National and regional trends mask important variation among states in the supply of high school graduates. This profile provides brief indicators for Colorado related to: current levels of educational attainment, our projections of high school graduates into the future, and two common barriers to student access and success – insufficient academic preparation and inadequate finances.

**Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity**

Workforce projections indicate there will a growing demand for well-educated labor, which means that younger adults need to be as well as or more educated than older adults given how much longer they will need to be employed.

- **Overall in Colorado between 2008 and 2010,** younger adults (ages 25-34) were slightly less likely than older adults (ages 45-54) to have a postsecondary degree; about 43% and 45%, respectively.
- **Rates of postsecondary degree attainment were lowest among Hispanics of both age groups,** 17% for younger and 19% for older Hispanics.
- **The largest gaps between younger and older adults were among Black non-Hispanics and American Indians/Alaska Natives; 7% to 8% fewer young adults of these race/ethnicities had postsecondary degrees than their older counterparts.**

**Production of High School Graduates**

According to our projections, Colorado’s graduating class peaked at about 54,700 in 2010-11.

- **Colorado is projected to experience a brief period of decline through 2013-14,** down to about 51,200 graduates. After this, projections indicate that Colorado will experience relatively consistent increases in high school graduates for most of the remaining projected years. By 2024-25, Colorado will produce about 61,000 public and nonpublic graduates, a 20 percent increase over 2008-09.
- **Nonpublic high school graduates account for 4% to 6% of total graduates in any given year,** declining from highs of about 3,000 around 2011-12, to 2,400 by 2027-28.

**Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity**

Colorado will experience increasing diversity in its public high school graduating classes throughout the years projected:

- **White non-Hispanic graduate production will be relatively stable,** with average annual changes of about 1%, ranging between 32,000 and 36,000.
- **Hispanic graduates will increase rapidly from about 9,400 in 2008-09 to around 14,000 for several years between 2019-20 and 2024-25,** before dropping back slightly to 12,300 by 2027-28.
- **Black non-Hispanic graduates will also increase,** from 2,600 in 2008-09 to 3,500 by 2027-28; **Asian/Pacific Islanders, from 1,700 in 2008-09 to 3,400 by 2027-28.**
- **The number of American Indian/Alaska Native graduates will range from 400 to 500 in most years.**
Composition of Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity

Our projections indicate that Colorado’s public graduating classes will become increasingly diverse, with non-White graduates accounting for 30% of public high school graduates in 2008-09, growing to 36% by 2016-17, and remaining at that level through the end of the projected period.

- White non-Hispanic graduates will decrease from 70% of the total in 2008-09 to 64% by 2016-17 and most years thereafter.
- Hispanic graduates gain in share of the total from 20% in 2008-09, to 36% by 2016-17 and most years thereafter.
- Black non-Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander graduates, while small in number in comparison to Hispanics and White non-Hispanics, will also show small share shifts.

Composite Math and Reading Scores by Race/Ethnicity²

Academic preparation is a major factor in college access and success, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provides some measure of differences by race/ethnicity.

- The average composite math and reading score across race/ethnicities for Colorado 8th graders in 2011 ranged from 263 for Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics, to 290 for White non-Hispanics and 299 for Asian/Pacific Islanders; no score was available for American Indian/Alaska Natives.
- The average score for eighth graders of each race/ethnicity was generally about the national average.

Annual Income by Race/Ethnicity³

A second major barrier is access to the financial resources needed to pay for college. Among working-age adults (25-64) in Colorado from 2006 to 2010:

- The statewide median income was $37,344 compared with $35,147 for the nation.
- Hispanics were the least well off financially among all races/ethnicities a median income of $25,399, just over 70% of the statewide median, with one in four Hispanics earning $13,180 or less.
- Other non-Whites in Colorado had median incomes notably less than the statewide median, particularly American Indians/Alaska Natives ($26,360) and Black non-Hispanics ($29,938).

For more information email knocking@wiche.edu or contact Peace Bransberger, Research Analyst, 303.541.0257, pbransberger@wiche.edu, or Brian Prescott, Director of Policy Research, 303.541.0255, bprescott@wiche.edu. Visit http://wiche.edu/knocking to obtain the full publication and download these projections as graphs or data files.