

Knocking at the College Door

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

PENNSYLVANIA

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).

Pennsylvania produced about 22,500 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of about 18.6

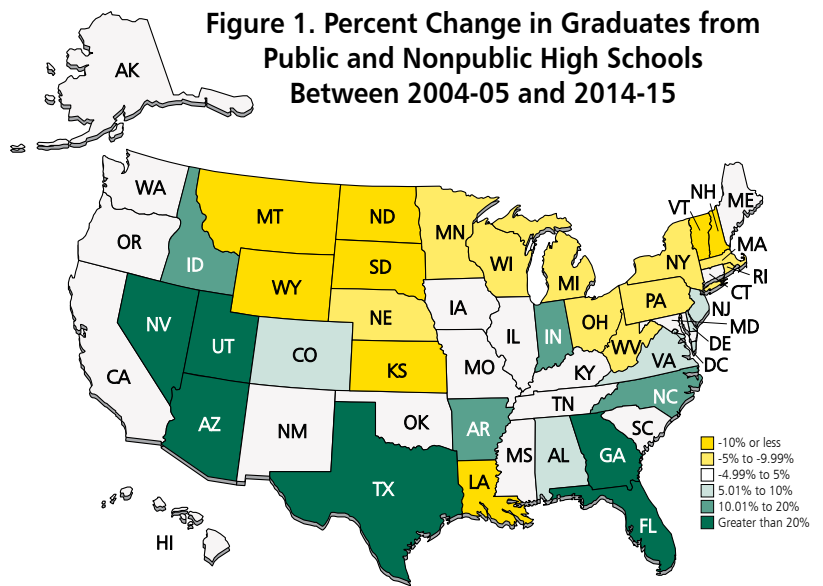
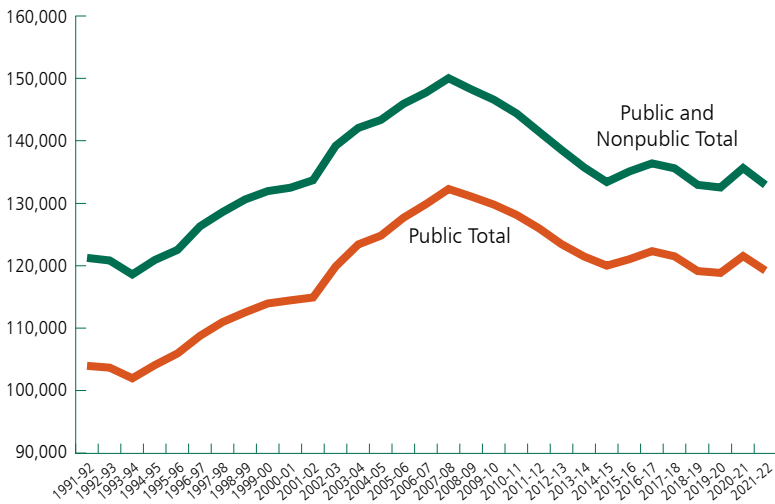


Figure 2. Pennsylvania High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



percent. Projections indicate that the state's number of graduates will grow though 2007-08 before beginning a sustained and substantial decline, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. Pennsylvania projects to produce about 6,600 more high school graduates in 2007-08 than it did in 2004-05, an increase equal to about 4.6 percent.

Pennsylvania saw steady growth in its production of high school graduates between 1993-94 and 2004-05, the most recent year of actual data from public schools (Figure 2). In 2004-05, 124,758 students graduated from public high schools in the state, 22,800 more graduates than were produced in 1993-94, representing growth of 22.3 percent. Nonpublic schools in the state added an estimated 18,673 in 2004-05, which was about 1,991 more than graduated in 1993-94. Of Pennsylvania's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 13 percent, on average, but that

share is expected to fall in the years ahead.

However, along with much of the rest of the nation, Pennsylvania is poised to enter a new period characterized by much more stagnant growth or declines in the production of high school graduates. After reaching a peak in 2007-08 at about 132,300, the state will see an uninterrupted decline in the number of public high school graduates lasting through 2014-15, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. During that timeframe, the number of public high school graduates is forecast to drop by nearly 12,300 (9.3 percent). Subsequently, projections indicate that production will hover around 120,000 through 2021-22.

