



Focus Area 9

Bucks
Chester
Delaware
Montgomery
Philadelphia



Demographic Profile

Key Findings and Conclusions

- This focus area includes 32% of the statewide population.
- There are 238 municipalities in the region, the majority (147) of which are townships. There are three cities in the focus area: Philadelphia, a 1st class city in Philadelphia, Coatesville in Chester County, and Chester in Delaware County, both 3rd class cities.
- This region has experienced a steady increase in net population between 1960 and 2014, gaining approximately 606,000 people, an increase of 17% since 1960.
- Many municipalities (86) have populations of over 10,000, and seven have populations over 50,000. The seven highest population municipalities are in order: Philadelphia, Upper Darby, Lower Merion, Bensalem, Abington, Bristol, and Haverford.
- The region is aging rapidly. The focus area's 65+ population has grown from 14% in 2014 to 16% in 2021. Though both are below statewide averages, the statewide proportion of over 65 population is also increasing.
- The region's population is predominantly White, with White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino) representing 59% of the region's total. Black Alone comprise 21% and Asian, Other, and 2 or more races comprise 10% of the total.
- Nonwhite residents comprise a significant portion of the populations in all types of municipalities in the region. In cities, including Philadelphia, Chester, and Coatesville, the Black Alone population is 40%, higher than the White non-Hispanic population.
- Homeownership rates vary widely across this area. Philadelphia County's is 52%, well below the state average, while Bucks County's is 78%, much higher than the state average.
- Poverty rates in individual counties also varied widely, and follow a similar trend as homeownership rates, with Philadelphia County's well below average (52%) and Bucks County's the highest in the focus area (78%), an above average homeownership rate. Statewide, 69% of Pennsylvania households are homeowners.

Potential Implications for Historic and Cultural Resources

- Population growth in the region is promising, though as developable land decreases and public desire for open space increases, pressures to increase density in existing communities, especially cities and boroughs could increase pressure to replace older and historic communities with new development. The converse situation may be that as communities resist densification in established communities, growth will continue to be diverted to suburban and exurban locations, perpetuating sprawl.



- Growth in traditionally rural townships is likely being fueled by new commercial and residential construction, which may impact open space, vistas, agricultural landscapes, villages, and archaeological resources.
- Increasing numbers of ethnic groups other than those that are historically associated with the region may suggest that the established narratives of historical significance of communities and buildings may not carry the same meaning with these groups. It may also suggest that there are places that these groups consider significant and worthy of preservation that may not have been documented or considered previously.
- An aging population could have several implications for historic resources. The first is the impact of fixed incomes on the ability to maintain historic properties. Second is the mobility and access needs of individuals who wish to age-in-place and the changes that might necessitate to historic buildings.
- The poverty rate is steady or declining overall, though pockets of poverty remain throughout the region, particularly in inner ring suburbs. This presents economic challenges to property maintenance and investment.
- Low homeownership rates in cities suggest that residential landlords are increasingly significant stakeholders in how properties are maintained and rehabilitated.

Current Population

- The 2021 population of the 5-county region was 4,218,131, or 32% of the total population of Pennsylvania.
- There are 3 cities within the region. Philadelphia, a 1st class city in Philadelphia, and Coatesville in Chester County and Chester in Delaware County, both 3rd class cities.
- Philadelphia County, which has just one municipality, the city of Philadelphia, is the single largest jurisdiction. Chester County is the smallest county in the region but is still relatively large compared to counties statewide.

Total Population:

	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
City	<i>n/a</i>	13,350	32,605	<i>n/a</i>	1,603,797
Borough	81,549	78,333	140,372	166,252	<i>n/a</i>
Township	562,790	442,730	403,853	692,500	<i>n/a</i>
TOTAL	644,339	534,413	576,830	858,752	1,603,797

- The vast majority of the region’s municipalities have large populations, with only 42 (18%) having populations of 5,000 or less. 86 (36%) have populations over 10,000.
- There are seven municipalities with populations over 50,000. These include Philadelphia, Upper Darby, Lower Merion, Bensalem, Abington, Bristol, and Haverford, in that order.

