

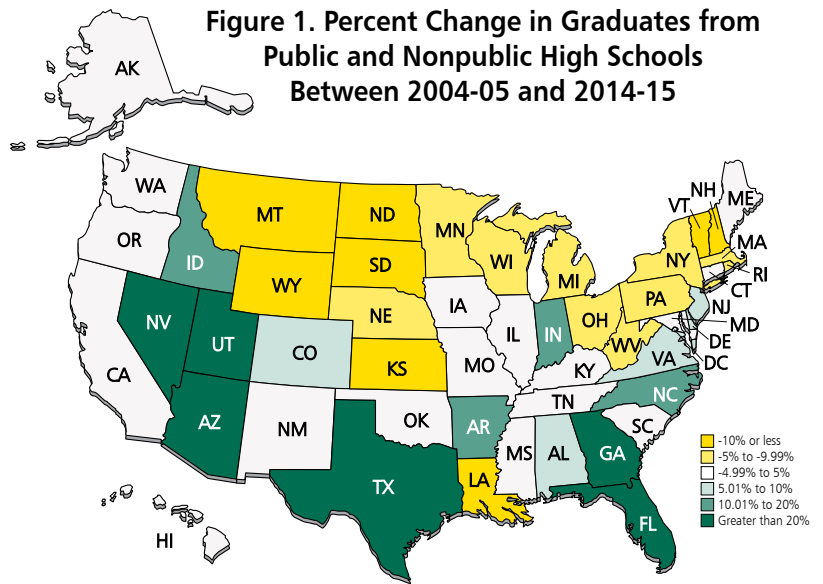
# Knocking at the College Door Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2022

## MONTANA

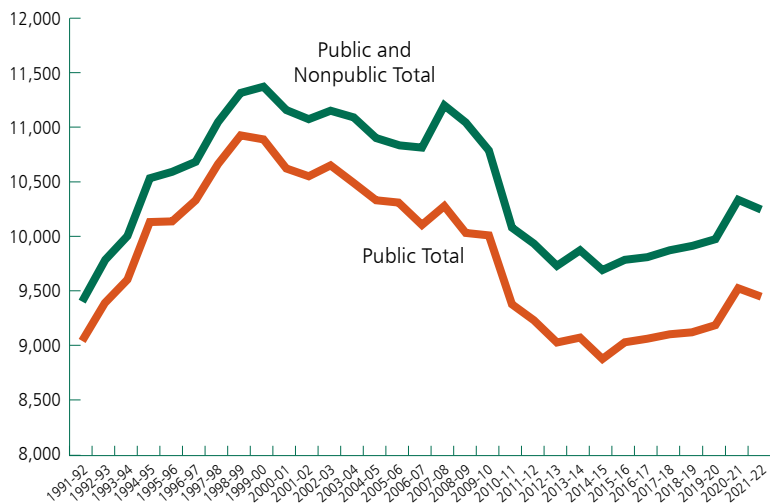
At over 3.3 million, the nation's graduating class of 2007-08 is projected to be history's largest. In fact, 2007-08 will mark the last year in an era of continuous growth in the nation's production of high school graduates, a period that reaches back to 1994. Over that time, the number of graduates 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 2. Montana High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)**



Montana produced just 360 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 3.4 percent. Projections indicate that Montana will experience a decrease in its production of high school graduates in the years ahead, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The state projects to have about 1,200 fewer high school graduates a decade after 2004-05, a decrease of about 11 percent.

Montana experienced rapid growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 1999-2000, but then saw it dip slightly leading up to the last year for which actual data were available, 2004-05 (Figure 2). That year, 10,335 students graduated from public high schools in Montana, 1,289 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, which represented growth of 14.2 percent. Nonpublic schools in Montana do not contribute a substantial number of additional graduates, with an estimated 562 in 2004-05, an amount which was 216 more than they produced in 1991-92. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic

