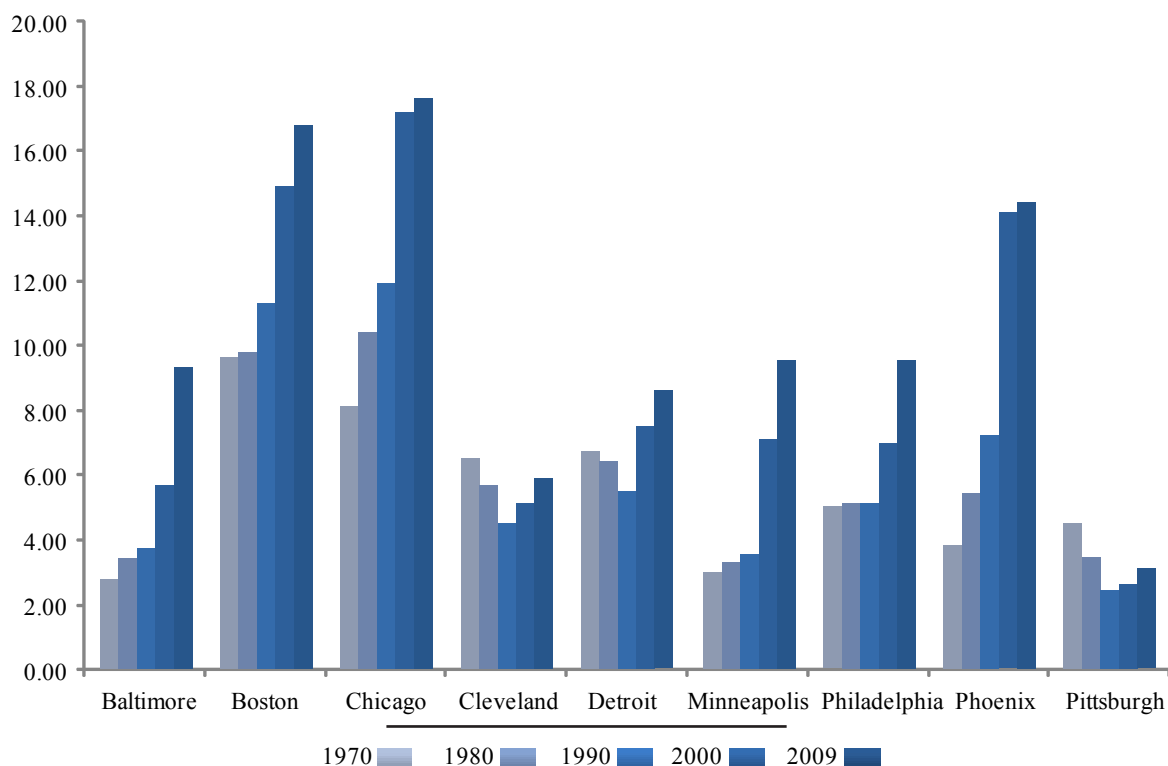




IMMIGRATION HELPS FUEL SUBURBAN GROWTH

An analysis published some years ago by the Brookings Institution classified Philadelphia as one of the nation’s “Former” immigrant gateways, that is, places that had attracted immigrants early in the 20th century but experienced drops in immigration by the middle of the 20th century. (Philadelphia was grouped in this category with places like Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit and Pittsburgh). The study contrasted these “Former” gateways with other “Continuous” gateways (for example, Boston and Chicago) that have always drawn large numbers of newcomers from abroad. Still other urban regions like Minneapolis and Phoenix were classified as “Re-emerging” gateways whose foreign-born populations had diminished but then rebounded during the second half of the 20th century.¹ **Figure 1** documents the changing percentage of foreign-born persons in the populations of Philadelphia and eight comparison regions. It suggests that in the past two decades, greater Philadelphia’s classification as a “Former” gateway needs to be revised. Starting in the 1990s, the pace of immigration accelerated in Philadelphia.

