Diabetes prevalence is higher among Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI), Filipino, Japanese, and Chinese than in Whites.

NHOPI and Filipino had the highest prevalence of diabetes whereas Whites had the lowest after controlling for socio-economic variables, body mass index (BMI), and health behaviors.

Disparities between ethnic groups are already apparent in the 35-44 year age group.

Diabetes increases with age for all ethnic groups, and is most prevalent in the 65-74 year age group.

Lower household income was associated with higher diabetes prevalence.

Obesity (BMI>30) and physical inactivity were associated with higher prevalence of diabetes.

Healthy diet and active lifestyle are important ways to prevent and control diabetes.

Using data from the 2011, 2013, and 2015 Hawai‘i Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), we examined the prevalence of diabetes in 18,200 adults in 5 ethnic groups (Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese and White) across 5 age groups (35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, and 75+).

Figure 1 shows how the prevalence of diabetes increases with age for all ethnic groups when other variables, like socioeconomic status and lifestyle behaviors, are controlled. The impact of these other variables are shown in Figure 2. In calculating these numbers, we followed instructions from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and all statistical analyses used survey weights and accounted for complex survey design.
Figure 2 shows some of the other factors that influence a person’s likelihood to have diabetes. A dot to the right of the vertical line for the factor, obesity, means that people who are obese are more likely to have diabetes. Dots to the left of the vertical line for higher income and physical activity mean that people with more income and people who exercise regularly are less likely to have diabetes.

### Ways to Prevent and Control Diabetes

Differences in diabetes prevalence across ethnic groups are already apparent in the 35–44 age group. They become more pronounced in older age groups. Knowing this, it is important that interventions to improve healthy lifestyle behaviors start in youth. Developing healthy habits in early life will help prevent bad health outcomes in later life.

Besides age and race/ethnicity, three other factors strongly influence a person's likelihood to have diabetes. These factors are 1) household income 2) individual obesity and 3) physical activity levels. These factors are interrelated. For example, people with lower incomes have less money to spend on fruits and vegetables, which are expensive in Hawai‘i. Thus, they may eat more lower-cost processed foods and fast foods, which contribute to obesity. People with low incomes may also have less leisure time to spend on exercise and less disposable income to spend on things like gym memberships. These findings tell us that prevention measures need to address not only one’s diet and exercise habits, but also one's broader life circumstances and financial health.


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