



Kriston Jae Bethel for The Pew Charitable Trusts

Philadelphia 2024

The State of the City

Overview

In many ways, 2024 is a year of significant transition for Philadelphia. The city has a new mayor in Cherelle Parker, plenty of fresh perspectives in City Council, and leadership changes at some of the largest and most influential institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University. The trends that have given the city a sense of dynamism in recent years—including its increasingly well-educated and diverse population—show no signs of weakening. But Philadelphia's persistent problems remain as well, threatening to undermine any sense of progress. Those problems include the high crime rate, the staggering number of drug overdose deaths, and the fact that over 1 in 5 residents are still living below the poverty line.

At least by historical standards, Philadelphia's economy entered the year in relatively good condition. In 2023, the city's unemployment rate was 4.2% on average, the lowest in more than 30 years, while the number of jobs in the city—an average of 765,400—was the highest in 40 years. Those factors have contributed to rising incomes for city residents: The median household income in 2022, the latest year for which data was available, was \$56,517; since 2019, the figure has risen by a healthy 19%, although it remains well below the national average. Yet substantial disparities remain among the city's racial and ethnic groups, with White, non-Hispanic households earning nearly \$40,000 more per year, on average, than Black or Hispanic households.

As for the makeup of its population, Philadelphia is becoming an ever more diverse city, with Hispanic residents now representing more than 16% of the city's population and Asian residents—whose population is up by about a third since 2000—representing 8%. Much of Philadelphia's increasing diversity stems from the rising number of immigrants, many of whom were born in Asia or the Caribbean. Currently, 15.7% of the city's residents report being born outside the United States, the highest share since the 1940s.

In addition, Philadelphians are better educated than ever, with 36% of residents, including more than half of all younger adults ages 25-34, having at least a four-year degree.

The city government's fiscal health is relatively strong as well, even though the city will be using the last round of its federal pandemic-era relief dollars this year. City revenue has continued to increase since 2020, thanks in part to higher-than-expected wage tax earnings.

Despite these largely positive indicators, huge challenges remain for Philadelphia.

The fiscal prospects of two of the city's leading public institutions—the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) and the School District of Philadelphia, both of which also received substantial federal help to weather the pandemic and its aftermath—are not so rosy. To fend off service cuts and fare hikes, SEPTA has called for expanded state funding; the system's ridership, which has gradually increased in the past several years, is still far below pre-pandemic levels, with the City Transit division off 29% from 2019 and Regional Rail down 43%. Similarly, the school district is projecting a major deficit that could result in service cuts in schools after its federal relief aid expires at the end of the year.

Public safety—which Mayor Parker made her top priority when taking office, declaring a public safety emergency on day one—is another major concern. Crime had already been on a multiyear climb before spiking during the pandemic; even though the overall level of violent crime in Philadelphia is the lowest it has been in more than 20 years, the number of homicides topped 500 in both 2021 and 2022. Although this total declined to 410 in 2023, the number was still high by historical standards, and property crimes kept rising as well. Car thefts increased 70% from 2022 to 2023, accounting for a quarter of all major crimes in Philadelphia. The high number of homicides and property crimes has soured Philadelphians' and suburbanites' attitudes about the city, making them less willing to go to the office (if they can work from home) or to visit cultural institutions or go out shopping.

Philadelphia also continued to struggle with high poverty, although its poverty rate declined to 21.7%, its lowest level in more than 20 years, thanks in part to some federal assistance programs that emerged from the pandemic. Even with the overall rate down, 28.8% of children, 33.3% of Hispanic residents, and 35% of adults with less than a high school diploma were living in poverty in the city. Residents living in poverty continued to face significant obstacles to obtaining and maintaining employment, finding housing, and pursuing their education. They were also more likely to live in the communities most affected by violent crime. Moreover, many of them lost their health insurance when the pandemic-era guidance allowing automatic re-enrollment in Medicaid expired in April 2023.

While there may be some glimmers of hope on crime and poverty, there was less promise regarding the city's opioid epidemic, which continued to devastate communities. The city recorded an estimated 1,300 unintentional drug overdose deaths in 2023, the seventh straight year with more than 1,100 such deaths reported. Among the nine cities that The Pew Charitable Trusts has long used for comparison in its "State of the City" reports, Philadelphia had the highest rate of drug overdose deaths: 78.9 for every 100,000 residents. During her inauguration, Mayor Parker declared a focus on Kensington, the epicenter of the crisis, increasing enforcement of quality-of-life statutes and arrests of drug users and sellers. It remains to be seen how effective these efforts will be.

In this year of transition, the challenge is clear for Philadelphia and its new leaders: They must nurture and strengthen the positive trends while making progress on a set of deep-seated problems that can sometimes seem intractable. That mission won't be easy. But its success is essential for the future of the city and its people.

Editor's note: *The Figure 12 note was updated on April 16, 2024, to reflect that the commuting data is the most recent available.*

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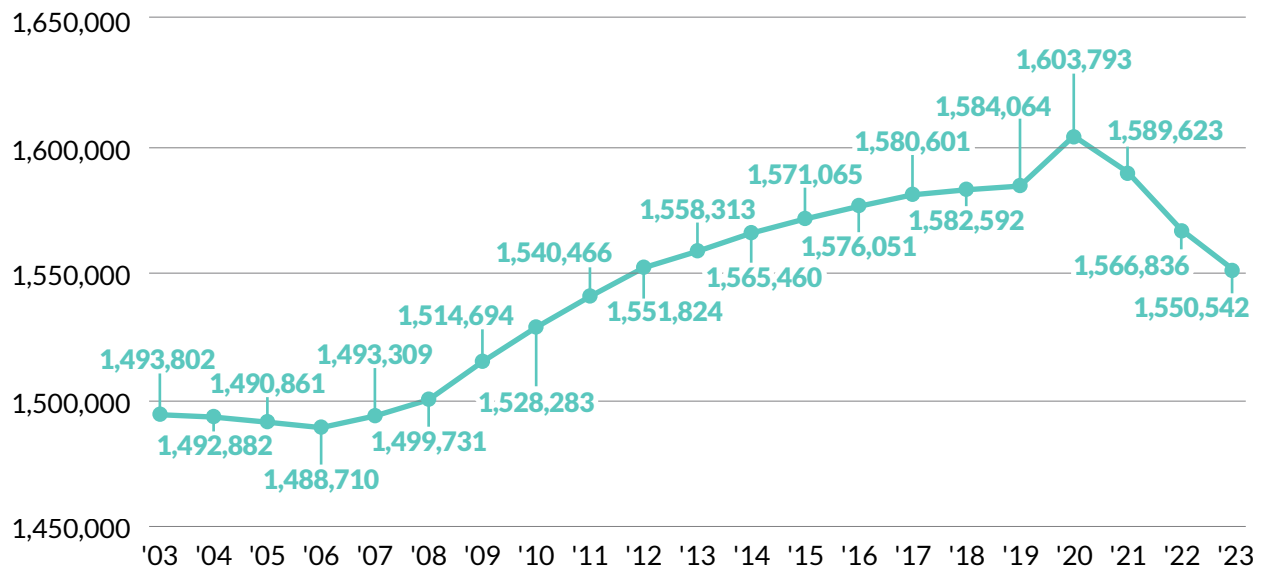
Contact: Elizabeth Lowe, communications manager

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Project website: pewtrusts.org/philaresearch

Founded in 1948, **The Pew Charitable Trusts** uses data to make a difference. Pew addresses the challenges of a changing world by illuminating issues, creating common ground, and advancing ambitious projects that lead to tangible progress.

Figure 1
Philadelphia Population, 2003-23



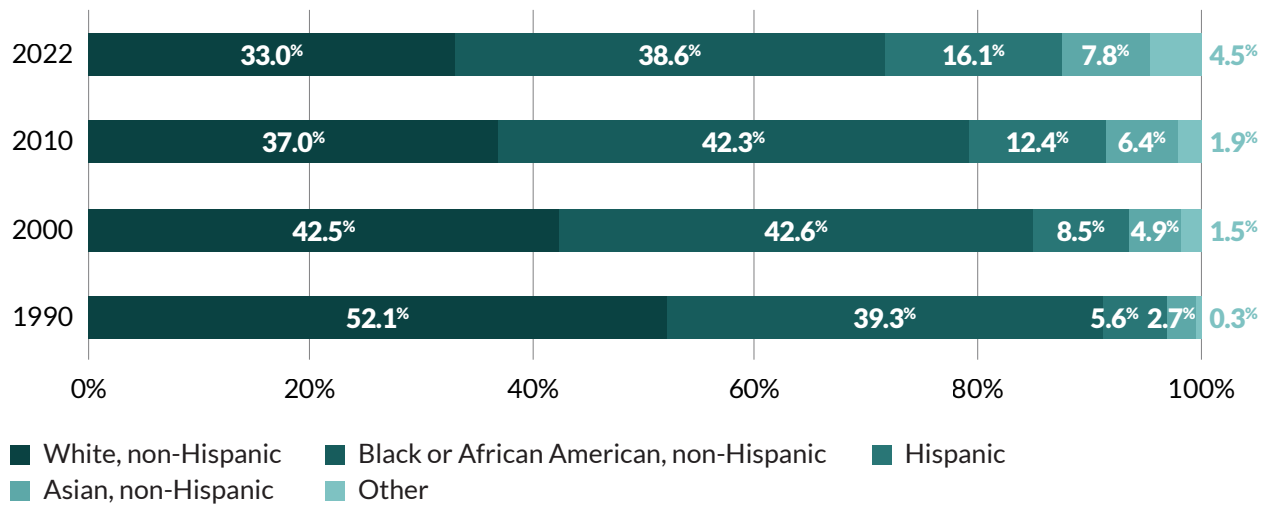
Philadelphia’s population has dipped since the onset of the pandemic. The population has declined by 3.3%, more than 53,000 people, since 2020, including roughly 16,000 fewer residents in just the past year. This change is a reversal of slow but steady population increases from the previous decade.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, “City and Town Intercensal Datasets: 2000-2010,” <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/intercensal-2000-2010-cities-and-towns.html>; U.S. Census Bureau, “Population and Housing Unit Estimates,” 2011-19, <http://www.census.gov/popest>; U.S. Census Bureau, “County Population Totals: 2020-2023,” <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/data/tables.html>

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Figure 2

Philadelphia Population’s Racial and Ethnic Composition, 1990-2022



From 1990 through 2022, Philadelphia’s racial and ethnic composition changed dramatically. For instance, White, non-Hispanic residents accounted for only 33% of all Philadelphians in 2022, down from 52.1% in 1990. The share of Asian and Hispanic residents nearly tripled over the same period, with the Hispanic population increasing from 5.6% to 16.1% and the Asian population increasing from 2.7% to 7.8%. The size of the African American population, the city’s largest racial or ethnic group, has been more constant, although African Americans represented a notably smaller share of the city’s overall population in 2022 than in 2010.

