

Hawaii Perspectives

Spring
2019
Report

Understanding the Mindset of Hawaii Residents

**Economic
Hardship**

**Persistent
Problems**


**Time
to Go?**

**Finding
Solutions**



An Initiative of
Pacific Resource Partnership





A Cause for Concern

Despite a strengthening national economy, continued low unemployment in Hawaii and record visitor arrivals to the Islands, Hawaii residents are not terribly optimistic about their future. The perennial issues — cost of living, housing affordability and homelessness — are of greater concern than ever, causing a good number of them to consider leaving the state.

In *Hawaii Perspectives 2019*, the largest public opinion survey conducted in Hawaii in recent months, residents express their concerns, struggles and hopes for Hawaii. Pacific Resource Partnership (PRP) is sharing survey results with leaders throughout the state to help make them more informed decision makers.

We welcome your questions and feedback.
Contact us at info@hawaiiperspectives.com.

PRP has been a contributing member of the community for more than 30 years, working on behalf of the 7,000 men and women employed as union carpenters and 240 large and small contractors. With our capabilities in research, industry relations and project advocacy, we are committed to building a stronger, more sustainable Hawaii in a way that promotes a vibrant economy, creates jobs and enhances the quality of life for all residents.

Paula H., 42
Manoa, Hawaii
Licensed Aesthetician
Mother of 3

An Initiative of
Pacific Resource Partnership



Methodology

A statewide survey of 942 registered voters was conducted February 4–12, 2019 via landlines and cellphones among professional interviewers.

506 interviews were conducted on Oahu, 174 interviews in Hawaii county, 155 interviews in Maui county, and 107 interviews in Kauai county. The data was then weighted to reflect the true composition of the Hawaii electorate.

The margin of error for the statewide sample is +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.

Once the survey was completed, researcher Lisa Grove followed up with four individuals with in–depth, open–ended interviews by phone. Verbatim quotes are used throughout the report.

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Due to rounding, "totals" of the individual components may differ by +/-1.

ALG Research

For over 20 years, ALG Research has helped a range of clients that include political campaigns and causes, corporations, nonprofits, foundations, and labor unions, develop strategies and messages to shape policy debates and achieve their objectives. The firm polled for President Obama in both 2008 and 2012, and currently polls for three U.S. Senators, five Governors, and more than 20 members of the U.S. House, as well as numerous mayors and local officials across the country.

ALG's nonprofit and issue clients include the Ford Foundation, Freedom for all Americans, AARP, EMILY's List, Rock the Vote, Third Way, the AFL–CIO and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Partner Lisa Grove has been based full–time in Hawaii since 2010, but her first assignment in the Islands was moderating focus groups for

Daniel Akaka in his first Senate bid in 1992. She has queried thousands of Hawaii voters on a wide range of topics since then, focusing mostly on public policy and politics. She also trains and mentors high school students on Lanai on qualitative and quantitative research methods. Their recent work was published last September in the Hawaii Journal of Medicine and Public Health.

The American Association of Political Consultants recently nominated Grove for “Pollster of the Year.” Statistician and writer Nate Silver, who founded FiveThirtyEight, called Grove one of the most accurate pollsters in the country.

ANZALONE
LISZT
GROVE | research

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Life in Hawaii Is Not Always Paradise

While a majority of residents believe they are better off than their parents, they are less optimistic about what the future holds for the next generation. Many say the gap between rich and poor is widening, and that the cost of living is causing significant financial stress.

Income Disparity and Financial Well-Being

► **Despite an expanding economy** and low unemployment, there has been a notable shift in perceptions of current economic well-being compared to a year earlier. In Hawaii Perspectives 2015, PRP found that 51% of respondents indicated they were much or somewhat better off than they had been a year earlier. Only 35% responded similarly in the current poll, with 36% viewing their situations as little changed.

Compared to 2015, far fewer Hawaii voters think they are “better off” than they were 12 months prior.

“Life has gotten more difficult here. Prices and taxes keep going up.” —Sally, retired teacher, Kaneohe

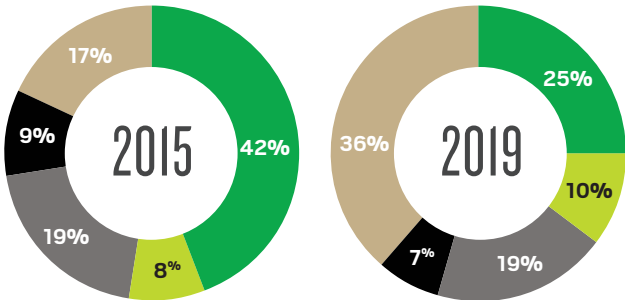
Optimism Declines

- Somewhat Better

Much Better
- Somewhat Worse

Much Worse
- About the Same

Would you say that you and your family are better off or worse off financially than you were a year ago?

