

Knocking at the College Door

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

GEORGIA

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).

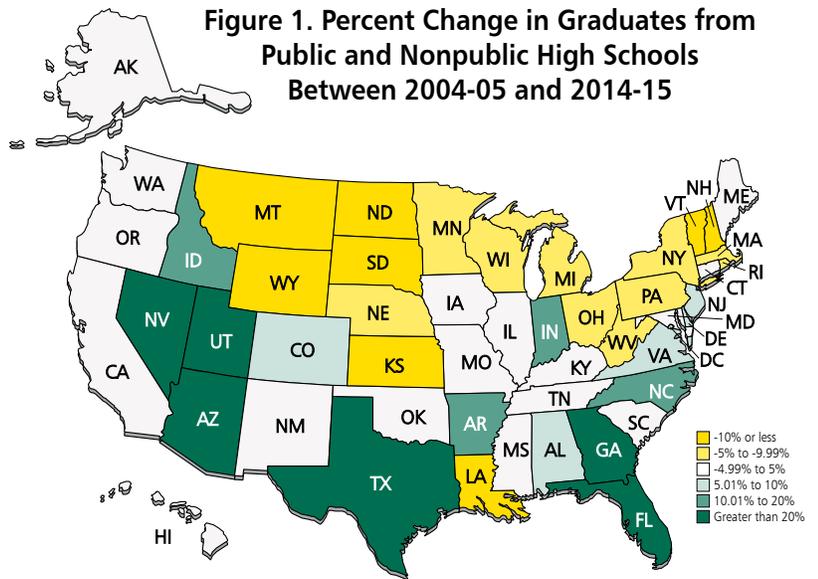
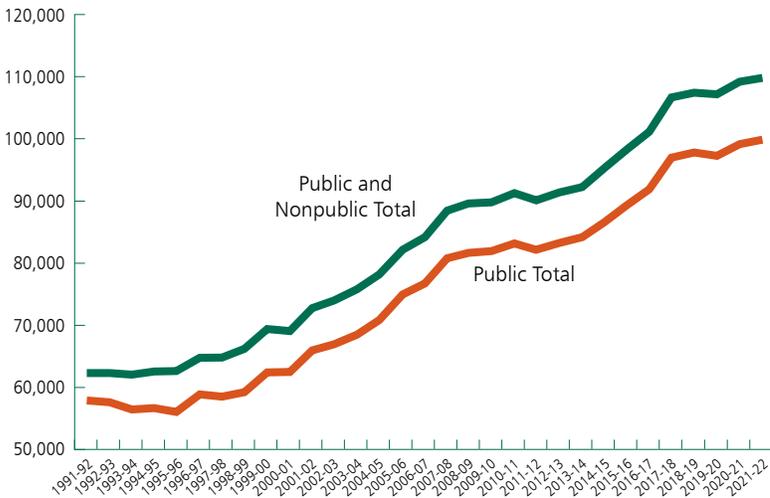


Figure 1. Percent Change in Graduates from Public and Nonpublic High Schools Between 2004-05 and 2014-15

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



Georgia produced about 15,700 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 25.2 percent. Projections indicate that Georgia will continue growing rapidly, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The state projects to produce nearly 17,200 more high school graduates a decade after 2004-05, an increase approximately equal to 22 percent.

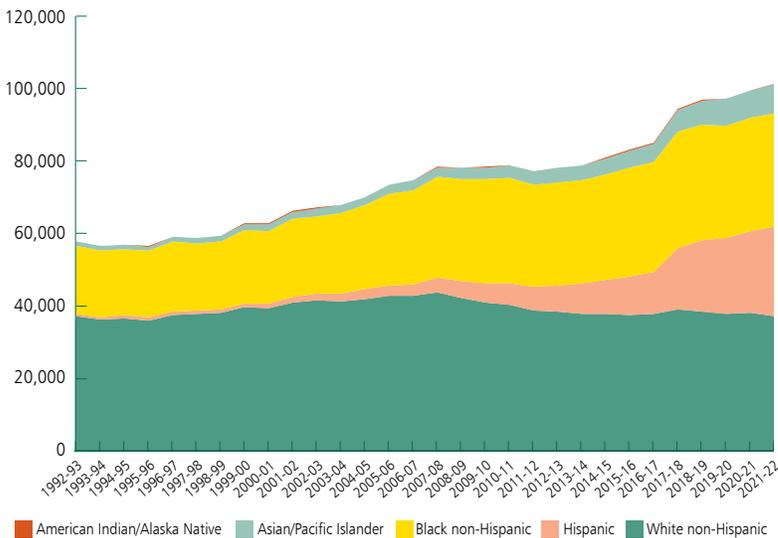
Georgia was among the states with rapid growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 2004-05, the most recent year of actual data from public schools (Figure 2). In 2004-05, 70,834 students graduated from public high schools in Georgia, 13,092 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, representing growth of 22.7 percent. Nonpublic schools in the state added an estimated 7,306 in 2004-05, which was about 2,600 more than graduated in 1991-92. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 9 percent on average.

