

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

COLORADO

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.

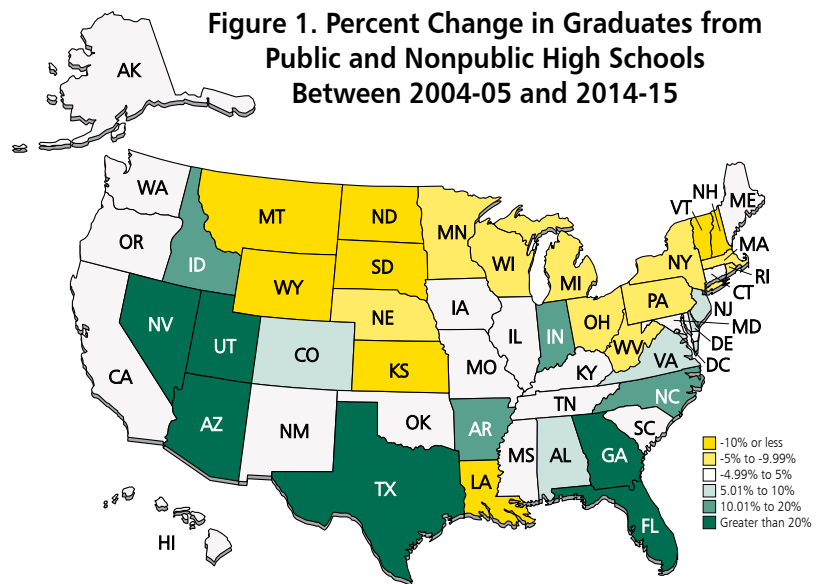
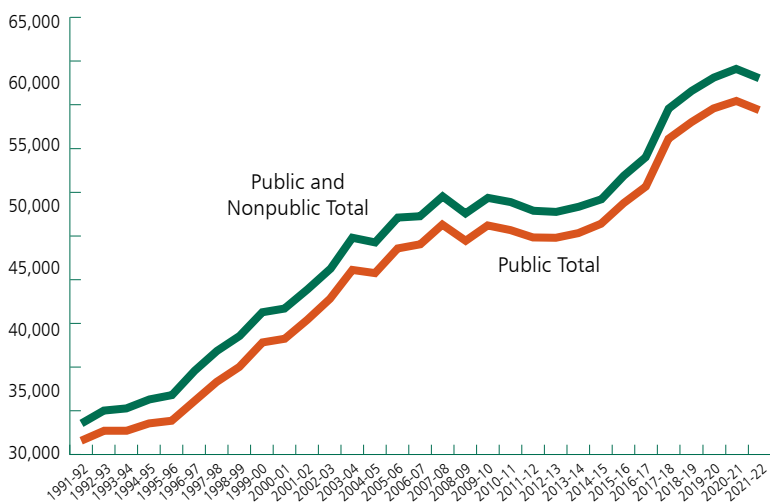


Figure 1. Percent Change in Graduates from Public and Nonpublic High Schools Between 2004-05 and 2014-15

Figure 2. Colorado 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). Colorado produced about 12,600 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 36.7 percent. Projections indicate that Colorado will continue growing, though at a slower pace. Assuming that existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue, the state projects to produce about 3,500 more high school graduates in the decade after 2004-05, an increase equal to less than 1 percent.

Colorado 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, 44,532 students graduated from public high schools in Colorado, a number that included 13,473 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, representing growth of 43.4 percent. Nonpublic schools in the state added an estimated 2,446 in 2004-05, over 1,000 more than graduated in 1991-92.

However, along with much of the rest of the nation, Colorado 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 50,660, Colorado will see little change in the number of high school graduates each year through 2012-13, 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 7.8 percent, but between then and 2012-13, it is projected to slide by about 2.5 percent. Growth will resume, beginning in 2013-14, with total graduates reaching nearly 61,000 at the end of the projected period. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 5 percent, on average.

