

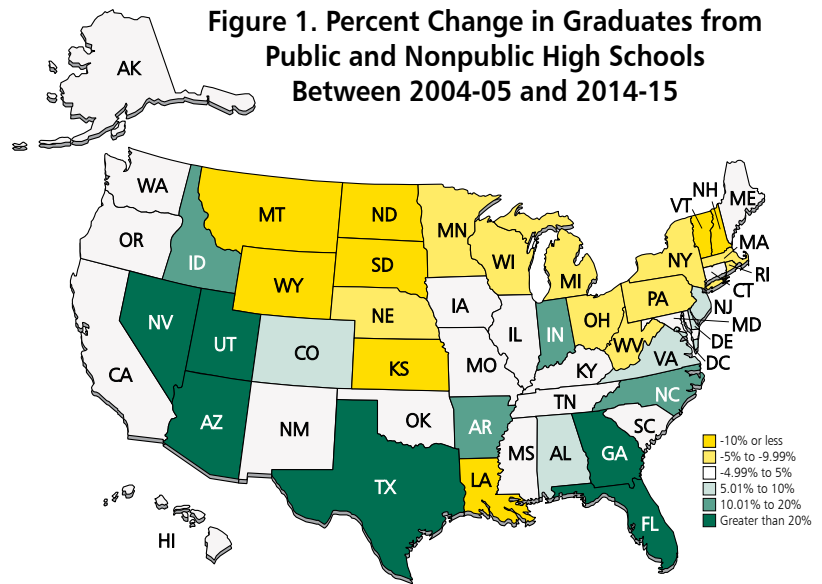
# Knocking at the College Door Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2022

## WEST VIRGINIA

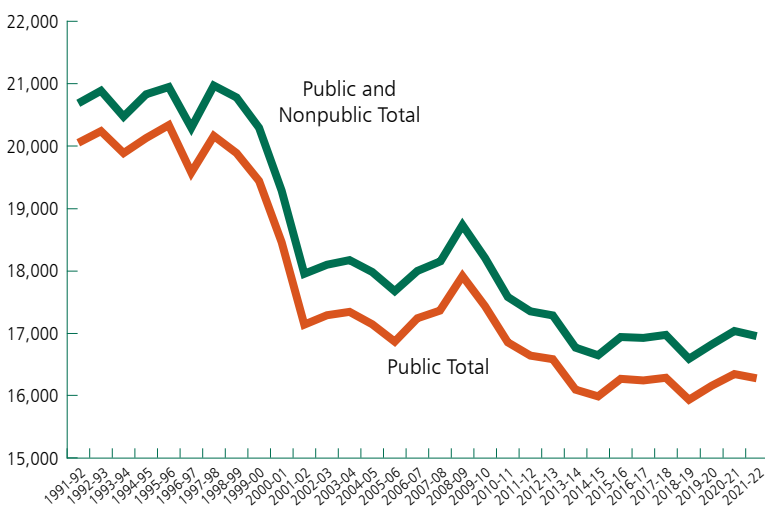
At over 3.3 million, the nation's graduating class of 2007-08 is projected to be history's largest. In fact, 2007-08 will mark the last year in an era of continuous growth in the nation's production of high school graduates, a period that reaches back to 1994. Over that time, the number of graduates 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 1. Percent Change in Graduates from Public and Nonpublic High Schools Between 2004-05 and 2014-15**



**Figure 2. West Virginia 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). West Virginia produced over 2,800 fewer graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, a decrease of about 13.7 percent. Projections indicate that West Virginia's production of high school graduates will continue declining in the years ahead, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The state projects to have more than 1,300 fewer high school graduates a decade after 2004-05, a decrease of greater than 7 percent.

West Virginia is one of a few states that saw its production of high school graduates actually decrease between 1991-92 and 2004-05, the last year for which data were available (Figure 2). That year, 17,137 students graduated from public high schools, a number that included 2,917 fewer graduates than were produced in 1991-92, which represented a reduction of 14.5 percent. Most of the drop-off occurred between 1997-98 and 2001-02. Nonpublic

