

Knocking at the College Door

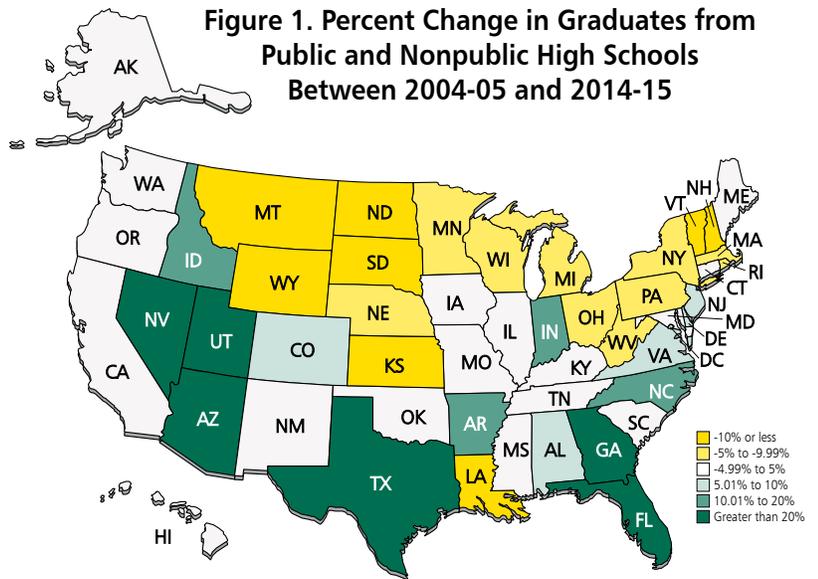
Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2022

KANSAS

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.

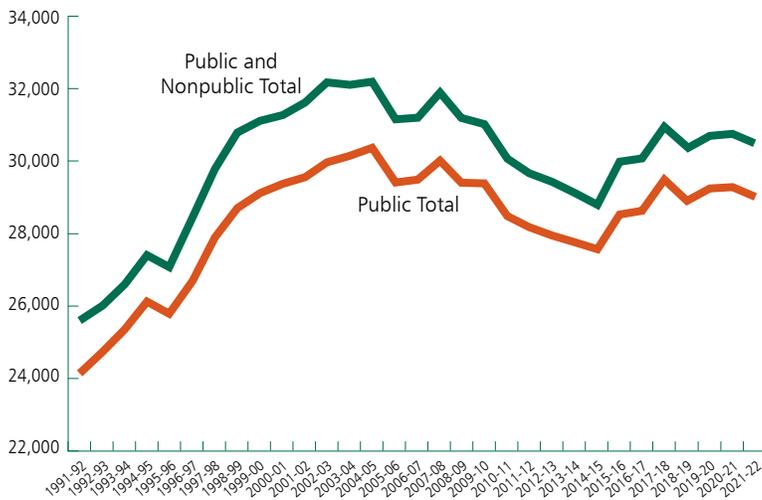
The national data obscure significant variations in this picture at the regional and state levels, however. Regionally, in the decade leading up to 2004-05, the number of high school graduates grew the fastest in the West at 34 percent, with the South growing by 23.5 percent, the Northeast by 20.7 percent, 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).



Kansas produced over 4,800 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 17.6 percent, and projections indicate that the number of graduates in the state is beginning a long-term decline, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. Kansas projects to have about 3,400 fewer high school graduates a decade after 2004-05, a decrease of more than 10 percent.

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



Mirroring the rest of the country, Kansas experienced rapid growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 2002-03 (Figure 2). By 2004-05, public schools in Kansas graduated 30,355 students, which was 6,226 more than they produced in 1991-92, an increase of 25.8 percent. The state's nonpublic schools contributed an additional estimated 1,841 graduates in 2004-05. Of the total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 5 percent, on average. But projections indicate that the production of nonpublic school graduates will decline in the years ahead.

However, along with much of the rest of the nation, Kansas is poised to enter a period characterized by much more stagnant growth or declines in the production of high school graduates. Projections indicate that 2004-05 will have been the peak year for public high school graduates. While the class of 2008 is expected to yield nearly as many graduates as 2004-05, subsequent years will see mostly consistent declines through 2014-15, with the state shedding roughly 2,800 graduates, or about 9.3 percent. Later, a brief but fairly substantial recovery is forecast for Kansas.

