



Lexey Swall for The Pew Charitable Trusts

Philadelphia 2020

State of the City

Overview

At the start of 2020, Philadelphia continued to be largely a tale of success, expanding upon years of economic progress and demographic change. But the rise in violent crime had become a central element in the city's story, with the potential to change Philadelphia's positive overall trajectory—especially when combined with its ongoing challenge of high poverty.

How the picture will change in the wake of the far-reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic remains to be seen. Through 2019, Philadelphia remained a city where people wanted to live, work, and visit. Its population rose for the 13th consecutive year, albeit marginally, reaching 1,584,064. That's a strong gain of more than 95,000 since 2006, when the population bottomed out after a half-century of decline—but still nowhere near the peak of more than 2 million in 1950.

The share of Philadelphians with a college degree has also grown in recent years—reaching 30.9 percent overall and 45.1 percent among adults ages 25-34, making the city more attractive to would-be employers.

In concert with rising educational attainment, the local economy continued to expand until the pandemic arrived. In 2019, the job count stood at 741,200, the most since 1990, a rise that came despite the sudden closures of two large, long-standing private employers: Hahnemann University Hospital and the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery. Key economic sectors were also flourishing, including the education, medical, and leisure and hospitality industries. And the city's median household income of \$46,116—though still lagging behind other U.S. cities—rose by a healthy margin in the past few years.

In addition, unemployment in 2019 was historically low at 5.2 percent, although it remained higher than the rates in the rest of the metropolitan area, many other cities, and the nation as a whole. In recent years, the drop in Philadelphia's unemployment rate and the increase in the number of jobs have both come at a faster pace than they have nationally, underscoring the city's economic strength.

This year, however, as a massive public health emergency threatens all of that, the rise in violent crime is adding to the city's woes.

In Philadelphia, major crimes increased marginally for the second year in a row in 2019, after falling in each of the previous seven years. But violent crimes rose 7.2 percent, the first upsurge since 2015.

And the number of homicides climbed to 356 in 2019, or nearly one per day, a figure essentially unchanged from the previous year but up nearly 45 percent since 2013. In the early months of 2020, the homicide rate was on track to be even higher.

The rise in crime comes at a time when concern about public safety is already one of the main reasons people move out of Philadelphia, according to a [poll](#) conducted by The Pew Charitable Trusts, and when many other cities are seeing a drop in homicides. In 2019, Philadelphia's rate—measured as the number of homicides per 100,000 residents—was still lower than those in Baltimore, Detroit, Cleveland, and Washington. But it was higher than the rate in Chicago, a city that has received a lot of national media attention for its gun violence over the past decade.

Philadelphia officials have attributed the increase in homicides, in part, to opioid misuse, which has affected neighborhoods throughout the city and is itself a significant cause of death in Philadelphia. Indeed, preliminary numbers suggest that approximately 1,100 drug overdose deaths occurred in 2019 (about as many as in 2018),

a figure more than three times greater than the homicide total and still among the largest in the nation on a per capita basis.

The backdrop to much of this, of course, is Philadelphia's enduring challenge with entrenched poverty, which city officials have long seen as Philadelphia's core problem. At 24.5 percent, the share of city households living below the federal poverty line has decreased slightly from previous years but remains the highest of the 10 largest U.S. cities. And the nearly 380,000 Philadelphians living in poverty serve as a sobering reminder of the magnitude of the situation.

For more than a decade, Philadelphia has netted steady gains in jobs and population—in a way that hasn't happened since the 1940s. But the concerns over public safety could endanger that progress. And any potential effects of the current COVID-19 situation are still unknown.

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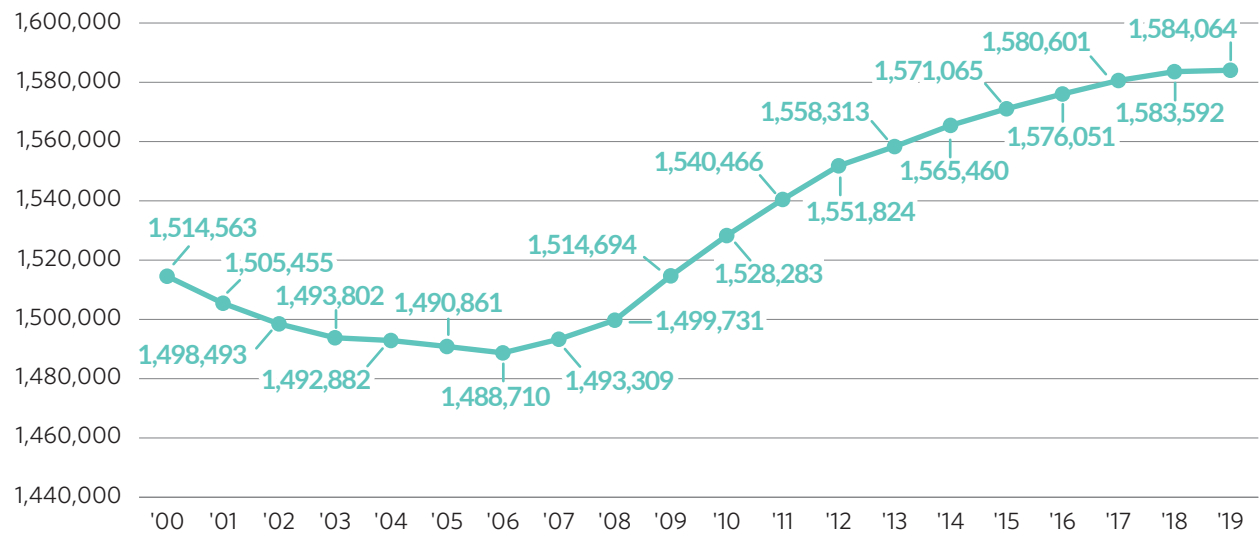
Project website: pewtrusts.org/philaresearch

