



# Knocking at the College Door

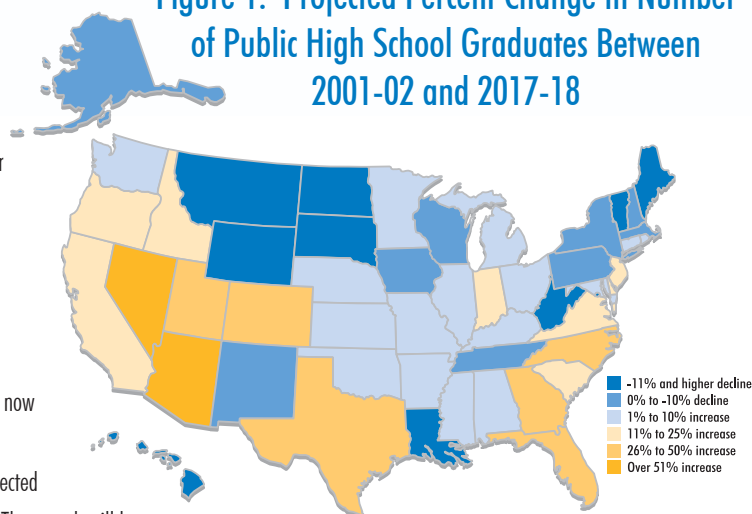
## Projections of High School Graduates by State, Income, and Race/Ethnicity

December  
2003

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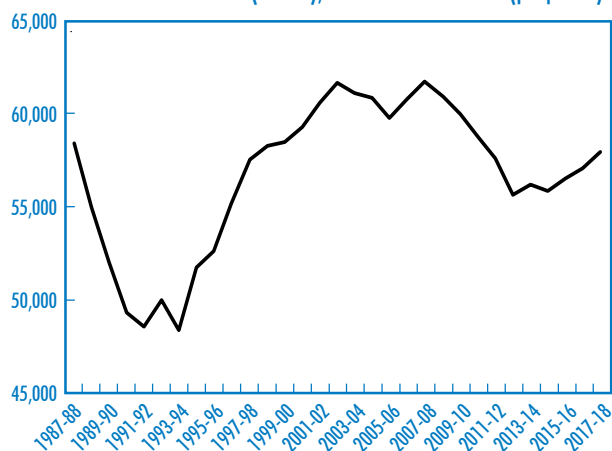
The graduating class of 2008-09 is projected to be the largest in history, with some 3.2 million students. Those graduates are part of the early wave of the “baby boomlet,” children born between 1990 and 2000. During that decade, the nation’s population grew by 13.2 percent. But the number of births over that period (and the number of graduates years later) varies widely from region to region. The West saw the largest population growth among the four regions of the country, with a 19.7 percent increase in the population compared to 5.5 percent in the Northeast, 7.9 percent in the Midwest, and 17.3 percent in the South. The growth rates are now being reflected in the numbers of high school graduates. Nationally, the number of public high school graduates is projected to increase by 10.4 percent between 2001-02 and 2017-18. The growth will be unevenly distributed across the country’s four major regions, with the South looking at an 18.7 percent increase, and increases of 15.8 percent in the West, 2.7 percent in the Midwest, and .1 percent in the Northeast. Wisconsin’s population increased by 9.6 percent — from 4,891,769 to 5,363,675 — but the state is projected to see fewer public high school graduates in 2017-18 than it had in 2001-02 (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Projected Percent Change in Number of Public High School Graduates Between 2001-02 and 2017-18**



**Figure 2. Wisconsin Public High School Graduates**

1987-88 to 2001-02 (actual), 2002-03 to 2017-18 (projected)



