



## Hawai'i Wellbeing Survey 2021

## 'Ōiwi Leadership Attributes

Referring to the search for wholeness and balance, 'Imi Pono seeks a more complete picture of wellbeing among Native Hawaiians and Hawai'i residents. As the source and outcome of multiple factors, wellbeing feeds, and is fed by, many streams. Native Hawaiian perspectives on wellbeing emphasize relationships, inter-connections and balance.

Increasing and sustaining wellbeing requires relevant and actionable data. Despite composing more than one-fifth of Hawai'i's population and enjoying a unique and what should be a privileged status as the Indigenous people of the state, Native Hawaiians are typically reported within the broader category of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. In addition, data collected by state agencies are often narrowly focused and deficit based.

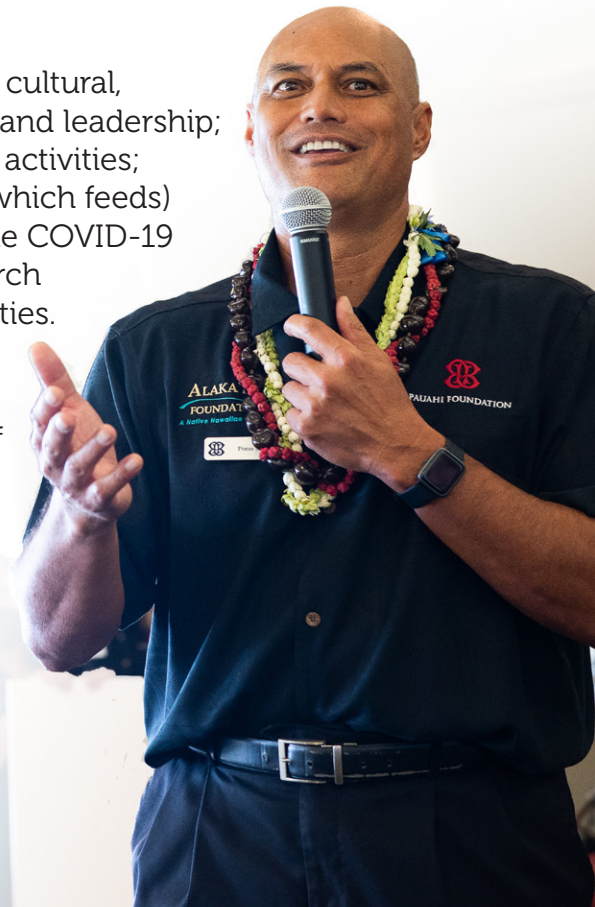
To collect relevant and actionable data, Kamehameha Schools, Lili'uokalani Trust, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs contracted Marzano Research to administer a statewide survey examining Native Hawaiian wellbeing from a holistic and strengths-based perspective. The results will inform organizational planning and improve community services for Native Hawaiians.

### Survey Topics

The survey provides unique insight into a range of topics: cultural, community, and spiritual connections; civic engagement and leadership; quality of life; hope for the future; participation in cultural activities; interaction with the 'āina (the land or, more broadly, that which feeds) and kai (the sea); community strengths; and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey items were informed by previous research conducted in partnership with Native Hawaiian communities.

### Purpose: 'Ōiwi Leadership Attributes

The purpose of this brief is to identify attributes of 'Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) Leadership and to explore their prevalence in Hawai'i. This brief examines a range of leadership traits among Native Hawaiians across counties and age groups. Results may be used to strengthen communities, inform organizations, and improve programs and policies that address historical injustices.



