

Knocking at the College Door

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

ARIZONA

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).

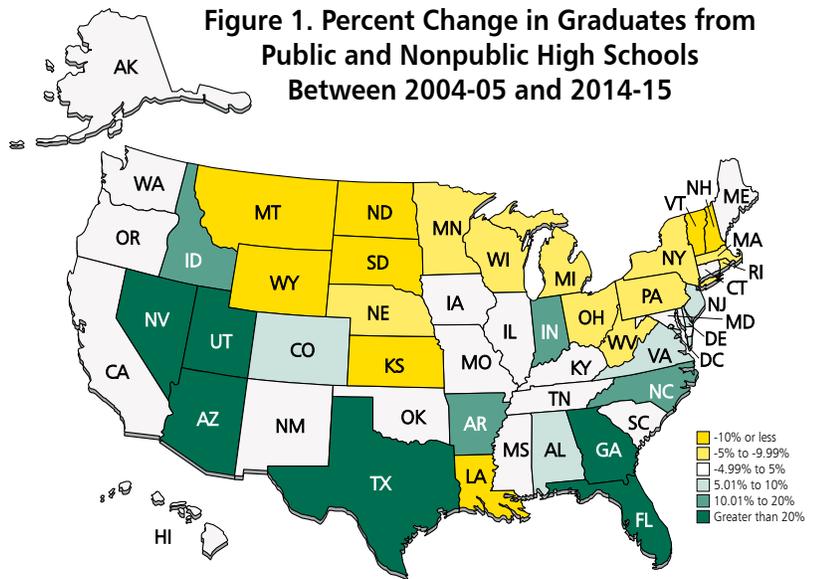
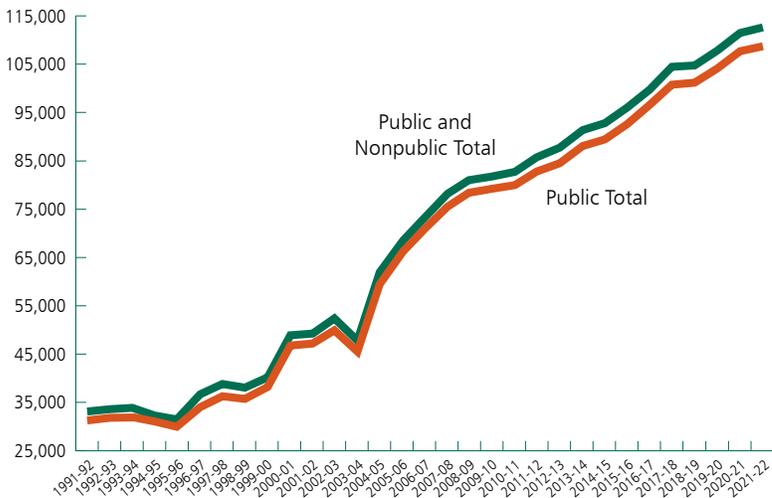


Figure 1. Percent Change in Graduates from Public and Nonpublic High Schools Between 2004-05 and 2014-15

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



Arizona produced nearly 30,000 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 92.4 percent. Projections indicate that Arizona will continue growing rapidly, at a pace that exceeds that of every other state. Assuming that existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue, the state projects to produce about 31,000 more high school graduates in the decade after 2004-05, an increase approximately equal to 50 percent.

Arizona was among the states with extremely 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, 59,498 students graduated from public high schools in Arizona, a number that included 28,234 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, representing growth of 90.3 percent. Nonpublic schools in the state added an estimated 2,430 in 2004-05, which itself was about 460 more than graduated in 1991-92.

Unlike states in much of the rest of the nation, Arizona is not expected to see its rapid growth in the production

