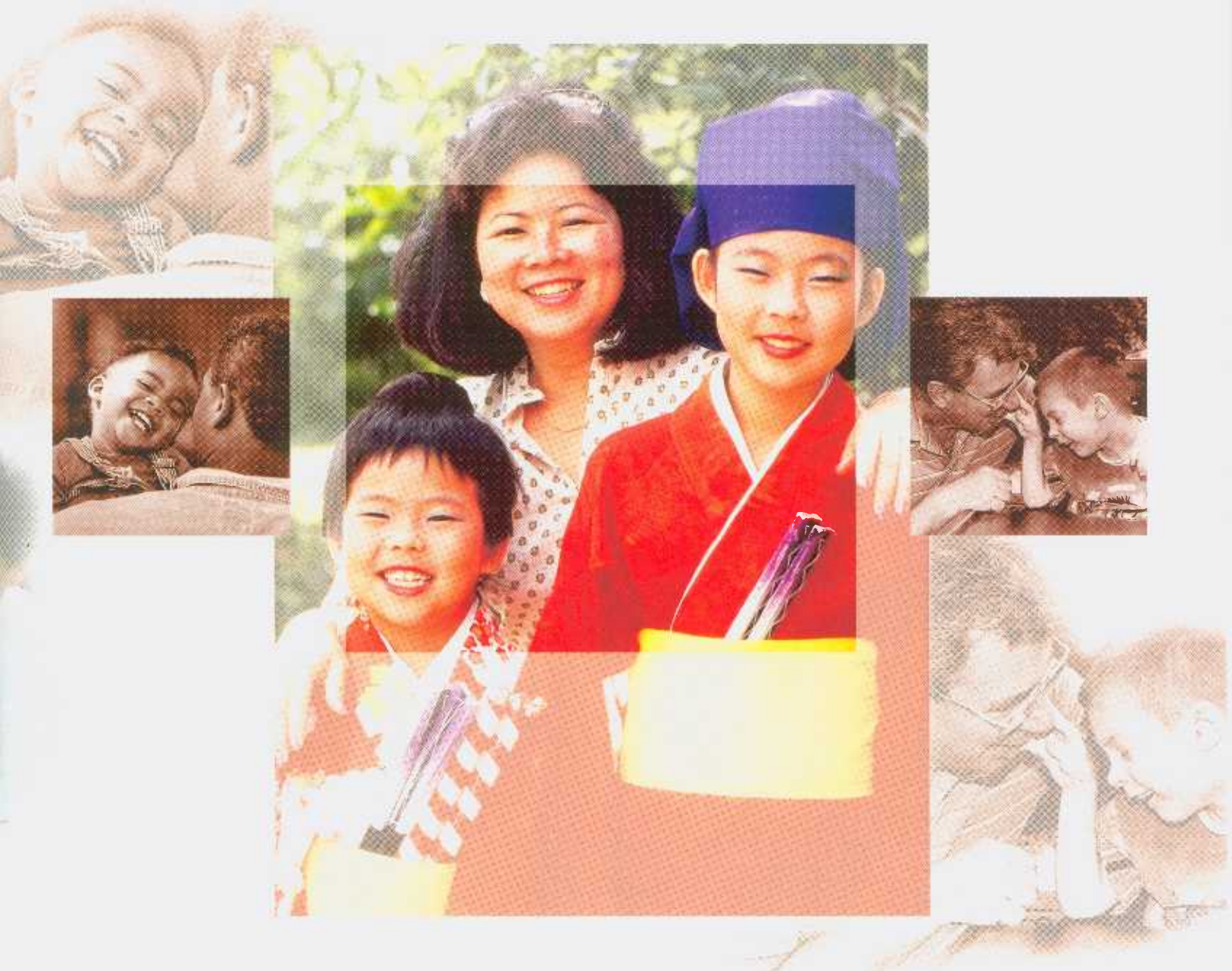


HAWAI'I FAMILY TOUCHSTONES



Center on the Family
1999

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history and across cultures, people have recognized the significance of the family. Indeed, despite overwhelming changes in contemporary life, the family remains the foundation upon which we nurture children, foster the well-being of individuals, and build strong communities. As Jane Howard observed: "Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family: whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one."

Despite the importance of families, we know surprisingly little about them. Based on selected, relevant, and measurable indicators that could be tracked over time, the Center on the Family developed Family Touchstones to provide an overview of Hawai'i's families. It is this information that allows us to monitor the status of families in our state. Our work is the outgrowth of the 1992 Governor's Family Policy Academy whose knowledgeable members enlisted wide community support for the vision and framework of the present report.

We gratefully acknowledge the many individuals and agencies who contributed to the development of Family Touchstones and made this inaugural publication a reality. We are especially appreciative of the support from our sponsors who share our desire to improve the conditions in Hawai'i for all of her families.

Sylvia Yuen, *Director*
Center on the Family



A SNAPSHOT OF HAWAII'S FAMILIES

All of Hawai'i's families shall have the opportunity to fulfill their lifelong aspirations, provide fully for their members, and contribute to the betterment of their community in a caring, secure, healthy, and prosperous environment.

