

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

## LOUISIANA

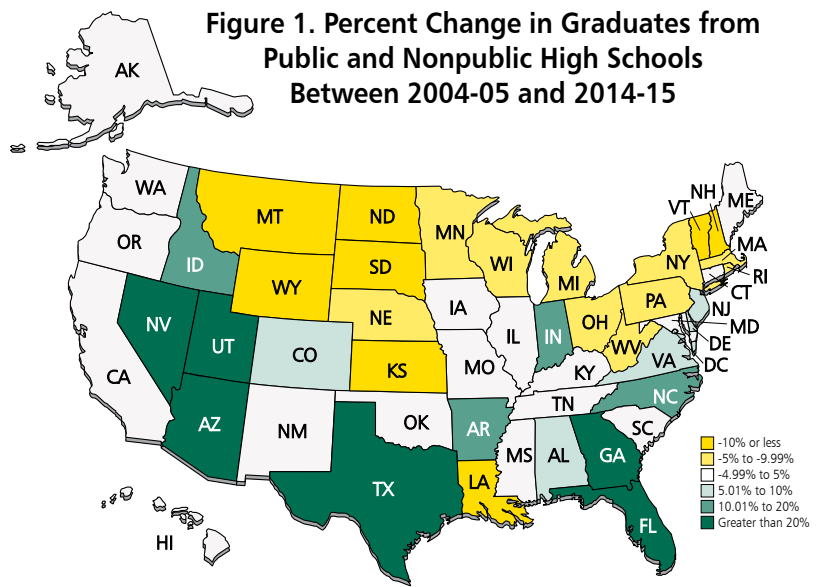
At over 3.3 million, the nation's graduating class of 2007-08 is projected to be history's largest. In fact, 2007-08 will mark the last year in an era of continuous growth in the nation's production of high school graduates, a period that reaches back to 1994. Over that time, the number of graduates 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 about 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.

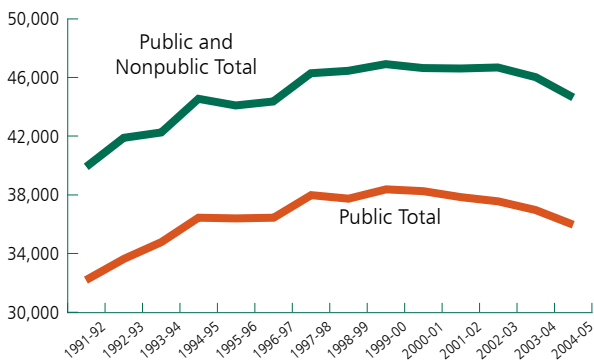
As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1). Louisiana's projected production of high school graduates is particularly peculiar, due to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Because these projections were built on data that included enrollments counted in the months immediately after Katrina, at a time when large segments of the state's population were displaced and the focus was still on recovery, they captured only the immediate effects of the hurricane on Louisiana's public schools. Indeed, two and a half years later, numerous former residents of New Orleans and other affected parts of Louisiana remain scattered in other parts of the country or in makeshift housing arrangements, though some are trickling back as rebuilding progresses.

Data on enrollment and graduates for subsequent years will more completely account for the longer-term impacts of Katrina, contributing to improved precision in the projections. In the meantime, readers should understand that it was necessary to make projections for Louisiana's high school graduates in order to include them in the national and regional data. But they should also examine the disaggregated projections for Louisiana with a healthy and informed skepticism.

However, even prior to Katrina, Louisiana was unusual in the South in experiencing diminishing numbers of high school graduates (Figure 2). Between 1992 and 2000, the state added about 7,000 graduates (an increase of 17.6 percent). But the growth ceased after that year, and the number of graduates began to decline slightly by 2004-05. Standard trend analysis using the data that were available projects that, post-Katrina, the number of graduates is projected to plummet by about 15,000 between



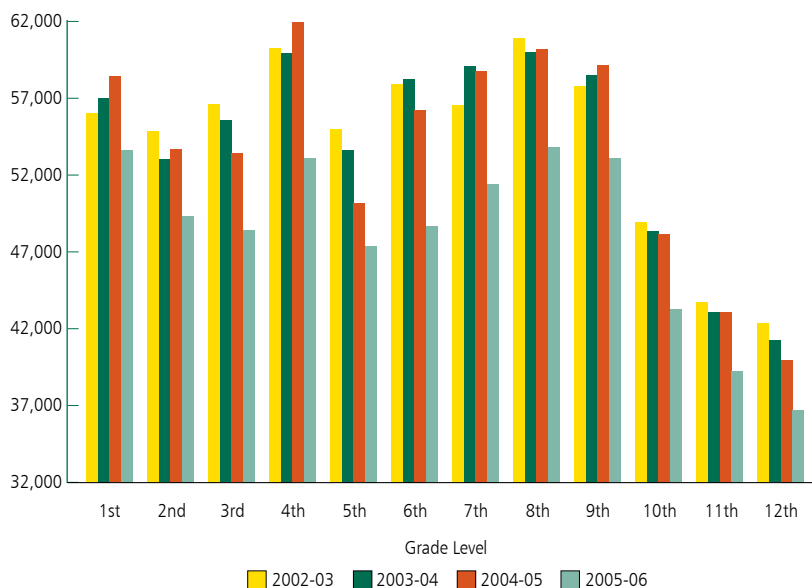
**Figure 2. Louisiana High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual)**



