

Knocking at the College Door

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

UTAH

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). Utah produced 3,145 more graduates in 2004 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 11.2 percent.

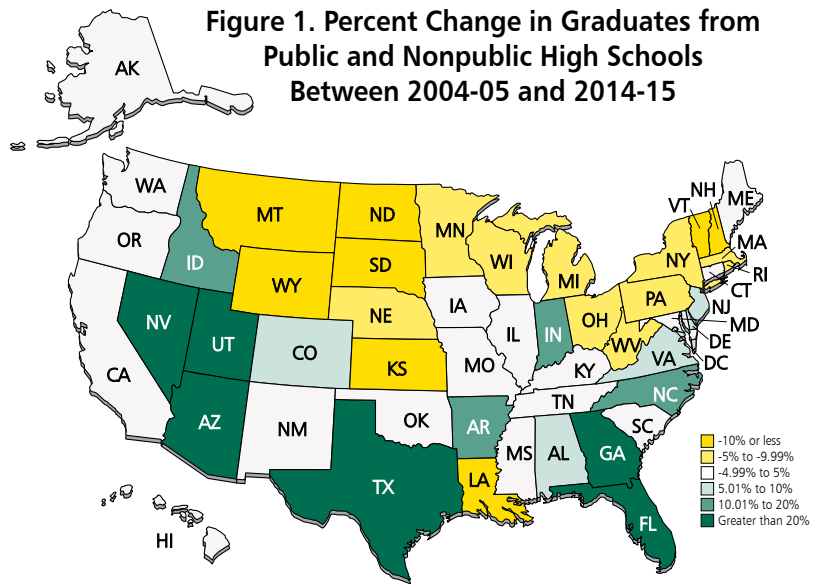
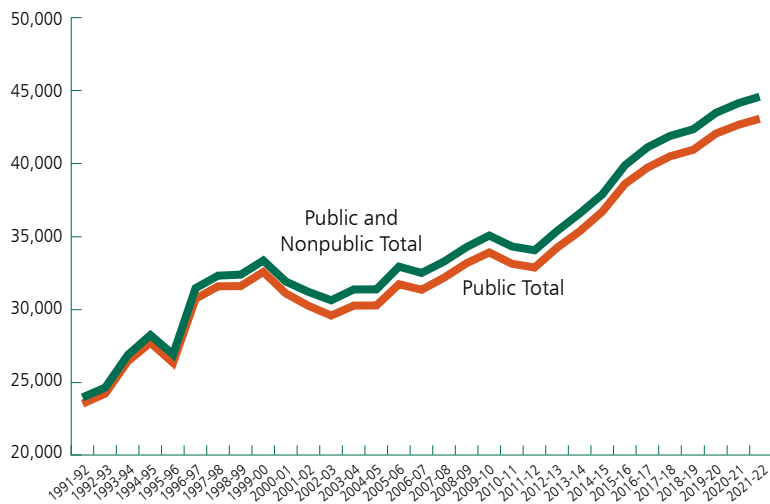


Figure 2. Utah High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Projections indicate that Utah will continue growing, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The state projects to produce about 6,630 more high school graduates in the decade after 2004-05, an increase of over 21 percent.

Utah experienced rapid growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 1999-2000, followed by a slight slowdown through 2002-03 (Figure 2). In 2004-05, the most recent year for which actual data were available, 30,253 students graduated from public high schools in Utah, 6,740 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, representing growth of 28.7 percent. Nonpublic schools added an estimated 1,097 graduates in 2004-05, which was over more than two-and-a-half times the number that graduated in 1991-92. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, on average, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 3 percent.

Unlike much of the rest of the nation, Utah is not expected to see its rapid growth in the production of high school graduates stagnate or decline. Instead, the state's growth curve is expected to continue mostly uninterrupted throughout the projected period. Initially, Utah can anticipate a first period of growth lasting until 2009-10, during which time the number of high school graduates is projected to grow by about 3,700 over the 2004-05 level (11.8 percent). After a brief downturn, the state projects to enter a period of more rapid growth in 2012-13, with the number of additional graduates over the 2004-05 level exceeding 13,000 by 2021-22 (42 percent).

