



February 2016

# **FINANCIAL STRUGGLES FACING WORKING FAMILIES IN HAWAI‘I**



**Study of the Financial Struggles  
Facing Working Families in Hawaii**

**Prepared for:**

**Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice**

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## **BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY**

Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice has contracted QMark Research to conduct a quantitative study in the form of a telephone (both landline and mobile telephones) consumer survey.

The interviewing for the study began on February 17 2016 and ended on February 29, 2016. A total of 503 surveys were completed during this time period. The number of surveys to be completed on each island was assigned proportionally based on population estimates of adults on each of the major Hawaiian Islands being tested. The sample used to generate was derived using QMark's Random Digit Dialing software. Approximately Thirty-seven percent of the interviews were conducted with landline respondents while the remainder (62%) was done via wireless phone.

The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 4.46 percentage points with a 95% confidence level.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A recent poll of 503 Hawaii residents was conducted by QMark Research beginning on February 17, 2016 and ending on February 29, 2016.

The findings of the poll revealed the personal financial struggles that many working families currently face in the Islands.

Some of the highlights include:

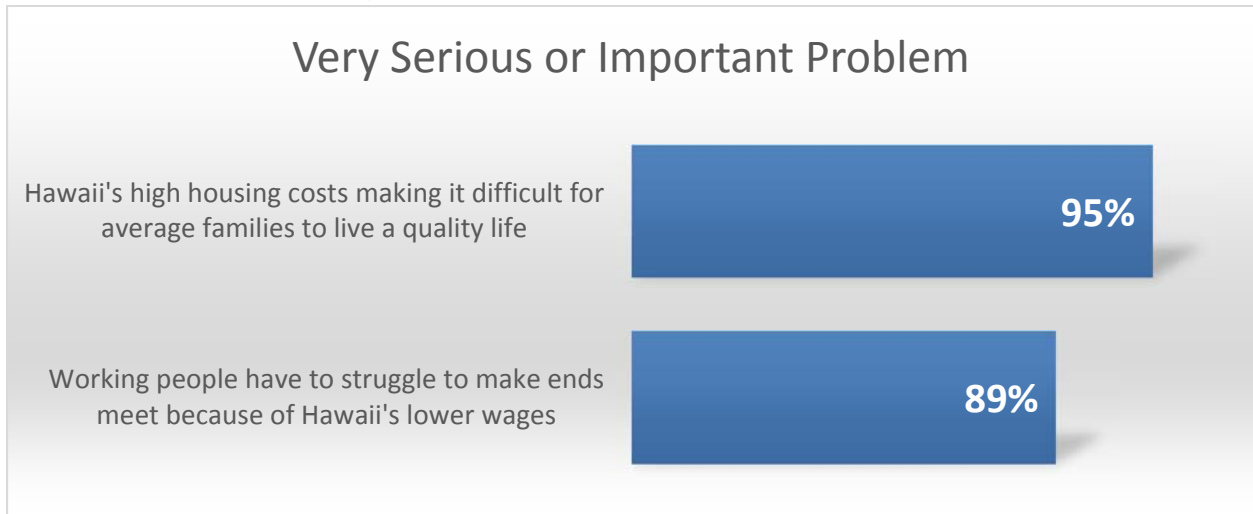
- Half (48%) currently describes their own personal financial situation as being one that survives “paycheck-to-paycheck.”
- One in four (25%) Hawaii residents have, in the last five years, worried about how they would pay that month’s rent or mortgage.
- Twenty-one percent have worried about how they would come up with enough money to pay their monthly utility bill.
- One in five (20%) Hawaii residents have faced a medical crisis which caused financial worry and hardship and questions as to how they would pay these bills.
- Seventeen percent of the families polled indicate they have worried about being able to provide basics such as food on the table for loved ones.

The survey results also show that Hawaii residents are highly concerned about the state’s high cost of housing and low wages and that they support targeted tax credits to help them make ends meet:

- 95% believe the high cost of housing is a very serious or important problem in Hawaii.
- Almost nine out of ten (89%) believe the low wages paid to many residents is a very serious or important concern.
- Six out of seven (86%) of the respondents indicated support for a tax credit that lets low and moderate income working families keep more of what they earn.

## SECTION – HIGH COST OF LIVING

In this section of the study Hawaii residents were presented with two separate issues related to the cost of living here in Hawaii and then asked for their perception of each.



The research shows that 95% of the residents polled believe the high cost of housing which adversely affects the quality of life here is a very serious or important problem here in Hawaii.