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Figure 1
Portrait of the City

Population	1,584,064	Percentage of adults who are:	Total housing units	688,846
Percentage of residents who are:		Married	Percentage of units listed as:	
Male	47%	Never married	Vacant	12%
Female	53%	Divorced or separated	Occupied	88%
Younger than 20	25%	Widowed	Percentage of units built before 1939	43%
Ages 20-34	26%	Percentage of single-parent households	Median monthly rent	\$1,032
Ages 35-54	24%		Percentage of units:	
Age 55 or older	25%	Median household income	Owned by occupant	53%
Black or African American	40%	\$46,116	Rented	47%
Non-Hispanic white	34%	Percentage of households with annual incomes of:	Where residents lived in the previous year:	
Hispanic or Latino	15%	Less than \$35,000	Same house	86%
Asian	7%	\$35,000 to \$74,999	Different house in Philadelphia	9%
Other	4%	\$75,000 to \$99,999	Somewhere else in the U.S.	4%
Percentage of residents who:		\$100,000 or more	Abroad	1%
Were born in Pennsylvania	64%	Percentage of population below poverty level	Percentage of residents without health insurance	7%
Were born in other states	17%	25%		
Were born in Puerto Rico or another U.S. territory	4%	Percentage of households with:		
Were foreign-born	15%	No vehicles available		
Speak a foreign language at home	24%	Two or more vehicles available		
Percentage of adult residents who:		A computer at home		
Graduated from college	31%	Broadband internet service		
Did not graduate from high school	14%	Percentage of workers employed by:		
		Private sector		
		Government agencies		
		Their own businesses		

Figure 2
Philadelphia Population, 2000-19

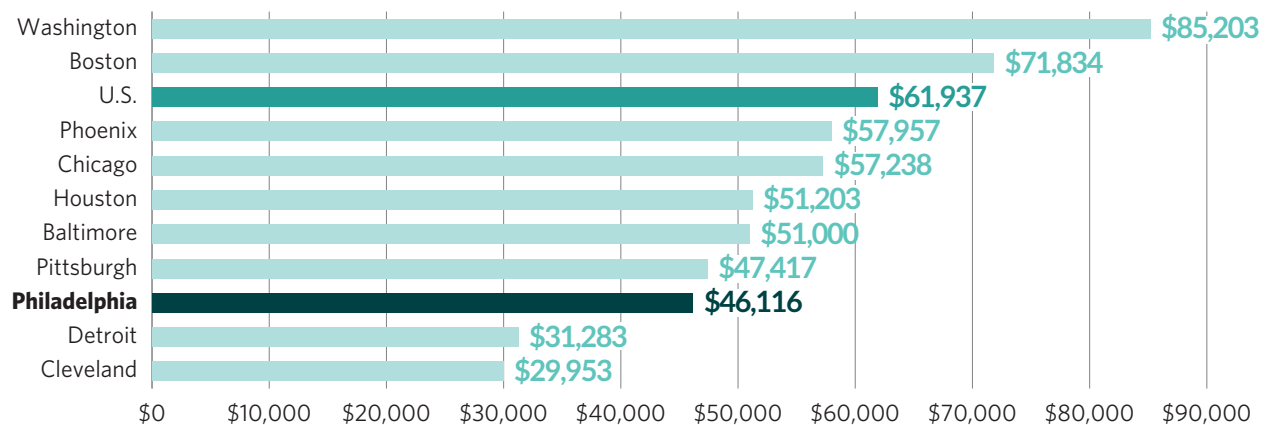


Philadelphia's population rose for the 13th straight year in 2019, bringing the total increase to more than 95,000 since 2006. For the past few years, population growth has been relatively modest; in 2019, the annual increase was fewer than 500 residents.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, "2000-2010 Intercensal Estimates"; U.S. Census Bureau, "Population and Housing Unit Estimates," 2011-19

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Figure 3
Median Household Income, 2018



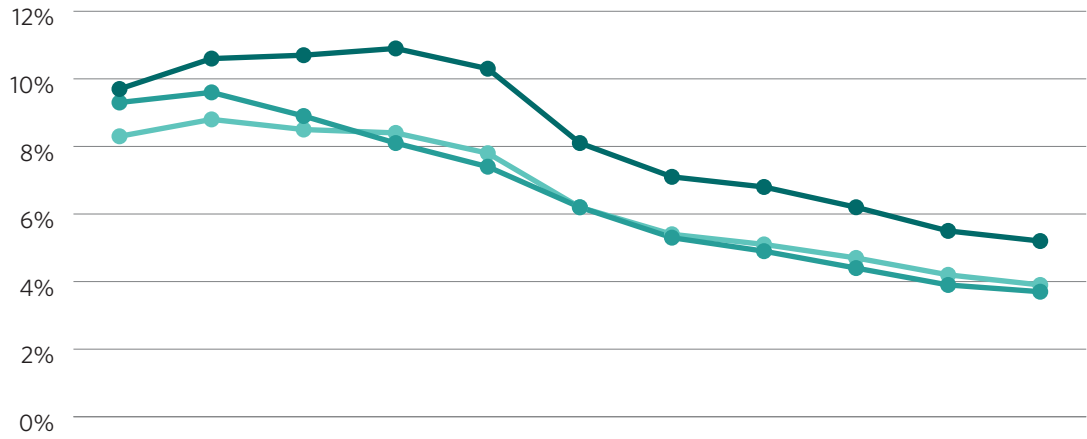
Philadelphia's median household income remained below those of all the comparison cities except Cleveland and Detroit. Since 2016, the local income figure has risen by 11 percent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2018, Table B19013 (Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months)

