



# Choosing Philadelphia

*Attracting  
and  
Retaining  
Immigrant  
Newcomers*

**The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians**

*June 2014*

[www.welcomingcenter.org](http://www.welcomingcenter.org)

June 2014

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

***Choosing Philadelphia*** represents a significant milestone in the work of the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians.

Our previous reports have detailed the opportunities and challenges faced by immigrant professionals; the economic impact of immigrant entrepreneurs; and the widespread adoption of mobile technology among immigrants.



In this report, we combine our ongoing commitment to rigorous original research with a new lens, looking at the Philadelphia region through the eyes of its most recent arrivals.

The result: A first-of-its-kind study of what draws newcomers to a region – and what makes them stay.

We hope that our findings will be both intriguing and useful to colleagues in Pennsylvania and nationally. Regardless of your reaction, we look forward to hearing your thoughts. Please don't hesitate to contact me at (215) 557-2626 or [peter@welcomingcenter.org](mailto:peter@welcomingcenter.org).

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Gonzales". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Peter Gonzales  
President and CEO

*The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians is a nonprofit economic development organization based in Philadelphia, PA. Founded in 2003, the Welcoming Center provides a wide range of services, including job placement for work-authorized immigrants, small business development for immigrant and American-born entrepreneurs, and adult education and training services. In addition, the Center provides consulting services to assist business, philanthropic, and public partners in more effectively incorporating their immigrant constituents.*

## **Acknowledgements**

We are indebted to Tom Ginsberg, Allison Karpyn, and Cliff Zukin for their generous willingness to speak with us during the initial planning phase of this research. Their thoughtful and probing questions helped us to strengthen our eventual design, and to think through both the possibilities and the limitations of this type of research. Needless to say, they bear no responsibility for the specific contents of this report or any errors that may remain.

## **About This Report**

This report presents findings from a first-of-its kind survey of immigrant residents of the Philadelphia region. While not statistically representative, the study reached an exceptionally broad range of respondents via in-person interviews and online surveys. A total of 364 individuals from 74 countries and the US territory of Puerto Rico participated in the research. All cross-tabulated findings are significant at the level of  $p=.05$  or less.

*For more about the methodology of the study, the terms used in this report, and the potential representativeness of the data, please see the Methodology section at the conclusion of this report.*

## Setting the Stage: How Cities and States Are Using Talent Attraction

In the past three years, dozens of cities and states across the US have launched efforts to attract and retain new residents, often focusing specifically on immigrants.



These initiatives include Welcome Dayton, the St. Louis Mosaic Project, Global Michigan, and the New York State Office of New Americans, to name just a few.



These efforts vary in specifics, but the overall focus is the same: To address issues of depopulation, demographic aging, and economic decline by inviting new (and presumably younger and more economically energetic) residents to become part of the local community.



While some initiatives are specifically focused on entrepreneurs or professional-class workers, others have explicitly invited a wider array of newcomers at every skill level.



**Philadelphia was an early leader in these efforts.**<sup>1</sup> Shortly after his election in November 2007, Mayor Michael A. Nutter (*pictured at left*) announced a bold goal of attracting 75,000 new residents over the next five to eight years.<sup>2</sup>

As of July 2013, nearly six years later, Census figures showed the city had grown by approximately 105,000 people.<sup>3</sup>

Though this growth reflects a number of contributing factors, it is indisputable that foreign-born arrivals – immigrants – have played a significant role, without which the city's population would be continuing its nearly 60-year decline.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While our focus in this report is the actions of elected officials, it should be noted that Philadelphia's efforts to attract newcomers actually started even earlier, with a paper written by Anuj Gupta for the Pennsylvania Economy League in 2000 (*Immigration in Philadelphia: A Call to Action*, available at: <http://economyleague.org/node/88>) as well as work by a number of advocates and nonprofit organizations, including the Welcoming Center. In addition, Mayor John Street, the predecessor to Mayor Nutter, also played a role by establishing a staff role in support of language access to city services for residents with limited English proficiency.

<sup>2</sup> "A Plan in the Works to Make Philadelphia More Immigrant-Friendly" (*The Notebook*, Fall 2008. Viewable at: <http://thenotebook.org/fall-2008/0811/plan-works-make-philly-immigrant-friendly>)

<sup>3</sup> US Census American Community Survey (ACS 2008 1-year estimate of 1.447 million Philadelphia residents compared to July 2013 estimate of 1.553 million)

<sup>4</sup> "Immigrant Surge: Why Area Grew" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 13, 2011).

Yet despite the widespread and enthusiastic national embrace of newcomers as a potential solution for economic woes, there remains a severe lack of data: **Remarkably little is known about why newcomers select one city or region over another**; what factors influence them; why they may eventually leave; and what makes a region “sticky” enough to keep them.

The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, a nonprofit economic development organization, thus embarked on this research study to improve the body of knowledge in this field. We see *Choosing Philadelphia* as a crucial step forward in uncovering the factors at work in immigrants’ choice of location. It is by no means the final step, and we welcome inquiries from colleagues and partners who wish to build upon this research.

## Who is Choosing Philadelphia?

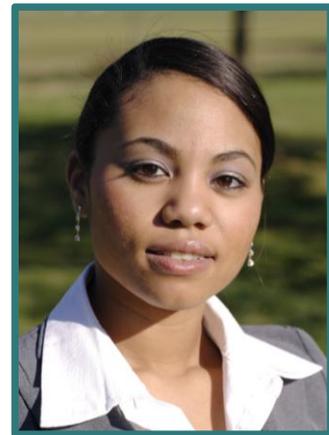
This section describes the demographics of our survey respondents, and compares them to immigrants overall in the city and the region. Data for these comparisons comes from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.<sup>5</sup>

Our survey respondents included 364 people from 74 countries plus the US territory of Puerto Rico. The wide range of countries represented included Azerbaijan, China, Guatemala, Russia, and Senegal.

Just over half (57%) of our survey respondents were female, a slightly higher percentage than among immigrants overall in the city (52%) or metropolitan region (51%).

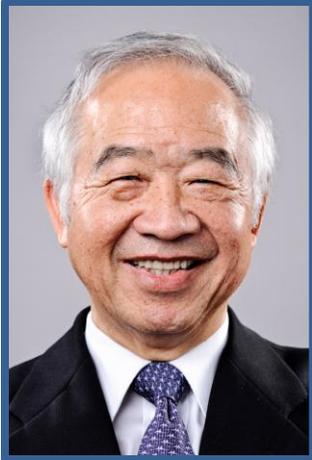
The median age of our respondents was 37 years old, which is slightly younger than immigrants in the city overall (40 years) or the region (41 years). It is important to note that immigrant age data *in general* often skews slightly older, because the children of immigrants, if born in the United States, are native-born citizens and thus not included in foreign-born calculations.

In addition, regions such as Philadelphia, which had a surge of immigrants much earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, today have a population of immigrant elders who have lived in the region for 50 or more years. *This population of longtime immigrant residents was not the focus of our survey*, although of course some respondents had lived in the region for a relatively longer period of time.



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<sup>5</sup> ACS 2008-12 five-year average dataset, viewable at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)



Approximately 22% of our survey respondents came from Africa, 15% from Asia and the Middle East, 48% from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 15% from Europe. These numbers are roughly analogous to the foreign-born population in the city and region as a whole, with one significant exception: **Immigrants from Asia and the Middle East are *under-represented* among our respondents**, while those from other groups are slightly over-represented.

While we made intensive efforts to solicit responses from Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants, we were challenged both by lack of resources and by the enormous range of languages encompassed in this broad umbrella category. To compensate in part for this under-representation, we conducted several follow-up conversations with key informants. Information shared in these conversations was consistent with our broader findings.

Overall, 12% of city residents were born in other countries. The remaining 88% were born in the United States – including 68% born in Pennsylvania itself. In the region as a whole, 10% of residents were born in other countries, with the remaining 90% born in the US, including 63% born in the state where they currently live.<sup>6</sup>

This makes Pennsylvania one of the most “place-bound” states in the country. That is, our Commonwealth has an unusually high percentage of people currently living in the state, who were also *born* in this state. This strong degree of attachment has both benefits and costs for the region overall.

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of respondents to our survey (80%) are bilingual or multilingual.<sup>7</sup> On average, respondents reported speaking 2.27 languages, ranging from Hindi to Wolof.

Citywide, 21% of all Philadelphia residents speak a language other than English at home. In the metropolitan region, the number is 15%.

Nearly half (48%) of our respondents reported having children under the age of 18 living with them. This is substantially higher than residents in the city overall (28%) or the region (33%).

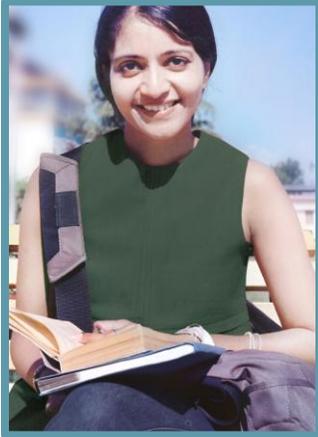
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<sup>6</sup> The Census-defined metropolitan region includes sections of PA, NJ, DE, and MD. The 63% refers to those the Census Bureau categorizes as “Native, born in state of residence.”

<sup>7</sup> However, it is important to note that some immigrants to the Philadelphia area report speaking *only* English. This includes not only individuals from Canada, Australia, and the UK, but also from English-speaking West African countries such as Ghana, Liberia, and Nigeria.

Overall, our respondents included a slightly higher percentage of college-educated individuals than immigrants in the city or region overall. *(See chart.)*

A total of 22% of our survey respondents had ***less than a high-school education***, compared to 29% of immigrants in the city and 22% of immigrants in the region. Another 16% of our respondents had ***a high-school diploma or equivalent***, compared to 26% of immigrants in the city and 23% of immigrants in the region.

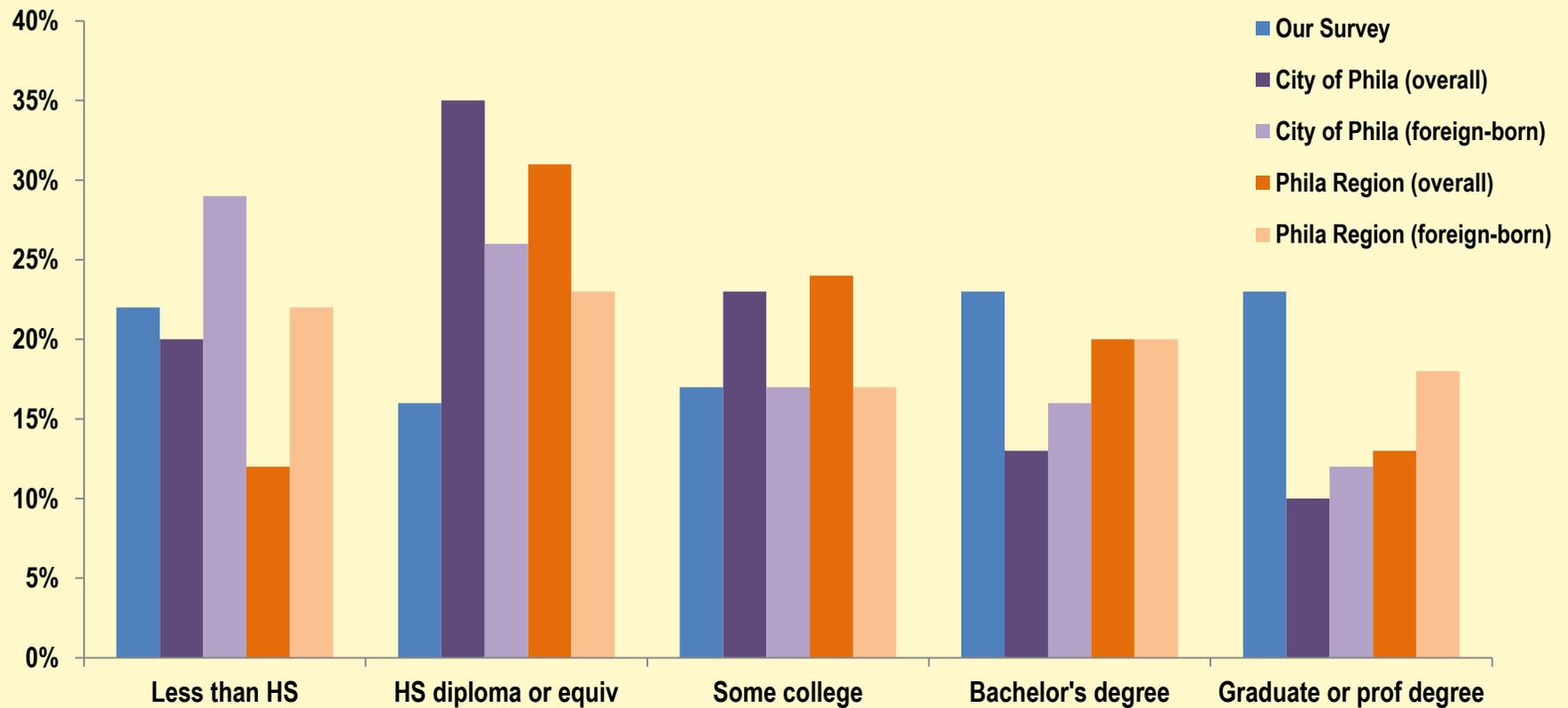


Seventeen percent (17%) of our respondents reported having ***some college***, exactly matching the percentage among immigrants in the city and in the region. In contrast, 23% of our respondents reported having a ***bachelor's degree***, compared to 16% of immigrants in the city and 20% in the region.

