

Knocking at the College Door

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

VERMONT

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.

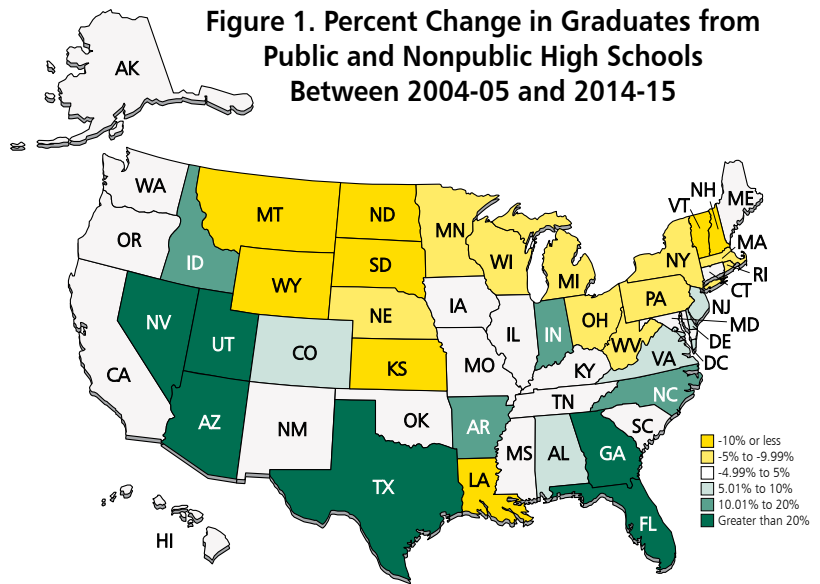
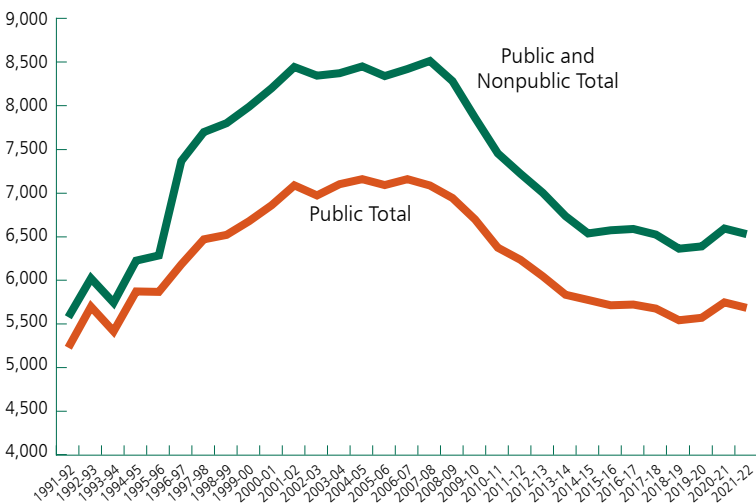


Figure 2. Vermont High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1). Vermont produced over 2,200 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of nearly 36 percent. Projections indicate that the state's number of graduates will spike in 2007-08 before beginning a sustained slide, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. Vermont projects to produce close to 2,000 fewer high school graduates in 2014-15 than it did in 2004-05, a decrease of about 22.6 percent.

Vermont experienced rapid but uneven growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 2001-02, during which time the number of graduates from its public schools climbed by 1,852 (35.4 percent) (Figure 2). But then its growth plateaued, and by 2004-05, the most recent year of actual data, production had reached 7,152, only 69 more than were produced

in 2001-02. Nonpublic schools in the state added an estimated 1,300 in 2004-05. Of Vermont's total number of high school graduates each year, on average, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 14 percent.

While much of the nation is poised to enter a period characterized by more stagnant growth in the production of high school graduates, Vermont's growth curve actually slowed to a crawl beginning in 2002-03 and is expected to remain there until 2007-08, when it begins a decline that will last through 2018-19. By then, the state's public schools will generate about 1,600 fewer graduates than they did in 2004-05 (22.5 percent). The bulk of the decrease will occur between 2007-08 and 2013-14.

