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A Portrait of Philadelphia Migration

Who is coming to the city—and who is leaving

Overview

The city of Philadelphia's population is constantly evolving. Each year, new residents move in while others move out, and the patterns of change help set the contours of the city's future.

In 2010, The Pew Charitable Trusts published *Destination Philadelphia: Tracking the City's Migration Trends*. Building on that research, this brief examines the latest available data to paint a fresh portrait of the people who have moved into and out of the city in recent years, looking at who they are—in terms of age, race, education, and household type—as well as where they came from and where they went.

This new study draws on two sources. One of them, census data from 2011 through 2013, looks at the people who moved into and out of Philadelphia from all locations, including other countries—a major factor in the city's population growth over the past nine years. The other, migration data from the Internal Revenue Service, provides county-by-county information about the sources and destinations of Philadelphia's domestic migrants in 2013.

Among the key findings are:

- Philadelphia's new arrivals have been gravitating toward the core of the city. The largest share of them, 23 percent, moved into Center City and surrounding neighborhoods, an area that accounts for only 9 percent of Philadelphia's overall population.

- Among those arriving in Philadelphia and those leaving it, college graduates and non-Hispanic whites were overrepresented compared with their presence in the city as a whole. African-Americans were less likely than members of other groups to move in or out.

- Migration has added to the city's young adult population. Nearly two-thirds of newcomers were ages 18-34, while just under half of those departing were in that age group.

- The number of migrants coming to Philadelphia from all U.S. locations, as a percentage of the city's overall population, was low in 2013 compared with the number moving to other large cities for which data was available.

- Most of the people leaving Philadelphia stayed in the 11-county metropolitan area or the counties just outside it. The most popular destination for those leaving the region entirely was New York City, followed by Travis County, Texas, home to Austin, a fast-growing city that has become a high-tech hub.

Philadelphia continues to experience a domestic net outflow of people, as do many other cities, including those that are both growing and shrinking. Even so, its population has increased every year since 2006, thanks largely to an influx of foreign immigrants and the margin of births over deaths.
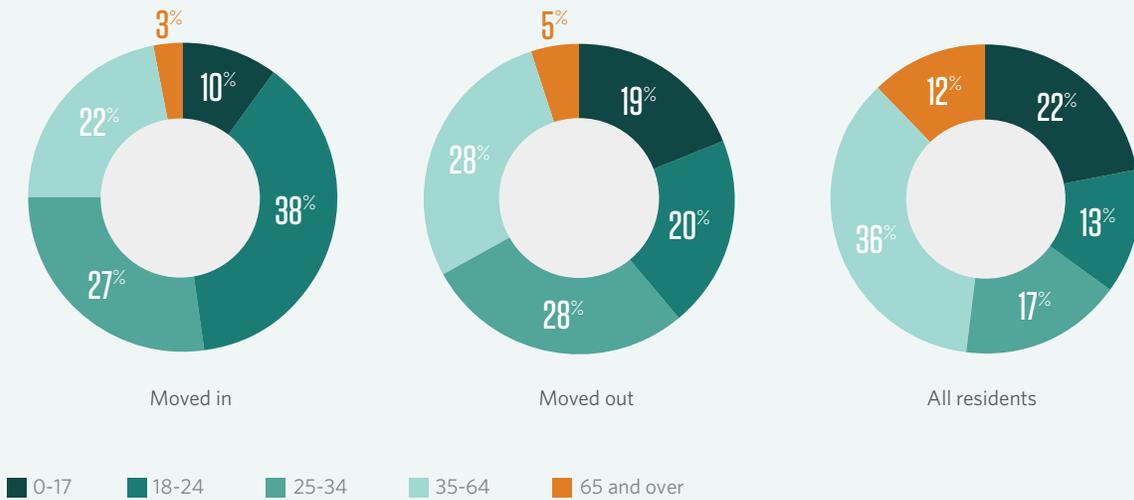
The demographic makeup of people coming and going

In terms of age, the profiles of Philadelphia's new arrivals and departing residents differed from the city population as a whole in several ways. The largest share of the newcomers, 38 percent, were ages 18-24, and more than two-thirds of the newcomers in that age group were enrolled at an educational institution—not surprising, considering the number of colleges and universities in the city. Another 27 percent of arriving migrants were ages 25-34, meaning that 65 percent of all new arrivals were ages 18-34—which is 9 percentage points higher than the median for the nation's 25 largest cities.

