

# Knocking at the College Door

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

# OKLAHOMA

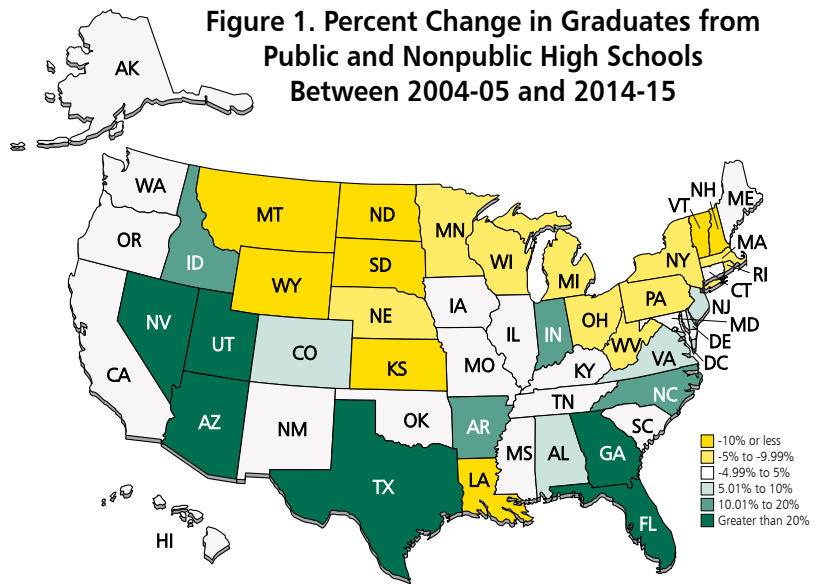
At over 3.3 million, the nation's graduating class of 2007-08 is projected to be history's largest. In fact, 2007-08 will mark the last year in an era of continuous growth in the nation's production of high school graduates, a period that reaches back to 1994. Over that time, the number of graduates 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.

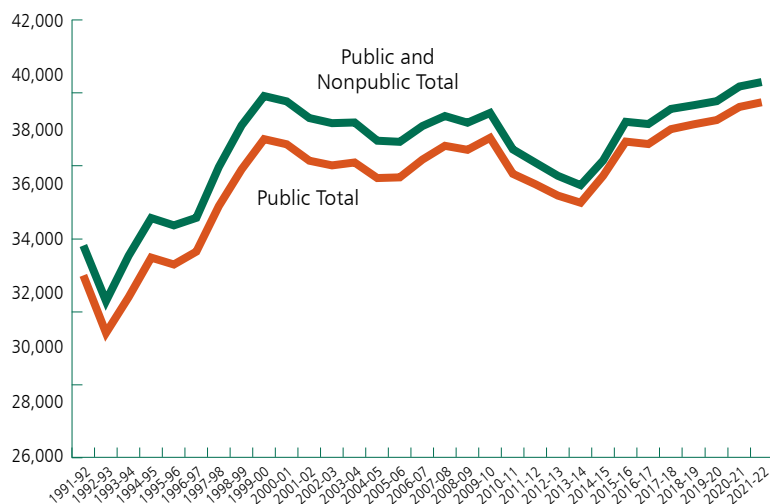
As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1).

Oklahoma produced over 2,800 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 8.1 percent. Projections indicate that the state's number of graduates will be little changed initially in the projection period, before beginning a decline in 2010-11, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The state projects to produce about 700 fewer high school graduates in 2014-15 than it did in 2004-05, a drop of about 2 percent.

The period 1991-92 through 1999-2000 was marked by rapid growth in Oklahoma's production of high school graduates, after which the state experienced a gradual decline (Figure 2). In 2004-05, the most recent year of actual data, the state's public high schools graduated 36,227 students. While that number was 3,557 more than the 1991-92 level, it was 1,419 graduates fewer than in 1999-2000. Nonpublic schools added an estimated 1,372 in 2004-05, which was about 280 more than they graduated in 1991-92. Of Oklahoma's total number of high school graduates



