

Demographic Shifts and Economic Prosperity: Fishtown's Rise as a Professional Hub

Section 1 Context and Introduction



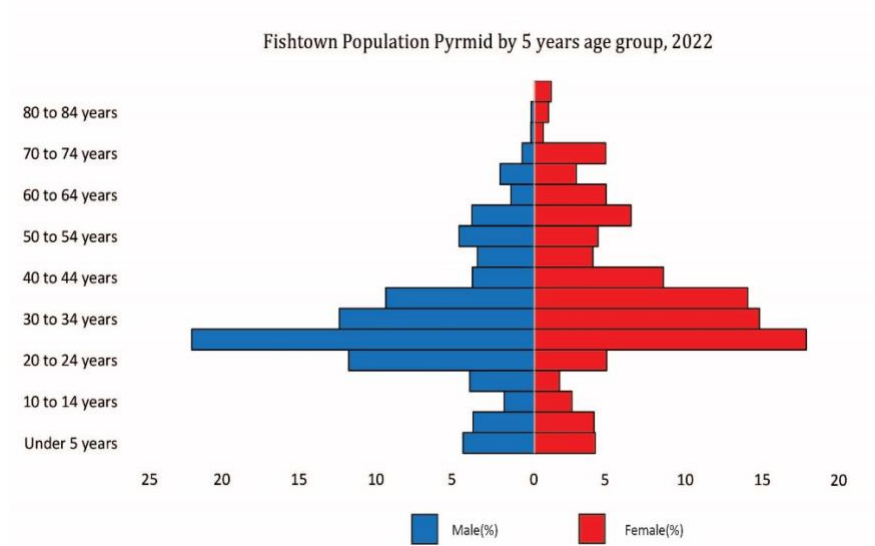
Fishtown is a neighborhood in northeastern Philadelphia, bordered by Lehigh Avenue to the north, Frankford Avenue to the west, and Delaware River to the South and east. For centuries, Fishtown remained a stable, predominantly white working-class community, heavily

segregated in the mid-20th century. In recent years, although Fishtown is still a predominately white neighborhood, the neighborhood has experienced notable demographic changes, becoming more diverse than before. With approximately 16,000 residents, Fishtown has attracted a number of well-educated professionals and formed strong labor market dynamics, making it grow into one of the most economically prosperous communities in Philadelphia.

Section 2 Demographic Characteristics and Changes

2.1 Current Demographic Profile (2022)

Fishtown's population structure in 2022 reflects a neighborhood dominated by working-age professionals with relatively few children and elderly residents. As shown in Figure 1, the age distribution in Fishtown is heavily concentrated in the 25- to 44-year-old age group. This group accounts for sixty percent of the neighborhood's population, indicating Fishtown is a hub for young professionals and recent college graduates. In contrast, the pyramid shows fewer children and elderly residents in the neighborhood—only a quarter of households have children under 18 or seniors older than 65. The average household size in the neighborhood is 2.07. One-third of those households were married couples or cohabiting couples without children. All of those suggest that the neighborhood primarily comprises working-age adults, many of whom do not have children.



For racial composition, Fishtown remains predominantly white, with around 85% of the total population being white. The Black or African American population makes up about 5% of the neighborhood; other racial or ethnic groups account for another smaller portion. Over two-thirds of Fishtown residents were born in Pennsylvania locally, and only 5% are foreign-born immigrants. This reflects an insular and segregated racial profile compared to the broader context of Philadelphia.