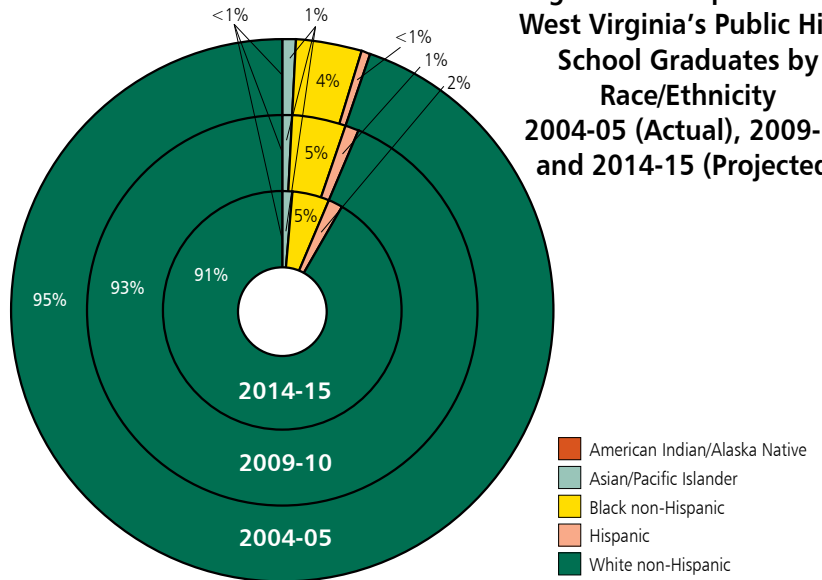
schools in the state contributed an estimated 848 graduates in 2004-05, an amount that was 220 higher in 1991-92. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 4 percent, on average.

While much of the rest of the nation is poised to enter a period characterized by more stagnant growth in the production of high school graduates, West Virginia has been experiencing declining graduate numbers since 1998. The number of public schools graduates are projected to spike in 2008-09 at almost 18,000, but thereafter it is forecast to diminish rapidly through 2014-15, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. In that span, West Virginia is projected to lose over 1,900 graduates, a slide of about 10.8 percent. Production is projected to stabilize after 2014-15, with the total number of graduates (public and nonpublic) hovering at just under 17,000.

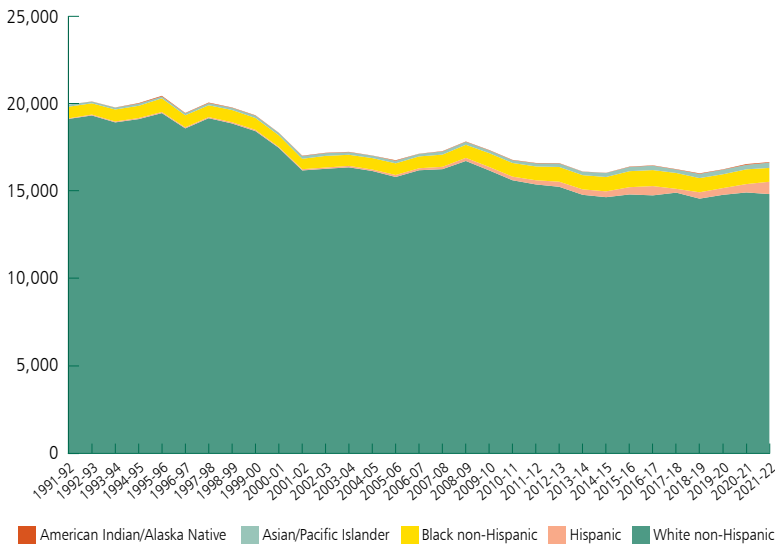
The racial/ethnic composition of West Virginia's public high school graduating classes has been among the most racially/ethnically homogeneous in the nation, and projections indicate that it will see gradual diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 95.5 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped only slightly, to 94.8 percent. The next decade will see a slight acceleration in that trend, with projections indicating that the share of White non-Hispanics will reach 91.3 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 West Virginia, 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. However, the substantial percentage increases projected for Hispanics and other minority groups belie very modest growth in actual numbers. While immigration has contributed to the growth of the Hispanic population, signs of the continuing demographic shift is 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 West Virginia's Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 2004-05 (Actual), 2009-10 and 2014-15 (Projected)**



**Figure 4. West Virginia 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 West Virginia 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. Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state numbered just 85 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 335, an increase of nearly 400 percent (Figure 4). The number of Black non-Hispanic graduates is projected to increase by 25.7 percent, from 659 in 2004-05 to 829 in 2014-15. Meanwhile, White non-Hispanics will likely see their numbers fall over the same timeframe, with projections showing a decline from 16,249 in 2004-05 to 14,745 in 2014-15, a 9.3 percent drop. Asians/Pacific Islanders are also forecast to see growth over the same period in West Virginia at 70 percent; as will American Indians/Alaska Natives, who can expect a modest increase over their 2004-05 level of 14 graduates.

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