

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

WASHINGTON

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.

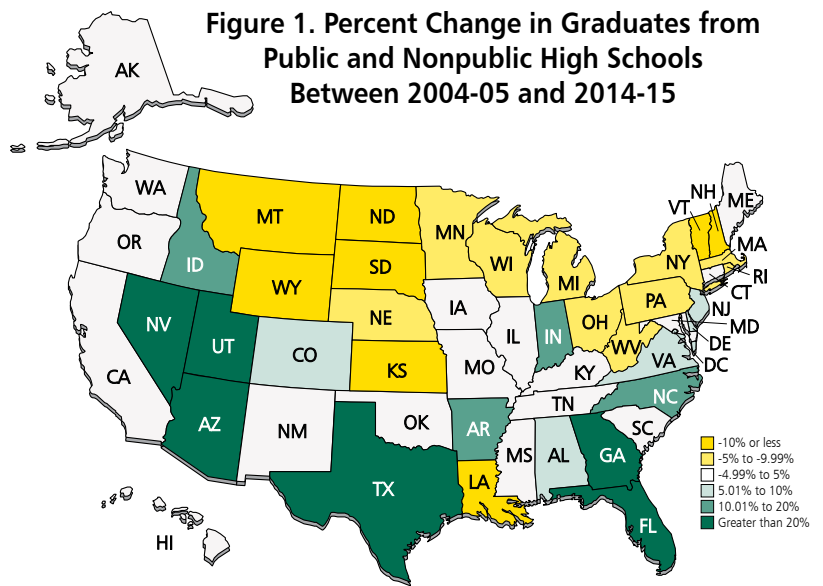
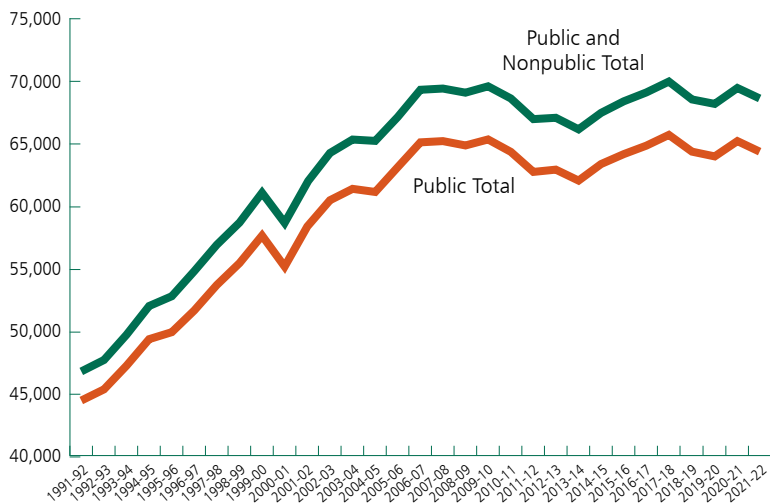


Figure 2. Washington High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1). Washington produced 13,217 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 25.4 percent. However, projections indicate that the state will experience slowing growth 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 2,271 more high school graduates in 2014-15 than in 2004-05, an increase of about 3.5 percent. Virtually all of that growth will occur by the graduating class of 2007.

Washington experienced extremely rapid growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 2004-05, the last year for which actual data were available (Figure 2). That year, 61,094 students graduated from public high schools in Washington, 16,713 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, which represented growth

of 37.7 percent. Nonpublic schools in Washington contributed an additional estimated 4,091 graduates in 2004-05, and their production level is expected to remain basically unchanged the years ahead. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 6 percent, on average.

Along with much of the rest of the nation, Washington is poised to enter a new period characterized by much more stagnant growth or declines in the production of high school graduates. After peaking in 2009-10 at nearly 65,271, the state will begin a brief period of diminishing production in the number of public high school graduates through 2013-14, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. During that timeframe, the number of public high school graduates is forecast to dip by 5 percent. Thereafter, it is projected to begin a modest recovery that boosts the number of high school graduates to just above the 2009-10 level by 2017-18 and then remains basically stable through the remainder of the projected period.

The racial/ethnic composition of Washington's public high school graduating classes will continue to show diversification over the coming decade and more (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 78.8 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped only slightly to 77.1 percent. But the next decade will see accelerating declines in the share of public high school graduates who are White non-Hispanic, with projections indicating it will reach 67.2 percent by 2014-15.

