

Knocking at the College Door

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

MISSISSIPPI

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).

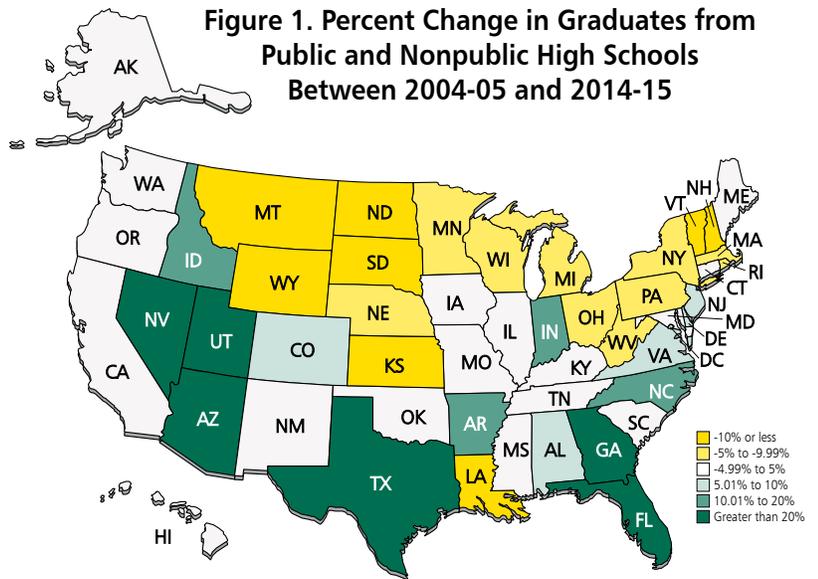
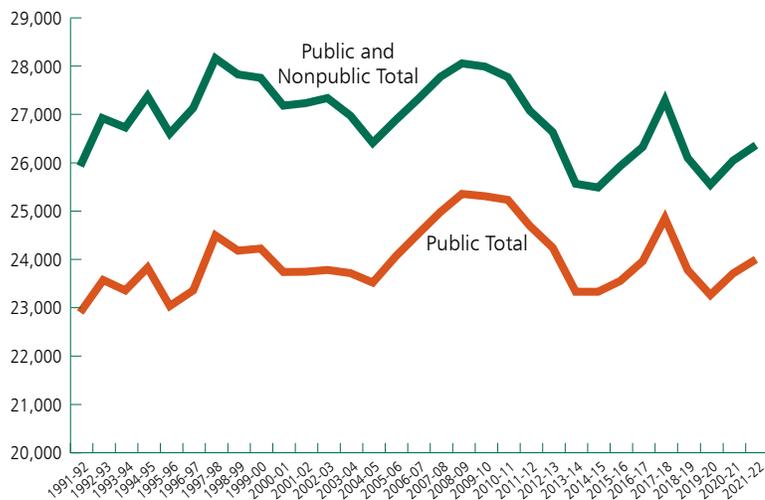


Figure 2. Mississippi High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Mississippi produced nearly 1,000 fewer graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, a decrease of 3.5 percent. Projections indicate that the state's number of graduates will grow rapidly though 2008-09 before falling back below the 2004-05 level by 2014-15. Assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue, the state projects to produce about 1,660 more high school graduates in 2008-09 than it did in 2004-05, an increase equal to about 6.3 percent.

The period 1991-92 through 2004-05 was marked by instability in Mississippi's production of high school graduates (Figure 2). The academic year 2004-05, the last year actual data were available, marked the low point in the number of public high school graduates for the preceding seven years. That year, the state's public high schools graduated 23,523 students, which was 611 more than the 1991-92 level but 979 less than the peak year of 1997-98. Nonpublic schools graduated an estimated 2,896 students in 2004-05, but they also have experienced declines in production that will continue

