

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

NORTH 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). North Dakota produced 212 fewer graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, a decrease of 2.6 percent. Projections indicate that North Dakota's decline is far from over, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The state projects to have over 1,600 fewer high school graduates a decade after 2004-05, a decrease of greater than 20 percent.

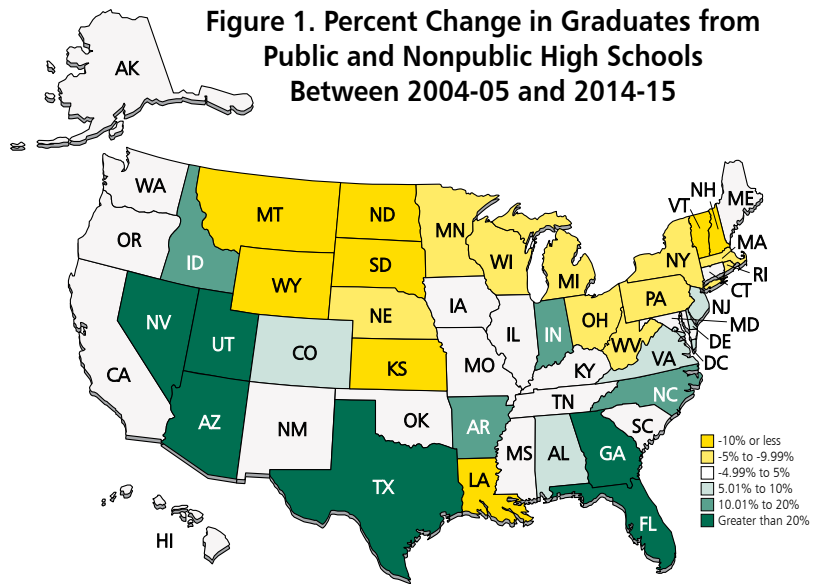
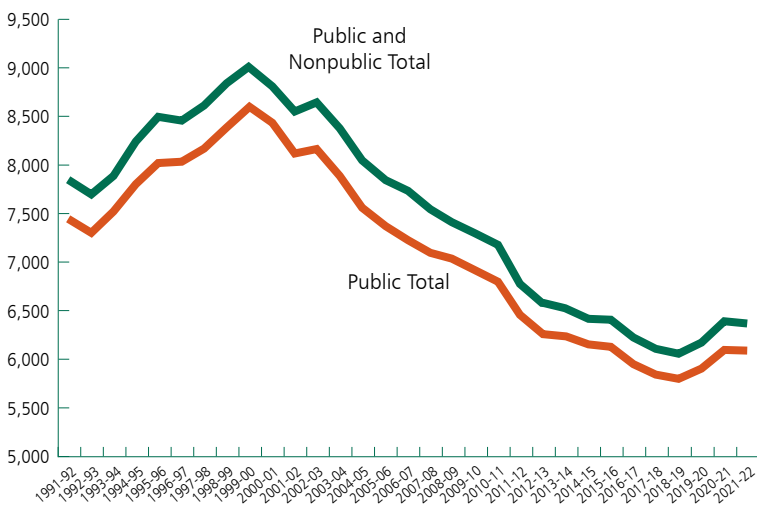


Figure 2. North Dakota High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Mirroring the rest of the country, North Dakota experienced growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 1999-2000, but then it began a steep, long-term decline (Figure 2). By 2004-05, the last year for which actual data were available, 7,555 students graduated from the state's public high schools, 1,051 fewer graduates than were produced in 1999-2000, a drop-off of 12.2 percent. Nonpublic schools in North Dakota contributed an additional estimated 486 graduates in 2004-05, but their production is also expected to fall off substantially after peaking in 2006-07. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 5 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, North Dakota has been experiencing declining graduate numbers since 2000. Consistent annual decreases between 2003 and 2018-19 will see North Dakota shed roughly 2,600 total graduates, or about 30 percent of the 2002-03 level. In subsequent years, projections indicate that North Dakota's production will begin a modest recovery.