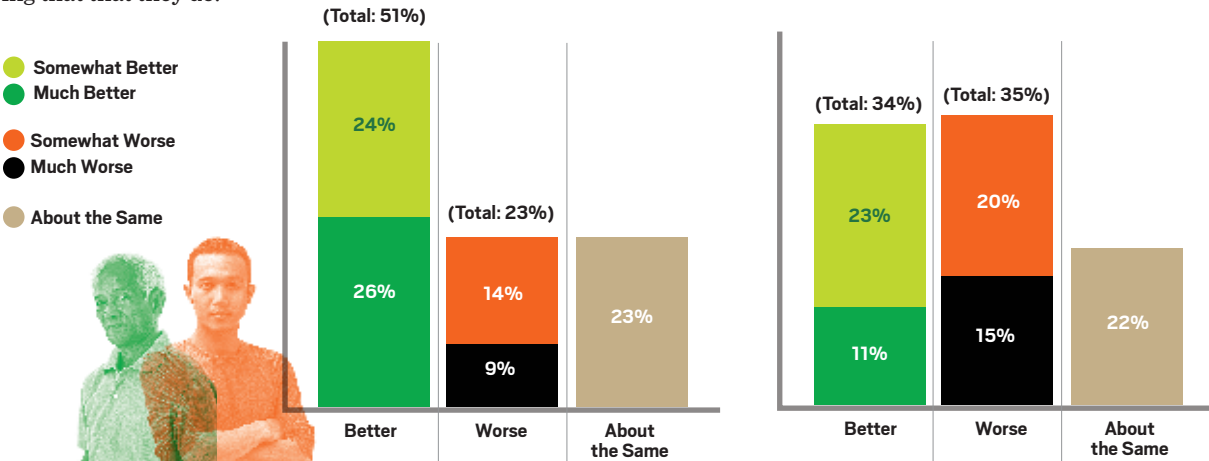


Uncertain Future

► **The future is** anything but bright for future generations. Voters believe their children will not enjoy the same standard of living that they do.

Compared to your parents when they were the age you are now, is the current standard of living better, about the same, or worse than theirs was?

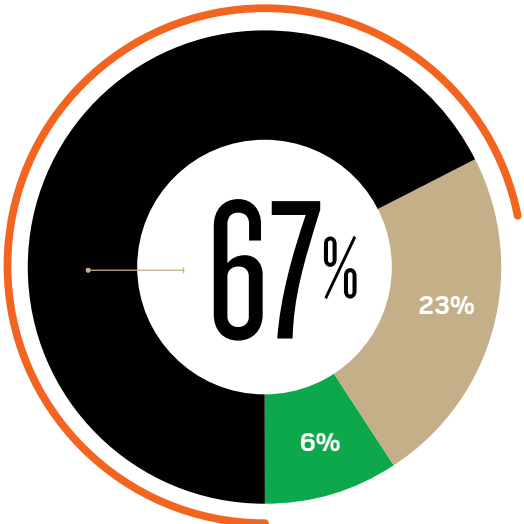
When your own children or children you know are at the age you are now, will their standard of living be better, about the same, or worse than yours is now?



► **Although only 26% of residents** describe themselves as lower-middle or lower class, the reality is that nearly one third of Hawaii households have incomes below \$50,000.

There is an increasing perception that the divide between haves and have-nots is growing. It's greatest among those who define themselves as financially insecure, but broadly prevalent, notably among both those under 55 and those who consider themselves financially comfortable.

Residents say living costs are the biggest contributors to their financial worries. While specifics vary among counties, there is a shared belief that none of the factors seem likely to change quickly.



Worth Noting: 72% of voters under the age 55 think the gap is getting wider compared to 62% among voters over the age 55.

83% of financially insecure voters think the gap is getting wider compared to **52% of the financially secure** voters

Mind the Gap

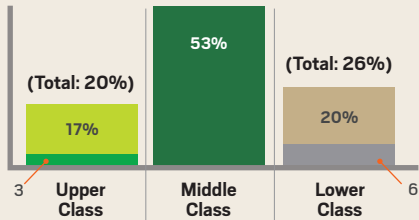
Do you think the gap between the rich and poor in Hawaii is:

- Getting Wider
- Staying About the Same
- Getting Narrower

Class Notes

Do you consider yourself part of the...

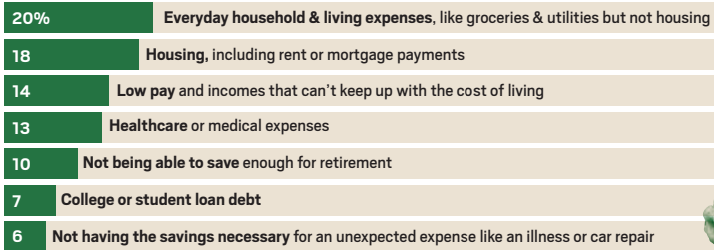
- Upper Class
- Upper-Middle Class
- Middle Class
- Lower-Middle Class
- Lower Class



Despite thinking income inequality is getting worse, these voters are decidedly “middle class.” A majority of voters in Oahu, Hawaii, and Kauai counties consider themselves “middle class.” The numbers are a bit lower on Maui – because more voters there identify as “upper.”

