



# Philadelphia 2022

The State of the City

## Overview

Two years into the pandemic, Philadelphia is showing signs of an economic and public health recovery, yet some serious challenges remain.

As of April 2022, the city had recorded more than 300,000 COVID-19 cases and over 5,000 deaths since the virus was first detected in Philadelphia in March 2020. A decline in coronavirus cases in the early fall of 2021 had offered the promise of recovery—a prospect disrupted by a surge of new cases in late 2021 and early 2022. By February 2022, the city's case numbers had declined sharply, although new surges in Europe and Asia around the same time added fresh uncertainty about the future trajectory of COVID-19 cases in Philadelphia.

Meanwhile, the city's economy is showing positive signs. The unemployment rate dropped to 5.8% by December 2021, returning to the same rate the city had reported just before the pandemic. Although job growth is still variable by sector, the professional and technical sectors are rebounding to pre-pandemic employment levels. Delinquency in paying bills among Philadelphia's small and midsize businesses steadily declined through 2021; though, at 7.1%, these late payments remain at their highest point since March 2020.

Despite the fact that the city's population has been steadily increasing since 2007 and reached 1.6 million in 2020—a 5% increase since the 2010 census—its 2021 population dropped by 1.7% in one year, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates. The decrease, which many U.S. counties and metro areas experienced, was attributed in part to migration loss as well as increased mortality intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic interrupted a period of unprecedented growth for Philadelphia, but some harsher realities underlaid that success story. For example, before COVID-19, the city's economy was expanding, with an impressive increase in total jobs. However, those employment gains were not equally distributed. Opportunities for city residents tended to be low-wage positions in low-paying sectors of the economy; as a result, wages for Philadelphians working in the city declined by 5% over almost a decade. The loss of jobs from the pandemic, concentrated in lower-wage sectors such as the retail and leisure and hospitality sectors, had a disproportionate impact on city workers in those positions—especially Black and female workers.

And in recent months, safety remained a major concern for Philadelphians, threatening all aspects of Philadelphia's return to pre-pandemic life. In a 2022 poll by The Pew Charitable Trusts, 70% of residents cited the combination of crime, drugs, and public safety as the biggest issue facing the city. At the center of this challenge is gun violence, which rose throughout the country in 2021, with Philadelphia alone reporting 2,326 shootings that year. Despite a slight decrease in total violent crime in the city, gun violence soared—including a 28% increase in robberies with a firearm in the past year.

In addition, the number of homicides in Philadelphia has been rising each year for the past eight years; in 2021, it reached 562, a historic high—and more than double the number recorded in 2013.

At the same time, Philadelphia has also been among the cities hardest hit by the nation's opioid problem. In 2019, the city recorded 1,150 deaths from drug overdoses. That figure rose to 1,214 in 2020 and reached an estimated 1,250 in 2021. In recent years, more than 4 in 5 of these deaths involved fentanyl, the deadly synthetic opioid that has spread past the heroin market into other illegal drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine. And, notably, 68% of Hispanic residents, compared with half of Black residents and White residents, indicated in a 2022 Pew poll that opioid use is having a negative impact on their neighborhoods.

Despite temporary financial relief through the federal government's American Rescue Plan Act, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused uncertainty over how Philadelphia will fund itself in coming years. The city's economic recovery demands a local government response, which requires secure fiscal footing. Yet Philadelphia's

government is projecting that 15% of commuters will never return to working in the city, creating a long-term impact on city revenue, particularly the wage tax, which has typically generated almost half of Philadelphia's local tax revenue. And receipts from other levies, including business and consumption taxes, have also declined since March 2020, adding to the city's financial challenge.

To set a course for Philadelphia beyond the pandemic, its leaders must navigate several complex issues—chief among them adjusting to a changing economic landscape while leaving sufficient funds to provide needed services in a high-poverty city. But just as important to the city's future will be its leaders' ability to help support a business recovery that provides jobs and career prospects for all residents while also addressing the twin specters of increased gun violence and high drug overdose death rates.

**Contact:** Elizabeth Lowe, communications officer

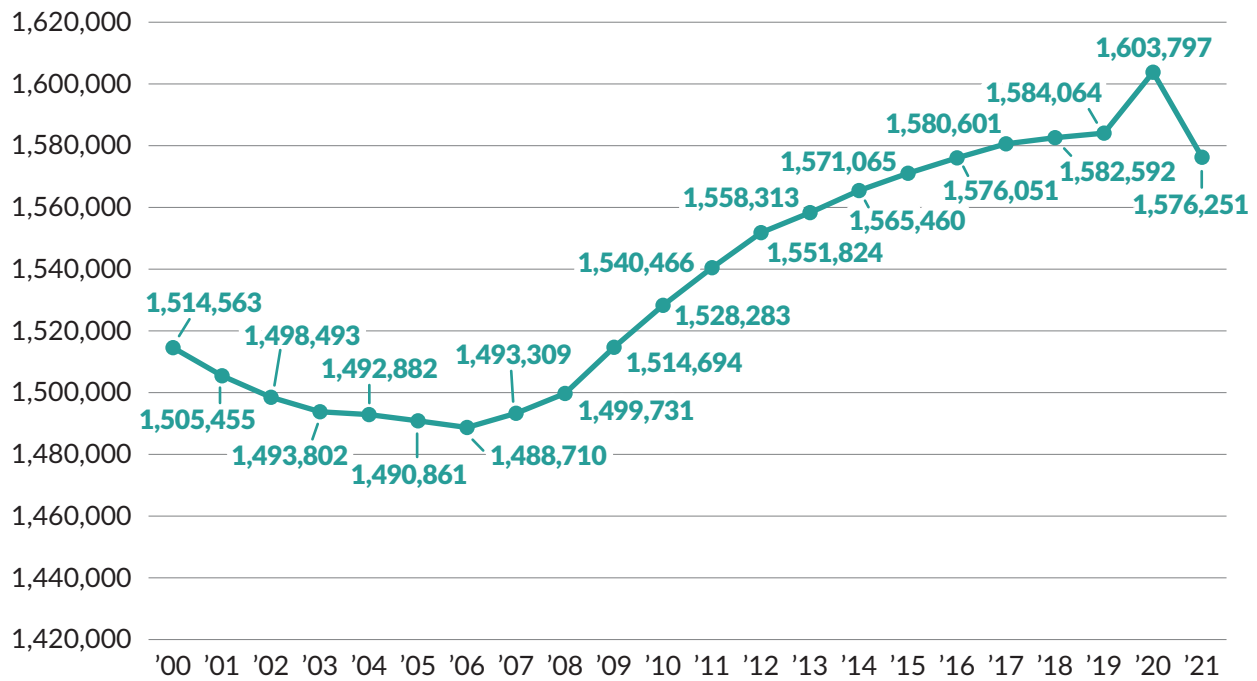
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**Project website:** [pewtrusts.org/philaresearch](https://pewtrusts.org/philaresearch)

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Figure 1  
**Philadelphia Population, 2000-21**



The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Philadelphia’s population dropped in 2021—the first decline since 2006. From 2020 to 2021, the city’s population fell by 1.7%. The Census Bureau attributed some population changes in U.S. counties in part to migration loss and increased mortality intensified by the pandemic.