Migrants leaving Philadelphia were more evenly distributed among the various age groups. Departures outnumbered arrivals among children age 17 and under and adults ages 35-64. (See Figure 1.)

As for race and ethnicity, the arriving migrants also had a distinct profile. Fifty percent of them were non-Hispanic whites, a group that represents only 36 percent of Philadelphia's overall population. Fifteen percent were Asian, compared with 7 percent citywide. Blacks were underrepresented among the new arrivals at 20 percent; 42 percent of Philadelphians are African-American. Hispanics' representation among new arrivals, 13 percent, matched their share of the broader population.

Figure 1

Those Who Moved Into Philadelphia, Those Who Moved Out, and All Residents

By age

Moved in | Moved out | All residents

Moved in
- 3%
- 10%
- 38%
- 27%
- 22%

Moved out
- 5%
- 19%
- 20%
- 28%
- 28%

All residents
- 12%
- 22%
- 13%
- 17%
- 36%

■ 0-17   ■ 18-24   ■ 25-34   ■ 35-64   ■ 65 and over

Source: U.S. Census, Public Use Microdata Sample, American Community Survey, three-year estimate, 2011-13
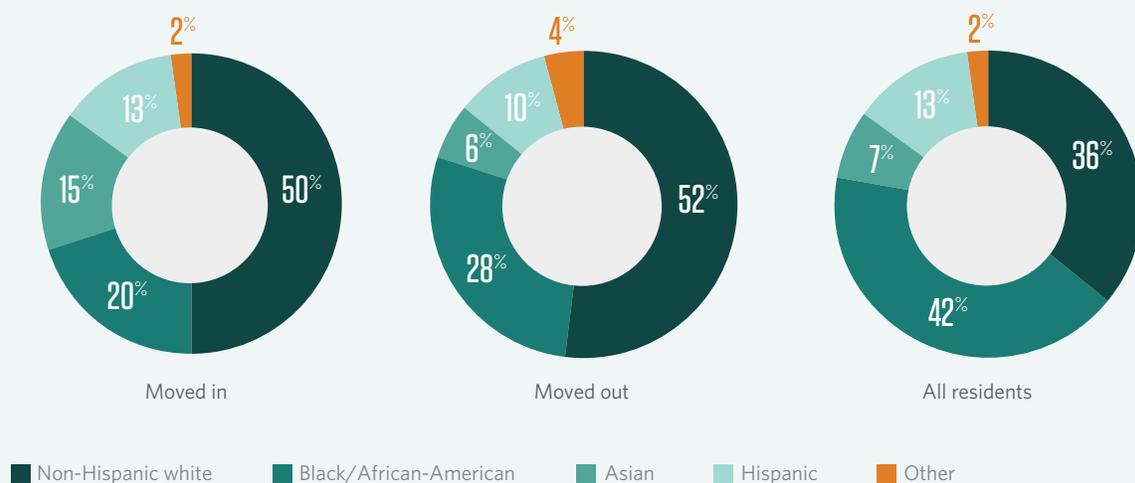
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Census Data

This section uses U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 2011-13 three-year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). The PUMS data was accessed via the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) from the Minnesota Population Center at the University of Minnesota. As part of the ACS questionnaires, participants were asked whether they had moved in the previous 12 months. The sample included 1,612 people who moved to Philadelphia—including those who came from other countries—as well as 2,372 who left and 26,310 who stayed. The margin of error for all of the analysis based on these numbers was at or below 5 percentage points.

This pattern—a higher percentage of non-Hispanic whites in the newcomer population than in a city's population as a whole—held true in 24 of the nation's 25 largest cities during the same period; Seattle was the exception. But the phenomenon was more pronounced in Philadelphia than in most of the other cities.