Finally, a robust 23% of our respondents reported having a ***graduate or professional degree***, compared to 12% of immigrants in the city and 18% in the region.

There were some differences in educational level between younger, Millennial-generation and non-Millennial respondents. These are discussed in more detail in the “Spotlight on Millennials” section below.

## Our Survey Included a Relatively Higher Percentage of College-Educated Respondents



*N=323 for our survey, which includes foreign-born + Puerto-Rican-born respondents. Data for Philadelphia and the region from US Census Bureau, ACS 2008-12.*

## Spotlight on Millennials

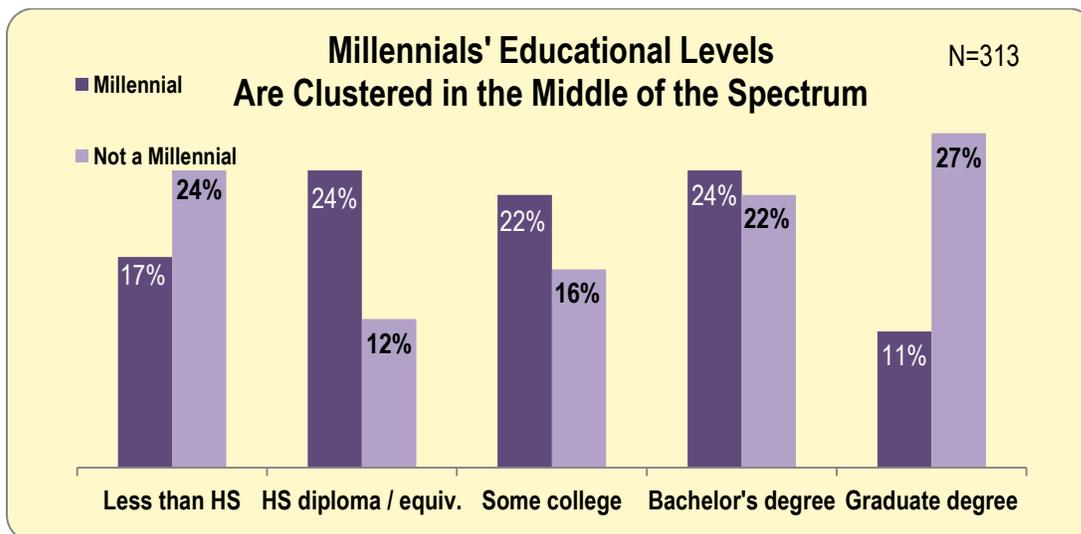
Numerous recent news stories have focused on the importance of young adults – the so-called Millennial generation – as a bellwether for cities’ ability to attract and retain newcomers.<sup>8</sup> We include here a brief demographic profile of the Millennials who responded to our survey. Other data on Millennials is incorporated into specific subject-area sections later in this report.



Nearly one-third (31%) of our respondents were Millennials, defined as people born in 1981 or later. This is a slightly higher percentage compared to all city residents (26%).<sup>9</sup> African respondents to our survey were the most likely to be Millennials, at 48% of total African respondents, followed by Asian and Middle Eastern respondents at 40%, Europeans at 28%, and Latin American and Caribbean respondents at 23%.

Millennial respondents were *less* likely than other respondents to have children under 18 (40% of Millennials compared to 52% of other respondents). This is unsurprising given that many members of the Millennial generation are still younger than the peak years for marriage and childbearing.

There were no statistically significant differences between Millennial and non-Millennial respondents with regard to gender. There *were* statistically significant differences with regard to educational level. Millennials were less likely to have very limited education, and also less likely to have a graduate degree. (See chart.)



<sup>8</sup> See, for example, “Do Millennials Want To Call Your City ‘Home’?” (Governing.com, November 2012) [www.governing.com/columns/eco-engines/col-are-cities-ready-for-millennials.html](http://www.governing.com/columns/eco-engines/col-are-cities-ready-for-millennials.html)

<sup>9</sup> The category of “Millennial” has been variously defined. Some analyses state that all individuals age 20-34 are Millennials. Our definition encompasses all of those born in 1981 or later.

## Arriving in Philadelphia: The First Destination?

We asked a two-part question: How recently respondents had arrived in the United States, and when they had moved to Philadelphia. For **57%** of respondents, the answer was the same: ***They had come to the Philadelphia region immediately.***<sup>10</sup>

This distinction is important for several reasons. First, talent attraction efforts may differ depending on whether the focus is individuals who are currently living abroad and planning to move to the US, or those who already live in another part of the United States and might be convinced to move.

Second, the existences of a relatively high percentage of primary migrants (people who came to Philadelphia first) likely reflects the existence of an established pipeline. That is, Philadelphia is not starting from scratch in creating awareness of its opportunities among potential newcomers, but rather is benefitting from a continuing flow of new arrivals that sustains itself, in part through peer referrals and social ties.

As illustrated in the chart below, there were stark differences among respondents from different regions of the world. Fully two-thirds of African immigrants (70%) and European immigrants (69%) reported that the Philadelphia region was their first destination in the United States. A somewhat lower percentage of Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants (56%) also reported arriving in Philadelphia first.

Immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean were the exception. Over half (54%) reported that they had lived elsewhere in the US before coming to Philadelphia.

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<sup>10</sup> Respondents who had arrived at an out-of-town port and journeyed immediately to our region were counted as a Philadelphia arrival.

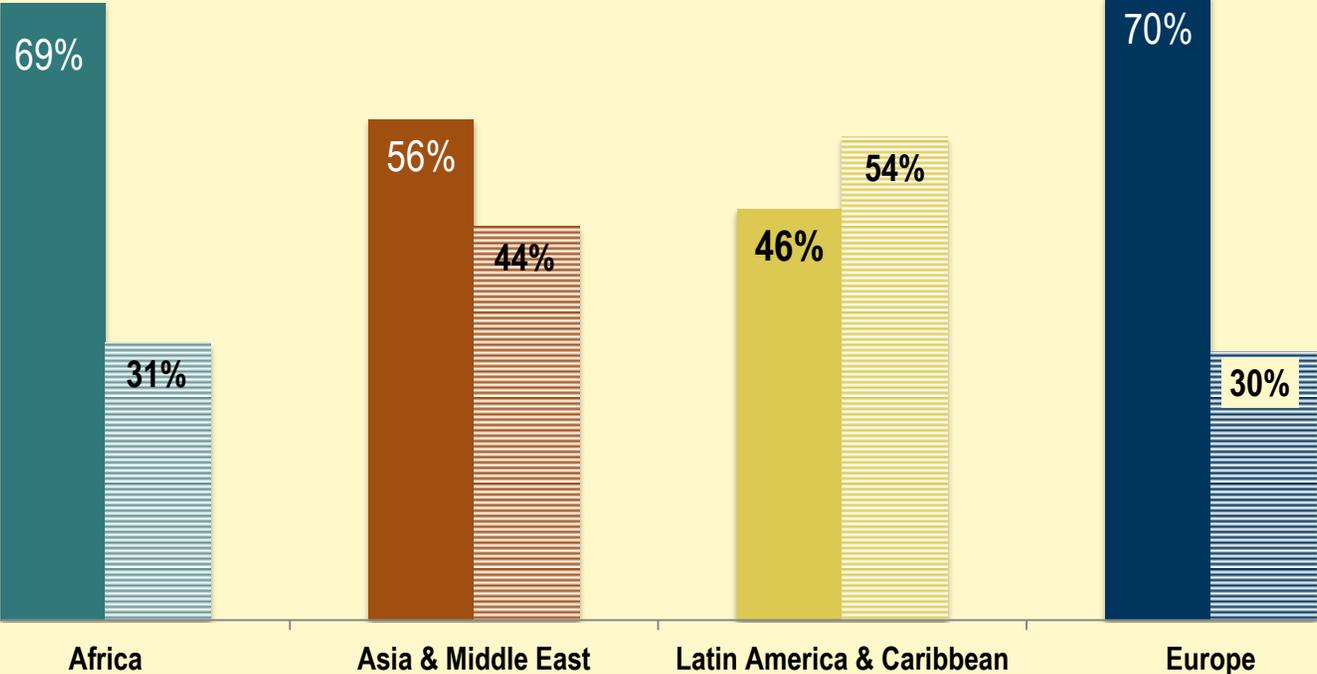
# A Majority of Respondents from Most World Regions Chose the Philadelphia Area as Their First US Destination

N=331

Came to Phila area as first destination

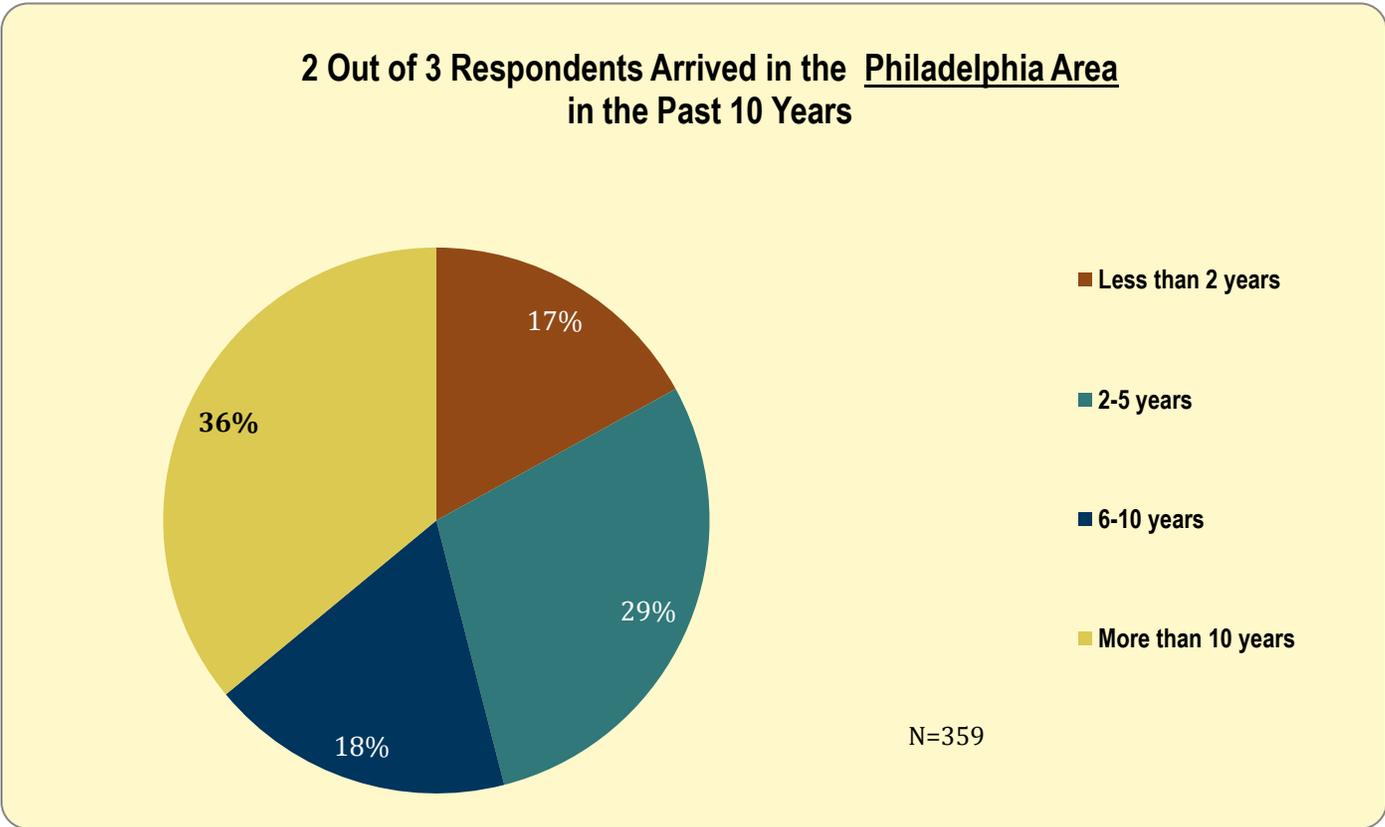
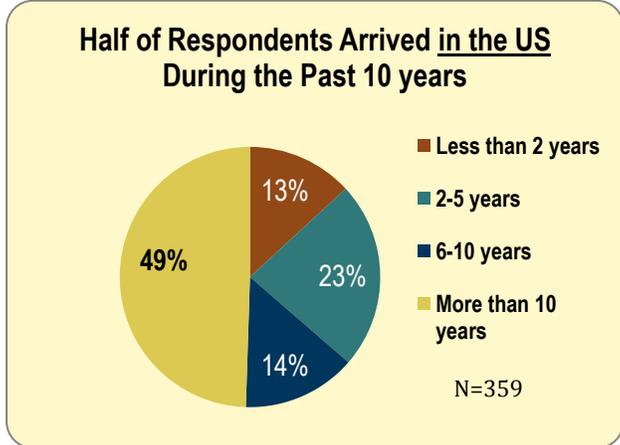


