

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

WYOMING

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.

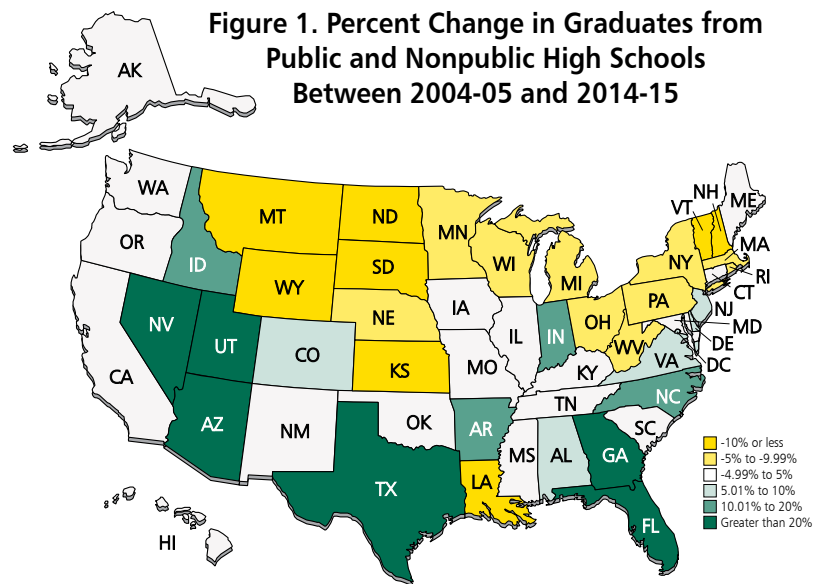
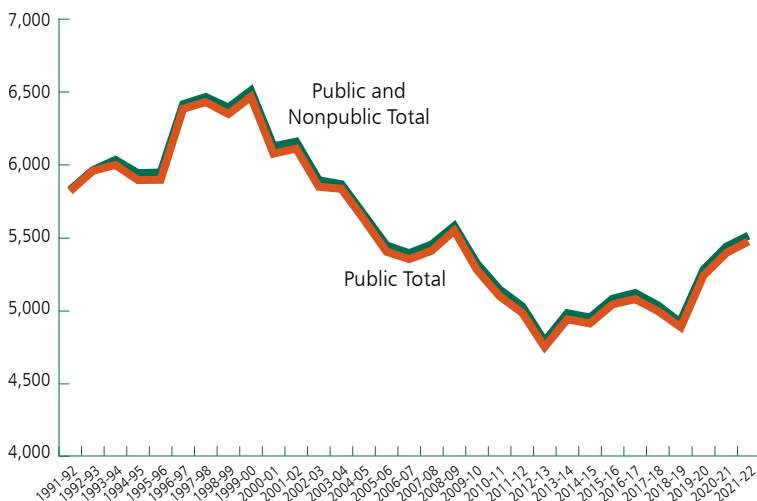


Figure 2. Wyoming High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1). Wyoming produced 284 fewer graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an decrease of 4.8 percent. Projections indicate that the state's decline is far from over, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue: the state projects to have more than 700 fewer high school graduates in 2014-15 than in 2004-05, a decrease of over 12 percent.

Mirroring the rest of the country, Wyoming experienced some 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, 5,616 students graduated from the state's public high schools, 846 fewer graduates than were produced in 1999-2000, a drop-off of 13.1 percent. There is not

a significant presence of nonpublic schools in Wyoming – they account for less than 1 percent of all graduates produced each year in the state. Their contribution in 2004-05 was an additional estimated 36 graduates, and their production is expected to remain basically unchanged in the years to come.

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, Wyoming has been experiencing declining graduate numbers since 2000. Mostly uninterrupted annual decreases between 2000 and 2012-13 will see the state shed roughly 1,700 total graduates, or about 26.5 percent of the 1999-2000 level. In subsequent years, projections indicate that Wyoming’s production will begin a modest but uneven recovery.