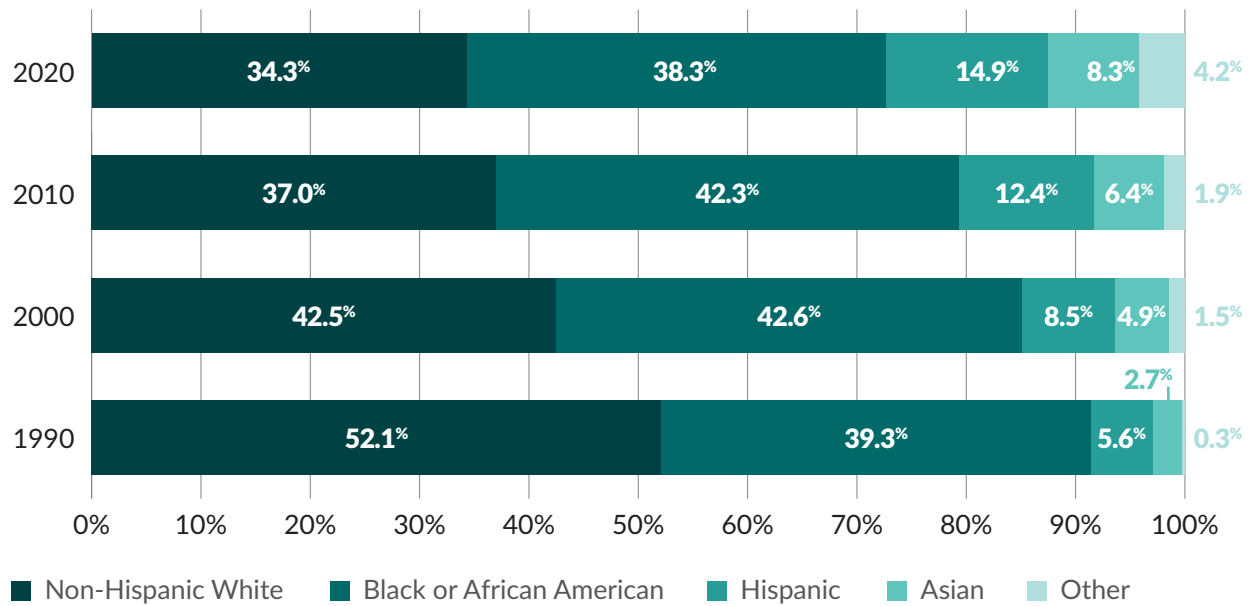
Note: The U.S. Census Bureau releases annual population estimates between the decennial counts. The estimates suggest population trends but are not exact counts of the number of residents.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, “2000-2010 Intercensal Estimates,” <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/intercensal-2000-2010-counties.html>; U.S. Census Bureau, “Population and Housing Unit Estimates,” 2011-19, <http://www.census.gov/popest>; U.S. Census Bureau, “County Population Totals: 2020-2021,” <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-total.html>

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Figure 2

## Racial and Ethnic Changes in Philadelphia, 1990-2020

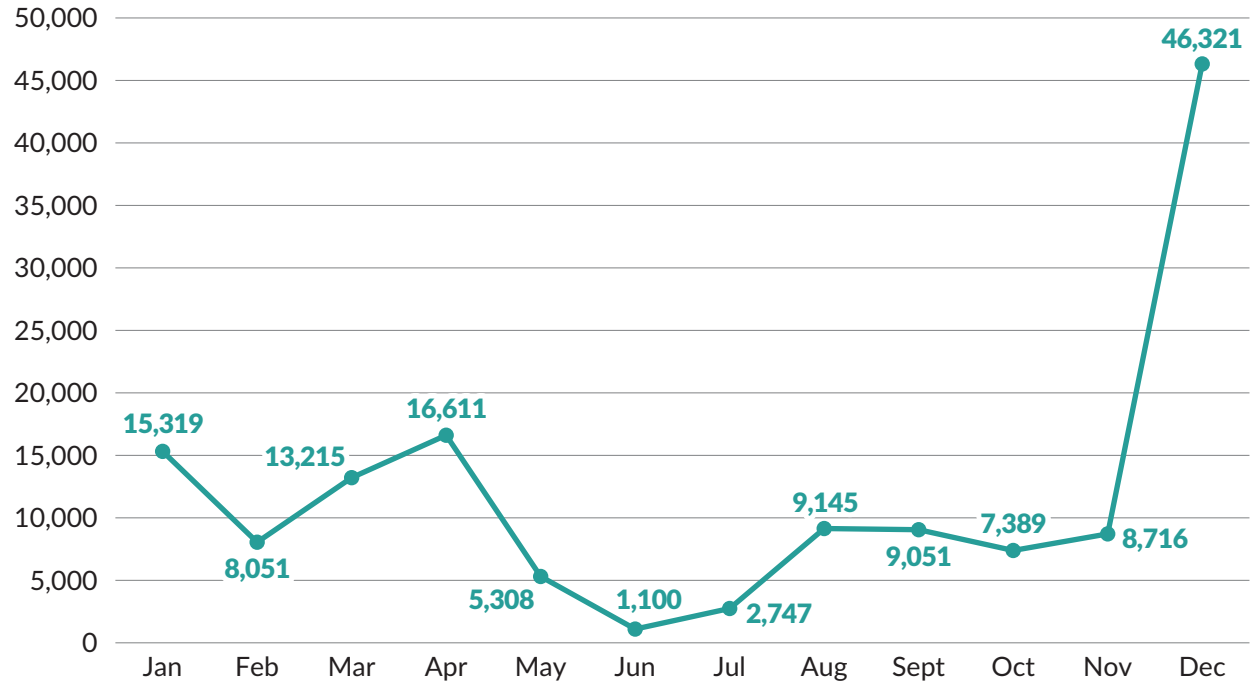


Philadelphia's racial and ethnic composition has changed noticeably since 1990. The non-Hispanic White share of the city's population shrank from just over half to roughly a third in 2020, the latest year for which data was available. And the Hispanic and Asian shares nearly tripled during this time. The share of Black or African American residents has remained relatively stable.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 Decennial Census reports, <https://data.census.gov>

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Figure 3  
**COVID-19 Cases in Philadelphia, 2021**  
Monthly count



From when the pandemic began in March 2020 through December 2021, at least 239,585 Philadelphians were diagnosed with COVID-19, and 4,233 died as a result of the virus. By the end of 2021, when the more easily transmissible omicron variant started to spread, the city's monthly case count had more than doubled from the previous high of 16,611 in April.

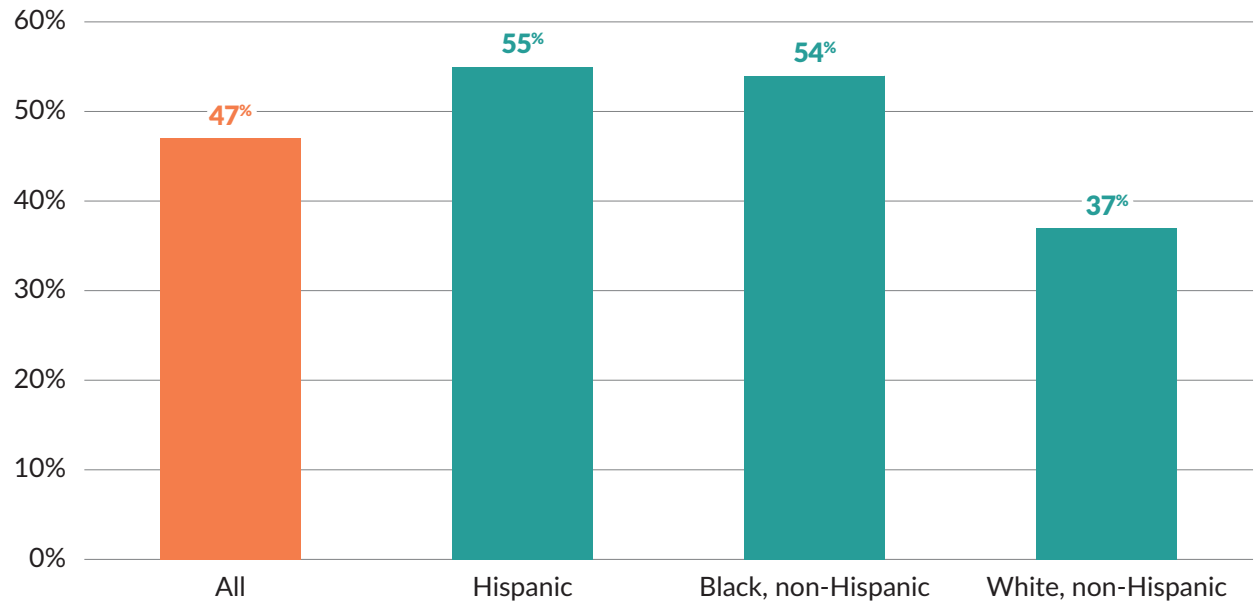
Source: City of Philadelphia, "COVID-19 Overview," <https://www.phila.gov/programs/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/data/testing/>

