

# Changes in the Demographic Characteristics of Texas High School Graduates

2003 – 2009

## Key Findings

- The number of Texas high school graduates increased by 26,166 students, an 11 percent increase from 2003 to 2009.
- The proportion of students graduating with the Recommended high school diploma increased from 57 percent to 71 percent while the number graduating with the Distinguished high school diploma increased from seven percent to 12 percent.
- The proportion of men increased (from 49.0% to 49.9%) and the proportion of women decreased (from 51.0% to 50.1%) resulting in nearly equal percentages of men and women high school graduates in 2009.
- From 2003 to 2009, the proportion of White high school graduates decreased (from 49% to 42%) and the proportion of Hispanic graduates increased (from 34% to 40%).
- A larger percentage of the 2009 high school graduates were economically disadvantaged (38%) in the year they graduated than the 2003 graduates (31%).
- The average ACT and SAT scores of Texas high school graduates were relatively unchanged from 2003 to 2009.
- While the number of students earning dual credit increased by 138 percent from 2003 to 2009, only about one in four graduates earned any dual credit and less than one in 10 earned 12 or more credits.

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## 2003 – 2009

### Background

This report is the first in a series of research briefs designed to monitor the educational progress of students who graduate from Texas public high schools and enter higher education institutions in the state of Texas. The purpose of these reports is to identify year-to-year trends in how this student population has changed demographically, how well they are prepared for college, how many enroll in Texas higher education institutions, their academic performance in the first two years of college, and how many eventually earn a certificate, Associate's, or Bachelor's degree.

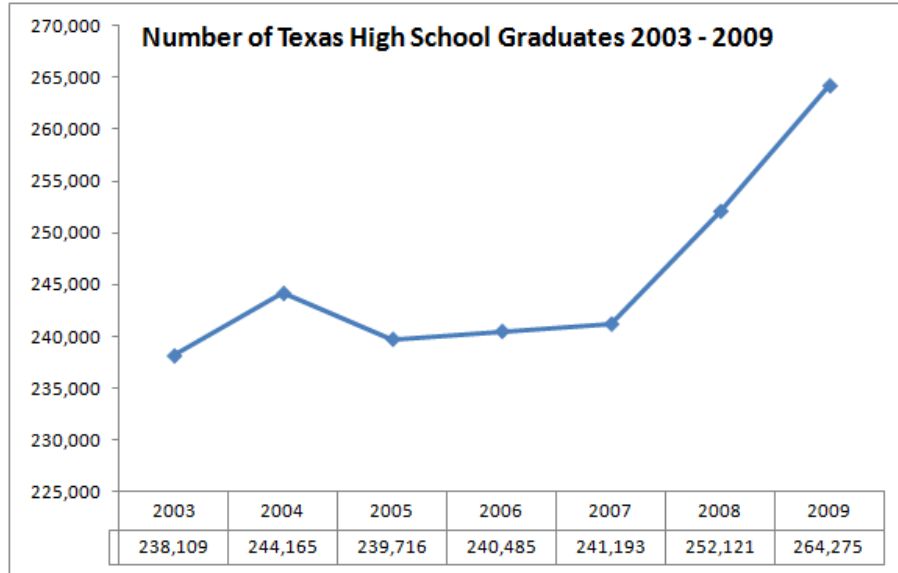
The research reported here is based on seven cohorts of students who graduated from Texas public high schools between 2003 and 2009. Data on Texas public high school graduates from the Texas Education Agency were combined with dual credit data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, SAT test score data from the College Board, and ACT test score data from ACT, Inc., to produce this report. Average ACT and SAT scores were calculated for high school graduates for a given year rather than all test takers.