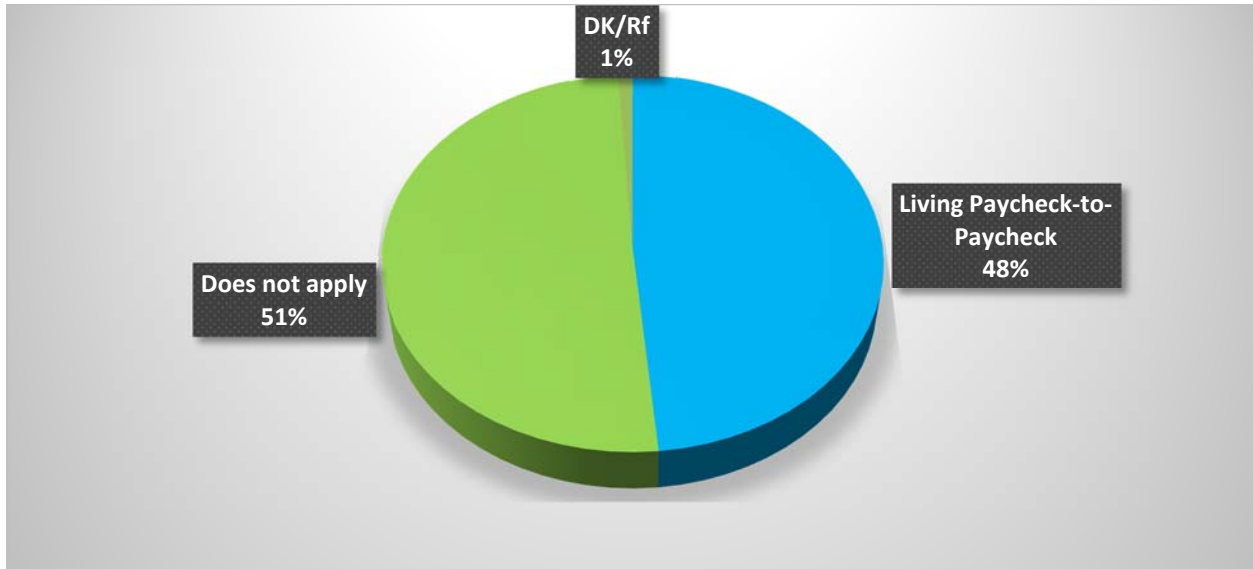
Almost nine out of ten (89%) believe the low wages paid to many residents which creates added hardships is also a very serious or important concern.

In another section of the study Hawaii residents were presented with arguments for and against tax credits targeted at low-and moderate income families and then asked them to quantify their perception of each.

Six out of seven (86%) of the respondents indicated support for a tax credit that lets low and moderate income working families keep more of what they earn to help meet basic needs and pay for things that allow them to keep working.

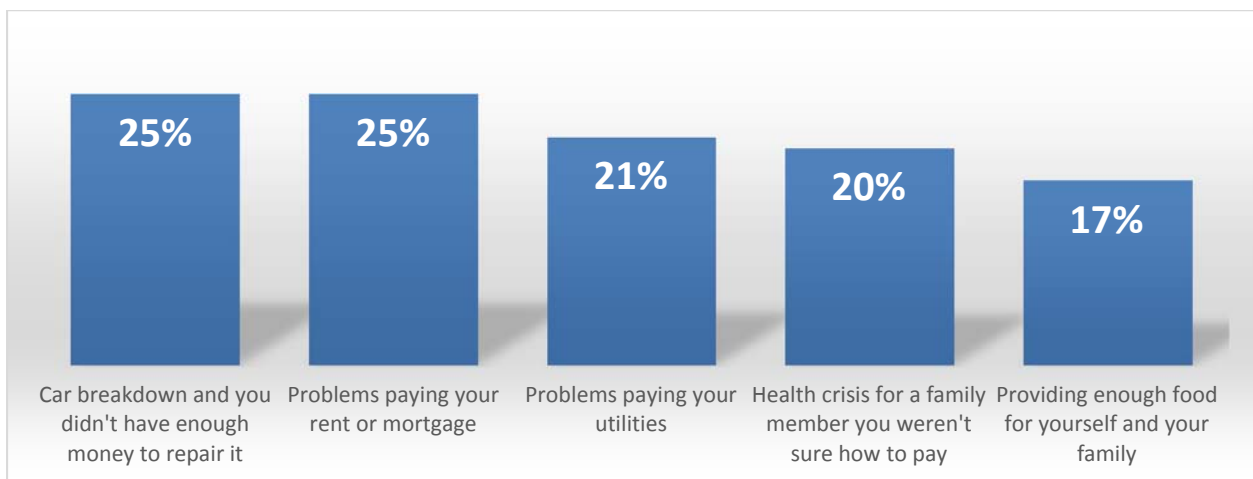
## SECTION – PERSONAL ECONOMIC STRUGGLES

The results show an astounding 48% of Hawaii residents polled currently could describe their personal financial situation as living “paycheck-to-paycheck.”



The findings indicate that Neighbor Island residents (59%) in particular are struggling more so than their Oahu (44%) counterparts.

In this next section of the study Hawaii residents were presented with various scenarios related to the economic struggles that individuals face here. They were then asked to identify those that applied to them at any time in the last five years.





One in four Hawaii residents have had their car breakdown and did not know how they would finance its repair.

Twenty-five percent of the residents polled have experienced the fear of not being able to pay their monthly rent or mortgage payment.

Twenty-one percent of the residents polled have had issues paying their utility bills.

Of greater concern is the fact that one in five (20%) have been ill or have had a family member who has gotten sick and were then faced with the dilemma of how they would pay for medical care.

Seventeen percent of the respondents polled have worried about providing enough food for themselves and their families.