National and regional trends mask important variation among states in the supply of high school graduates. This profile provides brief indicators for Washington state 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.

- Data about the proportion of adults ages 25-34 and 45-54 in Washington state with postsecondary degrees between 2008 and 2010 indicate that overall, younger and older adults are about as likely to have a postsecondary degree, about 41% of each age group; however, the rate for younger adults is slightly less than the regional average (44%) and national average (46%).
- Except for Asian/Pacific Islanders, among non-Whites younger adults are less likely than older adults to hold a postsecondary degree, by about 5% to 6% among Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native and Black non-Hispanic young adults.

Production of High School Graduates

According to our projections, Washington state produced a high of 71,000 high school graduates in 2009-10. After this, Washington will experience several years of decline, followed by moderate and steady growth. Total graduates will decline to about 65,500 by 2013-14. After this, the graduating class will grow by 1% to 5% in most years through 2025-26, to a new high that year of 77,400 public and non-public graduates, before small declines begin in the last projected years.

Nonpublic graduates are projected to consistently decline, from 4,500 in 2009-10 to around 2,800 by 2027-28, representing 6% and 4% of the total in these years.

Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity

Washington state is projected to experience increasing diversity throughout the years projected:

- After a projected high of 48,000 in 2010-11, White non-Hispanic graduates will decline by almost 20% to less than 38,000 by the end of the projections.
- Hispanic graduates consistently and rapidly increase, more than doubling in number from 6,400 in 2008-09 to more than 14,000 in the last several projected years.
- The number of Asian/Pacific Islander public graduates increase by about 65%, from around 6,000 at the beginning to more than 9,600 towards the end of the projections; Black non-Hispanic public graduates increase about 30% from around 3,000 to about 3,900.
Composition of Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity

Washington state’s public graduating classes are projected to grow increasingly diverse. Our projections indicate that Non-White graduates will increase from 27% of the total in 2008-09, to 35% by 2019-20, and then 42% in 2027-28, due in large part to growth among Hispanics and some to growth in Asian/Pacific Islanders.

- White non-Hispanic graduates will decrease from 73% of all public high school graduates in 2008-09, to 65% in 2019-20, then 58% by 2027-28.
- Hispanic graduates will consistently increase in number and share of the total, from 10% to 20%, from 2008-09 to the last projected year, 2027-28; and Asian/Pacific Islanders will increase in share from 9% to 14%.
- Black non-Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native shares remain relatively constant.

Composite Math and Reading Scores by Race/Ethnicity

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 eighth graders in Washington state in 2011 ranged from 255 for American Indians/Alaska Natives to 291 for Asians/Pacific Islanders, with scores for underrepresented groups fall well below the average score for White non-Hispanics.
- The average state score for eighth graders of each race/ethnicity was generally about the national average.

Annual Income by Race/Ethnicity

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

- The statewide median income was $38,442, compared with $35,147 for the nation.
- Hispanics were the least well off financially among all races/ethnicities with a median income of $23,719, two-thirds of the statewide median, and one in four Hispanics earning $21,700 or less.
- Other non-Whites in Washington state had median incomes below the statewide median, particularly American Indian/Alaska Natives ($30,228) and Black non-Hispanics ($30,581).

Projections of high school graduates are from WICHE, Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates, 2012. 1996-97 to 2008-09 are actual reported graduates and 2009-10 to 2027-28 are projections. The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems supplied the data used in the first and last figures. State-level estimates for those figures are only reported for a racial/ethnic group when the coefficients of variation for all estimates do not exceed 25% and sample size is 50 or greater. Readers should understand that estimates for small samples can be imprecise due to large standard errors. WICHE provides relevant data tables at http://wiche.edu/knocking-8th/technicalNotes.

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