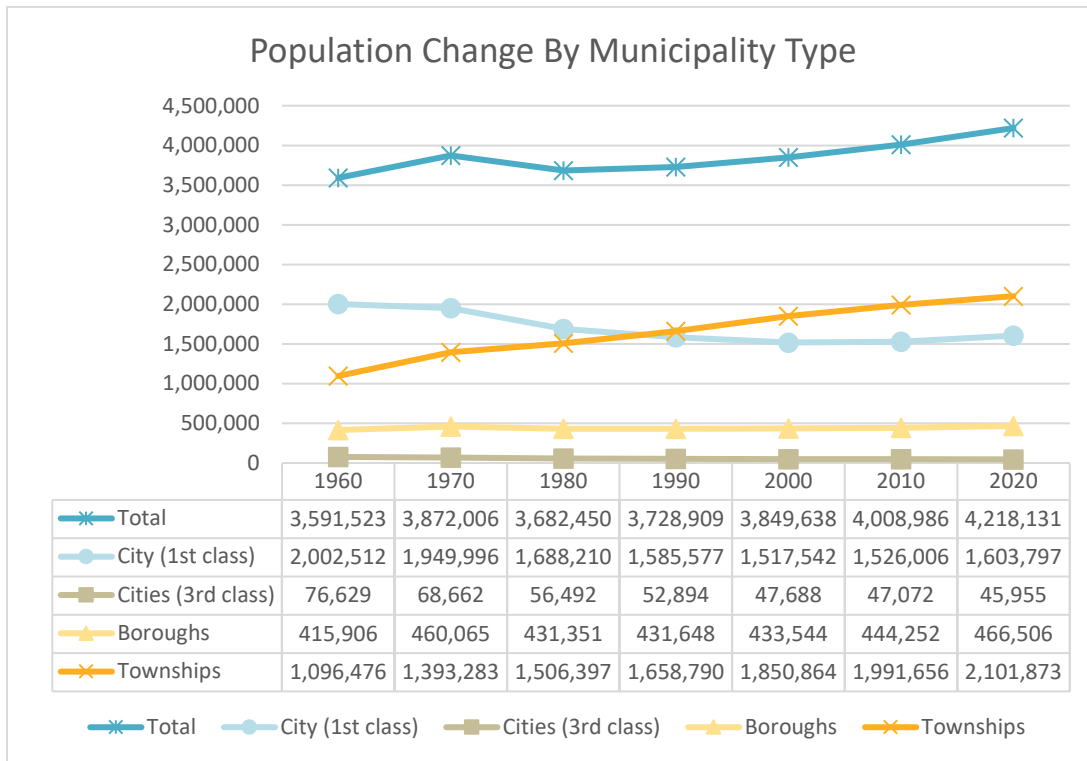
Number of Municipalities by Population:

Population (2020)	Focus Area 9	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
<2,500	42	14	15	8	5	0
2,500 to 4,999	52	9	17	10	16	0
5,000 to 9,999	58	11	24	14	9	0
>10,000	86	19	17	17	32	1
TOTAL	238	53	73	49	62	1



Population Trends 1960-2020

- This region has experienced a steady increase in net population between 1960 and 2014, gaining approximately 606,000 people, an increase of 17% since 1960.
- Philadelphia was the only county to experience a loss of population with a net decline of 442,200 or 22% of the 1960 population between 1960 and 2000. This trend reversed itself in the period between 2000-2020, with the City gaining 368,500 in that timeframe. The City of Chester also experienced a dramatic decline in population between 1960-2020, losing 31,000 residents, or 49% of the 1960 population. Coatesville, by comparison, experienced a small net gain (379), with a significant gain in the period 2000-2010.
- Boroughs in the region experienced significant growth between 1960-2020, gaining 50,600 net population.
- Population gains in the region’s townships is the most significant factor in the region’s overall growth. Between 1960 – 2020 the population of suburban and rural townships nearly doubled, increasing by more than 1,005,000 and nearly doubling the 1960 population.