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Figure 4

Unemployment Rate, 2009-19



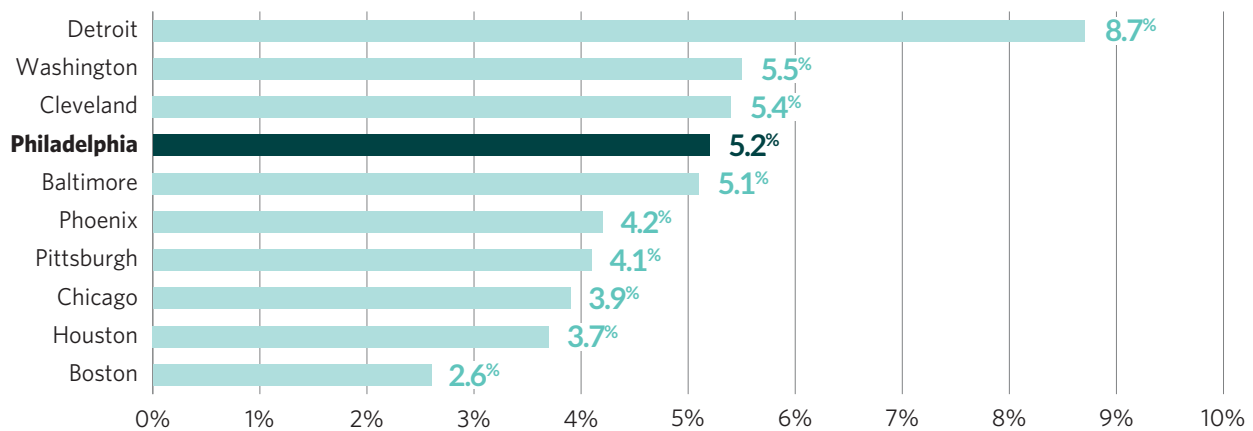
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
City of Philadelphia	9.7%	10.6%	10.7%	10.9%	10.3%	8.1%	7.1%	6.8%	6.2%	5.5%	5.2%
U.S.	9.3%	9.6%	8.9%	8.1%	7.4%	6.2%	5.3%	4.9%	4.4%	3.9%	3.7%
Metro Philadelphia	8.3%	8.8%	8.5%	8.4%	7.8%	6.2%	5.4%	5.1%	4.7%	4.2%	3.9%

Philadelphia’s unemployment rate continued to fall in 2019, averaging 5.2 percent for the year. Although still higher than the national and regional numbers, the city’s rate is lower than it has been in decades—another indicator of Philadelphia’s expanding economy.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/lau>; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, <https://www.bls.gov/cps>

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Figure 5
Unemployment in Comparable Cities, 2019

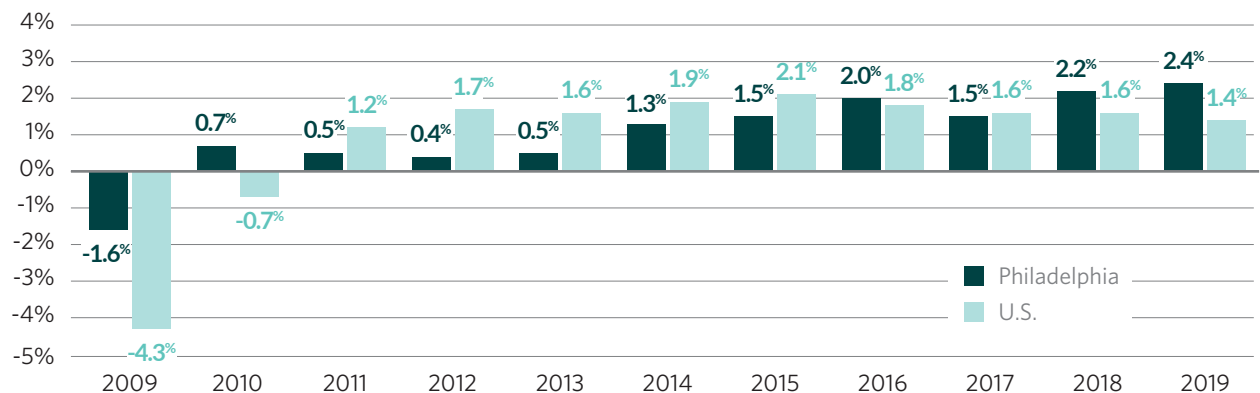


Philadelphia had the fourth-highest unemployment rate among the cities used for comparison, behind Detroit, Washington, and Cleveland. In 2019, unemployment fell slightly in all cities listed, decreasing the most in Cleveland, Baltimore, and Houston; in those cities, it dropped by half a percentage point or more. In Philadelphia, it dropped by 0.3 percent.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/lau>

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Figure 6
Job Growth and Decline, 2009-19

