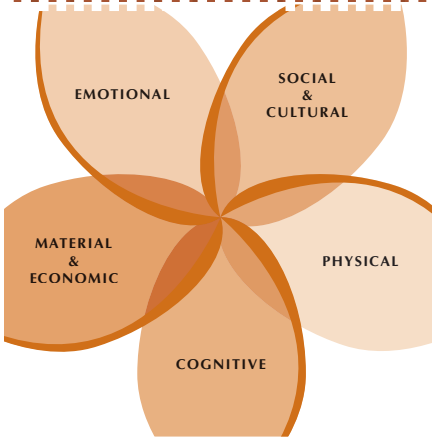


NATIVE  
HAWAIIAN  
WELL-BEING

JULY 2011



# Ka Huaka'i Snapshot:

## Physical Well-Being

### Introduction

Ka Huaka'i (literally, the journey) refers to a series of data reports designed to take a comprehensive look at factors affecting Native Hawaiian well-being.<sup>1</sup> The holistic nature of Native Hawaiian well-being is represented as a pua (flower) with five inter-related petals.

Using recent data, this snapshot provides a high-level look at selected physical and health-related trends for Native Hawaiians. A more complete report detailing physical well-being will be released separately. In 2013, a complete report addressing all five components of Native Hawaiian well-being will be made available.

#### Recent health-related highlights:

- Though Native Hawaiians lead the state in smoking, rates have decreased in recent years.
- Overweight and obesity rates among Native Hawaiians adults are the highest of all major ethnic groups in Hawai'i.
- Native Hawaiian students engage in physical activity more than their peers.
- The rates of Native Hawaiians who missed a needed doctor visit due to cost are the highest of Hawai'i's major ethnic groups.

#### Recommended Citation:

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KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

<sup>1</sup> Ka Huaka'i (2005) has its roots in The Native Hawaiian Educational Assessment (1983). For more information about this series of data reports, which includes a 2009 update, visit [www.ksbe.edu/spi/reports.php](http://www.ksbe.edu/spi/reports.php).

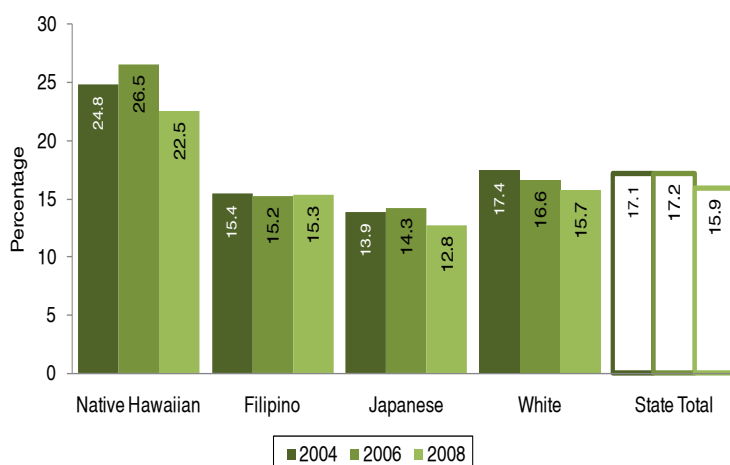
## Findings

### Smoking

According to the Hawai'i Department of Health's Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS 2003 to 2009) data, the rates of smoking among Native Hawaiians (averaged across three-year intervals) have decreased slightly between 2004 and 2008, but have consistently exceeded statewide rates (Figure 1).

- In 2004, 24.8 percent of Native Hawaiian adults (based on three-year averages) reported being a smoker, compared with 17.1 percent of the total state adult population.
- Between 2004 and 2008, the rate of smoking among Native Hawaiian adults has consistently been seven or more percentage points higher than the statewide rate.
- Although estimates of smoking fluctuate, the three-year averaged rate among Native Hawaiian adults appears to be diminishing, decreasing from 26.5 percent in 2006 to 22.5 percent in 2008.

Figure 1. Trends in individuals who smoke as a percentage of all adults [three-year averages, adults 18 years and older, by race/ethnicity, state of Hawai'i, selected years]



Data source: Hawai'i Department of Health, BRFSS 2003 to 2009.

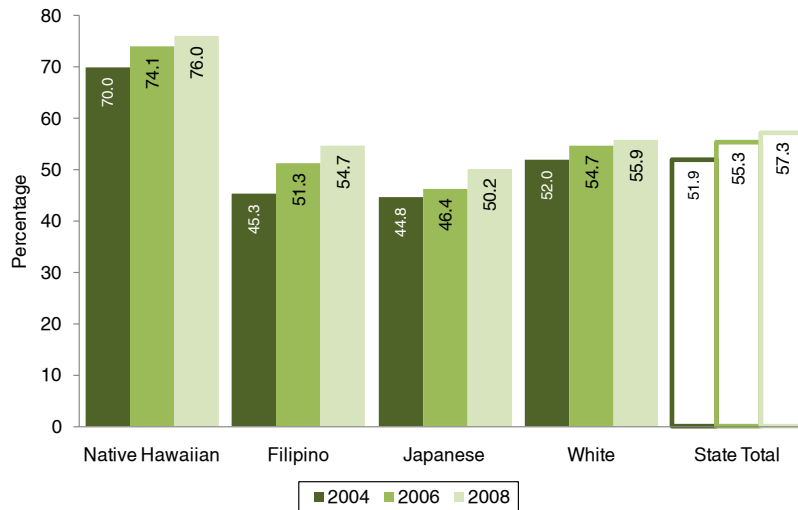
Note: Data for the Chinese population are not available.