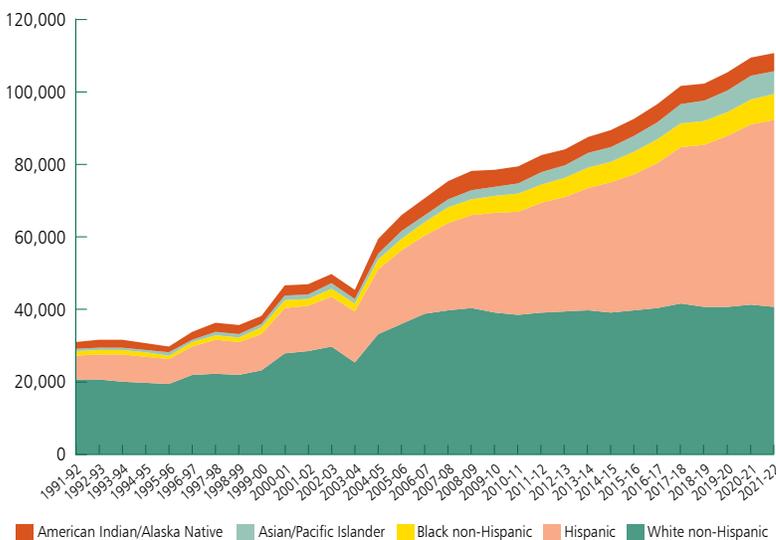
of high school graduates stagnate or decline. Instead, Arizona's growth is expected to continue uninterrupted throughout the projected period, and there appears to be no end in sight. These rapid increases will likely strain the state's capacity to provide equal opportunity to education, especially at the postsecondary level.

The racial/ethnic composition of Arizona'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-Hispanic graduates accounted for 64.8 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had fallen to 56.1 percent. The next decade in Arizona will see further declines in the share of public high school graduates who are White non-Hispanic, and the state's public high school graduating class is forecast to become "majority-minority" (when minority graduates outnumber White non-Hispanic graduates) in 2009-10. By 2014-15, the proportion of White non-Hispanic graduates will be approximately 44.1 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 Arizona, as in other states, the big changes are the result of rapid growth in the number of Hispanic high school students and graduates. However, unlike in most other states, in Arizona the numbers of White non-Hispanic graduates and those from all other races/ethnicities are also projected to rise. While international 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. Domestic in-migration accounts for a significant portion of the growth in other races/ethnicities as well, as Arizona is attracting new residents from other states.

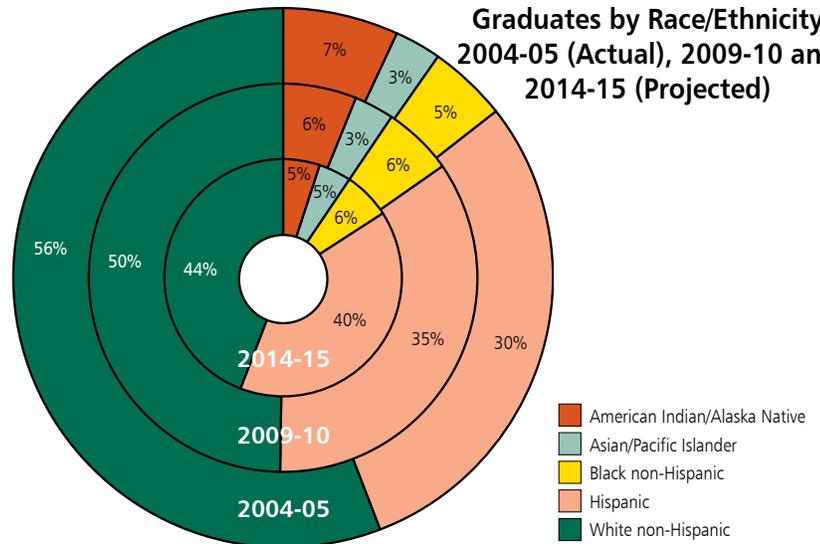
Hispanic graduates from public schools in Arizona numbered 17,616 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 35,683, an increase of 102.6 percent (Figure 4).

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



In Arizona this is not even the fastest rate of growth, as the number of Asian/Pacific Islander graduates is projected to climb by 155.3 percent over the same period. But because their total number in 2004-05 was relatively low, at 1,590 graduates, their growth, though explosive, does not have as significant an impact as that of the Hispanic population. Meanwhile, White non-Hispanics will likely see more modest growth in their numbers over the same timeframe, with projections showing an increase from 33,363 in 2004-05 to 39,380 in 2014-15, or 18 percent. With a 107.7 percent rate of increase, the growth of Black non-Hispanic graduates is also projected to exceed that of White non-Hispanics over the same period. Finally, American Indian/Alaska Native graduates numbered 4,139 in 2004-05. Projections indicate rapid growth initially, with an additional 1,285 graduates forecast in 2008-09, after which time graduates from that group will fall back slightly.

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



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