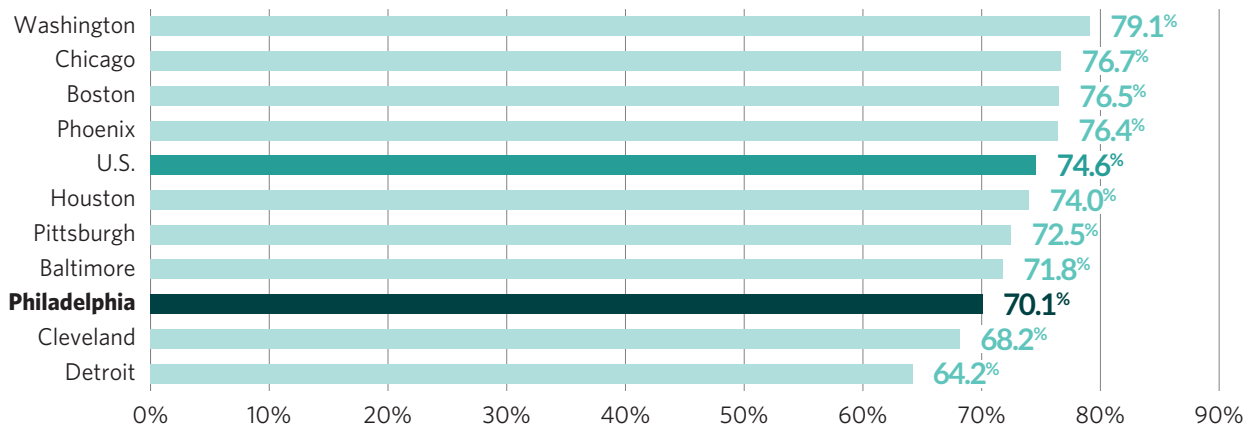


In 2019, the job market in the city outperformed the country as a whole for the third time in the past four years, expanding by 2.4 percent—a historically high rate of growth. For the year, Philadelphia had an average of 741,200 jobs, more than at any time since 1990.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/ces>; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, State and Metro Area Employment, Hours, and Earnings, <https://www.bls.gov/sae>

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Figure 7
Labor Force Participation Rate, 2018

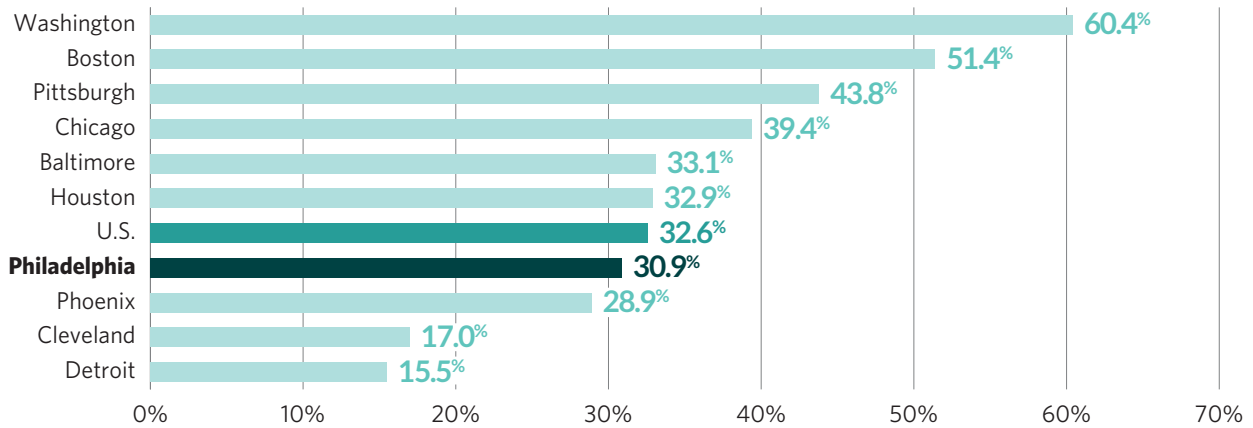


Among the comparison cities, Philadelphia had the third-lowest labor force participation rate among residents ages 16-64. The labor force consists of those who are employed or actively looking for work.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2018, Table B23001 (Sex by Age by Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Over), <https://data.census.gov>

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Figure 8
Percentage of College Graduates, 2018
 Adults 25 and older

