

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

NEW JERSEY

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).

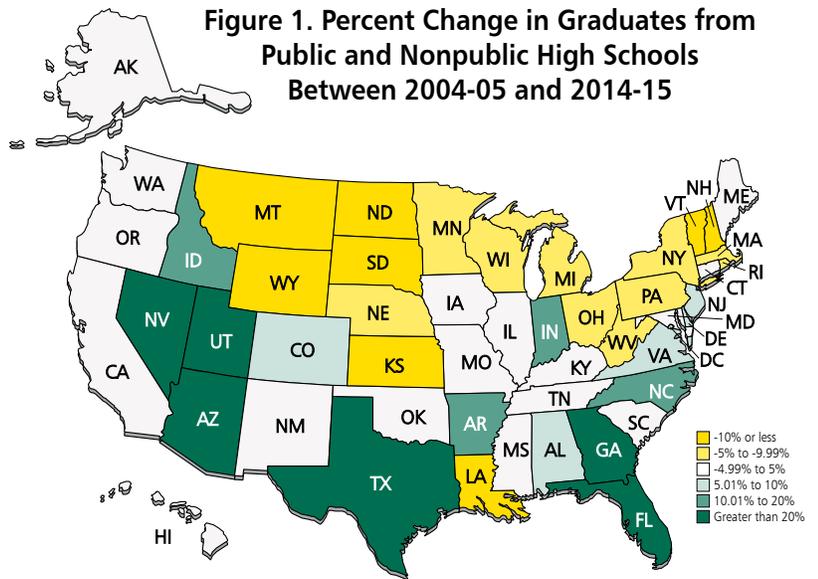
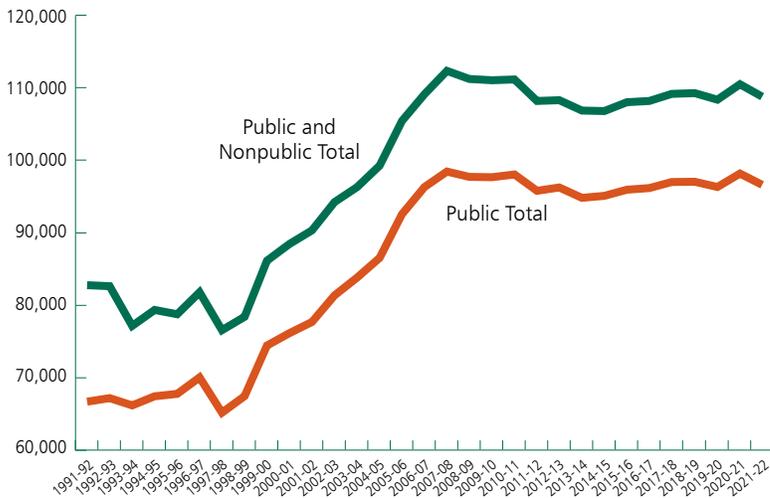


Figure 2. New Jersey High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



New Jersey produced nearly 20,000 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 25.1 percent. Projections indicate that the state's production of high school graduates will continue growing in the years ahead, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The state projects to have about 7,500 more high school graduates a decade after 2004-05, an increase of about 7.6 percent, although all the growth is expected to be over by 2007-08.

New Jersey experienced uneven growth in its production of high school graduates between 1991-92 and 2004-05, the last year for which actual data were available (Figure 2). That year, 86,502 students graduated from public high schools in the state, a number that was 19,833 higher than in 1991-92, representing an increase of 29.7 percent. Nonpublic schools in New Jersey graduate an estimated 12,746 graduates in 2004-05, about 800 more than a decade before. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 12 percent, on average.

Between 2004-05 and 2007-08, New Jersey's production of public high school graduates is expected to continue growing, adding nearly 12,000 in that short time (13.8 percent). But beyond 2007-08, New Jersey will join much of the rest of the nation as it enters a new period characterized by much more stagnant growth or declines in the production of high school graduates. After peaking at 98,465 in 2007-08, the state will see first a slow decline and then stabilization in the number of public high school graduates through the projections period, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. Public schools are expected to graduate just over 95,000 students in 2014-15, which represents a dip of 3.4 percent since 2007-08.

