

Knocking at the College Door

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

CONNECTICUT

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.

Figure 1. Percent Change in Graduates from Public and Nonpublic High Schools Between 2004-05 and 2014-15

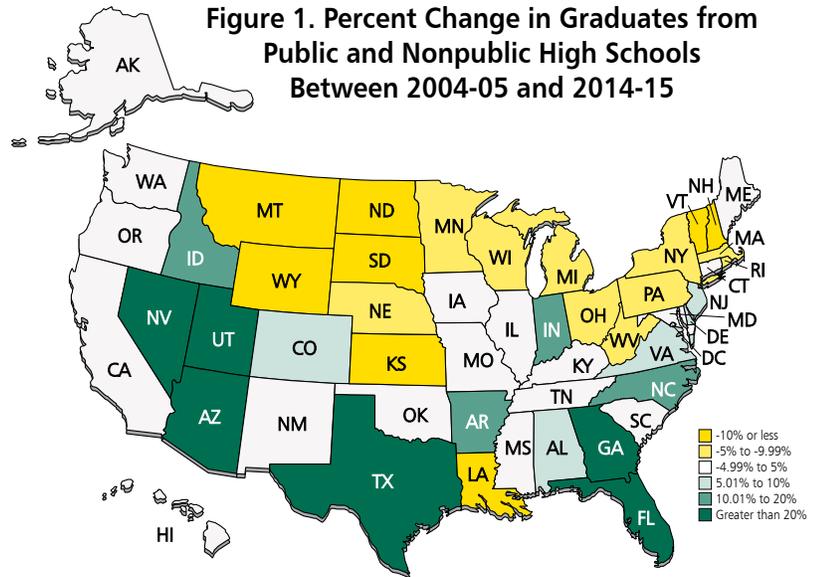
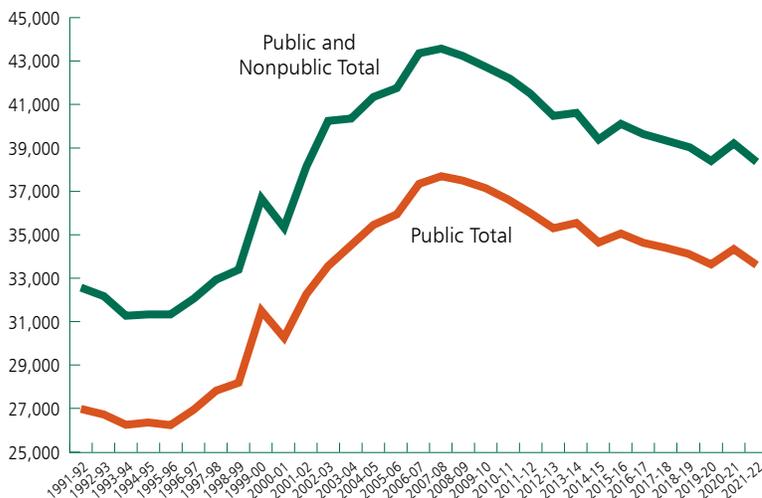


Figure 2. Connecticut High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1). Connecticut produced about 10,000 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 31.9 percent. Projections indicate the state will experience a decrease in its production of high school graduates starting in 2008-09, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. The state projects to have about 2,000 fewer high school graduates a decade after 2004-05, a decrease of about 4.8 percent.

Connecticut experienced mostly uninterrupted increases in its production of high school graduates between 1994-95 and 2004-05, the last year for which actual data were available (Figure 2). That year, 35,515 students graduated from the state's public high schools, a number that included 9,070 more graduates than were produced in 1994-95, which represented growth of 19.1 percent. Nonpublic schools contributed an estimated 5,899 graduates in 2004-05, almost 1,000 more than they produced a decade earlier; but their production is projected to decline in the

coming years. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 14 percent, on average, which is also forecast to decrease.

Along with much of the rest of the nation, Connecticut 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 43,624, Connecticut will see diminishing numbers of high school graduates for most years throughout the remainder of the projected period, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. Between 2004-05 and 2007-08, the number of high school graduates is forecast to climb by 5.4 percent, but between then and 2014-15, it is projected to decrease by 9.6 percent.

