

The Status of Women in Hawai'i County

Report completed December 2020

by the

Hawai'i County Committee on the Status of Women



Introduction

The Hawai'i County Committee on the Status of Women purpose is to provide for permanent and continuing countywide program on behalf of women in the County of Hawai'i. In line with this mandate, the Committee completed a project focused on using data from U.S. government and other sources to analyze women's status in Hawai'i County across multiple issue areas. The results of the report are intended to be used to highlight women's progress and the obstacles they continue to face, to encourage policy and programmatic changes that can improve women's opportunities, and to guide the Committee's focus, programs and activities in the future. The report on the Status of Women in Hawai'i County compiled data grouped in two major categories:

- 1) Employment and earnings and
- 2) Poverty and opportunity.

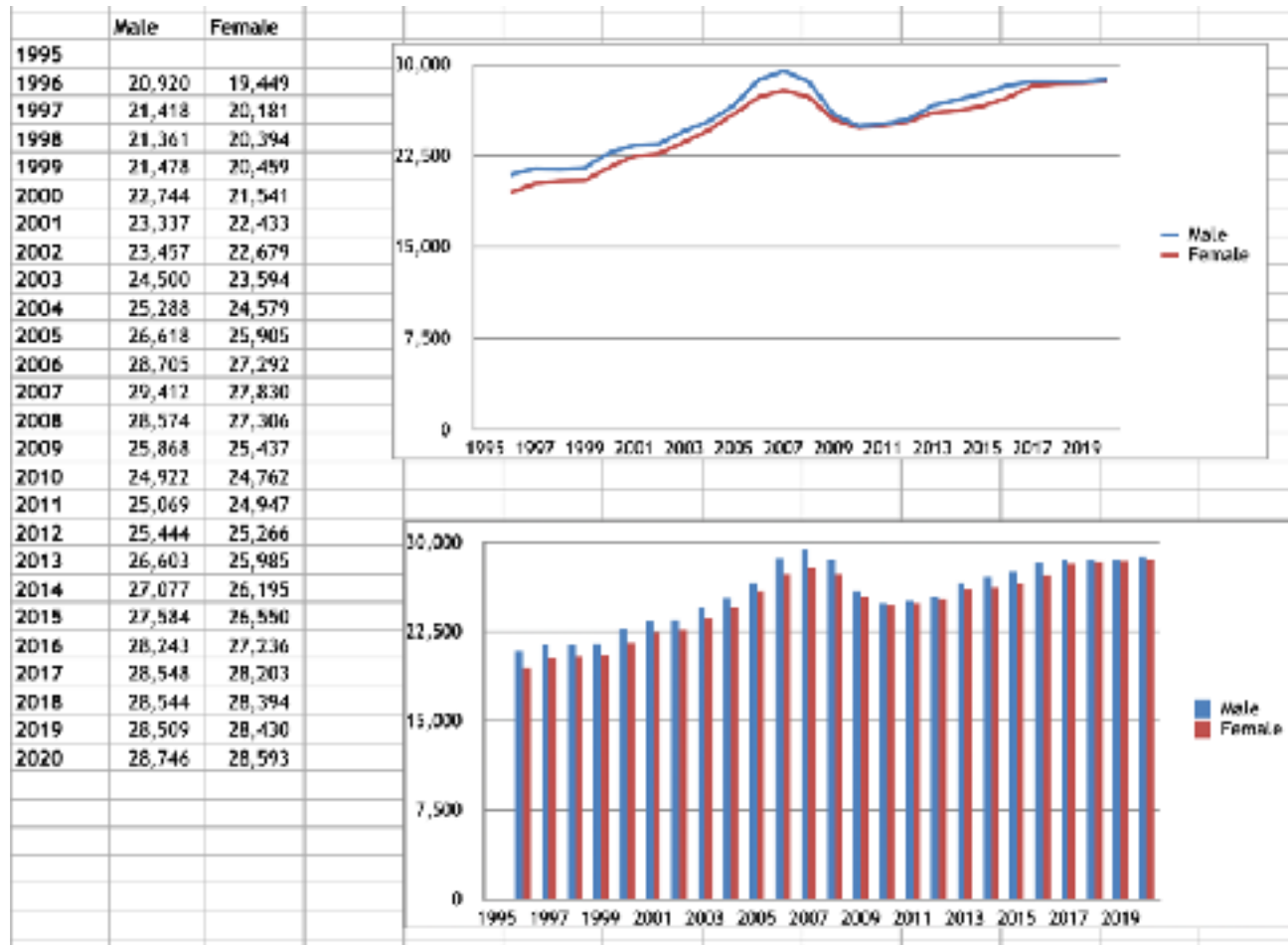
A third category - Violence and mental health - will be covered by another report in the future, as more relevant data becomes available.

