

2025

Kaua'i Youth Report: These Are Our Keiki

A strength-based, data-informed snapshot of how Kaua'i's keiki are growing up healthy, safe, and thriving—from birth to adulthood.

Acknowledgments

We extend our sincere gratitude to those who assisted in the research and writing of this report. A special thanks to our Kaua'i Youth Report review participants:

- Alanna Souza, Kaua'i Planning & Action Alliance and Keiki to Career
- Alice Luck, Kaua'i Planning & Action Alliance and Keiki to Career
- Diana Singh, DARS Consulting
- Dr. Janet Berreman, Kaua'i District Health Officer, Kaua'i District Health Office
- Kaliko Mokuahi, Kamehameha Schools
- Nannie Anne Apalla, Office of Wellness and Resilience (OWR)
- Mason Chock, Partner of Keiki to Career and the Kaua'i Resilience Project

Special thanks to the County of Kaua'i, Mayor Derek Kawakami, and Managing Director Reiko Matsuyama.

Thanks are also given to our partners who provided narrative support for our spotlights. Including: Partners in Development Foundation, Child and Family Service, Kaina Makua, Mālama Kaua'i, Nalani Brun and County of Kaua'i Office of Economic Development, Devindra Sharma, Dr. Heather Lebrun, Hale 'Ōpio, Hon. Gregory H. Meyers, YWCA Kaua'i, Sheila Bradley, Lauren Padesky, and Mikaila Keawe.

We extend our appreciation to Janice Ikeda Consulting for researching, analyzing, and preparing our data, and to Cole Kela Media for curating the report's layout, graphics, and charts.

Finally, we would like to thank our partners and supporters for their vision and commitment to creating an island community where all young people are healthy, competent, confident, and caring. Thank you to the Annie Sinclair Knudsen Memorial Fund, Hawai'i P-20, and the Executive Office of Early Learning Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5).

Without each and every one of you, this work would not be possible. It is our sincere hope that this report will provide a call to action to increase support and investment in our children and youth. This is not only the responsibility of our public agencies and community nonprofits—it is the responsibility of everyone.

Keiki to Career Kaua'i
Ready to Learn, Ready for Life



Contents

Introduction	4	Safe Communities, Secure Futures	15
Executive Summary	4	Feeling Sad (persistent sadness)	16
Our Shared Purpose	5	Bullying and Cyberbullying	16
A Guide For Readers	6	Adult Relationships	17
		Suicide Attempts	17
		Juvenile Justice Referrals	18
Where Growth Begins: 'Ohana as the Source	7	Substance Use	18
Family Engagement for Keiki Ages 0-5	8	Sexual Activity	19
Child Maltreatment	8	Teen Births	19
Children with Health Insurance	9		
Access to Well-Child Visits	9	Ready to Learn, Ready for Life	20
Physical Activity	10	Infant/Toddler + Preschool Capacity	21
Body Weight	10	Preschool Participation	21
WIC Participation	11	Cost of Childcare	21
Food Security (Free/Reduced Lunch)	11	Kindergarten Entry Assessment	22
Children in Poverty - Federal Poverty Level	12	School Attendance	22
Children in Poverty - A.L.I.C.E	12	Social Emotional Learning	23
Stable Housing + Cost Burden	13	4th/8th/11th Grade Proficiency	24
Overcrowded Housing	13	English Language Learners	25
Technology and Internet Access	14	Early College	25
Screen Time	14	On-Time Graduation	25
		ACT Scores	26
		Degrees & Certificates	26
		College Enrollment	26
		Connected Youth	26



Executive Summary

Kaua'i Youth Report: These Are Our Keiki brings together locally grounded data and program spotlights to show how children and teens are doing across health, safety, learning, and opportunity. It highlights strengths—strong 'ohana engagement, trusted adults at school, expanded early college pathways, broad broadband access—and names areas needing attention, including financial stress on families, housing instability, mental health, bullying, and sexual health risks. The report lifts community solutions already working (e.g., Kaukau 4 Keiki meals, Teen Court, prevention education) and emphasizes the importance of reliable, consistent data to guide action. Overall, it calls leaders, schools, families, and partners to grow what works so every keiki can thrive from early childhood through young adulthood.

At-A-Glance: What's Inside

- 'Ohana as the Source: Family stability, daily play, and early learning form the foundation for keiki health, belonging, and readiness to succeed.
- Healthy Growth: Access to health coverage, nutritious meals, physical activity, and safe environments strengthens children's bodies, minds, and futures.
- Challenges to Stability: Financial strain, housing insecurity, and crowded living conditions remain major pressures on families across Kaua'i.
- Connected and Supported Youth: Near-universal broadband, caring relationships, mental health supports, and comprehensive sexual health education help students feel safe, engaged, and valued.
- Pathways to Opportunity: From preschool to Early College and Kaua'i CC, strong educational pathways prepare youth to thrive in school, careers, and community life.



Our Shared Purpose

In 2002, the Kaua'i Planning and Action Alliance (KPAA) was founded by community leaders across government, business, social services, education, healthcare, and the environment to strengthen island-wide collaboration. Their vision was to strategically plan, leverage resources, and implement priority projects that could achieve far greater impact together than any single entity could alone. Today, KPAA continues to coordinate the Keiki to Career Initiative, guided by our mission to bring people together for collaborative planning and action that advances shared community goals.



Keiki to Career Kaua'i (K2CK) is a network of partners in education, health, human services, youth programs, families, and businesses, all working to ensure our young people are “ready to learn and ready for life.”

Since 2012, KPAA has published the Kaua'i Youth Report, offering a snapshot of how Kaua'i's young people are doing from birth to workforce entry. The 2022 edition added new indicators on the physical, mental, and emotional health of island youth, highlighting both social-emotional well-being and the social determinants of health. Data included physical health and risk behaviors (such as physical activity, screen time, substance use, and sexual activity), social and emotional health (adult relationships, abuse and neglect, bullying, depression, and suicide), academic performance (absenteeism, test scores, preschool participation), and college and career readiness (credential completion, college enrollment, and youth not in school or working).

The 2025 report will go further, adding early childhood indicators (prenatal to age five), weaving reflections from community members, and spotlighting promising community practices that support youth well-being. This report is intended to be hopeful, anchored in Kaua'i's strengths, and shaped by cross-sector collaboration with a unifying call to action rooted in local solutions.



"Our keiki are the heart of our island's future. When we invest in their well-being, whether through education, health, housing, or opportunities to thrive, we are really investing in the strength of our entire community. This report reminds us that by working together, we can create the stable foundations every child deserves and ensure Kaua'i continues to grow with resilience and aloha."

Mayor Derek Kawakami





A Guide For Readers

This report was designed to be a resource for everyone who shares responsibility for the future of Kaua'i's keiki. Our goal is not only to present data but to make it meaningful and actionable, offering insights that can be applied in homes, classrooms, community programs, and policy decisions alike. For parents and caregivers, the report affirms the importance of everyday interactions that build stability and confidence for children. It underscores how the conditions surrounding families—financial security, safe housing, access to health care, and opportunities for growth—directly shape the well-being of the next generation.

For community leaders, service providers, and funders, these findings offer a clear lens on where Kaua'i is making progress and where urgent challenges remain. Indicators related to family stress, health, education, and housing can guide thoughtful investments, strengthen partnerships, and inspire new approaches. The data also invite collaboration: when efforts are aligned, small actions add up to large-scale impact across the island. For those working in policy, the report illustrates how family well-being is tied to broader systems, highlighting how changes in one area—such as workforce development or affordable housing—can ripple outward to strengthen community resilience as a whole.

All student data presented here represent Kaua'i students, unless otherwise noted, ensuring that the insights are rooted in the lived experiences of local youth and families.

Throughout the report, you will also see yellow “bright spots” that highlight people, programs, and outcomes the community of Kaua'i can feel especially proud of—reminders that alongside challenges, there is real progress and innovation to celebrate.

As you move through each section, we encourage you to notice the patterns that connect across themes and to reflect on what role you play in shaping solutions. This is not simply a snapshot of current conditions—it is a tool for dialogue, decision-making, and collective action. More importantly, it is a reminder that the well-being of Kaua'i's children is inseparable from the strength of 'ohana and community. By using this report to inform choices and spark collaboration, we can create the conditions for every keiki to grow up healthy, supported, and secure.

01

Where Growth Begins: 'Ohana as the Source



I ulu no ka lālā i ke kumu. (No. 1261) — The branches grow because of the trunk. A healthy keiki is part of a thriving 'ohana and community.

The well-being of Kaua'i's children is directly shaped by the conditions their families face every day.

The data in this section highlight how everyday realities—from nurturing care in the home to pressures like financial strain and housing insecurity—directly influence children's development. Families balancing high costs of living, limited access to affordable childcare, or jobs that do not cover basic needs often find themselves stretched thin. Bright spots for Kaua'i families include strong family engagement with young children, declining rates of child maltreatment, near-universal health insurance coverage, and widespread broadband access. Access to nutritious meals is another cornerstone of well-being, with programs like Kaukau 4 Keiki ensuring children receive healthy meals each summer. These efforts not only nourish keiki but also strengthen community resilience by connecting local farms and families.

Why It Matters

- Early conditions set trajectories: Supportive, stable, and resource-rich childhood experiences help lay the foundation for strong educational and economic outcomes.
- Community environments matter: Safe spaces for recreation, nutritious food, and reliable healthcare create the conditions for healthier lives and greater opportunity.
- Healthy habits carry lifelong impact: Regular physical activity and healthy eating in childhood build resilience and reduce the risk of chronic disease in adulthood.



