

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

## NORTH CAROLINA

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.

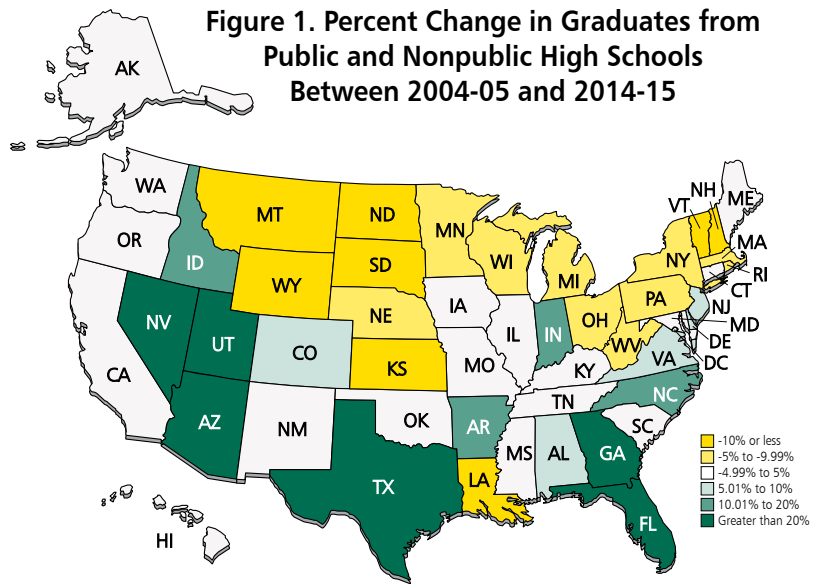
The national data obscure significant variations in this picture at the regional and state levels, however. Regionally, in the decade leading up to 2004-05, the number of high school graduates grew the fastest in the West at 34 percent, with the South growing by 23.5 percent, the Northeast by 20.7 percent, 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). North Carolina produced almost 18,000 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 28.7 percent. Projections indicate that the state will continue growing, though at a slightly

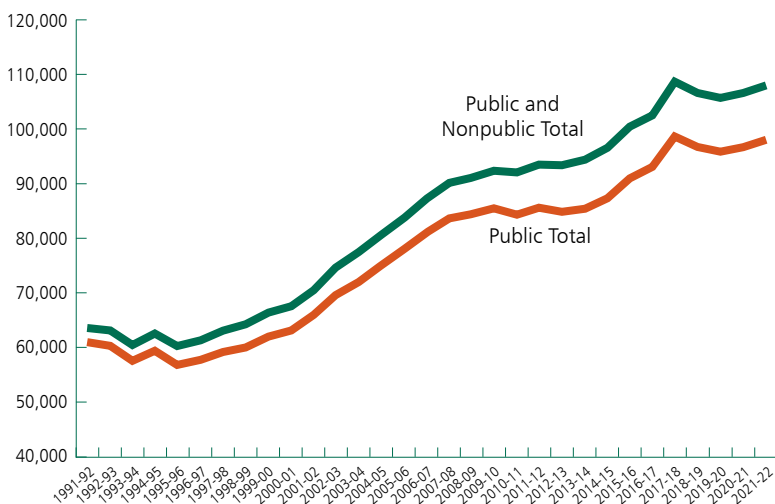
slower pace, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The state projects to produce nearly 16,000 more high school graduates a decade after 2004-05, an increase approximately equal to 19.7 percent.

North Carolina was among the states with rapid growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 2004-05, the most recent year of actual data from public schools (Figure 2). In 2004-05, 75,010 students graduated from public high schools in North Carolina, 13,853 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, representing growth of 22.7 percent. Nonpublic schools in the state graduated an estimated 5,665 in 2004-05, which was about 3,000 more than graduated in 1991-92. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, on average, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 7 percent, but that share is expected to rise.