### Questions

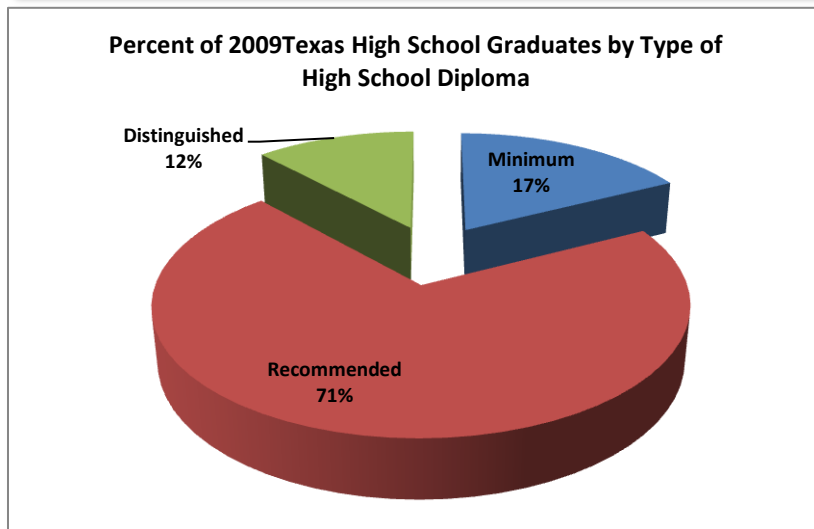
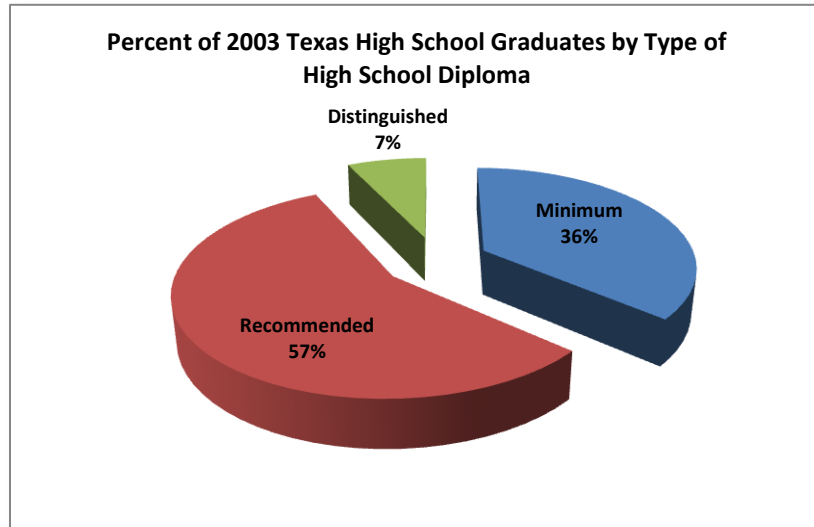
1. How has the number of students graduating from Texas public high schools changed from 2003 to 2009?
2. How has the number of students earning the Minimum, Recommended and Distinguish types of high school diplomas changed?
3. How has the demographic profile of Texas high school graduates changed over time with respect to gender, ethnicity, and family economic status?
4. Has 'readiness for college', as measured by standardized admissions test scores, changed?
5. Has the number of student earning dual credits and the number of dual credits earned changed from 2003 to 2009?

## Results

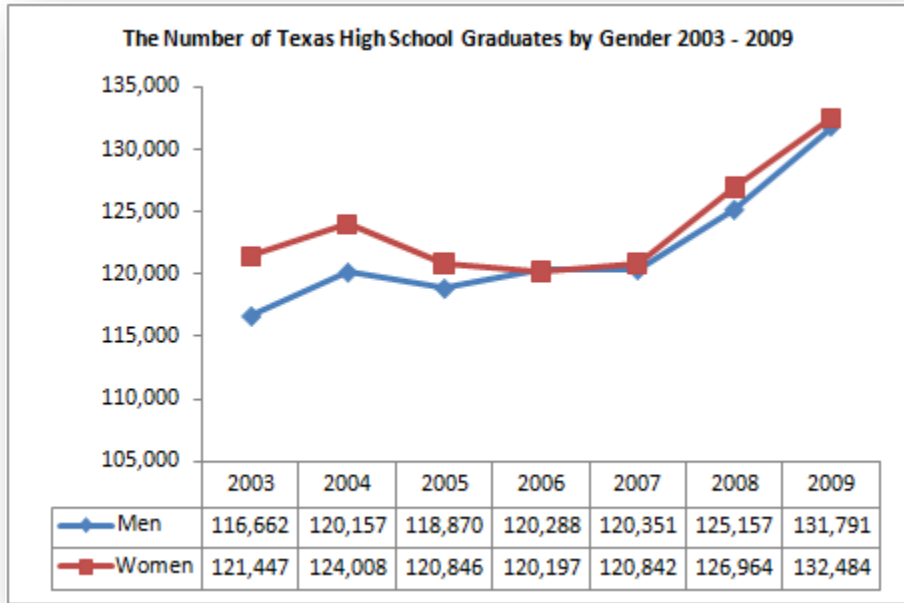
- The number of Texas high school graduates increased by 11 percent from 2003 to 2009 with most of the increase occurring in 2008 and 2009.