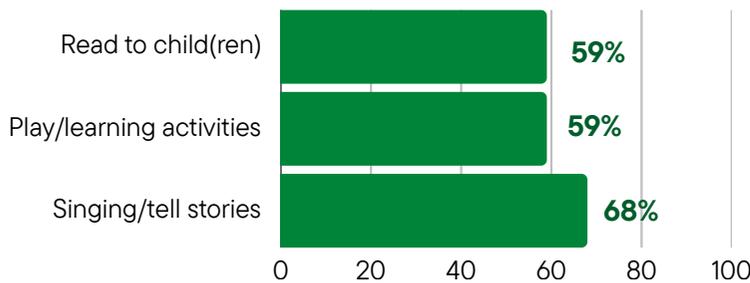
“Our working group’s journey has shed light on what works. A stable relationship with at least one caring adult is one of the strongest factors in youth resilience. Emmy E. Werner and Ruth Smith, in their landmark longitudinal study “The Children of Kaua’i”, demonstrated the importance of such relationships. More recently, the power of place-based experiences, such as ‘āina-based programming, has taught us it’s not just people but the nurturing environment we create that makes a difference toward their resiliency in life. We are blessed that Kaua’i has both caring people and cherished spaces that inspire and drive purpose. We just need to amplify their presence in our keiki’s lives. Kaua’i has what it takes.” **Mason Chock, Community Leader and Partner of Keiki to Career and the Kaua’i Resiliency Project**



The Power of Playtime

Time together is more than fun—it is one of the most powerful ways parents and caregivers can support growth and well-being. Through shared activities like reading, playing, talking, or creating, families build skills, spark curiosity, and strengthen a sense of security and belonging. As parents are a child’s first and most important teachers, these everyday moments nurture resilience, deepen ‘ohana bonds, and lay the foundation for lifelong health and success. Even setting aside a few minutes each day to connect makes a lasting difference.

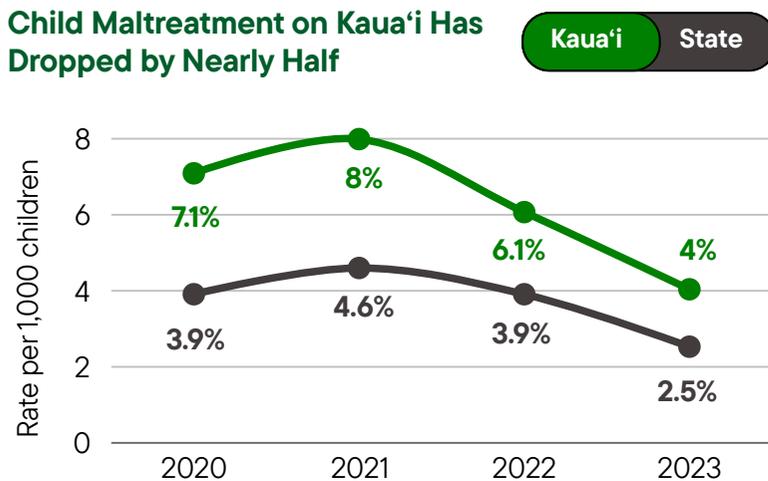
Most Kaua’i parents of children aged 0–5 reported that **someone in the household reads, plays, and sings with their children daily**. Rooted in ‘ohana traditions of passing down knowledge through mo’olelo and mele, these practices continue a cultural legacy that nurtures both the mind and the heart.



2024 Kaua’i Family and Community Survey administered by Ward Research.



Child Maltreatment on Kaua’i Has Dropped by Nearly Half



KIDS COUNT Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation. Child abuse and neglect, birth to age 17 (Hawai’i).

Tūtū and Me supports early childhood development through family-centered, culturally grounded learning.

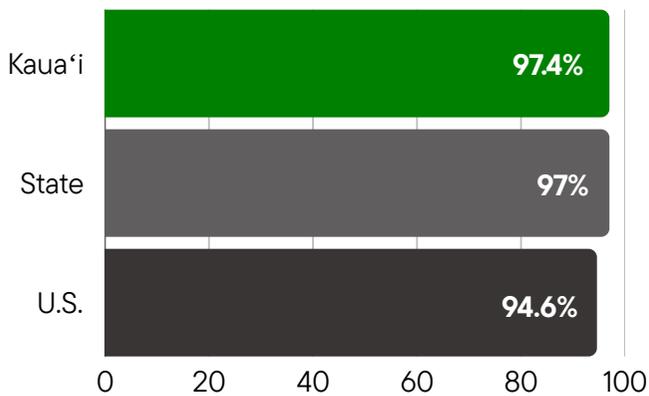
For more than 20 years, Tūtū and Me has strengthened early childhood development through family-centered, culturally rooted learning, helping caregivers nurture learning at home and support their keiki’s growth.

In 2025, 79.6% of caregivers improved their PICCOLO scores, reflecting growth in affection, responsiveness, encouragement, and teaching. Tūtū and Me operates in Anahola, Kekaha, Hanapēpē, and Kapa’a.

Health Coverage Matters

Regular well-child visits are essential for monitoring growth, providing vaccinations, and ensuring keiki receive developmental, vision, and hearing screenings that can identify concerns early, when interventions are most effective. Because many families rely on Medicaid (Med-QUEST in Hawai'i) to access these services, shifts in coverage or provider participation can directly affect whether keiki get the care they need. Sustaining strong systems of access ensures that every child has the opportunity for a healthy start, regardless of their family's financial situation.

Children (0 - 18) with Health Insurance



U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2023),

Access to Well-Child Visits and Developmental Screenings

32.5% of Kaua'i residents are on Med-QUEST.

Nearly 30% of those enrolled in Med-QUEST across the state are children. Children covered by Medicaid are eligible for regular well-child visits, which include developmental, vision, and hearing screenings. To use these services, families must have their child enrolled in Med-QUEST and see a provider who is both accepting patients and participates in the program.

Department of Health and Human Services Center for Medicare Medicaid Services 2023 Report.



Spotlight: Child and Family Service

Incorporating a community family center model, the **Neighborhood Places of Kaua'i provide a safe, nurturing environment for families in need of support and to link families to resources within the community.**

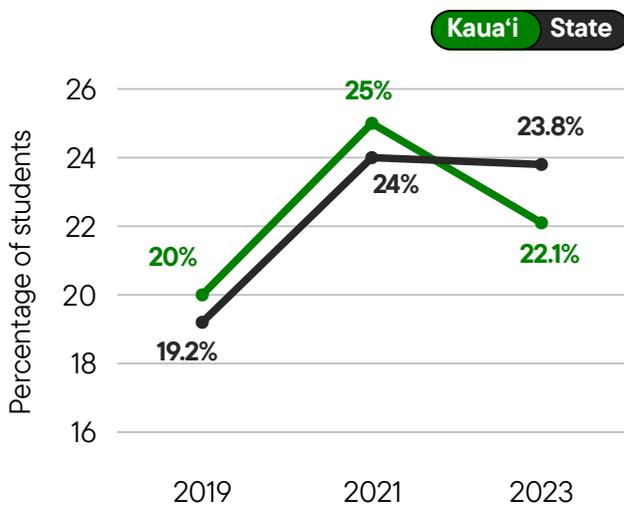
Family support and family preservation services includes information and referral; emergency food pantry and emergency clothes closet; various classes and groups such as parenting, budgeting, and 'ohana support services; outreach activities to engage hard-to-reach families; case management; individual and family counseling; community activities; grandparents raising grandchildren and cultural awareness activities.

You'll find the Family Centers (Hale Ho'omalū) on the Eastside and (Nana's House) on the Westside.

Let's Give Our Keiki A Running Start - To Lifelong Health

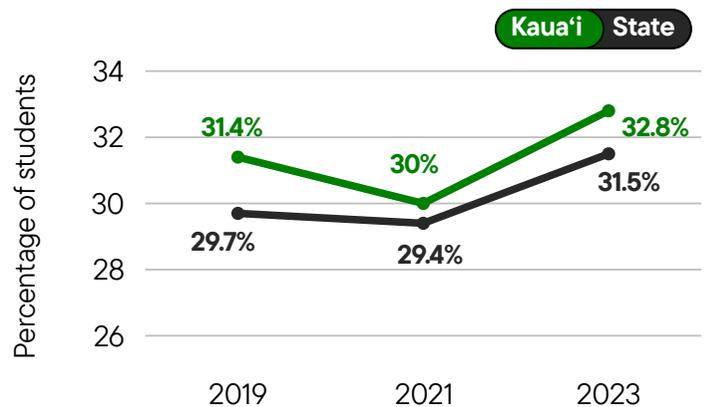
Regular physical activity in high school supports healthy bodies and minds—it improves cognition and mood, helps prevent obesity and type 2 diabetes, and is linked to better grades and classroom behavior. Monitoring obesity (e.g., via BMI surveillance like YRBS) identifies trends early so schools and communities can respond before risks compound into adulthood. Communities can help by ensuring teens get the recommended 60+ minutes daily through activity-friendly routes and destinations (safe places to walk/bike/play), shared-use of school facilities after hours, quality PE and after-school programs, and partnerships that expand access to free/low-cost sports and recreation.

High School Student Physical Activity: 60 Minutes Per Day for 7 of 7 Days



Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse. Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

About 1 in 3 high school students are overweight or obese, up slightly from 2021 and higher than the statewide average.



Obesity is defined as BMI \geq 85th percentile for age/sex (YRBS)

Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse. Youth Risk Behavior Survey.



“As a coach for Kilohana Canoe Club, I emphasize that exercise and hard work are cornerstones of building a healthy and fulfilling life. ‘U’uku ka hana, ‘u’uku ka loa’a. Little work, little gain.”

Kaina Makua - Kalo farmer, cultural practitioner, community educator, and co-founder of Kumano I Ke Ala and Aloha ‘Āina Poi Co.

Spotlight: Mālama Kauaʻi



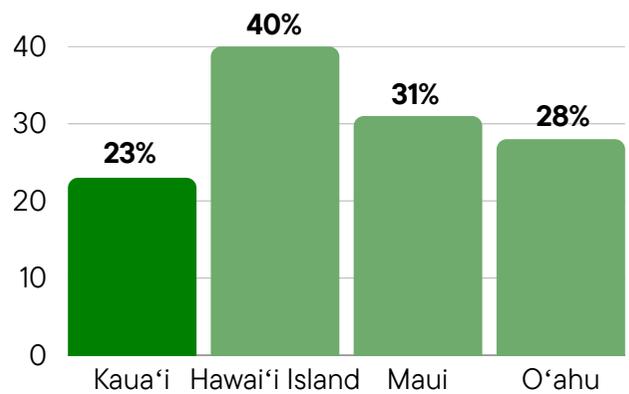
In summer 2025, the Kaukau 4 Keiki (K4K) program, coordinated by Mālama Kauaʻi, distributed 78,400 meals. Poi remains a favorite, with more than 5,000 pounds included in meal boxes each summer. This program highlights the vital role whole community partnerships play in achieving childhood food security. **This program depends on federal policy and USDA funding.** Protecting and strengthening this is an investment in children’s health today and in the resilience of our communities tomorrow.