#### Preferred Citation:

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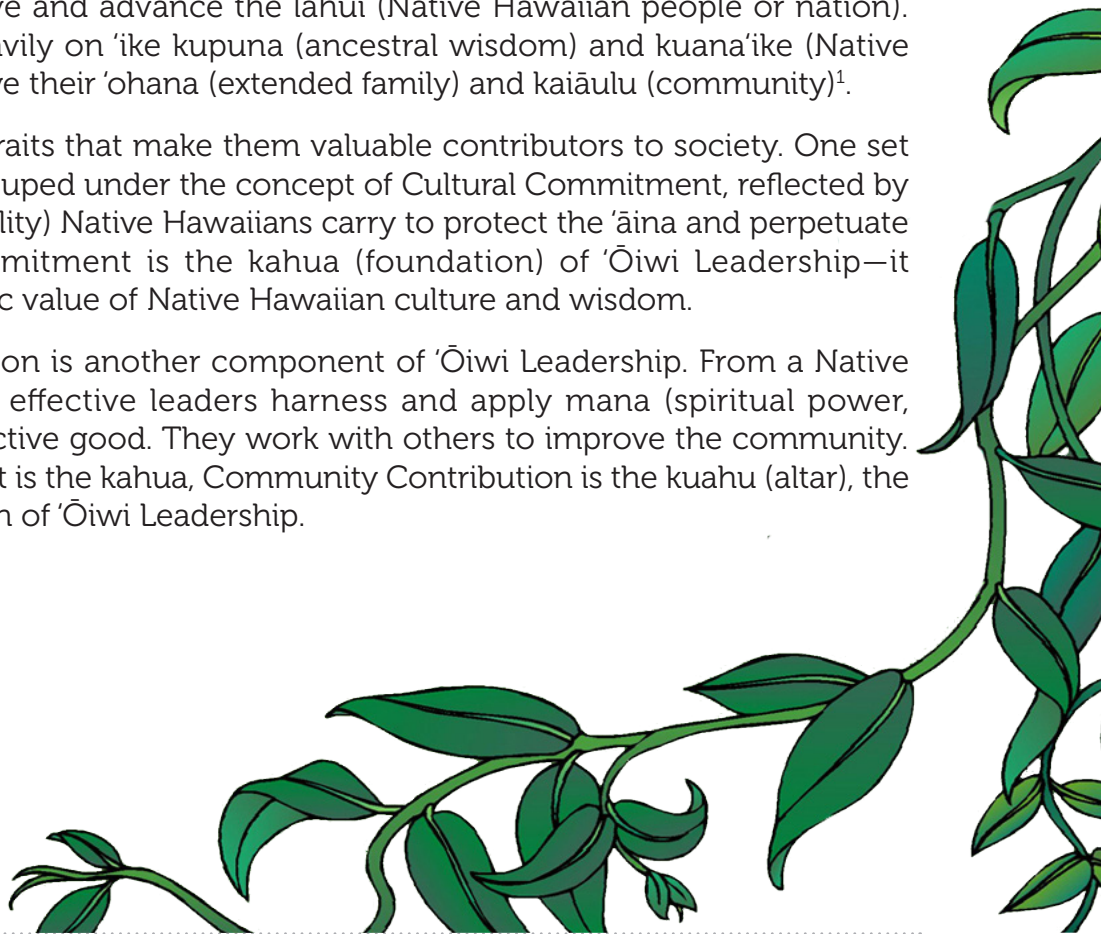


## 'Ōiwi Leadership: Key Findings

Native Hawaiians celebrate a legacy of leadership that stretches far back in time. In this brief, 'Ōiwi Leadership refers to the application of Native Hawaiian values, beliefs and knowledge to serve and advance the lāhui (Native Hawaiian people or nation). 'Ōiwi leaders draw heavily on 'ike kupuna (ancestral wisdom) and kuana'ike (Native perspectives) to improve their 'ohana (extended family) and kaiāulu (community)<sup>1</sup>.

'Ōiwi leaders possess traits that make them valuable contributors to society. One set of attributes can be grouped under the concept of Cultural Commitment, reflected by the kuleana (responsibility) Native Hawaiians carry to protect the 'āina and perpetuate culture. Cultural Commitment is the kahua (foundation) of 'Ōiwi Leadership—it emphasizes the intrinsic value of Native Hawaiian culture and wisdom.