Homeownership

- Overall, the region’s homeownership rate (65.1%) is lower than the statewide average (69.2%).
- However, this varies by municipality. As expected, the homeownership rate is lower in the region’s cities at 52.0%. It is highest in the region’s townships at 77.8%, and 58.0% in the region’s boroughs.
- Bucks County has the highest homeownership at 78.1%, while Philadelphia County has the lowest at 52.4%. This is well below the statewide average.

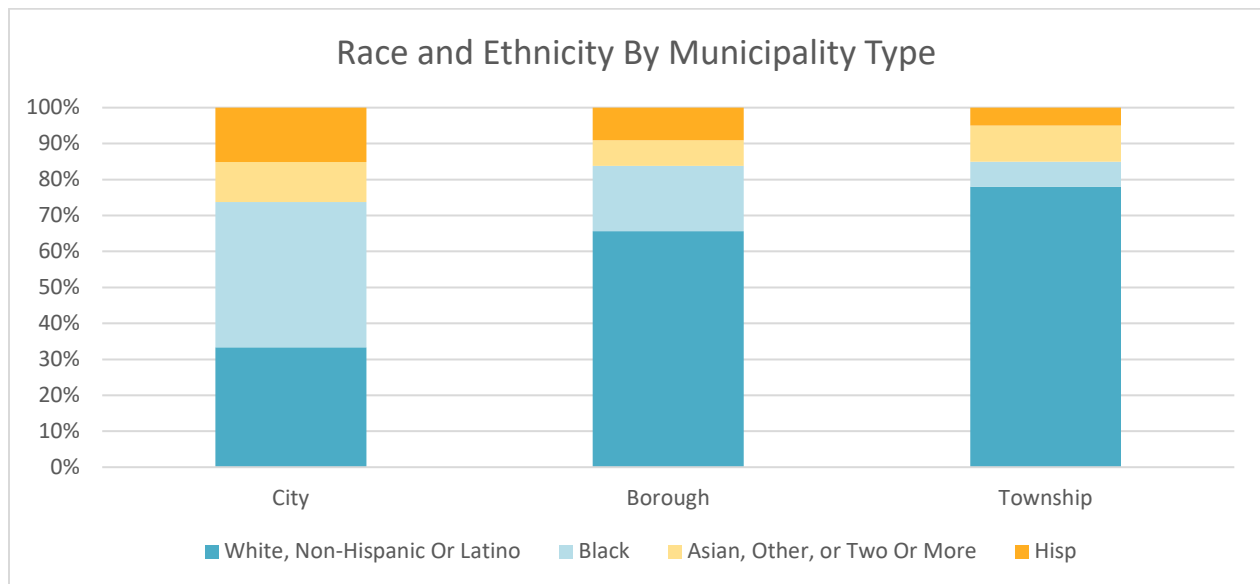
	Region 9	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
Homeownership Rate	65.1%	78.1%	74.8%	68.9%	72.0%	52.4%



Race and Ethnicity

- The region’s population is predominantly White/Caucasian, with White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino) representing 59% of the region’s total. This is below the state average of 75% White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino).
- Philadelphia County is the most racially and ethnically diverse in the region, with Black Alone making up 40% of the population, and Hispanic or Latino (Any Race) making up 15% of the population.
- There is more racial and ethnic diversity within the region’s cities--Philadelphia, Chester, and Coatesville. While the region overall is 59% White Alone (Non-Hispanic or Latino), within the region’s cities this population only makes up 33% of the total.