Moved to Phila area after living elsewhere in



Overall, 13% of our respondents had been in the United States for less than two years, 23% for 2-5 years, 14% for 6-10 years, and the remaining 49% for more than 10 years.

When it came to living in the Philadelphia region, 17% of respondents had lived in the region for less than two years, 29% for 2-5 years, 18% for 6-10 years, and 36% for more than 10 years.





**Women were more likely than men to have come directly to the Philadelphia region** (61% to 49%). We do not have a complete explanation for this finding. It is possible that it reflects in part the phenomenon known as the “trailing spouse,” in which women may have arrived in the Philadelphia region to accompany or follow a male relative, usually a husband, who has found employment here.

There were also statistically significant differences between Millennial and non-Millennial respondents. Unsurprisingly, Millennials were likely to have arrived in the US more recently:

One-fifth (22%) had lived in the US for less than 2 years, compared to just 6% of non-Millennial respondents. Another 33% of Millennials had lived in the US for 2-5 years, compared to 19% of non-Millennial respondents.

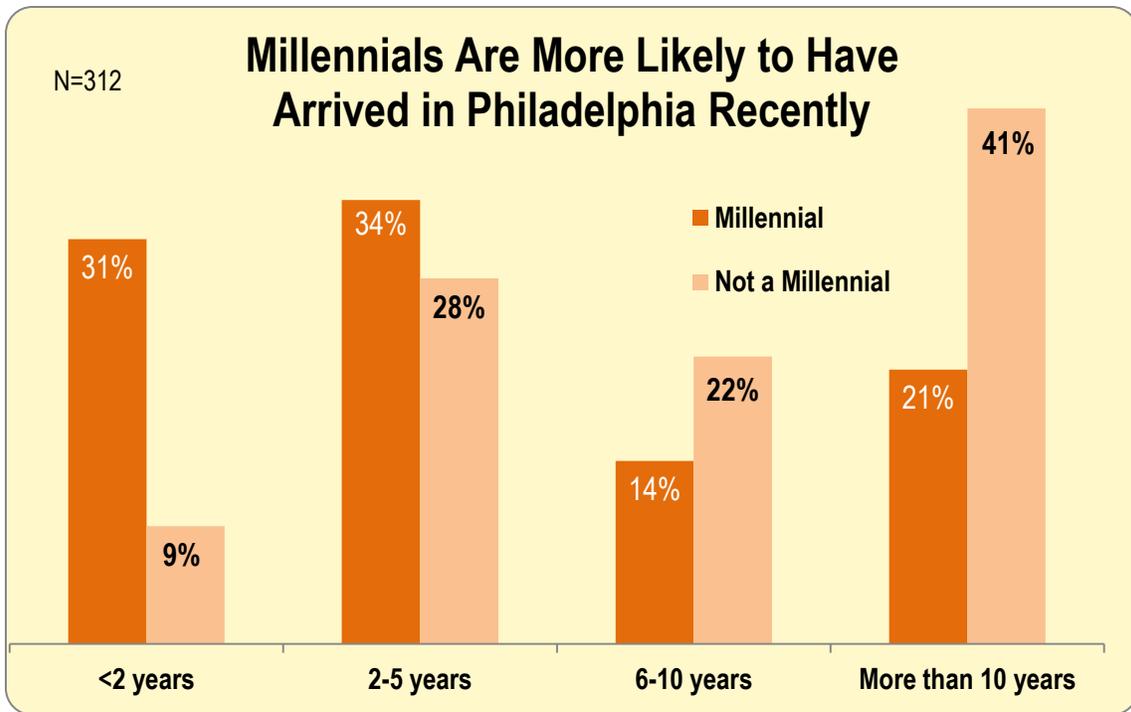
The percentage of Millennials who had lived in the US for 6-10 years was identical to that of non-Millennials (16%), but Millennials were much less likely to report having lived in the region for more than 10 years (28%, versus 59% of non-Millennial respondents).

These findings reflect both Millennials’ younger overall age, and the fact that our survey purposely did not attempt to reach a large number of so-called “1.5 generation” immigrants who arrived as young children and are now young adults.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to being more likely to have arrived in the US recently, Millennials were also more likely to have arrived *in Philadelphia* recently, compared to other respondents. (See chart.)

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<sup>11</sup> We made this decision because this study is primarily about what draws *adults* to our region; asking current-day 25-year-olds what drew their parents here fifteen or twenty years ago was not the object of our research.



Finally, Millennials were more likely than our respondents overall to have come to Philadelphia as their *first* US destination. A hefty 69% of Millennials named Philadelphia as their first American destination, compared to 50% of non-Millennial respondents.

This is a particularly significant finding when juxtaposed with the data above about length of time in the Philadelphia region. ***The data indicate that Millennials are both more likely to be recent arrivals, and more likely to choose Philadelphia as their first destination.***

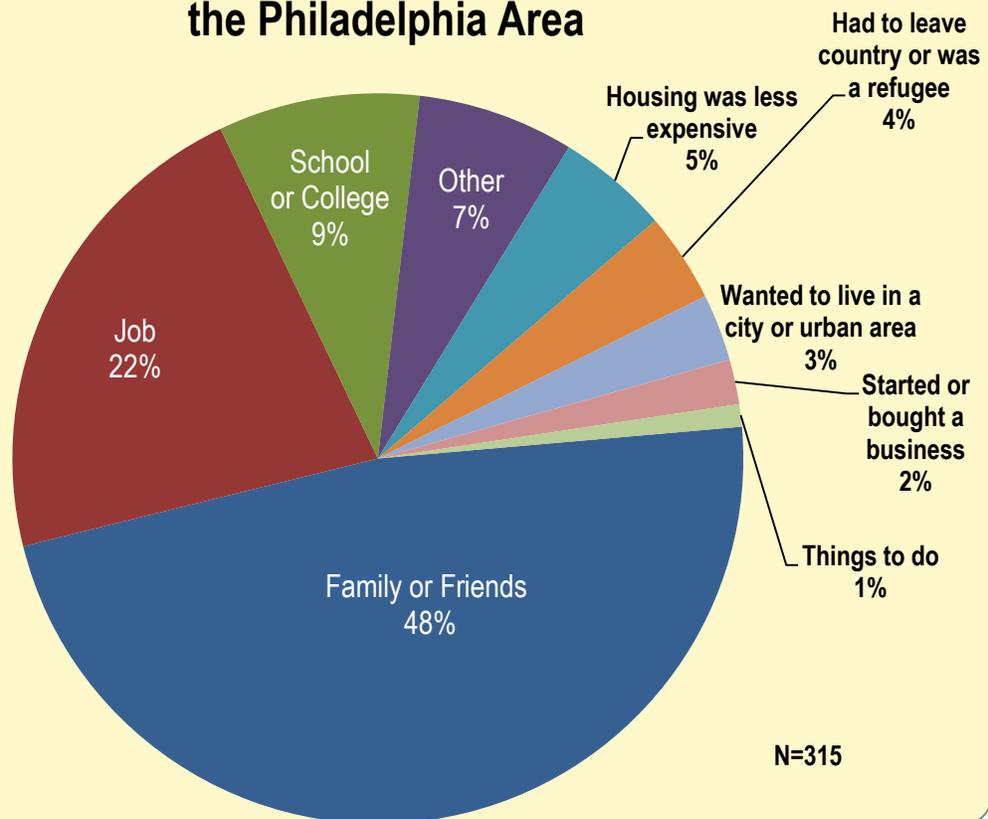
## What is Attracting Newcomers?

### Word of Mouth is Crucial in Attracting New Arrivals

Nearly half (48%) of our survey respondents reported that they had originally moved to Philadelphia because of their family or friends. An additional 1 in 5 (22%) said they had moved specifically for a job. Almost one in 10 (9%) came to our region to attend school or college.

More modest percentages reported that they had moved because of cheaper housing prices in our region (5%), because they were refugees who had to leave their country (4%), were launching or had bought a business (2%), liked the excitement of an urban area (2%), wanted “things to do” (1%), or had other reasons (7%). (See chart.)

## Social/Family Ties are Strongest Draw to the Philadelphia Area



In the “Other” category was a Filipino respondent who originally came to Philadelphia to join a group of nuns and a Haitian who had accompanied a friend to a hospital (whose comment said simply, “This is where the hospital was”).

Many respondents shared specific comments about how they came to choose Philadelphia. **“I came to the US [via political asylum], but I came to Philadelphia for a job,”** explained an Indonesian respondent.

An Albanian respondent listed his reasons for selecting Philadelphia as: **“Finding a job, public transportation, very good colleges for my children.”** A respondent from the small African nation of Benin said, “Housing and other stuff were less expensive.”

Some projected general hope and optimism. “For a new experience,” said an Irish respondent cheerfully. “For a better life and future,” explained a Latin American respondent.

