

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

NEVADA

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). Nevada produced nearly 6,000 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 57.3 percent. Projections indicate that Nevada will continue growing rapidly at a pace that is

second only to Arizona's. Assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue, the state projects to produce over 8,000 more high school graduates in the decade after 2004-05, an increase approximately equal to 50 percent.

Nevada was among the states with extremely rapid growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 2004-05, the most recent year of actual data from public schools (Figure 2). In 2004-05, 15,740 students graduated from public high schools in the state, 6,929 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, representing growth of 78.6 percent. Nonpublic schools in the state added an estimated 686 in 2004-05, which was about 308 more than graduated in 1991-92.

Unlike much of the rest of the nation, Nevada is not expected to see its rapid growth in the production of

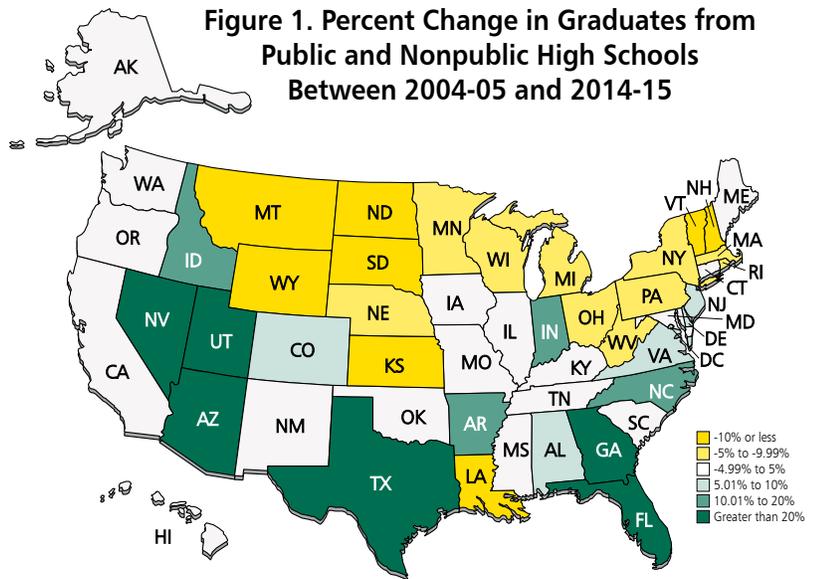
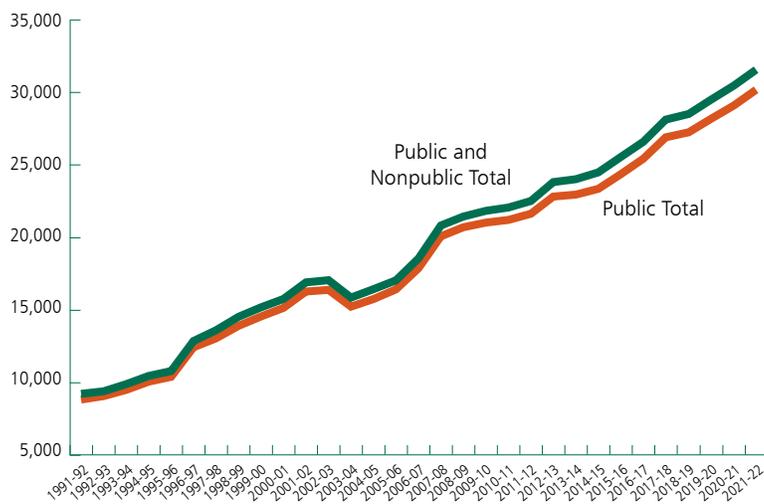


Figure 2. Nevada High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



high school graduates stagnate or decline. Instead, Nevada's growth curve is expected to continue uninterrupted throughout the projected period, and there appears to be no end in sight. These rapid increases will likely strain the state's capacity to provide equal opportunity to education, especially at the postsecondary level.

The racial/ethnic composition of Nevada's public high school graduating classes will continue to show substantial diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In fact, the proportion of White non-Hispanics in each public high school graduating class appears to be in free-fall. In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for just over three-quarters of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had fallen to 63.5 percent. The next decade in Nevada will see further declines in the share of public high school graduates who are White non-Hispanic, and the state's public high school graduating class is forecast to become "majority-minority" (when minority graduates outnumber White non-Hispanic graduates) in 2009-10. By 2014-15, the proportion of White non-Hispanic graduates will be approximately one-third.