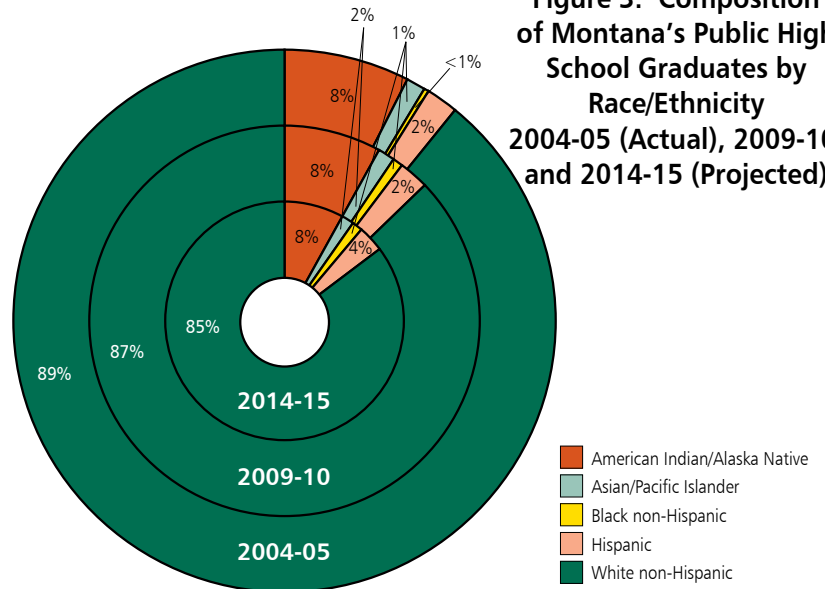
schools produced an estimated 6 percent, on average.

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, Montana has been experiencing declining graduate numbers since 2000. It can expect to see a spike in its production in 2007-08 at 11,202, but thereafter the number of graduates is forecast to diminish rapidly through 2012-13, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. In that span, Montana is projected to lose almost 1,500 graduates, a slide of about 13.1 percent. Beginning in 2014-15, modest growth is projected to resume.

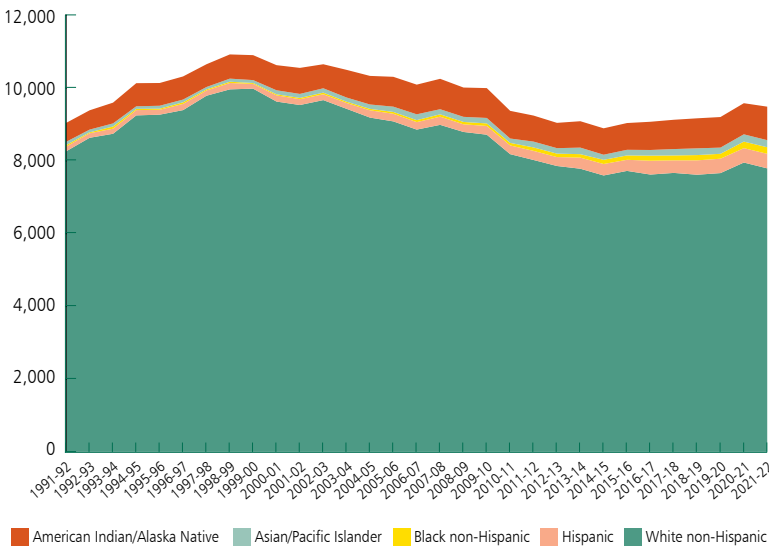
The racial/ethnic composition of Montana's public high school graduating classes will continue to show diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanic graduates accounted for 91.3 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped to 88.9 percent. The next decade will see further declines in the share of public high school graduates in the state who are White non-Hispanic, with projections indicating it will reach 85.5 percent by 2014-15.

These changes are roughly comparable to the experience of states all over the country, though the magnitude may differ substantially, as the nation as a whole is undergoing sweeping changes in the racial/ethnic composition of its population. In Montana, as in other states, the big changes are the result of rapid growth in the number of Hispanic high school students and graduates, coupled with a shrinking number of White non-Hispanics in the educational pipeline. Montana also projects to have a rapidly growing, though still small, number of graduates who will be Black non-Hispanic. While immigration has contributed to the growth of the Hispanic population, signs of the continuing demographic shift are evident in data showing a dramatic increase in the number of Hispanic births, which is due in part to a higher fertility rate among Hispanic women.

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



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



Projecting changes in the numbers of minority graduates in Montana is especially prone to potential error given the small size of these groups; a slight change can make an apparently large difference in the projected percentage change. Nevertheless, Hispanic graduates from public schools in Montana numbered just 198 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 316, an increase of 59.5 percent (Figure 4). The number of Black non-Hispanic graduates is projected to increase by 182 percent from just 40 in 2004-05 to 113 in 2014-15. Meanwhile, White non-Hispanics will likely see their numbers fall over the same timeframe, with projections showing a decline from 9,191 in 2004-05 to 7,600 in 2014-15, a 17.3 percent drop. Asians/Pacific Islanders are also forecast to see growth over the same period of 17.5 percent. American Indians/Alaska Natives comprise the second largest share of public high school graduates in the state; their numbers are expected to fall slightly by 2014-15 before recovering in subsequent years.

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