According to the US Census July 2019 estimation, the total population in Hawai'i County is 201,513, of which 50.6% are women. Women in Hawai'i County have a diverse racial profile, with about 34% White, 21% Asian, 13% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 13% Hispanic or Latino (Source: US Census Bureau Quick Facts). We believe that this diversity is a testament to the tremendous contribution and potential women have to the County's development, vitality and well being.

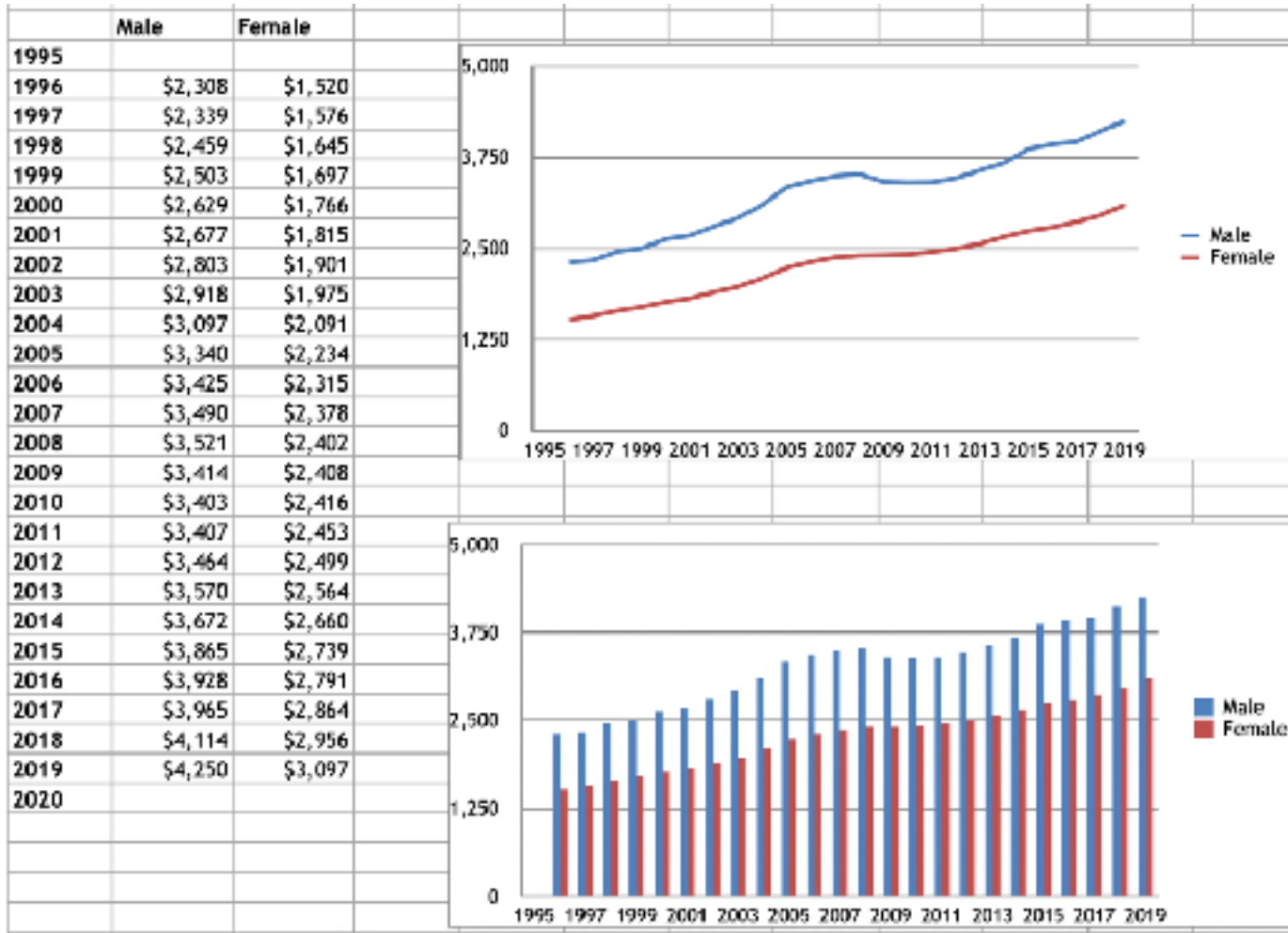
Employment and Earnings

Data obtained from the Local Employment Dynamics (LED) Program, which is the result of a partnership between the U.S. Census Bureau and the State of Hawaii, is presented in two sets of tables and charts below, showing the employment and earnings statistics between 1996 and 2020.

