

## STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY IN HAWAI‘I

Philanthropy’s success depends on a thriving democracy. When democracy does not work for everyone, funders’ impacts shrink – no matter the issue area their organization focuses on. Any funder can work toward a more inclusive and accountable democracy.

### How can philanthropy strengthen democracy in Hawai‘i?

Philanthropy Northwest produces the Democracy Lens, a set of resources to demonstrate how democracy issues have impacted your state. The Democracy Lens includes case studies known as [Bright Spots](#), which show how funders invest in democracy and where they can do more, and Democracy Charts, which highlight key statistics. In this resource, you will find the Democracy Charts for Hawai‘i.



Philanthropy Northwest’s discussions with our members and our own research illuminate concerning trends affecting the health of democracy throughout our region and in Hawai‘i, including:

- Democracy-related grants make up a small amount of funding in Hawai‘i and from only a small percentage of funders, indicating room to grow in this space. We see this trend in other states in the region as well, but the percentage of democracy funding is lowest in Hawai‘i.
- Elected officials across the region are much less diverse than the populations they serve. People of color are most of Hawai‘i’s population but slightly less likely than average to be in elected office. The disparity may result in missing community perspectives and less accountability in public policy decisions, especially for the Native Hawaiian population.
- In recent decades, the number of newspapers in Hawai‘i declined 38%, an even greater decline than in other states in our region. A decline in local journalism, especially in rural areas, can make it harder for communities to stay informed and have their issues gain awareness.
- A large portion of eligible voters in the region do not vote, including in Hawai‘i, where turnout has remained below the national average.

See the data on democracy funding, equity in representation, support for local journalism, voter engagement and election effectiveness in Hawai‘i below.

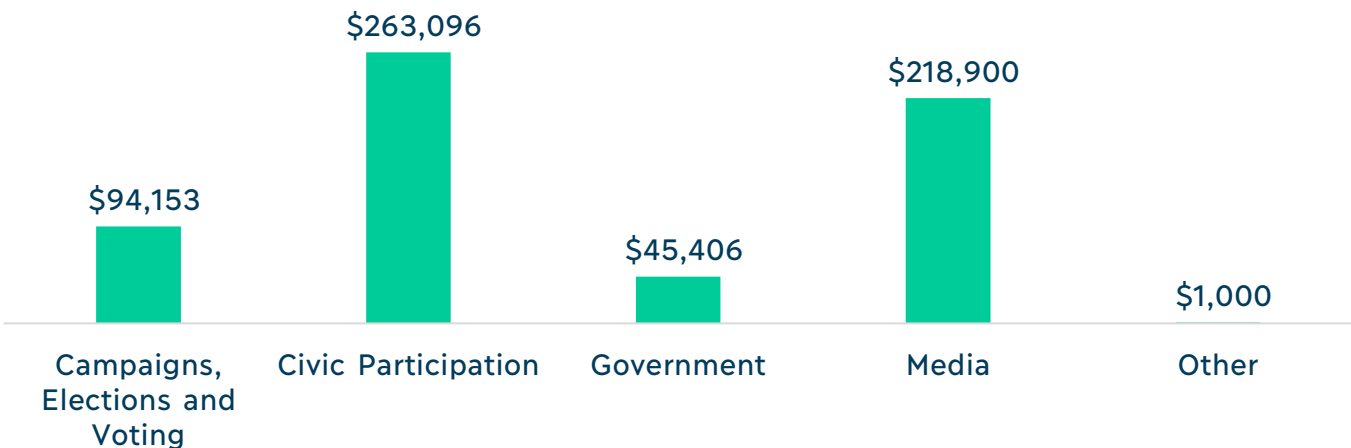
## Democracy Funding to Grantees in Hawai'i

The data below suggests that most funders are not engaged in democracy activities in Hawai'i, but those that do make a significant impact in the state. However, any positive impacts may be limited because democracy funding only makes up 0.2% of grantmaking to the state overall, which is lower than for the other states in the region.

**49 Funders**  
gave democracy-related grants to Hawai'i in 2019 (4.7% of all funders giving to Hawai'i)

**\$0.5M in Grants**  
went to democracy-related causes to Hawai'i in 2019 (0.2% of all grantmaking to Hawai'i)

### Hawai'i Democracy Funding by Category - 2019 (Grants can be in Multiple Categories)

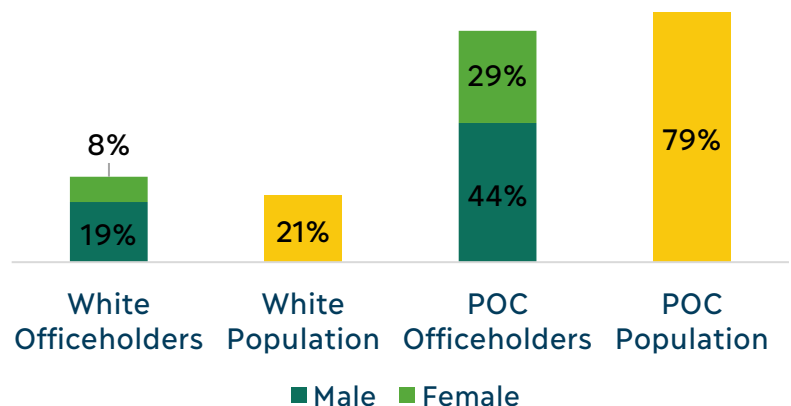


## Public Participation in Democracy

### Equity in Representation

Political candidacy is a way to ensure that democracy is reflective of the public good, but not all demographic groups are equally likely to run for office in Hawai'i. People of color are 79% of the population and 72% of elected officials. The disparity is much smaller than in other states, but still may reflect missing community perspectives in political representation, especially among the Native Hawaiian population. This can limit the government's accountability to address the