There was a similar pattern for those who left Philadelphia. Fifty-two percent of them were non-Hispanic whites, 28 percent were black, 10 percent Hispanic, and 6 percent Asian—meaning that whites were overrepresented and blacks underrepresented compared with their shares of the overall city population. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2

Those Who Moved Into Philadelphia, Those Who Moved Out, and All Residents

By race and ethnicity

| Moved in | Moved out | All residents |

Legend: Non-Hispanic white · Black/African-American · Asian · Hispanic · Other

Moved in: 50% / 20% / 15% / 13% / 2%
Moved out: 52% / 28% / 6% / 10% / 4%
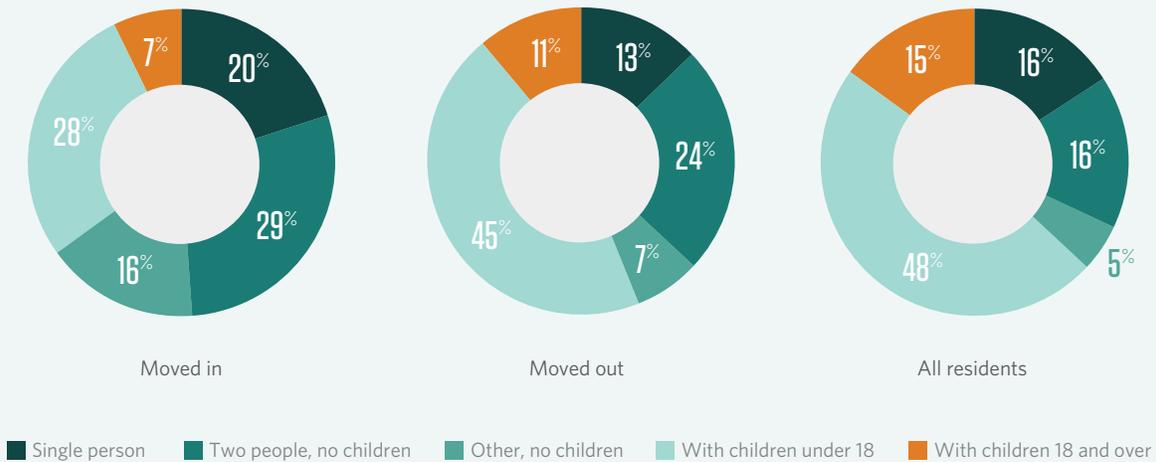All residents: 36% / 42% / 7% / 13% / 2%

Source: U.S. Census, Public Use Microdata Sample, American Community Survey, three-year estimate, 2011-13
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There was a modest difference in educational attainment between those arriving and those leaving, and both groups were better educated than the people who stayed in the city. Among individuals ages 25 and older, 51 percent of newcomers and 42 percent of those who left had at least a bachelor's degree, compared with about a quarter of the general population. Nationally, people who move from one county to another tend to be better educated than those who move within counties or don't move at all. Philadelphia ranked 10th among the country's 25 most populous cities in the percentage of newcomers with a bachelor's degree or higher.

In terms of household type, 20 percent of the new arrivals and 13 percent of those leaving lived in single-person households—excluding individuals who lived in group quarters, such as college dormitories. People living in households with children under the age of 18 accounted for 45 percent of those leaving and 28 percent of those arriving. (See Figure 3.) While the census did not ask people why they came to or left Philadelphia, these numbers appear to validate concerns, often expressed by civic leaders, about families leaving the city due to the ongoing problems of the public school system.

Those Who Moved Into Philadelphia, Those Who Moved Out, and All Residents

By type of living arrangement

| Moved in | Moved out | All residents |

Legend: ■ Single person ■ Two people, no children ■ Other, no children ■ With children under 18 ■ With children 18 and over

Note: These numbers do not include people living in group quarters such as dormitories or detention facilities.

Source: U.S. Census, Public Use Microdata Sample, American Community Survey, three-year estimate, 2011-13

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Where people came from, and where they went

The census data provides a look at where newcomers settled in Philadelphia, with the city divided into 11 areas. During the period examined, the largest share of people moved into the area labeled "Center City." That section, which includes the area Philadelphians generally consider Center City plus some adjacent neighborhoods, accounted for 23 percent of the new arrivals; it was home to only 9 percent of the city's population. The area, as defined by the census, runs between the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers and is bordered on the north by Poplar Street and Girard Avenue and on the south by Washington Avenue and Wharton Street. (See Figure 4.)