The racial/ethnic composition of Kansas'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 86.7 percent of the graduates from the state's public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped slightly to 82.3 percent. By 2014-15, the proportion of White non-Hispanics will have fallen to under 77.8 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 Kansas, 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.

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

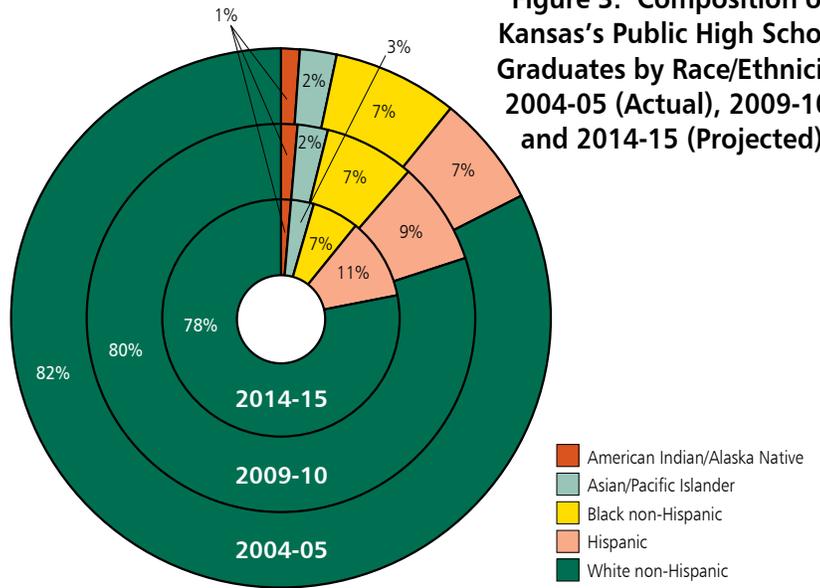
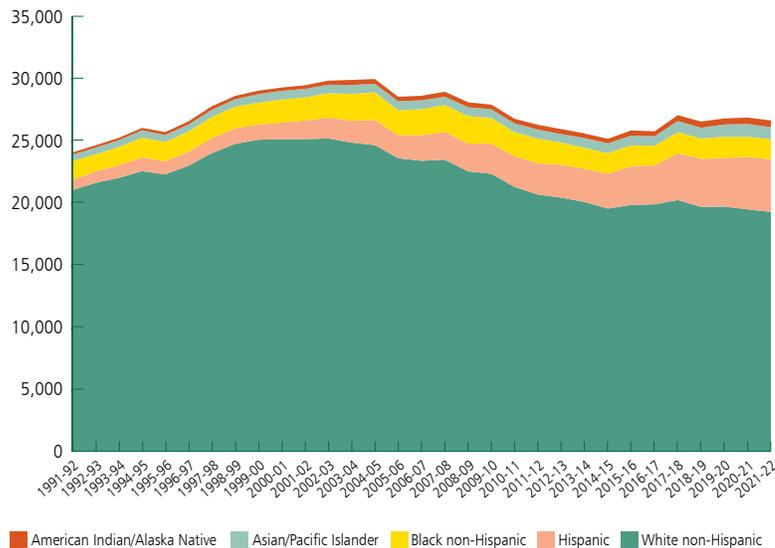


Figure 4. Kansas High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



The number of White non-Hispanic graduates, which was 24,734 in 2004-05, is forecast to drop precipitously by 2014-15, with a loss of over 5,000 graduates, more than 20 percent of the previous total. Additionally, Black non-Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state, who numbered 2,229 in 2004-05, are projected to see their population shrink by nearly 600 by 2014-15, a decrease of over 26 percent (Figure 4). Meanwhile, the number of Hispanic graduates is projected to increase from 2,019 to 2,810 over the same timeframe (nearly 40 percent). Also growing are the numbers of Asian/Pacific Islander graduates, who are expected to increase by 14.4 percent over their 2004-05 level of 684. Finally, little change is expected in the number of American Indians/Alaska Natives graduates: in 2004-05, they accounted for 374 graduates; and in 2014-15 they're projected to number 362.

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