The racial/ethnic composition of Colorado's public high school graduating classes will continue to show substantial diversification over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 78.9 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped to 74.1 percent. The next decade in Colorado will see further declines in the share of public high school graduates who are White non-Hispanic, with projections indicating it will reach 63.8 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 Colorado, 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 4. Colorado High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)

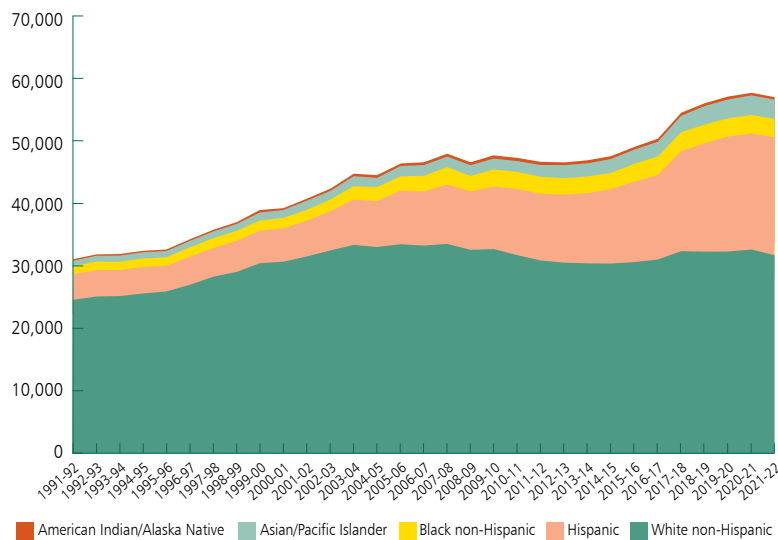
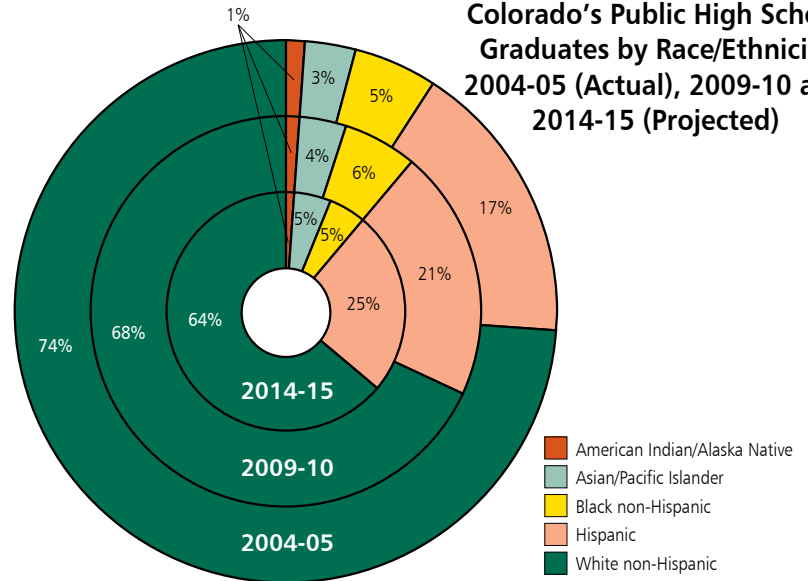


Figure 3. Composition of Colorado's Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 2004-05 (Actual), 2009-10 and 2014-15 (Projected)



Hispanic graduates from public schools in Colorado numbered 7,362 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 11,941, an increase of 62.2 percent (Figure 4). Meanwhile, White non-Hispanics will likely see their numbers fall over the same timeframe, with projections showing a drop from 32,999 in 2004-05 to 30,353 in 2014-15, an 8 percent decline. Asians/Pacific Islanders and Black non-Hispanics are also projected to see considerable growth over the same period in Colorado, at 45.1 percent and 17.3 percent, respectively. But these groups have a much smaller presence in the state.

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