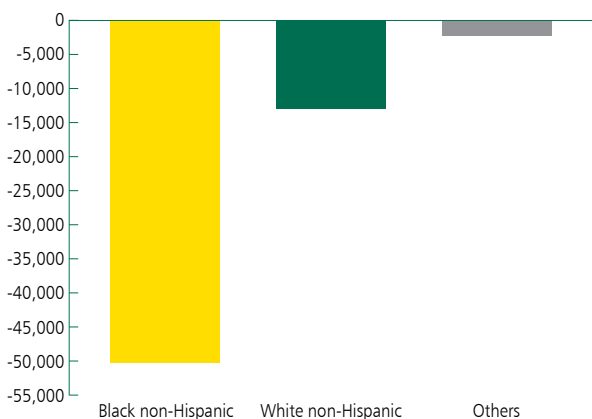
2004-05 and a decade later (a drop of about one-third). But these projections are almost certainly misleading; they do not account for the return of displaced residents to the state since the fall of 2005.

Because the last available data for public high school graduates was for the 2004-05 academic year, those data are absent any of Katrina's effects. But it is possible to get a glimpse of how the hurricane influenced the projections by examining the enrollment data. Despite seeing growth in several grades in the year or two preceding 2005-06, enrollments at every grade level in Louisiana's public schools experienced a sharp and sudden drop-off (Figure 3). All told, enrollment in all public schools fell by over 65,000 students, a decrease in one year of more than 10.1 percent. This dramatic drop had significant and lasting implications for the projections of high school graduates, as should be expected, since Katrina was a seminal event that almost certainly will have long-term consequences for many aspects of life in Louisiana, including schooling. (More technical details concerning how the data influenced the

**Figure 3. Public School Enrollments in Louisiana by Grade Level, 2002-03 to 2005-06**



**Figure 4. Change in Public School Enrollments in Louisiana by Race/Ethnicity Between 2004-05 and 2005-06**

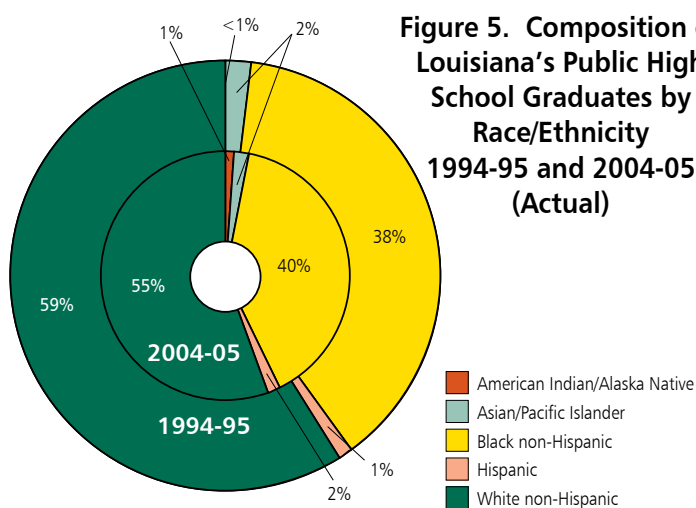


projections can be found in Chapter 4 of the publication.) However, no data yet exist on how circumstances have changed beyond the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Consequently, it is likely that the projections underestimate graduates in the state, as more people have returned to the state and to its schools in subsequent years.

The enrollment data also show how post-Katrina declines were not equally distributed among Louisiana's racial/ethnic groups (Figure 4). In percentage terms, total enrollments in public schools fell by 16.5 percent among Black non-Hispanics, approximately four times the rate for White non-Hispanics (4.1 percent) and double that of other races/ethnicities (8.3 percent). Consequently, the high school graduates projections suggest that the diversification within public graduating classes that many other states can anticipate over the next 15 years and beyond may not occur in Louisiana. That will depend on whether displaced students who return to the state to complete school share similar racial/ethnic

characteristics with individuals who were not counted among those enrolled in 2005-06. But in fact, data on the racial/ethnic composition of the public high school graduating classes in the state had begun to show increasing diversification leading up to 2004-05 (Figure 5). A decade earlier, White non-Hispanics had accounted for 59.3 percent of all graduates, while Black non-Hispanics accounted for 37.5 percent. In 2004-05, the share of White non-Hispanics had fallen to 56.2 and the Black non-Hispanic share had climbed to 39.6 percent. In most other states, Hispanics accounted for the fastest-growing proportion of the graduating classes. In Louisiana their numbers also were beginning to grow, although their increase was more modest through 2004-05.

**Figure 5. Composition of Louisiana's Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1994-95 and 2004-05 (Actual)**



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