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Figure 4

## Philadelphians Who Know Someone Who Has Died From COVID-19, 2022

By race and ethnicity



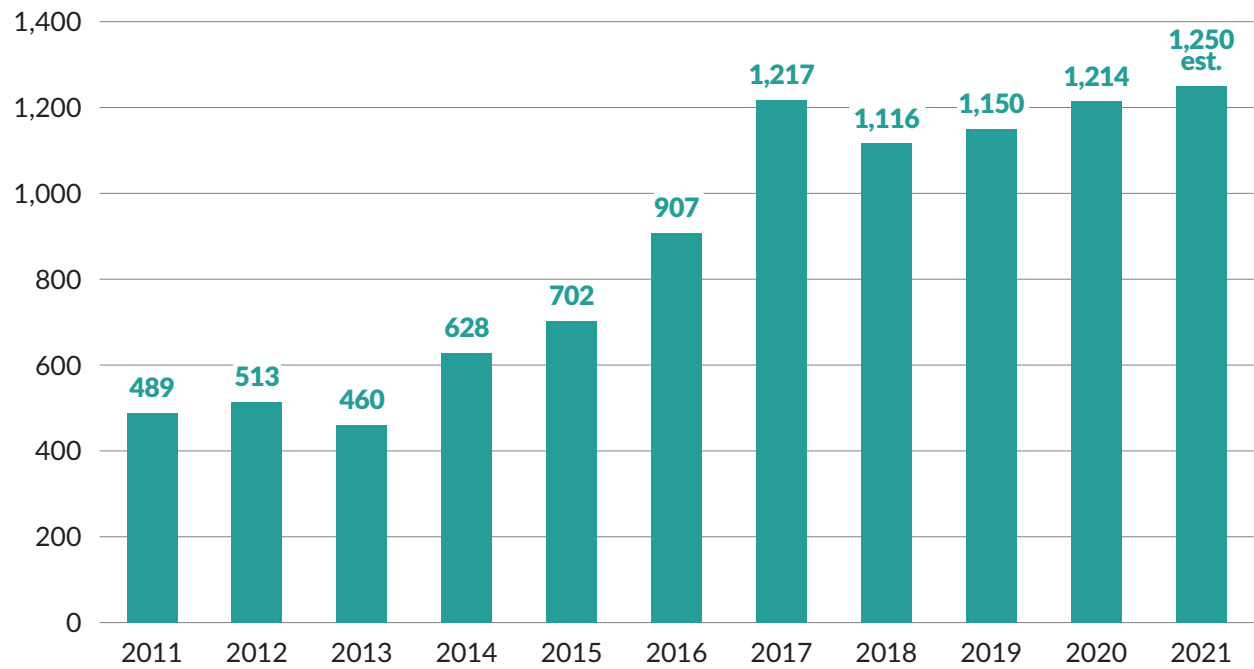
In the January 2022 Pew Philadelphia Poll, 47% of Philadelphians indicated that they knew someone who had died from the coronavirus during the pandemic, up from 24% in August 2020. Consistent with the 2020 poll, there are notable differences by race and ethnicity in the share of residents who know someone who has died. More than half of Hispanic and Black Philadelphians know someone who died from the virus, compared with more than one-third of White residents.

Source: The Pew Philadelphia Poll, 2022

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Figure 5

## Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths in Philadelphia, 2011-21



City officials estimate Philadelphia's 2021 death toll from drug overdoses at 1,250, slightly above the peak recorded in 2017.

Note: The 2021 number is an estimate. These figures apply to all unintentional drug overdose deaths that occurred in Philadelphia. "Unintentional drug overdose" is a determination used by the Philadelphia Medical Examiner's Office.

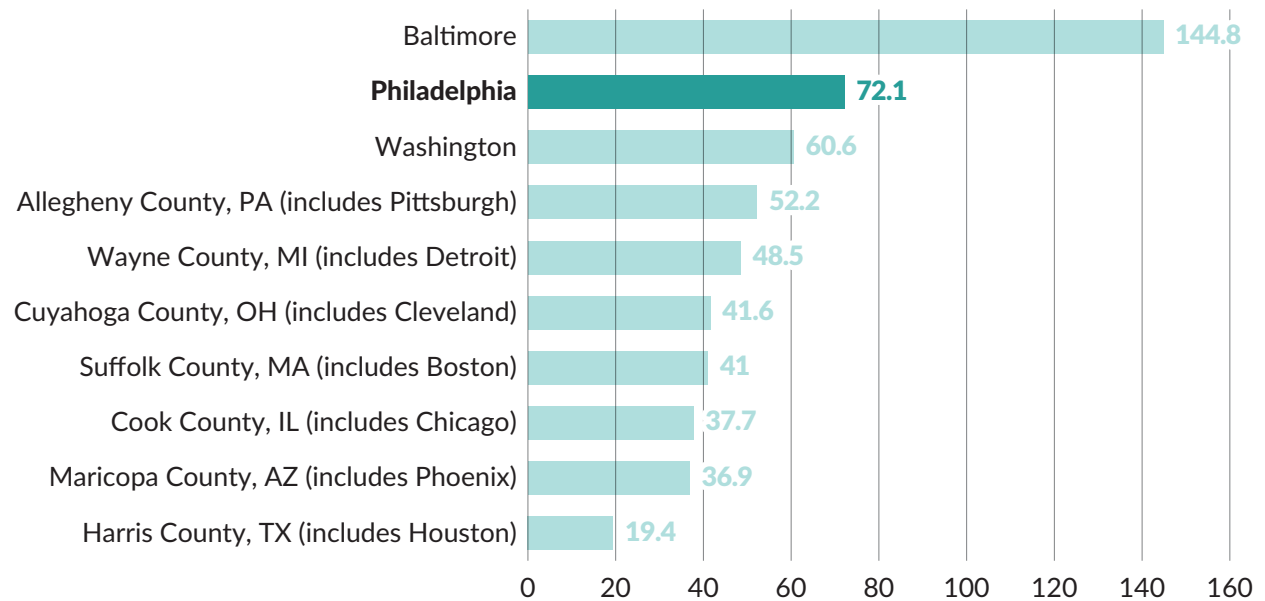
Source: Philadelphia Managing Director's Office

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Figure 6

## Drug Overdose Deaths per 100,000 Residents, 2020



Philadelphia reported 72 drug overdose deaths for every 100,000 residents in 2020, the second-highest among all counties in this figure. Overdose data is collected at the county level. In 2020, Philadelphia surpassed its previous 2019 high of 64.3 deaths per 100,000 residents by 12% and saw its biggest surge in drug overdose deaths since 2017.

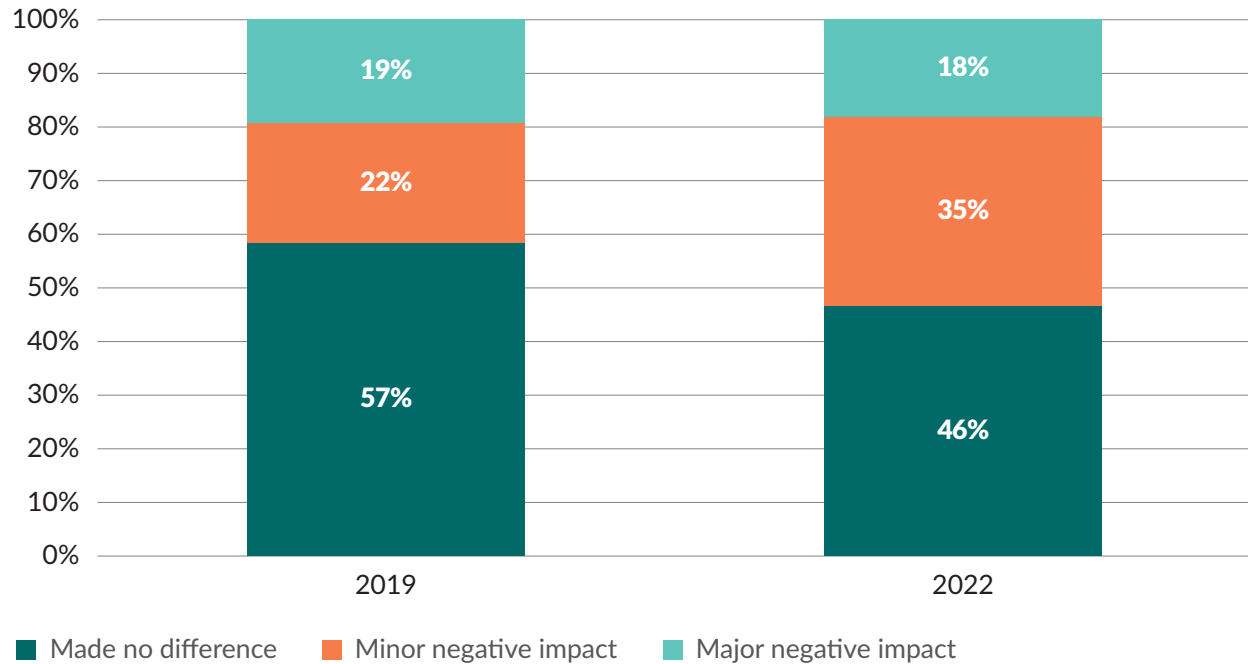
Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC WONDER Database, "Multiple Cause of Death Data," <https://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd.html>