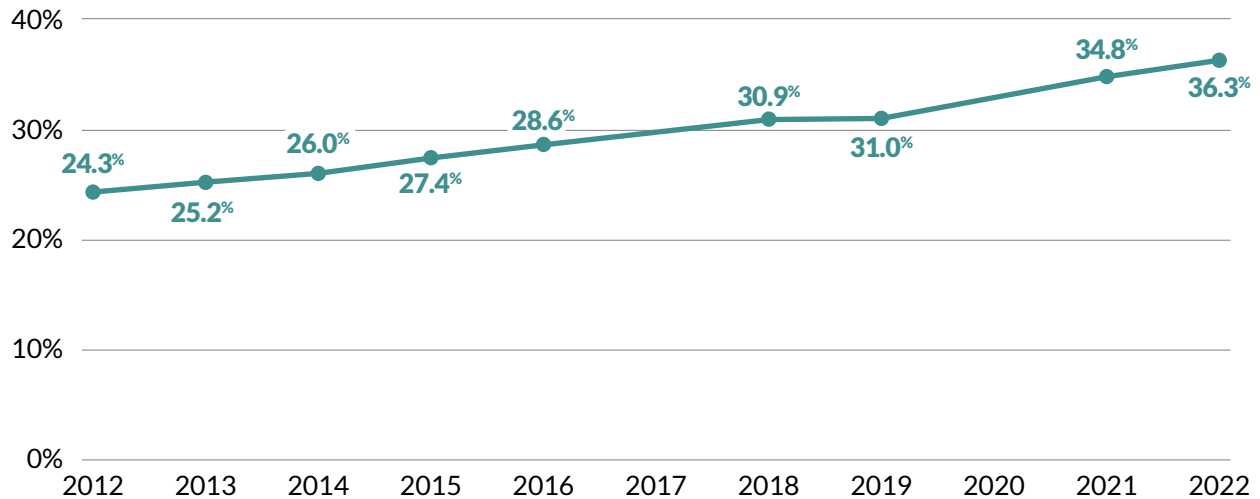
Note: The U.S. Census Bureau’s “other” category includes all non-Hispanic residents who identify as multiracial or as members of any racial group other than Black, White, or Asian.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census, Table P2 (Hispanic or Latino, and not Hispanic or Latino by Race); U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2021-22, Table B03002 (Hispanic or Latino Origin by Race), <http://data.census.gov>

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Figure 3

Percentage of Philadelphia Residents With a College Degree, 2012-22 Adults 25 and older



In 2022, the share of Philadelphians over age 25 with at least a bachelor's degree continued to grow, reaching 36.3%, up 12 percentage points from a decade earlier, and the highest percentage ever recorded. Much of this change was driven by the youngest people in this category, those ages 25-34. More than half of them have at least a bachelor's degree.

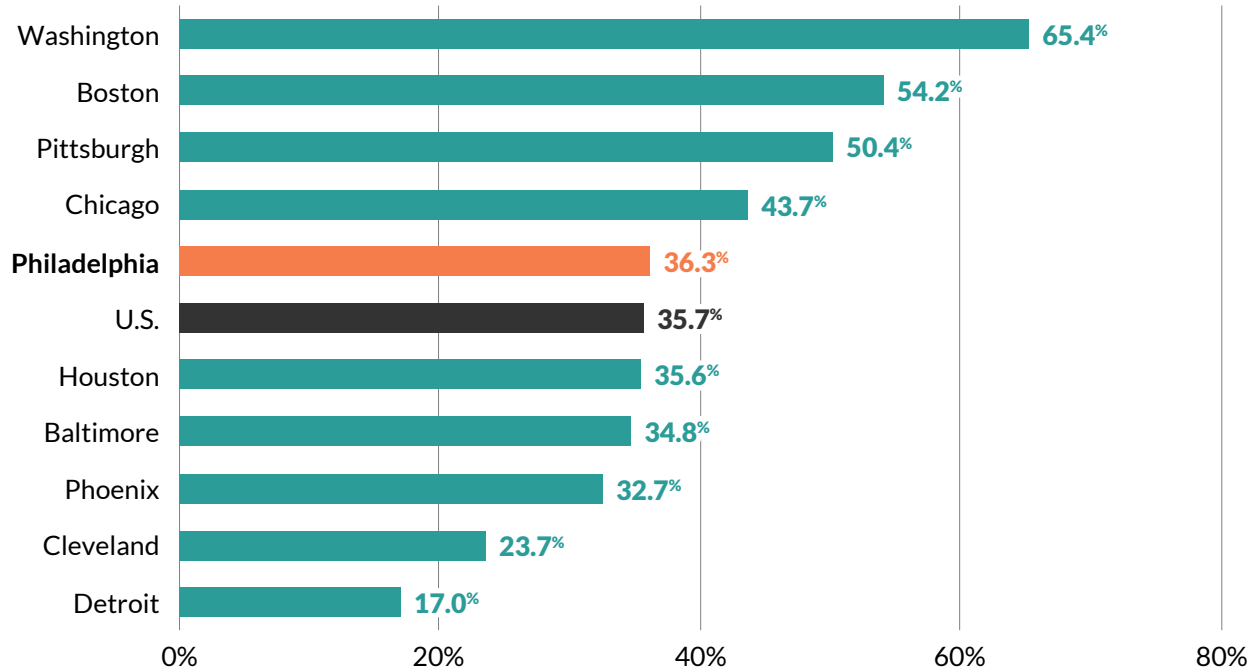
Note: Data for 2017 and 2020 is not included. Several years ago, the Census Bureau identified an error in some of its 2017 data for Philadelphia and recommended that it not be used. And the bureau did not release one-year American Community Survey data for 2020, citing the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on data quality.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2012-22, Table S1501 (Educational Attainment), <http://data.census.gov>

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Figure 4

Percentage of Residents With at Least a College Degree, 2022 Philadelphia and comparison cities



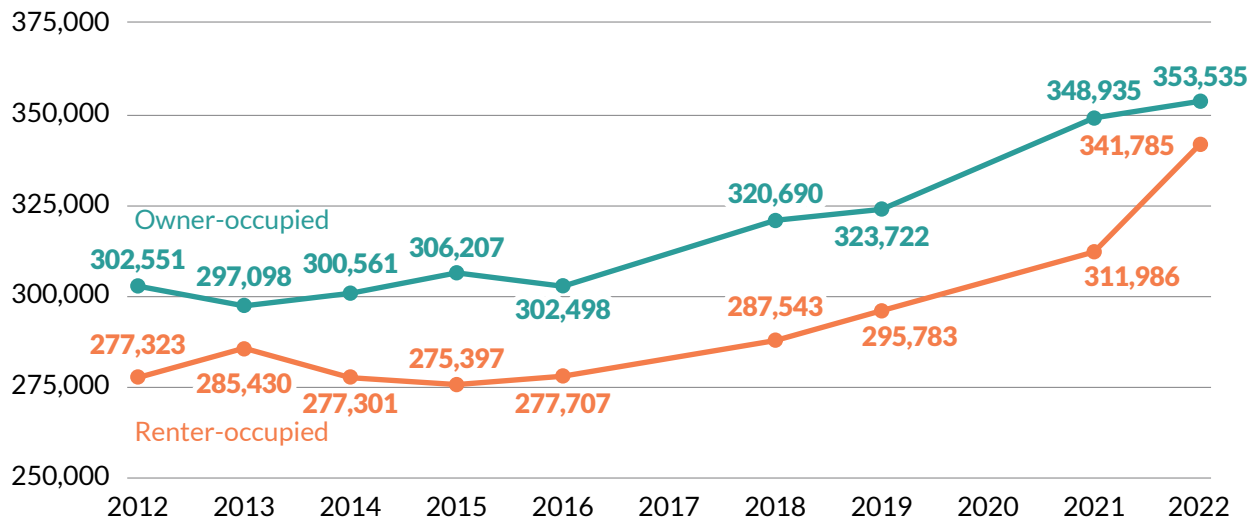
In 2022, Philadelphia's share of adults ages 25 and older with a college degree was roughly the same as the national average—36.3% for Philadelphia, and 35.7% for the nation as a whole. Philadelphia still lagged Washington, Boston, and Pittsburgh—where the corresponding percentages exceeded 50%—as well as Chicago, at 43.7%. In Washington, nearly 39% of those over age 25 also had a graduate or professional degree.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2022, Table S1501 (Educational Attainment), <http://data.census.gov>

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Figure 5

Homeownership in Philadelphia, 2012-22



Although it has long been known as a city of homeowners, Philadelphia had nearly as many renting households as homeowning households in 2022, according to the Census Bureau. Whether this turns out to be a one-year blip in the data or the start of a trend remains to be seen.