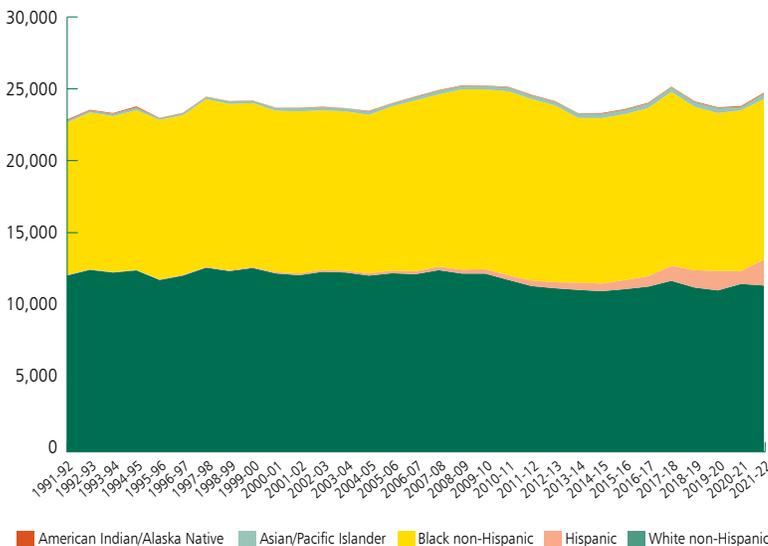
for the foreseeable future. Of Mississippi's total number of high school graduates each year, on average, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 11 percent, though that share is projected to fall as well.

However, Mississippi is projected to see substantial increases in public graduates in the first few years of the projections before the production once again slips. During the peak year of 2008-09, the state's public high schools are forecast to graduate 25,377 students, an increase of 7.9 percent over the 2004-05 level. Thereafter, the state will see a sharp decline in the number of public high school graduates each year through 2013-14, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. Between 2008-09 and 2014-15, the number of public high school graduates is forecast to drop by over 2,000 (8 percent). Subsequently, Mississippi is expected to see more inconsistency in the year-to-year change in the number of graduates it produces.

The racial/ethnic composition of Mississippi'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 52.5 percent of the graduates from the state's public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped slightly to 51.7 percent. By 2014-15, the proportion of White non-Hispanics will have fallen to under 47.4 percent.

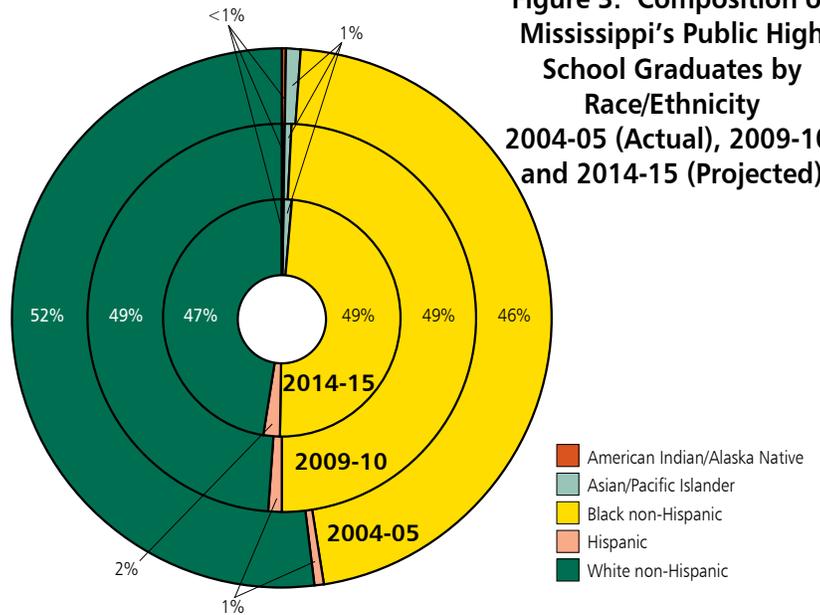
These changes are roughly comparable to the experience of states all over the country. Although the magnitude may differ substantially, the nation as a whole is undergoing sweeping changes in the racial/ethnic composition of its population. In Mississippi, as in other states, the big changes are the result of a shrinking number of White non-Hispanics in the educational pipeline together with growth in the number of graduates from minority groups. Whereas in other states the growth among Hispanics is most notable, in Mississippi their numbers are so small to start with that even the rapid pace at which they are increasing has less of an immediate effect on the forecasted changes than does the expected increase in Black non-Hispanic graduates.

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



Hispanic graduates from public schools in Mississippi numbered just 163 in 2004-05. Within a decade Hispanic graduates are projected to increase by about 370 (226 percent) to over 500, with the size of the annual increases growing in later years (Figure 4). Growth among Black non-Hispanics over that same span will be much more gradual, at 4.4 percent, but that slower pace still accounts for 484 more graduates from that group. Black non-Hispanics are projected to see much larger increases between 2004-05 and 2010-11 before they give back much of those gains. Asians/Pacific Islanders also account for a small but rapidly growing number of graduates in Mississippi, climbing from 240 in 2004-05 to 292 in 2014-15 (21.7 percent). Meanwhile, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates will slip by over 1,000 during that same period, declining from its 2004-05 level of 12,150 (an 8.9 percent decline).

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



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