Everyday Woes

Thinking about your own family, which of the following is your family's biggest financial worry?



Everyday living is the biggest financial stressor, followed by housing, low pay, healthcare, and not being able to save for retirement. On the Big Island, 1 in 5 are most worried about healthcare, while daily expenses make Oahu fret and housing is a key stressor on Maui and Kauai.



Same Problems, Different Year

Residents clearly believe that Hawaii's problems are many and see little being done to fix them. They are increasingly worried about the future and broadly negative on President Donald Trump.

“We need to be working for solutions, not just spouting out problems.” —Lynn, retired state employee, Hilo

Headed in the Wrong Direction

► **Four years ago**, a plurality of residents believed leaders were steering Hawaii in the right direction. Today, residents are split on the state's current course.

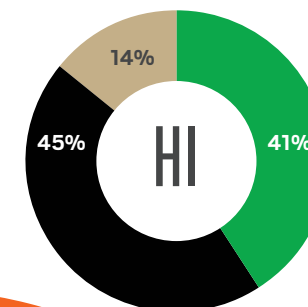
Yet Hawaii's track is less errant than that of the nation's under Trump. Unsurprisingly, residents identifying as Democrats believe the country is headed in the wrong direction. Of the 62% of voters harboring an unfavorable impression of Trump, 83% view him as very unfavorable.

No Aloha for Trump

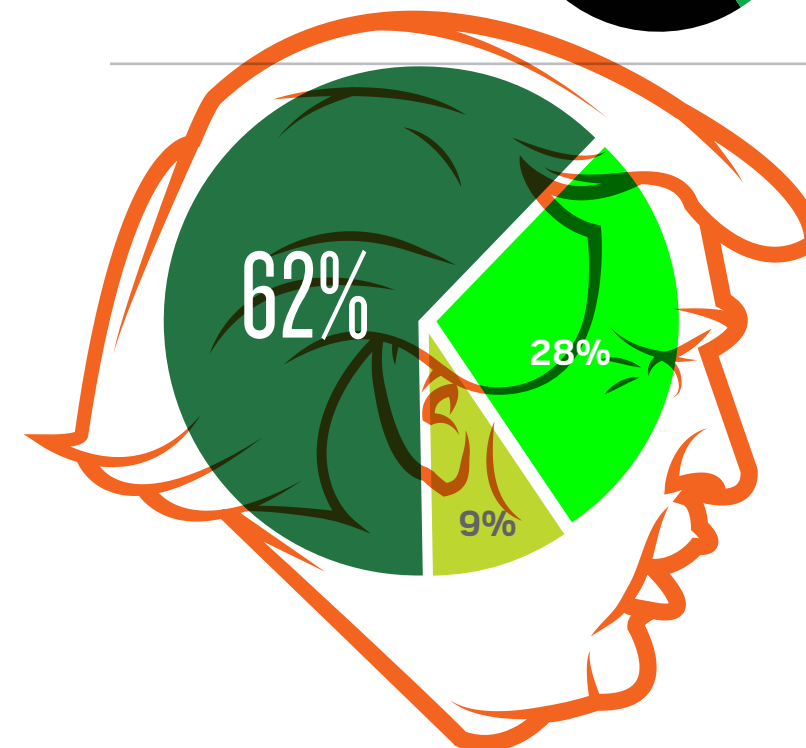
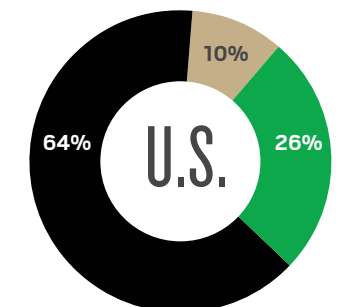
While voters are divided over Hawaii's course, most are pessimistic about the country's path. A majority (52%) of voters can be considered “national skeptics” — the U.S. is off on the wrong track and they're unfavorable toward President Trump.

- Right Direction
- Wrong Direction
- Don't Know

Would you say that things in Hawaii are going in the right direction, or would you say that things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?



Would you say that things in the U.S. are going in the right direction, or would you say that things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?



Do you have a favorable, neutral or unfavorable impression of Donald Trump?

- Unfavorable
- Favorable
- Neutral

The dour mood on the country's course closely matches Trump's numbers — he is reviled in Hawaii. Democrats, younger, college-educated white women, and voters in Hawaii and Maui counties are most unfavorable toward the President.

Highest % Very Unfavorable

Overall	51%
Democrats	75%
White women <55	73%
White college grad women	68%
Big Island	63%
Maui	63%

Persistent Problems

► **Financial circumstances influence** how residents view the direction of the state. Those who are financially secure believe Hawaii is moving in the right direction, while those with fewer financial means – along with long-time Hawaii residents – say the state is veering off course.