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Figure 7

## Philadelphians' Views of the Impact of Opioid Use on Quality of Life in Their Neighborhoods

2019 and 2022



Before the pandemic, 41% of Philadelphians said opioid use had an impact on the quality of life in their neighborhoods. Today, a majority (53%) say opioid use has affected their neighborhoods, driven primarily by an increase in the number of residents indicating that there was a “minor negative impact.” Sixty-eight percent of Hispanic Philadelphians say that opioid use has had a negative impact on their neighborhoods, compared with approximately half of White residents and half of Black residents.

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because of rounding.

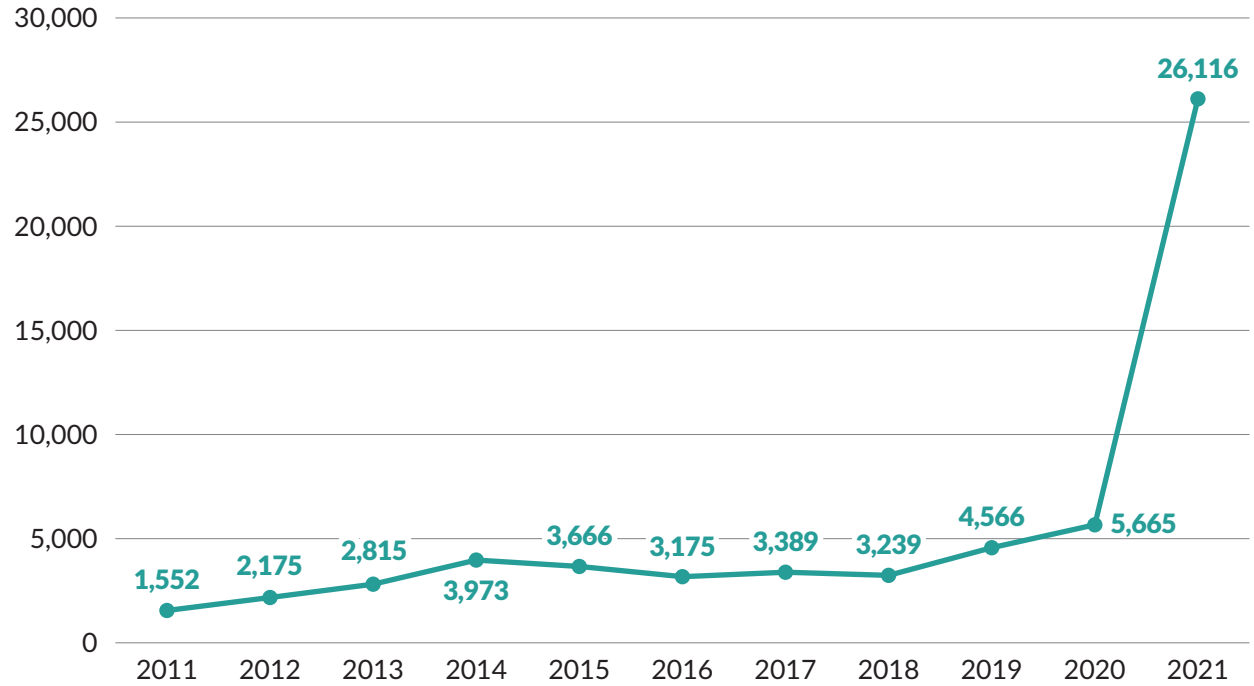
Sources: The Pew Philadelphia Poll, 2019 and 2022

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Figure 8

## Residential Building Permits Issued in Philadelphia, 2011-21

By unit

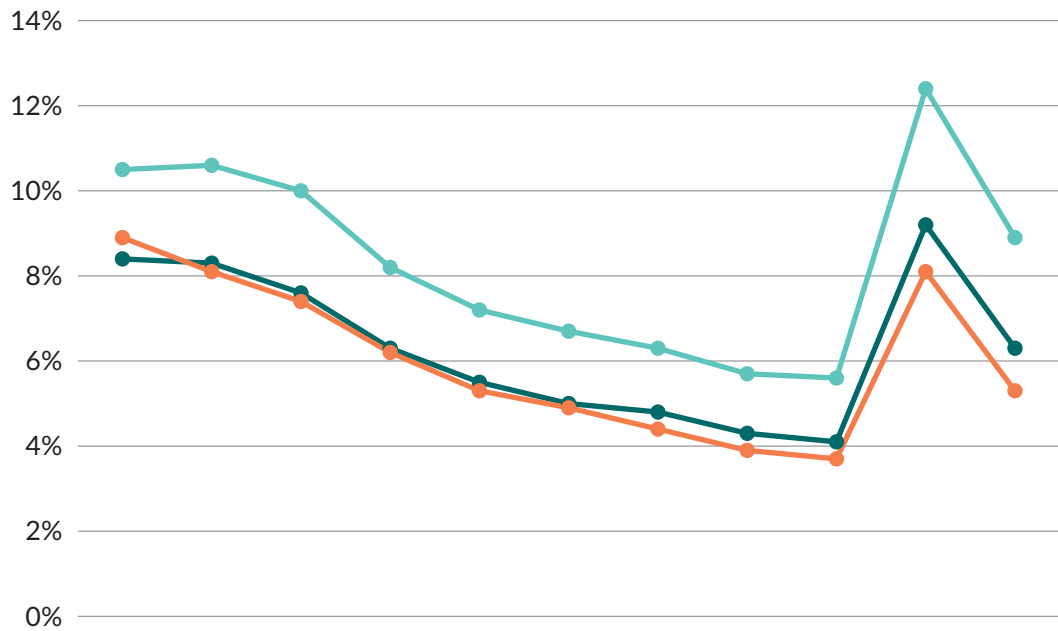


In 2021, the number of building permits for new residential units issued by the city's Department of Licenses and Inspections soared, with a 361% increase over the previous year, according to census data. More than half of the permits were issued in December. The remarkable increase coincided with the conclusion of the city's 10-year tax abatement, which had been set to expire at the end of 2020, to be replaced by a modified version. The original abatement was extended by a year because of the pandemic. In January 2022, its replacement, the equivalent of a five-year tax abatement, went into effect.

