

# Knocking at the College Door

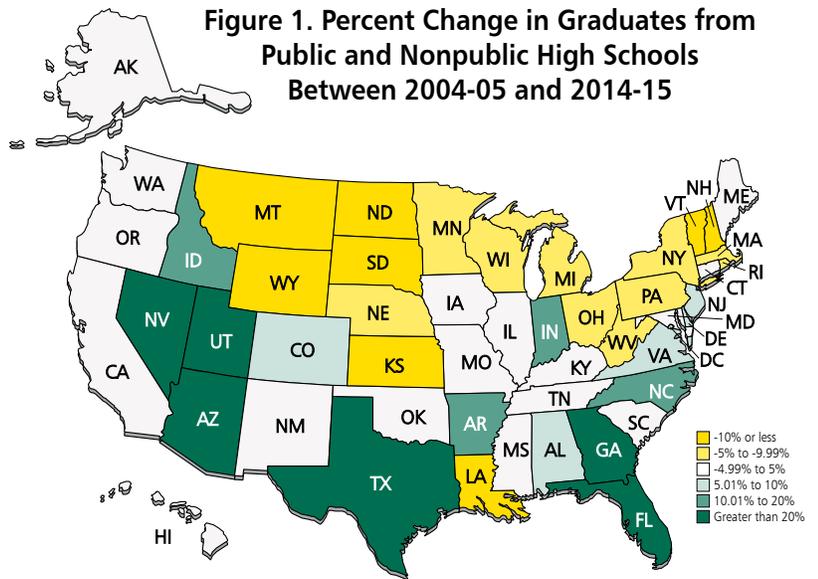
## Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2022

# ALABAMA

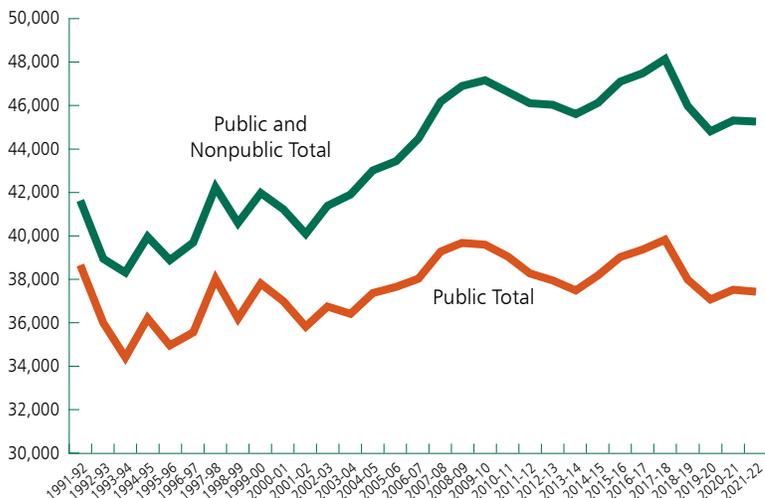
At over 3.3 million, the nation's graduating class of 2007-08 is projected to be history's largest. In fact, 2007-08 will mark the last year in an era of continuous growth in the nation's production of high school graduates, a period that reaches back to 1994. Over that time, the number of graduates 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.

As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1).



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



Alabama produced over 3,000 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 7.5 percent. Projections indicate that Alabama's number of graduates will continue growing rapidly though 2009-10 before it begins its next period of decreases. Assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue, the state projects to produce over 3,000 more high school graduates in the decade after 2004-05, an increase equal to about 7 percent.

The period 1991-92 through 2001-02 was marked by instability in Alabama's production of high school graduates. But the state entered into a growth period beginning in 2002-03 and counted 37,453 public school graduates in 2004-05, the most recent year of actual data (Figure 2). While that number was 1,227 fewer than the 1991-92 level, it was 1,656 more graduates than in 2001-02. Nonpublic schools in the state showed considerable growth over that time span. They added an estimated 5,634 in 2004-05, which was over 2,600 more than graduated in 1991-92. In fact, the number

of graduates from nonpublic schools appears to be growing much faster than graduates from public schools, and the projections indicate that this pattern will continue. Between 1994-95 and 2004-05, the estimated share of Alabama's total high school graduates from nonpublic schools climbed from 10.5 percent to 13.1 percent.

Along with much of the rest of the South, Alabama's production of high school graduates is poised to continue growing. The number of public high school graduates in that state is expected to climb to over 47,000 in 2009-10, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. Thereafter, the state will see a slight slowdown lasting through 2013-14 before it begins a second growth period that will peak in 2017-18, which itself will be followed by another reduction. Between 2004-05 and 2009-10, the number of public high school graduates is forecast to climb by 5.8 percent.

