

Knocking at the College Door Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2022

MISSOURI

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).

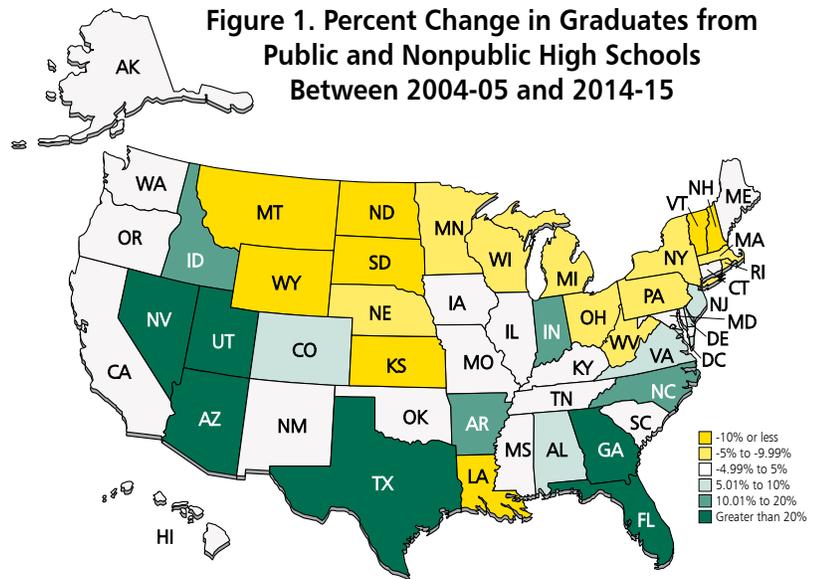
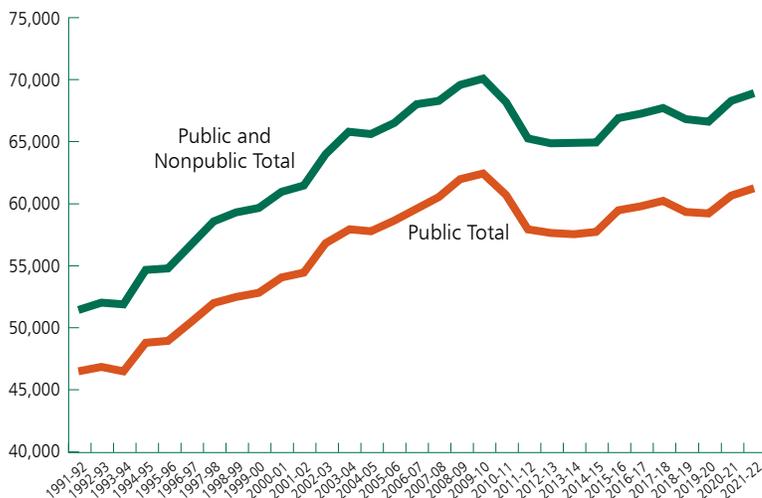


Figure 1. Percent Change in Graduates from Public and Nonpublic High Schools Between 2004-05 and 2014-15

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



Missouri produced almost 10,900 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 20 percent. Projections indicate that its number of graduates will continue growing steadily through 2009-10, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue, before it begins to decline. The state projects to produce over 700 fewer high school graduates in the decade after 2004-05, a decline of about 1 percent.

The period 1991-92 through 2004-05 was marked by rapid growth in Missouri's production of high school graduates (Figure 2). By 2004-05, the most recent year of actual data, the state's public high schools counted 57,841 graduates, which was 11,285 more graduates than in 1991-92. Nonpublic schools graduated an estimated 7,800 graduates in 2004-05, which was about 2,825 more than graduated in 1991-92. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year throughout the actual and projected timeframe, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 11 percent, on average.

However, along with much of the rest of the nation, Missouri is poised to enter a new period characterized by much more stagnant growth or declines in the production of high school graduates. After reaching a peak in 2009-10 at about 62,500, the state will see a sharp decline in the number of public high school graduates lasting through 2014-15, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. During that timeframe, the number of high school graduates is forecast to drop by nearly 4,800 (7.6 percent). Subsequently, projections indicate that production will recover, nearly returning to its 2009-10 level by 2021-22.