The remainder of the arrivals were spread relatively evenly throughout the rest of the city, with a slight overrepresentation in the Southeast zone (South Philadelphia) and underrepresentation in much of the city's northern and eastern sections.

Figure 4

Where New Philadelphians Live Compared With Where All Philadelphians Live

By U.S. Census Public Use Micro Area

■ Areas with high percentage of new arrivals relative to total population

■ Areas with low percentage of new arrivals relative to total population

■ Areas where percentage of new arrivals is similar to total population

Source: U.S. Census, Public Use Microdata Sample, American Community Survey, three-year estimate, 2011-13

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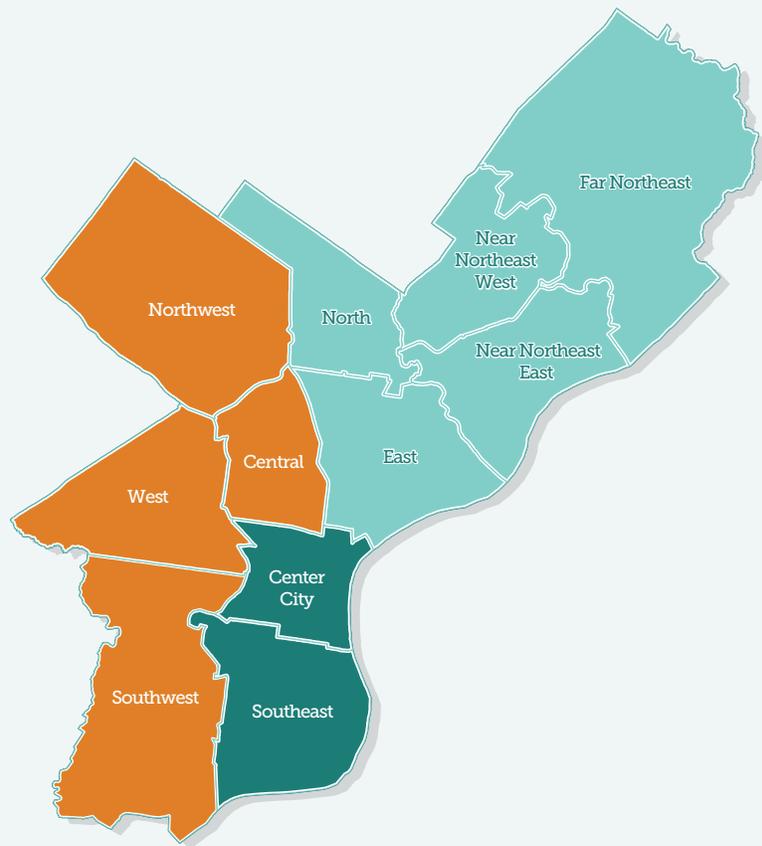
The remainder of the analysis in this report is based on IRS migration data. These numbers show that the city as a whole has had a relatively low level of population turnover or churn compared with other large cities.

In 2013, for instance, the share of the city's overall population represented by new domestic arrivals was 2.7 percent. Philadelphia ranked ninth on this measure among the 10 cities listed in Figure 5; the IRS has data only for those cities that also are counties or are not part of any county. Among the 10 places listed, the less populous ones tended to have a higher share of new arrivals. The three with the highest rates of new domestic arrivals—Denver, Nashville-Davidson County, and Washington—all have populations under 700,000, less than half the size of Philadelphia and less than one-tenth the size of New York City. All three are growing communities with generally healthy economies. Except for New York City and Philadelphia, data was not available for any of the eight other U.S. cities with more than 1 million residents.[1]

Figure 5
Domestic Arrivals in 2013 as a Share of a City's Overall Population

City	Percentage	City	Percentage
Denver	9.1%	Indianapolis-Marion County	4.8%
Nashville-Davidson County, TN	6.2%	Baltimore	4.8%
Washington	5.7%	Louisville-Jefferson County, KY	4.6%
Jacksonville-Duval County, FL	5.5%	Philadelphia	2.7%
San Francisco	4.9%	New York	1.9%