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



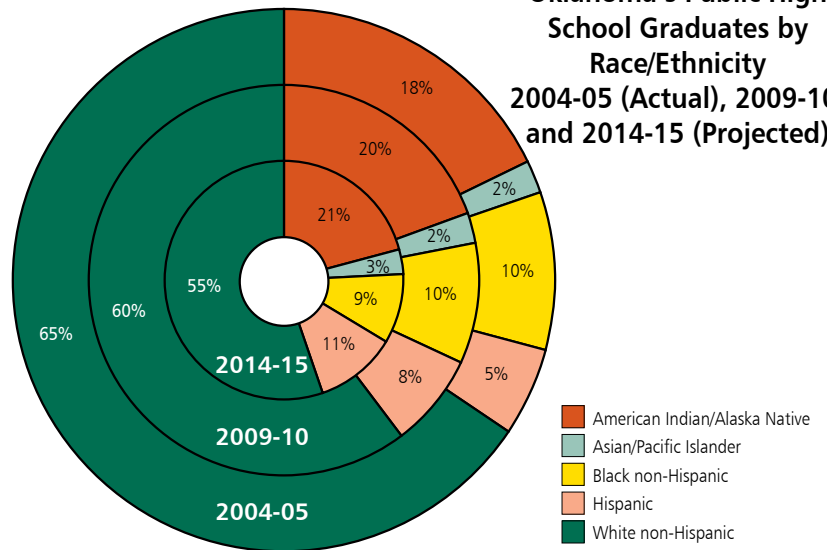
each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 4 percent, on average, but that share is projected to decline in the years ahead.

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, Oklahoma's public high schools have been producing mostly declining graduate numbers since 2000. This trend is projected to be reversed for a period leading up to 2009-10, during which the number of public graduates is projected to rise by nearly 1,500 (4 percent). Thereafter, production will fall off again through 2013-14, with that year's class size forecasted to be down by 6.6 percent from its peak in 2010. Beginning in 2014-15, mostly uninterrupted growth is projected to resume through the remainder of the projections.

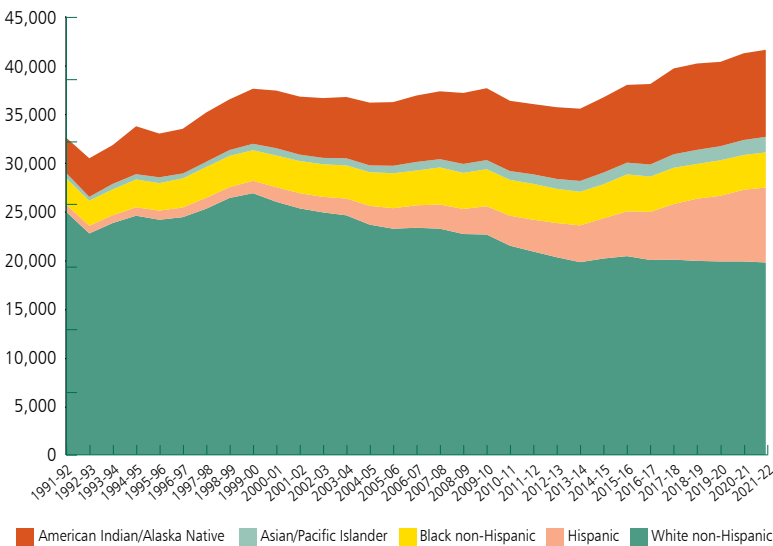
The racial/ethnic composition of Oklahoma's public high school graduating classes will begin to show more diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 72.9 percent of the graduates from the state's public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped to 65.5 percent. By 2014-15, the proportion of White non-Hispanics will have fallen to about 55.1 percent. The state's public high school graduating class is projected to become "majority-minority" (when minority graduates outnumber White non-Hispanic graduates) in 2018-19.

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



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



Oklahoma is also projected to experience substantial increases in the number of graduates from American Indian/Alaska Native descent.

Hispanic graduates from public schools in Oklahoma numbered just 1,937 in 2004-05. But within a decade Hispanic graduates are projected to increase by about 113 percent, to 4,127 (Figure 4). Growth among graduates who are Asians/Pacific Islanders will also be rapid over the same time span, with a projected increase of 75 percent over the 2004-05 level of 685. While the rate of growth is not projected to be as rapid, American Indian/Alaska Native graduates will add about 1,260 to their 2004-05 number by 2014-15 (a 19.6 percent increase). Meanwhile, the number of Black non-Hispanic graduates will not see much change between 2004-05 and 2014-15. Conversely, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates will drop by almost 3,500 over the same span from the 23,714 who were counted in 2004-05, a decline of almost 15 percent.

For more information, contact: Dolores Mize, Vice President, Public Policy and Research, 303.541.0221, [dmize@wiche.edu](mailto:dmize@wiche.edu); or Brian Prescott, Senior Research Analyst, Public Policy and Research, 303.541.0255, [bprescott@wiche.edu](mailto:bprescott@wiche.edu). To view the full publication or to place an order for a bound copy, visit our website at [www.wiche.edu/policy](http://www.wiche.edu/policy).