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. **WIC provides free healthy foods, breastfeeding support, nutrition education and referrals to other services, to support you and your family.**

In 2022, 22% of women, 20.3% of infants, and 58.2% of children in the state of Hawaiʻi received WIC.

An estimated 29.2% of pregnant mothers in Kauaʻi County participate in WIC during pregnancy.

2023 Households Facing Food Insecurity

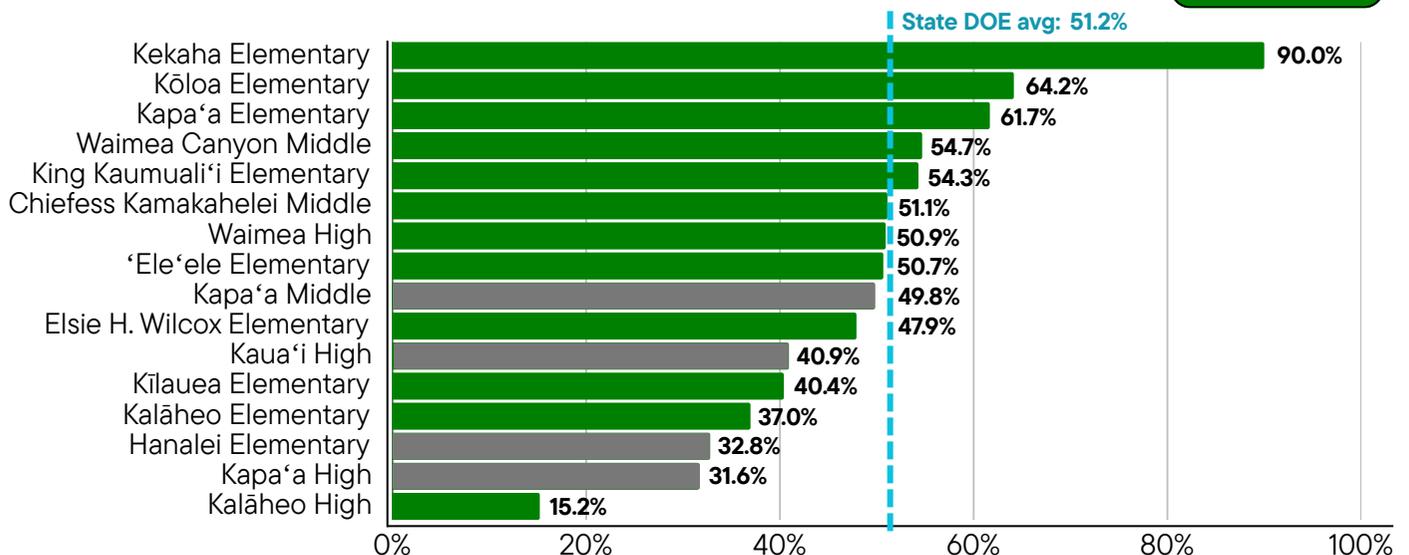


*Hawaiʻi Foodbank. (2024, May).
The state of food insecurity in Hawaiʻi: 2023*

Students Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch Oct 2025 (SY24-25)

About 1 in 2 Kauaʻi DOE students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals (49.5%; state 51.2%), with large variation by school (Kekaha 90% → Kapaʻa High 32%).

Title 1 Schools



State of Hawaiʻi Department of Education, Hawaiʻi Child Nutrition Programs.

51% of parents are stressed about finances.

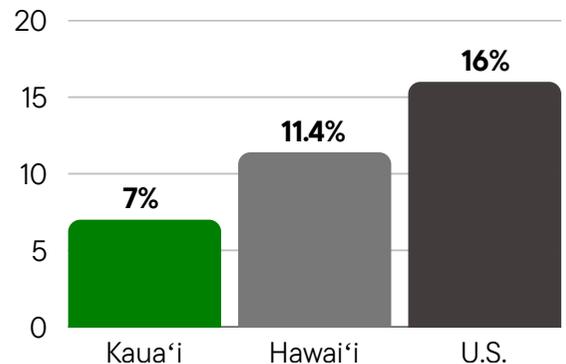
More than half of Kaua'i parents report that financial strain is a major source of stress in their lives. This kind of persistent pressure affects more than budgets—it influences choices about food, housing, childcare, and health, leaving little room for stability or planning ahead, and impacting children's sense of security and 'ohana well-being. Addressing this challenge calls for action at many levels: supporting local efforts that provide affordable childcare and afterschool programs, strengthening access to health and financial counseling, and encouraging policies that ease the cost of housing and basic needs. Every step that reduces financial stress helps families breathe easier, plan for the future, and build a stronger foundation for Kaua'i's next generation.

2024 Kaua'i Family and Community Survey administered by Ward Research

Children (Under 18) Living Below the Federal Poverty Level

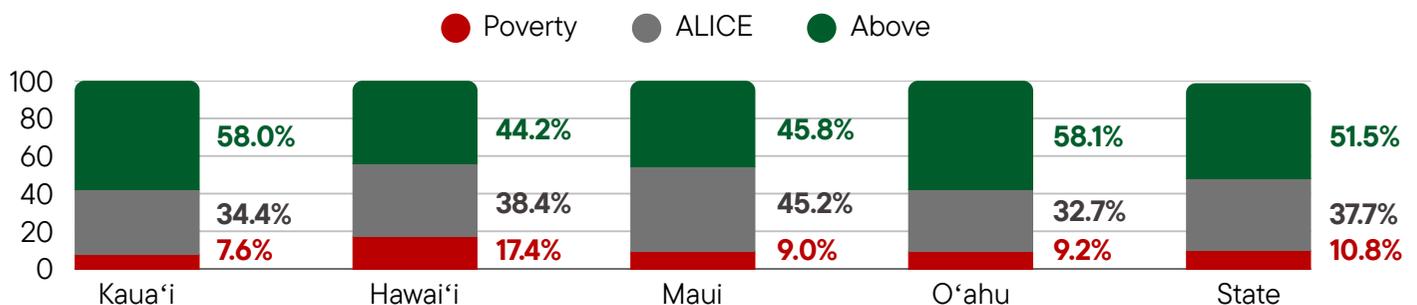
On Kaua'i, between 1,500 and 2,150 children have lived in poverty each year over the past five years. In 2023, about 7% of keiki were below the federal poverty line—lower than state and national levels. But this tells only part of the story. Nearly one-third of keiki statewide grow up in low-income households just above the poverty threshold. **While fewer Kaua'i children experience deep poverty, many more still face financial strain that affects their health, stability, and opportunities.**

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2023), Table S1707.



Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) Households, 2023

ALICE is an acronym that describes families who are **Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed**. These are families who work hard and earn money, but still don't make enough to cover essentials like rent, food, or childcare. Often, they earn just above the limit to qualify for financial assistance programs, which means support drops off even though they still can't make ends meet. This "cliff effect" can feel discouraging for families—earning a little more shouldn't make life harder.



United For ALICE. (2023). Hawai'i state overview. United Way of Northern New Jersey.

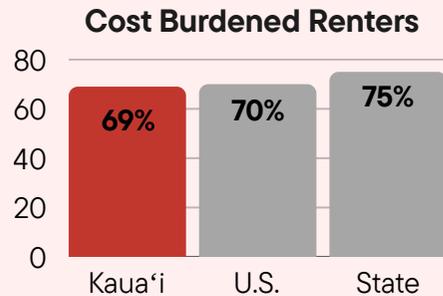
24% of families are stressed out due to housing instability.

Nearly one in four families on Kaua'i report that unstable housing is a major source of stress. When families are unsure if they can keep a roof overhead, it affects children's health, learning, and overall 'ohana stability. Expanding access to affordable, secure housing is key to reducing this stress and building a stronger future for Kaua'i's families.

2024 Kaua'i Family and Community Survey administered by Ward Research.

69%
of Kaua'i renters
are cost-burdened

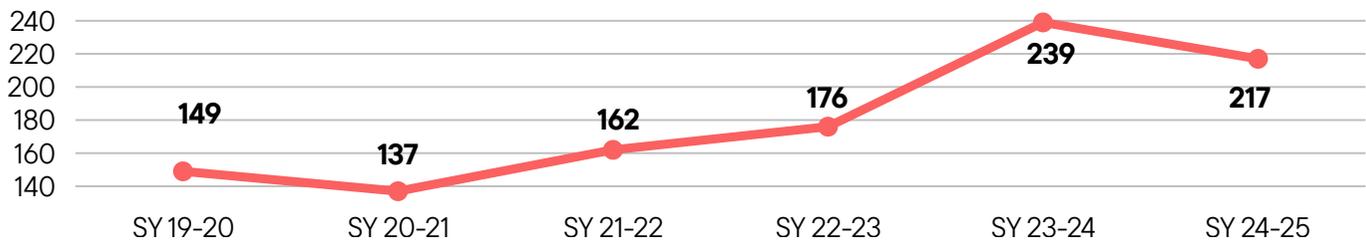
U.S. Census Bureau, American
Community Survey (2023).



What about households
with a mortgage?

45.7% of owner-occupied units with
a mortgage spend more than 30%
of their income on housing costs.

Number of K-12 Students Receiving Assistance through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA)



Under the McKinney-Vento Act, "homeless children and youth" are those without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes several living situations, with the largest group each year being Kaua'i students who stay with another family.

State Department of Education. The Education for Homeless Children & Youth (EHCY) Office

Hidden Homelessness: Families Sharing Space

18%

of Kaua'i households are crowded, (More than 1.01 person per bedroom), doubled up. (Housing units that are occupied by two or more families or groups of persons who are not related by birth, marriage, or adoption.) or both.