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

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Figure 9  
**Unemployment Rate, 2011-21**



	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
City of Philadelphia	10.5%	10.6%	10.0%	8.2%	7.2%	6.7%	6.3%	5.7%	5.6%	12.4%	8.9%
U.S.	8.9%	8.1%	7.4%	6.2%	5.3%	4.9%	4.4%	3.9%	3.7%	8.1%	5.3%
Metro Philadelphia	8.4%	8.3%	7.6%	6.3%	5.5%	5.0%	4.8%	4.3%	4.1%	9.2%	6.3%

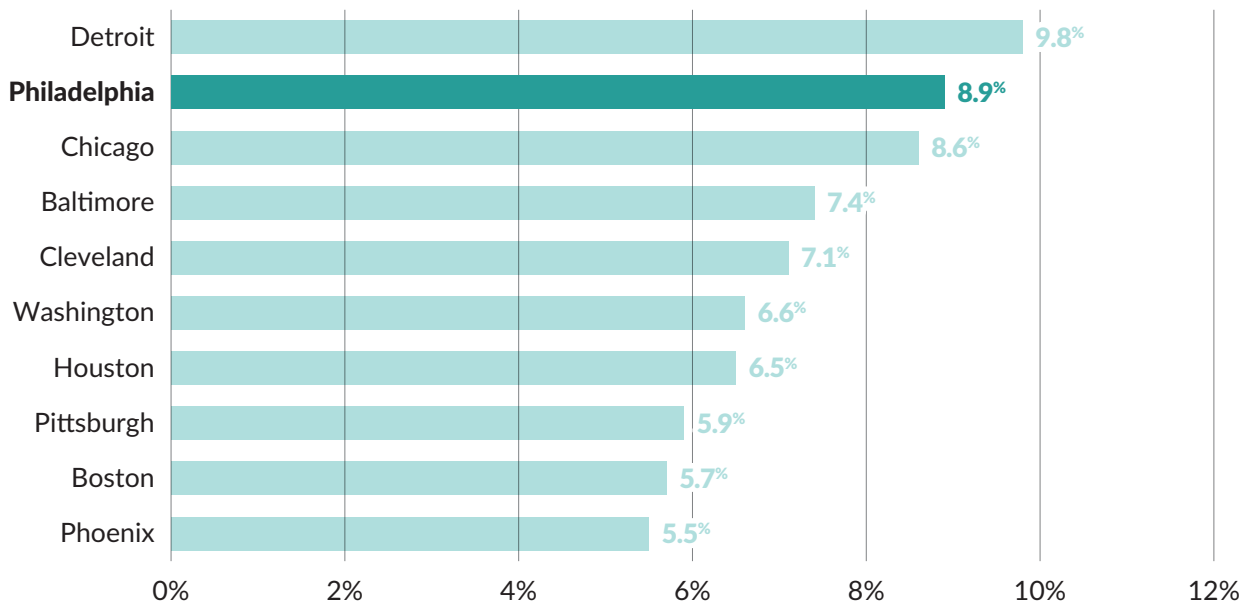
After a sharp increase in 2020, Philadelphia’s unemployment rate began to fall in 2021, dropping to 5.8% in December 2021 from a peak of 19.5% in July 2020. Although the rate continued to decrease during the year, the city’s 2021 average, at 8.9%, was still higher than the national rate of 5.3%.

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 10

## Unemployment Rate in Philadelphia and Comparable Cities, 2021



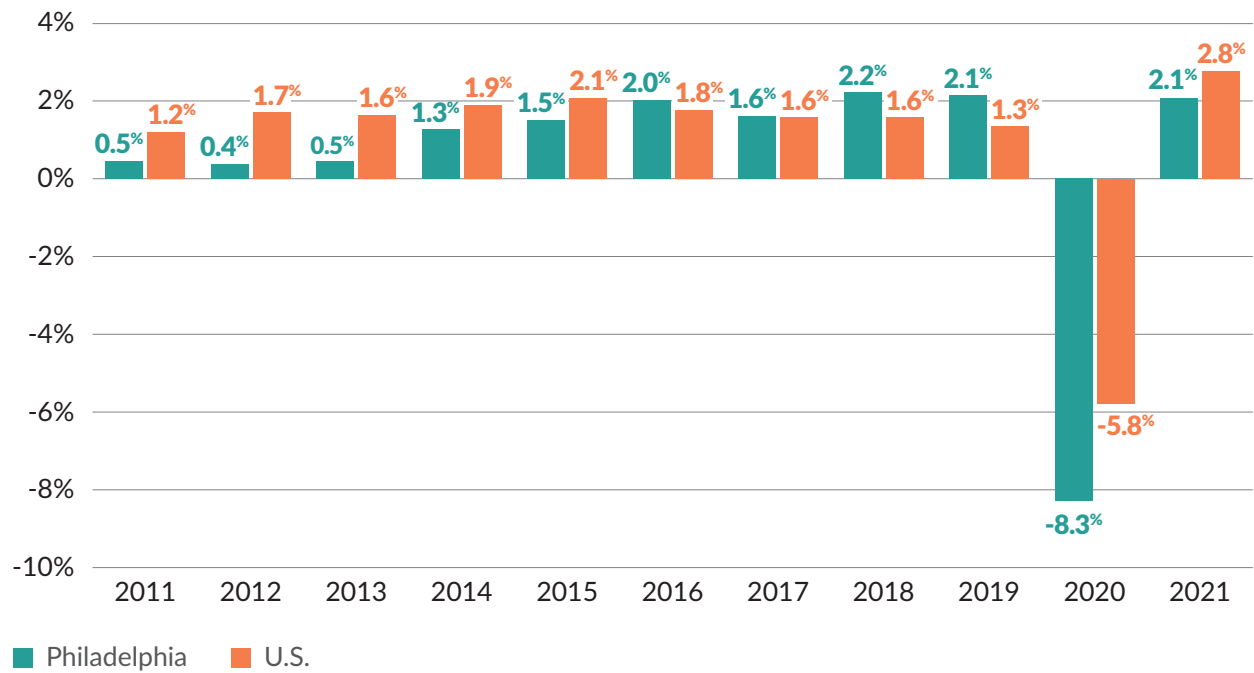
Philadelphia had the second-highest unemployment rate among the comparison cities, behind only Detroit. The city's rate decreased 3.5 percentage points from 2020, placing it in the middle of these cities in terms of improvement. But Philadelphia's rate is still more than 3 percentage points higher than it was before the pandemic—among the largest shifts in the comparison cities.

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

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Figure 11

## Job Growth and Decline, 2011-21



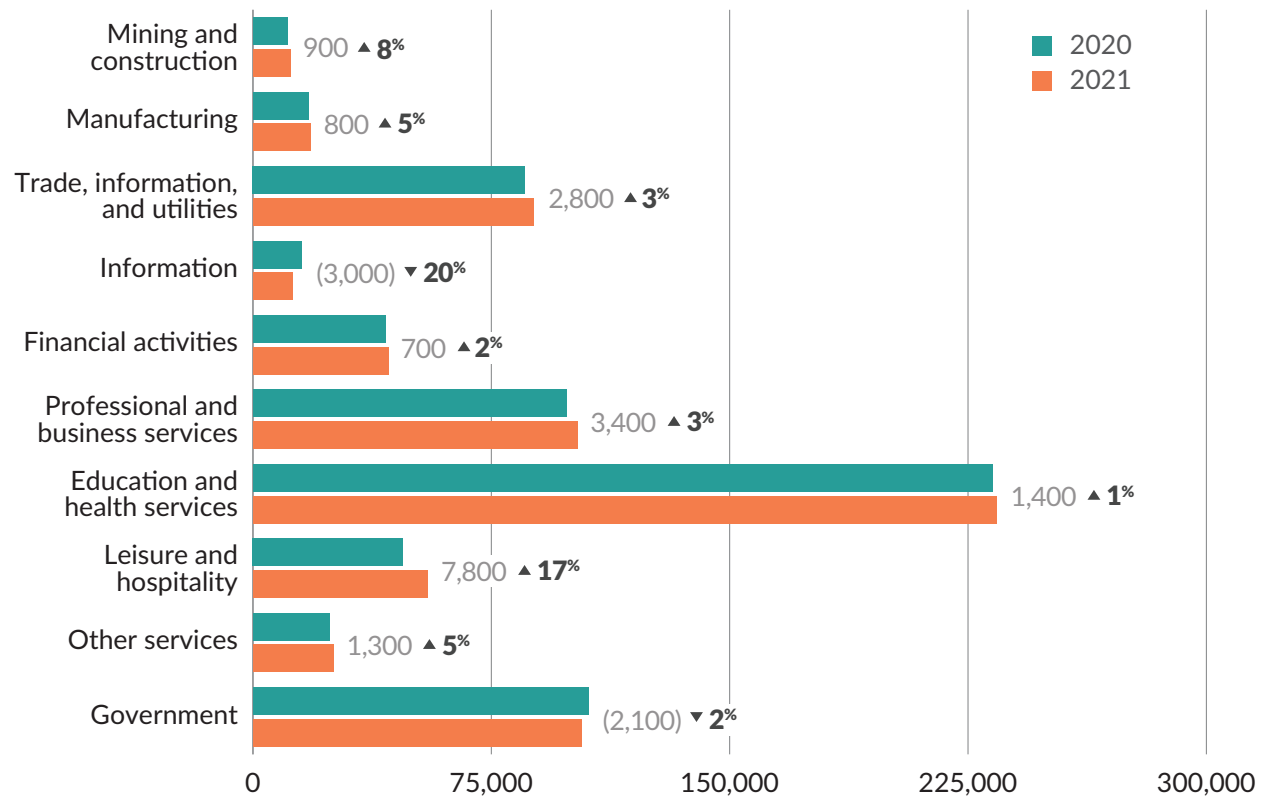
After dropping 8.3% from 2019 to 2020, the number of jobs in Philadelphia increased slightly in 2021. Although Philadelphia outperformed the country in job growth for a few years before the pandemic, the city fared worse than the nation on that front in both 2020 and 2021.