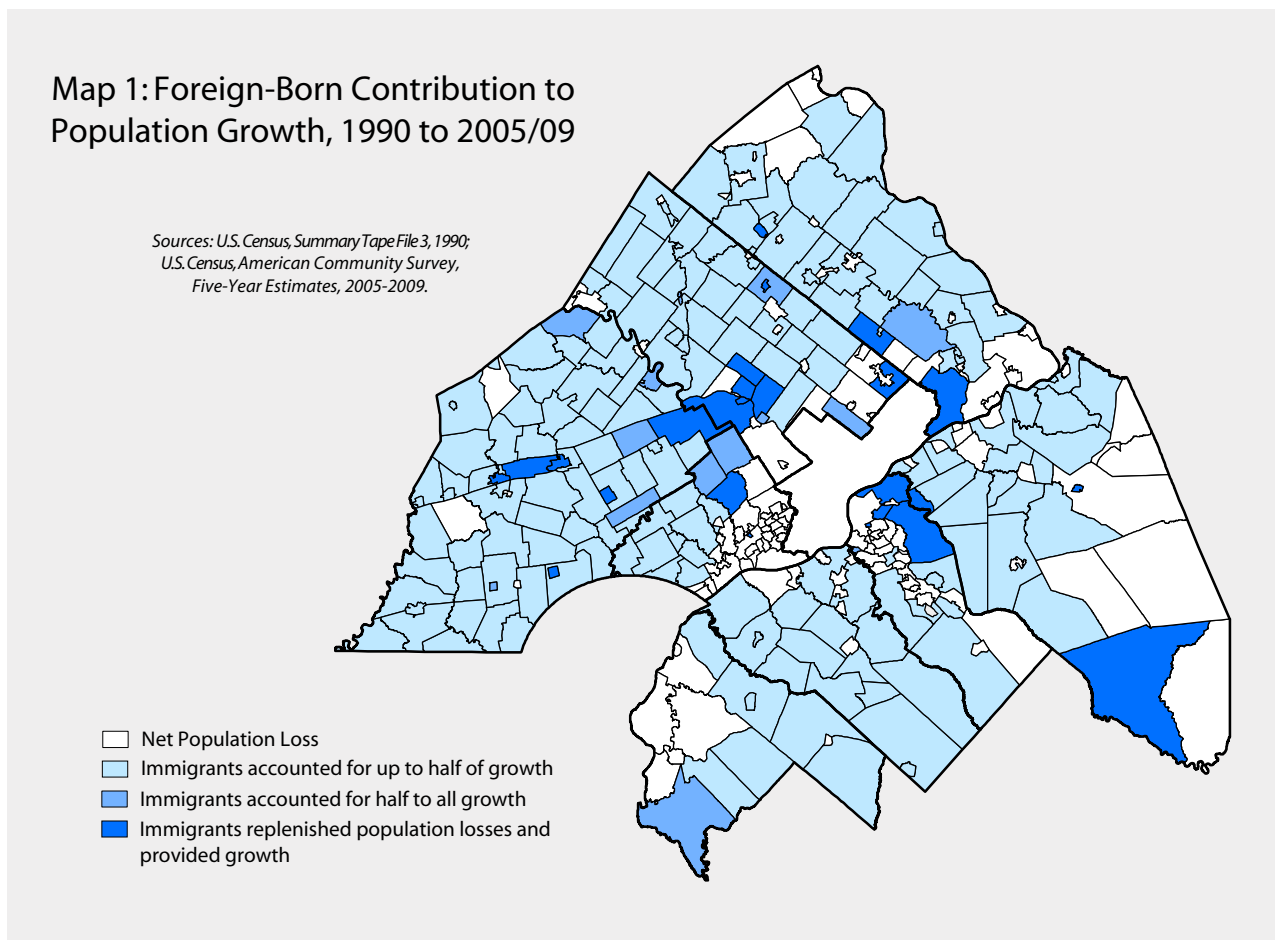
Figure 1: Percentage Foreign-Born in Selected Metropolitan Areas



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, One-Year Estimates, 2009.

Near the end of the 20th century, the historic pattern of immigrants settling in central cities began to change. Nationally, we witnessed a shift in residential preference from central cities to suburbs. In the Philadelphia region, an increase in immigrant population coincided with dramatic growth in many of the region’s suburban towns after 1990. This policy brief looks at the relationship between those two simultaneous trends, asking how much the population growth in the suburbs was attributable to increases in foreign-born residents.