- The types of high school diplomas earned by Texas high school graduates changed substantially from 2003 to 2009. The percentage fulfilling the requirements for the 'Minimum' diploma declined from 36 percent to 17 percent while the percentage for the 'Recommended' diploma increased from 57 percent to 71 percent. The percentage receiving a 'Distinguished' diploma increased from seven percent to 12 percent.

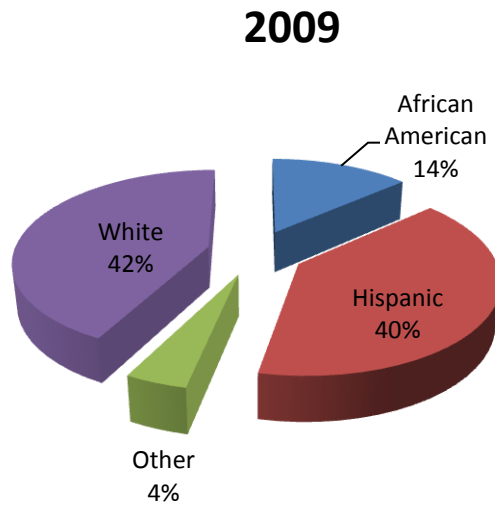
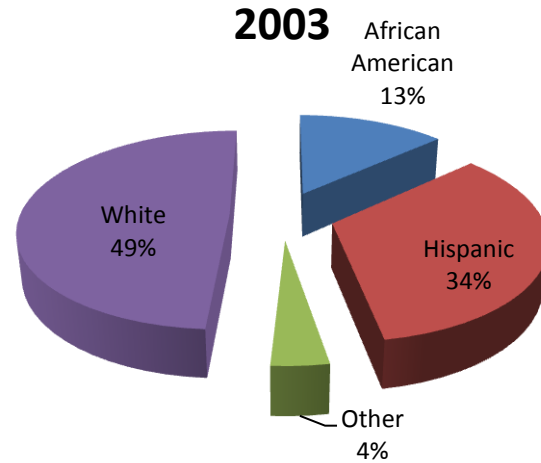


- In 2003, more of the high school graduates were women than men (51% v. 49%), but in 2009, nearly equal percentages of women and men graduated from high school (50.1 v. 49.9).