Where do residents believe Hawaii legislators should focus their attention? On homelessness – Hawaii’s most visible problem, and its biggest one, especially among older residents. The high cost of living and the quality of schools and education are also concerns that should be addressed, particularly for those under 55.

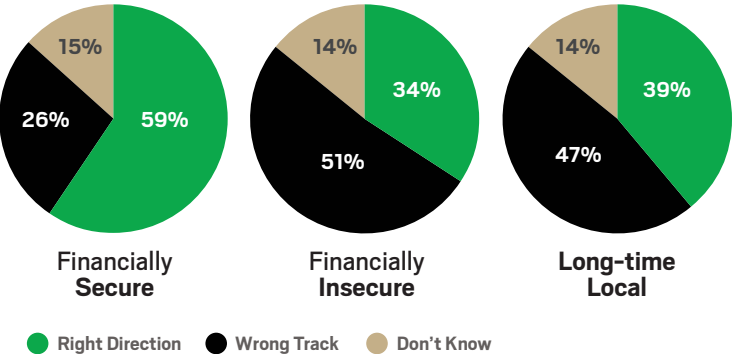
When it comes to personal worries, affordable housing ranks as the greatest concern, followed by the cost of living and homelessness. And residents say these problems are getting worse.

Defining Government Priorities

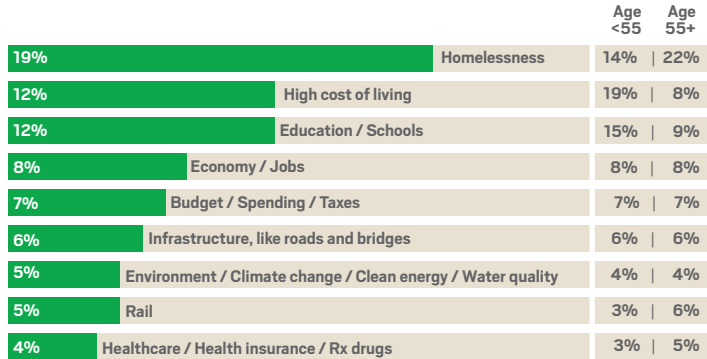
What do you feel is the most important issue or problem that the Governor and state legislature should make a top priority?

Homelessness is the #1 issue voters want addressed, including among a plurality of older voters. Concern over high cost of living is more prevalent among younger voters.

Would you say that things in HAWAII are going in the right direction, or would you say that things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?



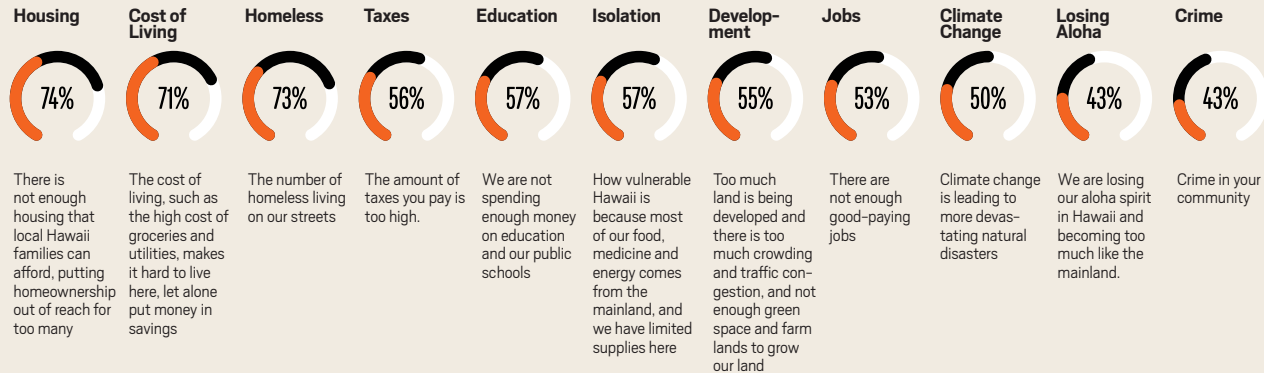
One’s personal financial situation likely influences their attitudes towards the direction of the state. A majority of financially secure voters believe Hawaii is moving in the right direction and vice versa. A plurality (47%) of voters who’ve attended high school in Hawaii are also more pessimistic.



Personal Worries

Is this one of the things that worries you most, a great deal, some...