Hawai'i County Employment (data from LED Project)



Hawai'i County earnings (data from LED project)



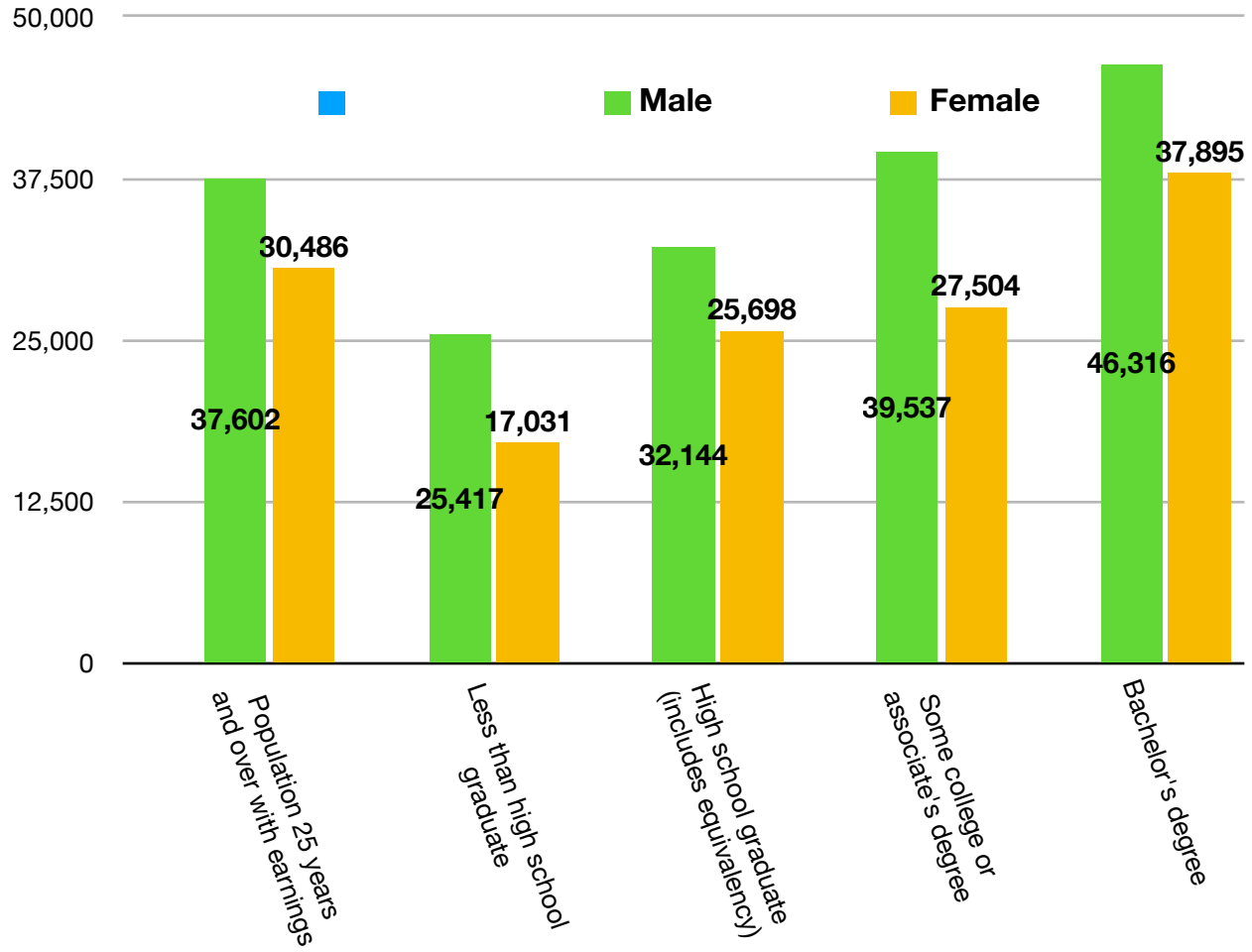
The data presented in the charts above suggest that although women are employed in a similar proportion as men, there is a disparity between women and men earnings, what is normally referred to as “the gender wage gap”. The table below, showing a comparison between women in Hawai`i County, the state of Hawai`i and women in the United States, further supports the argument of an gender wage gap: although the gender wage gap in Hawai`i County is smaller when compared to the entire State of Hawai`i or the entire US, in our County women are paid only about 85% of what men are paid, on average.