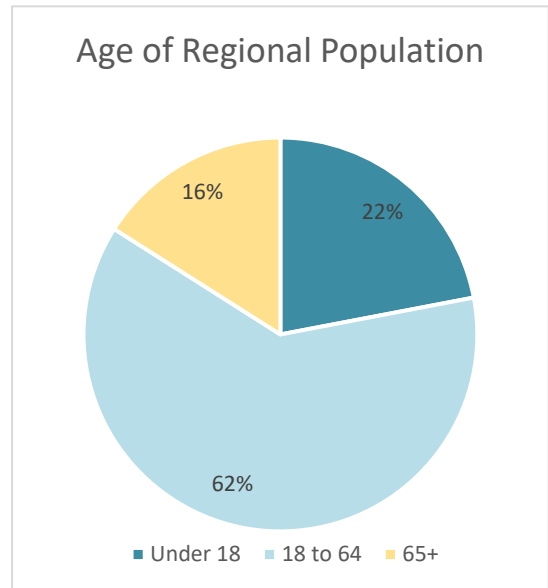
	Focus Area 9	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
White, Non-Hispanic Or Latino	59%	82%	78%	65%	74%	34%
Black	21%	4%	5%	21%	9%	40%
Hispanic Or Latino	9%	6%	8%	4%	6%	15%
Asian, Other Race, or Two or More	10%	8%	9%	9%	11%	11%
TOTAL	4,218,131	597,632	433,501	551,976	748,987	1,517,542





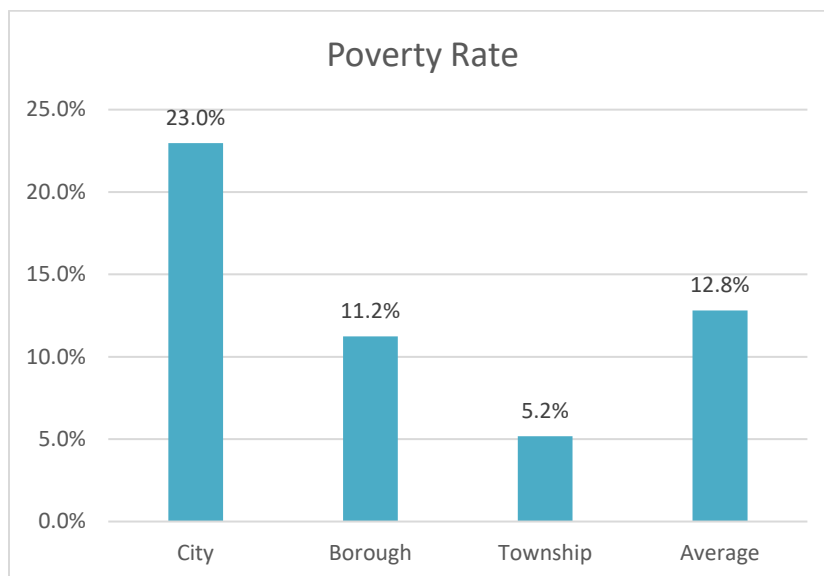
Age

- As of 2021, 62% of the focus area’s population was between 18-65; 22% was under 18, and 16% was over 65. The statewide averages are Under 18 (20%), 18-64 (61%) and over 65 (18%), so this focus area skews younger than Pennsylvania on average, with fewer seniors and more children.
- Townships within the focus group had a larger percentage of residents over 65 (18%), and a slightly lower percentage of residents 18-64 (60%). Boroughs and cities, in contrast, had just 14% of residents over 65.
- The focus area’s 65+ population has grown from 14% in 2014 to 16% in 2021. Though both are below statewide averages, the statewide proportion of over 65 population has increased over the same period.
- The median age has been increasing since 2010 across all counties. Philadelphia has the lowest median age at 34.8, much lower than the statewide median of 40.8.



Poverty

- Just as median incomes are generally below statewide averages, poverty within this focus area (12.8%) is higher than the statewide average (11.8%). However, this is not evenly distributed. Cities in the focus area have a high poverty rate of 23%, while townships have a very low rate of 5.2%.
- Poverty rates also vary widely across the counties. Bucks, Chester and Montgomery Counties have low poverty rates at 5.5%, 6.1%, and 5.9% respectively. Delaware County’s is slightly higher but still below the state average at 9.6%, and Philadelphia’s is the highest at 22.8%.





Survey Results

The following findings and survey results are from PA SHPO’s unscientific online public survey developed to inform the 2024-2034 statewide plan. It was available to the public, partners, stakeholders, and others from September 2023 through May 2024.