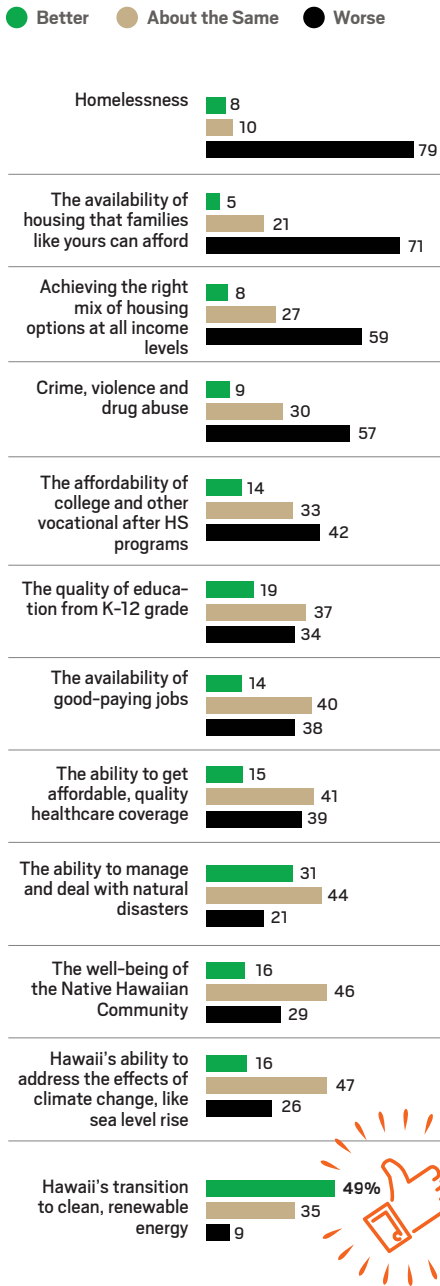
Most (orange)
Most + A Great Deal (black)



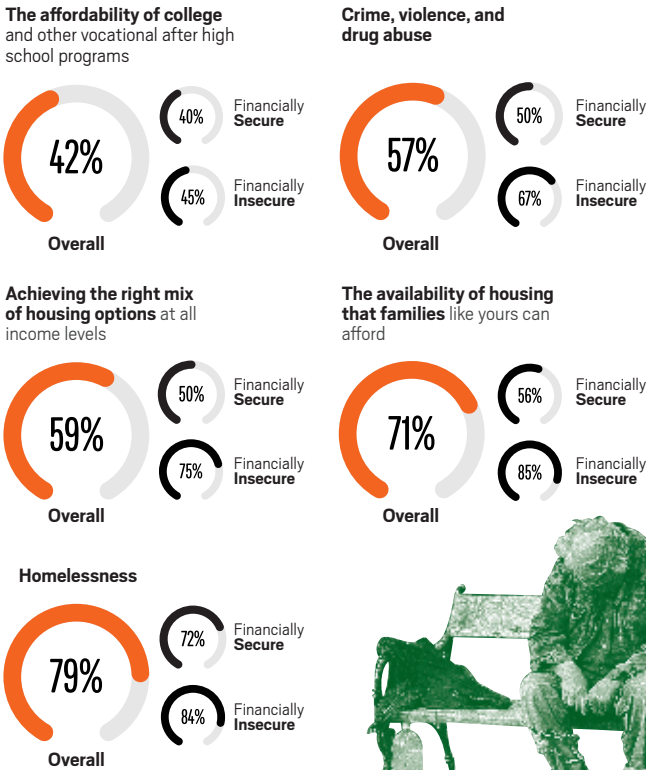
► **Residents give high marks to Hawaii’s progress on renewable energy.** It’s the only area where voters see improvement. The state gets low scores when it comes to handling issues such as homelessness and affordable housing.

Issues Affecting Hawaii

Do you think this issue has gotten better, stayed about the same, or gotten worse over the past couple of years.



Issues affecting Hawaii that have gotten worse over the past couple of years. (% Gotten Worse)



Financially insecure voters are much more likely to think crime and the availability of affordable housing have gotten worse, and vice versa for the financially secure.

Is It Time To Go?

More residents, particularly younger ones, are asking themselves this question. And the cost of living is what's driving their decision to leave. It's a trend that seems likely to continue and one that could threaten Hawaii's future. When young people can't afford to stay here, everyone loses.



“It’s challenging for us Hawaii locals to successfully find a home where the average price tag in town is in the millions.” —Paula, Licensed Aesthetician, Honolulu

Pushed Out of Paradise

► An alarming 45% percent of residents are choosing to leave Hawaii or considering doing so. Two-thirds of 18-34 year olds have considered leaving or have a member of their household who has considered leaving or left the state. Over half of those in demographic groups key to Hawaii’s future rank among potential exit candidates: college graduates, graduates of private schools and parents of private school students, and middle-class households with incomes above \$60,000.