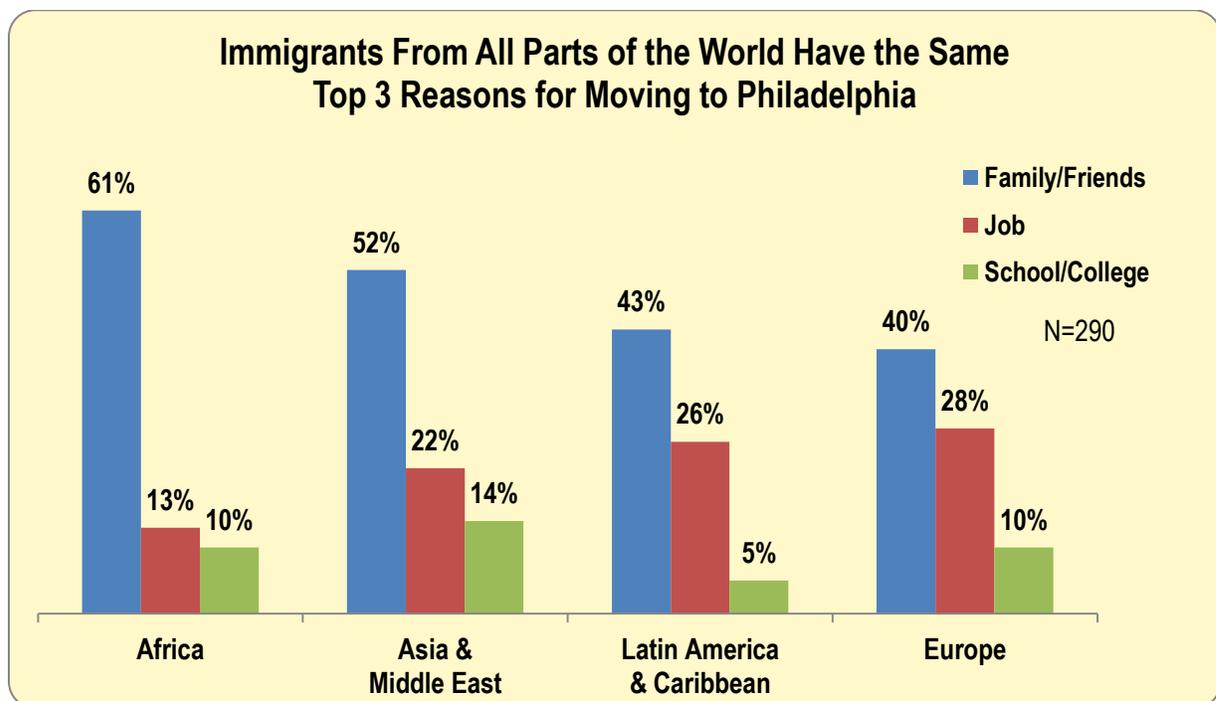
Others told a painful story in a few words. **“Because of the earthquake. Country devastated,”** said a Haitian respondent.



A few people answered the question by explaining their method of immigration to the United States. “GREENCARD LOTTERY,” said an enthusiastic Kenyan respondent, while others mentioned marriage and family.

There were statistically significant differences in responses among respondents from different regions of the world. **For each subgroup, the top three reasons for moving to Philadelphia were (in descending order): Family and friends, a job, or school/college.**

However, the percentages for each of these factors differed noticeably. African immigrants were the most likely (61%) to name family and friends, followed by Asian and Middle Eastern respondents at 52%, Latin American and Caribbean respondents at 43%, and European at 40%. (See chart.)



A job was the most important factor for 28% of European respondents, 26% of Latin American and Caribbean respondents, 22% of Asian and Middle Eastern respondents, and 13% of those from Africa.

Attending school or college was the most important factor for 14% of Asian and Middle Eastern respondents, 10% of both African and European respondents, and 5% of Latin American and Caribbean respondents.

There were a handful of other findings that stood out. **Fully 12% of European respondents cited “Other” reasons** for moving to the area, an unusually high percentage given that our survey already listed eight named reasons.

**Table 1: Primary Reason for Moving to Phila. Area by World Region of Birth**

	Africa	Asia & Middle East	Latin America & Caribbean	Europe
School/College	10%	14%	5%	10%
Job	13%	22%	26%	28%
Family/Friends	61%	52%	43%	40%
Started/Bought a Business	0%	0%	4%	2%
Housing More Affordable	3%	2%	9%	0%
Had to Leave Country/ Was a Refugee	9%	0%	3%	6%
Wanted to Live in a City	0%	2%	5%	2%
Things to Do	1%	2%	0%	0%
Other	3%	6%	5%	12%

*Gray shading indicates most frequently selected response per category. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.*

Nearly **1 in 10 (9%) of African respondents and 6% of European respondents selected “Had to leave my country/I was a refugee”** as their primary reason for coming to Philadelphia. This is not especially surprising given the context: Pennsylvania has traditionally resettled several thousand refugees per year, although these new arrivals are not limited to the southeastern part of the state. In 2012, Pennsylvania was the 4<sup>th</sup> largest refugee-receiving state nationwide.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, **9% of Latin American and Caribbean respondents named more affordable housing** as the primary factor in their relocation to Philadelphia. This is particularly notable given that Latin American and Caribbean respondents are *also* the most likely to have come to Philadelphia after having lived elsewhere in the U.S. It is possible that the so-called immigrant grapevine is functioning especially well in these communities.

There were also statistically significant differences between men’s and women’s reasons for moving to the Philadelphia region. **Women were substantially more likely (59%) to say that they moved for family and friends reasons** than men were (36%). A job was the second-most frequently cited reason for moving, but here again the gender split was pronounced, with men at 32% and women at 15%. School or college was the third most frequently mentioned reason, at 10% for men and 7% for women.

<sup>12</sup> See “Which States Accepted the Most Refugees in 2012?” *Governing*, April 8, 2013. Available online at: [www.governing.com/news/state/sl-refugees-in-states-2012.html](http://www.governing.com/news/state/sl-refugees-in-states-2012.html)

Rounding out the list, starting or buying a business was mentioned by 3% of men and 1% of women; cheaper housing by 6% of men and 4% of women; being a refugee by 3% of men and 4% of women; wanting to live in a city or liking the excitement of city life by 2% of men and 3% of women; “Things to do” by 2% of men and zero women, and “Other” reasons by 6% of each gender.

Respondents’ reasons for choosing Philadelphia also diverged by their education level. Notably, **social and personal ties remained the number-one reason for respondents at all educational levels except those with graduate degrees.**



Perhaps unsurprisingly, those with graduate degrees were instead more likely (33%) to have moved to the Philadelphia region because of a job.

We are somewhat perplexed by the uneven response of those who reported moving to Philadelphia for educational reasons. This answer was selected by 14% of respondents with “Some college” education (this includes some who may be in the midst of their undergraduate studies) and 16% of those with graduate degrees, but only 1% of those with a bachelor’s degree. It is not clear to us what may be causing this effect, but we would caution against drawing too many conclusions given the generally modest sample size (N=283 for this question.)

**Table 2: Primary Reason for Moving to Phila. Area by Educational Level**

	Less than HS Diploma	HS Diploma or Equiv.	Some College	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Degree
School/College	4%	7%	14%	1%	16%
Job	25%	21%	14%	17%	33%
Family/Friends	54%	51%	54%	62%	28%
Started/Bought a Business	4%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Housing More Affordable	10%	5%	2%	6%	4%
Had to Leave Country/ Was a Refugee	2%	5%	4%	1%	6%
Wanted to Live in a City	2%	5%	2%	1%	3%
Things to Do	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%
Other	0%	2%	6%	10%	9%

*Gray shading indicates most frequently selected response per category. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.*

Interestingly, there are *no* statistically significant differences between Millennials and other respondents in the primary reason they moved to the Philadelphia region.

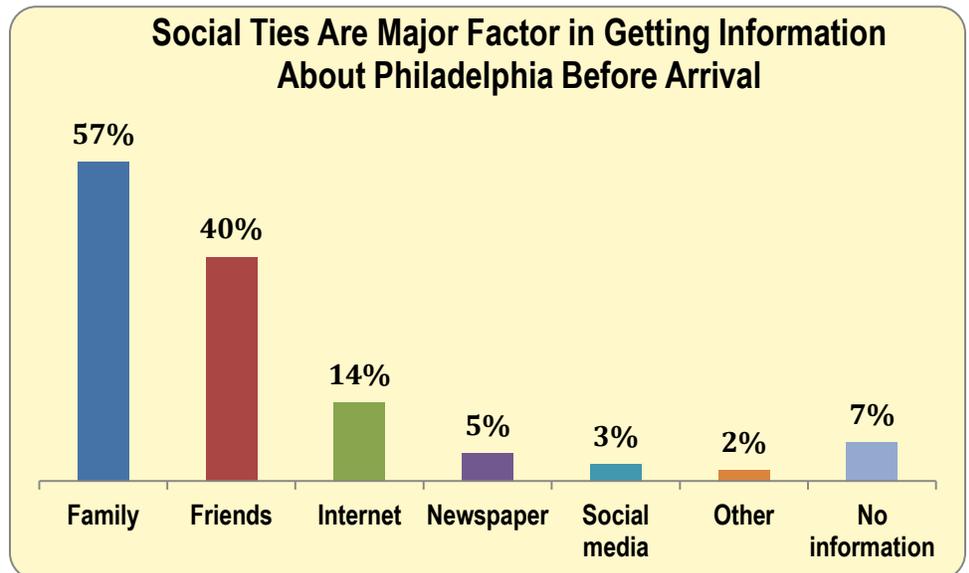
Similarly, there were no statistically significant differences in top reasons for moving to Philadelphia among respondents who had arrived here recently versus in earlier years. This suggests that people’s reasons for selecting our region may be relatively similar in the 2010s as they were in the 2000s or 1990s.<sup>13</sup>

## Getting Information about Philadelphia

We asked respondents to tell us *all* of the ways that they obtained information about the Philadelphia region before moving here.

Not surprisingly, personal relationships played a major role here as well. Well over half of respondents (57%) reported that family members were their primary source of information about the region before arrival. Friends were also very important sources (40%).

Less mentioned, but still notable, are more impersonal sources of information, including the Internet (14%), newspapers (5%), and social media (2%). It should be noted that we did not ask respondents about what types of Internet sites they had visited, so this category may also include some news media.



We had expected that respondents might volunteer a significant category of new answers in the “Other” category, but this was not the case. The “Other” responses were an eclectic array.

Several respondents mentioned books about Philadelphia history, movies about the city, and their schools or classmates (including both Philadelphia-area universities and schools in their home country). Intriguingly, several said they had visited Philadelphia on vacation before deciding to move to the city.

<sup>13</sup> It is also possible that there *have* been changes in people’s reasons for coming, but that they are obscured by an artifact of our study design or data collection – for example, the fact that we did not survey individuals who had left Philadelphia.

One respondent reported learning about the city from customers at a craft show, and a very disgruntled respondent reported, “***Some other stupid people told me about it.***”

Among the relatively high number (7%) of people who reported moving to Philadelphia without having *any* information about the region, some had originally come to the US as refugees. This reflects the fact that the federal refugee resettlement process typically allows newcomers very little (if any) choice in city or regional location.

Other respondents who reported that they moved to Philadelphia without knowing anything about the region had moved here for a job or because of a family member.



There were very few statistically significant differences in the above categories by gender, world region of birth, age in general or status as a Millennial, length of time in Philadelphia, or length of time in the US.

Unsurprisingly, there *was* a difference for the “Internet” category. More than ***1 in 4 people (28%) who had arrived in Philadelphia in the past two years had obtained information about the region via the Internet.*** The number dropped to 14% for those here 2-5 years, stayed at 14% for those here 6-10 years, and dropped to 9% for those here more than 10 years.

In the “Social Media” category, there are very slight differences among respondents by length of time in Philadelphia and length of time in the US: Those who have arrived in the past two years are more likely to report using social media to get information about the region before arrival.

While the subset of respondents in this category is too small to generalize about, this preliminary finding is very consistent with other research on the growing use of social media, the worldwide adoption of mobile phones (especially in countries with limited infrastructure), and our own findings in this study on the primacy of social and personal bonds in making decisions about location.

## **A Welcoming Region?**

Respondents overwhelmingly (82%) reported finding the Philadelphia region to be welcoming when they first arrived. To some extent this finding is to be expected; we would anticipate that a substantial number of those who did *not* find the region welcoming would have quickly moved on and therefore not have been present to participate in our survey.

Respondents volunteered numerous additional comments to explain why they felt the region was welcoming (or unwelcoming). Several themes came up repeatedly:

Forty-four respondents volunteered that their **family and friends** were a reason that they experienced the region as welcoming. “I had my husband to welcome me,” said one respondent. Another said it was joyful to be reunited with her mother after a years-long separation.

A dozen respondents emphasized that **having a critical mass of others from their home country**, region of the world, or religious faith helped to make the Philadelphia area feel welcoming. The Catholic Church and Philadelphia’s robust Muslim community were singled out, as were the region’s Albanian, Greek, and Russian communities, among others.



Several African and Latino respondents also commented about the importance of having a community of people from their region of the world. “Puerto Rican people welcome[d] me,” said a Nicaraguan. In contrast, another respondent said wistfully, “Not too many Mexicans back then.”

