

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

ALASKA

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

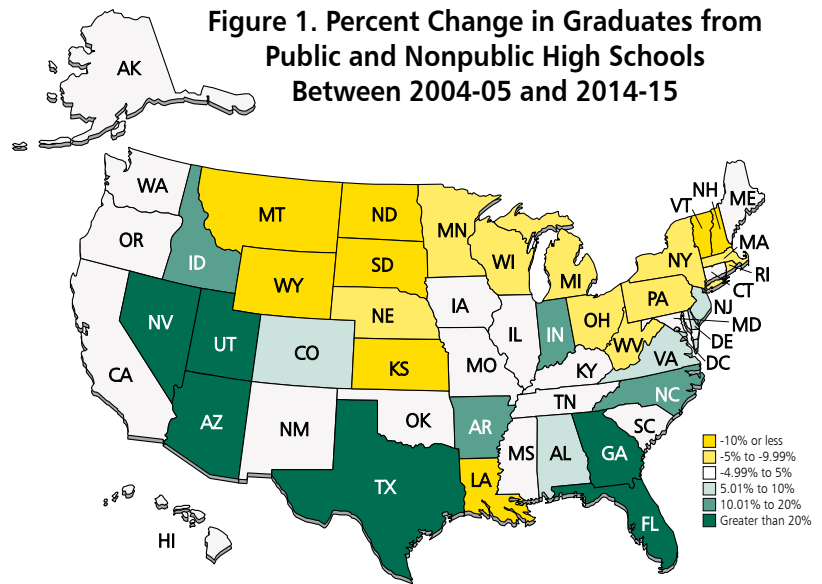
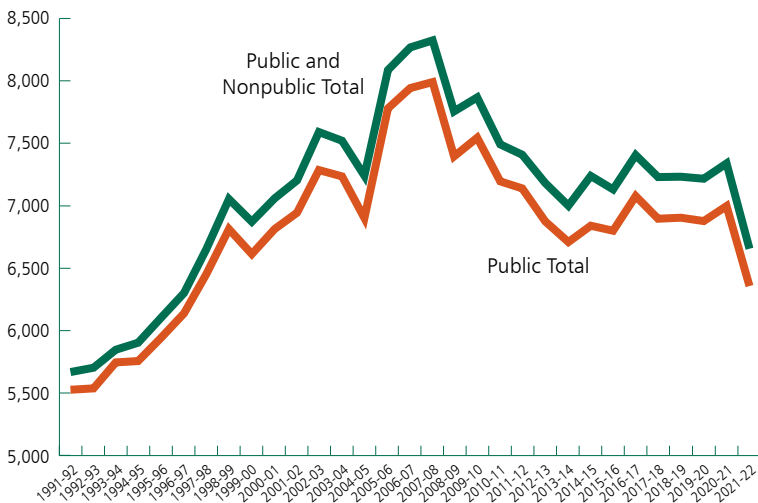


Figure 2. Alaska High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



1,374 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, representing growth of 24.8 percent. Nonpublic schools in the state

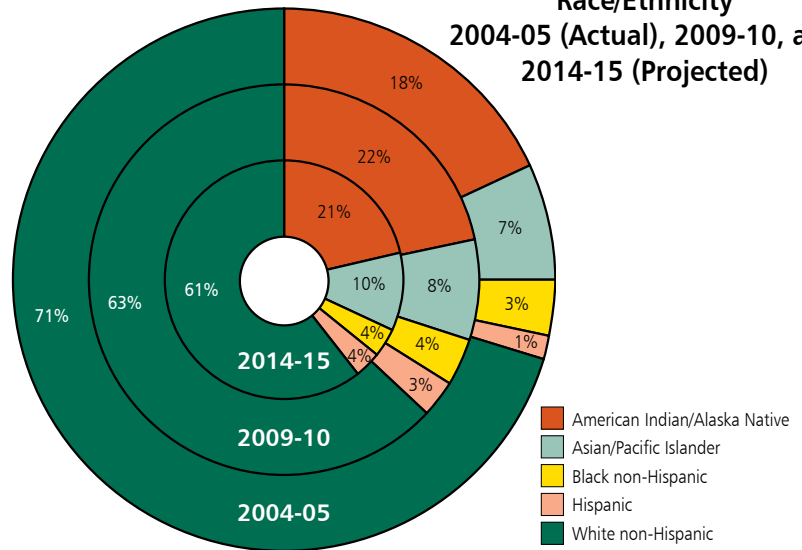
As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1). Alaska produced about 1,340 more graduates in 2004 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 22.7 percent, although the state experienced sporadic downturns in some years. Assuming that existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue, the state projects to produce about an equal number of high school graduates in 2014-15, although the intervening years will be somewhat unstable. The state's production of high school graduates will grow significantly through 2007-08, after which it will see general slippage punctuated by occasional increases over the subsequent six years.