These changes are roughly comparable to the experience of states all over the country, though the magnitude may differ substantially, as the nation as a whole is undergoing sweeping changes in the racial/ethnic composition of its population. In Nevada, 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 decline in the number of White non-Hispanic graduates. While international 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. Domestic in-migration accounts for a significant portion of the growth in other races/ethnicities as well, as Nevada is attracting new residents from other states. Rapid growth in the numbers of Black non-Hispanics and Asians/Pacific Islanders is also having a substantial effect.

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

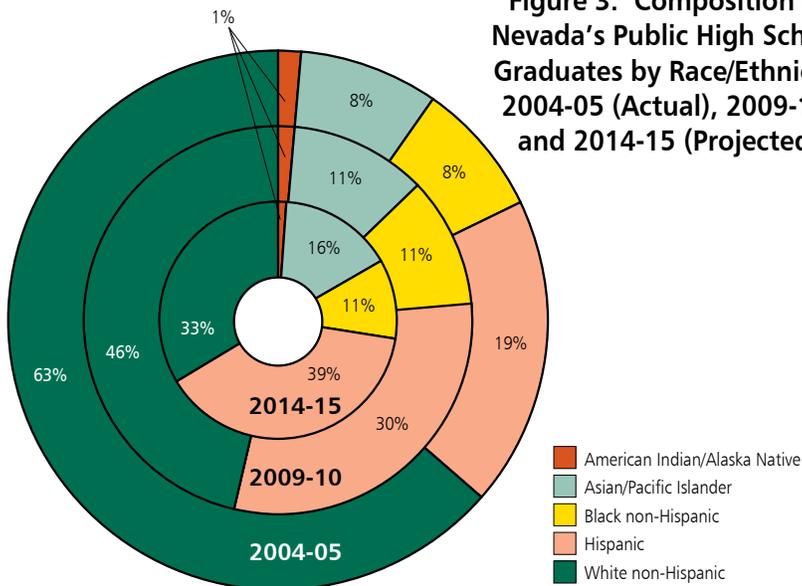
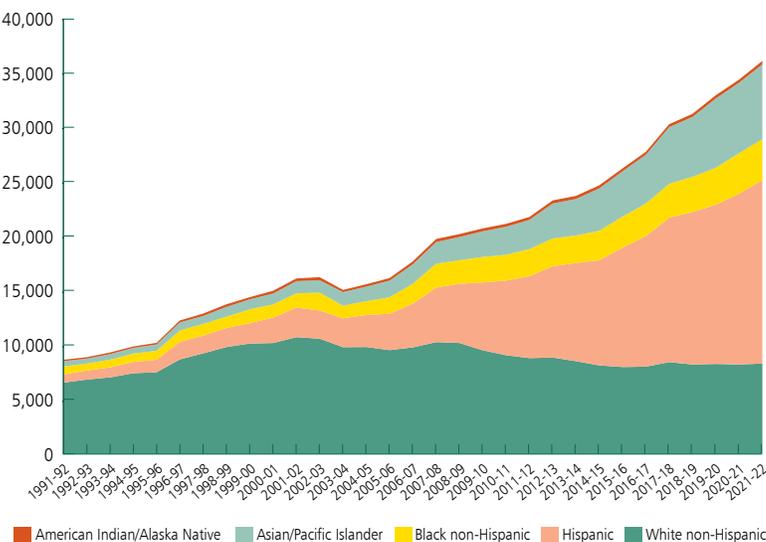


Figure 4. Nevada High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Hispanic graduates from public schools in Nevada numbered 2,934 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 9,644, a mind-boggling increase of 228.7 percent (Figure 4). Meanwhile, White non-Hispanics will likely see a sizeable decrease in their numbers over the same timeframe, with projections showing a decline from 9,988 in 2004-05 to 8,297 in 2014-15 (a decrease of 16.9 percent). Growth among graduates from Asian/Pacific Islander and Black non-Hispanic backgrounds is also projected to be dramatic, rising by about 2,500 (191.8 percent) and 1,500 (113.2 percent), respectively. Finally, American Indians/Alaska Natives are the only minority group not expected to at least double their number of graduates by 2014-15. This group had 226 graduates in 2004-05, a number expected to rise by nearly 60 within the subsequent decade.

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