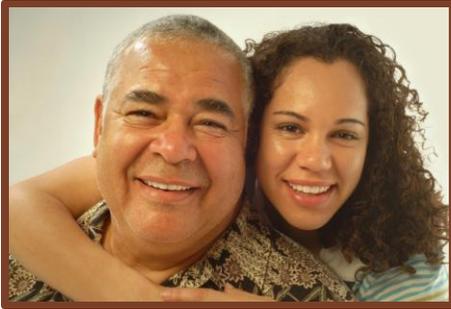
Ten respondents specifically mentioned Philadelphia’s **diversity and acceptance** as drawing points. “There were so many other minorities – it felt like a place of immigrants,” said an Indian immigrant currently living in South Philadelphia. “It’s a multiethnic city,” said another respondent approvingly. “I don’t feel being singled out,” added a Chinese respondent.

Notably, some respondents took a utilitarian approach, citing **jobs and opportunity** as the reason they felt welcome in the region. “I feel welcome here [because] I [got] a job in less than a month,” explained a respondent from Sierra Leone. This theme was repeated by nearly two dozen other respondents, all of whom emphasized the simple fact of getting a job or having opportunities open to them, rather than the specific reception they felt from co-workers once on the job.

Perhaps most intriguing, a full 60 respondents volunteered that that they see Philadelphia-area residents as **nice, friendly, or patient**. We were somewhat surprised by this outpouring of cheerfulness, which was voiced by respondents from every region of the world, living in numerous neighborhoods across the Philadelphia region.

They included a Mexican respondent living in South Philadelphia; an Ivorian living in Southwest Philadelphia, an Indian immigrant in Northeast Philadelphia, a

Guatemalan in Germantown, a North African living in Montgomery County, a Chinese respondent on the Main Line, and a Haitian living in the Logan/Olney area.



“The people were friendly; [it] felt like we were living in our country,” said a Latin American respondent. “Some neighbors spoke our language, and the children were very open to meeting the ‘new kid’ on the block, despite language barriers,” said a respondent from Montgomery County.

“**The people are warm,**” summed up a respondent from Barbados, who lives just outside the city in Delaware County.

In contrast, 18 respondents mentioned specifically negative aspects of their experience in the Philadelphia region. Some simply gave one-word answers: **Racism. Discrimination. Favoritism. Nepotism. Cliquishness.** Others were more specific: “The kids in school were very mean and made fun. It was a difficult transition as a kid and [I] did not feel city/schools had many resources to assist,” said a Haitian respondent currently living in the Frankford section of the city.

A suburban respondent explained, ““My family moved to an area with few Latinos. We were the first kids in our public school to come from outside of the U.S. They didn't know how to deal with us. Neither did our neighbors.”

“We moved to inner city Philadelphia. Coming from Eastern Europe, there was nothing culturally common between us and the neighborhood we lived in,” said a Hungarian respondent.

“**People here talk down to immigrants.** Especially if they have an accent,” said a West African respondent living in Chester County. “Racism, violence, underfunded school system,” summed up a respondent from China.

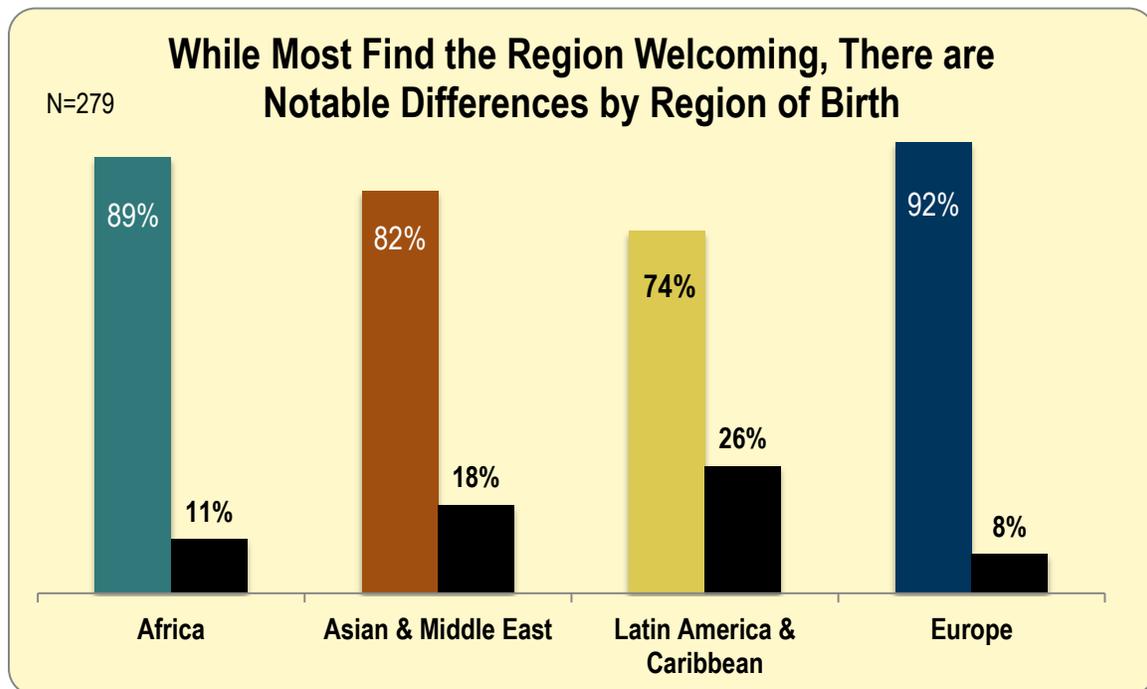
Other responses illustrated the **resilient and philosophical attitude** that many immigrants adopt to survive. “People were nice even [if] some of them were making fun of my accent and my limited English language skills,” said a West African respondent.

“People at the airport were kind of mean. Very blunt and abrupt. But it's just their attitude. It didn't prejudice me against everybody in Philly,” said a Polish respondent. One Chinese respondent living in North Philadelphia said simply: “People are rude in big cities.”

But perhaps the best summary came from this respondent: “**People here in Philly talk to you. [S]ometimes not politely, but they talk.**”

While strong majorities of immigrants from each region of the world said they find Philadelphia to be welcoming, there are important differences among them. Favorable opinions are highest among European immigrants (92%), followed closely by African immigrants (89%) and then Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants (82%) and finally Latin American and Caribbean immigrants (74%).

Put another way, **a startling 1 in 4 Latin American and Caribbean immigrants (26%) find the Philadelphia region unwelcoming**, along with nearly 1 in 5 Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants (18%). (See chart.)

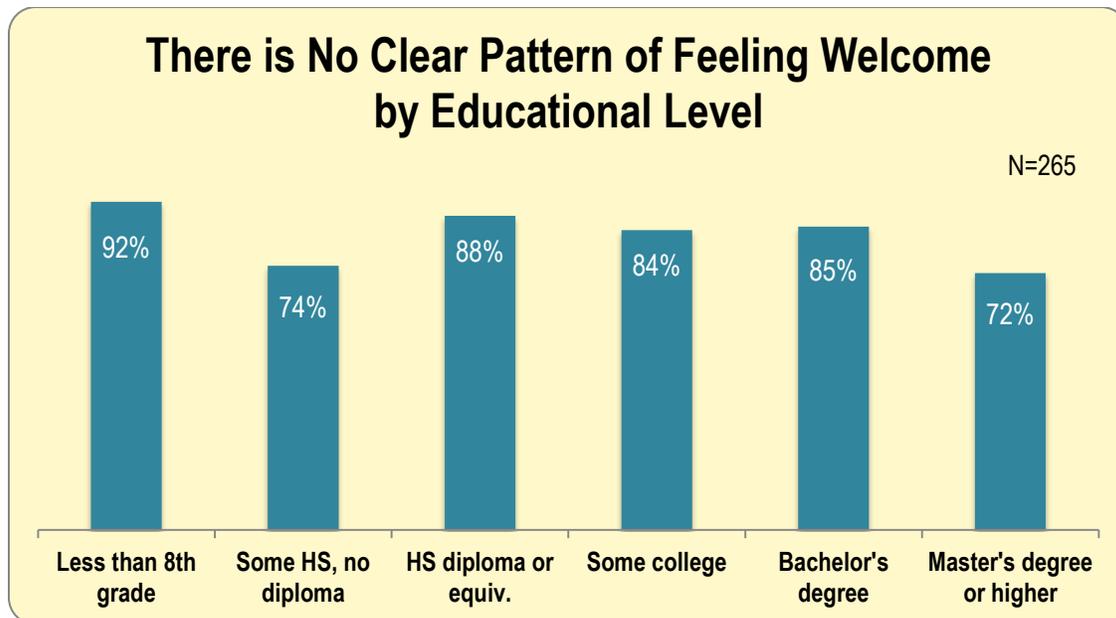


There are several potential factors that may be driving these differences in perception. A factor mentioned by a number of respondents was their experience of bias. These respondents experienced racially or ethnically prejudiced actions on the part of neighbors, law enforcement officials, or other individuals. (See next section for more details on interactions with the police.) It is certainly the case that experiencing discriminatory or biased treatment could make individuals feel unwelcome.<sup>14</sup>

The degree to which immigrants perceive Philadelphia as welcoming also differ by educational level, although here the trends are harder to explain. Overall, most immigrants still report feeling welcome in the region, with the percentages ranging from 72-92%. (See chart.)

<sup>14</sup> Some of the respondents who reported experiencing discrimination did not give their country or region of birth. However, all of those that did were from Africa, Latin America or the Caribbean.

However, there are important differences among educational groups. Most notably, **a full quarter of immigrants with master's degrees (28%) as well as those with some high school (26%) report feeling unwelcome.**

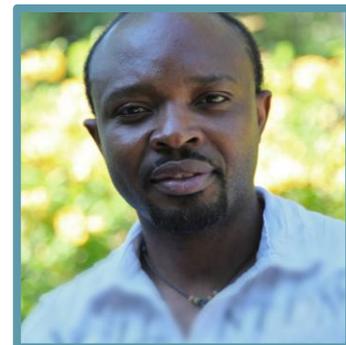


It is difficult to know what to make of this data. There is no progression of perceiving Philadelphia as more (or less) unwelcoming as one moves up the educational ladder. Indeed, immigrants with almost no formal education (8<sup>th</sup> grade or less) feel the *most* welcome at 92%, while their compatriots with just slightly more schooling (9-11<sup>th</sup> grade) feel significantly less welcome at 74%.

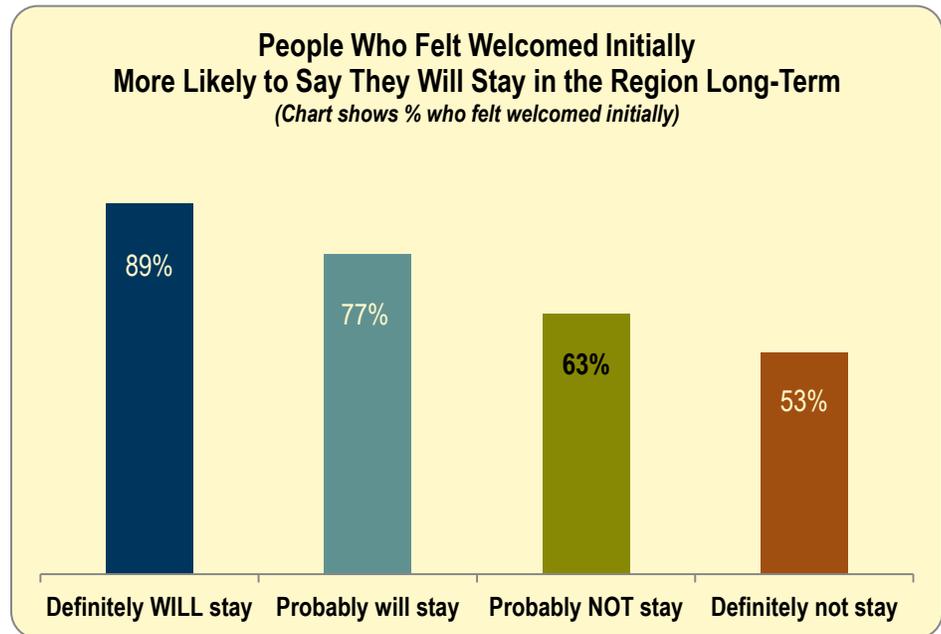
Similarly, those with bachelor's degrees report feeling very welcome (85%), yet those with master's degrees and above are much less likely to feel favorably toward the region (72%).

