

Knocking at the College Door

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

SOUTH DAKOTA

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). South Dakota produced just 69 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of less than 1 percent,

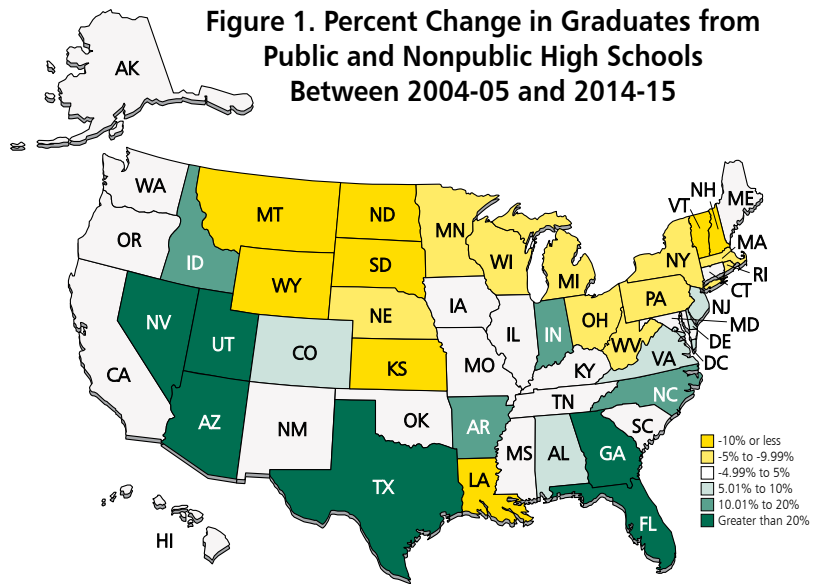
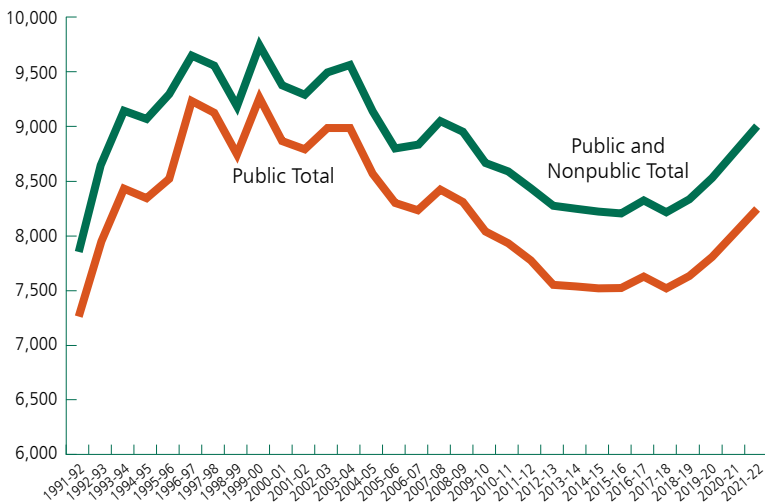


Figure 2. South Dakota High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



and projections indicate that the number of graduates in South Dakota is beginning a long-term decline, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The state projects to have over 900 fewer high school graduates a decade after 2004-05, a decrease of over 10 percent.

Mirroring the rest of the country, South Dakota experienced growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 1996-97. For several years, it held mostly steady around 9,500 graduates. But beginning in 2004-05, the last year for which actual data were available, the state entered a period when projections of its number of high school graduates began to undergo a long-term decline (Figure 2). By 2004-05, 8,585 students graduated from the state's public high schools. That amount was 1,324 higher than South Dakota's public schools generated in 1991-92 but 416 fewer than the preceding year. Nonpublic schools in

South Dakota contributed an additional estimated 564 graduates in 2004-05, and their production is expected to grow slightly to offset some of the anticipated decline in public graduates. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 7 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, South Dakota saw little change between 1996-97 and 2003-04 and now is experiencing declines. Mostly consistent annual decreases between 2003-04 and 2015-16 will see the state shed roughly 1,400 total graduates, or about 14 percent. In subsequent years, projections indicate that South Dakota's production will begin a promising recovery.