The racial/ethnic composition of New Jersey'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 69.3 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped to 62.9 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 55.3 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 New Jersey, as in other states, the big changes are the result of rapid growth in the number of Hispanic high school students and graduates. While immigration has contributed to the growth of these populations, 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. Projections indicate growth in other racial/ethnic groups as well.

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

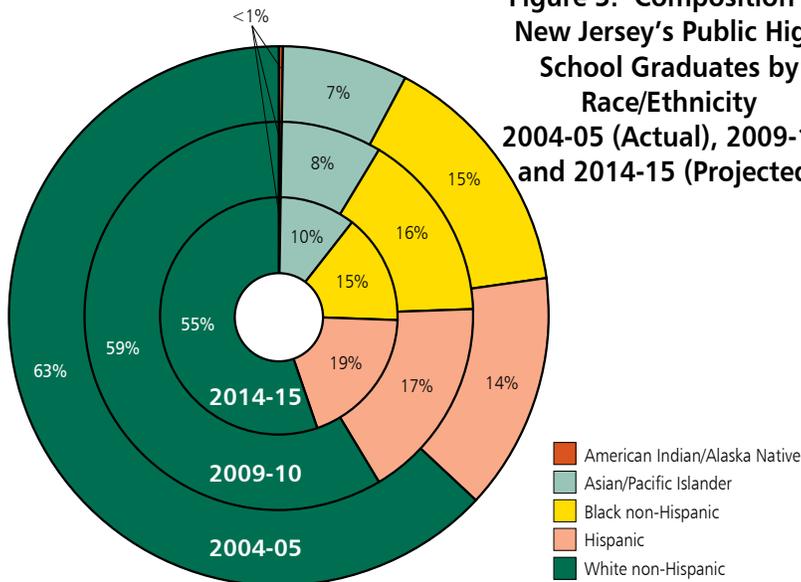
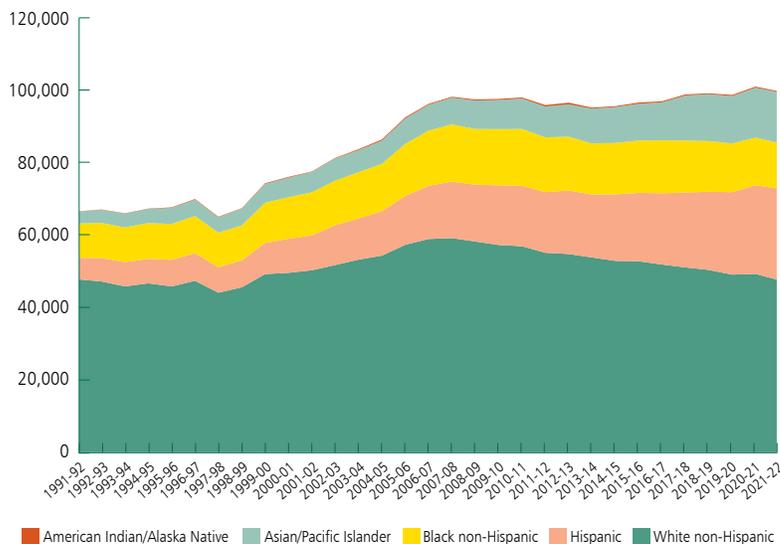


Figure 4. New Jersey High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state numbered 12,238 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number about 18,400, an increase of more than 50 percent (Figure 4). The number of Asian/Pacific Islander graduates is projected to climb by about 3,400 above its 2004-05 level of 6,452 (52.9 percent). Growth is also expected among graduates from Black non-Hispanic descent, whose number will climb by about 9 percent above 13,090, the number who graduated in 2004-05. Meanwhile, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates, after initial growth, is forecast to fall by nearly 1,500 (2.7 percent) from its 2004-05 level of 54,422. Finally, American Indian/Alaska Native graduates are expected to see little change from their 2004-05 level of 300.

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