Despite North Dakota's relatively racially/ethnically homogenous population, the composition of the state's public high school graduating classes will continue to show diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 94 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped to 91.4 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 86.9 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 North Dakota, the biggest changes are due to the shrinking number of White non-Hispanic graduates, coupled with growth among Black non-Hispanic graduates and relatively stable numbers from other racial/ethnic groups.

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

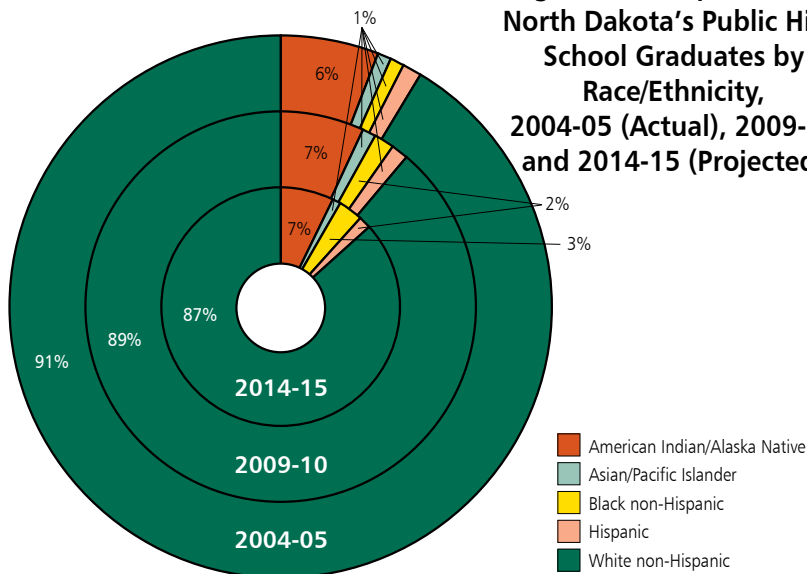
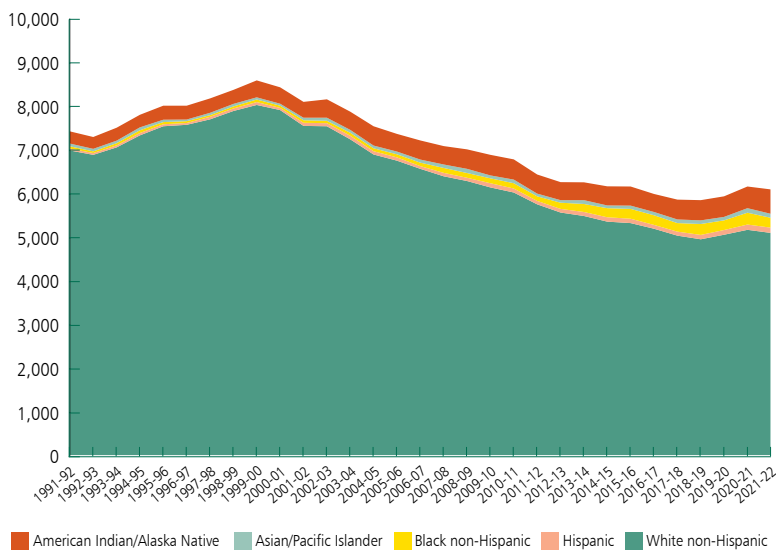


Figure 4. North Dakota High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Projecting changes in the numbers of minority graduates in North 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. Nevertheless, Black non-Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state numbered just 68 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to reach 205, an increase of over 200 percent (Figure 4). The number of Hispanic graduates is projected to increase by about one-third from just 76 in 2004-05 to 101 in 2014-15. Meanwhile, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates will be dropping precipitously over the same timeframe, with projections showing a decline from 6,907 in 2004-05 to 5,371 in 2014-15, a 22.2 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 amount to virtually no projected alteration in numbers.

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