32%

of Kaua'i households are at risk of homelessness, meaning they could lose housing within three months if their primary income stopped—often called "precariously housed."

Ward Research; Hawai'i Housing Planning Study. (2024)



Equitable Access to Technology

The County of Kaua'i Office of Economic Development is working hard to ensure that every young person, family, and business has access to reliable, high-speed broadband—from our most remote homesteads and farmlands to our community parks and town centers. This isn't just about being connected—it's about opening doors for learning, business innovation, and community growth. With access, our youth can build skills in emerging technologies like AI, while small businesses and entrepreneurs can use digital tools to expand opportunities and strengthen our local economy. Broadband equity means that everyone, from beginners to advanced users, can take part in shaping a future that is already knocking at our door. By investing in digital access today, we are equipping Kaua'i to thrive in the generations to come.

Nearly all Kaua'i households have broadband — higher than the State (91.3%) and the U.S. (91.0%).

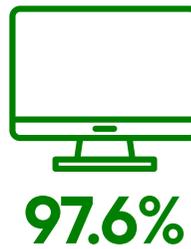


“Broadband Access Matters. Reliable internet gives Kaua'i youth tools to learn, supports small business growth, and ensures every family can fully participate in today's economy.”

**- Nalani K. Kaauwai Brun,
County of Kaua'i**

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2023), Table DP02.

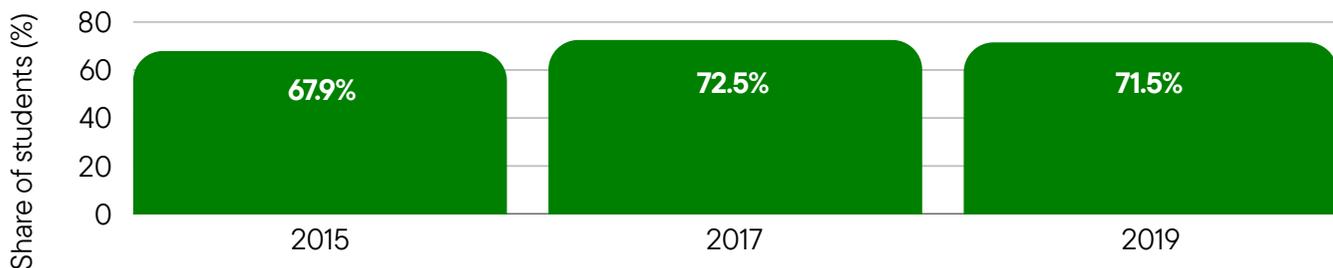
Nearly all Kaua'i households have a computer — higher than the State (96.2%) and the U.S. (95.7%).



While computer access brings clear benefits for learning and connection, nearsightedness is rising quickly and showing up earlier in children. Help protect healthy vision by encouraging more time outdoors, and ensuring keiki receive routine eye exams. Join the movement—learn more and take action today to safeguard children's vision for the future.

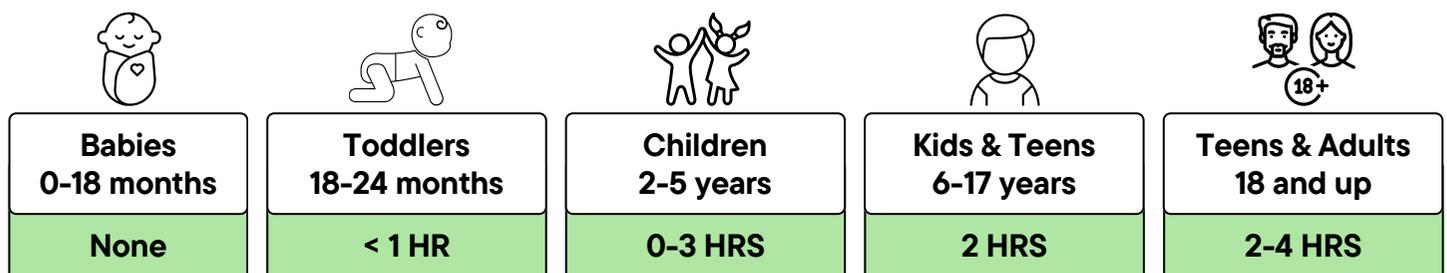
<https://www.babystepshi.com/myopia>

About 2 out of 3 High School students report less than 5 hours of daily screen time.



Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse. High School Screen Time Categories by County. Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

Screen Time Recommendations by Age



American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

02

Safe Communities, Secure Futures



Nāna i waele mua i ke ala, ‘a’ole ona iho ke ala. (No. 2239) —

He who clears the path doesn’t need the path. Safety is co-created across generations.

Safety is not just the absence of harm—it is the presence of care, connection, and protections that allow young people to grow with confidence.

This section highlights the importance of giving young people the relationships, knowledge, and environments that allow them to grow with confidence. The data reveal areas where youth continue to struggle, from emotional well-being to experiences with bullying, as well as patterns in sexual health that carry long-term consequences.

Just as important, they highlight the protective role of connection, showing that when students feel supported and guided, they are better equipped to navigate challenges. By focusing on both the risks and the strengths reflected here, we can see where attention and investment can most directly help keiki walk a safer, healthier path into adulthood.

Why It Matters

- **Mental health and bullying concerns:** Nearly one in three middle and high school students report persistent sadness or hopelessness, and bullying—both in person and online—remains a challenge. These trends highlight the need for safe spaces and stronger peer and adult supports.
- **Trusted adults as protection:** Many students on Kaua’i report having at least one adult at school they can turn to, a powerful protective factor. These relationships can ease the impact of bullying, reduce sadness or hopelessness, and support healthier decision-making.

The Healthy Me Healthy We PSA contest, led by community partners including the Kaua’i Resilience Project and Kaua’i District Health Office, invites middle and high school youth to create messages promoting healthy lifestyles, relationships, and mental health. Student submissions often tackle issues like bullying, self-esteem, and harmful relationships.

Learn more and view the winning videos at <https://health.hawaii.gov/camhd/hmhw/>



1 in 3 Middle & High School Students Feel Persistently Sad or Hopeless



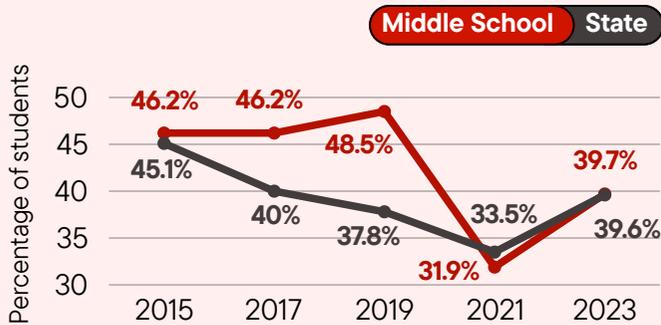
Adolescence is a time of rapid change, and the pressure to fit in—both in person and online—can leave many students feeling isolated. Bullying and cyberbullying add to that weight, often amplifying sadness and hopelessness. By paying closer attention to these dynamics, **we can focus on building school and community environments where students feel supported, safe, and truly connected.**

All data on this page is cited from Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse.

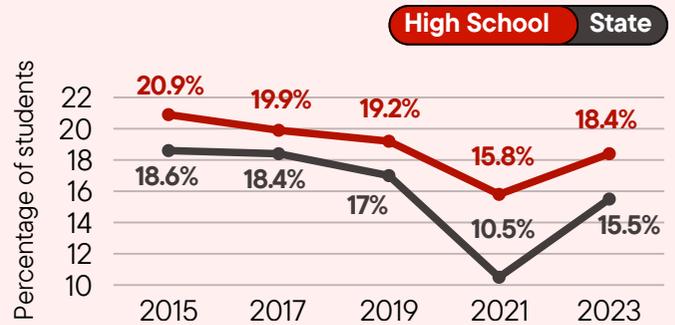
Bullying At School

2 in 5 public middle school students report being bullied at school — about the same as the statewide average of 39.6%. This is down from Kaua'i's 2019 peak of 48.5%. **1 in 5 public high school students** report being bullied on school property — higher than the statewide average of 15.5%. This is also down from Kaua'i's 2015 peak of 20.9%.

Public Middle School students who are bullied



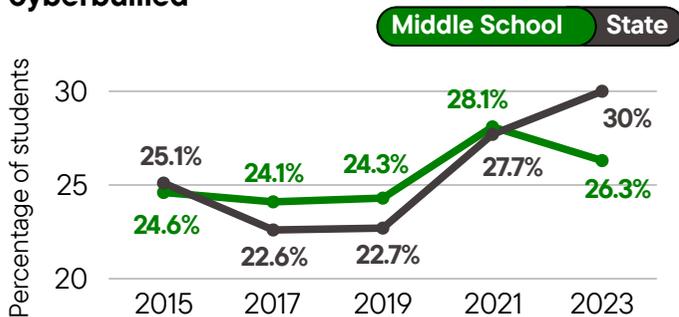
Public High School students who are bullied



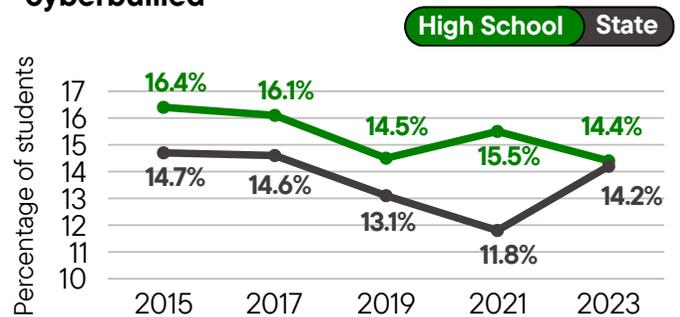
Cyberbullying

26% of public middle school students report cyberbullying — lower than the statewide average of 30%. This is down from Kaua'i's 2021 peak of 28.1%. **14% of public high school students** report being cyberbullied — which is about the same as the statewide average. This is also down from Kaua'i's 2015 peak of 16.4%.