Despite Wyoming’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 91.1 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had barely dropped to 90.9 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 84.5 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 Wyoming, the biggest changes are due to the shrinking number of White non-Hispanic graduates, coupled with growth among minority graduates, especially Hispanics.

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

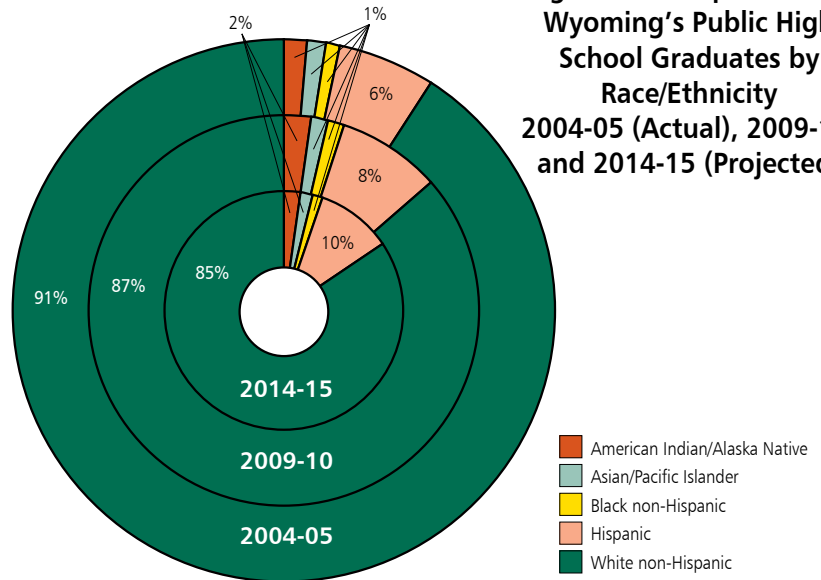
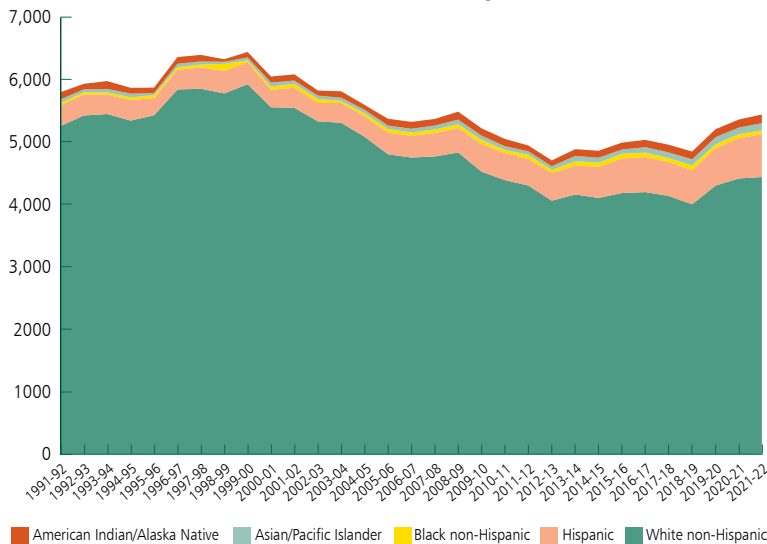


Figure 4. Wyoming High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Projecting changes in the numbers of minority graduates 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, the number of Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state is projected to increase from 328 in 2004-05 to nearly 500 in 2014-15 (51.4 percent). Black non-Hispanic graduates numbered just 48 in 2004-05; within a decade, they are projected to reach 69, an increase of 43.7 percent (Figure 4). Graduates from American Indian/Alaska Native descent will be up by 32 from 80 (39.5 percent). Meanwhile, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates will be go down substantially over the same timeframe, with projections showing a decline from 5,104 in 2004-05 to 4,125 in 2014-15, a 19.2 percent drop.

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