Community Contribution is another component of 'Ōiwi Leadership. From a Native Hawaiian perspective, effective leaders harness and apply mana (spiritual power, authority) for the collective good. They work with others to improve the community. If Cultural Commitment is the kahua, Community Contribution is the kuahu (altar), the focus and manifestation of 'Ōiwi Leadership.



<sup>1</sup> For additional information about 'Ōiwi leaders see [https://www.ksbe.edu/oivi\\_leaders/](https://www.ksbe.edu/oivi_leaders/) and Ka Huaka'i 2021 Executive Summary [https://www.ksbe.edu/ka\\_huakai/](https://www.ksbe.edu/ka_huakai/).



## 'Ōiwi Leadership: Key Findings cont.

To understand its dynamic nature, the research team explored how groups of questions could be used to articulate attributes of 'Ōiwi Leadership. Using factor analysis, the team found that two major concepts emerged, Cultural Commitment and Community Contribution. Cultural Commitment embodies links to Native Hawaiian heritage, mālama 'āina, and involvement in Native Hawaiian activities. Community Contribution represents a sense of belonging and civic engagement.

The key findings in this brief are:

1. Native Hawaiians reported **high rates of 'Ōiwi Leadership attributes**, evidenced by strong feelings and frequent behaviors associated with cultural and community connectedness. For example, 50% reported feeling “quite a bit” or “extremely” connected to their ethnic or cultural community, and 55% said they contributed to the Native Hawaiian community at least monthly.
2. 'Ōiwi Leadership attributes were **relatively consistent across counties**, with some exceptions. For example, 60% of Kaua'i County residents reported feeling “quite a bit” or “extremely” connected to their geographic community, compared to the statewide average of 40%.
3. **Middle-age Native Hawaiians tended to report the highest rates of 'Ōiwi Leadership attributes.** For example, 59% of Native Hawaiians age 45 to 54 said issues such as self-determination, Native land rights, and Hawaiian language revitalization were “extremely important” to them, compared to 50% of Native Hawaiians of all ages.
4. 'Ōiwi Leadership attributes may be **organized into two main groups: Cultural Commitment and Community Contribution.** This is supported by prior literature and statistically strong relationships among survey questions.



## Sample and Methods

Data were collected from November 2020 through February 2021, via email, phone, postcard, and social media. Respondents consisted of 755 Native Hawaiians and 703 non-Hawaiians, ranging in age from 18 to 55 and over. The highest percentages of survey respondents were in the most populated counties, Honolulu (57%) and Hawai'i (22%). The lowest percentages of survey respondents were in the least populated counties, Maui (13%) and Kaua'i (8%). The confidence intervals for the state and Honolulu County—including breakouts for Native Hawaiians within these areas—are 5% or less. Confidence intervals for other counties are greater than 5%; therefore, findings for these counties should not be generalized beyond the survey sample.

Given the data collection methodology, it is likely that survey respondents were more financially affluent than the general Native Hawaiian and Hawai'i population. It is important to note that the survey results are a snapshot in time and that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on all aspects of wellbeing are likely to be felt for years to come. Some negative impacts may continue to deepen despite the rollout of vaccines and gradual return to fuller employment and in-person learning.

Honolulu residents were somewhat underrepresented in this survey, as they make up 68% of the state population but only 57% of the survey respondents. Maui County residents were proportionately represented, making up 12% of the state population and 13% of survey respondents. Hawai'i County and Kaua'i County residents were overrepresented, making up 22% and 8% of the survey respondents, respectively, compared to 15% and 5% of the state population.

When asked in what ways do you strengthen the Native Hawaiian community, respondents provided a range of answers. Open-ended responses were manually coded using the constant comparison method, to identify common themes. This brief presents qualitative comments provided by Native Hawaiians.

