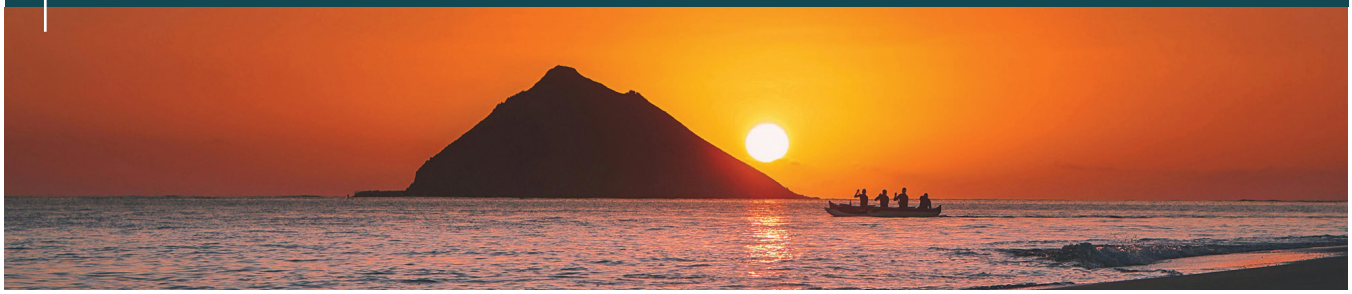
COMMUNITY DATA SPOTLIGHT
SCIMA



By Justin Hong, Principal of SCIMA

TOPICS Native Hawaiians, Out-migration

ABOUT

SCIMA is an independent research and evaluation company that works primarily with Native Hawaiian serving organizations in Hawai'i. It is focused on understanding, supporting, and advocating for Native Hawaiian communities. SCIMA has worked with multiple organizations to understand issues around education, health, economics, spirituality, and changes in demographics. These efforts have helped to support program development by and for Native Hawaiian communities, as well as bring visibility and clarity to key issues.

DATA NEEDS

SCIMA emphasizes the critical need for disaggregated data on Native Hawaiian communities for specific geographies. In the Aloha State, the Native Hawaiian population is defined as anyone who reports being of Native Hawaiian race or ancestry alone or in combination with other races or ethnicities. Despite the unique historical and cultural significance of Native Hawaiians, this population remains largely underserved and overlooked due to the lack of granular, community-specific data. Native Hawaiian communities were previously defined at the sub-county level (e.g., census tracts and county subdivisions), which revealed crucial insights into variations within neighborhoods. However, recent changes to the U.S. Census have resulted in the loss of county subdivision-level geographies for the Native Hawaiian population. This reliable middle ground for geographic resolution has been erased. Without this key level of granularity, the Native Hawaiian population becomes less visible, leading to inaccurate representation in both research and policymaking.

A significant example is the 2020 Census data. While it contains detailed demographic and housing characteristics (DHC-A and DHC-B), it excludes many of the tables that were contained in earlier Census releases, such as those in Summary Files 1 and 2 (SF1 and SF2). This lack of detailed, community-level data prevents effective tracking of population changes, thereby impeding the ability to discern key trends, such as out-migration, population aging, and community-level economic disparities over the past decade.

Native Hawaiians are the only major racial/ethnic group in Hawai'i with consistent negative net migration, indicating a critical need to understand out-migration patterns to the U.S. continent. The lack of detailed disaggregated data severely limits the ability to answer important questions, such as:

- How many Native Hawaiians have left Hawai'i, and what are the annual out-migration rates?
- From which communities are Native Hawaiians most likely to move?
- How do employment, educational attainment and homeownership influence migration patterns among Native Hawaiians?

Further, Native Hawaiians face multiple barriers that thwart equitable access to resources, the limited availability of which often is exacerbated by inadequate data collection. For instance, communities with lower employment rates or higher concentrations of young adults may be disproportionately affected by out-migration, but this cannot be adequately tracked without detailed, disaggregated data. Furthermore, recent Census data does not capture the complexities of mixed-race identities, leaving a significant portion of

the population uncounted or misclassified. This lack of visibility translates into diminished political power, limited funding opportunities, and poorly targeted community interventions. Detailed disaggregated data is crucial not only for understanding socioeconomic outcomes but also for ensuring fair representation during redistricting processes and other political activities. For the Native Hawaiian community to be effectively served, federal and state agencies must prioritize the collection of disaggregated data that accurately reflects community-specific needs. This data should capture nuanced details, such as migration patterns, educational attainment, employment status and household characteristics at the most granular and reliable geographic levels possible. Native Hawaiians' unique identity and experiences must be recognized across data collection processes, including those led by the U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and state and local Hawaiian agencies.

Ethnicity-specific population data for county subdivision-level geographies must be restored, and detailed tables that track changes over time must be included in Census reports. Only with accurate and detailed data can meaningful, data-driven solutions be developed to support Native Hawaiian communities and ensure that their voices are heard in policymaking and planning processes.

Learn more about SCIMA: Justin Hong, justinhong83@hotmail.com
Learn more about data policy: action@aapidata.com

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