Public Middle School students who are cyberbullied



Public High School students who are cyberbullied



4 out of 5

High school students report having a trusted adult/teacher (77.6% in 2023), similar to other counties.



All data sets on this page is reference from the Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse. Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

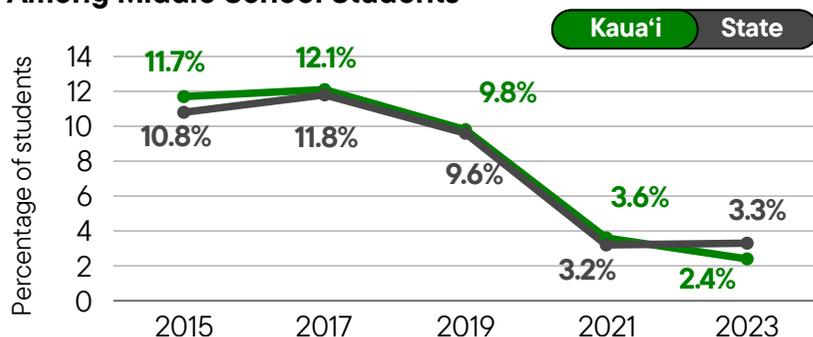


“The 2018 suicide crisis on the East Side underscored the need to provide hope, health, and community to the younger generation. And it is not individual youth but the health of the whole community that engenders the difference.

This and other glaring health disparities that stare us starkly in the face cannot be remedied by a single-issue focus. They must be addressed comprehensively. Aloha 'Āina expressed through food sovereignty projects is one such comprehensive approach, that not only protects future generations but further empowers the youth in their identity. It is one of many determinants of health for our youth that, once addressed, will uplift our whole island community.”

Dr. Heather Lebrun, Kaua'i Resilience Project Coordinator, from the The Po'e Aloha 'Āina, 2021.

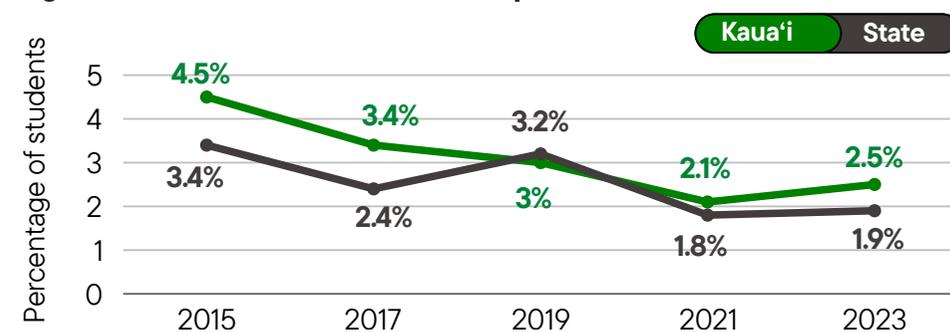
Suicide Attempts Are Decreasing Among Middle School Students



Spotlight: Kaua'i Resilience Project

Launched in 2019, the Kaua'i Resilience Project (KRP) is a dynamic effort to uplift youth and young adults across the island. KRP collaborates with government, nonprofits, and schools in order to address suicide through a social determinant of health approach, i.e. promoting those entities that can support: viable career pathways; addiction intervention/prevention; affordable housing; effective afternoon school programs; youth resilience; social-emotional learning; safe spaces for youth; agricultural/food security projects; and health on every level. Learn more at KauaiResilienceProject.org.

High School Student Suicide Attempts

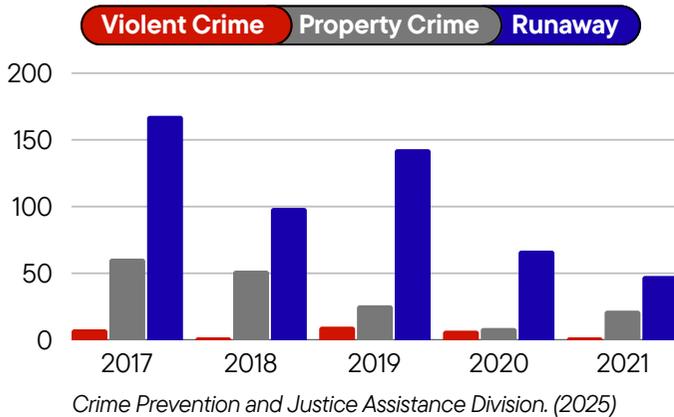


In 2023, 2.5% of high school students reported ever attempting suicide. Kaua'i's rate has generally declined from 4.5% in 2015 to 2.5% in 2023, dipping to a low of 2.1% in 2021 and tracking close to the state in 2019 (3.0% vs 3.2%).

Spotlight: Hale ‘Ōpio

Hale ‘Ōpio Kaua‘i’s Teen Court offers a culturally responsive alternative for low-risk youth, diverting them from prosecution into a peer-led “court” with teen jurors. This collaborative approach creates resolutions better suited for adolescents than traditional prosecution. Unlike many programs, Hale ‘Ōpio provides ongoing services tailored to individual needs, including education, housing, and substance use support. This holistic model empowers youth to address root causes of behavior and make lasting positive change. Preliminary findings from an ongoing study of Hale ‘Ōpio Kaua‘i’s Teen Court program, in collaboration with the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney (OPA), show promising outcomes for youth referrals. **Only 3.4 percent recidivated, as measured by new OPA cases between March 2020 and April 2023. These results suggest expanding Teen Court to more referrals and more serious cases.**

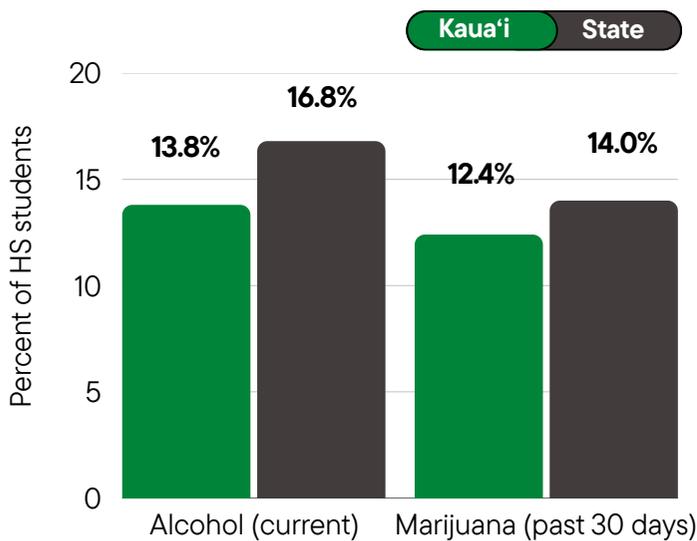
Juvenile Justice Referrals



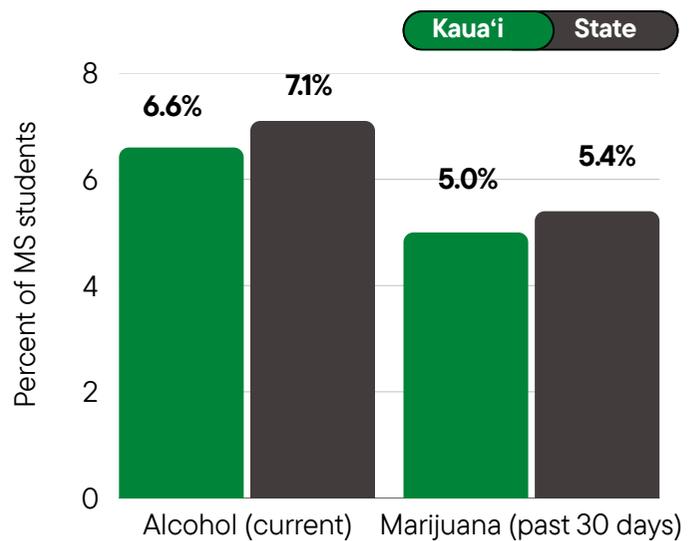
“As one of the Fifth Circuit Family Court judges on Kaua‘i, I have made it one of my overarching goals to involve the community and create programs for our youth that help them stay positive in tough situations, make better choices, and become the best versions of themselves. Through my Stakeholders Group, which consists of approximately 15 community leaders, we have developed multiple projects that aim to improve the lives of our youth and their families. Each year, we hope to identify and implement 3 new creative ideas to meet our goals.”

Hon. Gregory H. Meyers, District (Family) Court Judge, Fifth Circuit, State of Hawai‘i

2023 High School Substance Use



2023 Middle School Substance Use



About 1 in 7 high school students report recent alcohol (13.8%) or marijuana use (12.4%) slightly lower than the statewide averages (16.8% and 14.0%). Reported alcohol and marijuana use in 2023 is slightly below state levels. Juvenile index-offense arrests declined from 2017–2021. Because these indicators measure different outcomes and cover different years, we do not interpret them as correlated.

Hawai‘i Health Data Warehouse. Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Current Alcohol Use among High School Students by County.

Spotlight: YWCA

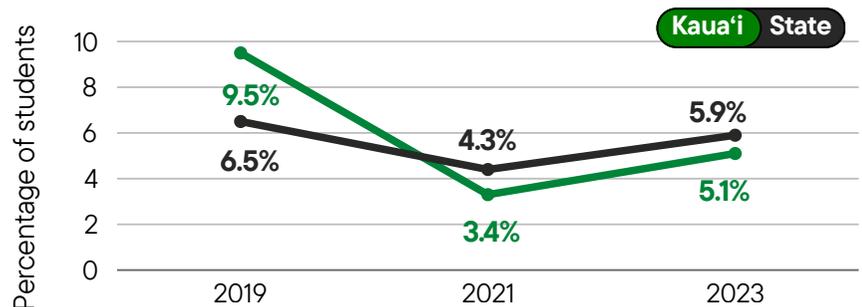
YWCA hosts a Prevention Education Community Outreach Program for high school students. Students reflect on their behaviors, learn how to respect other’s personal boundaries, and avoid behaving in disrespectful and sexually abusive ways. Students will also learn how to reduce their risk of victimization, how to help peers in unhealthy relationships, and the importance of healthy, respectful relationships.