It is possible that these varying numbers reflect differences in the expectations that immigrants of various educational levels have about life in the United States, or that they are an artifact of other demographic differences (such as region of birth). We do not feel confident that we have a full understanding of the factors at work here, and we would welcome hypotheses.

There were no statistically significant differences in perception of overall welcome by gender, age, status as a Millennial, number of languages spoken, length of time in the United States, or length of time in Philadelphia.



**Not surprisingly, immigrants' perception of our region as a welcoming one was correlated with their intent to stay in the area in the future.** Among those who said they “Definitely will” stay in the Philadelphia region over the next 5-10 years, 89% reported feeling welcome when they arrived here. For those who “probably will” stay in the region, 77% felt welcome.



The numbers drop substantially for those who are planning to leave the region. Just 63% of respondents who said they “probably will” leave the Philadelphia area felt welcome when they arrived here.

Among those who said they “definitely will” leave the region, only 53% felt welcome when they arrived.

## Gauging the Welcome in Specific Places

In addition to asking about overall welcome, we also asked respondents to tell us about whether they felt welcome in six specific settings: The workplace, places of worship, ethnic associations, libraries, in interactions with the police, and (if they had children) in school.

In general, respondents had positive responses to all six categories, ranging from a low of 83% who had positive impression of the police to a high of 95% who perceived their place of worship as welcoming.

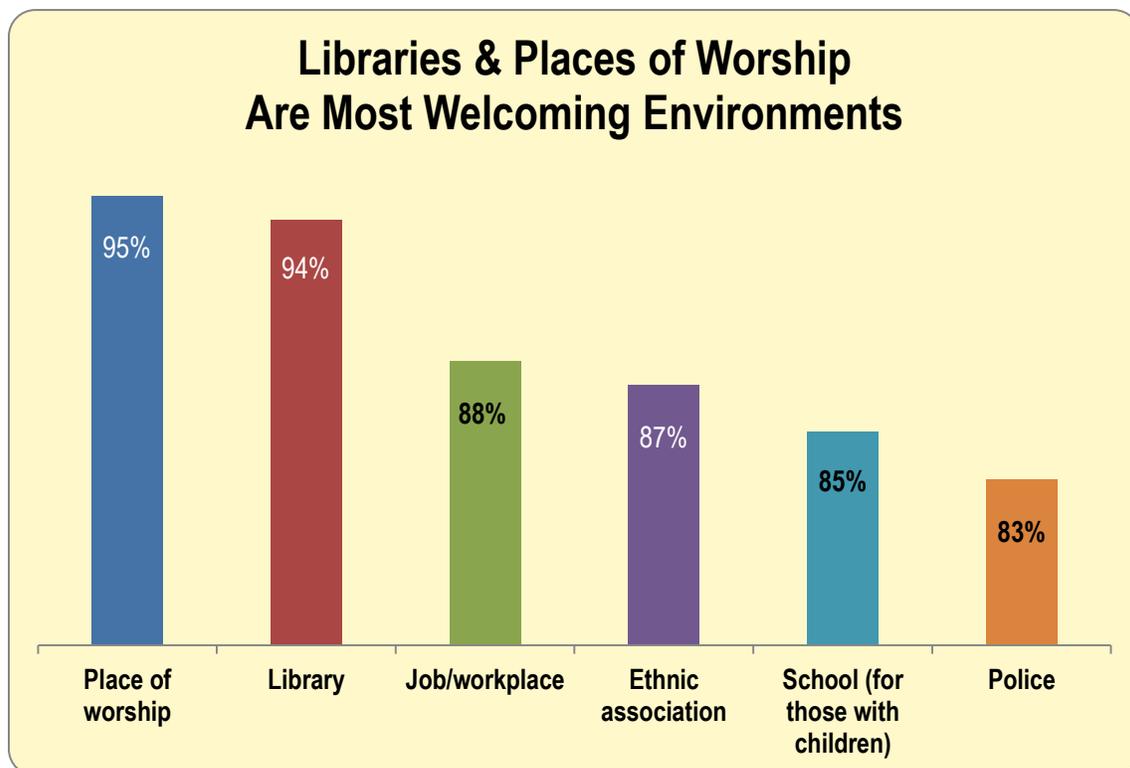
General comments on welcome included a West African man living in Delaware County who said, *“Immigrants can feel at home in Philadelphia,”* an Algerian respondent who reported *“feeling welcom[e],”* and a respondent from Uzbekistan who simply said *“Great.”*

“Love living here. Fast paced and laid back at the same time,” said a delighted Jamaican respondent. **“The West Philly community welcomed me with open arms,”** said a respondent from the Philippines.

In contrast, a respondent from Guyana said grouchily, “The younger generation are less friendly,” and a respondent from the United Kingdom said only, **“I have always been treated like an outsider.”**

A frustrated East African respondent shared a lengthy story: “My kid was 4 year old but he did not get [in to a] school. I applied everywhere, but I did not get positive response and still he is at home. [Also, even now] my kids do not have medical insurance. At one time I go to welfare office to ask information about school and medical insurance [but] one social worker mistreated me. **I stop looking for another option and decided to move** but I am [still] here.”

Below, we review each of the six specific settings that our study considered. (See chart this page, followed by description.)



### Places of worship

There were no statistically significant differences by gender, region of birth, status as a Millennial, education level, length of time in Philadelphia or the United States.

There is a very slight difference by age in general, with respondents in their 30s being slightly more likely to report feeling *unwelcome* in their place of worship. We do not have an immediate explanation for this finding, which was sufficiently small (in the single digits in each age category) that it is clearly not a significant factor for the vast majority of respondents.

### Libraries

There were no statistically significant differences by gender, region of birth, level of education, status as a Millennial, or by length of time in Philadelphia or the United States.

There was a slight indication that respondents in their 30s were marginally more likely to say that libraries were unwelcoming. We do not have a ready explanation for this finding, and we would caution against over-interpretation because the effect is so small.

### Workplaces

***“Everyone at work was nice except for the boss,”*** a Caribbean respondent said wryly. His comments reflected the generally positive tone that most respondents had about the welcome in their workplaces.

Similarly, a Chinese respondent was philosophical in explaining his adjustment to the workplace: ***“[I] had to learn more about the job [and] get experience.”*** But not all of his colleagues were patient with a newcomer, he added: ***“[S]ome people were rude.”***

Overall, there were no statistically significant differences in workplace welcome by region of birth, age in general or status as a Millennial, length of time in Philadelphia or the United States.

There was a slight but statistically significant difference by gender. **Men were more likely (92%) to report feeling welcome in the workplace than women (84%).** It is hard to know what is driving this phenomenon, but one obvious possibility reflects women workers’ generally greater vulnerability to sexual harassment or other exploitation, particularly among low-wage workers who are working in private settings (such as home health aides).

There were also statistically significant differences by level of education. **Respondents with higher levels of education were more likely to say that they do not feel welcome on the job.**



There are several possible explanations for this finding. First, more highly educated immigrant workers may be more vulnerable to on-the-job isolation and a lack of colleagues with shared experiences. Unlike lower-wage workers, who are more likely to be employed in settings with numerous fellow immigrants, white-collar workers are often in less diverse contexts.

Second, there may be a greater gap between expectations and achievement for highly educated respondents. In our organization's work, we regularly encounter college-educated immigrants who are surprised and dismayed by the often-lengthy and complex process of transferring international credentials to the US. It is possible that frustration at finding skill-appropriate employment spilled over into highly educated respondents' answers on this question, leading them to express dissatisfaction with their work environments.

Third, in our follow-up interviews to explore these initial findings, key informants suggested that tensions on the job might be contributing to perceptions of an unwelcoming atmosphere. Examples of such tensions included lack of recognition or financial remuneration for respondents' skills – common issues for any worker, but ones that can be compounded by culturally different approaches to performance evaluation and even bragging.

In addition, unlike a manufacturing or service industry job, where colleagues are often working in parallel on an easily-defined task, white-collar “knowledge work” often involves nuanced, actively collaborative activities that require high-level interpersonal and communications skills. The often-subjective nature of evaluating such skills may leave highly education immigrant respondents feeling undervalued in the workplace.

### Ethnic Associations

Respondents offered very limited comments on this category. Our follow-up conversations with key informants suggest that ethnic organizations sometimes carry with them religious, tribal, or political affiliations from their home country, thus making it more of a challenge to welcome fellow newcomers who share a nationality or a language but may not share other characteristics.

***“Some [ethnic associations] are very receptive while others are not, and this is from personal experience,”*** said a Caribbean respondent pointedly.

There were no statistically significant differences by gender, region of birth, level of education, age in general or status as a Millennial, or by length of time in Philadelphia or the United States.



## Schools

We asked respondents to tell us how welcoming they felt the schools had been, if they had children. Here there was a stark divide between those who had arrived in Philadelphia more than 10 years ago and those who came more recently.



Nearly 1 in 4 of the older arrivals (23%) reported that schools had been *unwelcoming* to their children. The rate dropped to 8% among those who had been in Philadelphia for 6-10 years or 2-5 years, and dropped slightly again to 7% for those who had been here for less than two years.

Some respondents commented on their sense that schools were not welcoming: ***"Not a good experience,"*** said one Caribbean respondent. ***"Public schools were not welcoming,"*** agreed another respondent from Trinidad. "[But my] youngest child did online school and had a good experience."

In contrast, a respondent from Haiti felt more favorably; he explained that his ***"[s]on has Asperger's; school system was able to support through special needs programs and teach [me about] how to raise [my] child."***

There were no statistically significant differences by gender, region of birth, level of education, age in general or status as a Millennial, or by length of time in the United States.

## Police

The overwhelming majority of respondents who felt moved to make an additional comment on this question had had negative experiences with the police. ***"[I] feel profiled by cop[s] pulling me over looking for something to call me on,"*** said a West African resident living in Eastern North Philadelphia.

***"Police officers were suspicious of me without a reason,"*** said a Guatemalan respondent. ***"Police harassed [me],"*** said a respondent from the Gambia, adding that religious differences between people of the same ethnicity were also a problem in the community.

Others shared painful memories. ***"I was told I was a drug dealer because of my skin color,"*** recalled a Jamaican respondent living in Northeast Philadelphia.

***"Police sometimes take too long,"*** said one Latin American respondent, who added that there is prejudice and people don't treat everyone equally. ***"They give me tickets,"*** added a respondent living in West Philadelphia.

A Haitian respondent felt differently, saying: “**Police [were] welcoming, especially Haitian police.**”



We were somewhat surprised that there were statistically significant differences in respondents’ experiences with the police at *both* ends of the age spectrum. Nearly one-third (29%) of those in their 20s had an unwelcoming experience with law enforcement. The percentage dropped to 16% among those in their 30s, and 6% for those in their 40s, and then rose to 25% for those aged 50 and older.

We do not have a clear explanation for this finding; our study was not large enough to allow us to also control for length of time in the US, and we did not ask about English language proficiency, both of which are factors that may influence respondents’ experiences.

It should be noted that **we did not inquire about the nature of respondents’ interactions with police**, although, as indicated by the comments above, a number of respondents volunteered such information. Our conversations with key informants and our own experience indicate that there are numerous ways in which newcomers may come in contact with the police, including as crime victims, as witnesses, as business owners, as makeshift interpreters,<sup>15</sup> through community-relations and outreach events, and as potential offenders.

It should also be noted that this question elicited a **higher-than-average rate of refusal** in even answering the question, resulting in a total N of 183 respondents. Our in-person interviewers found through probing that many respondents interpreted *the question itself* as a judgment about their likelihood of contact with law enforcement, and were taken aback or even offended by the suggestion.

Overall, there were no statistically significant differences by gender, region of birth, level of education, status as a Millennial, or by length of time in Philadelphia or the United States.

## Recommending Philadelphia

We asked respondents whether they would recommend the Philadelphia region as a good place for others to live. This is an especially important gauge given that social

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<sup>15</sup> While the Philadelphia Police Department has an established policy on official use of interpreters and has existing in-house and contracted language interpretation services, many of the smaller police forces in the region lack these resources. In addition, police departments of all sizes, including the city, struggle with ensuring that all personnel on the ground are aware of and are implementing policies as written.

and personal ties play such a significant role in newcomers' decisions to relocate to Philadelphia.