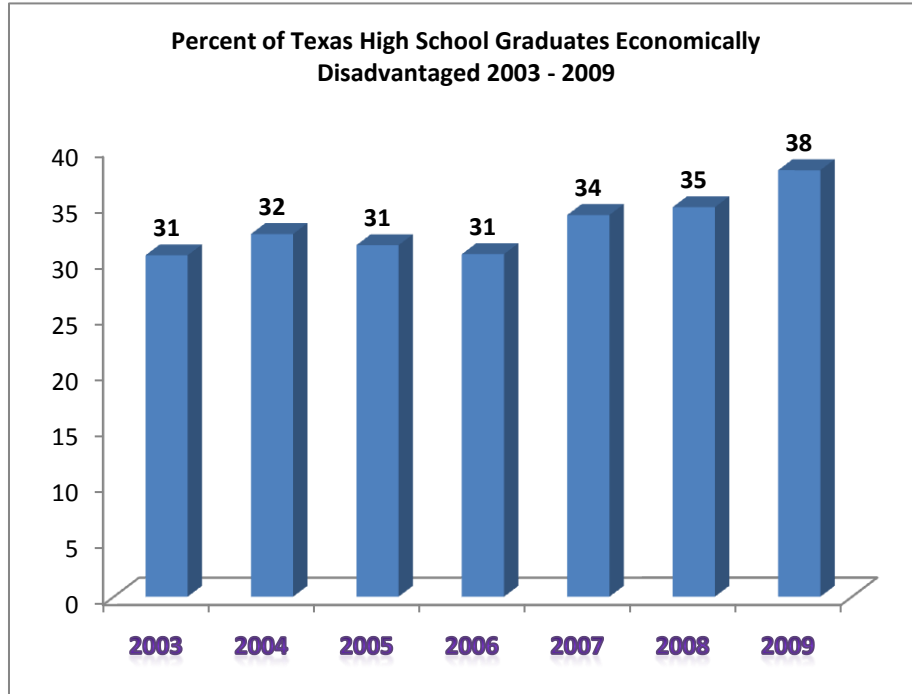


- The ethnic composition of Texas high school graduates changed dramatically from 2003 to 2009. More of the high school graduates were Hispanic (34% v. 40%) and fewer were White (49% v. 42%).

### Ethnic Composition of Texas High School Graduating Classes 2003 versus 2009



- In 2009, 38 percent of the Texas high school graduates were classified as economically disadvantaged in the year they graduated, up from 31 percent in 2003.

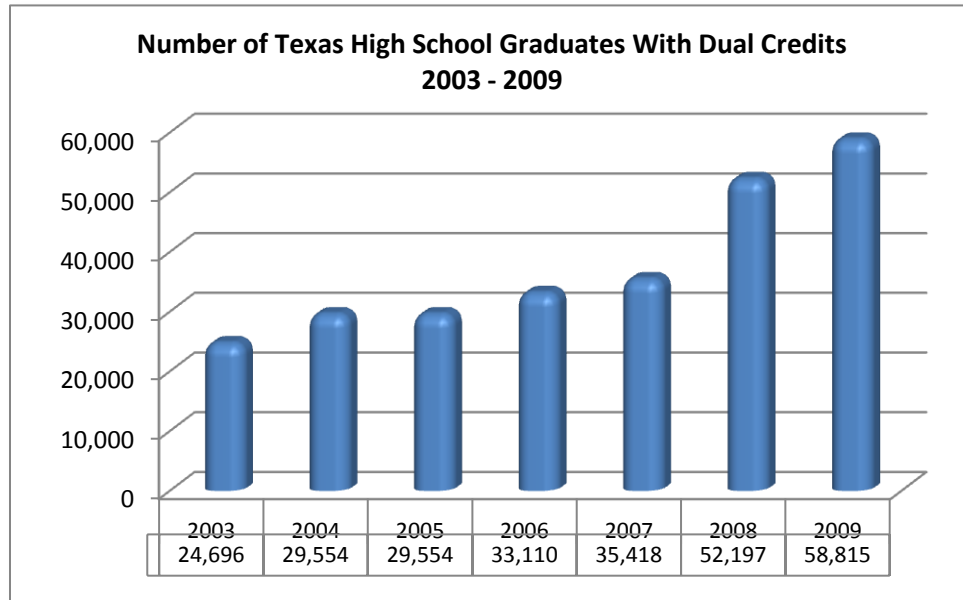


- The mean SAT and ACT scores increased slightly from 2003 to 2009.