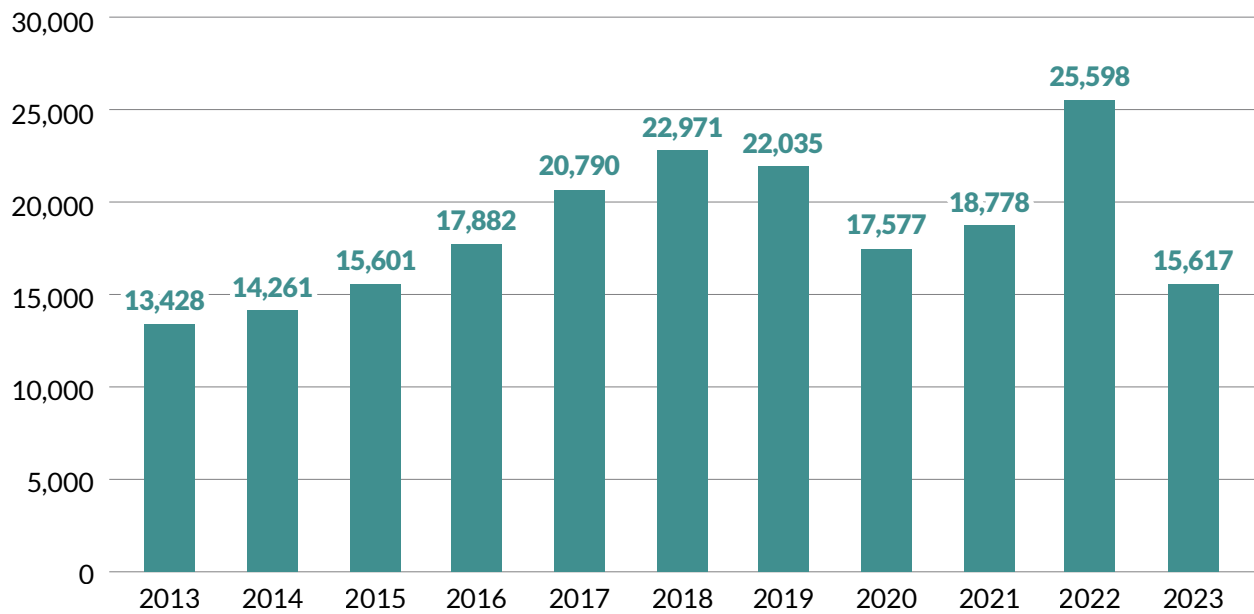
Note: Data for 2017 and 2020 is not included. Several years ago, the Census Bureau identified an error in some of its 2017 data for Philadelphia and recommended that it not be used. And the bureau did not release one-year American Community Survey data for 2020, citing the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on data quality.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2012-22, Table B25003 (Tenure), <https://data.census.gov>

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Figure 6

Sales of Residential Units in Philadelphia, 2013-23



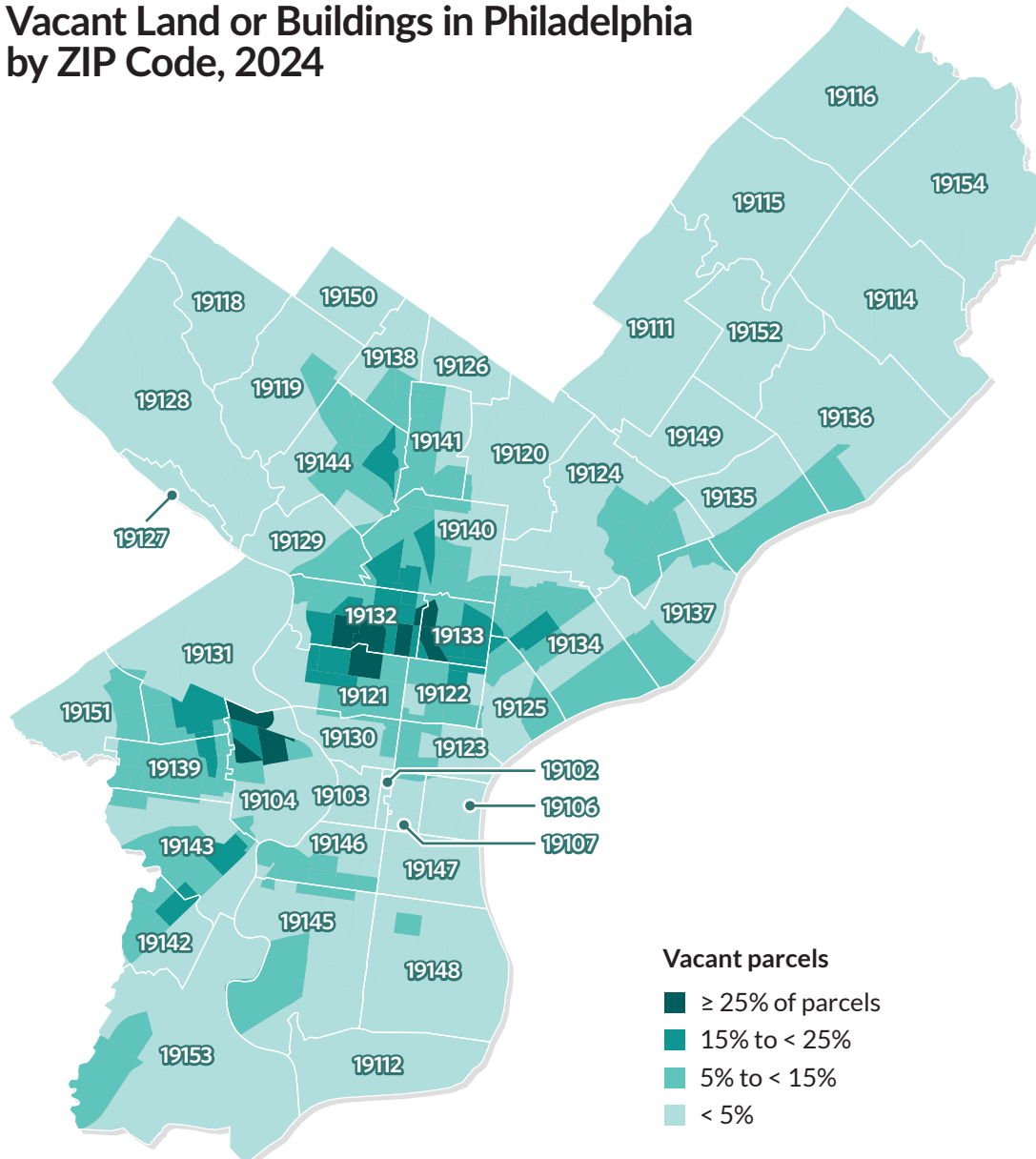
In 2023, there were 15,617 home sales in Philadelphia, a 39% decline from a year earlier. Driven by low interest rates and pandemic-related trends such as an increase in people working from home, 2022 was an exceptional year for home sales. But with rising interest rates, the residential market returned to a more traditional number of sales in 2023.

Source: Data from Kevin C. Gillen, senior research fellow at Drexel University's Lindy Institute for Urban Innovation

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Figure 7

Vacant Land or Buildings in Philadelphia by ZIP Code, 2024



The city of Philadelphia tracks vacancy of both land and buildings by measuring administrative and geographic data such as code violations or water use in order to better understand where parcels are either temporarily unused or vacant over a long period of time. As of this year, approximately 5% of parcels in Philadelphia sit vacant. But the distribution varies dramatically by neighborhood. Parts of North and West Philadelphia have the highest concentration of vacancies, and sections of Center City, the far Northeast, South, and Northwest Philadelphia have the lowest share.

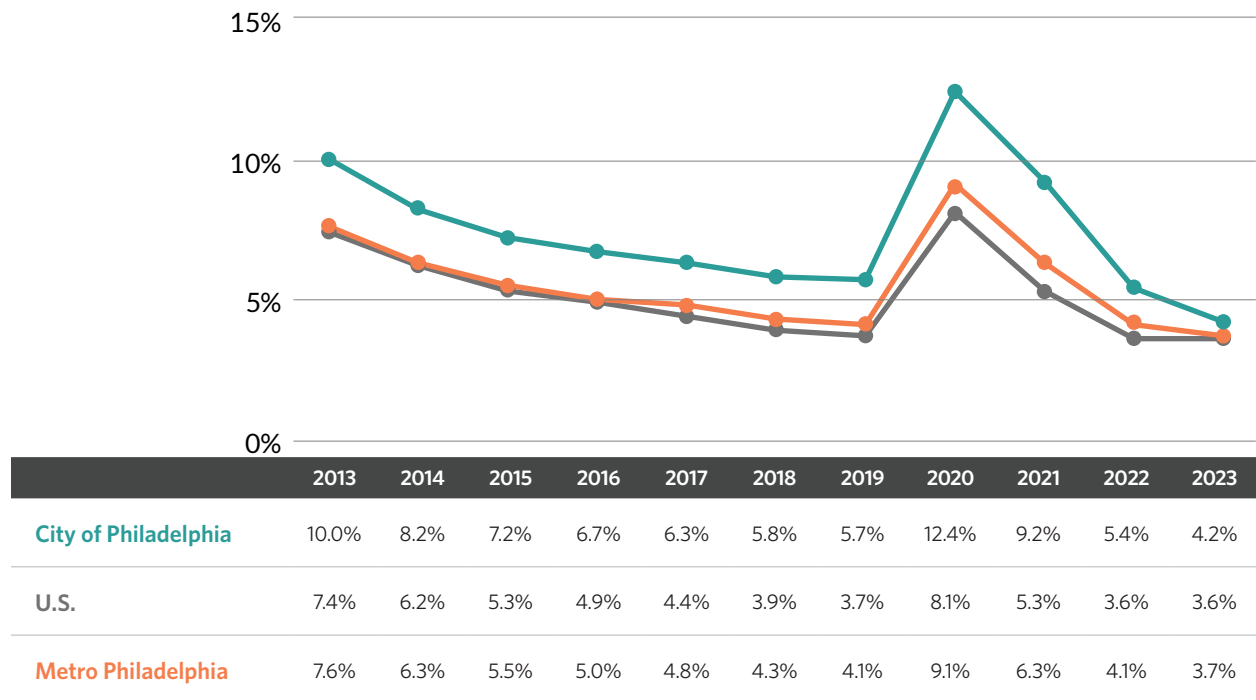
Note: The city of Philadelphia created an aggregated vacancy indicator by combining information from the Department of Licenses and Inspections, Office of Property Assessment, Philadelphia Land Bank, and Philadelphia Water Department. The indicator models land and building vacancy status by 20 different indicators. Parcels that meet at least eight of these criteria are considered vacant.