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

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Figure 12

## Philadelphia's Job Growth and Decline by Sector, 2020 and 2021



After recording historic job losses in 2020, most sectors—including leisure and hospitality, one of the hardest-hit sectors in Philadelphia—began to recover in 2021. Overall, job numbers grew slightly but remained well below pre-pandemic levels.

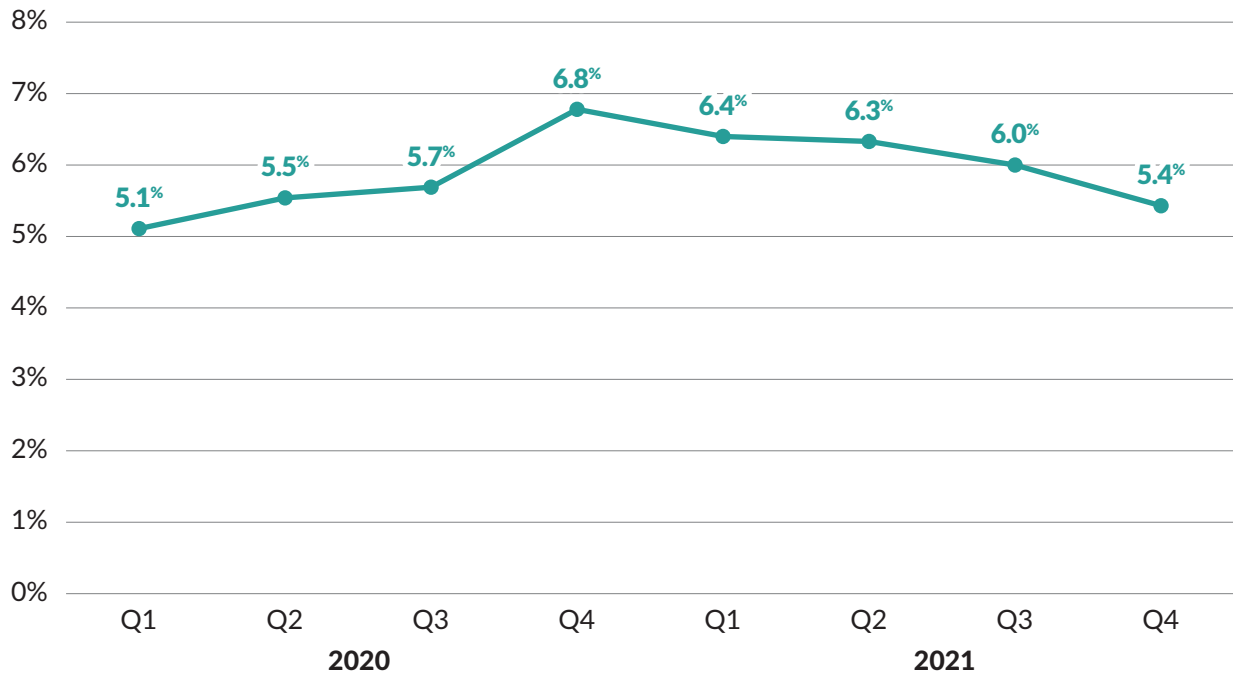
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, State and Metro Area Employment, Hours, and Earnings, <https://www.bls.gov/sae>

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Figure 13

## Delinquency on Bills by Philadelphia Businesses, 2020 and 2021

The share of business establishments paying their bills 31 or more days late, on average



After increasing throughout 2020, the percentage of Philadelphia businesses in serious delinquency decreased each quarter in 2021—reaching 5.4% by the end of the year. Delinquent bills may include commercial mortgages, loans, credit cards, and suppliers; rent is excluded.

Source: The Pew Charitable Trusts' Economic Recovery and Growth Dashboard, <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/data-visualizations/2021/pew-dashboard-tracks-philadelphias-economic-recovery-and-growth-in-the-age-of-covid>, with data from Experian Days Beyond Terms

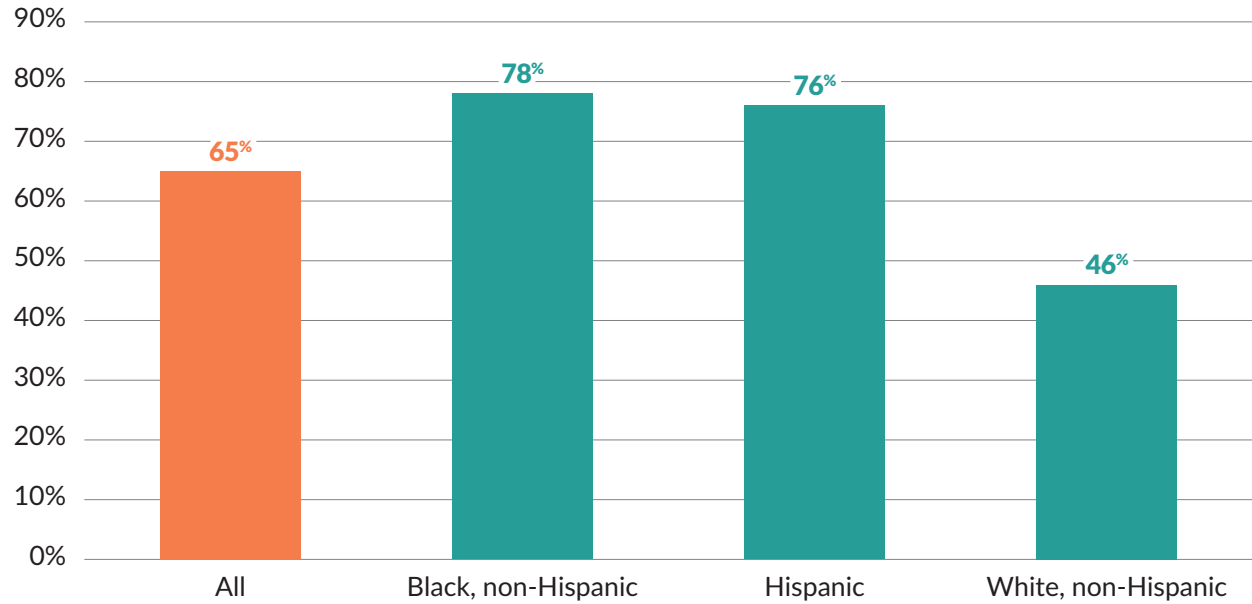
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Figure 14