The IRS migration data also provides information about the domestic sources of newcomers and the destinations of those leaving. These numbers indicate that city residents were more likely to move to other counties in the Philadelphia metropolitan area than residents of the other counties were to move into the city.[2]

In 2013, 50.2 percent of the people leaving Philadelphia went elsewhere in the 11-county metropolitan area, and 49.8 percent left the region.[3] Nearly 46 percent of all of Philadelphia's departing migrants stayed in Pennsylvania (including counties outside the metropolitan area), with Montgomery County the most common destination. Another 11.8 percent went to New Jersey. These results are similar to those in years past. The state that received the largest number of migrants from Philadelphia, other than Pennsylvania and New Jersey, was New York, followed by Florida, Texas, California, and Delaware. (See Figure 6.)

Of the individuals who moved into Philadelphia, 45.9 percent came from inside the region and 54.1 percent came from outside. Just over 43 percent of all arriving migrants came from Pennsylvania, with Montgomery County again the largest source, and 13.7 percent came from New Jersey. Among the other states, New York was the leading source of new arrivals, followed by Florida, Delaware, California, and Maryland. (See Figure 7.)

Figure 6

Domestic Destinations of People Leaving Philadelphia, 2013

Inside Philadelphia metropolitan area*	27,596	50.2%
Outside Philadelphia metropolitan area	27,349	49.8%
Total	**54,945**	

Pennsylvania	**25,073**	**45.6%**
Montgomery County	8,326	
Delaware County	7,145	
Bucks County	5,293	
Chester County	1,235	
Other PA counties	3,074	

New Jersey	**6,500**	**11.8%**
Camden County	2,249	
Burlington County	1,117	
Gloucester County	816	
Salem County	51	
Other NJ counties	2,267	

Other states	**22,765**	**41.4%**
New York	2,984	
Florida	2,226	
Delaware	1,841	
California	1,619	
Maryland	1,582	
Rest of U.S.	12,513	

Foreign[†]	**607**	**1.1%**

Notes:

* The Philadelphia metropolitan area, as defined by the census, consists of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties in Pennsylvania; Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Salem counties in New Jersey; New Castle County, Delaware; and Cecil County, Maryland.

† The IRS' "foreign" categorization includes people moving to Puerto Rico and other countries plus U.S. military personnel transferred to foreign posts.

Source: IRS Migration Data, 2013-14

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In terms of the net outflow from Philadelphia (the number of departures minus the number of arrivals), three suburban Pennsylvania counties—Montgomery, Delaware, and Bucks—posted the largest numbers, in that order. There was much less movement between Philadelphia and the four suburban New Jersey counties considered part of the metropolitan area—Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Salem—with the net outflow to those counties only about one-seventh the size of the outflow to the Pennsylvania suburbs.

Excluding localities in the metropolitan area—as well as those in the eastern half of Pennsylvania and the southern half of New Jersey—New York City was far and away the most popular source of new Philadelphians and the most common destination for people moving out. (See Figure 8.) And in 2013, more people moved to Philadelphia from New York City than in the opposite direction, repeating a pattern seen in the data for most of the past 20 years. With 3,071 individuals moving to Philadelphia and 2,441 going in the opposite direction, though, Philadelphia's net gain from New York City was a modest 630 people.

Los Angeles County was the second largest source of arrivals outside the region, slightly ahead of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania (where Pittsburgh is located), and Washington. The second most popular landing spot for migrants leaving Philadelphia was Travis County, Texas (home to the city of Austin), followed by Los Angeles County and Cook County, Illinois (Chicago).