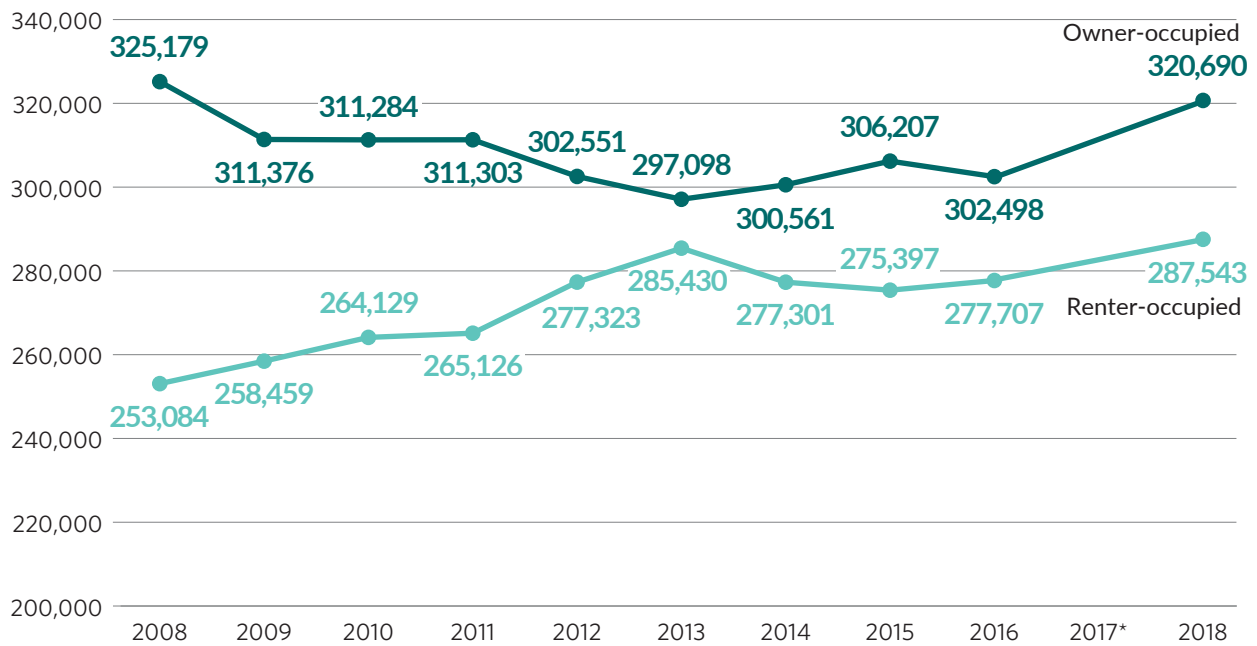


In 2018, the percentage of Philadelphians with a college degree exceeded 30 percent for the first time and was up from 21 percent a decade earlier. In this regard, however, Philadelphia still lags behind many of the other comparison cities and the national average.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2018, Table S1501 (Educational Attainment)

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Figure 9
Homeownership, 2008-18



In 2013, it appeared that Philadelphia, long known as a city of homeowners, was on the verge of becoming a majority-renter city. But the most recent data shows that owner-occupied residential units outnumber rented ones by more than 33,000. Philadelphia remains an anomaly among older cities in the Northeast and Midwest, where renters are in the majority.

*Note: In September 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau identified an error in some of its 2017 data for Philadelphia. The Census Bureau does not plan to update the data, so Pew will not use 2017 data from Philadelphia in the affected topic areas.

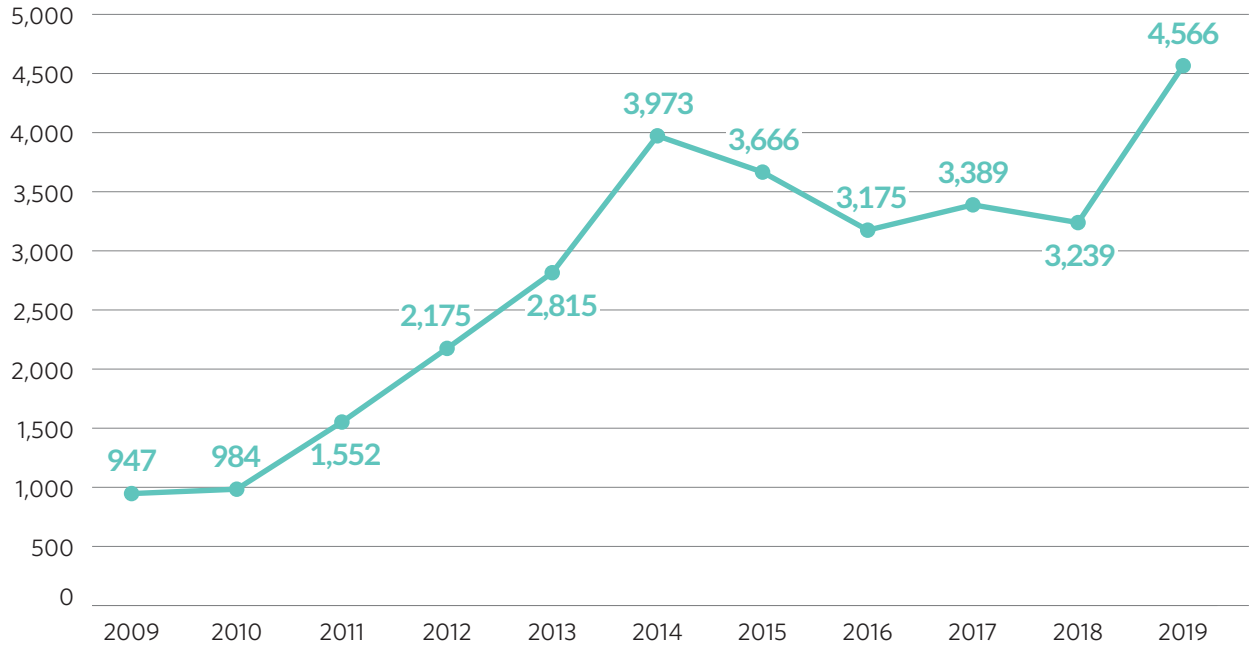
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2018, Table B25003 (Tenure)