South Dakota is home to a relatively racially/ethnically homogenous population and, unlike most other states, these projections suggest that the composition of the state's public high school graduating classes will change little in the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 91.5 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had actually increased slightly to 91.8, and there will not be much change until the last half of the second decade of this century, when growing enrollments among Hispanics will finally start to influence the relative shares of the graduating classes.

While South Dakota's projected changes in the racial/ethnic composition are more gradual and delayed than most other states, it is still experiencing trends similar to those in the rest of the country, in smaller doses. For example, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates has been declining, and it is projected to continue to do so. Meanwhile modest increases in the number of Hispanic graduates will take place. But the effects on the proportions of the graduating class are muted by the vast differences in the sizes of the two groups.

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

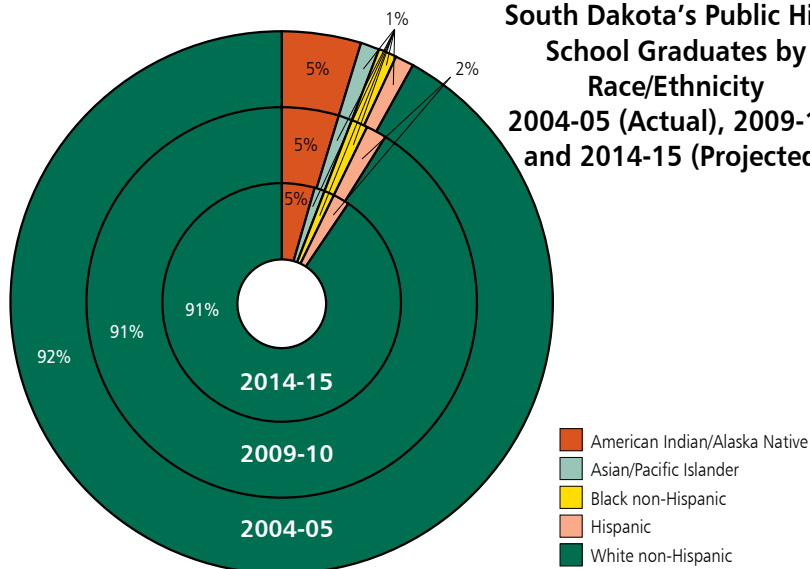
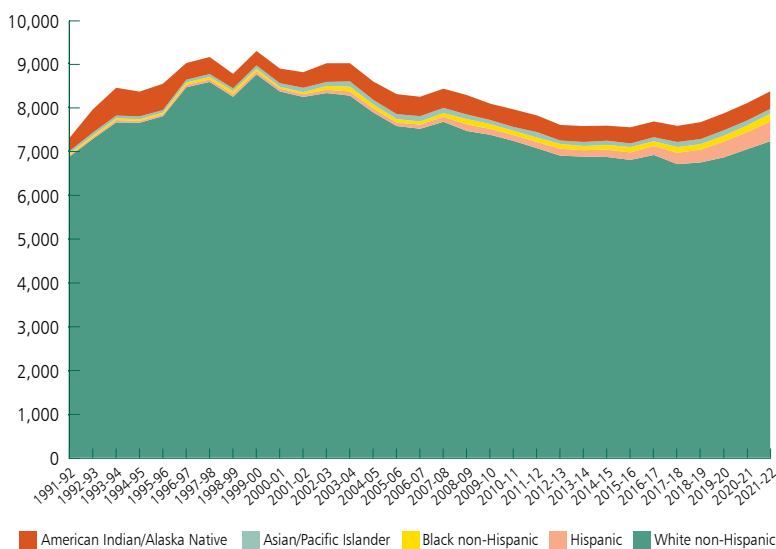


Figure 4. South Dakota High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Projecting changes in the numbers of minority graduates in South Dakota 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. Black non-Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state numbered 91 in 2004-05, which is projected to grow by just 16 by 2014-15, an increase of nearly 18 percent (Figure 4). The number of Hispanic graduates is projected to increase from just 91 in 2004-05 to 166 in 2014-15 (82.1 percent). Meanwhile, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates will be dropping precipitously over the same timeframe, with projections showing a decline from 7,879 in 2004-05 to 6,868 in 2014-15, a 12.8 percent drop. American Indians/Alaska Natives comprise the second largest share of public high school graduates in the state. Annual changes in the number of graduates from that group will be inconsistent; but by 2014-15, they are projected to have fallen by almost 20 percent, from 417 to 342.

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