Overall, an overwhelming 86% of respondents said they would recommend Philadelphia. **"[I] always tell my friends to move to Philadelphia, [and I] bring them to visit,"** said an enthusiastic African respondent.

Several respondents emphasized the quality, variety and affordability of colleges and universities in the Philadelphia region. Others stated that while you could get a job in Philadelphia, it wouldn't necessarily be a *good* job.

Most of those who chose to add additional comments wanted to add nuance to their recommendation. For example, a West African respondent who has lived in Philadelphia for almost a decade said, "Not sure because finding a job is not easy right now. Before it was easier but now it is hard."

An Eastern European respondent was equally equivocal: **"I don't know; it's OK.** Maybe there are other places that are better. It's hard to get a job everywhere you go, not just in Philadelphia."

A number of those who *did* recommend the region added caveats to their endorsements. An Egyptian respondent felt compelled to honesty: **"[Yes, I would recommend], but I've never been anywhere else in the US."**

A Ukrainian respondent was blunt: "Philadelphia is good, but there are better places out there."

Others were more philosophical:

"I will describe it the way I see it and let [my friend] decide... Who knows -- some are doing well here and others [aren't]," said a Togolese respondent.

"It depends what they are looking for in a place to live. If they want fast-paced and melting pot like, then NYC is far superior; if they want the history of a nation and smaller, then Phila is a great place to live," said a Moldovan respondent.

"Depending on the goals and needs of my friends, I may or may not recommend Philadelphia," said a Chinese respondent.

**"I would recommend Philadelphia if you are strong and have patience with the people,"** summed up a Chilean respondent pragmatically.

Overall, there were modest but statistically significant differences among respondents from different regions of the world. European respondents overwhelmingly (95%) recommended Philadelphia, with African respondents close



behind at 92% and Latin American and Caribbean respondents at 91%. Asian and Middle Eastern respondents were the most tempered, but still very positive at 85%.<sup>16</sup>



**Intriguingly, individuals who currently live in the City of Philadelphia were *more likely to recommend the region (92%) than those who live outside the city (86%).*** Assuming that respondents' answers were based on their experience in their current place of residence, this finding somewhat contradicts the common belief that the suburbs are more desirable. We hope to explore this small but statistically significant result further in the future.

There were no statistically different differences by gender, age, status as a Millennial, length of time in the United States, length of time in Philadelphia, or education level.

## Recommending Philadelphia...in Specific Cases

We also asked respondents whether they would recommend Philadelphia in five specific instances: To get a good job, for young adults, for older adults with no children, to raise children, and to attend college.

Philadelphia's powerhouse educational institutions propelled their category to the top of the list, with 88% of respondents agreeing that the region was a **good place to attend college**. Respondents also overwhelmingly (86%) endorsed the city as a good place for **young adults**.

A robust 4 out of 5 respondents (80%) agreed that Philadelphia was a good place for **older adults with no children**. Almost as many, 77%, said it was possible to **get a good job** here.

The response on the last question, **raising children**, was the most muted. Seventy percent (70%) of respondents agreed that the region was a good place for parents. This category garnered numerous comments, with respondents volunteering more detailed information about why they did or did not find Philadelphia to be a welcoming place for childrearing.

Below we include a brief analysis of findings in these specific categories.

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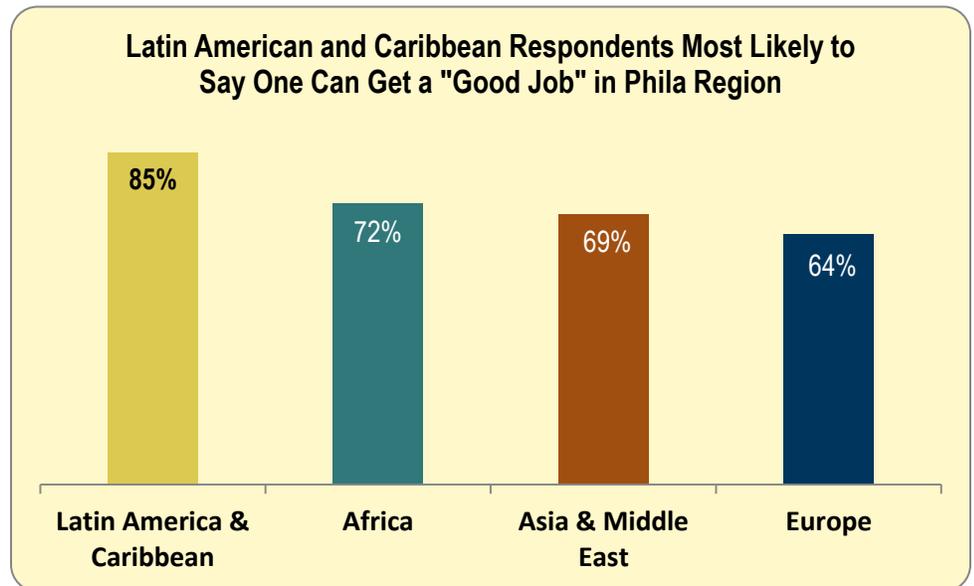
<sup>16</sup> Note that differences between the overall rating of 86% and the aggregate of these individual regions of origin reflect the fact that some respondents replied to the "Would you recommend" question but declined to tell us their country or region of origin.

### **Get a good job:**

There were marked differences by region of birth on this question. Latin American and Caribbean respondents were the most likely (85%) to say they would recommend the region as a place to get a good job. They were followed by African (72%) Asian and Middle Eastern (69%) and finally European respondents (64%).

There was also a sizeable difference among respondents who live in the city of Philadelphia (80% say one can get a good job here) versus those who live outside the city (64%).

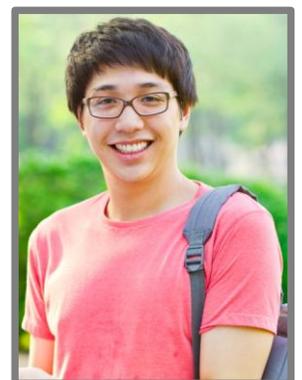
There were no statistically significant differences by age, status as a Millennial, gender, or among respondents who had children under 18 living at home.



**Older adults, no children:** There were no statistically significant differences by age, gender, status as a Millennial or region of birth. Interestingly, there was a slight but statistically significant difference among respondents who were parents of young children. A slightly higher percentage of respondents with young children (82%) thought the city was a good place for older adults, compared to 78% of respondents without children present. We do not have a hypothesis for this finding.

**Young adults** There were no statistically significant differences by gender, age, status as a Millennial, region of birth, or presence of children under 18.

**Raise children.** There were no statistically significant differences by gender, age, status as a Millennial, region of birth, or presence of children under 18.



**Get a college education.** There were no statistically significant differences by gender, age, status as a Millennial, region of birth, or presence of children under 18.

## Staying in Philadelphia for the Long Term?

A substantial majority of respondents affirmed that they plan to stay in Philadelphia over the longer term. Fifty-one percent (51%) said they “definitely would” stay in the region for the next 5-10 years, and an additional 33% said they “probably would.”



Much smaller percentages reported that they plan to leave the region: 11% said they “probably would not” stay long-term, while 5% said they “definitely would not.”

As noted earlier in this report, there is a notable correlation between those who plan to leave Philadelphia and those who did not find the region to be welcoming when they initially arrived.

Of those who plan to leave their current home, 57% plan to leave the region *entirely*, while the remainder say they would like to stay in the tri-state area (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware). Interestingly, there is no particular pattern in the far-off destinations named by respondents; Virginia and Minnesota were as likely to be mentioned as New York. Our interpretation is that this reflects in part the primacy of social and personal ties to relocation decisions.

We also asked respondents to tell us **what would cause them to leave the Philadelphia region**, if they chose to leave.<sup>17</sup> *Respondents were allowed to select multiple reasons.*

The most often mentioned response was job/career reasons at 61%, followed by family/friends/personal reasons at 51%, and schools/child upbringing at 20%. The next-most-frequently mentioned were crime/safety/drugs at 16%, decreasing quality of life at 11%, and desire for a more suburban lifestyle at 10%.

Just 6% of respondents cited politics/government/corruption as a reason for leaving, and 5% listed “Other” reasons, primarily focusing on the Philadelphia region’s cold weather and opportunities to find cheaper housing elsewhere.

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<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that a number of respondents resisted this question, often saying to our interviewers some version of, “But I just told you I’m not going to leave!” While there are many cross-cultural issues involved in administering a survey to individuals who may not be familiar with an American-style format, this was the sole question in which our ability to even obtain replies was genuinely affected.

## Findings & Recommendations

***Warm attachment to the region follows tangible outcomes – not necessarily the reverse.*** We were surprised by the extent to which respondents answered questions about how welcome they felt in the Philadelphia region with an immediate recitation of how quickly they had gotten a job. This response was repeated enough times that we feel confident that it reflects a real phenomenon.

Our interpretation is that welcoming initiatives should be mindful of the importance of bread-and-butter economic issues, and strategically focus talent attraction efforts accordingly.

***Family and friends play a purposeful – not just incidental – role in attracting and integrating newcomers.*** Our study shows that this goes significantly beyond nuclear family members such as parents or spouses. Again and again, respondents provided specific examples of how their friends or extended family members had introduced them to Philadelphia, helped them find their first homes and access their first jobs, and advised them on longer-term goals.



This intentional, step-by-step acclimation process illustrates the importance of broader social networks in the lives of newcomers. From the cousin who allows you to sleep on his couch for the first two months, to the acquaintance from your home city who introduces you to the hiring manager for your first American job, success in the US often reflects individuals' ability to draw on a web of contacts both formal and informal.

The implications for talent attraction are clear: Any attempt to recruit or incorporate newcomers should strive to facilitate more of the (and capitalize on the existing) social and personal relationships that drive so much of migration.

***Diversity fosters diversity, and momentum breeds momentum.*** A number of respondents volunteered specific comments about Philadelphia's multiethnic, multi-faith demographics. Some respondents focused specifically on how meaningful it was to find others here from their home country, or who spoke their primary language, or worshipped a shared faith. Others appreciated the fact that they didn't feel conspicuous or alone.

We draw two conclusions from this finding. First, there is indisputably a snowball-like effect in which the existence of a given immigrant community in a geographic location encourages additional members of that community to settle in that area. While this may seem obvious, it again emphasizes the relatively powerful role of network effects in attracting new residents.

Second, attention should be paid to *relative* diversity, not just absolute diversity. The City of Philadelphia is still just 12% foreign-born – a far cry from the 37% foreign born in New York City, for example. Yet our respondents mostly did *not* compare Philadelphia to longtime immigrant gateways such as Los Angeles, Chicago, or New York. Rather, they saw Philadelphia as primarily diverse *in comparison to other cities and regions* on the East Coast and in the South and Southwest. Thus, regions with comparatively little diversity may wish to think more broadly in considering the makeup of regions beyond those they currently think of as peers or competitors.

***Within a city or region, there are “micro-climates” for integrating newcomers.***

These climates may be geographic in nature – that is, defined by neighborhood or political boundaries – but not necessarily. In fact, our study suggests that immigrants from different regions of the world often experience very different “welcomes” in the same geographic community.



The emotion with which respondents shared their experiences – both good and bad – emphasizes that the welcoming atmosphere in a given town, or neighborhood can vary substantially for immigrants depending on demographic traits such as race, ethnicity, and social class. Almost by definition, immigrant newcomers are entering into a fluid environment, rich with social and interpersonal dynamics, in which their reception may vary along a number of dimensions.

The primary implication of this finding is the importance of ensuring that a diverse range of perspectives and experiences are present at the discussion or decisionmaking table for both talent attraction efforts and policy initiatives. While no one individual can be expected to represent the perspective of an entire community, the experience of a Haitian, Christian woman may nevertheless be very different from that of a Russian, Jewish man.

***Higher education plays multiple, reinforcing roles in attracting and integrating newcomers.*** We were not surprised that respondents overwhelmingly agreed that Philadelphia was a good place to pursue higher education, or that a sizeable number reported moving to Philadelphia primarily because of a college or university.

However, we were struck by comments about the role that these anchor institutions play *beyond* simply attracting students and faculty and even providing employment.