“*I realize that being of Hawaiian ancestry I have a responsibility to myself to my ancestors and to the future generations to keep Hawaiian culture alive.*

*- Survey respondent*





# Cultural Commitment

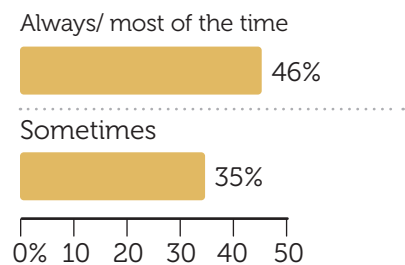
## Importance of Cultural Heritage

Native Hawaiian identity is inextricably linked to ‘āina and culture. This deep connection—and resulting Cultural Commitment—is a major attribute of ‘Ōiwi Leadership. Just over half (53%) of Native Hawaiians reported their cultural heritage was extremely important to their wellbeing. Across counties, the highest percentage of Native Hawaiians who felt their cultural heritage was extremely important was for Hawai‘i County (55%), and the lowest percentage was for Kaua‘i County (48%). In terms of age groups, results ranged from 44% of Native Hawaiians age 18 to 24 to 61% of respondents age 45 to 54 who indicated their cultural heritage was extremely important to their wellbeing.

‘Ōiwi leaders look to their culture for guidance and strength. When making a difficult decision or taking on a challenging task, 46% of Native Hawaiians reported drawing on their cultural heritage “most of the time” or “always” (*Figure 1*). About a third of Native Hawaiians (35%) said they draw upon it “sometimes” draw on it. This rate was higher among Native Hawaiians age 45 to 54 (30%) and Native Hawaiians in Maui County (29%), compared to 22% of Native Hawaiians across all age groups and counties.



*Figure 1. Just under half of Native Hawaiians reported drawing on their cultural heritage most of the time or always when dealing with challenges.*



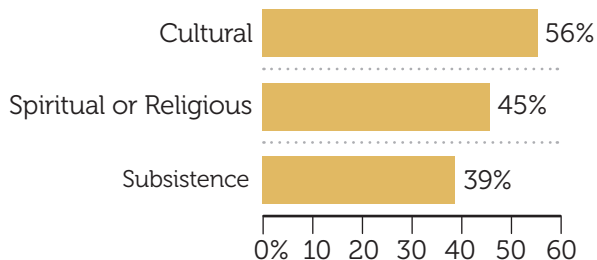


## Cultural Commitment cont.

### ‘Āina and Kai Interactions

“He Hawai‘i au, mau a mau” (I am Hawaiian, forever and ever) expresses the belief that being Native Hawaiian and being a part of Hawai‘i are one and the same. Thus, the responsibility to mālama ‘āina (to care for the land so that the land provides for us) is a large attribute of Ōiwi Leadership. Based on the factor analysis, interactions with the ‘āina and kai for cultural, spiritual or religious, and subsistence reasons were highly correlated with each other, whereas interactions for recreational and health reasons were not. Although most Native Hawaiians reported interacting with the ‘āina or kai in some way, 56%

**Figure 2.** Native Hawaiians engage with ‘āina and kai for many reasons, most often cultural.



“ Our ‘āina. Our land is what keeps us up daily. It feeds us and supports us. If we do not have our land we don’t have much left.

- Survey respondent

did so for cultural reasons and 45% for spiritual or religious reasons (**Figure 2**). These rates were similar across counties.