Despite Utah's relatively racially/ethnically homogenous population, the composition of the state's public high school graduating classes will continue to show diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 94.2 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped to 89.2 percent. The next decade will see further declines in the share of public high school graduates who are White non-Hispanic, with projections indicating it will reach 82 percent by 2014-15

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 Utah, as in other states, the big changes are mainly the result of rapid growth in the number of Hispanic high school students and graduates. However, unlike in most other states, in Utah the numbers of White non-Hispanic graduates and those from all other races/ethnicities are also projected to rise.

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

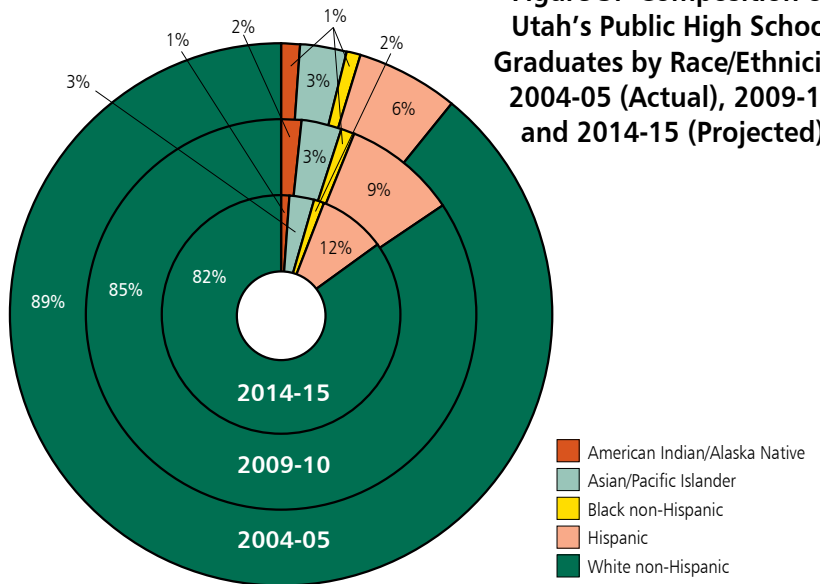
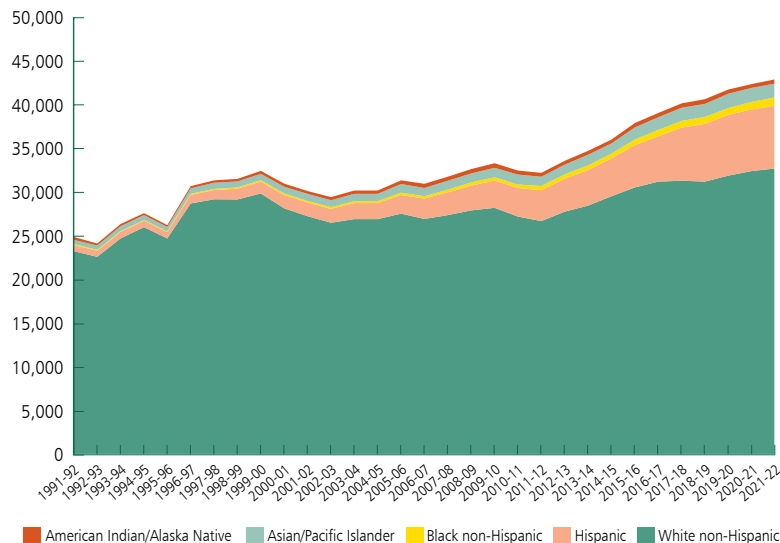


Figure 4. Utah High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Hispanic graduates from public schools in Utah numbered 1,838 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 4,328, an increase of 135.5 percent (Figure 4). In Utah, this is not even the fastest rate of growth, as the number of Black non-Hispanic graduates is projected to climb by 149 percent over the same period, although their number in 2004-05 was a comparably small 218. American Indians/Alaska Natives will see an increase at 17.2 percent; and Asians/Pacific Islanders will see their numbers climb by 38 percent, with projections for 2014-15 reaching 442 and 1,165, respectively. Meanwhile, White non-Hispanics will see more modest growth in their numbers over the same timeframe, with projections showing an increase from 26,976 in 2004-05 to 29,605 in 2014-15, or a 9.7 percent jump.

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