“A lot of us students come to an age where we are in relationships and experiencing them, and because it’s all new we can’t tell the difference of a healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationship. Which is why I believe [the Prevention Education Community Outreach] was the most impactful.”

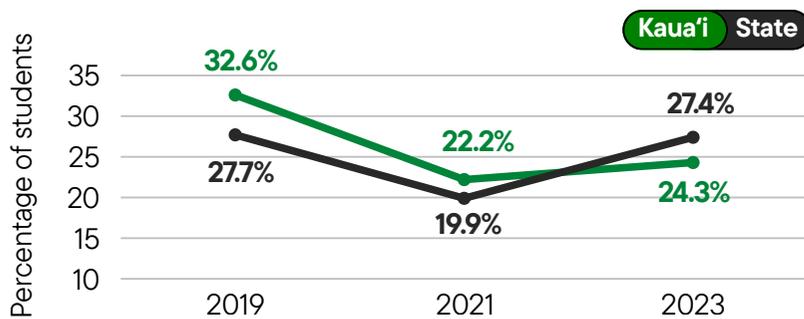
In 2023, 5.1% of middle school students reported ever having had sex — similar to the statewide rate (5.9%) and lower than 2019 (9.5%). Early sexual activity matters because it can increase health risks for youth, making continued prevention and education efforts essential to support their well-being.

Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse. Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Sex Intercourse Ever, Middle Schools.

Sexual Activity — Ever Had Sex (Middle School, 2019–2023)



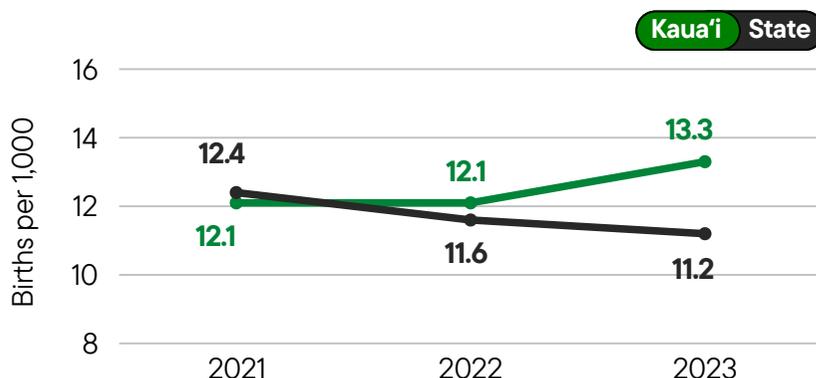
Sexual Activity — Ever Had Sex (High School)



Kauai high schoolers (24.3% in 2023) report having had sex—underscoring the need for updated sexual health education in our schools. Equipping youth with accurate information, skills, and resources helps them make healthy choices and reduces risks related to relationships, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections.

Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse. Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Sex Intercourse Ever, High Schools.

Teen Births - Rate per 1,000 females ages 15-19



Kauai’s teen birth rate rose to 13.3 in 2023, above the state rate (11.2), after holding at 12.1 in 2021–2022; statewide rates continued to decline. While this measure may include births to older teens (ages 18–19), it still highlights the importance of access to comprehensive sexual health education and youth-friendly healthcare, so young people have the knowledge and support they need to make informed choices.

Hawai'i Health Matters, Teen Birth Rates.

03

Ready to Learn, Ready for Life



‘O ke kahua mamua, mahope ke kūkulu. (No. 2459) — The foundation first, then the building. Success is not just about academic benchmarks. It’s also about building the social-emotional skills that shape who we become.

From Early Learning to Lifelong Achievement

Kaua‘i’s early learning landscape shows limited preschool and child care capacity alongside high costs, underscoring the need for accessible options that build strong foundations before kindergarten. Once in school, attendance is a key lever: regular attendance supports learning and belonging, while chronic absenteeism signals where more help is needed. Across grades, ELA, Math, and Science results show literacy as a relative strength, but too many students remain below proficiency—especially in Math—highlighting the need for targeted support as students advance. SEL indicators (e.g., emotional regulation, perseverance, belonging) reveal that students’ sense of belonging and self-management are closely tied to engagement and achievement, underscoring the value of supportive school climates. College-readiness pathways, such as Early College and KCC opportunities, provide on-ramps that help students earn credit, explore careers, and build confidence for future success while staying rooted in the community.

Why It Matters

- Attendance and readiness go hand in hand: Absenteeism interrupts learning and connection, while steady attendance helps students build the habits and confidence that carry into later grades.
- Test scores signal where to focus: Below-proficiency rates, especially in math, highlight specific subjects where additional support and resources can directly change academic outcomes.
- SEL and college pathways link learning to life: Social-emotional skills strengthen perseverance and belonging, while Early College access shows how students can translate those strengths into real postsecondary opportunities.



“Books help kids learn about emotions, new ideas, and the world around them. When they see characters working through feelings or experiencing something new, it helps them understand themselves—and others—a little better. That’s where empathy starts. Reading also sparks imagination and creativity. It invites kids to ask questions, dream big, and get curious about everything. But more than anything, reading together creates connection. It doesn’t have to be perfect.... Just 15 minutes a day can expose them to over a million words in a year.”

**Sheila Bradley, Literacy Advocate,
Educational Services Representative with PaperPie**



Access To Childcare and Early Learning Programs

Families on Kauaʻi have several options for childcare and early learning, though cost and availability can be challenges. About 80% of childcare seats are offered through DHS-licensed providers, who care for keiki ages 0–6 in both center- and home-based settings. EOEL Public Pre-K classes are available at ‘Ele‘ele, Kekaha, Kīlauea, and Kapa‘a Elementary Schools, while Play and Learn Groups—also called Family Child Interaction Learning programs—give parents opportunities to learn alongside their children while fostering healthy growth and development.

Licensed Infant Toddler Centers

2 Providers

20 Desired Capacity

2 Openings

PATCH Hawai‘i. (2025, August)

Preschool Capacity

24 Center-based Providers

22 Home-based Providers

1065 Desired Capacity

49 Openings

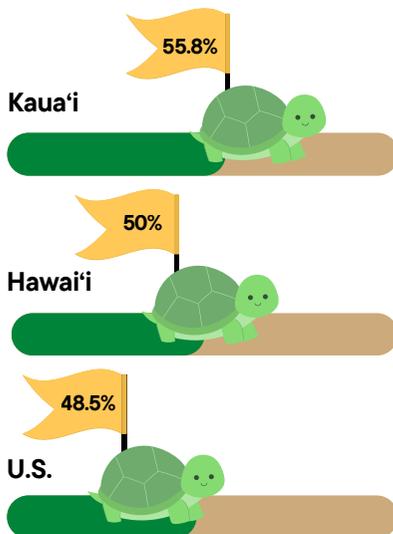
PATCH Hawai‘i. (2025, August)

Kauaʻi FCIL/EOEL

109 keiki and 255 caregivers participate in Family Child Interaction Learning (FCIL), with most children under age three. Public Pre-K adds another option, with 97 keiki enrolled for SY 2025–26 and a total capacity of 116 seats across EOEL classrooms.

Data provided by Partners in Development and the Executive Office on Early Learning

Kauaʻi Leads in Preschool Participation



In 2023, **55.8% of Kauaʻi 3–4-year-olds were enrolled**, versus 50.0% statewide and 48.5% nationally—about +5.8 and +7.3 percentage points higher, respectively.

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2023), Table S1401.

Cost of Childcare

\$840.45 Average cost for family childcare homes **(0–5 years)**

\$2,400 Cost of Child Care Centers **(0–12 months)**

\$1,600 Cost of Child Care Centers **(18–24 months)**

\$946.20 Average cost for childcare centers **(2–5 years)**

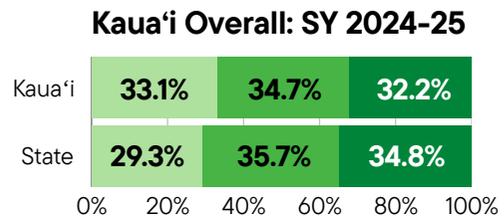
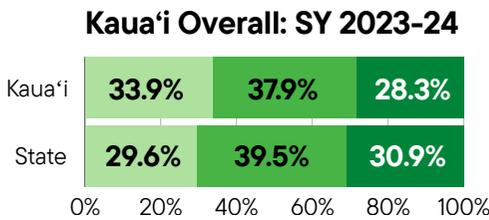
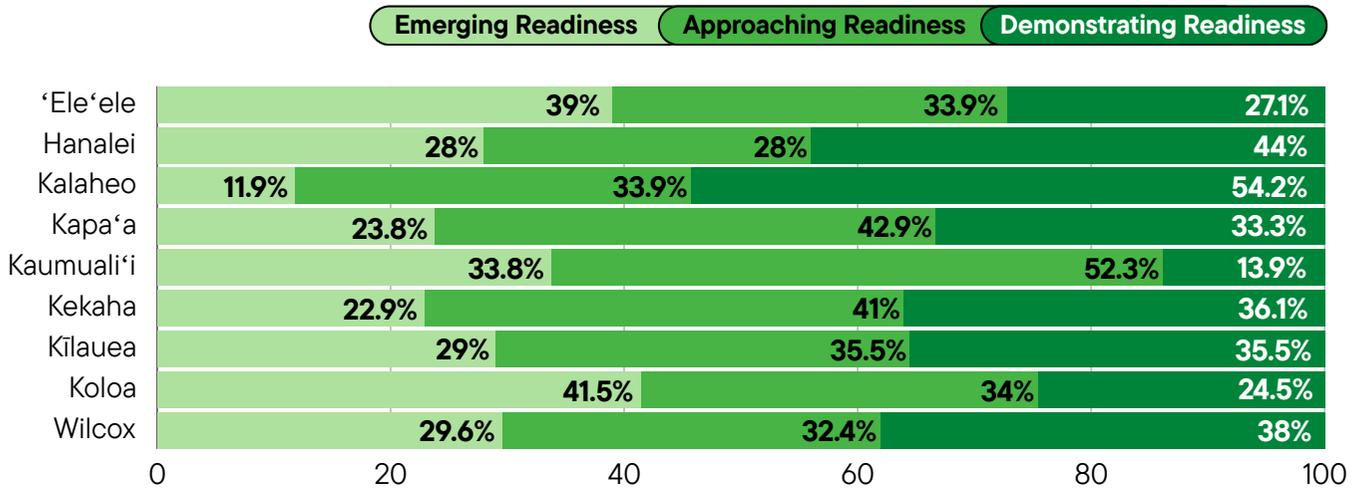
PATCH Hawai‘i. (2025, August)



Kindergarten Entry Assessment

The Board of Education’s goal is for every child entering kindergarten to be assessed for social, emotional, and academic readiness so teachers can create classrooms that build strong early learning foundations. For the 2024–2025 school year, only 30% of English-medium kindergarteners across Hawai‘i showed readiness, with Language & Literacy as the greatest area of need at just 26%. On Kaua‘i, two of nine elementary schools offered a summer start program to help keiki transition into kindergarten, showing the importance of early literacy and smooth school entry.