Key Findings

- When asked about the contributions that historic places make to their community, statewide and focus area respondents were most likely to select that they protect Pennsylvania’s unique stories and heritage for future generations, and that they help teach and remind us about the past. Focus area responses differed in that focus area respondents were more likely than statewide respondents to select that historic places improve the beauty and quality of life of their community.
- Focus area respondents were most likely to select that residential neighborhoods should be prioritized for preservation, followed by archaeological sites and landscapes. When asked what historic places are most threatened, focus area respondents were most likely to select places that reflect local/regional historic and culture and unique/ landmark buildings.
- 80% of focus area respondents selected development pressures as a threat to historic places, the highest of any focus area. Statewide, 65% of respondents selected this option. Focus area respondents were much less likely than statewide respondents to select demographic changes such as an aging population or population loss as a threat.
- When asked what would assist historic preservation where they live, both focus area and statewide respondents were most likely to select additional funding. Focus area respondents were more likely to suggest that local ordinances and regulation would assist historic preservation.
- Focus area respondents were more likely to know that Pennsylvania has a statewide preservation agency.

Focus Area Highlights

For this section, comparisons were drawn between statewide responses to survey question in contrast to focus area responses. Cells below are highlighted to show which responses are over or underrepresented by the focus area’s respondents. In total, this region had 642 respondents out of the 2,238 statewide respondents.

Legend:

Response rate 10%+ higher than statewide
Response rate 3%-9% higher than statewide
Response rate within 2% of statewide
Response rate 3%-9% lower than statewide
Response rate 10%+ lower than statewide



Q5. Which of the following are the most important contributions you think historic places make to your community or region? Select up to 2.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
They help sustain my community through heritage tourism.	9%	15%
They provide unique economic development opportunities.	7%	12%
They help teach and remind us about the past.	40%	40%
They protect Pennsylvania’s unique stories and heritage for future generations.	59%	64%
They encourage sustainable, walkable, ‘green’ communities.	14%	10%
They improve the beauty and quality of life of my community.	33%	25%
They are a big part of our community/regional identity.	31%	28%
Not sure / I haven't really thought about it before.	0%	0%
None of these / I don’t think they make valuable contributions.	1%	0%
Other (please specify)	2%	3%

Q6. Which of the following types of older and historic places would you prioritize for preservation in your community? Select up to 3.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Cemeteries/burial places	29%	35%
Pre-historic archaeological sites	13%	18%
Historic archaeological sites	34%	36%
Sacred spaces/religious properties	18%	18%
Transportation infrastructure	5%	7%
Residential neighborhoods	39%	30%
Downtown commercial districts	27%	31%
Public buildings	22%	21%
Institutional buildings	7%	6%
Educational buildings	7%	7%
Agricultural properties	17%	18%
Industrial areas	5%	5%
Landscapes	32%	27%
Recreational places	10%	13%
None of these should be preserved	0%	0%
Other (please specify)	12%	9%



Q7. What types of places do you think are most threatened in your community? Select no more than 3.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Places that reflect local/regional history and culture	46%	43%
Buildings constructed from 1960 through the early 1980s	9%	10%
Archaeological sites	13%	14%
Places associated with underrepresented histories (for example, African American, LGBTQ+, specific ethnic/racial communities)	27%	24%
Recreational places (for example, amusement parks, swimming pools, etc.)	7%	11%
Older industrial areas	16%	15%
Traditional downtown shopping/commercial areas	26%	33%
Residential areas built before 1950	28%	24%
Planned suburban housing developments/neighborhoods built after 1950	4%	2%
Religious buildings/sacred spaces	14%	14%
Agricultural buildings/landscapes	28%	27%
Unusual and/or landmark buildings	31%	28%
Cemeteries/burial places	11%	14%
Other (please specify)	7%	6%