The racial/ethnic composition of Pennsylvania's public high school graduating classes will continue to diversify over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 86.4 percent of the graduates from the state's public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped slightly to 81.2 percent. By 2014-15, the proportion of White non-Hispanics will have fallen to under 74.6 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 Pennsylvania, 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. In addition, Pennsylvania's graduates of Asian/Pacific Islander descent are also projected to add substantially to their number of graduates.

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

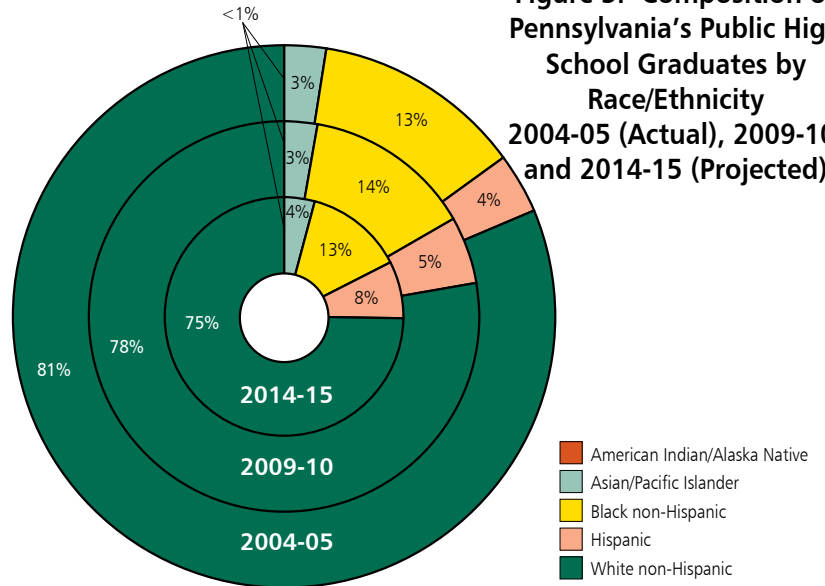
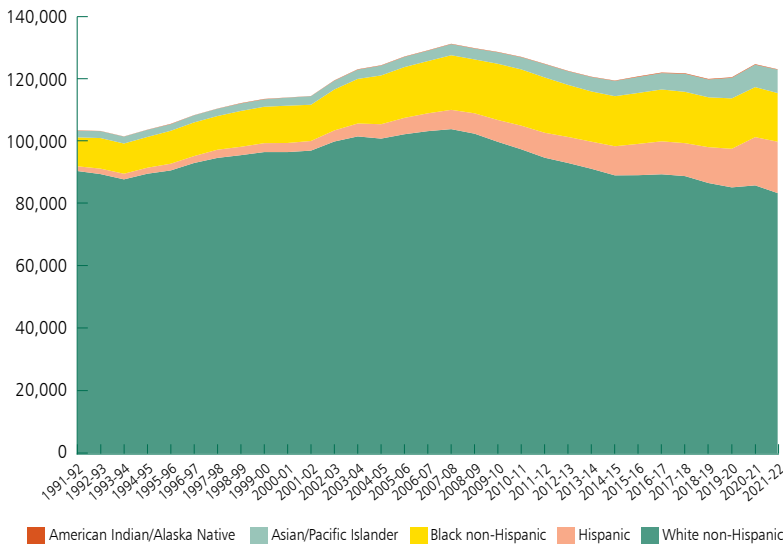


Figure 4. Pennsylvania High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state numbered 4,610 in 2004-05. Within a decade Hispanic graduates are projected to more than double to about 9,350 (Figure 4). Growth among Asians/Pacific Islanders will also be considerable over the same time span, rising by 55.6 percent over their 2004-05 level of 3,139. Black non-Hispanics, who accounted for 15,610 graduates in 2004-05, will see modest growth of about 2.7 percent by 2014-15. American Indians/Alaska Natives, who accounted for just 114 graduates in 2004-05, are projected to see growth of about 32 percent over the same span, though their share of the total graduating cohort will remain small. Meanwhile, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates will decrease by about 11.6 percent from its 2004-05 level of 101,285.

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