

Knocking at the College Door

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

ILLINOIS

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).

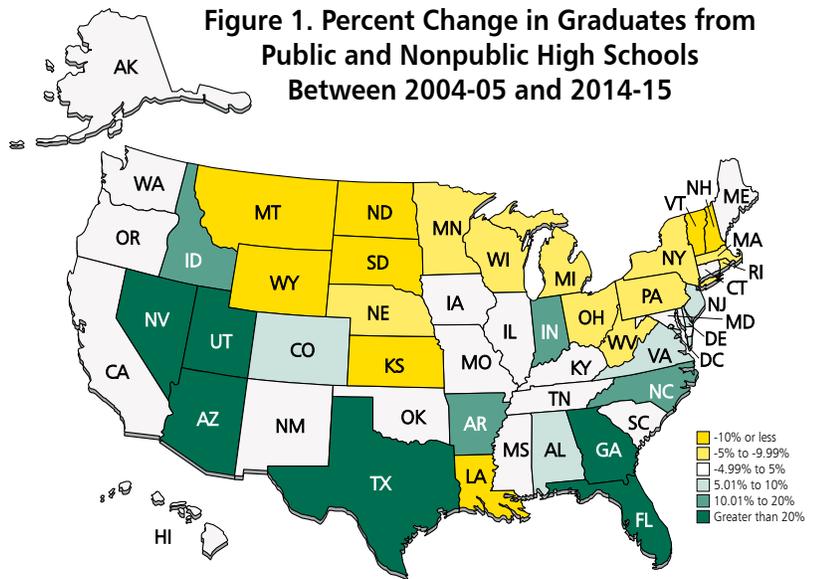
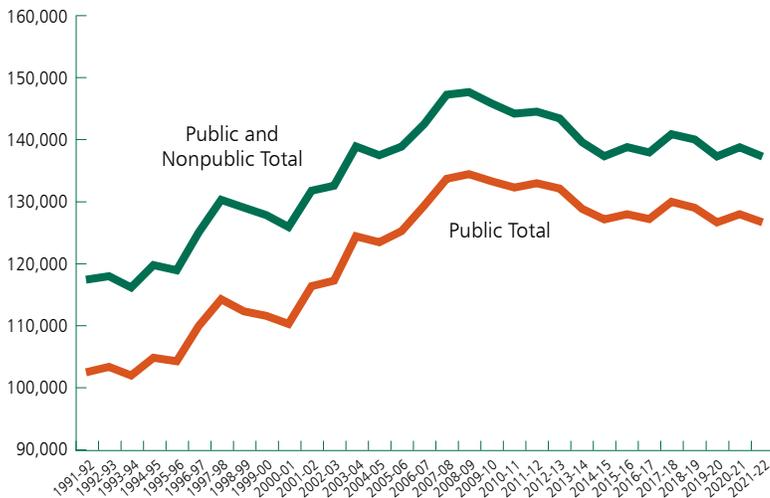


Figure 2. Illinois High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Illinois produced about 17,500 more graduates in 2004-05 than it did a decade earlier, an increase of 14.6 percent. Projections indicate that the state's production of graduates will continue growing in the near future before undergoing a period of decline. Assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue, the state projects to produce about the same number of graduates a decade after 2004-05 as it did that year.

Illinois experienced considerable, though uneven 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, 123,615 students graduated from public high schools in Illinois, 20,873 more graduates than were produced in 1991-92, representing growth of 20.3 percent. Nonpublic schools in the state added an estimated 13,942 in 2004-05, nearly 1,000 fewer than the number that graduated in 1991-92. Of the state's total number of high school graduates each year throughout the actual and projected timeframe, nonpublic schools

produced an estimated 12 percent, on average. But projections indicate that the production of graduates from nonpublic schools will decline considerably in the years ahead.

Along with much of the rest of the nation, Illinois is poised to enter a period characterized by much more stagnant growth in the production of high school graduates. After reaching a peak in 2008-09 at 134,495, the state will see its number of public high school graduates drop each year through 2014-15, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. Between 2004-05 and 2007-08, the number of public high school graduates is forecast to climb by almost 9 percent, but between then and 2014-15, it is projected to slide by about 5.3 percent. Thereafter, Illinois's projected number of public high school graduates will be relatively stable from one year to the next, at around 128,000.