The racial/ethnic composition of Missouri'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 86.7 percent of the graduates from the state's public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped to 82.1 percent, and that trend is projected to accelerate. By 2014-15, it will reach 75.5 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 Missouri, 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. 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. The number of the state's graduates from other minority racial/ethnic groups is anticipated to climb relatively rapidly as well.

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

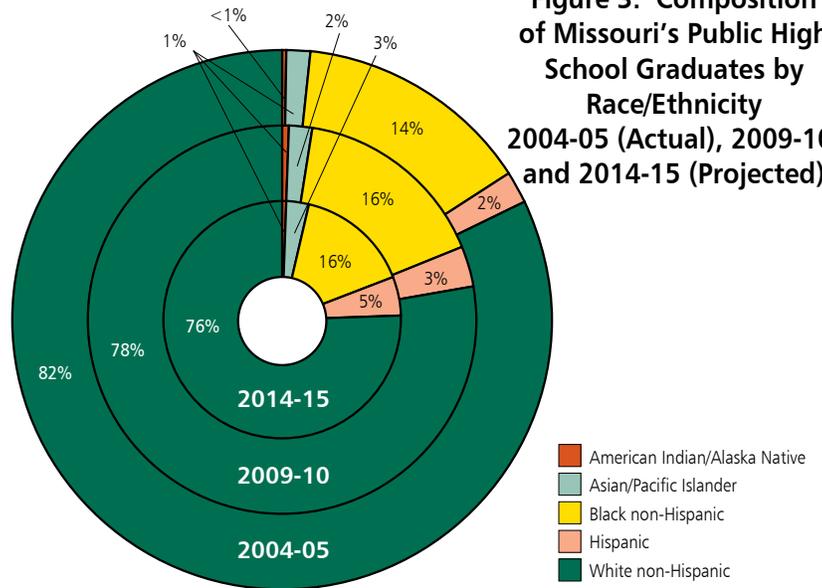
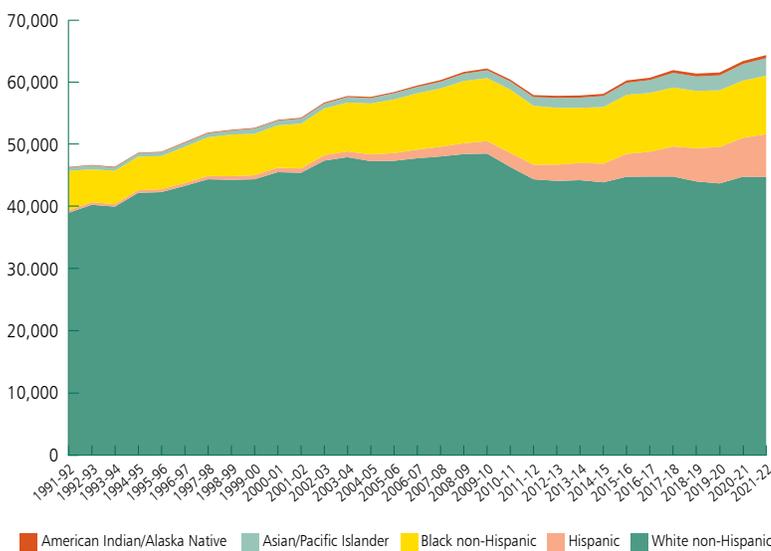


Figure 4. Missouri High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Hispanic graduates from public schools in Missouri numbered 1,075 in 2004-05. But within a decade Hispanic graduates are projected to nearly triple that amount to about 3,000 (Figure 4). Asians/Pacific Islanders are also expected to see rapid growth, increasing their numbers by 108 percent from their 2004-05 level of 852 graduates. Growth among American Indian/Alaska Native graduates is expected to add about 160 (an increase of 83 percent) by 2014-15. The number of Black non-Hispanic graduates is also projected to grow by more than 900 (11.1 percent) over the same span to roughly 9,150. Meanwhile, despite initial growth, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates will be more than 3,400 lower by 2014-15 than its 2004-05 level of 47,485 (down 7.2 percent).

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