Map 1 shows the impact of immigration on each community's net population growth during the two decades between 1990 and 2010. The communities portrayed in white experienced no net gain in population, while all those in color registered some gains in their total population. The shading in the map indicates how much of each community's growth was attributable to newcomers from other countries. It shows how widespread was the distribution of foreign-born persons across the communities of our region. The lightest shading identifies communities where growth in foreign-born numbers accounted for between zero to fifty percent of the town's net population growth. The next darker shade shows where foreign-born newcomers accounted for fifty percent to one hundred percent of the population gain across two decades. The darkest shade is reserved for communities where the number of foreign-born newcomers actually exceeded the over-all numerical increase in the town's population. **That means immigrants not only accounted for all of the population gain, but also replenished losses in the population that had been living there in 1990.** The twenty-five communities in the darkest color would have registered net population losses if it were not for the arrival of international immigrants.



In fifteen of the communities relying on immigration for virtually all their population growth, the percentage of the population that is foreign born is now ten percent or higher (see **Table 1**). In all but one of those fifteen suburbs, this is a dramatic increase from 1990 when the percentage of the population that was foreign born ranged from less than one percent up to slightly less than ten percent. These communities have experienced significant churn in their population in the last twenty years and have become attractive places for new arrivals to settle.

In Coatesville, Chester County, and Norristown, Montgomery County, Latino immigration is the overwhelming source of the increase in the foreign born population. In Norristown, 69.5 percent of the foreign born population is Latino. In Coatesville the percentage is even higher, 77.5 percent.

In Bensalem Township, Upper Merion Township, Cherry Hill, Pennsauken, Marple Township and Tredyffrin Township, foreign born residents have come mostly from Asia. In all six cases foreign born Asians represent five percent or more of the total population. With the exception of Marple Township, these communities have had a history of a high percentage of residents who are foreign born and of sizable immigration from Asian communities over the last twenty years.

Table 1: Towns where Immigrants Comprise Over 10 Percent of Total Population, 2005-2009

Municipality	Percent Latino Foreign-Born, 2005-2009	Percent Asian Foreign-Born, 2005-2009	Percent Foreign-Born, 1990	Percent Foreign-Born, 2000	Percent Foreign-Born, 2005-2009
Norristown Borough, Montgomery County, PA	11.9%	2.0%	5.5%	10.5%	17.1%
Coatesville City, Chester County, PA	11.4%	1.5%	2.9%	5.1%	14.7%
Pennsauken Township, Camden County, NJ	4.2%	6.9%	4.2%	7.9%	13.9%
Bensalem Township, Bucks County, PA	2.8%	7.4%	6.4%	13.2%	15.6%
Cherry Hill Township, Camden County, NJ	1.2%	6.4%	9.5%	12.5%	14.0%
Upper Merion Township, Montgomery County, PA	0.7%	7.2%	6.3%	11.5%	14.9%
Tredyffrin Township, Chester County, PA	0.6%	5.0%	5.7%	9.6%	10.4%
Lower Moreland Township, Montgomery County, PA	0.3%	3.8%	8.8%	9.9%	16.4%
Marple Township, Delaware County, PA	0.1%	7.3%	8.3%	10.8%	12.9%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1990 and 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, 2005-2009.

At present, 58 percent of the region’s foreign-born now live outside the core cities of Philadelphia and Camden. The towns where foreign-born newcomers contributed a disproportionate share of the population were not the fastest-growing towns of the region, but instead were the towns whose growth rates were comparatively modest. Immigrants contributed most substantially to towns that saw less than 10 percent growth from 1990 to 2010, compared with growth rates exceeding 30 percent in the fastest-growing towns in our region. In a number of older communities, the arrival of immigrants made the difference between modest growth and a flat – or even shrinking – population.

Philadelphia and Camden, the two core cities in the region, both attracted significant numbers of foreign born persons in the decades between 1990 and 2009. Philadelphia welcomed over 63,000 newcomers from other countries, while Camden drew just over 7,000 new foreign-born residents. However, in both of these core cities of the region, the loss of population after 1990 exceeded the number of all newcomers, both foreign and domestic. Therefore, despite making gains in foreign-born population, both cities are colored white on **Map 1** because the over-all population trend across two decades was downward. (Even with the slight population gain in Philadelphia between 2000 and 2010, Philadelphia still had 50,000 fewer residents by 2010 than in 1990).

These two core cities were not the only places in the region that experienced net population losses despite registering gains in foreign-born population. Seven other communities showed that same pattern on a smaller scale. They were losing their existing population faster than they were gaining new foreign-born residents to replenish those numbers. So despite drawing substantial numbers of immigrants, they still shrank in population across the two decades (see **Table 2**).