Table 1: Key Indicators of Women’s Employment & Earnings (US, Hawai`i State and Hawai`i County)

	2004 Status of Women in the States	2017 Status of Women in Hawai`i	2017 Status of Women in Hawa`i County
Median Annual Earnings for Women Employed Full-Time, Year-Round	\$39,500.00	\$40,000.00	\$37,427.00
Earnings Ratio Between Women and Men Employed Full-Time, Year-Round	83.4%	81%	85.2%
Percent of Women in the Labor Force	60.8%	59.6%	70.3%
Percent of All Employed Women in Managerial or Professional Occupations	30.3%	40.2%	54.3%

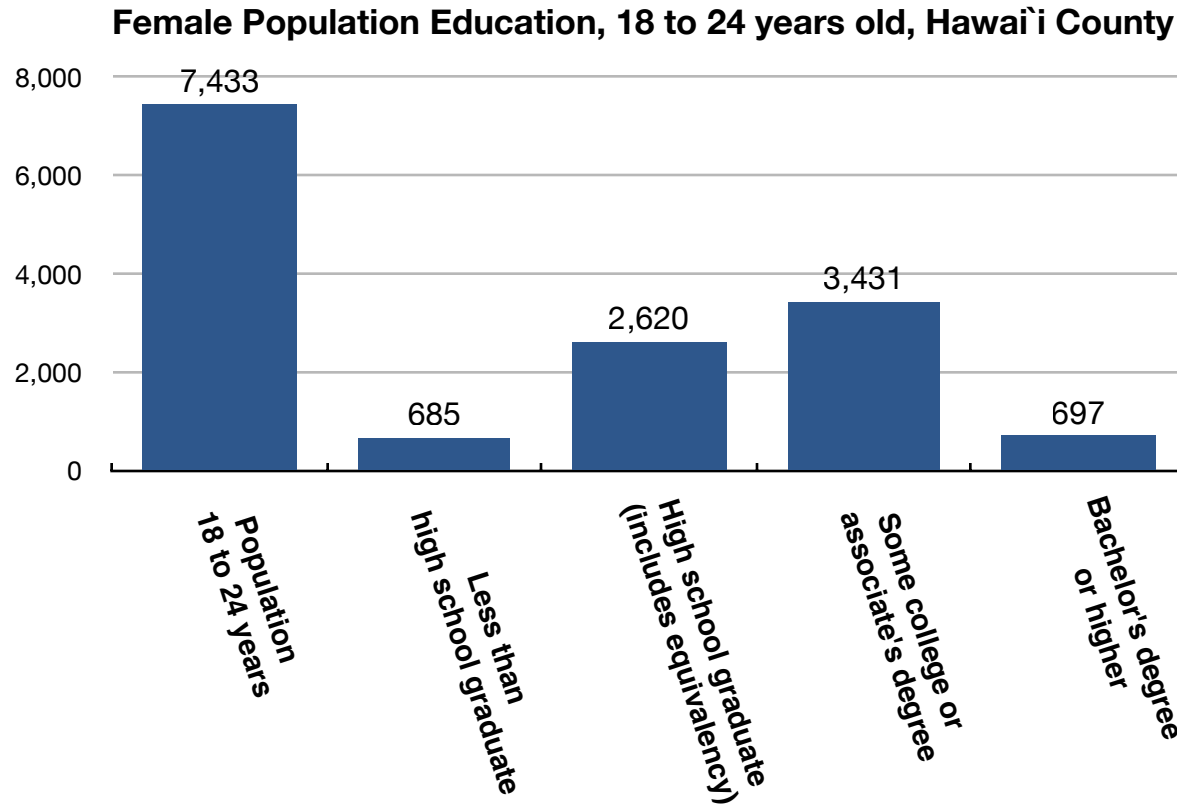
The gender wage gap holds true regardless of the education level, as shown by the bar chart below: although the statistics show that higher education results in higher pay, a female high school graduate is paid about the same as a male who did not graduate high school, a female with some college or associates degree is paid much less than a male with only a high school diploma, and a woman with a bachelors degree is paid much less than a male who did not finish college.

HAWAII COUNTY MEDIAN EARNINGS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, AGE 25 YEARS AND OLDER (IN 2017 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)