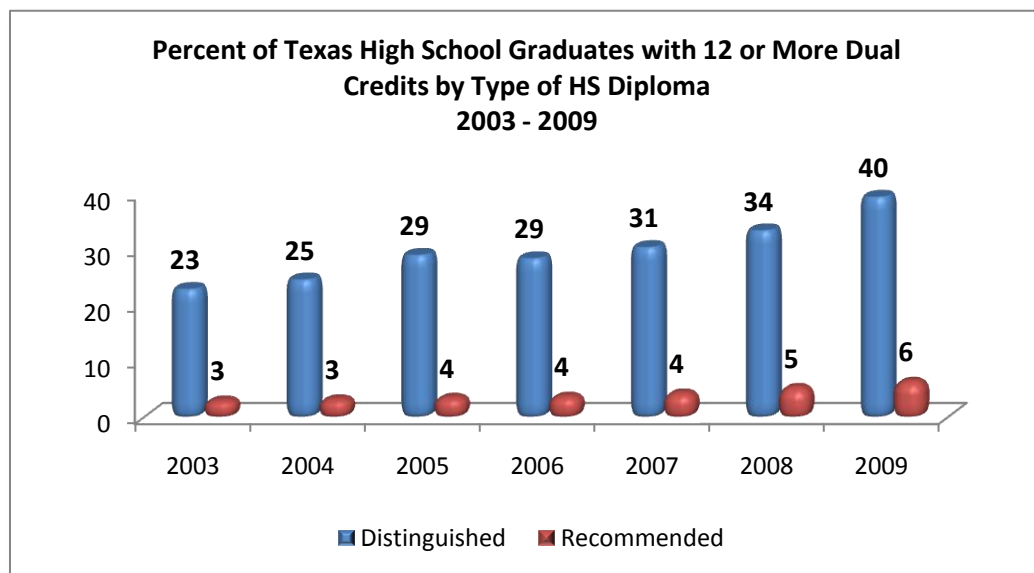
**Mean SAT and ACT Admission Test Scores of Texas High School Graduates  
2003 - 2009**

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
SAT	989	989	994	993	995	994	992
ACT	19.9	20.1	20.1	20.3	20.2	20.5	20.5

- The number of students earning dual credit while enrolled in high school increased by 138 percent from 2003 to 2009.



- The percentage of students earning more than 12 dual credits varied substantially by type of high school diploma received. Students with the Distinguished high school diploma who earned more than 12 dual credits increased from 23 to 40 percent while students with a Recommended diploma earning dual credits increased from three to six percent.





## Summary

The demographic profile of Texas high school graduates has changed. First, more students graduated in 2009 than 2003, an 11 percent growth over seven years. As a result of educational policy changes, we noted a significant shift in the type of high school diploma earned. Most of the shift resulted from more students earning the Recommended diploma and fewer students earning the Minimum. The percent earning the Distinguished diploma increased from seven to 12 percent. Interestingly, this shift in the type of diplomas earned did not have significant impact on how well students were prepared for college; the ACT and SAT scores changed very little over the same time period.

Other changes occurred in the demographic profile of Texas high school graduates. There was a gradual shift in the gender representation among graduates to point where there were nearly identical numbers of men and women graduating from Texas public high schools in 2009.

Two other demographic changes were more pronounced. The number of students who were economically disadvantaged in the year they graduated increased from 31 percent to 38 percent. For the time being, this shift may have important implications for the ability of students to pursue higher education. The second significant shift in the demographic profile was the increase in Hispanic students and a corresponding decrease in White students. The number of African American and students of 'other' ethnic categories remained relatively unchanged.

Finally, there has been a clear and significant change in the number of students who earn dual credit while in high school. From 2003 to 2009, the number of students who earned dual credit increased from nearly 25,000 to almost 59,000, a 138 percent increase. However, most students earn relatively few dual credits. In 2009, slightly more than 12,000 students or about six percent of the nearly 187,000 students who earned a Recommended high school diploma earned 12 or more dual credits, slightly less than one semester of college credit. Another 12,000 students who earned the Distinguished high school diploma earned 12 or more credits, but they represented about 40 percent of the 31,000 students with this type of diploma. Overall, less than one-fourth of all 2009 high school graduates earned dual credit and less than one student in 10 earned as much as a full semester's worth of college credit.