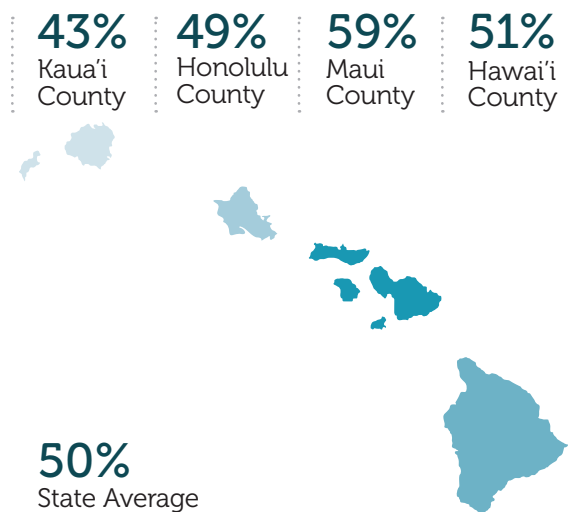
Native Hawaiians age 25 to 54 reported the highest rates of cultural (61%) and spiritual or religious (49%) interactions with the ‘āina and kai, compared to all Native Hawaiian survey respondents, who reported interacting with the ‘āina and kai for cultural (56%) or spiritual or religious (45%) reasons. These types of interactions were found among younger and older Native Hawaiians as well. Half (50%) of Native Hawaiians age 18 to 24 reported cultural interactions, and a third (33%) reported spiritual or religious interactions. Among Native Hawaiians age 55 and older, 47% reported cultural interactions with the ‘āina and kai, and 38% reported spiritual or religious interactions.

## Cultural Commitment cont.

### Involvement With Cultural Issues and Activities

The responsibilities Ōiwi leaders carry for their 'āina, culture, and community run deep and are reflected in high levels of engagement with cultural issues. Half of all Native Hawaiians (50%) reported that issues like self-determination, Native land rights, and Hawaiian language revitalization were “extremely important” to them. Native Hawaiians age 45 to 54 voiced this belief most often (59%), whereas Native Hawaiians age 18 to 24 voiced this belief least often (45%). Geographically, Native Hawaiians on Maui County reported the highest rate of engagement with cultural issues (59%; *Figure 3*).

*Figure 3. Native Hawaiians from Maui County reported the highest level of engagement with cultural issues.*



When asked to identify one Native Hawaiian issue they care a lot about, Native Hawaiians provided a range of responses.<sup>2</sup> Common issues were the protection of 'āina, a desire for greater sustainability, and a fear of being “pushed out” by the high cost of living in Hawai'i. As one respondent wrote, *“Making sure most Native Hawaiians are able to live good lives in Hawai'i . . . that they can afford housing, get good jobs, support themselves and their family, and that the Hawaiian culture is respected and cherished.”*

Ōiwi leaders ho'omau (perpetuate) cultural values and principles through their actions. Participation in cultural activities cements pilina (relationships) and transfer of 'ike (knowledge). About half of Native Hawaiians (48%) reported they participate in cultural activities at least weekly, and one-fifth (20%) reported doing so daily. Native Hawaiians in Maui County (55%) and Hawai'i County (54%) reported the highest rates of participation at least weekly, compared to the 48% statewide average of 48% among Native Hawaiians. Native Hawaiians age 45 to 54 were most active in weekly and daily cultural activities (53%).

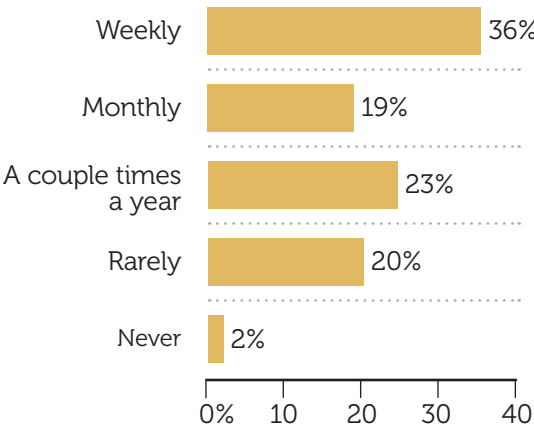
<sup>2</sup>For more information on the analysis of this item see: <https://www.ksbe.edu/assets/pdfs/Imi-Pono-Strengths-Challenges-August-2021.pdf>.



Cultural Commitment cont.