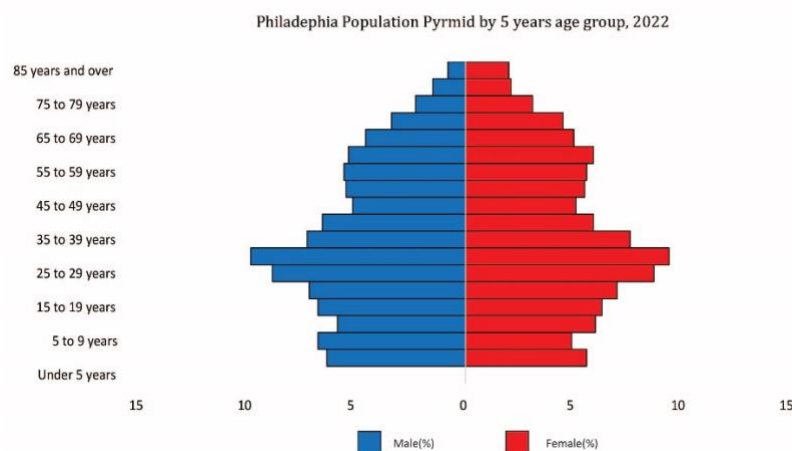
The residential turnover in Fishtown reveals a dynamic pattern of population movement, with frequent inflows and outflows. This pattern underscores the neighborhood's magnet role in attracting newcomers and the workforce to explore nearby opportunities. According to the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) data, approximately one-third of households moved into the neighborhood in the last five years. The Location Quotient (LQ) for recent five-year move-in households is 1.26, indicating that Fishtown has higher concentration of newly arrived residents than the broader Philadelphia County. This pattern suggests that Fishtown is attracting new residents faster than other parts of the city. More than seventy percent of them moved within Philadelphia County.

2.1 Demographic changes over time (2012-2022)

Over the past two decades, around 70 percent of occupied housing units have changed hands, with newcomers replacing long-time residents. According to 2012 ACS data, around 3000 households, roughly 50% of the neighborhoods, moved between 2000 and 2009. By 2022, however, only 750 households remained in the neighborhood, and nearly three-quarters of those residents moved out. These trends highlight Fishtown’s dynamic migration pattern, indicating that the neighborhood has undergone urban revitalization, which displaced many long-time residents. At the same time, it fosters a robust labor force and attracts new economic opportunities.

The influx of new residents into Fishtown has directly contributed to the increase in racial diversity, even though the Fishtown neighborhood is predominantly white. Compared to 2012 ACS data, the white population has decreased by eight percentage points, from 92 percent in 2012 to 85 percent in 2022. At the same time, the Black or African American and multiracial populations have grown by around eight percentage points combined. Hispanic or Latino residents have increased by six percentage points over the past decades.

2.3 Comparison to Philadelphia



In comparison, Philadelphia had a more balanced age distribution in 2022, with residents evenly spread across all age groups. While the city of Philadelphia offers a broader multigenerational profile, Fishtown stands out as a more youthful and livelier neighborhood with economic and social vitality. Fishtown's population ages 25 to 44 constitute sixty percent of its residents- nearly double the proportion in Philadelphia. In contrast, the LQ for the under-18 population is 0.65, indicating that children and teenagers make up a smaller proportion of Fishtown's population than Philadelphia. The LQ for individuals aged 65 years and older is 0.52, showing that seniors are underrepresented compared to Philadelphia. This distinction distinguishes Fishtown from the broader Philadelphia landscape as a center for career-oriented individuals and economic growth.

While Philadelphia is known for its racial diversity, Fishtown remains primarily homogenous, although there has been a recent shift towards more diverse and inclusive neighborhoods. The LQ for the white population of Whites is 2.27. For the black population, it is 0.12, showing a picture of a demographic disparity in a community where the white residents are much more concentrated than in broader Philadelphia, and black residents are starkly underrepresented.

Section 3 Socio-economic Characteristics and Changes

3.1 Education Attainment

Education Attainment (Percentage)	Fishtown (2022)	Fishtown (2012)	Philadelphia (2022)	Philadelphia (2012)
High School graduate or higher	95.0	82.8	86.9	80.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	64.4	34.0	33.6	32.2
Graduate or Professional degree	25.9	10.0	14.8	9.8

Fishtown's residents are well-educated, with a higher concentration of individuals holding college and professional or graduate degrees than Philadelphia. Based on Table One, nearly two-thirds of the population who are 25 years and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher, roughly double the proportion in Philadelphia County. Fishtown's education attainment has also experienced remarkable growth over the past decade. In 2022, more than a quarter of residents held a graduate or professional degree, doubling the proportion in 2012. This growth significantly outpaces Philadelphia, where only five percentage points increase from 2012 to 2022. This surge in educational attainment proves that Fishtown has become a hub for highly educated professionals with higher diplomas.

