

# Knocking at the College Door

## Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2022

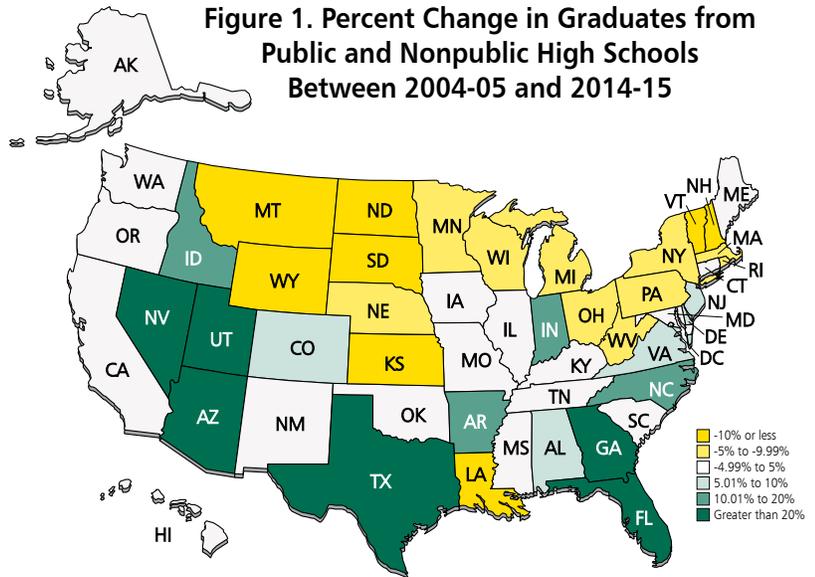
# DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

At over 3.3 million, the nation's graduating class of 2007-08 is projected to be history's largest. In fact, 2007-08 will mark the last year in an era of continuous growth in the nation's production of high school graduates, a period that reaches back to 1994. Over that time, the number of graduates swelled by 35.7 percent. In 2008-09, however, our country will begin a protracted period during which its production of high school graduates is expected to stagnate, assuming existing patterns persist. The number of graduates nationally will dip slightly over the next several years before growth resumes at a slower pace around 2015. Ultimately, projections indicate that between 2004-05 (the last year of available actual data) and 2021-22, the number of high school graduates will grow by approximately 265,000, or 8.6 percent.

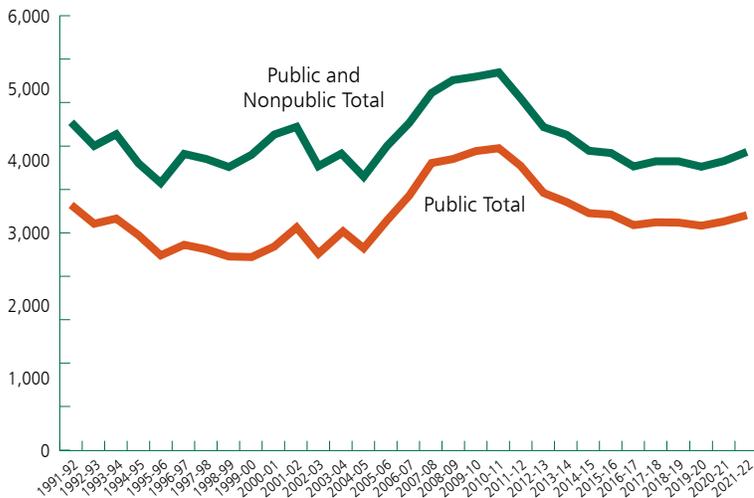
The national data obscure significant variations in this picture at the regional and state levels, however. Regionally, in the decade leading up to 2004-05, the number of high school graduates grew the fastest in the West at 34 percent, with the South growing by 23.5 percent, the Northeast by 20.7 percent, and the Midwest by 14.2 percent. But the regions face very different futures in the years to come. The South will see the most growth in its production of high school graduates, at about 9 percent by 2014-15; and the West's numbers will climb by 7.1 percent. But the number of graduates produced in the Northeast and the Midwest will decline – by 6.1 and 3 percent, respectively.

As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Percent Change in Graduates from Public and Nonpublic High Schools Between 2004-05 and 2014-15**



**Figure 2. District of Columbia High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)**



The District of Columbia produced 184 fewer graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an decrease of 4.6 percent. Projections indicate that D.C. will experience considerable growth in its production of high school graduates in the years ahead, assuming that existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The district projects to have about 350 more high school graduates a decade after 2004-05, an increase of about 9 percent.