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

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

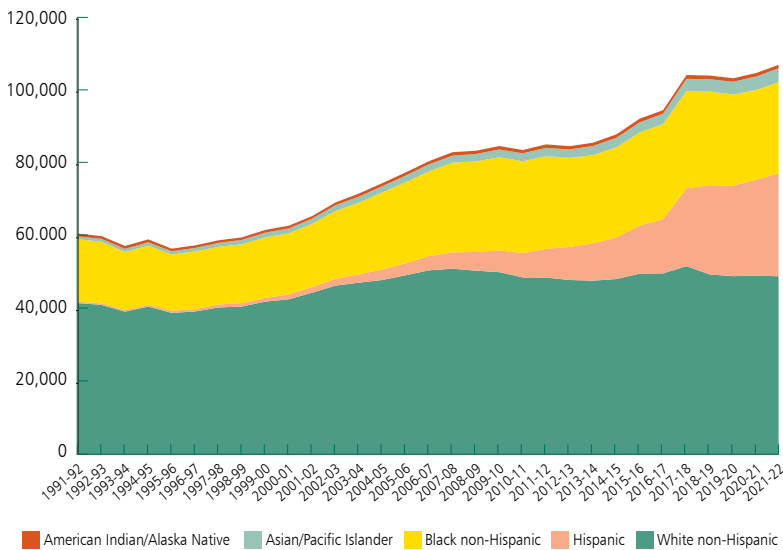


However, along with much of the rest of the nation, North Carolina is poised to enter a new period characterized by much more stagnant growth in the production of high school graduates. After 2007-08, the number of graduates from the state's public high schools is projected to increase much more slowly before picking up in 2014-15. Between 2004-05 and 2007-08, the number of public high school graduates is forecast to climb by 11.7 percent, but between then and 2014-15, it is projected to grow by a little more than 4 percent. Thereafter, more rapid growth is expected to resume.

The racial/ethnic composition of North Carolina's public high school graduating classes will begin to show more diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 69 percent of the graduates from the state's public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped slightly to 64.6 percent. By 2014-15, the proportion of White non-Hispanics will have fallen to under 55 percent. The state's public high school graduating class is projected to become "majority-minority" (when minority graduates outnumber White non-Hispanic graduates) in 2017-18.

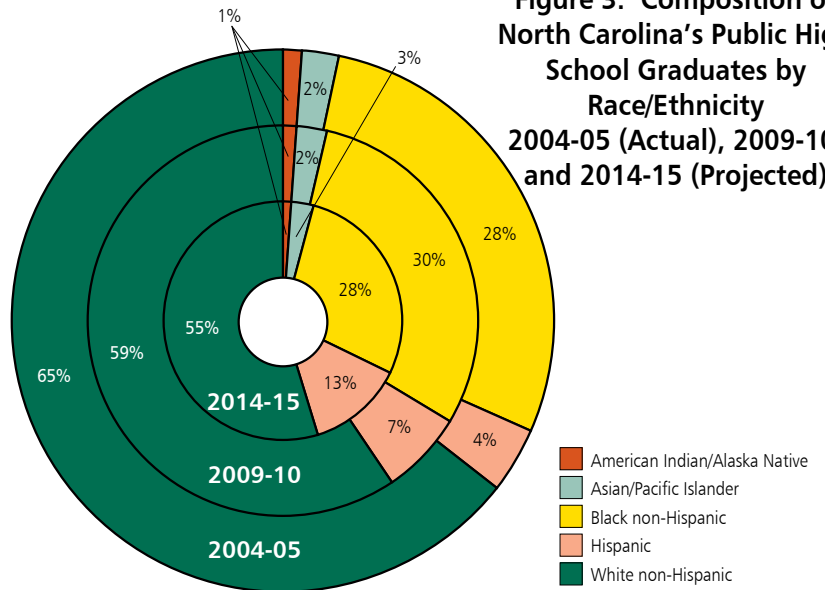
These changes are roughly comparable to the experience of states all over the country, though the magnitude may differ substantially, as the nation as a whole is undergoing sweeping changes in the racial/ethnic composition of its population. As in other states, the big changes are the result of rapid growth in the number of Hispanic high school students and graduates, coupled with stagnation or declines in the number of White non-Hispanic graduates. In North Carolina, considerable growth among other minority groups is also projected to impact the racial/ethnic composition of its public school graduating classes. While international 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 4. North Carolina High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)**



Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state numbered 2,864 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 11,453, an increase of about 300 percent (Figure 4). Growth is also expected among graduates from other minority groups: projections for 2014-15 show that the number of Black non-Hispanic graduates will increase by 16.8 percent above its 2004-05 level of 21,155; and the number of Asian/Pacific Islander graduates will climb by over 55 percent, from 1,717. Meanwhile, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates is forecast to show little change from its 2004-05 level of 48,422. After initially climbing, that group will give back all those gains to wind up with just over 200 more graduates in 2014-15. Finally, the number of American Indian/Alaska Native graduates will also grow rapidly, rising about 8 percent within a decade, from 852 in 2004-05.

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



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