Kindergarten Entry Assessment by School (2024-2025)



Special Request made to Hawai‘i DOE Data and Research.
 Hawai‘i State Board of Education. (2023, December 7). Review of Strategic Plan Desired Outcome 1.1.1.
 Hawai‘i State Board of Education. (2024, November 21). Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

Regular Attendance vs Absentee: Unweighted Average Across Listed Schools



Schools Listed: Chiefess Kamakahalei Middle, Kapa‘a Middle, Kapa‘a High, Kaua‘i High, Ni‘ihau High & El, Waimea Canyon Middle, Waimea High

Hawai‘i State Department of Education Office of Strategy, Innovation and Performance, Accountability Section.

Social Emotional Learning (proxy via student survey)

Grades 3-5

Grades 6-12

Hawai'i State Department of Education & Panorama Education. (2023). Student Social-Emotional Learning and Perception Surveys.

Emotion Regulation

49%

Students reflected on how well they can manage emotions when faced with challenges. This included their ability to shift out of a bad mood, calm down when upset, relax in stressful situations, and think before acting. The responses show how students handle the everyday ups and downs of school life.

46%

Growth Mindset

48%

This area examined whether students believe they can improve key aspects of their learning, such as effort, behavior, and intelligence. It also asked about their willingness to learn from mistakes by seeking feedback and trying new strategies. Together, these items show how strongly students believe in their capacity to grow.

47%

Perseverance

59%

Students were asked how they approach setbacks, distractions, or moments of low motivation. Questions measured whether they would try again after failure, stay focused on long-term goals, and follow through on commitments even when difficult. This captures determination and grit in the face of challenges.

53%

Self-Efficacy

52%

This section explored how confident students feel in their academic abilities. Students considered their certainty about completing schoolwork, mastering difficult content, remembering what they've learned, and understanding complex ideas. These beliefs influence how likely they are to persist when learning feels hard.

43%

Self-Management

72%

Questions focused on how consistently students manage their own behavior, time, and responsibilities. This included paying attention in class, staying prepared, following directions, starting work promptly, and maintaining focus when working independently. These skills help create reliable habits for learning.

64%

Sense of Belonging

63%

Students shared how connected and valued they feel at school. Items asked about the respect they receive from peers, the support they feel from adults, how well others understand them, and whether they feel they truly belong in their school community.

48%

Social Awareness

62%

This area measured how well students empathize with others and maintain respectful interactions. Questions looked at listening carefully, showing care for others' feelings, celebrating others' successes, and navigating disagreements constructively. It also included the ability to stand up for oneself without putting others down.

53%

Supportive Relationships

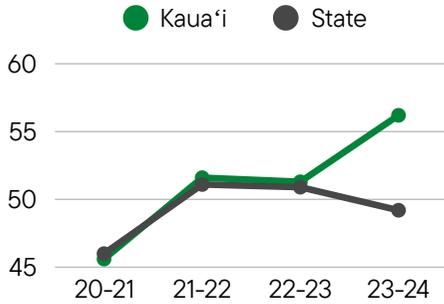
91%

Students identified whether they have at least one trusted adult at school they can turn to in any situation. This indicator highlights the importance of stable, supportive connections with teachers and staff for student well-being.

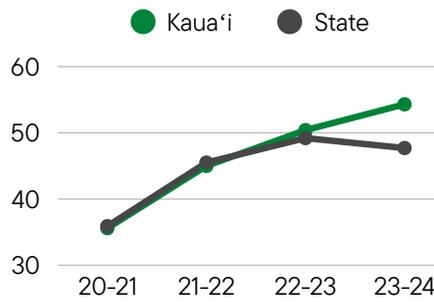
80%

English Language Arts, Math, and Science Test Scores

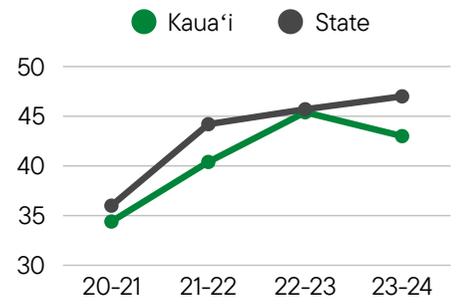
4th Grade ELA



4th Grade Math

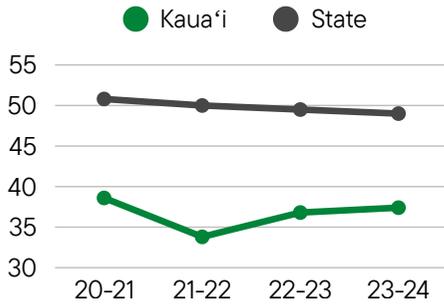


5th Grade Science

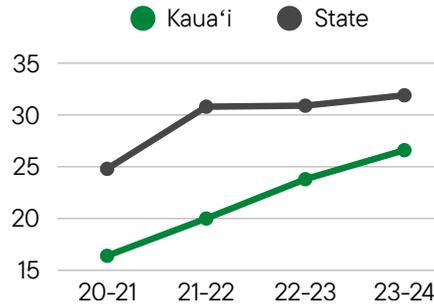


Fewer than half of Kaua'i's elementary students are proficient in English Language Arts, Math, or Science. ELA scores are the highest of the three, showing that many keiki are building literacy skills, but Math proficiency lags well behind. Science falls in the middle, suggesting that while students are developing curiosity and basic scientific understanding, more support is needed to strengthen both math foundations and applied learning skills.

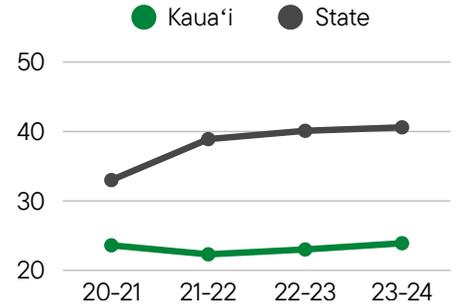
8th Grade ELA



8th Grade Math

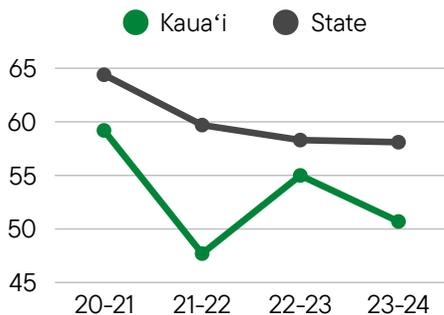


8th Grade Science

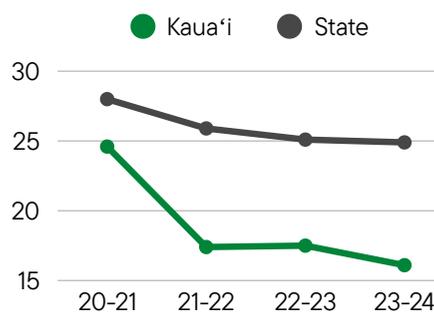


By middle school, proficiency rates across all three subjects remain under 50%, indicating that early challenges in literacy and numeracy often carry forward. ELA continues to be a relative strength, but Math and Science scores show more pronounced gaps, highlighting the importance of consistent academic support, tutoring opportunities, and engaging curriculum that connects learning to real-world applications during these critical adolescent years.

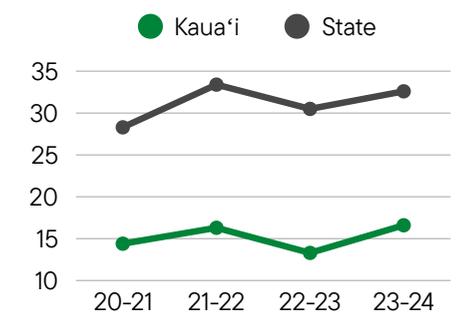
11th Grade ELA



11th Grade Math



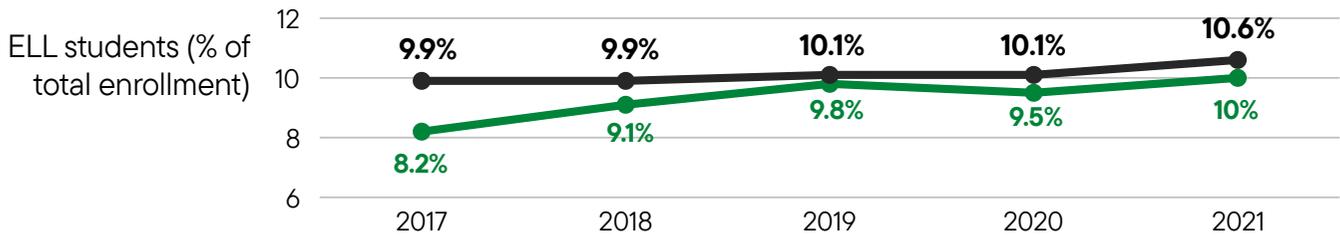
10th Grade Science



In high school, fewer than half of students reach proficiency in ELA, Math, or Science, with Science outcomes falling especially low. While ELA scores show some progress in communication and comprehension, persistent struggles in Math signal barriers to college and career readiness, particularly in STEM pathways. The low Science scores underscore how gaps in earlier math and critical thinking skills impact later success.