A crucial attribute of ‘Ōiwi Leadership is its application to the collective good. Over half (55%) of Native Hawaiians reported spending time contributing to the wellbeing of the Native Hawaiian community at least monthly. Among this group, 36% did so weekly (Figure 4). Native Hawaiians in Kaua’i County reported weekly (17%) or daily (13%) contributions, which were lower than the rates in other counties. Among all age groups, Native Hawaiians age 45 to 54 most often made daily contributions (24%). These results suggest that, even though there is some variation in contributing to the wellbeing of the Native Hawaiian community, many choose to do so on a regular basis.

Figure 4. Over half of Native Hawaiians reported spending time contributing to the wellbeing of the Native Hawaiian community at least monthly.





## Community Contribution

### Sense of Belonging

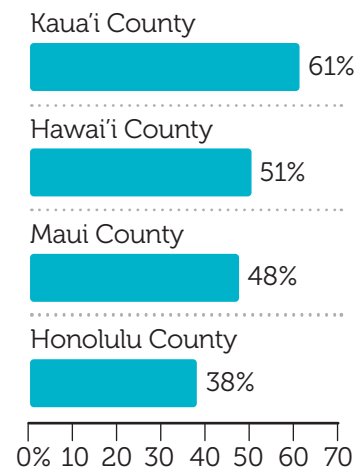
In addition to Cultural Commitment, a second set of attributes in Ōiwi Leadership is Community Contribution. It follows that the strong kuleana Native Hawaiians hold toward āina, culture, and place should result in community mindedness and civic engagement. Across Hawai‘i, 44% of Native Hawaiians reported feeling “quite a bit” or “extremely” connected to their geographic community. This rate was noticeably higher for Kaua‘i County, where 61% of Native Hawaiians said they felt that way (*Figure 5*).

In addition to feeling connected to where they live, Native Hawaiians displayed a strong attachment to one another. Half of Native Hawaiians (50%) reported feeling “quite a bit” or “extremely” connected to their ethnic or cultural community. There was a similar trend across counties and age groups, with the exception of Native Hawaiians age 45 to 54, who reported a higher rate of connectedness (57%). This finding aligns with prior research on civic engagement among middle-age adults nationwide.

Likewise, 64% of Native Hawaiians reported feeling at least moderately connected to a spiritual or religious community. Native Hawaiians in Kaua‘i County reported a significantly higher rate (72%) than those in other counties. Two-thirds of Native Hawaiians age 55 or older (66%) reported feeling at least moderately connected to a spiritual community. Overall, 9 in 10 Native Hawaiians (90%), said they believed in a “higher power” such as God or other deities. This percentage was relatively stable across age groups and counties, suggesting that spirituality—in various forms—is very common within Native Hawaiian families.



*Figure 5. Native Hawaiians in Kaua‘i County reported the highest levels of connectedness to their geographic community.*



“ I continue to educate my children daily about Hawaiian values and cultural practices. We are involved daily with our kūpuna. We only know how to live Hawaiian, its not an addition, it is our way of life.

- Survey respondent

## Community Contribution cont.

### Civic Engagement

Ōiwi leaders combine commitment with action through multiple forms of civic engagement. In the past year, just over half of Native Hawaiians made a donation to benefit the community. Further, 38% of Native Hawaiians said they worked with others in the community to achieve a common goal, 38% participated in a virtual or in-person event to address a community issue, and 16% organized a community event. Additionally, 27% of Native Hawaiians submitted testimony, and 12% met with a local official about an issue that was important to them (*Figure 6*).