Wisconsin was among the low- to average-growth states in the nation between 1990 and 2000, falling considerably below the national growth rate over that period. Following a period of decline in the number of public high school graduates in the state from 1987-88 through 1991-92, minimal growth characterized the years to 2001-02 (see Figure 2). Increases of 1 to 7 percent were seen during several years prior to 2001-02. By the end of the 14-year period between 1987-88 and 2001-02, Wisconsin had gone from 58,438 public high school graduates to 60,575. But the growth trend of the 1990s is not projected to continue. Between 2002-03 and 2017-18, Wisconsin will see several years of losses in the number of graduates, punctuated by a few years of increases. Annual declines that range from less than 1 to over 3 percent during this period will offset increases. The number of public high school graduates is expected to decrease to 58,109 in 2017-18, a 4.1 percent decline over 2001-02. Nonpublic high school graduates accounted for

9 percent of all Wisconsin high school graduates in 1987-88; by 2001-02, that share had decreased to 8 percent, or 5,302 nonpublic graduates. Although the number of nonpublic graduates is expected to decline through 2017-18 to approximately 5,000, their share is projected to remain at about 8 percent.

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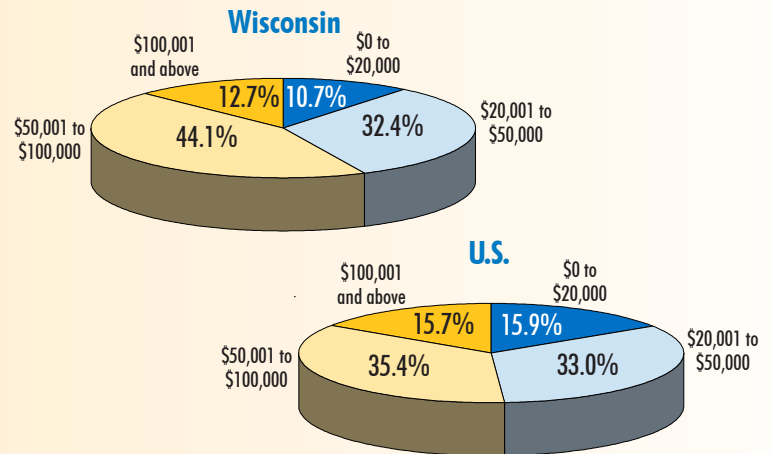
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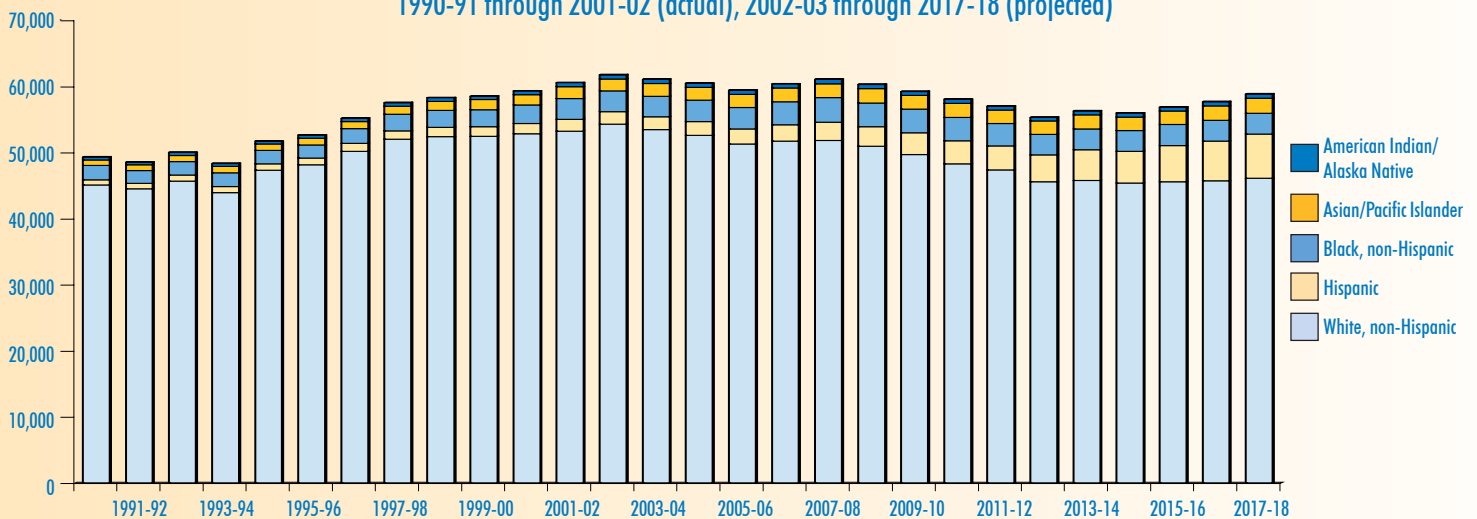
A larger share of Wisconsin's public high school graduates will fall in the higher income categories in the near future. The state is projected to have a somewhat smaller percentage of its public high school graduates in the lowest income category of \$0 to \$20,000 in 2006-07 than in 2000-01 (a decrease of nearly .05 percentage point), but Wisconsin will see about 100 more students at this level. The \$20,000 to \$50,001 category is forecast to experience the largest decline in share (approximately .44 percentage point), while also showing nearly 130 more graduates. The largest numerical increase is projected in the \$50,001 to \$100,000 category; its share may grow by nearly .20 percentage point, and its numbers may increase by approximately 630. The state is expected to see close to 325 more graduates in the \$100,001 and above category. How will Wisconsin's student population stack up when compared to the nation's and the Midwest's? In the Midwest region in 2006-07, 13.2 percent of public high school graduates are projected to fall in the \$0 to \$20,000 category. The \$20,001 to \$50,000 category is anticipated to have 32.8 percent, while the \$50,001 to \$100,000 category is projected to have the largest share at 39.6 percent. The \$100,001 and above category is expected to have the remaining