A state with a relatively homogeneous population, Vermont will see its public high school graduating classes diversifying over the coming decade and more (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 97.7 percent of the graduates from the state's public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped only slightly to 96 percent. By 2014-15, the proportion of White non-Hispanics will have fallen to under 92.7 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. The big changes are the result of a shrinking number of White non-Hispanics in the educational pipeline. In Vermont, this trend is coupled with growth in the number of minority students and graduates.

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

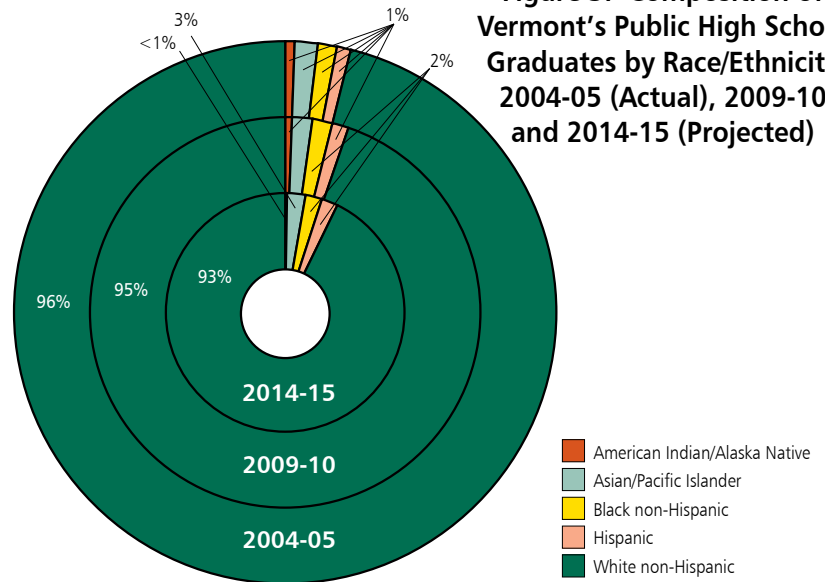
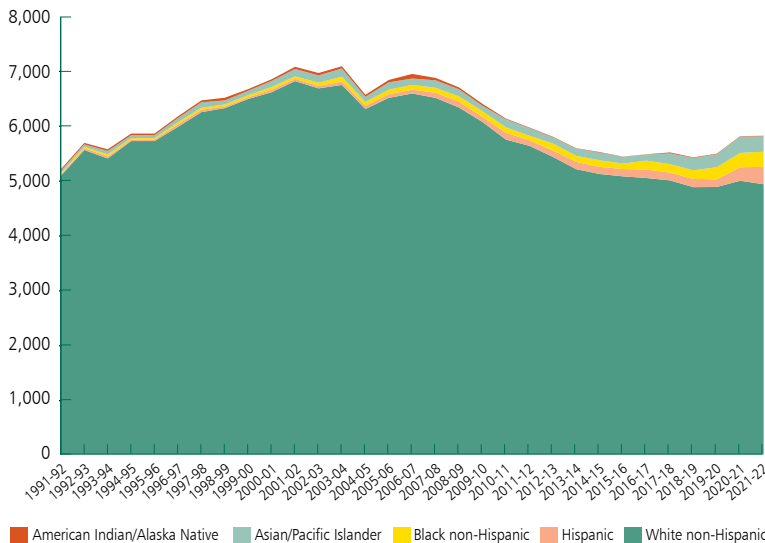


Figure 4. Vermont High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Projecting changes in the numbers of minority graduates in Vermont is especially prone to potential error given the small size of these groups; a slight change can make an apparently large difference in the projected percentage change. The growth in minority groups, with the exception of American Indians/Alaska Natives, will remain very modest, even though their rates of growth as measured in percentage terms will be dramatic. Hispanic graduates numbered just 58 in 2004-05, and they will more than double by 2014-15, adding about 70 to their number. The percentage increase among Black non-Hispanics will be about 73 percent over their 2004-05 level of 69 graduates. Asians/Pacific Islanders will also see growth of about 50 percent from the 2004-05 level of 95. Meanwhile, White non-Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state, who numbered 6,315 in 2004-05, will see their group slip in size by about 1,200 (19 percent) by 2014-15 (Figure 4).

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