*Figure 6. Just over half of Native Hawaiians made a donation to benefit the community.*



51%

Made a donation to benefit the community



38%

Worked with others in the community to achieve a common goal (for example, fundraising for the local library)



38%

Participated in an event to address a community issue



27%

Wrote a letter or submitted testimony about an issue that was important to them in the community to achieve a common goal (for example, fundraising for the local library)



16%

Organized an event to address a community issue



12%

Met with a local official about an issue that was important to them a community issue





## Community Contribution cont.

The rates at which Native Hawaiians demonstrated civic engagement varied slightly by geography. Higher percentages of Native Hawaiians in Kaua'i County reported submitting testimony (40%) and organizing community events (24%), compared to the statewide averages (27% and 16%, respectively). Likewise, a higher percentage of Native Hawaiians in Hawai'i County reported working with others to improve their community (44%), compared to the statewide average (38%). Native Hawaiians age 45 to 54 consistently reported the highest levels of civic engagement, apart from organizing a community event, which is consistent with national research on this topic.<sup>4</sup>



Community Contribution begins with a sense of belonging and grows into a lifestyle. When asked where they served as a leader, 42% of Native Hawaiians reported they did so in community organizations. This result ranged from 47% of Native Hawaiians in Kaua'i County to 37% in Maui County. Rates were highest among Native Hawaiians age 35 to 44 (46%) and lowest among Native Hawaiians age 18 to 24 (32%).



“ I run a Hawaiian culture-focused non-profit, and I am a mom of a Hawaiian child I am trying to ground in our culture and 'āina from a young age in ways that I wasn't.

- Survey respondent

A total of 514 Native Hawaiians answered the question “In what ways do you strengthen the Native Hawaiian community?” Because a single comment could be coded multiple ways, open-ended responses accounted for 714 responses. The most common response to the question was by learning, sharing, or teaching others about Native Hawaiian history, language, and culture (23%). Respondents also felt they strengthened the Native Hawaiian community through their work as educators, health care professionals, business owners, and other professions (13%). Participating in community discussions, events, and organizations was another reported contribution (12%).

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<sup>4</sup>Smith, A. (2013, April 25). Civic engagement in the digital age. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2013/04/25/civic-engagement-in-the-digital-age/>.

## Conclusion

Leadership is a key component of social transformation.<sup>5</sup> Prior studies of 'Ōiwi Leadership support the significance of cultural and civic engagement.<sup>6</sup> Results from the 'Imi Pono Hawai'i Wellbeing Survey indicate these attributes exist among Native Hawaiians at high rates, with occasional variation across counties and age groups. The prevalence of these traits during a global pandemic cannot be overlooked, evidenced by **one in two Native Hawaiians working to improve the Native Hawaiian community at least monthly, and one in five doing so daily.**

The 'Ōiwi Leadership attributes described in this brief are categorized into two, interrelated groups. The first, Cultural Commitment, reflects the intrinsic value Native Hawaiians ascribe to their culture. It underscores the importance of cultural heritage, 'āina and kai interactions, and involvement with cultural issues and activities. Upon this kahua rests the kuahu of Community Contribution with a strong sense of belonging, anchoring and inspiring civic engagement. Results for these two sets of attributes suggest that 'Ōiwi leaders are present and doing important work across Hawai'i communities.



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<sup>5</sup> Morris, A. D., & Staggenborg, S. (2004). Leadership in social movements. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 171–196). Blackwell Publishing.

<sup>6</sup> Borofsky, A. R. H. (2010). Measuring Native Hawaiian leadership among graduates of Native Hawaiian charter schools. *Hūlili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being*, 6, 169–185.