The racial/ethnic composition of Illinois'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 73.4 percent of the graduates from public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had fallen to 67.9 percent. The next decade will see further declines in the share of public high school graduates who are White non-Hispanic, and by 2014-15 the proportion of White non-Hispanic graduates will be approximately 60.7 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 Illinois 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 declines in the number of White non-Hispanic graduates. 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.

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

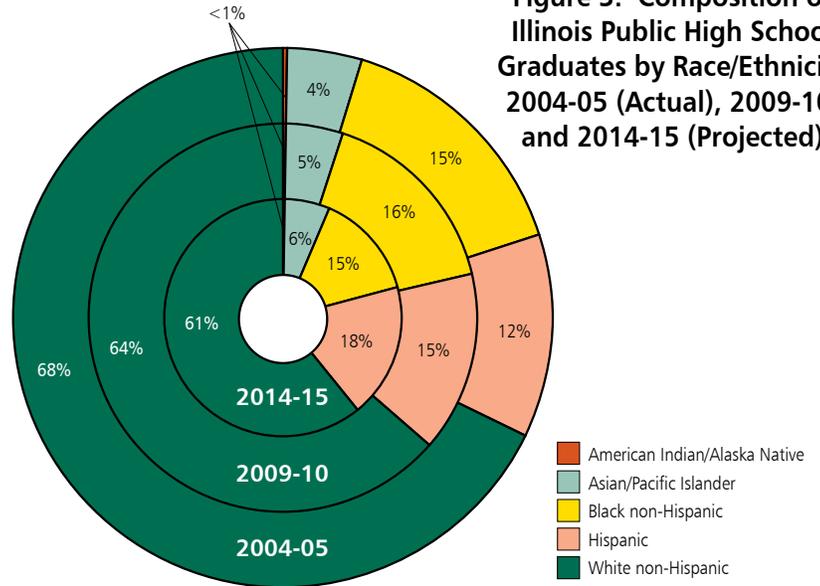
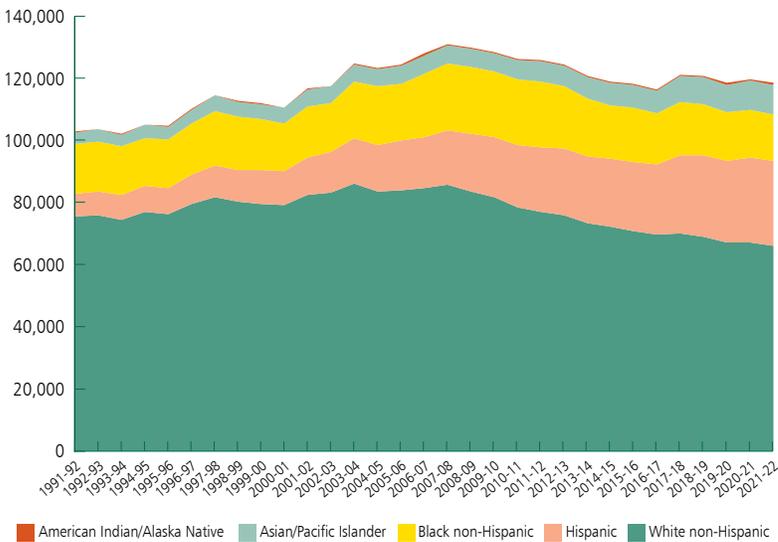


Figure 4. Illinois High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



Hispanic graduates from public schools in Illinois numbered 14,926 in 2004-05, but within a decade they are projected to number 21,834, an increase of 46 percent (Figure 4). Growth is also expected among graduates from other racial/ethnic groups. By 2014-15, Asians/Pacific Islanders are projected to climb by over 1,600 (29 percent) above their 2004-05 level of 5,514. Meanwhile, the number of White non-Hispanic graduates is forecast to decline from 83,613 to about 72,183 over the same span (a 14 percent decrease). After increasing between 2004-05 and 2007-08, the number of Black non-Hispanic graduates will be lower by almost 1,500 (8 percent) in 2014-15 than its 2004-05 level of 18,771. Finally, the number of American Indian/Alaska Native graduates will be little changed from 2004-05, when it was 363, although year-to-year percentage changes throughout the projections are expected to vary.

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