English Language Learners in Public Elementary & Secondary Schools

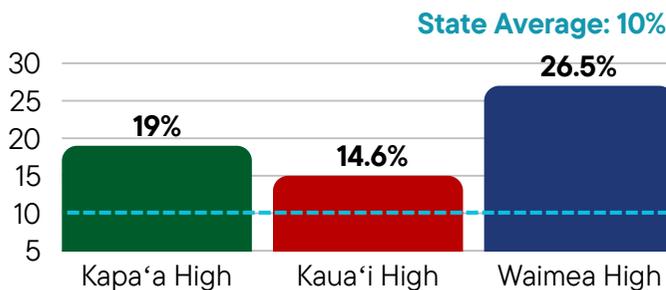
State U.S.



Hawai'i English Learners' Data Story (Hawai'i DXP / Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships)

NCES Table "English learners (ELs) enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by state or jurisdiction"

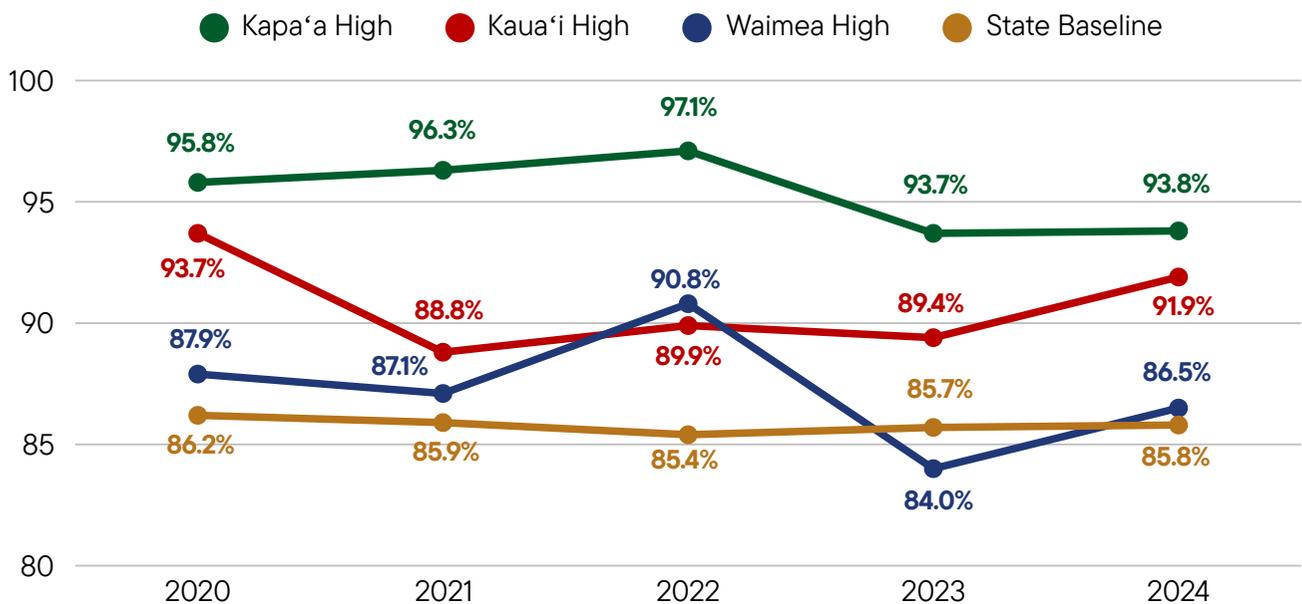
Early College Participation - SY 2023-2024



Hawai'i State Department of Education. School Status & Improvement Report (SSIR).

In 2023–24, nearly one in five Kaua'i high school students (19.4%) participated in Early College courses, with Waimea High leading at 26.5%. **Early College matters because it allows students to earn college credits while still in high school, easing the transition to higher education, reducing future tuition costs, and building confidence in their ability to succeed in college-level work.** This creates stronger pathways for youth to pursue careers and contribute to the island's economic and community resilience.

On-Time Graduation — High Schools on Kaua'i vs. State (Class of 2020–2024)



Graduation rates remain strong across high schools. In 2024, Kapa'a led with 93.8%, followed by Kaua'i at 91.9% and Waimea at 86.5% — all above the statewide average (85.8%).

Hawai'i State Department of Education. School Status & Improvement Report (SSIR).

Mikaila Keawe, Kapa'a High School, May 2023

“The Chaminade Early College program has greatly challenged and prepared me for the academic rigor of college that I would have not received in regular Kapa'a High School classes. I am very grateful for this opportunity and for the ability to earn college credits while still in high school. Through this program, I have made fun, life-long memories with my classmates, which was another aspect of the program that I really liked. We have become very close since we all suffered through the program together. I enjoyed being surrounded by other like-minded, goal-driven, determined, and motivated peers who pushed me to keep going when things got tough. By having these experiences and being surrounded by these types of people, I believe it has set me up for success.”

Hawai'i ACT 2024 Scorecard (State)

Estimated 62% of Grads Tested
Average Composite Score of **17.7**

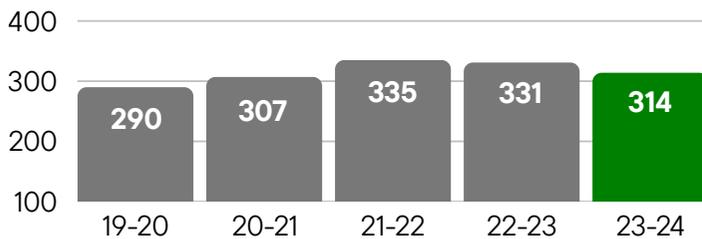
College Readiness Benchmarks Met

- English: 38%
- Reading: 29%
- Math: 18%
- Science: 19%

Hawai'i State Department of Education, Accountability Data Center



Degrees & Certificates - Kaua'i CC



Kaua'i Community College (KCC) offers youth the chance to earn college credit, explore careers, and build skills that prepare them for future success.

University of Hawai'i Institutional Research and Planning Office

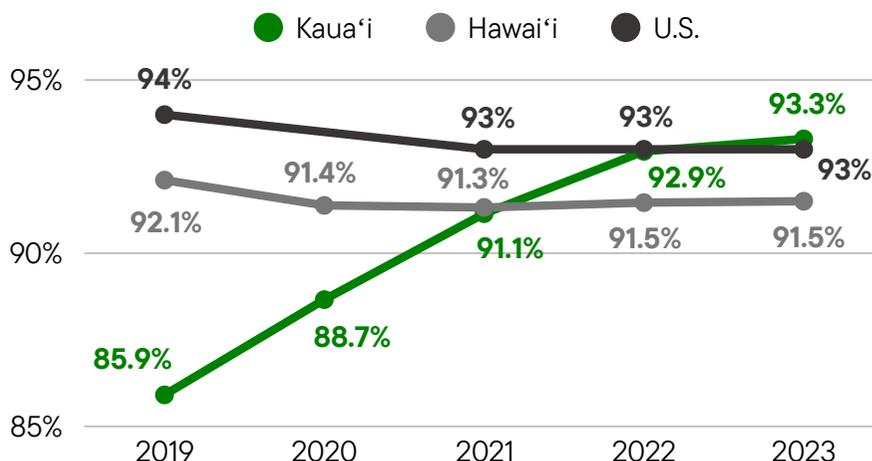
High School Students Enrolling into a 2 or 4 Year College Program

49% Enrolled in a Nationwide College
(**52%** of students across the state enroll in a Nationwide College)

32% Enrolled in the University of Hawai'i
(**34%** of students across the state enroll at UH)

*Hawai'i Data eXchange Partnership. (2025, March).
College and Career Readiness Indicators Summary Reports.*

Youth (16-19) In School and/or Working



Kaua'i youth are increasingly connected to school and work. The share of teens (16-19) engaged in education or employment grew from 85.9% (2015-2019) to 93.3% (2019-2023), surpassing the U.S. average of 93%. **This steady rise highlights stronger opportunities and engagement for young people in our community.**

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Kids Count Data Center*

So That Every Keiki Thrives: A Call To Action

At Kaua‘i Planning and Action Alliance, we believe that keiki deserves the chance to thrive in health, stability, and joy, supported by ‘ohana and community. By nurturing connection and opportunity, we help children grow with confidence and flourish into contributors who produce a brighter future, carrying forward the lessons we teach and the strength they draw from their first and most enduring source—‘ohana.

The following is a call to action for the many partners in our community—from leaders to educators, parents, and neighbors—who each play a role in shaping a strong foundation for every child.

Political Leaders

Thoughtful leadership and steady investment create the conditions for children and families to do well. By cultivating reliable data and protecting essential supports, leaders help ensure that every keiki has a strong foundation to build upon.

- Protect core funding for public health, education, food access, and family supports.
- Invest in integrated, reliable data systems that guide decisions and measure progress.
- Encourage place-based solutions that respond to local strengths.

Educators

Educators inspire curiosity and confidence that extend far beyond the classroom. By creating meaningful opportunities and safe, inclusive spaces, schools equip students with the tools to reach their full potential.

- Expand real-world pathways (Early College, CTE, work-based learning).
- Create inclusive, culturally grounded spaces that build belonging.
- Open campuses for after-school and weekend opportunities.

Parents & Caregivers

‘Ohana are a child’s first and most enduring source of strength. Everyday moments—reading, playing, talking story—help keiki build confidence and a lasting sense of connection.

- Set aside daily time to read, talk story, play, and connect.
- Keep up with well-child visits, screenings, and immunizations.
- Stay connected with teachers and counselors to celebrate progress.

Our Community

Communities provide the fertile soil where ‘ohana can take root. By choosing aloha and working together, we create environments where every child has the opportunity to discover their gifts and pursue a fulfilling future.

- Expand local supports such as mentorship, youth programs, and safe spaces to play.
- Strengthen food security through community gardens, pantries, and summer meals.
- Support nonprofits and hubs that connect families to opportunities with dignity.
- Use both data and lived experience to guide and celebrate progress.



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Nonprofit Tax ID: 20-1579949