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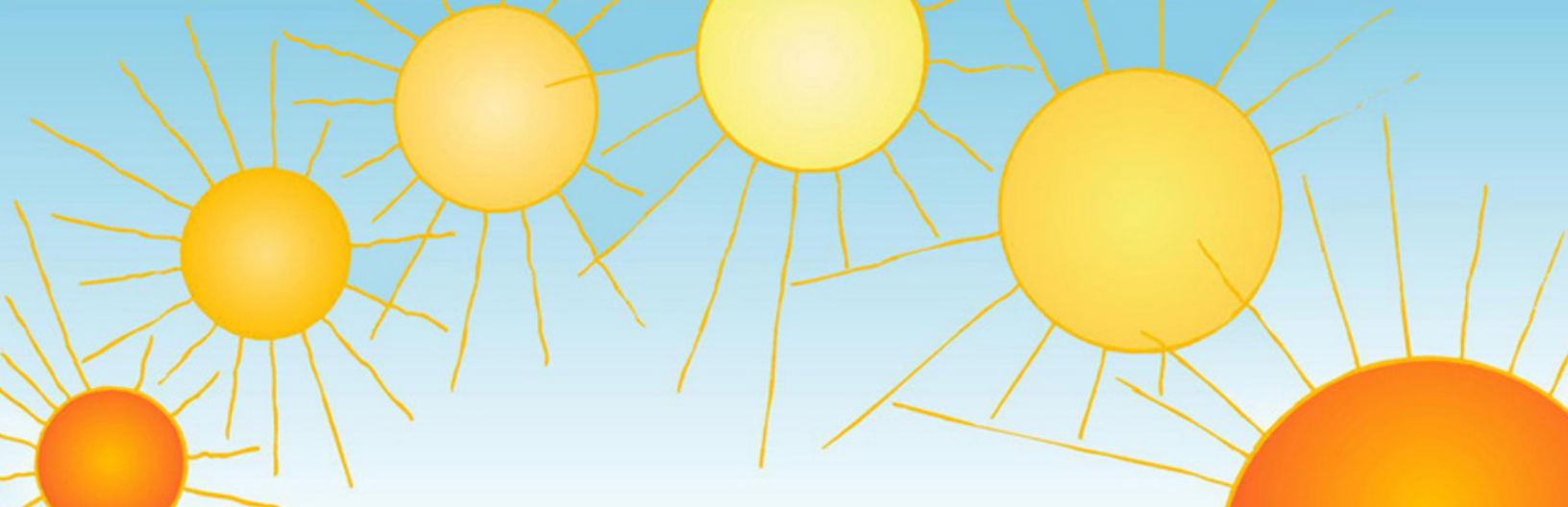


## Conclusion cont.

While this brief examines data for individuals, it is important to note that environmental conditions are critical factors that enable or inhibit the development of 'Ōiwi Leadership. The concept of 'auamo kuleana (to fulfill one's responsibilities) also recognizes the situational role of leadership –knowing when to step forward or when to practice good followship. Lastly, the attributes of Cultural Commitment and Community Contribution are not limited to Native Hawaiians and future research could explore their prevalence among other ethnic groups.

Still, Native Hawaiian values are core to the servant leadership and collective efficacy generated by 'Ōiwi leaders. These values persist despite historical and political forces that constrain Native Hawaiian agency and leadership. Among other things, 'Ōiwi leaders must wrestle with structural racism, persistent inequity, social obligations, and financial hurdles when driving change. Still, there is a feeling that critical mass is building as ranks of 'Ōiwi leaders grow each year through Hawaiian culture-based education programs, community-based nonprofits, and Native Hawaiian-owned businesses.





## Next Steps

Data from the 'Imi Pono Hawai'i Wellbeing Survey highlight attributes of 'Ōiwi Leadership, which may mitigate challenges and advance social change in Hawai'i. Despite impressive levels of self-reported 'Ōiwi Leadership across the islands, stubborn structural barriers stand in the way.

**The following actions may be taken to remove inhibitors, increase visibility, and amplify 'Ōiwi leaders in Hawai'i and beyond:**



- **Educate the public** on historical and contemporary 'Ōiwi leaders.
- **Support organizations and programs** that develop Native Hawaiian identity and 'Ōiwi Leadership.
- **Identify, elevate, and network** 'Ōiwi leaders across key sectors (education, business, health, government).
- **Research factors and conditions** (e.g., mentorship) associated with successful 'Ōiwi Leadership.
- **Share survey results** with community members to seek out additional interpretations and applications.

**Note.**

The confidence intervals for the State and Honolulu County—including breakouts for Native Hawaiians within these areas—are five percent (5%) or less. Confidence intervals for other counties are higher; therefore findings for these counties should not be generalized beyond the survey sample.