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Figure 10

Residential Building Permits Issued in Philadelphia, 2009-19

By unit



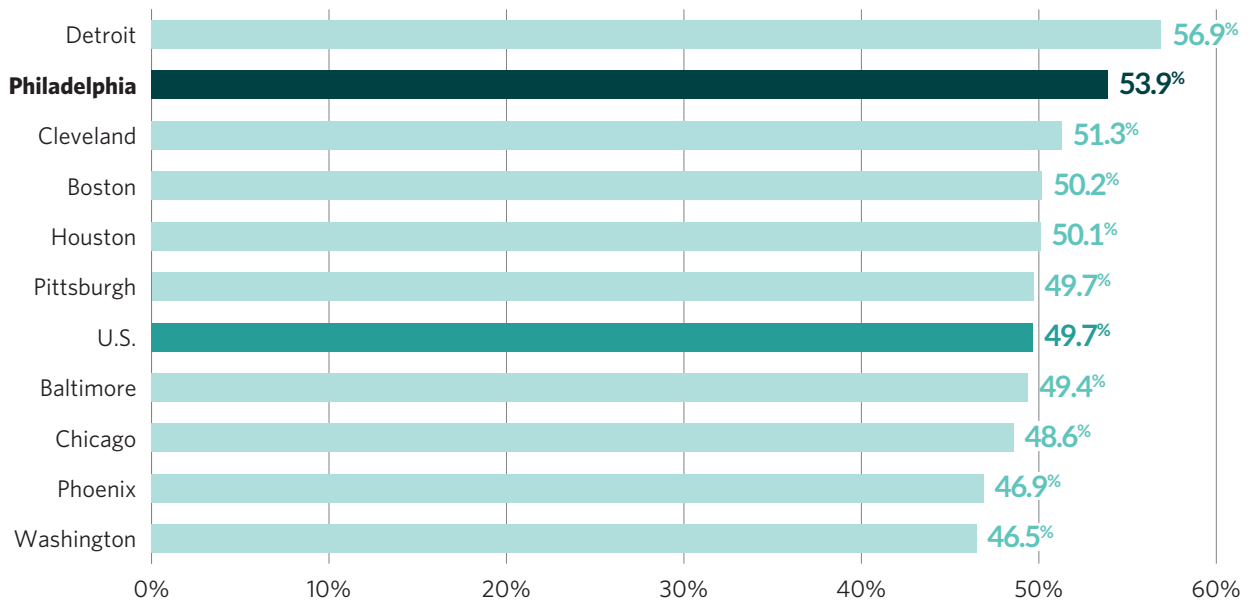
In 2019, Philadelphia’s Department of Licenses and Inspections issued permits for 41 percent more residential units than in the previous year, reaching the highest level this century. Legislation reducing the city’s tax abatement on new residential construction will take effect at the beginning of 2021.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Building Permits Survey, <https://www.census.gov/construction/bps>, based on data from Philadelphia’s Department of Licenses and Inspections

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Figure 11

Percentage of Residents Paying at Least 30% of Income in Rent, 2018

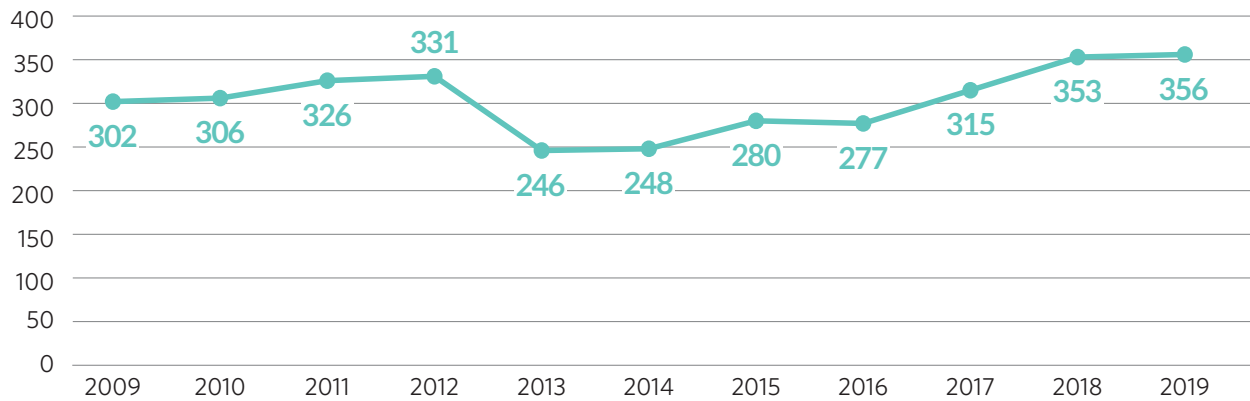


Nearly 54 percent of Philadelphia renters spent at least 30 percent of their income on rent and utilities. Financial experts say households should spend no more than that amount on housing costs, including utilities. Among the comparison cities, only Detroit had a higher rate. And about 32 percent of Philadelphia renters spent at least 50 percent of their income on rent, the highest rate among the 10 cities.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2018, Table B25070 (Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months)

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Figure 12
Homicides in Philadelphia, 2009-19

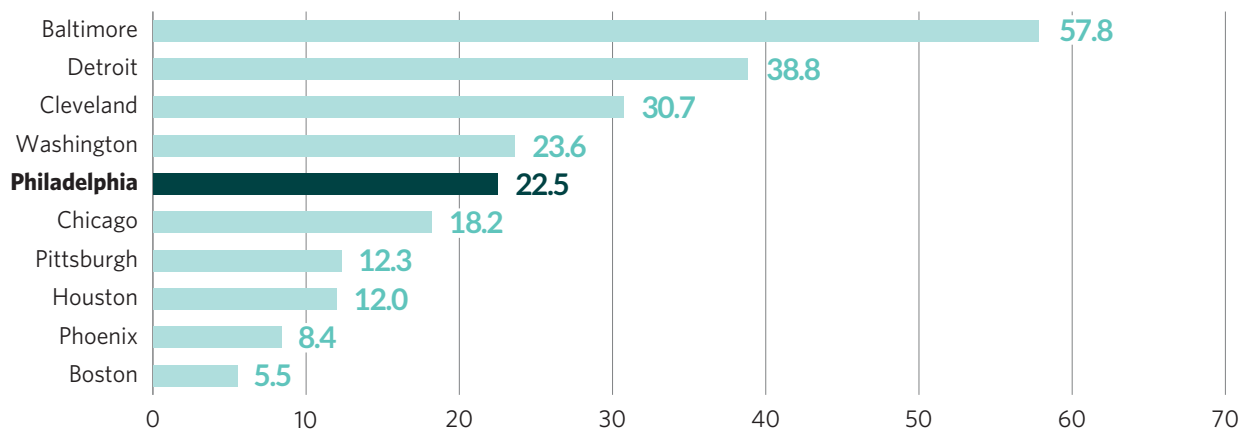


The number of homicides has increased by nearly 45 percent since 2013. With an average of nearly one homicide per day in 2019, Philadelphia had its highest death toll since 2007, when 391 homicides were recorded.

