National and regional trends mask important variation among states in the supply of high school graduates. This profile provides brief indicators for South Dakota 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 suggest a growing demand for well-educated labor, so younger adults need to be as well as or more educated than older adults given how much longer they will need to be employed. In South Dakota in 2011, 42.9% of younger adults (aged 25-44) had earned postsecondary degrees, considerably higher than the rate achieved by older adults (aged 45-64), 36.2%. While a rising educational attainment rate is good news for the state, the gap in educational attainment between White non-Hispanics and American Indians/Alaska Natives appears to be widening.

- Younger White non-Hispanics are outpacing their older counterparts in the rate at which they have earned an Associate’s degree or better.
- At only about 14%, younger American Indians/Alaska Natives are much less likely to have achieved a postsecondary degree that their older counterparts.
- The gap in this measure of educational attainment between young White non-Hispanics compared to American Indians/Alaska Natives is estimated to fall somewhere between 29 and 36 percentage points.

**Production of High School Graduates**

After seeing its production falter over the past decade, the number of high school graduates in South Dakota is projected to stabilize over several years before climbing to new heights.

- Between 2008-09 and 2015-16, total graduates are expected to remain steady around 8,600 (surpassing 9,000 briefly in 2010-11).
- Between 2016-17 and a new peak projected for 2024-25, they could rise by almost 1,700, about 20%.
- Nonpublic schools accounted for about 6% of the state’s graduates in 2008-09. But projections suggest their numbers decline by about 175 graduates, a drop of about a third, with their share of the state total also falling to less than 4%.

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

After declining throughout the 2000s, White non-Hispanic graduates in South Dakota are projected to stabilize and even increase in the years ahead. Nevertheless, the growth in overall production has more to do with increases in the other racial/ethnic groups. Because their numbers are small, projections are naturally going to be less stable, however.

- White non-Hispanics are projected at about 600 fewer in 2018-19 than in 2008-09. By 2023-24, numbers will have fully recovered to that 2008-09 level.
- American Indians/Alaska Natives are the largest minority group, and projections suggest their numbers will climb by 140 graduates by 2019-20 relative to 2008-09, an increase of 26%.
- Significant increases of 150% or more are projected for all other races/ethnicities over the same timeframe.
Composition of Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity

White non-Hispanics have been the dominant racial/ethnic group among public high school graduates in South Dakota, and will remain so in spite of fairly rapid diversification.

- The White non-Hispanic share is projected to fall by about 9 percentage points between 2008-09 and 2019-20.
- American Indians/Alaska Natives’ share is projected to rise by a little more than 1 percentage point over the same timeframe, while both Black non-Hispanics and Hispanics can expect their share to double to 4%.
- Further diversification is projected for the period beyond 2019-20.

Composite Math and Reading Scores by Race/Ethnicity

Academic preparation is a major factor in access to and success in college. One indicator of readiness comes from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math and reading scores for twelfth graders in 2009.

- The composite score for White non-Hispanics in South Dakota, 281.9, was similar to their peers nationwide.
- Similarly, the composite score for American Indians/Alaska Natives is not statistically distinguishable from the group’s average score nationally.
- No state-level scores were available for Asian/Pacific Islanders, Black non-Hispanics, or Hispanics.

Annual Income by Race/Ethnicity

A second major barrier is access to the financial resources needed to pay for college. Precision estimates are difficult to come by for small populations, which makes comparisons between some groups difficult. But in South Dakota from 2006 to 2010:

- The statewide median income for the working-age population (25-64) was $30,479, compared to $35,147 for the nation.
- The median income for White non-Hispanics was $31,557, about 10% below the national median.
- American Indians/Alaska Natives typically took home only about $16,000. A quarter of them earned about $5,000 or less.