

**HIGHER EDUCATION: ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

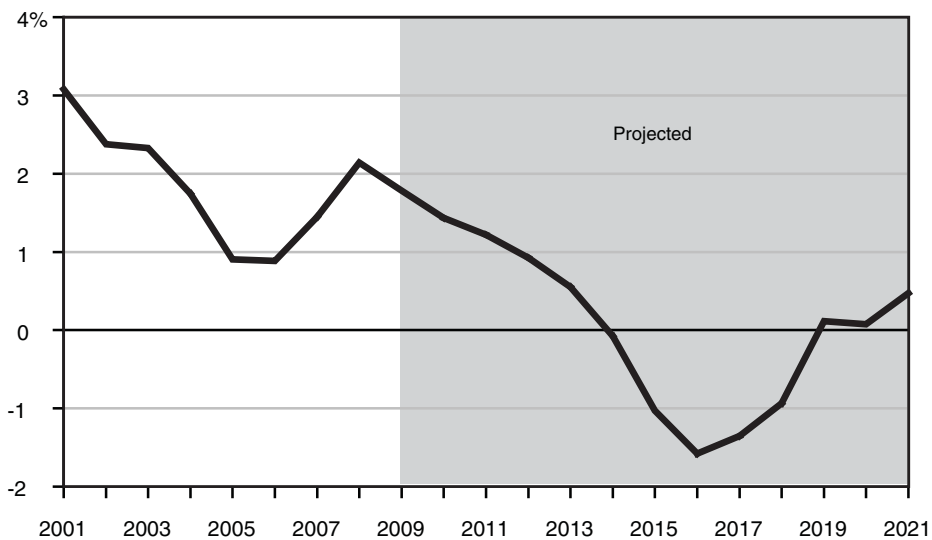
## How Fast Is the College-Age Population Growing?



### College-Age Population Starting to Slow; Will Soon Decline

- As shown in the figure, annual growth in the college-age population has varied between about 0.9 percent and 3.1 percent since 2000, averaging about 2 percent per year.
- Growth in the college-age population is projected to start slowing in 2009, with the population actually shrinking in about five years. As a result, the total college-age population a decade from now will be slightly less than it is today.
- California’s colleges and universities also enroll students older than traditional college age. The state’s population of 25- to 44-year olds is expected to grow modestly over the next decade, with average annual growth of about 0.7 percent.

**Annual Change in Number of 18- to 24-Year Old Californians**

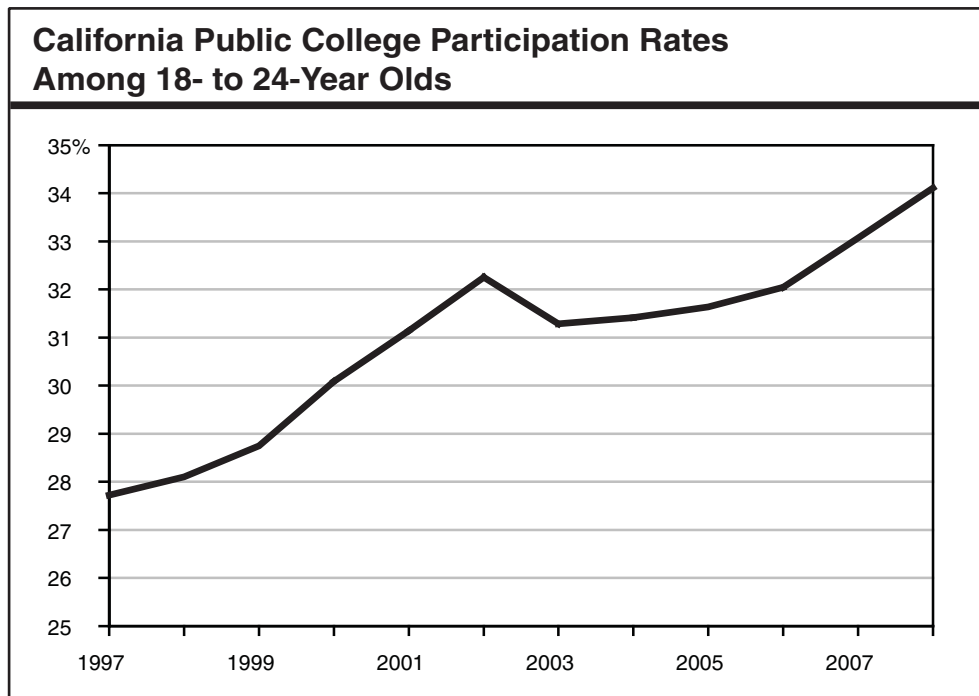


## How Fast Is the College-Age Population Growing? *(Continued)*



### Actual Enrollment Levels Depend on Participation Rates

- While population is a major determinant of college enrollment levels, actual enrollment depends on the percentage of eligible students who choose to participate.
- College participation is influenced by a number of factors, including cost, available employment opportunities, and the capacity of higher education institutions.
- As shown in the figure, college-age participation rates increased significantly through 2002, and started to increase again in the last few years. Given the forecast for declining population growth described on the previous page, future enrollment growth would only occur with further increases in participation rates.
- Although the size of the college-age population in California is not expected to change over the next decade, subgroups within the population will change. The rapidly growing groups will mostly be those with traditionally low participation rates such as Latinos. Other things being equal, this would tend to reduce overall participation rates.



This is one of a series of issue briefs examining important questions about higher education funding in California. For more information on this topic, or to request other briefs from this series, contact the Legislative Analyst's Office Higher Education section at (916) 445-4656, or visit our Web site at [www.lao.ca.gov](http://www.lao.ca.gov).