Using various phrases, respondents also emphasized the “critical mass” that universities help to foster – whether that critical mass was of internationally-minded people or of opportunities for partnership and creative collaboration.



In our opinion, this finding reflects the need for expanded and more purposeful collaboration between immigrant attraction initiatives and local universities.

### Philadelphia-Specific Findings

In addition to the general findings outlined above, many of which have relevance for a national audience, we identified two findings specific to the Philadelphia region:

***Even suburban respondents still think of Philadelphia as the heart of the region.***

Regardless of where our respondents lived, the overwhelming majority still oriented themselves in reference to the city. In fact, our informal observation suggests that immigrant suburbanites may be *less* skeptical of Philadelphia’s assets than their native-born compatriots.

This has particular significance for efforts such as economic development initiatives to attract shoppers to “destination corridors” in the city.<sup>18</sup>

***Over time, immigrants become decidedly Philadelphian – for better and worse.***

We were somewhat taken aback by the extent to which many respondents have adopted very Philadelphian levels of attachment to their neighborhoods or suburban towns. We heard repeated examples of ways in which newcomers had internalized the intense loyalty that characterizes many native-born residents.<sup>19</sup>

This personal investment in place is a double-edged sword; while it can foster keen and valuable commitments to local communities, it can also leave immigrants vulnerable to adopting the same parochial attitudes that native-born residents sometimes exhibit.

There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. First, of course, it is possible that the Philadelphia region over time is in effect *selecting for* people who feel most at home in the region – that is, that the very immigrants who are most likely to stay are the ones who naturally feel at ease with the Philadelphia area’s blue-collar, do-it-yourself ethos; frank talk; and pragmatic ways.

Second, it is possible – even likely – that immigrants who persist in the region may consciously or unconsciously *alter* their approach to more closely mirror local attitudes. This may occur as a pro-active strategy to speed personal integration, or a more re-active strategy and survival skill. We welcome additional hypotheses on this intriguing topic – and indeed all of the above findings.

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<sup>18</sup> For more on this theme, see the Center for an Urban Future’s 2007 brief, “Recapturing Suburban Shoppers,” viewable at: [www.nycfuture.org/images\\_pdfs/pdfs/RecapturingSuburbanShoppers.pdf](http://www.nycfuture.org/images_pdfs/pdfs/RecapturingSuburbanShoppers.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> After data collection for this study was completed, we attended a forum at which a participant asked if research had been done on sports team allegiances among Philadelphia-area immigrants. We regret not having asked about this issue.

## Choosing Philadelphia: Methodology

### How this data was collected

In the summer and fall of 2013, the nonprofit Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians surveyed 364 foreign-born residents of the Philadelphia region. Of these, 198 respondents were interviewed in person (87 in English and 111 in Spanish), and 166 completed online surveys.

The survey protocol was almost identical for online and in-person interviews. The difference was that in-person interviewers were prompted to probe for additional details on select questions, to help us to more thoroughly understand the responses.

Online survey responses were solicited through e-mail announcements of the survey to the Welcoming Center's mailing list of approximately 9,000 contacts; individual requests to fellow nonprofit agencies serving immigrants; and social media postings on Facebook and Twitter. In addition, we distributed 500 postcards with a website URL and scannable QR code, inviting people to participate in the survey. Postcards were distributed through individual contacts and at high-profile public events such as the Indian and Caribbean festivals at Penn's Landing (popular summertime weekend events which draw large crowds).

In-person survey responses were solicited in several ways. First, clients of the Welcoming Center's employment, adult education, and small business services were invited to participate in interviews during their visits to our Center City offices. All participants were given the option to decline participation. We carefully emphasized that individuals were *not* required to participate in the survey in order to receive services from the Welcoming Center.

Participants were interviewed by separate personnel, trained in qualitative interviewing, who had no responsibility for service delivery. This was done to minimize the social pressure that participants might feel to say "yes" to the Welcoming Center staff member who was helping them to find a job, learn English, or launch a business.

We did not detect any particular patterns of response bias with regard to those who declined to take the survey; one factor that did come up a few times was whether the potential respondent was pressed for time (for example, if they were on their way to a job interview, or if their parking meter was about to run out).

The second method by which in-person participants were recruited was through a highly visible table in Suburban Station, the busy commuter rail hub located on the concourse level of the Welcoming Center's main offices. Interviewers staffed this table for a full weekday, resulting in a number of in-person on-site interviews. In addition, the table was marked by a large posterboard on an easel, with a large-print invitation to participate in the survey and a scannable QR code so passersby could respond to the online survey via their smart phones.

Thirdly, we conducted interviews via telephone, by contacting former Welcoming Center clients to invite their participation.

Finally, individual interviews were solicited from passersby in community settings such as parks and laundromats. This low-key approach allowed people to participate when they had the leisure (while watching their children play or waiting for laundry) to respond to our questions.

**Our interview protocol is available as an appendix to this report.** Note that we asked about presence of children *in the home* because immigration is a notorious factor in family separation. Simply asking people if they had children under 18 would tell us nothing about whether that child was living in the Philadelphia region (and thus might affect their parents' opinions about the local public schools, etc).

We are aware that this led to some under-counting of parenthood, because we did not collect data on immigrants who are non-custodial parents. We believe this is a relatively limited factor given the particular population we are studying.

We did not ask about income. There is a well-established tendency for immigrants to become more Americanized – that is, less willing to give salary or income data – over time. We did not have the personnel to gather enough data to allay this effect, so we did not ask at all.

We also did not ask about what type of visa immigrants had had when they first arrived in the US, or their current immigration or naturalization status. The complexity and sensitivity of gathering accurate data on these questions made it impractical for us to reasonably obtain given the resources we had available.<sup>20</sup>

### Representativeness of the data

**This report is *not* based on a statistically random sample of immigrants in the Philadelphia region.** While we would have much preferred to be able to conduct such a survey, the cost of doing so was prohibitive for a small nonprofit organization with no dedicated research budget.

We are indebted to partners (acknowledged above) who helped us think through the processes and options available for gathering data. Their generosity in sharing their expertise helped us understand how we could most rigorously approach this project, given the financial and human resource limitations.

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<sup>20</sup> Getting detailed and accurate information on immigration status requires establishing trust with the respondent, something that can be challenging to do in the course of a 10-minute interview and very hard to assess in online surveys. We considered asking a binary question about US citizenship versus non-citizen status, but it is not uncommon for respondents to over-report citizenship, and we did not have the tools to adjust for this tendency.

We do want to acknowledge the most obvious form of potential response bias, which is not limited to our survey: The lack of responses from people who have *already* left the Philadelphia area in dissatisfaction. We know of no economically feasible way to easily identify and interview such individuals, who would of course include both immigrants and the US-born.

Nevertheless, we are pleased that the Welcoming Center’s broad and deep reach into immigrant communities in the Philadelphia region aided us in gaining as wide a sample as we did. Since our organization’s founding in 2003, we have served 11,000 individuals from more than 140 countries around the world. We maintain close relationships with numerous immigrant community leaders, both formal and informal, with broad geographic reach across the city and region.

Despite the clear limitations of this non-representative survey, we are confident that it accurately reflects the subset of participants who responded, and raises important themes that are likely to be shared across the general population of immigrant Pennsylvanians, and perhaps beyond.

### A note on terminology

This report uses the terms “foreign-born” and “immigrant” interchangeably.

Throughout this report, we refer to the Philadelphia region, the Philadelphia area, and simply “Philadelphia.” All of these refer to the metropolitan Philadelphia region. In contrast, references to the City of Philadelphia itself are indicated by that phrase, or in shorthand as “the city.”

In addition, we made the deliberate decision to *include* Puerto Rican participants in this survey, even though they are not immigrants. Because Puerto Rico is a US territory, Puerto Ricans are US citizens by birth and can travel to and work on the US mainland without need for a passport or visa.

Nevertheless, there are many aspects of the migration journey from Puerto Rico to the mainland that mirror the immigration process. In particular, because both Spanish and English are official languages in Puerto Rico, many new arrivals to Philadelphia speak Spanish as a primary language and must adjust to life as bilingual/bicultural Philadelphians. For these reasons, we thought it best to include Puerto Rican-born individuals among our survey respondents.

## Appendix

### Interview Protocol (English)

*Introduction (can be recited by interviewer in own words):* Here at the Welcoming Center, we meet many new immigrants. Each person has his or her own reasons for moving to Philadelphia. Today, we would like to talk with you about your reasons for moving here. The information you give us is private and will be kept confidential. When we put this information into a report, it will be added together with things that many other people said. No one will know your name or the specific answers you gave. The reason we are doing this report is to help explain reasons people choose to live in Philadelphia. Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

**1. What year did you first come to live in the United States?**

\_\_\_\_\_ (year - but if possible, get exact date)

**2. What town or city did you first live in in the United States?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**2a. (if first location was not Philadelphia) When did you move to the Philadelphia area?**

\_\_\_\_\_ (year)

**3. What is the MAIN REASON why you moved to Philadelphia?** (please allow me to read the entire list first and then choose ONE response)

School/College

Job

Family and friends reasons

Started a business/bought a business

Housing was less expensive

Had to leave my country/I was a refugee

Wanted to live in a city/urban area/excitement of the city

Things to do

Other (please explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

**4. Before you came here, how did you get information about Philadelphia?** (check all that apply; read each one and ask respondent to say yes or no)

Friends

Family

Newspaper articles

Internet search

Social media (such as Facebook)

I did not get any information

Some other way (please describe)

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Some places are more welcoming to new residents than others. Overall, did you feel welcome when you came to Philadelphia?**

Yes

No

(Probe: What made you feel welcome or not? Interviewer can also explain concept of “welcome” if necessary)

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**6. In your experience, have these been welcoming or NOT welcoming here in Philadelphia, or does the answer not apply?**

Job/workplace	<b>W</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Place of worship (church, mosque, synagogue, temple)	<b>W</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Ethnic association	<b>W</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Library	<b>W</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Police	<b>W</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>N/A</b>
School (if you have children)	<b>W</b>	<b>NW</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. All things considered, do you think you would or would NOT recommend Philadelphia to a friend as a place to live?**

- I would recommend Philadelphia
- I would NOT recommend Philadelphia
- Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

**8. And do you think you would or would NOT recommend Philadelphia for each of the following. As a place:**

To get a good job	W	WN
For older adults with no children at home	W	WN
For young adults	W	WN
To raise children	W	WN
To get a college education	W	WN

**9. Thinking about how your own life might unfold over the next 5 to 10 years, how likely are you to be living in Philadelphia? Do you think you....?**

Definitely will be living in Philadelphia in 5 years.

Probably will be living in Philadelphia in 5 years.

Probably will NOT be living in Philadelphia in 5 years.

Definitely will NOT be living in Philadelphia in 5 years.

Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

*(if probably/definitely will NOT be here)* **9a. Where would you like your new house or apartment to be?**

Another neighborhood in the city of Philadelphia

Suburbs of Philadelphia (in Pennsylvania)

New Jersey

Maryland

New York

Somewhere else (please explain)

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**10. If you do leave, why do think you will leave the city?** *(Check all that apply)*

Job/career reasons

Crime/safety/drugs reasons

Schools/child upbringing reasons

Prefer suburban lifestyle/tired of living in city

Politics & government reasons (taxes/government services/corruption)

Family/friends/personal reasons

City going downhill/dying/decreasing quality of life

Other (please explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

**Just a few more questions.**

**11. What zip code do you live in now?**

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**12. What country were you born in?**

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**13. Do you have any children age 18 and younger who are living with you now?**

Yes (If Yes, go to question #13a.)

No (If No, skip to question #14.)

**13a. (if yes): How many?**

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**14. What languages do you speak?** *(probe to make sure you get lesser-known languages)*

First language \_\_\_\_\_

Second language \_\_\_\_\_

Third language \_\_\_\_\_

Fourth language \_\_\_\_\_

**15. What year were you born?**

\_\_\_\_\_ (year)

**16. What is your gender?**

Male

Female

Trans

**17. What is your highest level of education?**

Primary school (United States grades K-8)

Attended high school but did not finish (US grades 9-11)

High school diploma/GED (US grade 12)

Some college, no degree

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree or higher

**18. In what country did you last attend school or university?**

\_\_\_\_\_