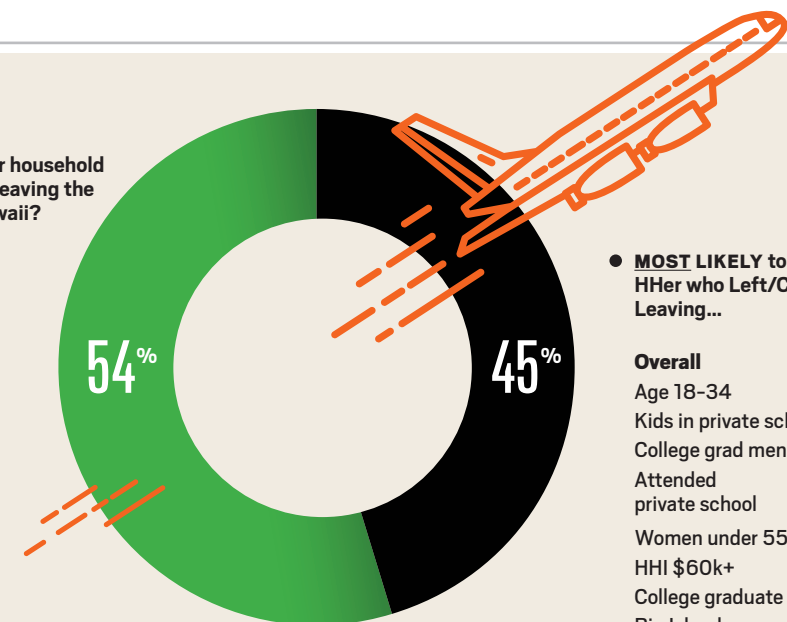
The biggest issue pushing people out is the cost of living. Two related issues, insufficient job opportunities and the expense of housing, contribute as well.

Flight Risk

Have you or has anyone in your household ever thought seriously about leaving the state or have recently left Hawaii?

● **LEAST LIKELY** to Have HHer who Left/Considered Leaving...

Overall	54%
HHI <\$25k	67
Kauai	65
AJA	64
Seniors (age 65+)	62
Women 55+	62
High school or less	60
Asian women	60

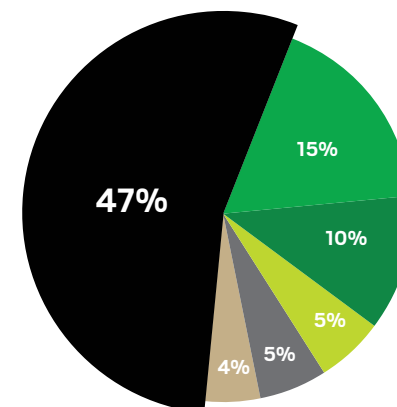


● **MOST LIKELY** to Have HHer who Left/Considered Leaving...

Overall	45%
Age 18-34	66
Kids in private school	56
College grad men	54
Attended private school	54
Women under 55	54
HHI \$60k+	51
College graduate	51
Big Island	51
Renters	50

More than 4-in-10 live in households where leaving the state is considered. Younger voters, especially millennials, college-educated men, certain white voters and residents of Oahu and Big Island are most likely to have considered moving or have householders who have.

Older, less well-educated and low income voters are among the most inclined to stay put.



Aloha Oe?

For those considering leaving:
What makes you think about leaving, or for immediate family members who have left, what was the primary reason?

- Cost of living
- More job opportunities
- Housing is too expensive
- Want to be near children or other family member
- Education
- Quality of life / HI is losing its aloha / HI is changing too much



Finding Solutions

Residents believe life in Hawaii would be better if meaningful fixes could be found for our most pressing issues: cost of living, affordable housing, homelessness and education.

Priorities for Hawaii's Future

"I am not as concerned for myself as much as I am for the homeless. We are not providing as many options for them. —Sally, retired teacher, Kaneohe

► **Costs are a factor** for many Hawaii residents. A majority of them cited lower costs as key to improving the quality of life here. There was little variation between counties, although high taxes stood out for Big Island residents.

Government action is central to addressing the issue of homelessness in Hawaii. Investment in men-

tal health, substance treatment, and creating permanent housing pathways were widely cited. The second most cited approach was to take a more aggressive stance to remove the homeless from public spaces.

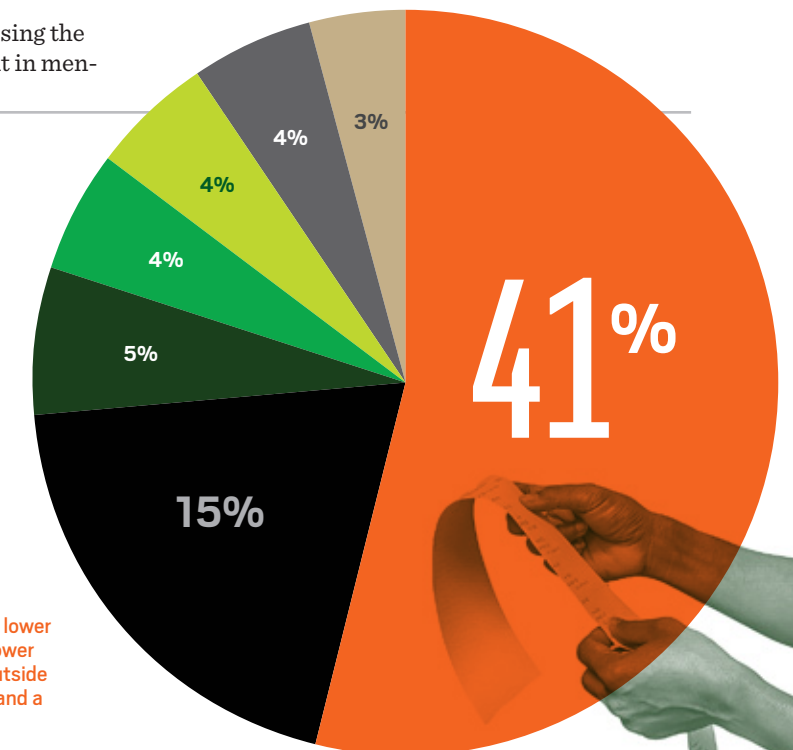
Life Fixes

What would make life better for you and your family?