Source: City of Philadelphia, OpenDataPhilly, January 2024, <https://metadata.phila.gov/#home>

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Figure 8

Unemployment Rate in Philadelphia, 2013-23



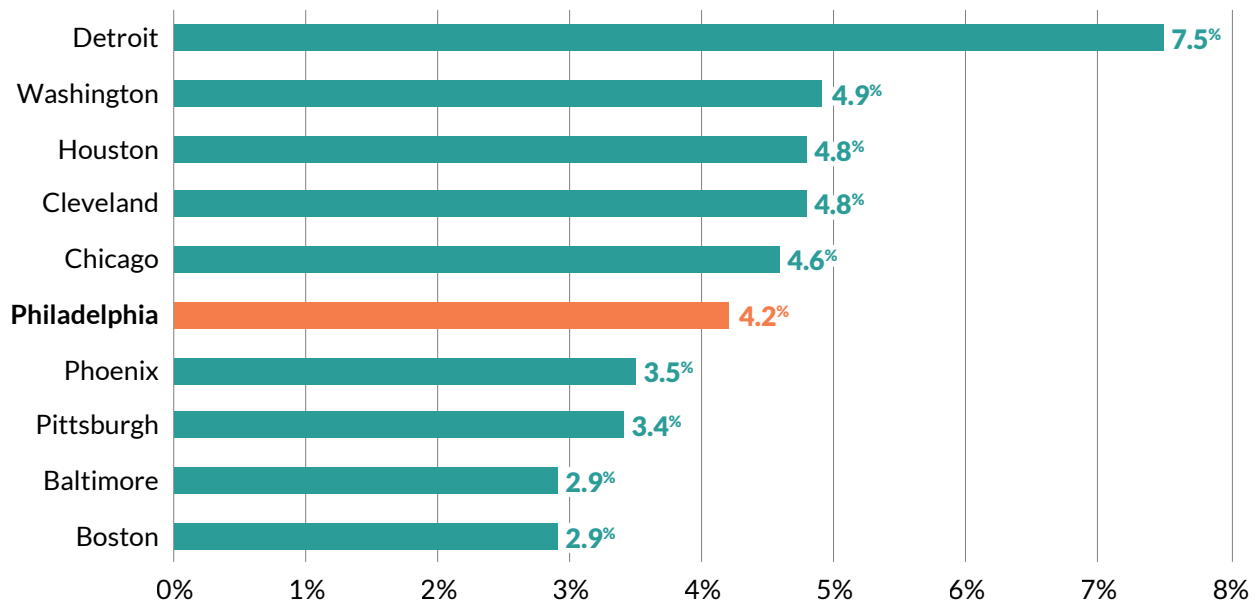
Philadelphia’s unemployment rate continued to decrease from its pandemic-related peak of 12.4% in 2020, falling to 4.2% in 2023. In 2023, unemployment was at its lowest level since at least 1990 for the city and the region.

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

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Figure 9

Unemployment Rate in Philadelphia and Comparable Cities, 2023



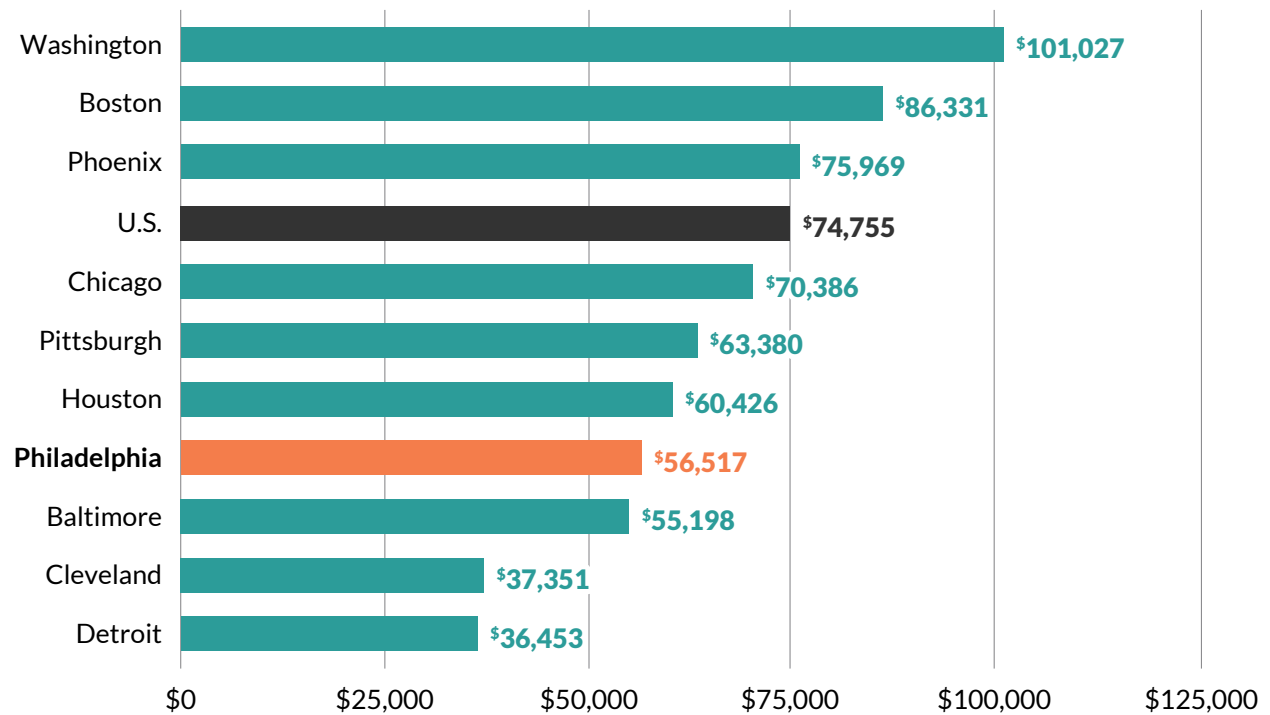
In 2023, Philadelphia had a 4.2% unemployment rate, down 1.7% from 2022. All of the comparable cities had rates below 5% except Detroit, at 7.5%. Boston and Baltimore each had rates below 3%.

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

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Figure 10

Median Household Income in Comparable Cities, 2022



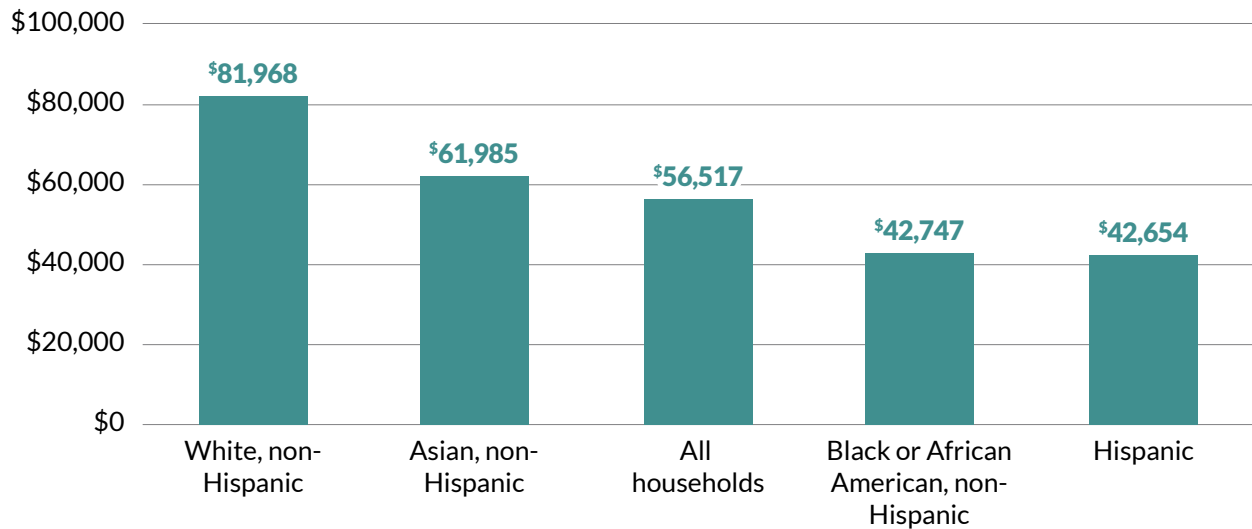
In 2022, Philadelphia's median household income continued to increase, growing 7% from 2021, to \$56,517. For the first time in the 16 years that Pew has published "State of the City" reports, Philadelphia's median income was higher than that of Baltimore, although it remained lower than those in most of the comparison cities as well as the national average of \$74,755.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2022, Table S1903 (Median Income in the Past 12 Months in 2022 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars), <http://data.census.gov>

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Figure 11

Median Household Income in Philadelphia by Race and Ethnicity, 2022



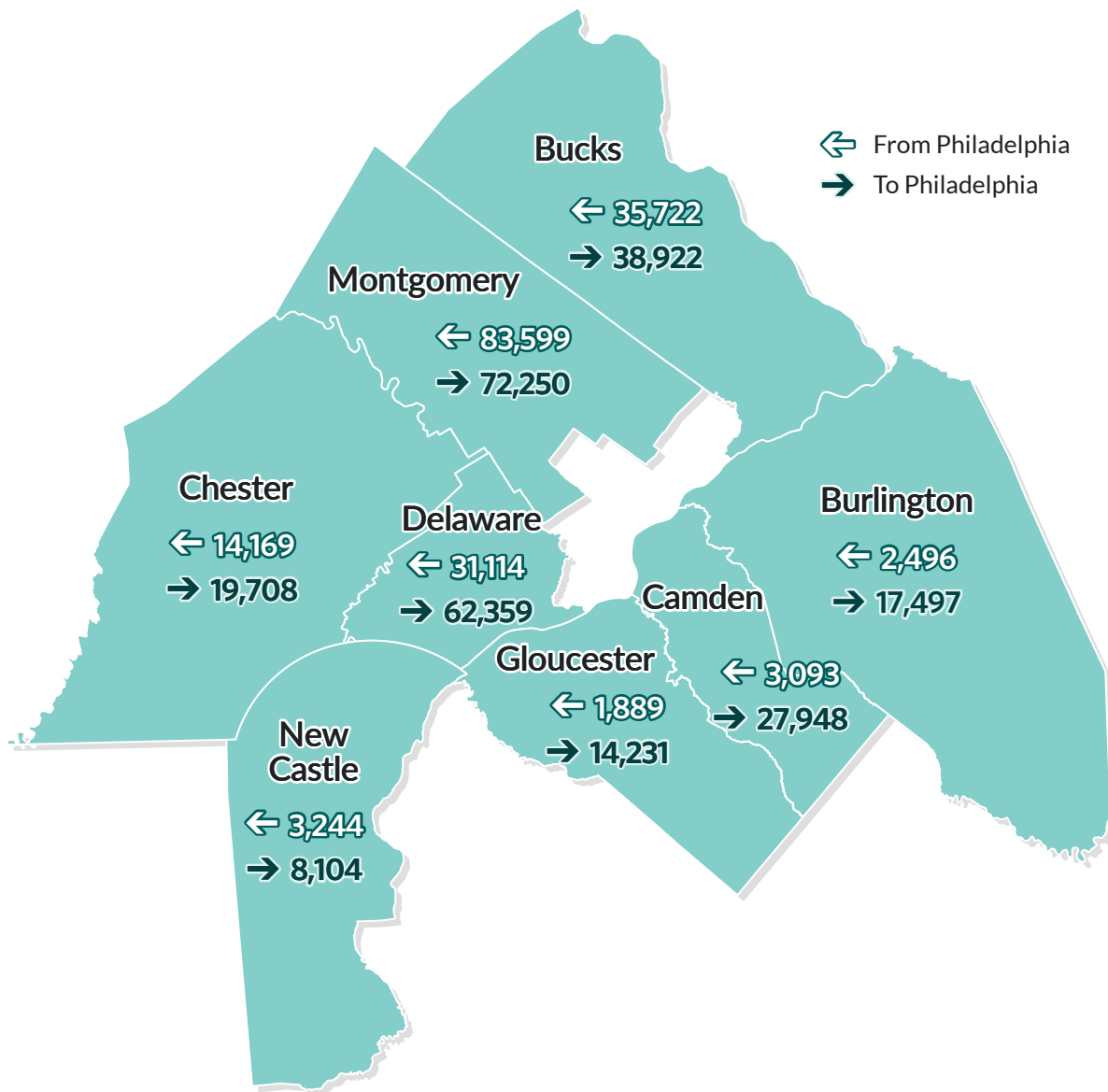
In 2022, median household income varied markedly by race and ethnicity in Philadelphia. White, non-Hispanic households and Asian households earned more than the citywide median, while Black or African American and Hispanic households made less.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2022, Table S1903 (Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months), <http://data.census.gov>