## Philadelphians Who Reported Hearing Gunshots in Their Neighborhoods in the Previous 12 Months, 2022

By race and ethnicity



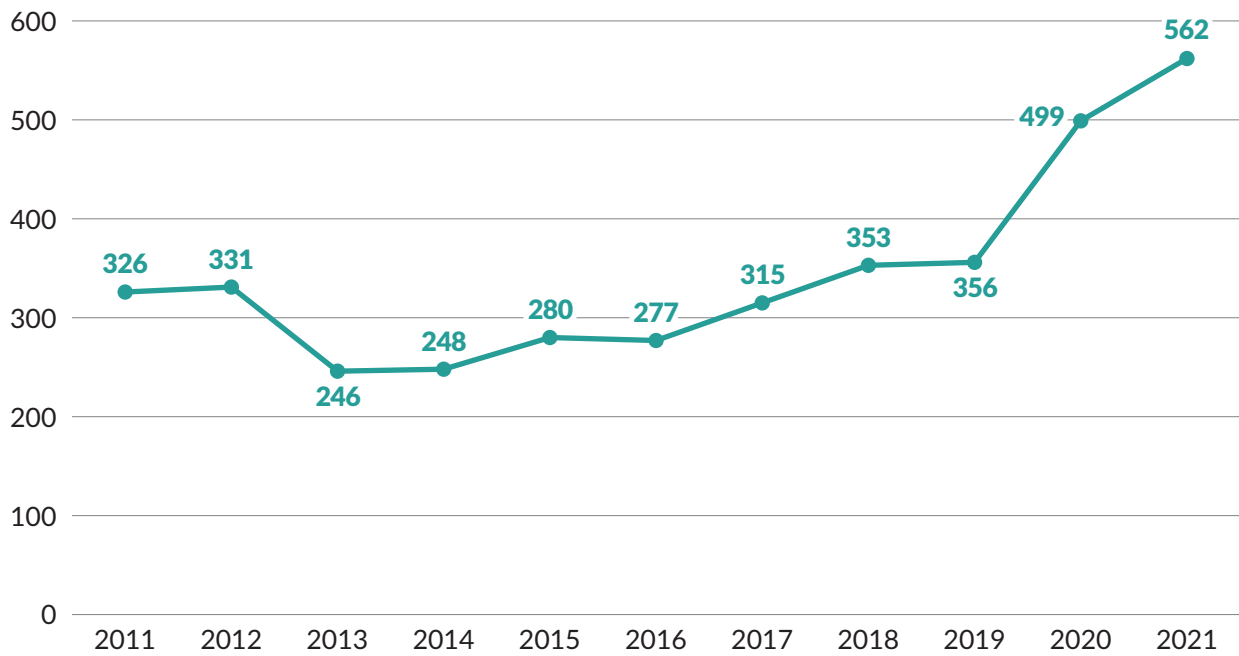
Almost two-thirds of Philadelphians indicated that they heard gunshots in their neighborhoods at some point in the previous 12 months. Nearly 4 in 5 Black residents said they heard gunshots, compared with less than half of White residents. And 74% of residents with children under age 18 in the household said they heard gunshots over the past year.

Source: The Pew Philadelphia Poll, 2022

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Figure 15

## Homicides in Philadelphia, 2011-21



Philadelphia recorded 562 homicides in 2021, a 13% increase over 2020 and surpassing 500 for the first time since 1990. It is the city's highest recorded total since 1960. The police department preliminarily attributed approximately 30% of homicide motives to arguments and 20% to retaliation. A further 20% of homicides were designated as drug-related. The remaining 30% include many types of incidents, including robberies and abuse as well as homicides with undetermined motives.

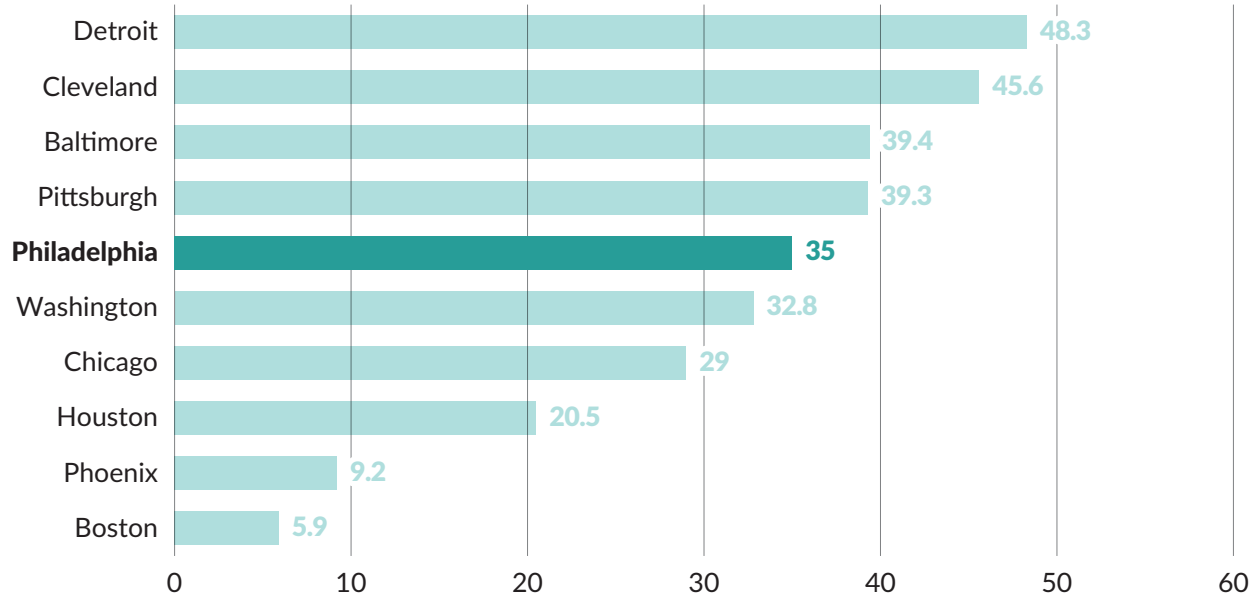
Source: Philadelphia Police Department, "Crime Maps & Stats," <https://www.phillypolice.com/crime-maps-stats>

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Figure 16

## Homicide Rate, 2021

Homicides per 100,000 residents



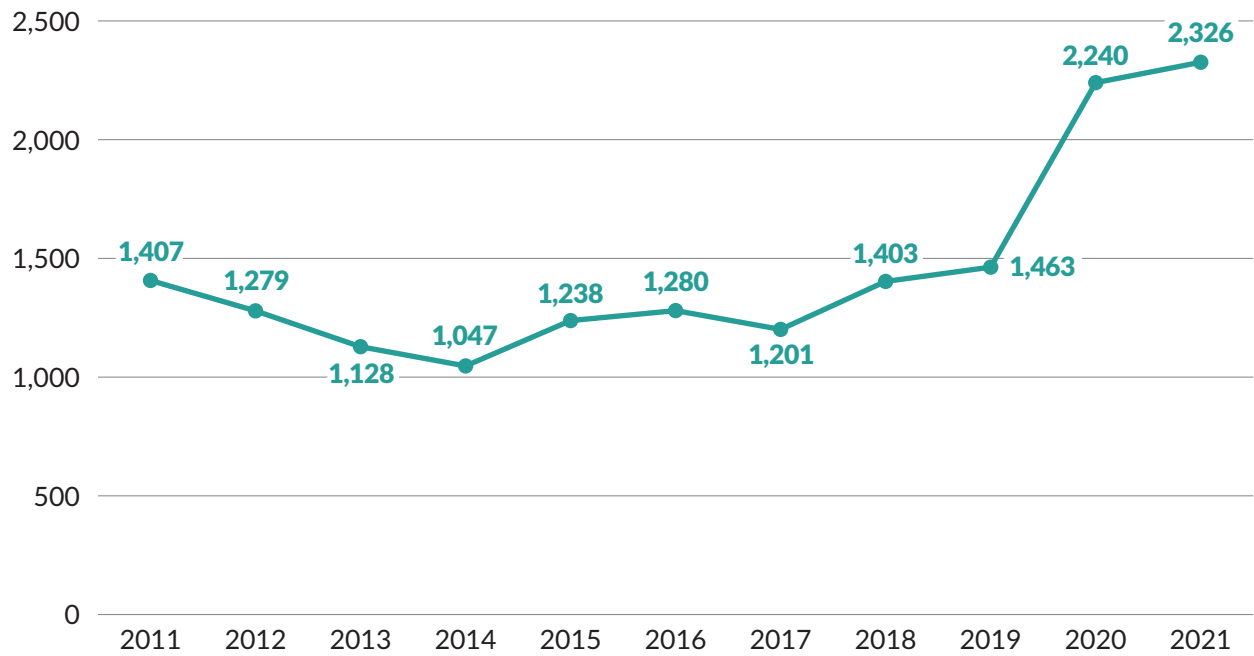
Continuing the trend from the previous year, homicide rates rose in many cities, towns, and communities across the United States in 2021. Philadelphia's homicide rate rose from 22.5 per 100,000 residents in 2019, before the pandemic, to 35. Pittsburgh saw a steep increase during the same period, from 12.3 per 100,000 residents in 2019 to 39.3 in 2021; it also showed the greatest one-year increase, from 17 per 100,000 residents in 2020. Although Baltimore's homicide rate was similar to Pittsburgh's, it saw the greatest single-year homicide rate reduction, falling 17 points, from 56.4 in 2020 to 39.4 in 2021.