Source: Philadelphia Police Department

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Figure 13
Homicide Rates, 2019
 Homicides per 100,000 residents

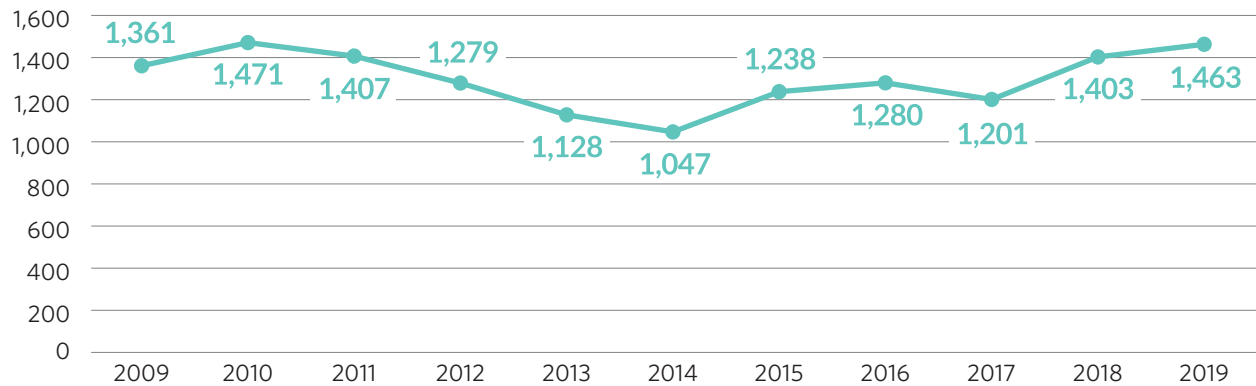


In 2019, Philadelphia’s homicide rate rose to 22.5 per 100,000 residents, up from 16 five years earlier—an increase that has come while homicide rates have been falling in several other cities. The homicide rate has also been rising in Baltimore; its 2019 rate was more than 2.5 times higher than Philadelphia’s.

Sources: Police departments of all 10 cities; population numbers drawn from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2018, Table B01003 (Total Population)

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Figure 14
Shooting Victims in Philadelphia, 2009-19

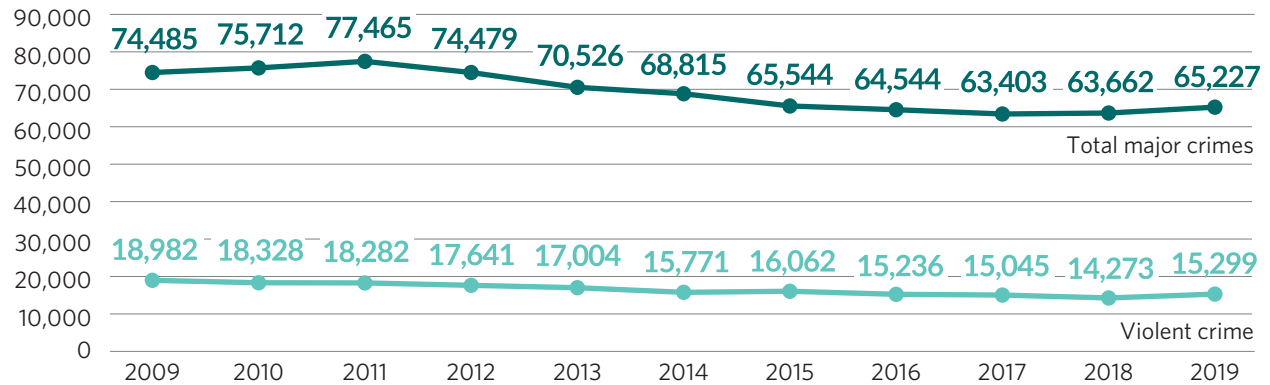


The number of shooting victims in the city rose again in 2019, to its highest level since 2010. Since 2014, Philadelphia has had a nearly 40 percent increase in the number of shooting victims.

Source: Philadelphia Police Department

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Figure 15
Major Crime in Philadelphia, 2009-19