However, unlike much of the rest of the nation, Georgia is not expected to see its production of high school graduates stagnate or decline. Although growth will slow somewhat between 2007-08 and 2013-14, each year the state can expect to have more graduates than the preceding year, according to these projections, with only one year (2011-12) that does not fit that pattern. Between 2004-05 and 2007-08, the number of high school graduates is forecast to climb by 13.4 percent. Subsequently, the percentage increase through 2013-14 will slow to 4.4 percent before picking back up the following year. Total graduates are forecast to reach nearly 110,000 at the end of the projected period.

The racial/ethnic composition of Georgia's public high school graduating classes will continue to show substantial diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 64.6 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had fallen to 59.9 percent. The next decade will see further declines in the share of public high school graduates who are White non-Hispanic. The state's public high school graduating class is forecast to become "majority-minority" (when minority graduates outnumber White non-Hispanic graduates) in 2012-13. By 2014-15, the proportion of White non-Hispanic graduates will be approximately 46.7 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 Georgia, 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 declines in the number of White non-Hispanic graduates. While international immigration has contributed to the growth of the Hispanic population, signs of the continuing demographic shift are evident in data showing a

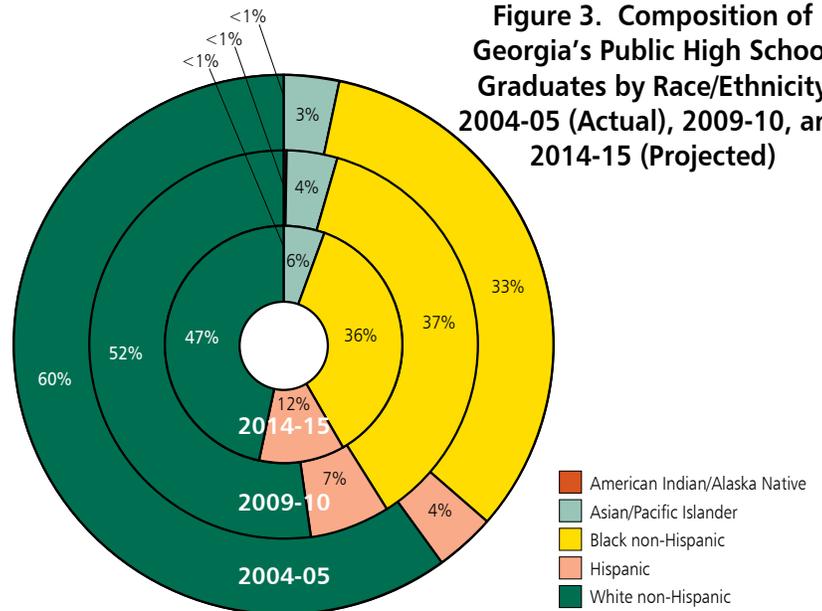
Figure 4. Georgia High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1992-93 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



dramatic increase in the number of Hispanic births, which is due in part to a higher fertility rate among Hispanic women. Domestic in-migration accounts for a significant portion of the growth in other races/ethnicities as well, as Georgia is attracting new residents from other states.

Hispanic graduates from public schools in Georgia numbered 2,590 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 9,360, an increase of 261.4 percent (Figure 4). Growth is also expected among graduates from other minority groups: projections for 2014-15 show that the number of Black non-Hispanic graduates will increase by 26 percent above its 2004-05 level of 23,035; and the number of Asian/Pacific Islander graduates will climb by over 90 percent from 2,342. Meanwhile, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates is forecast to decline from 41,903 to about 37,650 over the same span (a 10 percent decrease). Finally, the number of American Indian/Alaska Native graduates will remain essentially unchanged.

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



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