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Figure 12

Commuting To and From Philadelphia for Work, 2021



This figure indicates the average number of people commuting to and from Philadelphia daily for work. Montgomery County, which has a long border with the city, had the greatest number of commuters traveling both to the city (72,250) and from the city (83,599)—accounting for nearly half of all Philadelphians going to the suburbs for work and more than a quarter of suburbanites heading to the city. More than a third of working Philadelphians commute to jobs in the suburbs, primarily in primarily in Montgomery, Bucks, and Delaware counties.

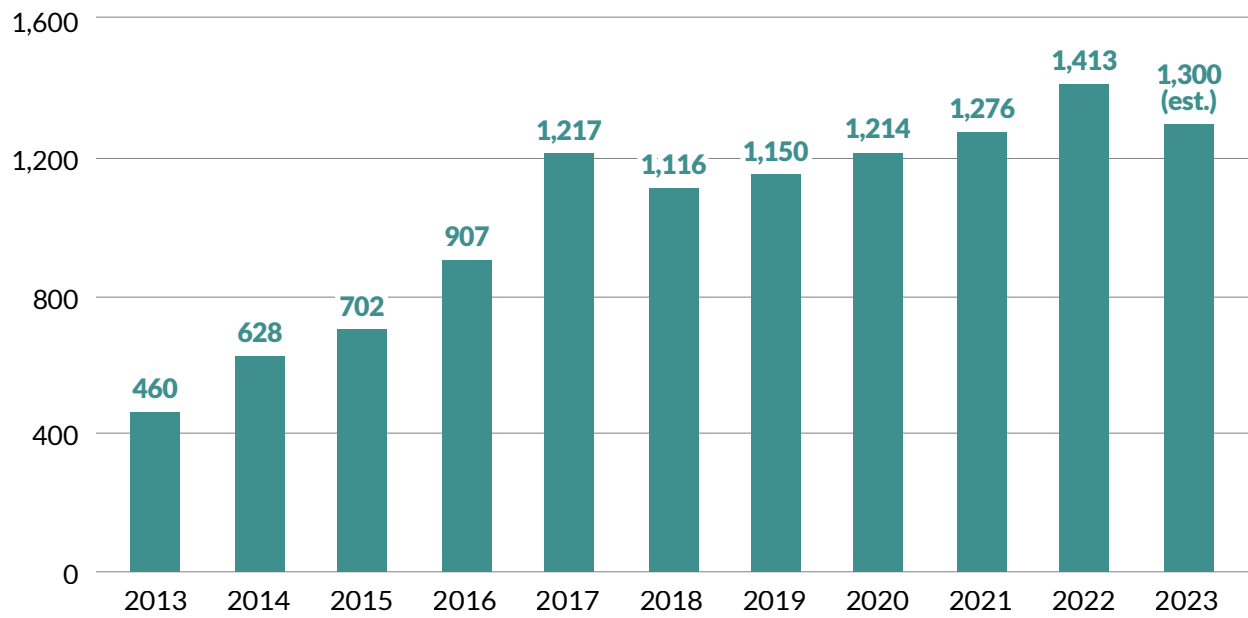
Note: Note: The 2021 commuting data is the most recent available.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, <https://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/>

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Figure 13

Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths in Philadelphia, 2013-23



The city reported an estimated 1,300 unintentional drug overdose deaths in 2023, a decrease of 8% from the previous year's total. If confirmed when official figures become available in May, this would be the city's second-highest total on record, after the 1,413 deaths reported in 2022. Unintentional overdose deaths have exceeded 1,100 in each of the past seven years in Philadelphia.

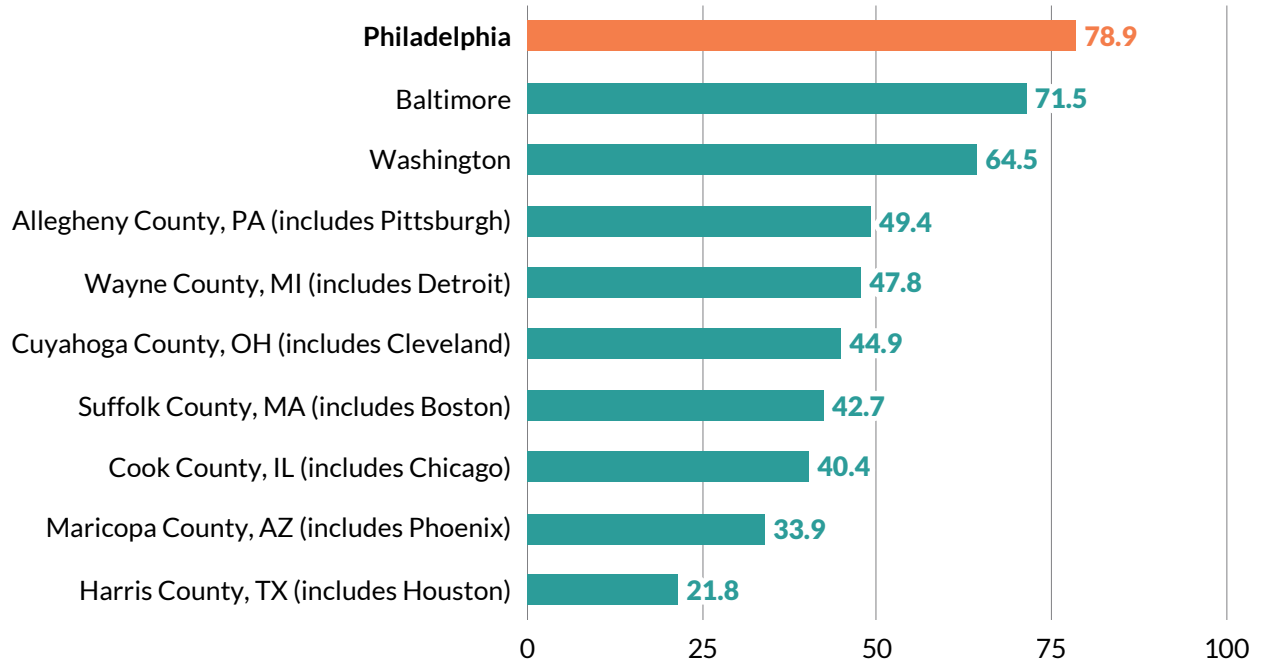
Source: Philadelphia Department of Public Health

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Figure 14

Drug Overdose Deaths Per 100,000 Residents, 2022

Philadelphia and comparable cities and counties



In 2022, Philadelphia reported 78.9 deaths per 100,000 residents from unintentional drug overdoses, the highest figure among the comparable cities and counties. In 2022, 75% of the people who died of an unintentional overdose in Philadelphia were ages 35-64, with the greatest number of deaths among those ages 55-64.

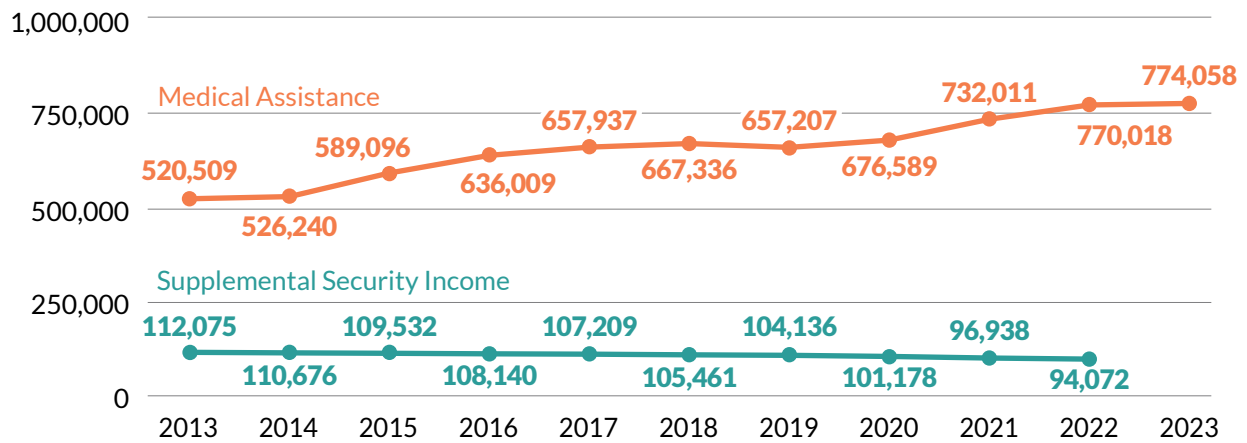
Note: Overdose data is collected at the county level. Data includes deaths considered unintentional or undetermined, and rates are age-adjusted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, allowing for fairer comparisons among populations in different jurisdictions.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC WONDER Database, "Multiple Cause of Death Data," 2022, <https://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd.html>

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Figure 15

Public Benefit Enrollment Trends in Philadelphia, 2013-23



In 2023, some 774,058 Philadelphians—nearly half of the city’s population—were enrolled in Medical Assistance, also known as Medicaid. The figure was slightly higher than it had been in 2022, despite the April 2023 expiration of expanded eligibility for benefits. By December, the number of enrollees declined by 8% compared with the start of the year. The number of people receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) decreased slightly from 2013 to 2022, the latest year for which that data was available. Some 94,072 Philadelphians were enrolled in SSI in 2022, accounting for about 29% of all recipients in Pennsylvania.