14.5 percent of public graduates. Nationally that year, 16.3 percent of public high school graduates are expected to be in the lowest median family income category. Another 33.4 percent may fall in the \$20,001 to \$50,000 category. The \$50,001 to \$100,000 category is expected to account for 35.1 percent of public high school graduates in 2006-07, and the remaining 15.2 percent are projected in the category of \$100,001 and over. Figure 3 shows the projected distribution of public high school graduates across the four income groups in 2012-13 for Wisconsin and the nation.

**Figure 3. Public High School Graduates by Median Family Income 2012-13 (projected)**



**Figure 4. Wisconsin Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1990-91 through 2001-02 (actual), 2002-03 through 2017-18 (projected)**



Wisconsin will continue to see a shift in the racial/ethnic make-up of its public high school graduates over the next decade. During the early 1990s, underrepresented racial/ethnic groups accounted for approximately 8.5 percent of all public high school graduates in Wisconsin. That proportion gradually increased to 12 percent by 2001-02 and is projected to continue increasing at a higher rate through the projection period, reaching approximately 19 percent by 2013-14. Among these minority groups, Black, non-Hispanics have made up the largest share. In the 1990-91 graduating class, there were over 2,100 Black, non-Hispanics, who accounted for 4.4 percent of the class; their presence increased to over 3,100, or 5 percent, in 2001-02. By 2013-14, this group will have declined slightly, but its share of graduates is expected to remain stable at about 5 percent of all public high school graduates in 2014. The second largest group has been Asians/Pacific Islanders, with 838 students (1.7 percent of public school graduates) in the class of 1991 and 1,757 in 2002, representing close to 3 percent that year. By 2013-14 that number is expected to reach over 2,000 and represent nearly 4 percent of the class. The proportion of each graduating class that is Hispanic increased from 1.5 percent to 3 percent between 1990-91 and 2001-02; that proportion is forecast to more than double through the projection period, reaching 8 percent of the graduating class in 2014. White, non-Hispanic students were 91.5 percent of the graduating class of 1991; that proportion had declined a decade later to 88 percent and is projected to be approximately 81 percent for the class of 2014.