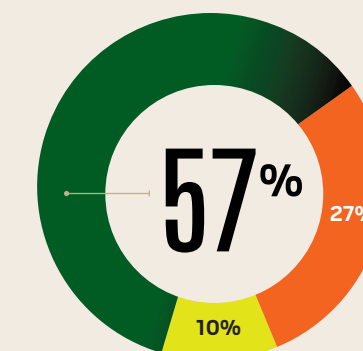
[OPEN-ENDED]

- Lower prices/Cost of Living/Housing
- Lower taxes
- New President / Get rid of Trump
- Job security / Find job / Wage
- Less traffic
- Lower healthcare costs
- Less government regulation

Voters say to improve life, make it more affordable: lower prices (along with more money), lower taxes, and a lower cost of living are all cited. Lower prices top the list outside of the Big Island which narrowly prefers lower taxes and a lower cost of living.



Helping the Homeless



When it comes to addressing the homelessness problem, which of the following comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right:

- Invest More**
State and county governments need to invest more in mental health, drug treatment and other programs designed to move the homeless into permanent housing.
- More Aggressive Stance**
State and county governments need to take a tougher, more aggressive stance when it comes to removing the homeless from public spaces, including parks.
- Other Pressing Needs**
State and county governments have too many other pressing needs. We need local nonprofits and religious groups to carry the burden.

Nearly 6-in-10 believe in government investments in mental health, drug and other assistance to help move homeless people into permanent housing.

Raising the Bar for Education, Creating Opportunities

► **The belief that improving education and schools will allow children and grandchildren to live better lives is widespread.** More economic opportunities would be an outcome, which ranks second as a tool for enhancing life for the next generation.

Growth must be responsible. More development is seen as a means to creating jobs and more affordable housing. Residents opposed to additional development numbered less than one in four.

Support for increasing the minimum wage to \$15/hour is strong and broad. It grows significantly when the wage increase is combined with offsetting credits offered to small businesses.



Better Schools, Better Lives

What would make life better for your children and grandchildren, or for children who you know?

[OPEN-ENDED]



30%

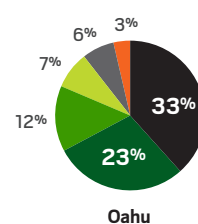
23%

11%

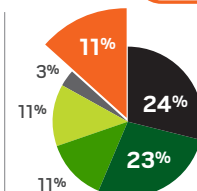
7%

5%

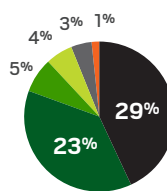
4%



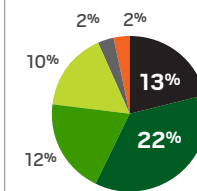
Oahu



Big Island



Maui



Kauai

- Improve Education
- Lower Cost of Living/Prices/Housing
- Find Jobs
- Address Climate Change
- Lower Taxes
- Affordable Healthcare

“While we don’t want these big tall buildings, if we don’t build higher, we are going to end up building out. I just think we need to keep these high rises in a particular area or soon we will look like Hong Kong.”

—Richard, veteran, Honolulu

Good Growth

Which statement do you agree with more, even if none are exactly right.

A ●

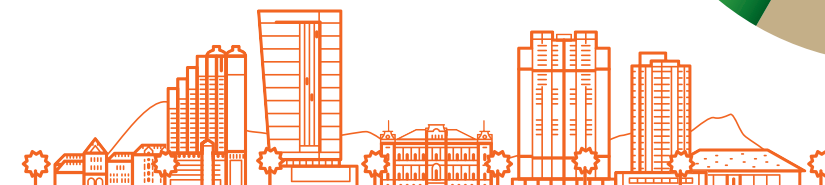
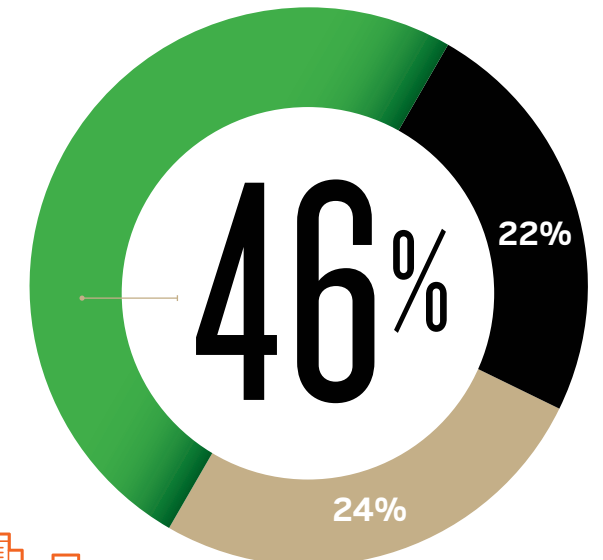
We should allow some more development to create jobs and middle class housing as long as it's done responsibly and protects our air, land and water.