### Weight Problems and Obesity

Data from the BRFSS (2003 to 2009) indicate that Native Hawaiians are significantly more likely to be overweight or obese than those in other ethnic groups. Figure 2 shows rates of being overweight or obese among Native Hawaiian adults, averaged across three-year intervals (2004 estimate is the average of 2003, 2004, and 2005).

- Recent years have seen an upward trend in those overweight or obese for all ethnic groups.
- Between 2004 and 2008, the prevalence of weight problems and obesity among Native Hawaiians, based on three-year averages, was consistently 18-19 percentage points higher than the statewide rate.
- The 2008 three-year average indicates that about three-quarters of Native Hawaiian adults (76.0 percent) were overweight or obese, compared with slightly more than half of the total population.
- Obesity prevalence among Native Hawaiians (45.5 percent) is three times higher than for Japanese (14.0 percent) and twice that of the state (22.6 percent) (not shown).

Figure 2. Trends in individuals who are overweight or obese\* as a percentage of all adults [three-year averages, adults 18 years and older, by race/ethnicity, state of Hawai'i, selected years]



Data source: Hawai'i Department of Health, BRFSS 2003 to 2009.

Note: Data for the Chinese population not available. Overweight is defined as a body mass index of 25 to 29.9; obese equates to a body mass index of 30 or higher.

Results from the Hawai'i YRBS indicate that Native Hawaiian students are more likely to have weight problems than their non-Hawaiian peers. However, the same study reports that Native Hawaiian students are also more likely to engage in physical activity. These two apparently conflicting results are shown in Table 1.

- Approximately 23.7 percent of Native Hawaiian high school students were obese compared to 9.9 percent of non-Hawaiian high school students.
- Encouragingly, Native Hawaiian middle school students were more likely than their non-Hawaiian peers to engage in physical activities.

Table 1. Students exhibiting selected indicators of weight problems and physical activity as a percentage of all public school students [middle and high school students, by Native Hawaiian ethnicity, state of Hawai'i, 2003]

|  | Middle School   |              | High School     |              |
|--|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
|  | Native Hawaiian | Non-Hawaiian | Native Hawaiian | Non-Hawaiian |
| Obese <sup>a</sup>                     | n/a             | n/a          | 23.7            | 9.9          |
| At risk of becoming obese <sup>a</sup> | n/a             | n/a          | 16.3            | 12.8         |
| Trying to lose weight                  | 59.2            | 47.0         | 56.8            | 46.9         |
| Physically active <sup>b</sup>         | 49.6            | 42.2         | 41.0            | 31.2         |

Source: Hawai'i Department of Health, YRBS 2009.

Notes: a. For this study, "obese" was defined as a body mass index (BMI)  $\geq$  95th percentile of the BMI distribution for a child's particular age and sex. "At risk for becoming obese" was defined as a BMI  $\geq$  85th percentile but  $<$  the 95th percentile. b. More specifically, physical activity that increased the heart rate and made a student "breathe hard" some of the time for a total of at least 60 minutes per day on 5 or more of the 7 days before the survey. \*See YRBS 2009 for complete questions.

*Preventive Care*

Figure 3. Trends in individuals who missed a needed doctor visit within the past year because of the cost as a percentage of all adults [three-year averages, by race/ethnicity, state of Hawai'i, selected years]



Data source: Hawai'i Department of Health, BRFSS 2003 to 2009.

Note: Data for the Chinese population are not available.

The high cost of medical care may not only reduce the frequency of routine checkups, but also deter families from seeking treatment when health problems arise. Figure 3 shows the percentage of adults (averaged across three-year intervals) who have foregone needed medical treatment because of cost considerations.

- Among the major ethnic groups, Native Hawaiians were most likely to have deferred a needed visit to the doctor because of the associated costs. In 2008, the rate of foregone medical treatment among Native Hawaiians (based on three-year averages) was 11.1 percent, compared with a statewide rate of 7.0 percent.
- The percentage of the population that deferred treatment because of finances has been increasing across all major ethnic groups. The most noticeable increase is among Native Hawaiians, increasing from a three-year average of 8.6 percent in 2004 to 11.1 percent in 2008.

## Conclusion

Ka Huaka'i depicts a complex journey of Native Hawaiian well-being. This particular snapshot on the physical well-being of Native Hawaiians reports that in some areas the gaps between Native Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians are diminishing, while in other areas, large disparities remain. A number of improvements in the physical well-being of Native Hawaiians can be seen over the years, as well as many opportunities for improvement. Though Native Hawaiians have experienced a decline in the percentage of adults who smoke in recent years, they continue to lead the state smoking and obesity rates. Continuing efforts to improve the overall health of the Native Hawaiian population is needed to increase and sustain a positive movement toward a healthier Native Hawaiian community.

## Next steps

Next in this series of data reports is a snapshot into trends related to Native Hawaiian social and cultural well-being. For more information about Ka Huaka'i, visit [www.ksbe.edu/spi](http://www.ksbe.edu/spi).