Note: 2023 Supplemental Security Income enrollment data was not available at the time of publication.

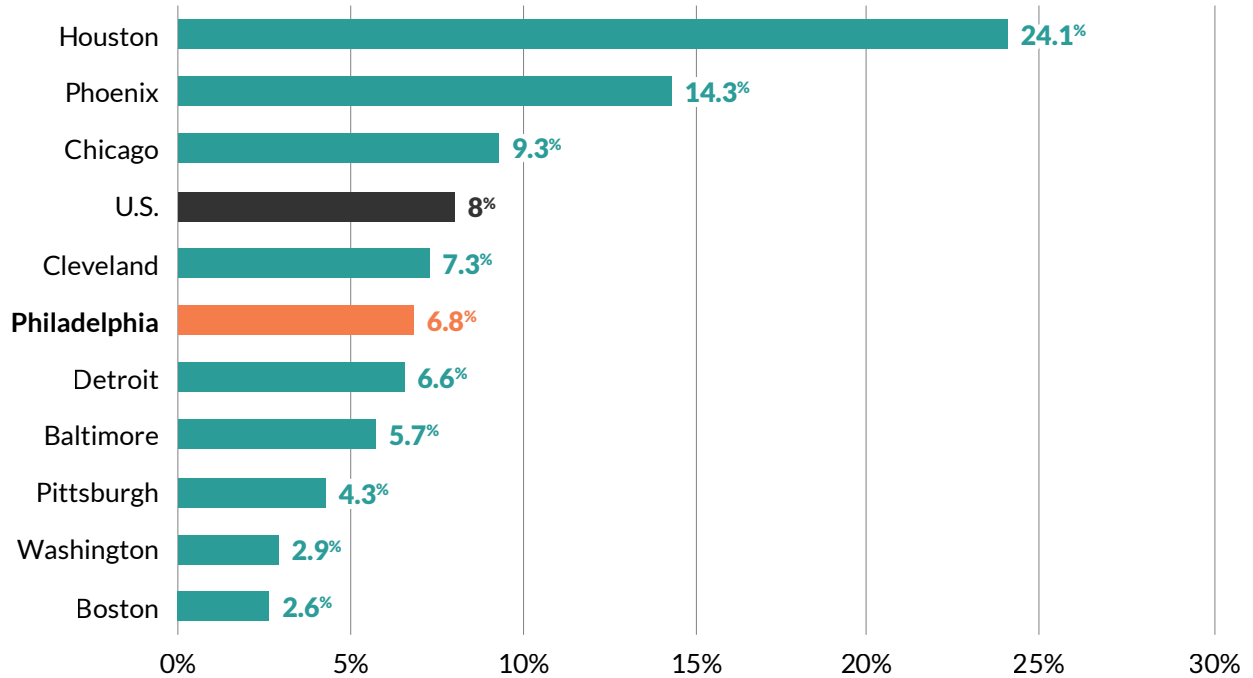
Sources: Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Medical Assistance, Food Stamps, and Cash Assistance Statistics Reports, https://data.pa.gov/Human-Services/Medical-Assistance-Enrollment-July-2003-Current-Mo/2ght-hfn9/about_data (Medical Assistance enrollment data); Social Security Administration, “SSI Recipient by State and County,” https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_sc/index.html (Supplemental Security Income enrollment data)

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Figure 16

Residents Without Health Insurance, 2022

Philadelphia and comparable cities



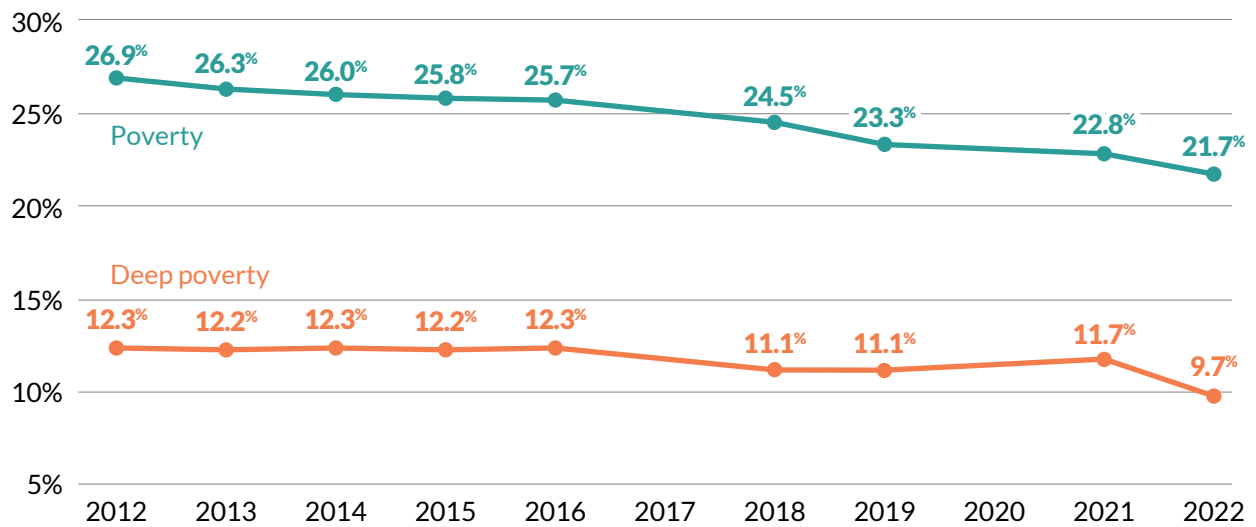
The percentage of Philadelphians without health insurance continued to decrease in 2022, dropping to 6.8%. Of the comparison cities, Houston had the highest percentage of residents without health insurance, and it is the only comparison city located in a state that has not expanded Medicaid access under the Affordable Care Act.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2022, Table B27010 (Types of Health Insurance Coverage by Age), <http://data.census.gov>

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Figure 17

Poverty and Deep Poverty in Philadelphia, 2012-22



In 2022, the city's poverty rate was 21.7%, down about 1 percentage point from the previous year and the lowest rate the city had recorded since the 1990s. The deep poverty rate, the share of residents with incomes at 50% or less of the federal poverty level, dropped to 9.7%, representing about 148,000 Philadelphians. A Philadelphia household of four was considered to be living in poverty in 2023 if its income was \$31,200 or less, and in deep poverty with an income of \$15,600 or less.

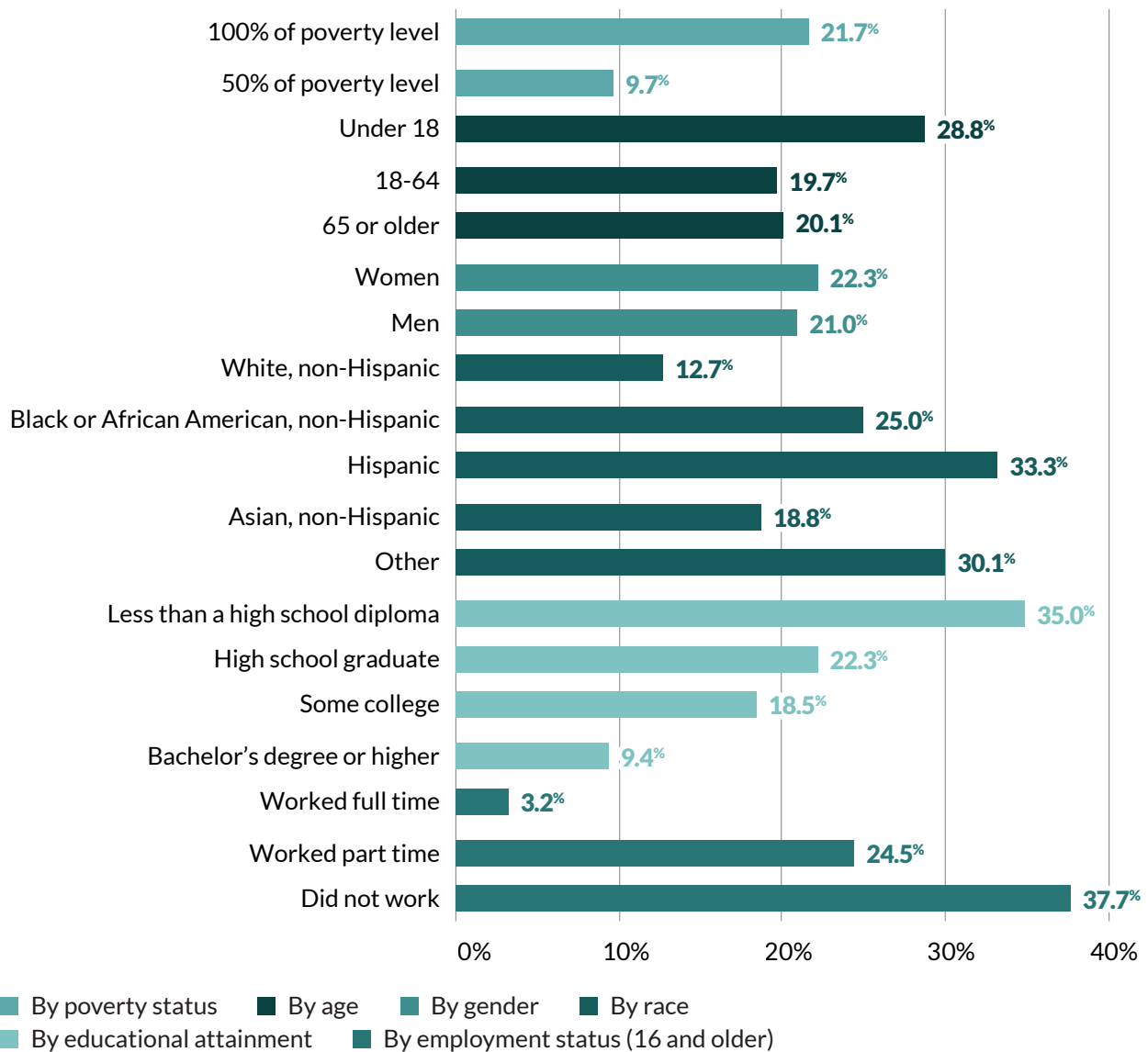
Note: Data for 2017 and 2020 is not included. Several years ago, the Census Bureau identified an error in some of its 2017 data for Philadelphia and recommended that it not be used. And the bureau did not release one-year American Community Survey data for 2020, citing the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on data quality.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2012-22, Table S1701 (Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months), <http://data.census.gov>

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Figure 18

Profile of People Living in Poverty in Philadelphia, 2022



While nearly 22% of Philadelphians lived in poverty in 2022, the percentage varied widely among demographic groups. For instance, nearly 29% of children under age 18 in the city were living below the poverty line. Groups with poverty rates of more than 30% included individuals who did not work, those without high school diplomas, Philadelphians of Hispanic origin, and members of racial groups other than White, Black, or Asian. Additionally, 3.2% of Philadelphians who worked full time lived in poverty.

