The Working Lives and Struggles of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Americans

About the Survey
In November 2019, researchers from PRRI and AAPI Data released a landmark report on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) workers in California. The survey of 2,684 AAPI California residents explored experiences and perspectives of workers, many of whom are struggling with poverty.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing racial groups (and working-age population) in California and the nation. Between 2010 and 2017, most new immigrants (56%) to California came from Asia.

As with other racial and ethnic groups, the research tells the story of “two Californias” — one where some AAPI workers are financially stable and another in which AAPI workers report struggle significantly. This brief highlights key findings relevant to Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander American workers in California from the full report.

AAPI California Workers Struggling with Poverty Within Each Region
In California, the highest proportion of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander adults reside in the Bay Area (28%) and the Central Valley (21%).

% of AAPI Californians
- San Joaquin Valley: 50%
- Inland Empire: 37%
- Los Angeles: 23%
- South Coast & Border: 22%
- Sacramento Valley: 20%
- Bay Area: 20%
- Insufficient Sample Size

Key Findings
Nearly FOUR IN 10 AAPI workers in California are struggling with poverty.

AAPI Workers Struggling with Poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Struggling with Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All AAPI</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian &amp; Pacific Islander</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodian</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>29%</td>
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</tbody>
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Snapshot of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander Americans in California
From the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey:
- Are foreign-born: 32%
- Are naturalized citizens: 18%
- Have limited English proficiency: 15%
- Hold a college or post-graduate degree (age 18+): 16%
- Identify as Democrats*: 56%
- Identify as Republicans*: 38%
- Identify as Independents*: 12%

*From the PRRI/AAPI survey
Economic Hardships and Concerns

Share of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander American workers in California who experienced hardships in the past 12 months:

- 67% helped parents or in-laws financially
- 58% had difficulty paying rent or mortgage
- 56% reduced meals or cut back on food to save money
- 50% were not able to pay a monthly bill
- 48% put off seeing a doctor or buying medicine

Share of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders American workers in California who believe that:

- 81% worried that they or someone in their family will be unable to afford housing
- 70% worried that they or someone in their family will lose health insurance
- 58% worried that they or someone in their family will be deported

Hardships on the Job

Share of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander American workers in California who said they or someone in their household experienced the following in the past 12 months:

- Experienced racial discrimination or bias at work: 31%
- Required to work overtime without pay: 32%
- Paid less than minimum wage: 20%
- Felt vulnerable due to immigration status: 15%
- Had wages withheld by an employer without cause: 14%
- Injured on the job: 32%
- Experienced discrimination or bias related to gender or sexual orientation at work: 31%
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Views on the American Dream and Economic Mobility Among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders Americans in California

52% still believe in the American Dream (if you work hard, you’ll get ahead), compared to 62% of all AAPI Californians.

38% of struggling Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander workers in California believe in the American Dream.

58% believe it is harder to achieve the American Dream here than in other states.

56% agree that hard work is not a guarantee of success, compared to 55% of all AAPI Californians.

Views on the Economy, Employers, and Policymakers

Share of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander American workers in California believe that:

- The U.S. economy unfairly favors the wealthy: 81%
- Public officials do not care what they think: 70%
- Employers generally see them as replaceable: 68%
- It is important to organize so that employers do not take advantage of them: 82%

For more data and survey methodology, please see the full report, in English, at: irvine.org/learning/aapi

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