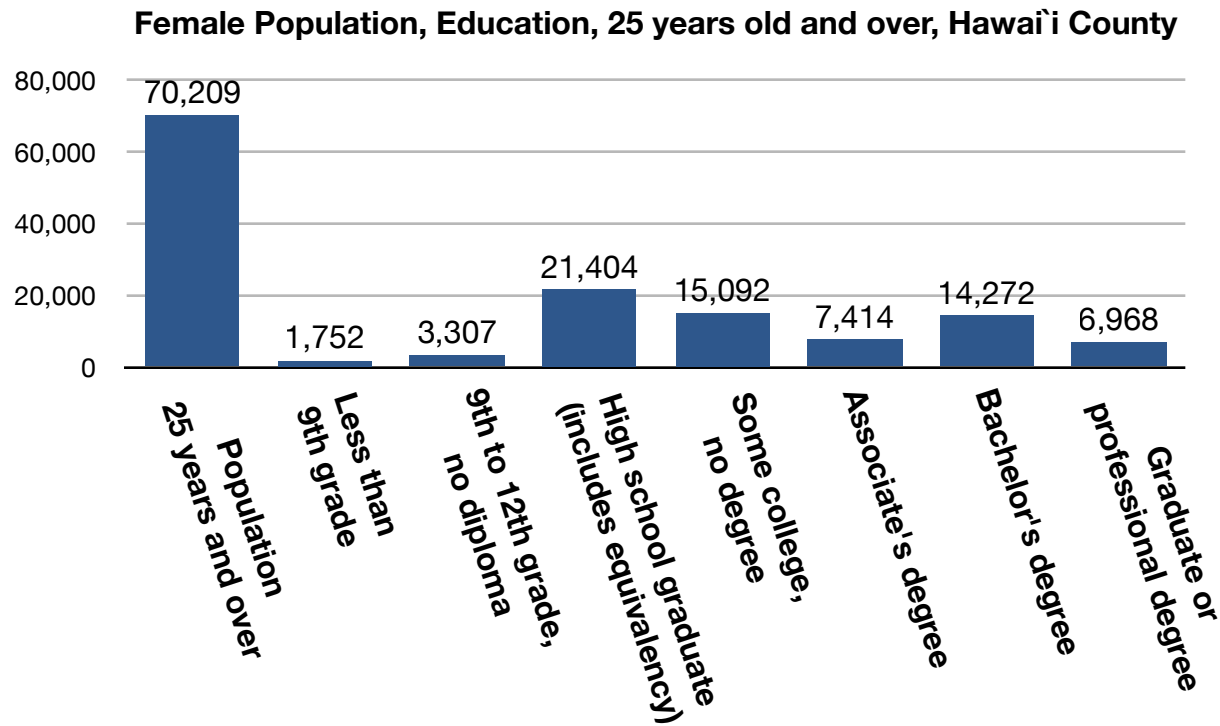
Women's educational attainment

In Hawai'i County, of 7,433 women 18-to-24 year old, more than 90% have a high school degree or higher, 46% have some college or associate's degree, while only 9% have a bachelor's degree or higher (see chart below). When compared to their male counterparts, a higher percentage of women in this age group pursued higher education: only 44% male have some college or associate's degree, and only 5% a bachelor's degree or higher.