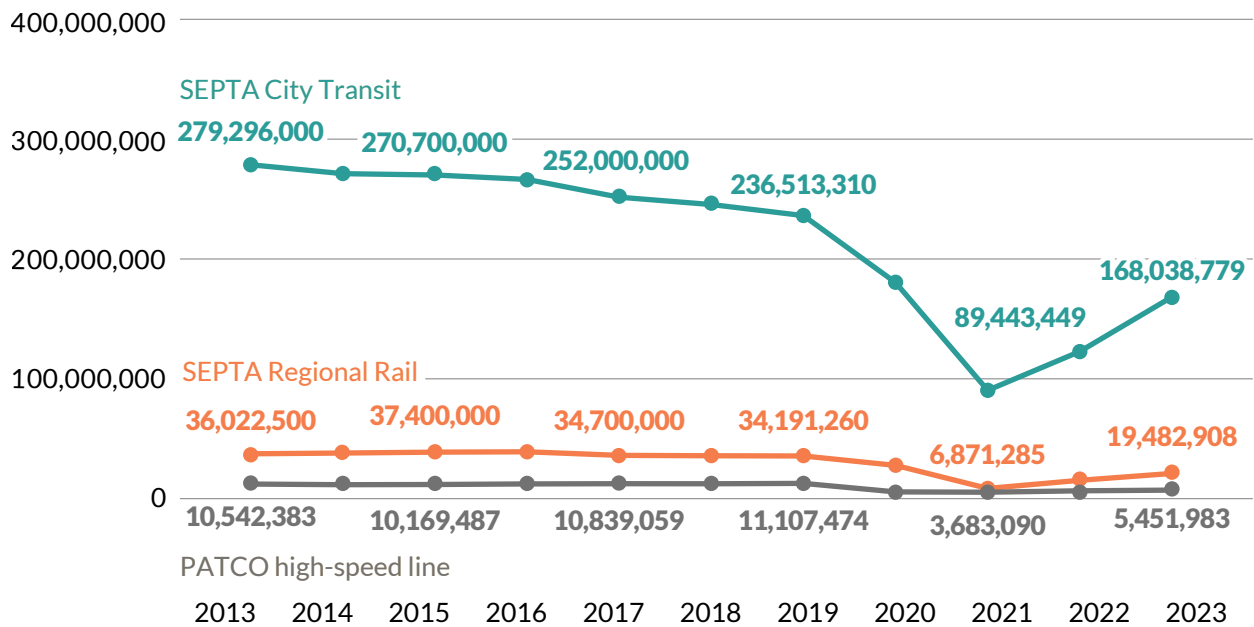
Note: The U.S. Census Bureau's "other" category includes all non-Hispanic residents who identify as multiracial or as members of any racial group other than Black, White, or Asian.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2022, Table S1701 (Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months), <http://data.census.gov>

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Figure 19

Local Mass Transit Ridership, 2013-23



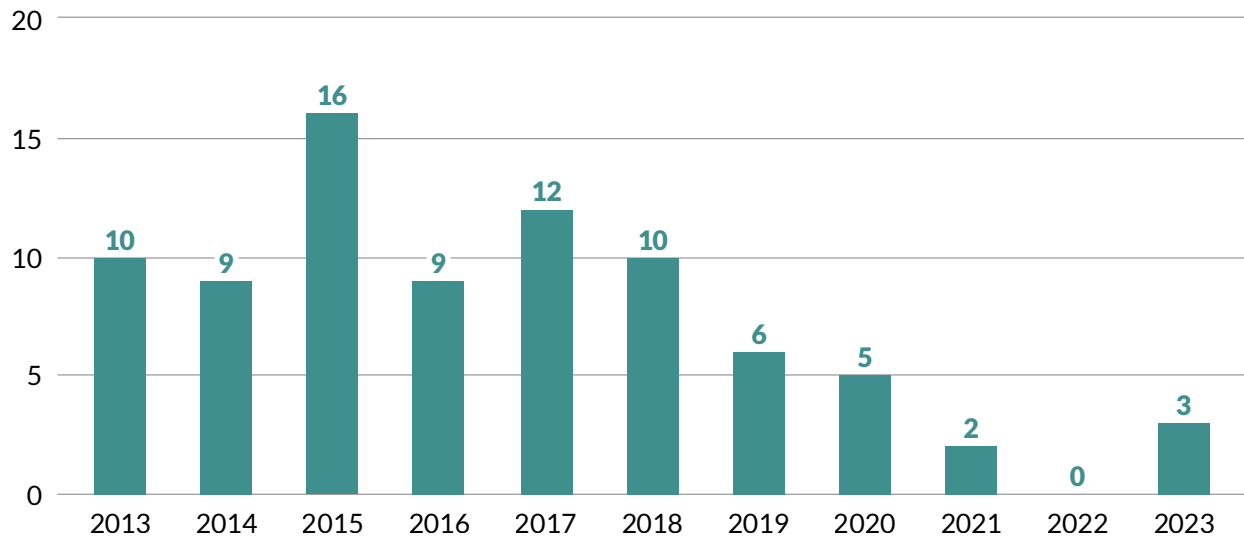
In 2023, mass transit ridership in and around Philadelphia continued to climb but remained well below pre-pandemic levels. Compared with 2019, the last pre-COVID year, total ridership was down 29% for SEPTA City Transit, 43% for SEPTA Regional Rail, and 51% for the PATCO high-speed line. With COVID-19 federal relief funding soon to expire, SEPTA warned of an impending fiscal cliff that could result in reduced service and higher fares. In his state budget proposal, which is being considered by the General Assembly, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro has proposed boosting state funding to support the agency's operations.

Sources: SEPTA (City Transit and Regional Rail data); Delaware River Port Authority (PATCO high-speed line data)

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Figure 20

Days With Unhealthy Air in Philadelphia, 2013-23



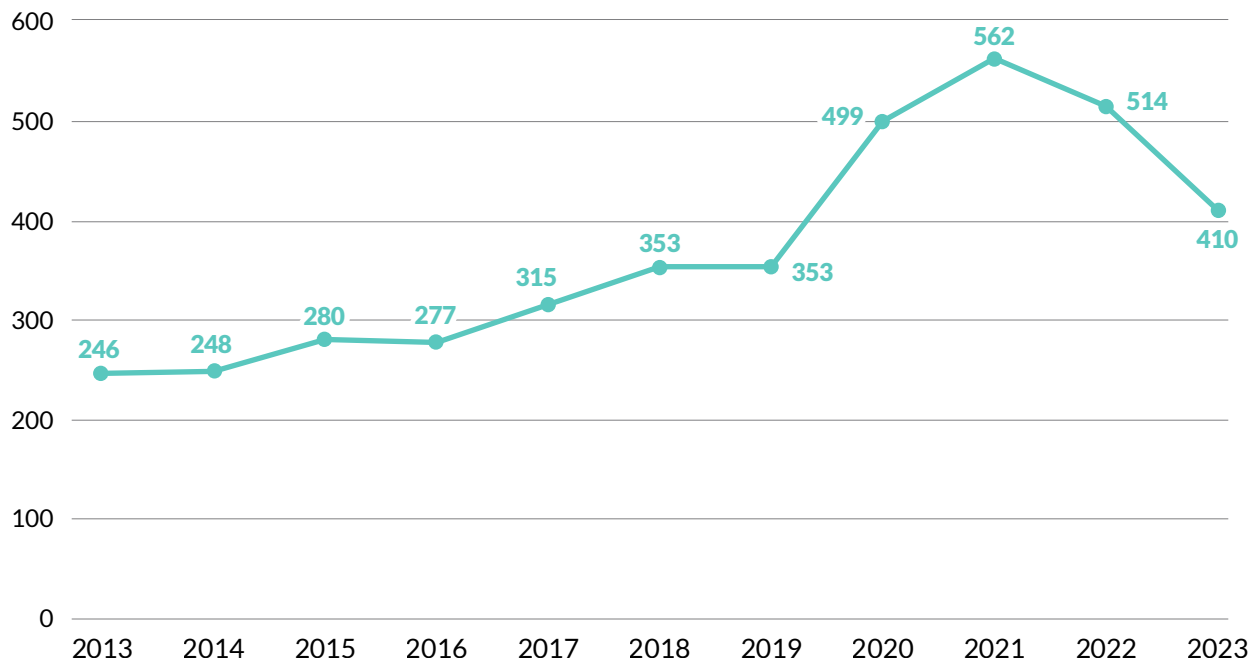
Philadelphia had only three days with unhealthy air in 2023, a relatively low figure compared with previous years. Those three days coincided with the Canadian wildfires in summer 2023 that prompted code-red alerts throughout much of the eastern United States. Generally, the number of days in which Philadelphia has had unhealthy air has been dropping since 2019, when the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery closed.

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Air Quality Index Report," 2013-23, <https://www.epa.gov/outdoor-air-quality-data/air-quality-index-report>

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Figure 21

Homicides in Philadelphia, 2013-23



The number of homicides dropped to 410 in Philadelphia in 2023, down 20% from 2022. Even so, homicides remained historically high in Philadelphia. On her first day in office, Mayor Cherelle Parker signed an executive order declaring a public safety emergency, which requires the city government to establish a strategy for addressing and reducing violent crime.

