and its effect on Hawaiian well-being, we need to better understand how KS alumni and Native Hawaiians in general mediate the conflict between their strong ties to family and the homeland and the lure of economic opportunities beyond the islands.

SUMMARY

In sum, data from the KS Alumni Survey indicate that former students exhibit strong social ties to Hawai'i. Most alumni express a preference to remain within the state; those who leave or anticipate leaving in the future are primarily driven by educational opportunities and economic concerns. Conversely, social ties to family draw alumni back to the islands.

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