These changes are roughly comparable to the experience of states all over the country. Although the magnitude may differ substantially, the nation as a whole is undergoing sweeping changes in the racial/ethnic composition of its population. In Washington, 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. Growth in the number

of Asians/Pacific Islanders is also an important factor in Washington's shifting demographic picture. While immigration has contributed to the growth of these populations, signs of the continuing demographic shift are evident in data indicating a dramatic increase in the number of Hispanic births, due in part to a higher fertility rate among Hispanic women.

Graduates from all minority groups in Washington are expected to climb or stay basically unchanged between 2004-05 and 2014-15, while White non-Hispanic numbers will fall substantially. Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state numbered 4,893 in 2004-05, and within a decade Hispanic graduates are projected to number 8,986, an increase of 83.6 percent. The second largest minority group in Washington, Asians/Pacific Islanders, will grow from 5,138 in 2004-05 to 6,662 a decade later (29.7 percent). Black non-Hispanics will increase by 412 to 3,085 in the same time span (15.4 percent). Meanwhile, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates will be down by more than 6,000 (12.9 percent) to 40,904 (Figure 4).

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

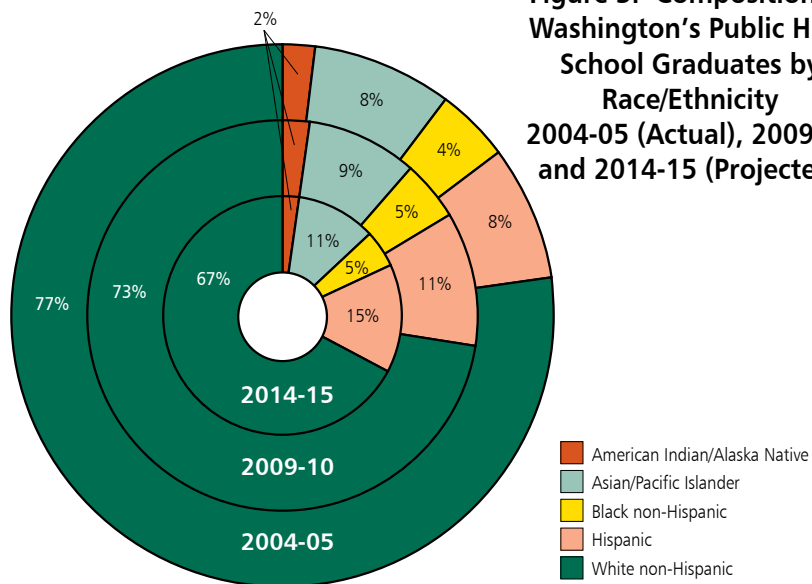
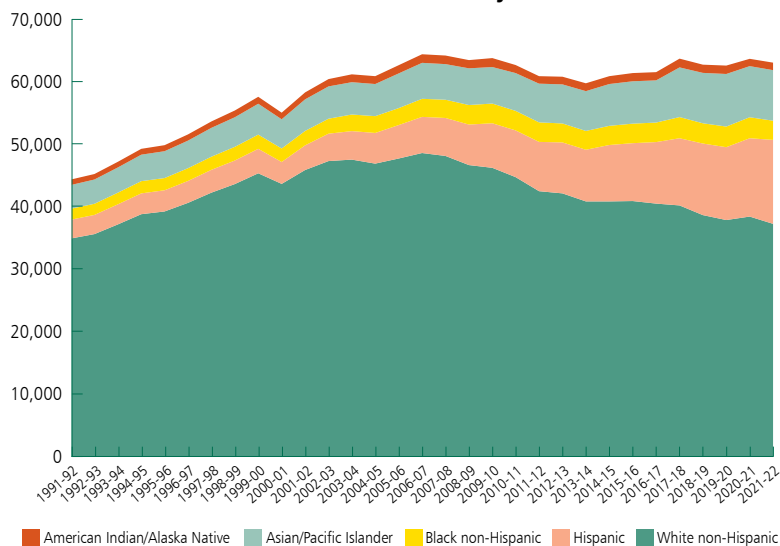


Figure 4. Washington High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



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