Figure 7

Domestic Sources of Individuals Moving to Philadelphia, 2013

Inside Philadelphia metropolitan area*	19,589	45.9%
Outside Philadelphia metropolitan area	23,059	54.1%
Total	**42,648**	

Pennsylvania	**18,528**	**43.4%**
Montgomery County	5,422	
Delaware County	5,330	
Bucks County	3,538	
Chester County	1,013	
Other PA counties	3,225	

New Jersey	**5,837**	**13.7%**
Camden County	1,738	
Burlington County	884	
Gloucester County	590	
Salem County	53	
Other NJ counties	2,572	

Other States	**17,921**	**42.0%**
New York	3,828	
Florida	1,386	
Delaware	1,180	
California	936	
Maryland	921	
Rest of U.S.	9,670	

Foreign†	**362**	**0.8%**

Notes:

* The Philadelphia metropolitan area, as defined by the census, consists of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties in Pennsylvania; Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Salem counties in New Jersey; New Castle County, Delaware; and Cecil County, Maryland.

† The IRS' "foreign" categorization includes people moving from Puerto Rico and other countries plus U.S. military personnel returning from foreign posts.

Source: Source: IRS Migration Data, 2013-14

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Figure 8

Where Philadelphians Came From and Moved to in 2013
Outside the region

	Where they came from		Where they moved to
1	New York City	1	New York City
2	Los Angeles County	2	Travis County, TX (Austin)
3	Allegheny County, PA (Pittsburgh)	3	Los Angeles County
4	Washington	4	Cook County, IL (Chicago)
5	Cook County, IL (Chicago)	5	Baltimore
6	Baltimore	6	Miami-Dade County, FL
7	Travis County, TX (Austin)	7	Washington
8	Middlesex County, NJ	8	Broward County, FL (Fort Lauderdale)
9	Essex County, NJ	9	Orange County, FL (Orlando)
10	Suffolk County, MA (Boston)	10	Middlesex County, NJ

Note:

For the purpose of these lists, the region is defined as the Philadelphia metropolitan area plus all other nearby counties in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Thus, counties such as Lancaster, Berks, and Lehigh in Pennsylvania and Cape May, Mercer, and Atlantic in New Jersey are not listed here.

Source: IRS Migration Data, 2013-14
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The IRS data showed that the number of people leaving Philadelphia was larger than the number of people moving in from elsewhere in the nation. That has been the case every year since 1990, when IRS data first became available. In 2013, a number of other cities—including New York City, Washington, Denver, and Baltimore—also had domestic net outflows. Like Philadelphia, many of them increased their populations by attracting people from other countries and having more births than deaths.

Conclusion

Our analysis indicates that the people who have been moving into and out of Philadelphia are different from the population of the city as a whole. In particular, the incoming migrants are younger, better educated, more likely to be non-Hispanic white or Asian, and more likely to find housing in Center City and adjacent neighborhoods. While many of the new arrivals hail from elsewhere in the metropolitan area, the majority have come from places outside the region, including other parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, as well as New York City, Florida, California, and elsewhere. But compared with the share in other major cities, the percentage of arriving domestic migrants remains rather small.

Endnotes

1   Data is available for two other cities, St. Louis and New Orleans, both of which have populations under 400,000. In 2013, new arrivals represented a relatively high percentage of the population in both places—6.9 percent in St. Louis, which lost population overall, and 6 percent in New Orleans, which is growing. These results provide additional evidence of a possible inverse relationship between a jurisdiction's size and its turnover rate—i.e., the smaller the jurisdiction, the larger the turnover rate.

2   This does not appear to be an unusual phenomenon. In several of the other cities for which IRS migration data is available, including Baltimore and Denver, the percentage of city-leavers who wound up in other counties in the metropolitan area was higher than the share of new arrivals who came from elsewhere in the area.

3   The census defines the Philadelphia metropolitan area as Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties in Pennsylvania; Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Salem counties in New Jersey; New Castle County, Delaware; and Cecil County, Maryland.

About this brief

This brief was researched and written by Larry Eichel and Michelle Schmitt of Pew's Philadelphia research initiative. It was edited by members of the initiative staff, as well as by Elizabeth Lowe, Daniel LeDuc, Bernard Ohanian, and Erika Pontarelli Compart. The report was designed by Kodi Seaton. Two demographers from Temple University, David Elesh and James Bachmeier, reviewed an early draft of the analysis.

About the Philadelphia research initiative

Pew's Philadelphia research initiative provides timely, impartial research and analysis on key issues facing Philadelphia for the benefit of the city's residents and leaders.

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