Table 2: Towns that Suffered Net Population Losses Despite Gaining Immigrants, 1990 to 2005-2009

Municipality	Foreign-Born Population 1990	Foreign-Born Population 2005-2009	Total Population 1990	Total Population 2005-2009	Total Pop Change Minus Foreign-Born Change 1990 to 2005-2009
Bristol Township, Bucks County, PA	1,817	3,477	57,129	53,999	-4,790
Darby Borough, Delaware County, PA	450	1,596	11,140	9,964	-2,322
Falls Township, Bucks County, PA	1,183	2,561	34,997	33,905	-2,470
Lindenwold Borough, Camden County, NJ	841	2,896	18,734	17,377	-3,412
Lansdale Borough, Montgomery County, PA	1,028	2,396	16,362	15,650	-2,080
Lower Southampton Twp., Bucks County, PA	1,031	2,229	19,860	19,086	-1,972
Uppeer Darby Township, Delaware County, PA	7,468	13,394	81,177	78,962	-8,141

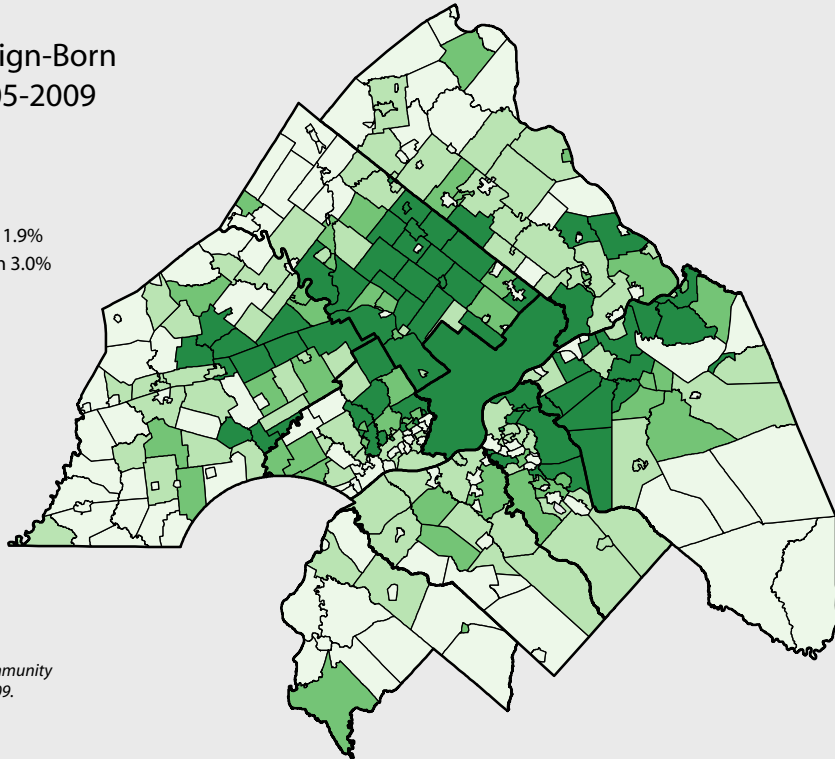
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1990 and 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, 2005-2009.

Not every suburban town in our region registered gains in foreign-born residents between 1990 and 2009. In 39 communities the total number of immigrants actually declined between 1990 and 2009. But in most of those communities, the declines in foreign-born residents were small. Only three suburbs lost 100 or more foreign-born persons over the two decades.² Nine towns lost 50-99 immigrants, and the rest lost fewer than 50 foreign born persons.

When we compare **Maps 2 and 3**, we see clearly that first-generation Latinos and Asians tend to cluster in different places in the region. Rather than becoming “melting pots” where immigrants from different world regions mingle, suburban towns tend to draw either one or the other group. **Map 2** shows that the general tendency has been for newcomers from Asia to cluster in communities near the center of the region. They now represent 3.7 percent of the population of Philadelphia, although less than 2 percent of the region’s other core city, Camden. We see Asian concentrations also in the affluent area located at the intersection between Montgomery, Delaware, and Chester counties near Valley Forge and King of Prussia. Similar concentrations of new residents from Asia are visible in Montgomery County suburbs at mid-distance between Philadelphia and the outer edge of the region. But few clusters are seen in the outer-most communities on either the Pennsylvania or New Jersey side of the region.