B ●

We should **NOT** allow more development because it will lead to a permanent loss of open space and farmland and add more people and traffic

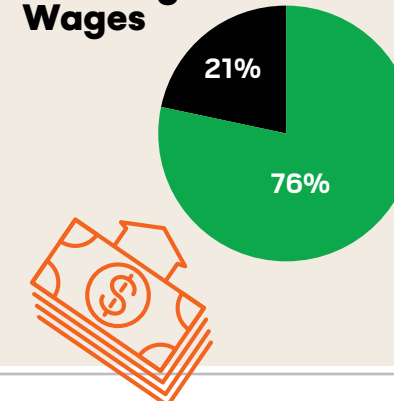
C ●

We should allow more growth and development to create jobs, improve the economy and provide more affordable housing for middle class families.

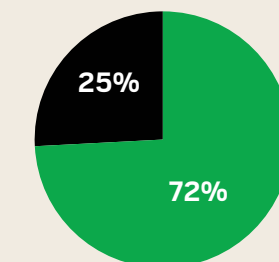


Most Hawaii voters want responsible growth that factors in our aina.

Boosting Wages



Raise Hawaii's minimum wage, which is currently \$10.10 an hour by one dollar each year until the minimum wage reaches \$15 an hour.
Provide tax credits to small businesses to offset the higher labor costs



Raise Hawaii's minimum wage, which is currently \$10.10 an hour by one dollar each year until the minimum wage reaches \$15 an hour.

70%+ favor an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, with or without tax credits to small businesses. Adding tax credits increases support mostly among Asian college grads, non-college whites, younger voters and Kauai residents.

Biggest Difference Between With & Without Tax Credits

Overall	+8
Own/work in small biz	+43
Asian college grads	+41
White non-college	+26
Age <55	+18
Kauai	+16
Men	+16
White	+14



Working for Hawaii

Over the years, PRP has developed initiatives that strengthen the community and support the building industry. Learn more about some of these programs.

Insights

PRP's quarterly publication that seeks to build understanding, support and effective action on key topics and issues affecting Hawaii. Each issue features the views of industry experts and shares the perspectives of people working in our community.

Hawaii Directory of Public Officials

A public service provided by PRP, the Hawaii Directory of Public Officials is a guide to elected and appointed federal, state, and county government representatives. This directory has been an invaluable tool for civic engagement for over 20 years. PRP assumed responsibility for this publication from the Hawaii Institute for Public Affairs in 2018.

KĀKOU

Developed exclusively for Hawaii, KĀKOU is a civic engagement app that enables users to easily contact elected officials and participate in the legislative process. PRP partnered with several local non-profit organizations dedicated to diverse community needs. With KĀKOU, the non-profit partners can amplify their advocacy efforts by keeping their members and supporters informed of important legislation and advocacy opportunities.

To learn more about KĀKOU, visit: www.kakouapp.org

Executive Leadership Series

The Executive Leadership Series is an intensive, 10-month leadership development program, custom-tailored for Hawaii's next generation of construction leaders. Led by some of Hawaii's top design and construction consultants and practitioners, the program covers a broad range of topics required for success in the construction industry, from personal development to business essentials.

Tenant Construction Program

A unique program geared for commercial retail and restaurant tenants looking to build out or improve their existing tenant space. The Tenant Construction Program matches the tenant with a qualified PRP member contractor, and offers exclusive benefits to ensure the project is built quickly at a competitive price.

Industry Integrity

Non-compliance with Hawaii's labor, employment and construction industry laws affects legitimate businesses in all industries, every taxpayer, and the entire state economy. In partnership with government officials, businesses, workers and the public, PRP is committed to raising awareness of these fraudulent activities and ensuring unscrupulous operators do not take advantage of workers and those living in the community.

Next Level Business Planning

In partnership with Garrett Sullivan of Sullivan & Associates, Inc., Next Level Business Planning is a 10-step program specifically designed for new or emerging contractors looking to take their businesses to the next level. This program, subsidized by PRP, is exclusively for member contractors.

To learn more about any of PRP's initiatives or programs, visit prp-hawaii.com or call (808) 528-5557.

Where Do We Go From Here?

It's a question that has no easy answer. But given what we know, it's clear that something needs to be done to restore optimism in our community and keep our residents from leaving. It'll take honest dialogue and collaboration but, more importantly, the collective will to mitigate a trend with dire consequences.

If we — the leaders of this state — don't step forward to shape our future, then who will?

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