Vision Statement

Many of Hawai'i's families show great promise in attaining our vision:

- 73% of families regularly share "quality time" doing fun things together
- 74% of families eat dinner together 5 - 7 times a week
- 75% of children are in contact with extended family members, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, at least once a week
- 66% of adults feel safe in their neighborhood
- 83% of people feel they can rely on others in their community for help
- 59% of people volunteer time to church, charity, or community groups
- 94% of adults are covered by health insurance
- 93% of school kids are in class on any given day
- 77% of families rate themselves today on the top half of the "ladder-of-life" (ratings of 6 to 10 where 10 is the highest score) and 87% are optimistic that they will be higher on the ladder 5 years from now

Other families have problems that require immediate attention:

- 52% of all divorces are to couples with children
- 38% of families formed with a first child consist of unmarried parents, and 8% consist of unmarried parents where the mothers are under 20 and do not have a high school diploma
- 2% of all children under school age are reported as victims of abuse and/or neglect, while half of the reports are legally confirmed (note: studies indicate less than half of instances of abuse are reported)
- 17% of adults are binge drinkers, while many others abuse other substances
- 30% of families identify financial issues as their greatest challenge
- 14% of people live in poverty
- 31% of students score below average on the reading portion of the Stanford Achievement Test, and the percentage of students scoring average or above has declined significantly since 1990
- 16% of adults over age 25 do not have a high school diploma
- 50% of eligible voters do not vote in gubernatorial elections, thus do not participate in the community political process

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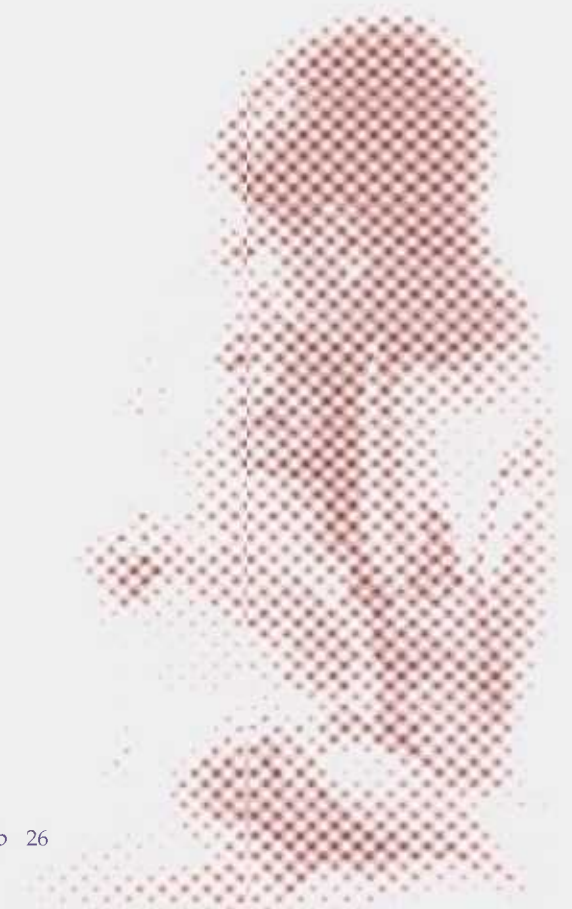
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PORTRAIT OF HAWAI'I'S FAMILIES



Families come in many constellations, each with its own strengths, weaknesses, and issues. Despite these differences, each family bears primary responsibility for providing what its members need to develop in healthy ways. The “family” is also the product of social forces within society. Families are challenged by new technologies, the organization of work, economic booms and depressions, and political events. These factors affect the shape and resources of families into the future. Without healthy families to perpetuate our traditions and values, our state will increasingly experience social ills that diminish the quality of life, the vitality of our communities, and our ability to raise responsible children capable of grappling with tomorrow’s challenges.

What does the portrait of Hawai’i’s families look like today compared with the 1950s or the beginning of this century? Household size has declined about 20% since 1900. Today, the average number of people in a Hawai’i home is three. There has been an increase in marriages between members of different ethnic groups, from 11.5% in 1912 to over 25% during the second half of the century. The number of dissolved marriages has increased dramatically since 1900 when the divorce rate was 0.3 per 1,000 residents. By 1950 the state had seen a sevenfold increase in divorces, and today the divorce rate is 12 times greater. The number of married women and mothers in the workforce has also increased in the last 50 years.

Although the portrait of the typical Hawai’i family may be changing, we still consider a happy family life and strong family–community ties to be among life’s most important gifts. More than any other life goal, Hawai’i’s parents want their children to have happy and rewarding marriages and families. Complementing this wish are parents’ strong desires that their children give back to the community and work to correct social inequities. Hawai’i’s citizens value both their own and others’ families.