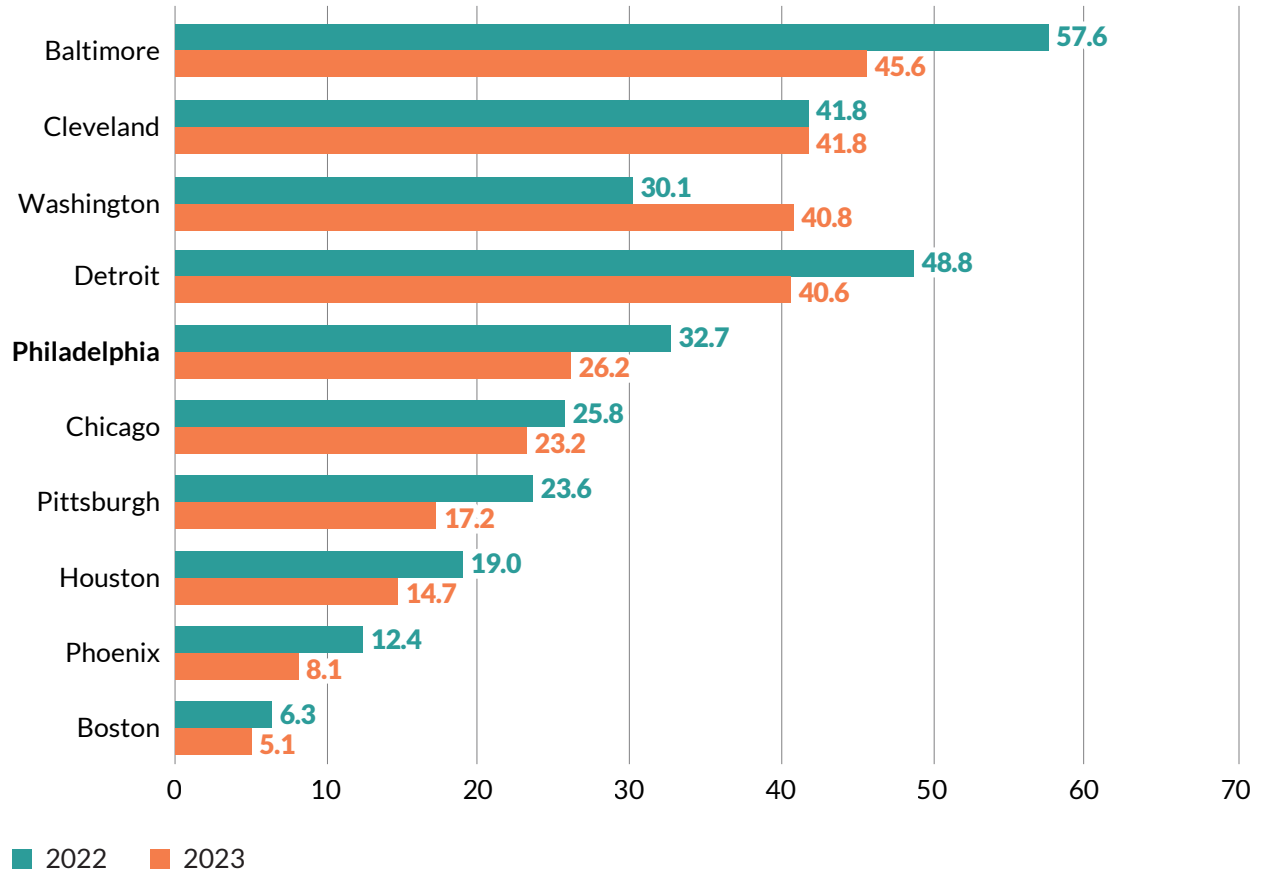
Source: Philadelphia Police Department

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Figure 22

Homicide Rates Per 100,000 Residents, 2022 and 2023

Philadelphia and comparison cities



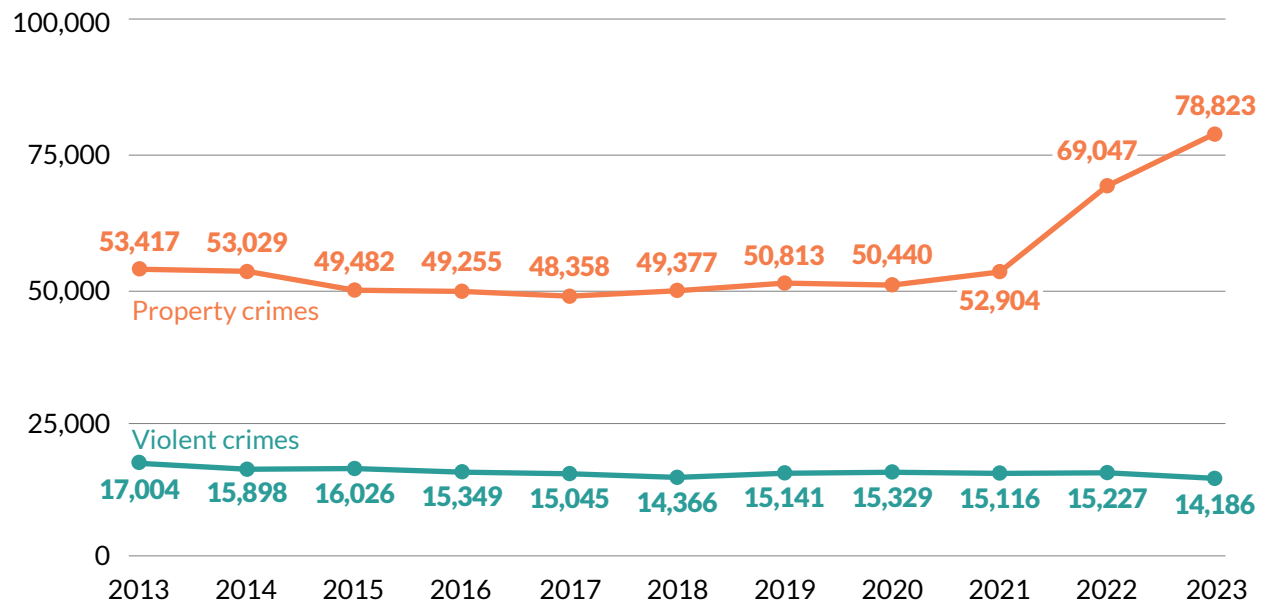
In 2023, many cities—including Philadelphia—saw a reduction in homicide rates from the previous year. Other cities with declining rates were Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Phoenix, and Pittsburgh. The rate in Cleveland remained flat, while Washington recorded a 10-percentage-point increase.

Sources: Police departments in all 10 cities; population numbers drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places, July 1, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popost/2020s-total-cities-and-towns.html>

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Figure 23

Property Crimes and Violent Crimes in Philadelphia, 2013-23



While there was a decline in violent crimes in 2023, property crimes continued the steep rise they have recorded in the past several years, reaching 78,823 and bringing the total number of major crimes—which include both violent crimes and property crimes—to 93,009, the highest level in more than 20 years. In a single year, retail thefts increased by 28% and stolen vehicles by an astounding 70%; in 2023, stolen vehicles accounted for 25% of all major crimes in Philadelphia. At the same time, thefts from automobiles were down 17%, thefts from individuals dropped by 15%, and commercial burglaries were down 15%. The number of violent crimes was the lowest in a decade.

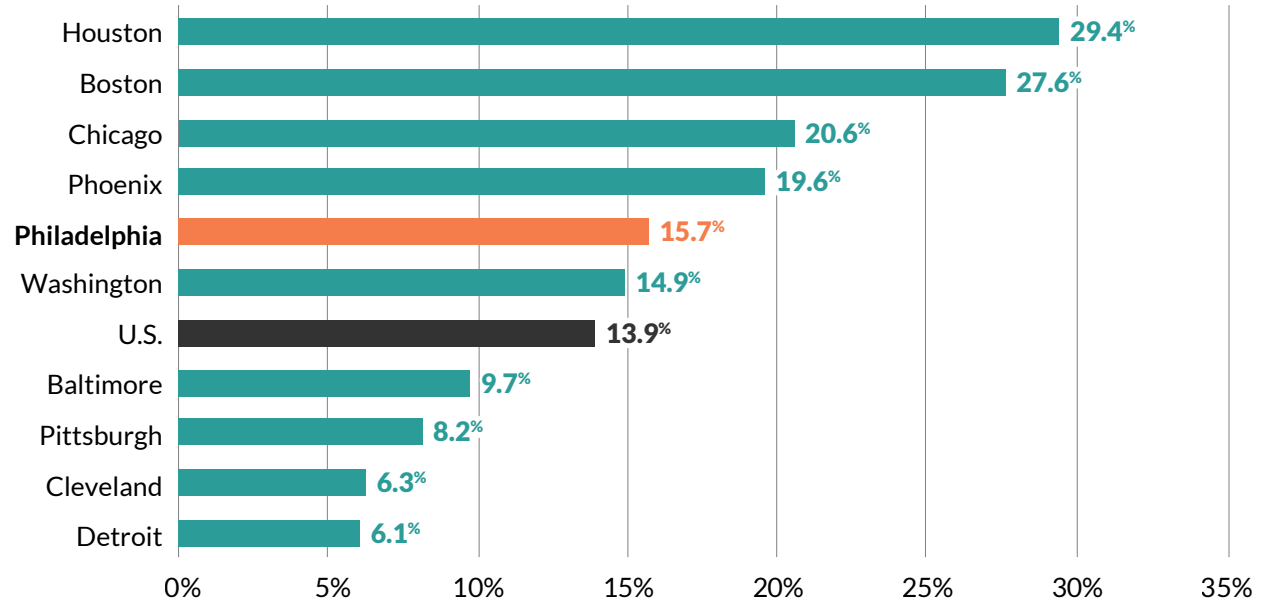
Source: Philadelphia Police Department

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Figure 24

Percentage of Residents Born Outside the U.S., 2022

Philadelphia and comparison cities



In 2022, 15.7% of Philadelphia’s population was born outside the U.S., higher than the national level of 13.9% and placing Philadelphia fifth among the comparison cities in terms of its share of foreign-born residents. At the high end of the range, more than a quarter of Houston and Boston residents were born outside the U.S.; at the lower end, only 6% of Cleveland and Detroit residents were born abroad.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, one-year estimates, 2022, Table B05002 (Place of Birth by Nativity and Citizenship Status), <http://data.census.gov>

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