The racial/ethnic composition of Connecticut's public high school graduating class will continue to show diversification over the coming decade and more (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 79.3 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped to 74.6 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 dip to 68.4 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 Connecticut, 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 Connecticut's Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 2004-05 (Actual), 2009-10 and 2014-15 (Projected)

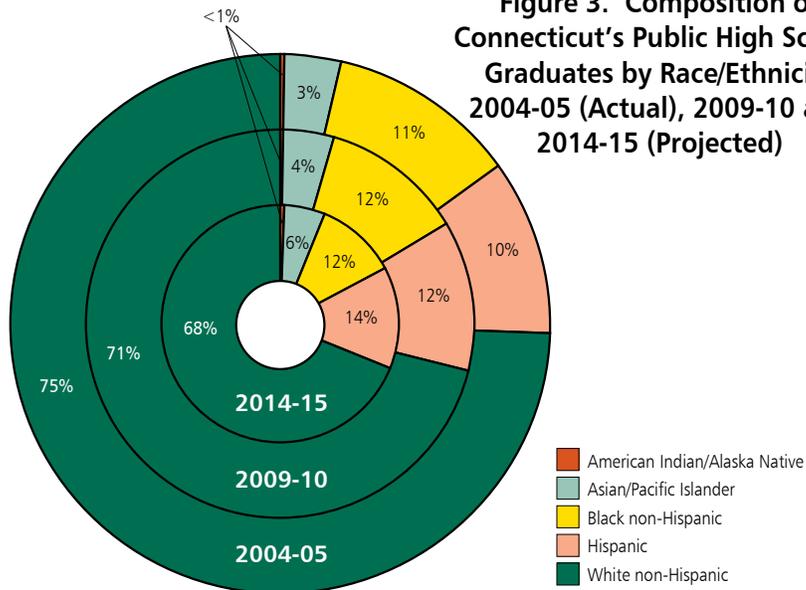
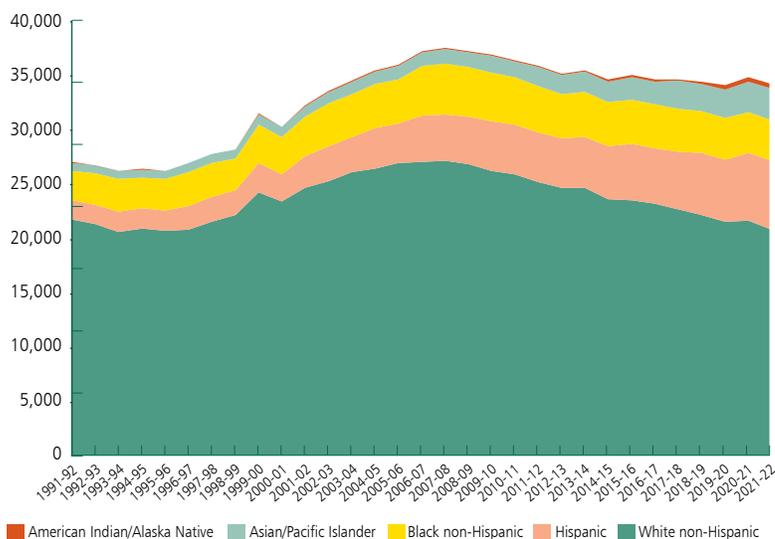


Figure 4. Connecticut High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Hispanic graduates from public schools in Connecticut numbered just 3,717 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 4,837, an increase of 30.1 percent (Figure 4). The number of Black non-Hispanics steadily increases until 2007-08 and then begins to decrease until 2021-22, our last projected year; their number in 2014-15 is projected to be about the same as it was in 2004-05, when it was 4,051. Meanwhile, White non-Hispanics will likely see their numbers fall rapidly, with projections showing a decline from 26,482 in 2004-05 to 23,701 in 2014-15, a 10.5 percent drop. Asians/Pacific Islanders are also forecast to see growth over the same period, at 63.8 percent, an increase of 747 graduates from the 2004-05 level of 1,172. Finally, American Indian/Alaska Native graduate numbers are expected to grow in most years throughout the projections; by 2014-15, they are projected to number 162, an increase over 2004-05 level of 74 percent.

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