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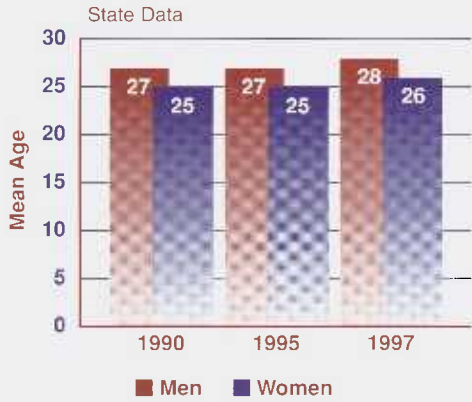


Mean age at first marriage

The indicator Delaying family formation past the teenage years, when greater maturity and an adequate education have been achieved, increases the chances for a healthy family life and financial stability. Men and women are marrying later than ever before. Educational attainment may be a possible explanation for the delay in

marriage, especially for women. A greater acceptance of premarital cohabitation (as evidenced by a sevenfold increase in unmarried-couple households since 1970) may also be contributing to this delay. Average family size has been affected because early marriage, associated with having more children, is less common.

Comparison The average age at which Hawai'i residents marry has shown little change between 1990 and 1997 for both men and women. In 1990 the national mean age at first marriage was very similar to Hawai'i's average, with men getting married at the average age of 26.9 and women at 25 years.



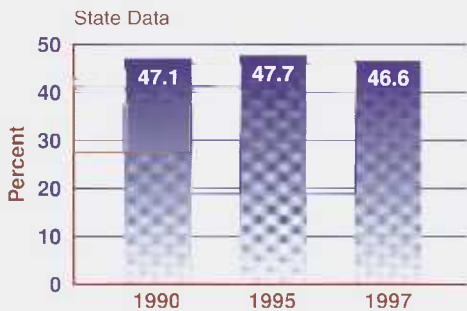
County	1990		1995		1997	
	M	W	M	W	M	W
O'ahu	26	25	27	25	27	26
Hawai'i	28	25	29	26	29	26
Kaua'i	27	24	28	25	29	26
Maui	28	25	29	26	28	26

Percent of marriages involving bride and groom of different ethnicity

The indicator As might be expected in such a multicultural society, there is a high rate of interethnic marriages in Hawai'i. A majority of Hawai'i's residents are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. The labor migration of the later decades of the 19th century brought people from East Asia and Europe, while in the early decades of the 20th century people were recruited more often from Southeast Asia and North America. Cultural traditions

and values are important to people, and individuals from different heritages who marry face different marital adjustments from those with more similar backgrounds. They can lead either to a blend of cultural beliefs or to conflicting values.

Comparison The percent of marriages involving bride and groom of different ethnicity changed very little between 1990 and 1997. Hawai'i County has consistently shown the highest percentage of interethnic marriages during the period of study. While national data are not available regarding interethnic marriages, only 2.3% of those wed in the United States in 1997 were interracial couples. Over a quarter of the marriages in Hawai'i were interracial as well as interethnic.



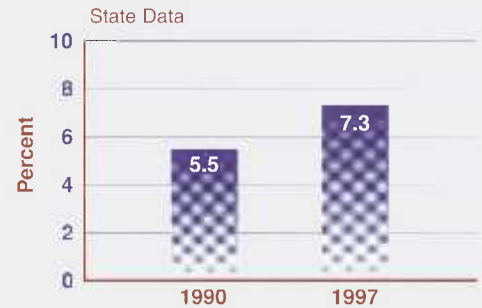
County	1990	1995	1997
O'ahu	47.0	47.1	46.7
Hawai'i	50.3	53.7	50.7
Kaua'i	49.3	55.8	40.7
Maui	43.5	42.3	43.8

Percent of families with more than two generations in households

The indicator The percentage of families with more than two generations in one household is influenced by cultural values and personal decisions, economic cycles, and the increasing life expectancy of many senior citizens. In Hawai'i, the concept of 'ohana or family often includes extended family and non-related people. Living in a multiple generational household may encourage shared responsibilities and provide enriching opportunities for children to interact with grandparents and other extended family members. It may also operate in the other direction to increase tensions and feelings of lack of privacy. Those in the middle, the "sandwich generation," may be especially stressed when care must be given to the young and the elderly.

Comparison There was a 33% increase in families with more than two generations living in Hawai'i households from 1990 to 1997. This may be a result of the downturn in the state's economy. While the counties were very similar on this indicator in 1990, O'ahu exhibited the greatest increase and had the highest percentage by 1997.

County	1990	1995	1997
O'ahu	5.7	N/A	8.4
Hawai'i	4.7	N/A	6.4
Kaua'i	5.8	N/A	6.8
Maui	5.6	N/A	6.7



Average number of people in household

The indicator Households come in all shapes and sizes ranging from single individuals to roommates, cohabiting couples, and nuclear and extended families. Whom one lives with is influenced by many factors. There are many social and economic benefits of living with extended family members or friends. Overcrowded situations, however, can have harmful effects on family life if a healthy sense of personal space and privacy is compromised.

Comparison The average household size has remained relatively unchanged since 1990 at the county, state, and national levels. Hawai'i's average household size is slightly larger than the national

average, perhaps due to multigenerational households (see indicator above on percent of families with more than two generations in household). Nationally, the average number of people per household was 2.6 in 1997.

County	1990	1995	1997
O'ahu	3.2	N/A	3.1
Hawai'i	2.8	N/A	2.8
Kaua'i	3.1	N/A	3.1
Maui	3.1	N/A	3.1