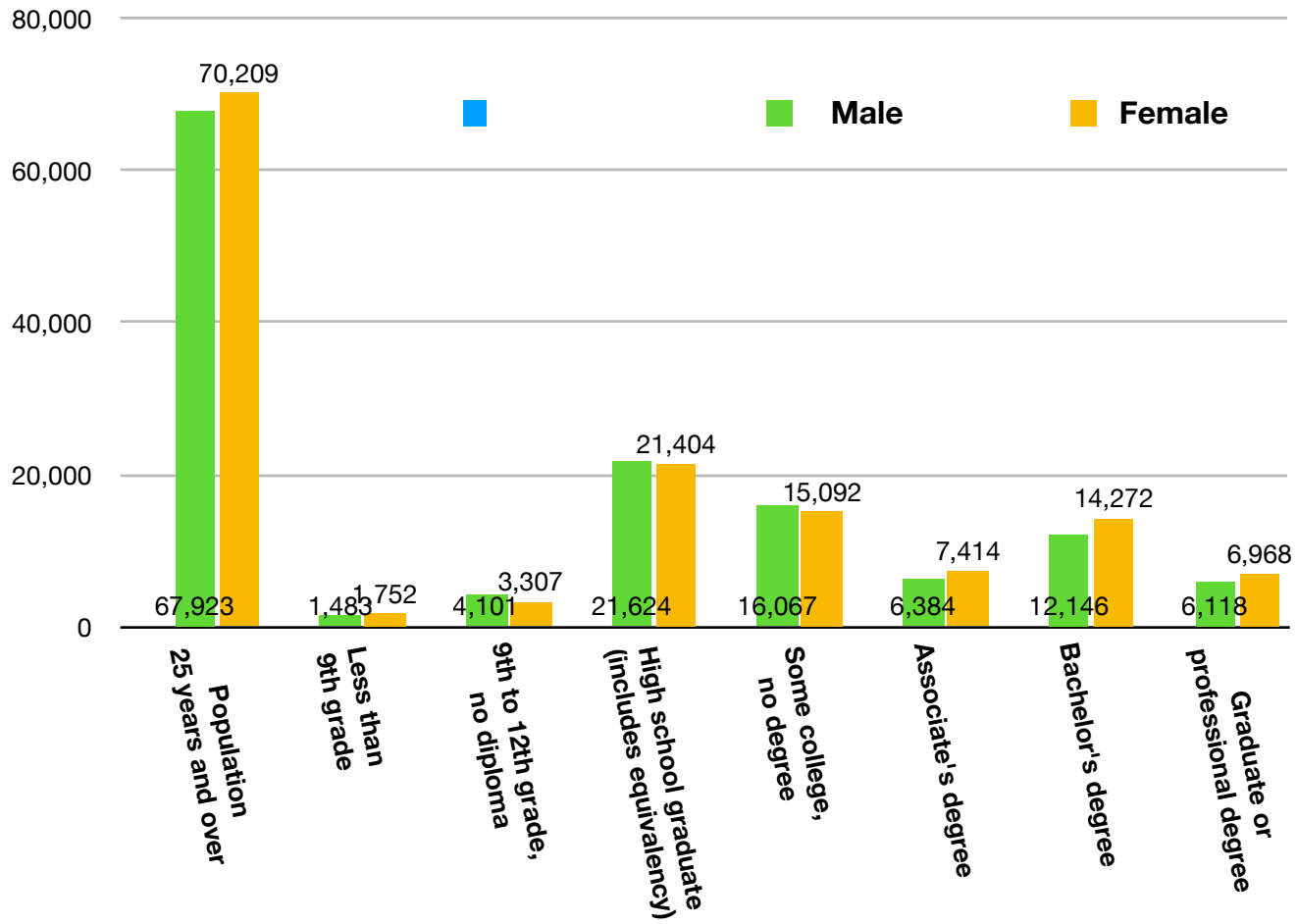


Hawai'i County has 70,209 women 25 years old and over. Of this number, about 93% have a high school degree or higher, 20% have a bachelor's degree, and only 10% have a graduate or professional degree (see chart below). When compared to their male counterparts, only 18% of the male population in this age group has a bachelor's degree, and only 9% and graduate or professional degree.

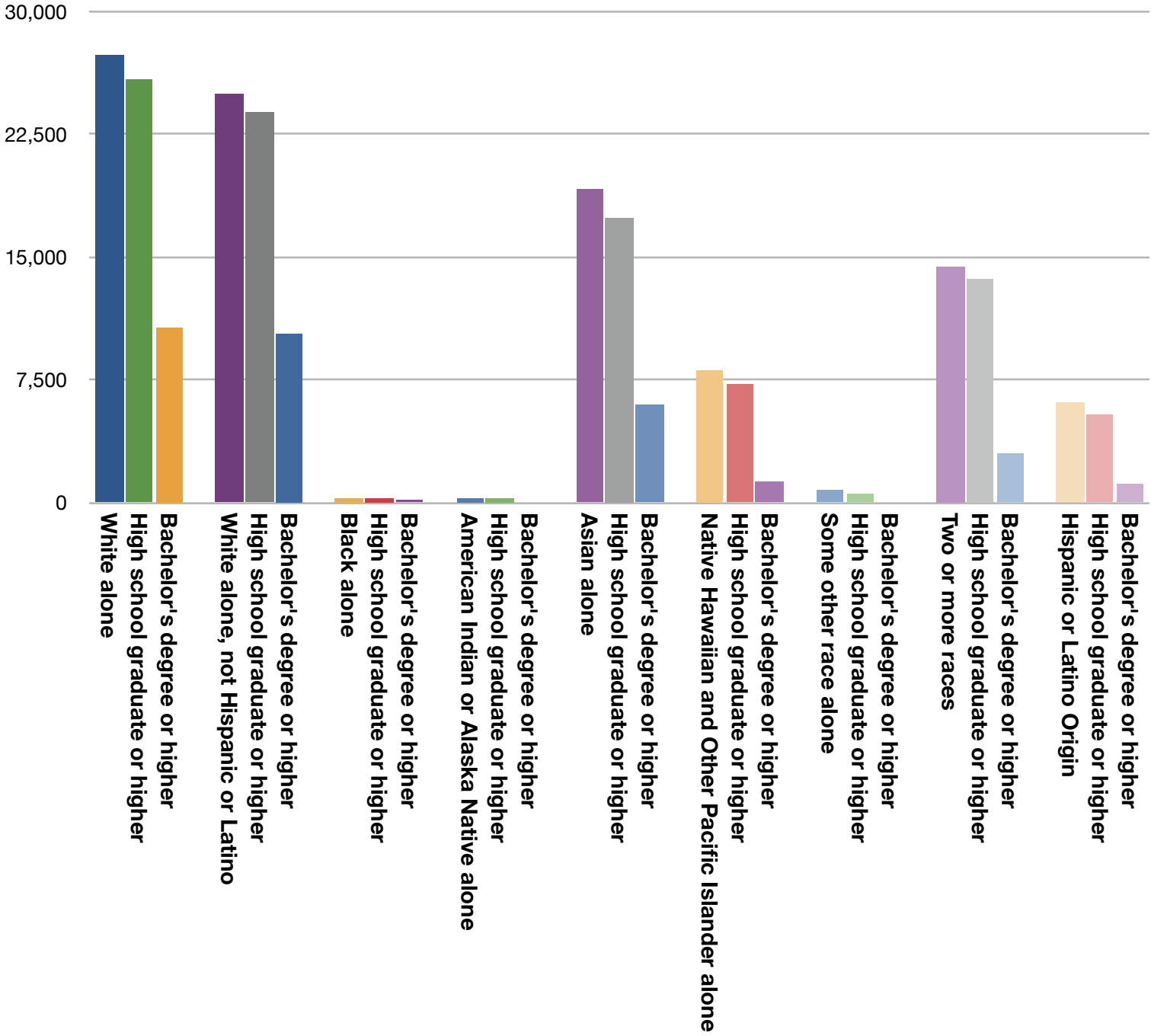
The data of women's education by race and ethnicity shows that race is not a factor in educational achievement for women. Overall, about the same percentage, regardless of race, have a high school degree, or a college degree or higher.