Q8. Thinking about your response to the above question, what do you think is threatening those places? Select all that apply.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Development pressures (rural, suburban, urban, etc.)	80%	65%
Gentrification	27%	19%
Changes in community demographics (aging populations, loss of population, etc.)	28%	39%
Vacancy/disinvestment/deferred maintenance	44%	50%
Lack of local protection/regulation	52%	43%
Local zoning practices	31%	24%
Little or no interest in historic preservation	42%	46%
Few or no preservation advocate(s)	22%	27%
Misguided or misinformed development (parking lots, housing density, widescale demolition)	44%	39%
Interest in preservation but don't know where to start	12%	14%
Other (please specify)	11%	11%



Q10. Choose up to 5 things that you think would encourage and/or assist historic preservation efforts where you live.	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Increased public funding for historic preservation.	76%	72%
Municipal employees with greater knowledge of local, state, and/or federal preservation programs.	36%	41%
Access to knowledgeable technical experts.	15%	18%
Access to qualified contractors and tradespeople.	19%	21%
Access to reputable and easy-to-understand online resources.	20%	23%
Local ordinances/regulation to protect older and historic places.	58%	48%
Informed elected officials knowledgeable about historic preservation.	50%	46%
Increased public awareness of the older and historic places in the community.	60%	59%
Adding more properties to the National Register of Historic Places.	16%	15%
Gathering and maintaining up-to-date information about older and historic places, including archaeological sites.	26%	28%
Identification and preservation of places associated with underrepresented history.	24%	25%
Connecting preservation with sustainability, economic development, and planning.	53%	52%
Other (please specify)	4%	4%

Q11. When you think about needing more funding/money for historic preservation, what 3 specific things would you like to have?	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Financial support for private residential property owners.	32%	30%
More money to history/preservation organizations and municipalities for construction projects.	42%	45%
Expand access the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Tax Credit for income-producing properties.	33%	28%
Funding for preservation plans to help manage change in communities.	32%	31%
Money for surveys to identify historic places in a community.	21%	18%
Funding to support or restart local preservation networks and advocates.	25%	26%
Financial support for municipalities interested in starting a historic preservation program.	26%	28%
Grant or other incentive to preserve specific threatened resources.	53%	52%
Funding for local training programs for municipal employees, tradespeople, contractors, etc.	17%	21%
Other (please specify)	4%	5%



Q12. If you think education about and greater awareness of historic preservation is important, what 3 tools do you think would be most useful?	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Specific and replicable examples of successful preservation construction projects.	47%	47%
Specific and replicable examples about community archaeology projects.	8%	12%
Case studies of successful preservation planning efforts or save a threatened resource.	45%	38%
User and resource guides for finding information, researching a historic property, using state or federal preservation programs, etc.	54%	58%
Toolkits for preserving specific types of historic places, like agricultural buildings or cemeteries.	38%	40%
Toolkit for talking about historic preservation and the importance of historic places.	39%	35%
101-type information about historic preservation, including vocabulary, state and federal laws, etc.	37%	34%
101-type information about archaeology, including vocabulary, types of sites, etc.	6%	9%
I don't think education/awareness is important.	1%	0%
Other (please specify)	8%	6%

Q14. Did you know that Pennsylvania has a state preservation agency, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO)?	Focus Area Responses	Statewide Responses
Yes	74%	70%
I think so, but I'm not sure	12%	12%
No	15%	18%
Other (please specify)	1%	1%

Themes & Issues Summary

Analysis of the data compiled through the statewide planning process:

- The three top historic preservation themes for Region 9 are: community, planning, and context.
- The three top historic preservation issues for Region 9 are: access, climate change, and development.
- Residents of Focus Area 9 acknowledged that more funding and access to preservation is needed so that historic designation is not such a burden and financially prohibitive.
- The area’s rich history is a plus, however, access to records and histories of underserved communities, including African Americans, needs to be addressed to create context and encourage a more inclusive preservation environment.
- There needs to be an improved link between preservation, housing and neighborhood improvement that does not lead to gentrification. Removing the gentrification mindset was discussed in this focus area more than others.
- Training in preservation would promote access in presently underserved communities. Retention of more modest, residential buildings is a goal as it contributes to community. Preservation should be part of the larger environmental discussion on climate change, sustainability and resiliency.