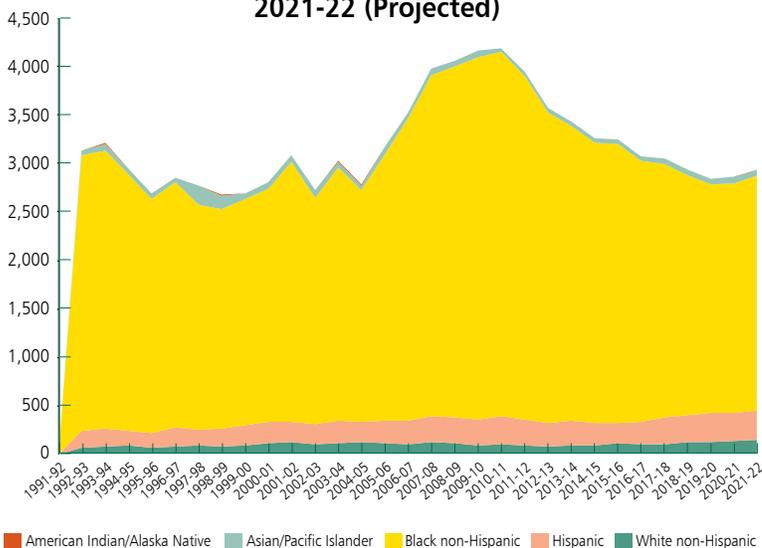
Despite trends in other states to the contrary, the District of Columbia experienced a decline in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 1999-2000 (Figure 2). In 2004-05, only 2,781 students graduated from public high schools in D.C., a number that was 604 lower than 1991-92 levels, which represented a decrease of 17.8 percent. Nonpublic schools in D.C. play a significant role in educating its youth; they contributed an estimated 1,010 graduates in 2004-05, but that amount was 128 less than they produced in 1991-92. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced about a quarter on average.

While much of the rest of the nation is poised to enter a period characterized by much more stagnant growth in the production of high school graduates, the District of Columbia is projected to experience a period of rising graduate numbers, at least initially. This trend is expected to top out in 2010-11 at nearly 4,200 graduates, after which it will reverse itself: the number of graduates will fall almost all the way back to the 2004-05 level by 2016-17. The growth period will result in an additional 1,400 public school graduates (a 50 percent increase), while the subsequent erosion will result in D.C.'s public schools shedding over 1,000 graduates (a drop of 25.6 percent from the peak year). These projections assume the continuation of existing patterns of migration, enrollment, and completion, however. D.C.'s rather poor track record for providing a safe, quality education and the proximity of other schooling options in Maryland and Virginia mean that these assumptions are perhaps less stable than elsewhere.

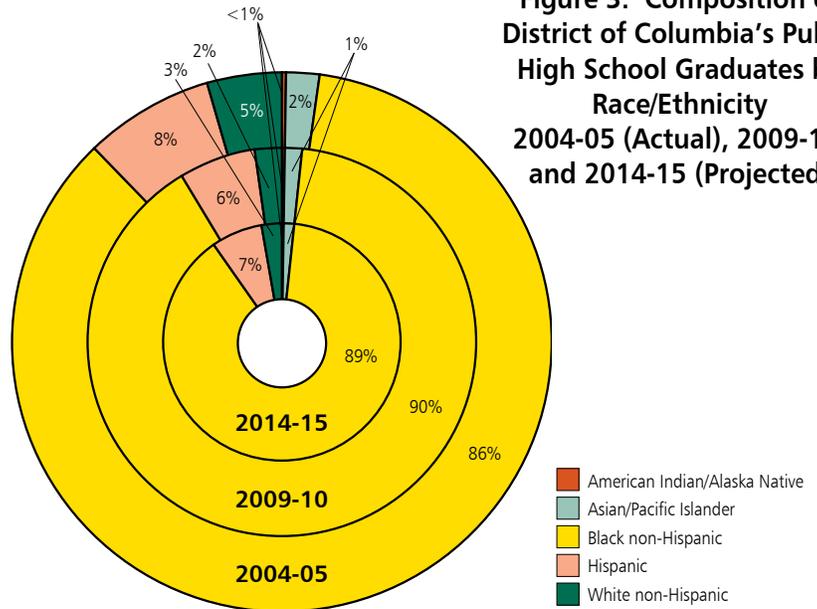
In fact, D.C.'s public school population has a much higher share of Black non-Hispanic students than the city's population as a whole, which the U.S. Census Bureau estimated was 32 percent White non-Hispanic, 55 percent Black non-Hispanic, and 8 percent Hispanic in 2006. Yet Black non-Hispanics comprise almost all of students in and graduates from D.C.'s public schools (Figure 3). This wide disparity indicates that White non-Hispanic families are seeking alternate schooling options to the district's public school system.

As in other states, the racial/ethnic composition of D.C.'s public high school graduating classes has diversified slightly in recent years. In 1994-95, Black non-Hispanic graduates accounted for 89.8 percent of the graduates. A decade later, that proportion had dropped to 85.5 percent. However, projections indicate that the next decade will see no further declines in the share of public high school graduates in the district who are Black non-Hispanic.

**Figure 4. District of Columbia High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)**



**Figure 3. Composition of District of Columbia's Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 2004-05 (Actual), 2009-10, and 2014-15 (Projected)**



Projecting changes in the numbers of graduates who are not of Black non-Hispanic descent in D.C. is especially prone to potential error, given the small sizes of these groups; a slight change can make an apparently large difference in the projected percentage change. Nevertheless, D.C.'s production of Hispanics, White non-Hispanics, and Asians/Pacific Islanders is not expected to change substantially in terms of raw numbers. In 2004-05, graduates from these groups numbered 214, 127, and 56, respectively. In percentage terms, by 2014-15, projections indicate decreases of between one-fifth and one-quarter for each of the three groups.

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