Female & Male Population, Education, 25 years and older, Hawai'i County



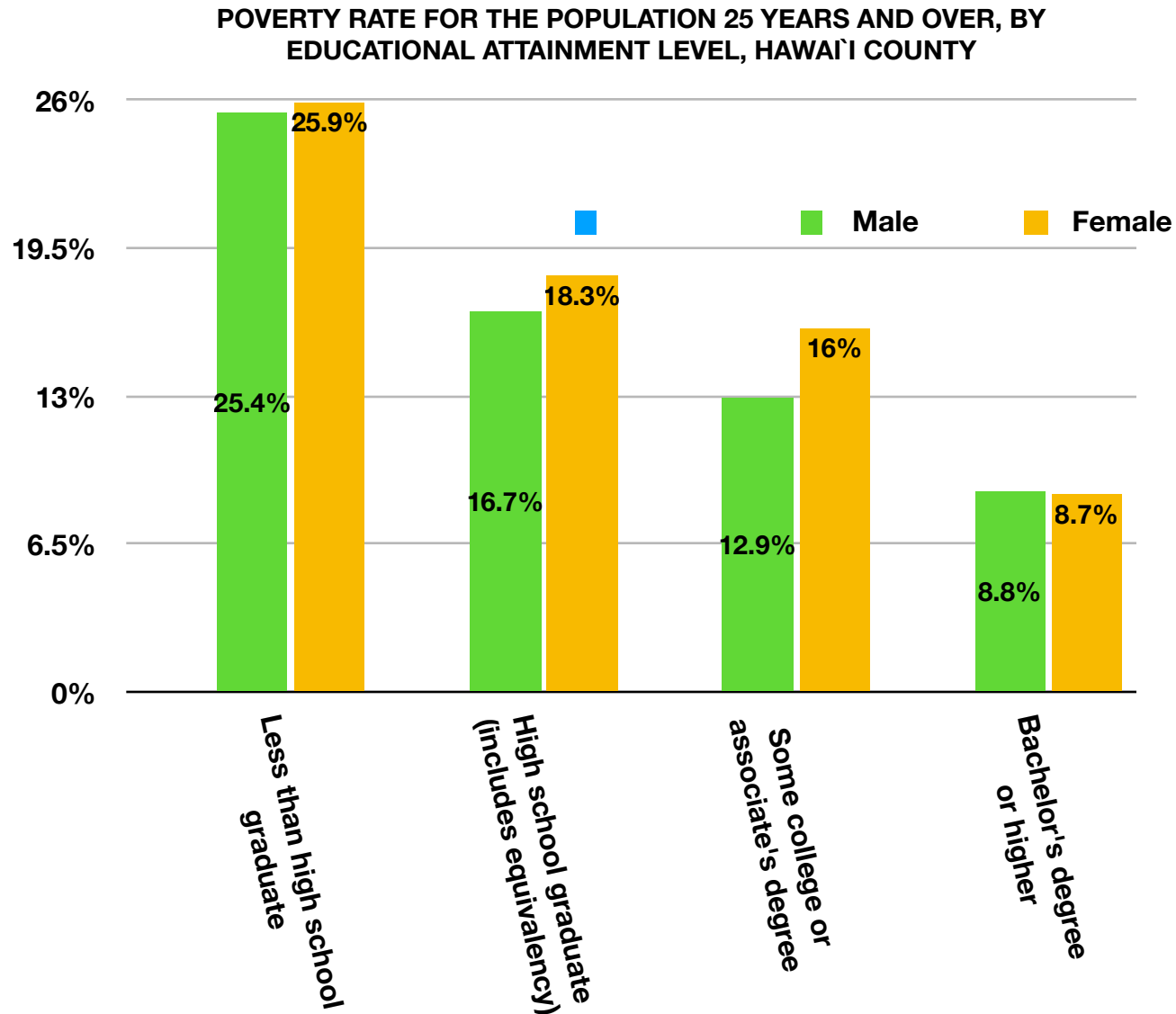
Hawai'i County women's educational attainment by race/ethnicity