Alaska was among the states with 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, 6,909 students graduated from public high schools in Alaska, a number that included

added an estimated 332 graduates in 2004-05, which itself was nearly two-and-a-half times more than graduated in 1991-92.

However, along with much of the rest of the nation, Alaska is poised to enter a new period characterized by much more stagnant growth in the production of high school graduates. After reaching a peak in 2007-08 at 8,327, Alaska will enter a period of diminishing numbers of high school graduates for most years through 2013-14, 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 15 percent, but between then and 2013-14, it is projected to slide back by a roughly equal amount. Beyond that, the number of graduates will be relatively stable until 2021-22, the last year projected, when a big drop is anticipated. Alaska's nonpublic sector grew dramatically between 1991-92 and 2004-05 but still only accounts for less than 5 percent of the state's high school graduates.

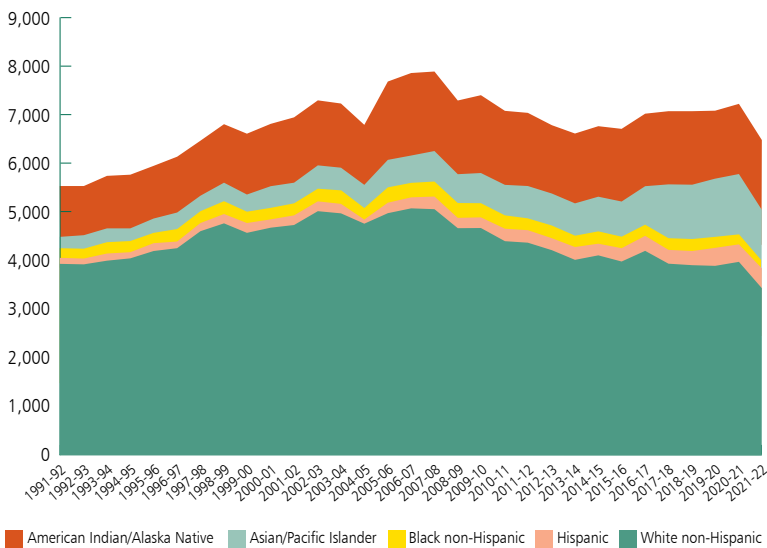
Figure 3. Composition of Alaska's Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 2004-05 (Actual), 2009-10, and 2014-15 (Projected)



The racial/ethnic composition of Alaska's public high school graduating classes will continue to show substantial diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 2004-05, White non-Hispanics accounted for 70 percent of the graduates from public high schools, but the subsequent decade in Alaska will see declines in their share of public high school graduates, reaching down to 60.8 percent by 2014-15.

The decreasing proportion of White non-Hispanic high school graduates is consistent with the experience of states all over the country. But whereas in most other states the sweeping 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, in Alaska the increase in the Hispanic population is not a significant factor. While the rate of Hispanics graduating from high school is rising sharply in Alaska, as elsewhere, their relatively low numbers are dwarfed by growth in the Asian/Pacific Islander

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



and American Indian/Alaska Native populations. (Alaska's population has a larger proportion of those who identify as American Indians/Alaska Natives than does any other state in the nation.) Substantial declines in the number of White non-Hispanic high school graduates are also an important cause of the shifting racial/ethnic composition.

Asian/Pacific Islander graduates from public schools in Alaska numbered 477 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 706, an increase of 47.9 percent (Figure 4). In 2004-05, 1,233 American Indians/Alaska Natives graduated from public high schools in the state; that amount is projected to grow to 1,448 by 2014-15, a climb of 17.4 percent. Meanwhile, White non-Hispanics will likely see their numbers fall, with projections showing a drop from 4,756 in 2004-05 to 4,110 in 2014-15, or a 13.6 percent decline.

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