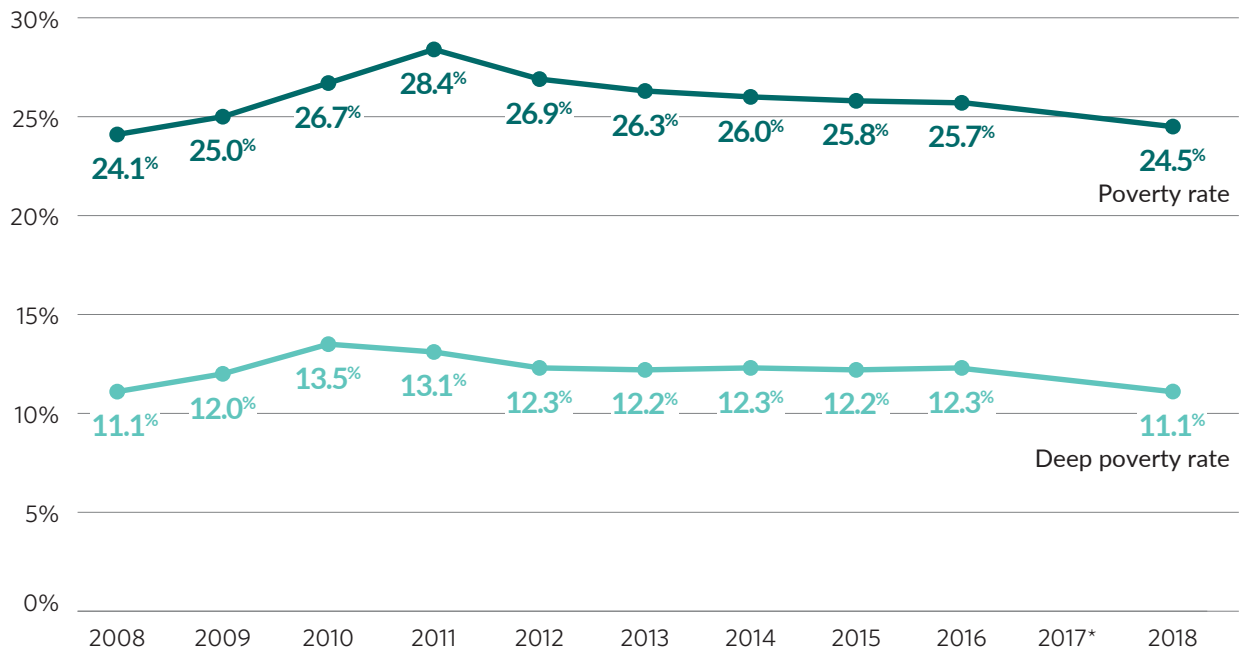
In 2019, violent crime—which includes murder, rape, assault, and robbery—increased by 7.2 percent in Philadelphia from the previous year, the first year-to-year increase since 2015. Total major crimes in the city increased by about 2.5 percent. Major crimes include both violent crimes and property crimes such as burglary and theft.

Source: Philadelphia Police Department

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Figure 16

Poverty and Deep Poverty in Philadelphia, 2008-18



Philadelphia's poverty and deep poverty rates have returned to the levels recorded before the Great Recession. Even so, the city still has the highest poverty rate among the 10 most populous U.S. cities; Houston has the second highest, at 20.4 percent. In 2018, the poverty line for a household of four was \$25,100, and the deep poverty line was \$12,550.

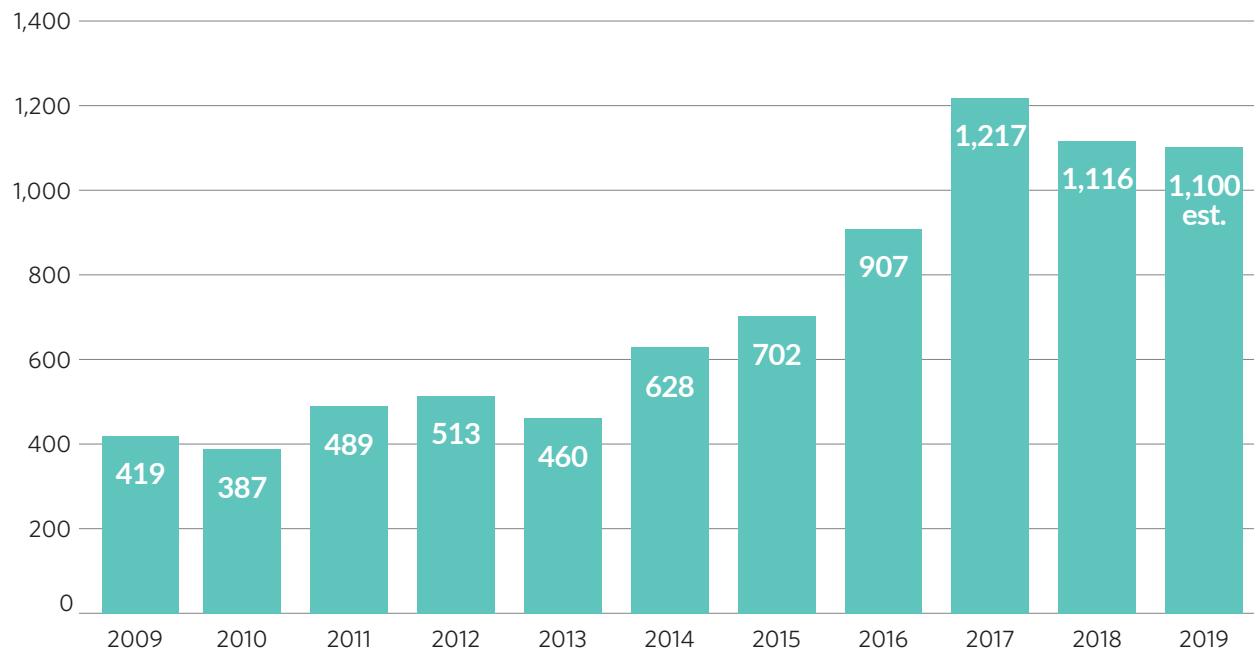
*Note: In September 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau identified an error in some of its 2017 data for Philadelphia. The Census Bureau does not plan to update the data, so Pew will not use 2017 data from Philadelphia in the affected topic areas.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2008-18, Table B17002 (Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months)

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Figure 17

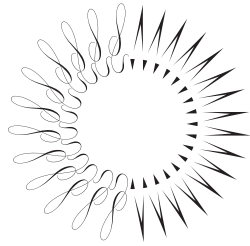
Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths in Philadelphia, 2009-19



For the second year in a row, the number of unintentional drug overdose deaths in Philadelphia was approximately 1,100, down from the 2017 peak but still one of the highest per capita rates in the country. At the end of 2019, Mayor Jim Kenney's administration concluded the Philadelphia Resilience Project, its emergency response to the opioid epidemic. In April 2020, city officials are expected to release a five-year plan outlining strategies to reduce the number of opioid deaths in Kensington, the hardest-hit neighborhood.

Source: Philadelphia Department of Public Health

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