The conclusion is that overall, women in all age groups have higher level of education compared to males. It is surprising, however, more education does not translate into higher income levels for women. The expectation is that higher education leads to higher income, but as we have seen from the data presented in the section discussing employment and earnings, the median earnings is higher for men than for women, regardless of the education level. It is important to understand the cause of this situation. Is it because women in general chose or have access to lower paying jobs compared to men? Or is it gender discrimination, where for the same position and education background women are paid less than men? We do not have the necessary data to understand this issue in depth.

Poverty and economic security

In Hawai'i County, poverty rates are direct proportional to the education level: a person who did not graduate high school has over 25% chance to live in poverty, compared to only about 9% chance for a person with a bachelor's degree or



higher. The data suggests that among the high school graduates or persons with some college or associates degree, women tend to have a higher likelihood to live in poverty compared to men. For the higher or lower levels of education, there is no difference between gender.

Conclusions

Data collected from US Census Bureau regarding women's status in the Hawai'i County led to the following conclusions:

- Women represent more than half of the population in the County
- Although the employment numbers are similar, women on average earn 15% less compared to men. These numbers show clearly that **women are paid less money for the same work**
- Women on average have a higher education level than men
- Among the high school graduates or persons with some college or associates degree, women tend to have a higher likelihood to live in poverty compared to men

The data we had access to and analyzed show that women appear to do everything right: they pursue education more than men, are employed in the same percentage as man, and yet they seem to be paid less. As a result, they have less economic freedom and opportunities and are more likely to fall into poverty. According to the Women's Policy Research, a typical woman who worked full time and year round would lose out approximately half million dollars over her lifetime, compared to her male counterpart. A college-educated woman would lose about \$800,000 over her lifetime. Understanding why the gender wage gap still exists, and focusing in reducing and eventually eliminating it, must be of primary importance in improving the status of women in Hawai'i County.

There are several possible explanations for the persistence of the gender wage gap and for women poverty level in Hawai'i County:

1. Women may be more likely to choose lower-paying occupations;
2. Women are more likely to reduce or leave paid work in order to care-take for children or other family members, thus reducing their earnings and slowing career advancement;
3. Employers' methods of setting pay is affected by gender bias and discrimination;
4. Women are less aggressive in negotiating over pay (or women's assertiveness is less likely to be successful).

State Policy Strategies

1. **Adopt “pay secrecy” laws** to prohibit employers from discriminating against employees who ask about salaries in the workplace.

In 2018 the Hawai'i State Legislature passed “Act 108”, which prohibits employers and employment agencies to inquire into a job applicants current or past compensation. Augmenting this law by not allowing discrimination against employees who ask about salaries will be impactful.

2. **Don't base employee pay on salary history**, which perpetuates pay inequality for women.

Banning salary history questions from the negotiation process makes it possible for women to enter into negotiations on level footing with men, by reducing the likelihood that women would have to negotiate from a lower starting point than male counterparts.

3. **Make salaries public** because when employees have access to information about on what their co-workers earn, and pay gaps at specific employers are exposed, employers will be pressured to fix pay disparities.

Hawai'i legislature introduced a bill in 2019, and in 2020 (HB 1192) related to equal pay, but both times the bill failed to pass into law. Hawai'i County CSW must work with the State Commission on the Status of Women and other relevant agencies to resurrect this effort and enact an equal pay law.

References

Status of Women in Hawai'i 2017 report https://womensfundhawaii.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Status_of_Women_in_Hawaii_11-17_reader-spreads-final.pdf

United States Census Bureau <https://www.census.gov/data.html>

State of Hawaii Department of Health <https://health.hawaii.gov/hhs/>

Hawaii Workforce Infonet <https://www.hiwi.org/vosnet/Default.aspx?enc=vLa15KtdCzQQMP6jrcRdIQ==>

US Department of Labor <https://www.bls.gov/home.htm>

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Status of Women in the States (Hawai'i) <https://statusofwomendata.org/explore-the-data/state-data/hawaii/>

American Association of University Women <https://www.aauw.org/what-we-do/research/>

Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/hscsw/>