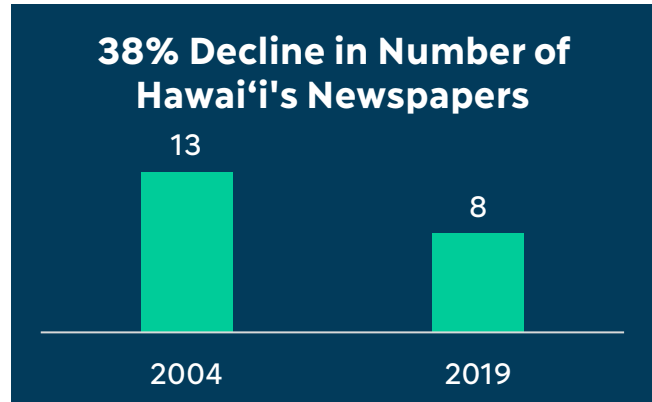
### Hawai'i Elected Official Demographics - 2021



full range of community needs. Funders can address this problem with policy advocacy for systems change, reducing economic barriers to run for office, supporting diverse leadership development and more.

### Support for Local Journalism

The decline in newspapers is starker than any other state analyzed in the Democracy Lens. In recent decades, the Hawai'i had a net decline of five papers – a 38% decline – highlighting a concerning loss in local journalism that provides crucial information to the state's residents. Philanthropies can collaborate with and fund diverse local news outlets so that all residents have access to quality news on events that impact them.

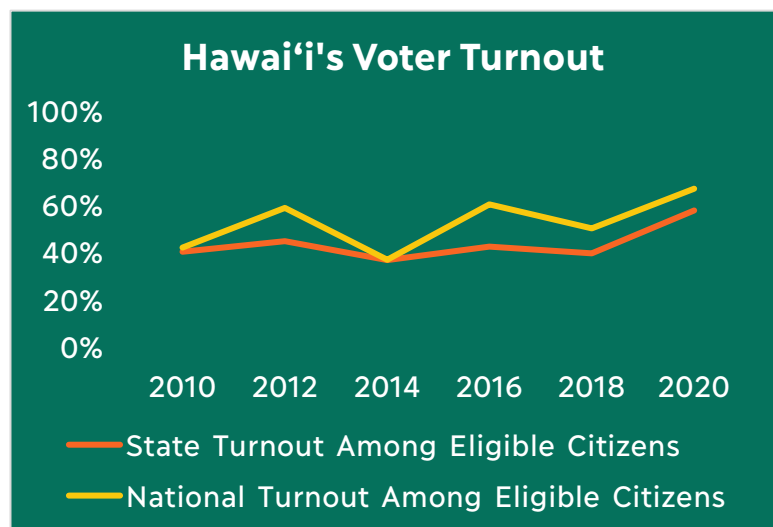


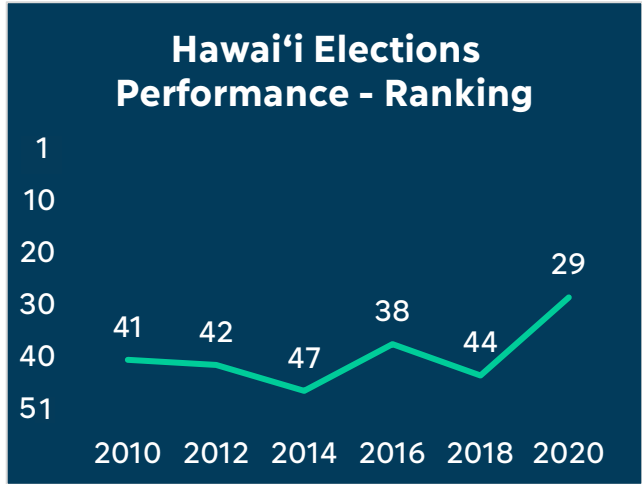
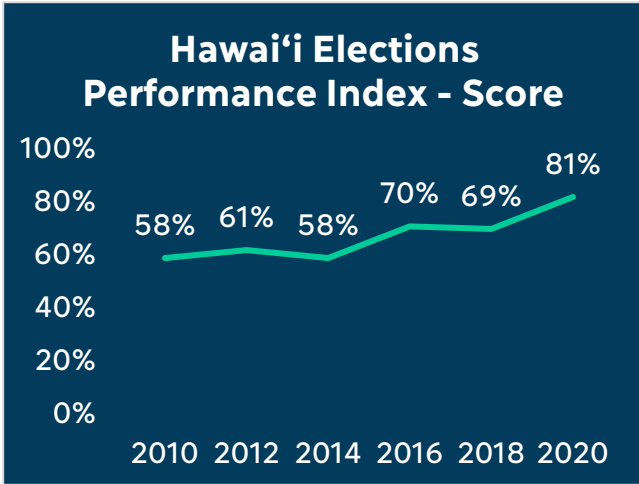
### Voter Turnout and Election Effectiveness

Voting provides another snapshot of the public's involvement in civil society. Hawai'i's turnout has remained below the national average in recent years – never reaching 60% – highlighting room for funders to foster more civic engagement so more Hawaiians are included in the democratic process.

Limited voter turnout may also highlight a need for funders to advocate for improvements to the electoral system. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology scores elections performance based on

election participation rates, voting accessibility measures and data accuracy protocols. Below is Hawai'i's aggregate score on a percent scale (100% being the highest) and ranking (one being the highest out of 50 states plus Washington D.C.). The state has improved but often ranks toward the bottom, struggling with low turnout, low registration, ballot problems and more.





To see the real-world impact, check out the Bright Spot case studies, which showcase examples of how funders have had success in improving democracy. To see Democracy Charts and Bright Spots for other states in our region, please visit our [Democracy Lens webpage](#).