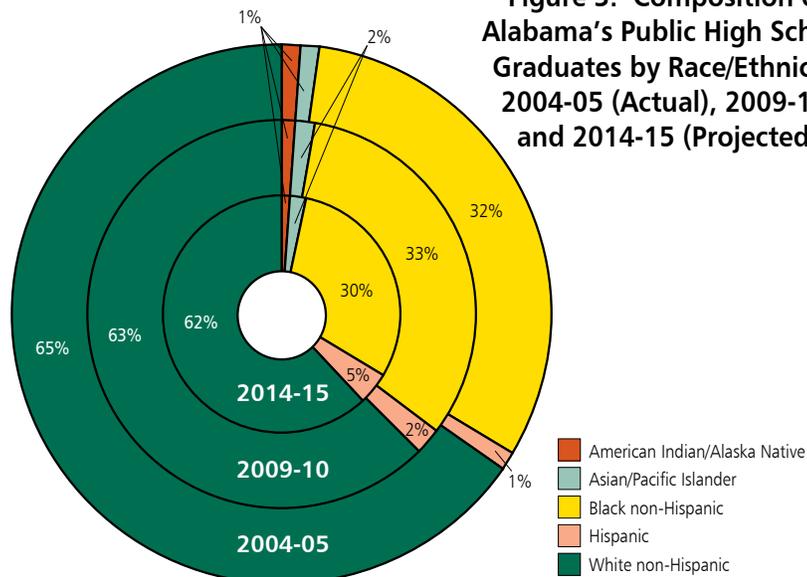
The racial/ethnic composition of Alabama's public high school graduating classes will begin to show more diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 68.4 percent of the graduates from the state's public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped to 65.2 percent. By 2014-15, it will reach 61.9 percent.

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 Alabama, as in other states, the big changes are the result of rapid growth in the number of Hispanic high school students and graduates coupled with a shrinking number of White non-Hispanics in the educational pipeline. These trends are actually somewhat delayed in Alabama, since the White non-Hispanic population is projected to continue growing initially while Hispanic numbers will grow ever faster as time goes by. While immigration has contributed to the growth of the Hispanic

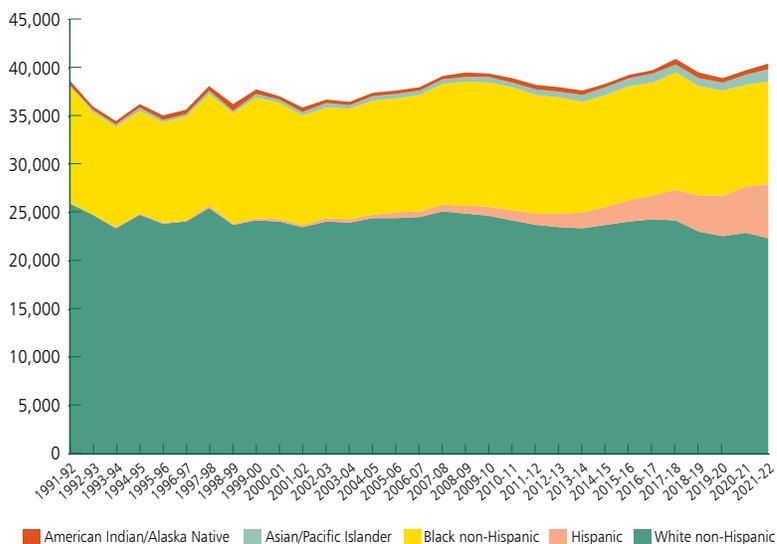
population, signs of the continuing demographic shift are evident in data showing a dramatic increase in the number of Hispanic births, which is due in part to a higher fertility rate among Hispanic women.

Hispanic graduates from public schools in Alabama numbered just 404 in 2004-05. But within a decade Hispanic graduates are projected to quadruple in number to about 1,860, with the size of the annual increases growing in the later years (Figure 4). Asians/Pacific Islanders are also expected to see rapid growth, nearly doubling from 420 to 807 graduates. Meanwhile, despite initial growth, the number of Black non-Hispanic graduates will wind up decreasing by 226 graduates (1.9 percent) to nearly 11,600 over that same span. White non-Hispanics will have the biggest decreases: the 2014-15 level is projected to be 646 lower than the 2004-05, a decline of 2.6 percent. Finally, American Indians/Alaska Natives are projected to see their number of graduates fluctuate at around 400 graduates.

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



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



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