Sources: Police departments in all 10 cities; U.S. Census Bureau

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Figure 17

## Shooting Victims in Philadelphia, 2011-21



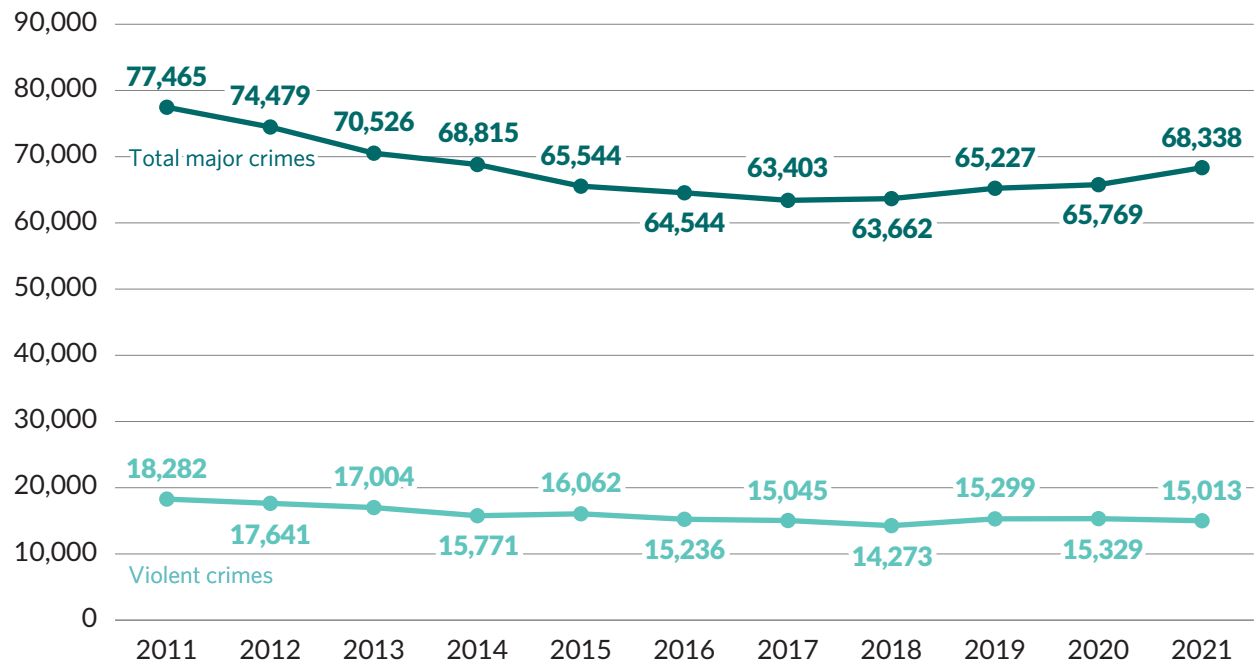
The number of people shot in Philadelphia continued to rise in 2021, adding to the substantial increase from the previous year. Since 2011, the annual number of shooting victims in the city has increased by 65%.

Source: Philadelphia Police Department, "Crime Maps & Stats," <https://www.phillypolice.com/crime-maps-stats>

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Figure 18

## Major Crime in Philadelphia, 2011-21



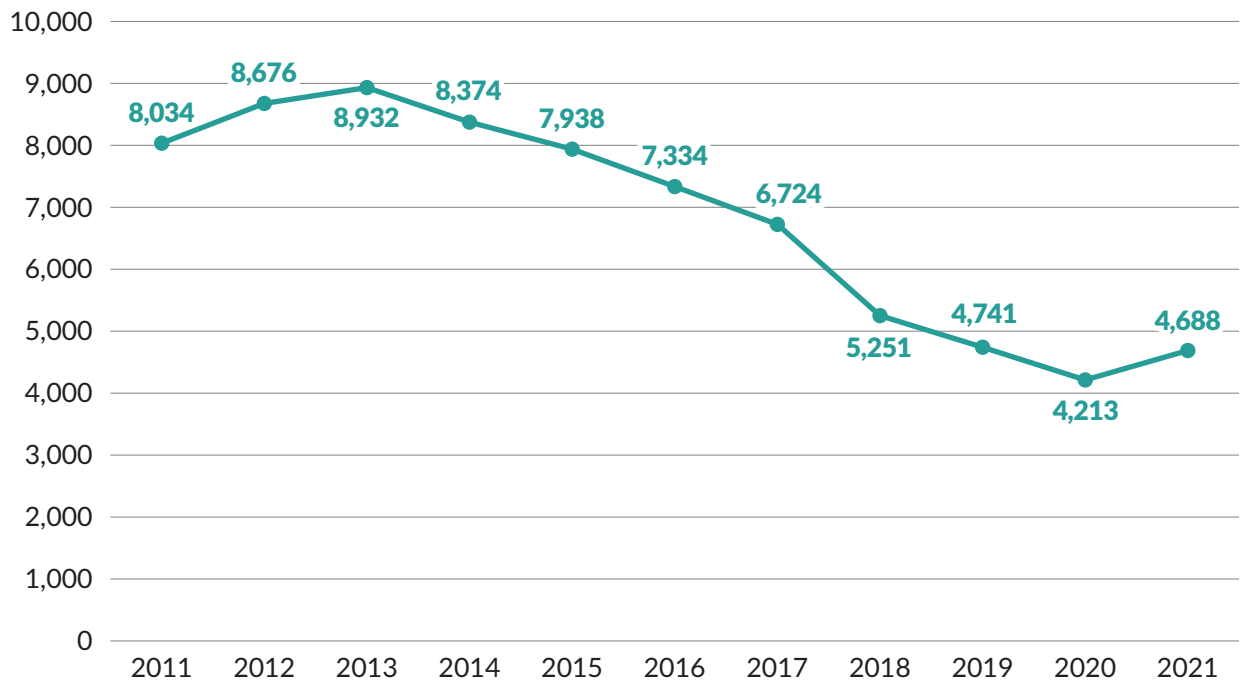
Major crimes rose in Philadelphia in 2021, driven primarily by an increase in thefts—including retail theft, thefts from individuals, thefts from automobiles, and thefts of vehicles. Overall, violent crime declined slightly in 2021, with fewer assaults, robberies, and rapes. However, gun-related violent crimes increased dramatically, with 28% more robberies with a gun, 13% more homicides, and 6% more shooting incidents.

Source: Philadelphia Police Department, Year-End Citywide Major Crimes, <https://www.phillypolice.com/crime-maps-stats/index.html>

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Figure 19

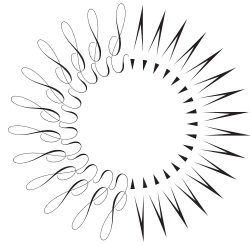
## Philadelphia Jail Population, 2011-21



Philadelphia's average daily jail population rose in 2021 for the first time since 2013. But following increased efforts from policymakers and others—including a 2016 grant from the MacArthur Foundation—to reduce incarceration rates, the city's jail population remains significantly lower than it was a decade ago.

Sources: City of Philadelphia, Managing Director's Office (2011-14); City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Prison Population Snapshot Reports (2015-21), <https://www.phila.gov/documents/philadelphia-jail-population-snapshot-reports>

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