Map 2: Percentage Foreign-Born Asian Population, 2005-2009

Less than 1.0% 1.0 to 1.9%
2.0 to 3.0% More than 3.0%

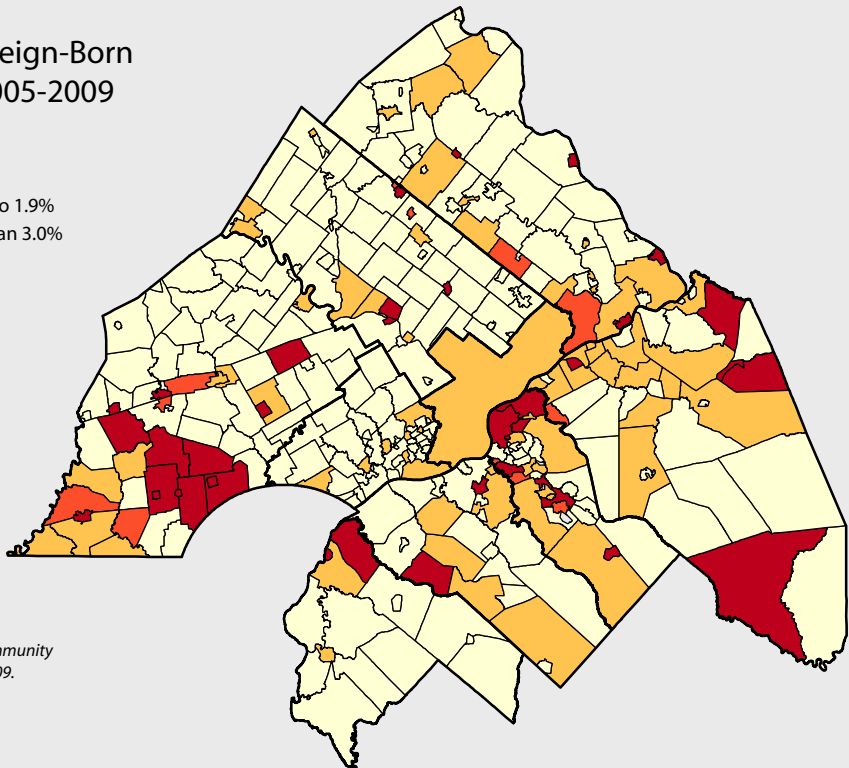


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, 2005-2009.

Map 3 shows a different pattern for foreign-born Latino residents. Of the two core cities, Camden shows the higher concentration of Latino immigrants at 10%, while Philadelphia has less than two percent. Many of the suburbs with the higher concentrations of Latino foreign-born residents are located near the outer edges of the region—in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and in Burlington and Salem counties on the New Jersey side (Pennsauken, Woodlynne Borough, Bellmawr Borough, and Somerdale Borough). By and large, Asian and Latino newcomers tend to separate into different suburbs. This separation is similar to patterns in other metropolitan regions and is attributable to the generally higher educational and occupational attainment of Asian immigrants relative to Latino immigrants.

Map 3: Percentage Foreign-Born Latino Population, 2005-2009

Less than 1.0% 1.0 to 1.9%
2.0 to 3.0% More than 3.0%



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, 2005-2009.

As international newcomers establish a more substantial presence in suburban towns across the U.S., concerns are being expressed that the economic downturn of recent years may be having a negative effect on citizens' attitudes, especially in communities that are historically unaccustomed to welcoming newcomers from other nations. Unlike the period from 1990 to 2006, many suburban communities now face unemployment, stagnant tax bases and mortgage foreclosures. Many school districts are strained. If competition for limited economic opportunity and public services increases, history tells us we can expect social tension to result from rising diversity.

Endnotes

¹ Audrey Singer, "The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways: Historical Flows, Recent Settlement Trends," in A. Berube, B. Katz & R. Lang, eds., *Redefining Urban and Suburban America*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005, pp. 41-86.

² The suburbs that lost 100 or more foreign-born persons from 1990 to 2009 were: New Hanover Township and Wrightstown Borough in Burlington County; Springfield Township and West Norriton Townships in Montgomery County; and Pittsgrove Township in Salem County.