3.2 Employment, Income, and Occupation

The unemployment rate in Fishtown is extremely low, reflecting the neighborhood's economic prosperity and the influx of skilled professionals. In 2022, the neighborhood boasted an exceptionally low unemployment rate of 3.5%, more than ten percentage points lower than in 2012. During the same period, Philadelphia County only decreases by five percentage points. Furthermore, Fishtown's labor force surged by 45% from 2012 to 2022, while Philadelphia County only got an 11% increase.

The robust labor market dynamics and low unemployment rate are matched by substantial income growth. The average household income in Fishtown reached over \$120,000 in 2022, with half of all households earning more than \$100,000 annually. The Location Quotient (LQ) of 1.88 for households earning above \$100,000 indicates a concentration of middle—and high-income households in Fishtown that is 88% higher than the county average. About 90% of the households derive their income primarily from earnings, illustrating the neighborhoods' robust economic vitality and professional success.

The poverty rate in Fishtown has significantly declined compared to 2012 and Philadelphia. In 2022, only 10% of the population in the neighborhood was living below the poverty line, which is a substantial decrease of approximately ten percentage points since 2012. This reduction highlights the growing affluence of the area. The location quotient (LQ) for poverty in Fishtown is 0.46, meaning that the neighborhood has less than half the poverty concentration compared to Philadelphia. These trends reflect broader socio-economic changes, such as the influx of higher-income residents and professionals, which have reshaped the community over the past decade.



Fishtown's labor force is concentrated in professional, creative, and management roles, which aligns with growing average income and economic prosperity. The chart above shows that around seventy percent of Fishtown's labor force in 2022 was employed in management, science, and arts occupations, which increased from 46% in 2012. Traditional working-class positions in production, transportation, and sales industries have declined quickly in Fishtown. Compared with broader Philadelphia, only forty-three percent of the labor force worked in the

management, business, and science occupations, while around 40 percent of others worked in sales and service occupations. These occupation trends reinforce that Fishtown has become a hub for well-educated professionals and economic prosperity.

3.3 Workplace and commuting

Fishtown's residents enjoy working locally, and the variety of commuting options reflect the neighborhood's evolving lifestyle. In 2022, 90% of Fishtown's residents worked within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with approximately three-quarters working within Philadelphia. The neighborhood offers diverse commuting options as well. Despite the high car ownership rate of 87%, only 45% of residents drive or carpool to work, 20% use public transit such as trolleys or subways, and 12% walk or bike. Additionally, after the covid, many highly skilled workers, like professional engineers, have shifted working remotely. In 2022, About **25%** of residents were working from home—an increase of nearly 20 percentage points compared to 2012. This shift has also reduced the mean travel time to work, which now averages 30.31 minutes, a 7% decrease from 2012.

Section 4 Housing Characteristics and Changes

4.1 Housing Types and Homeownership

Fishtown's housing stock comprises single-unit houses and a few new buildings, including apartment complexes. Approximately 80% of the housing units are single-unit houses, with a Location Quotient (LQ) of 1.18, indicating a higher concentration of single-unit homes than Philadelphia. Around 10 percent of the housing stock comprises multi-unit apartment complexes. More than 85% of the apartment complexes in Fishtown are located within Census Tract 158, and around 80% of these units are rented. This concentration of rental apartments

highlights a distinct housing characteristic in Census Tract 158 compared to other areas within the neighborhood primarily dominated by single-family homes.

The housing occupation rate in Fishtown is relatively high, with 96% of total housing units occupied and only about 5% remaining vacant. The neighborhood has seen a 20% increase in available housing units since 2012 to accommodate the rising number of residents moving into the area. Although only around 3% of the housing was developed after 2000, most of the housing within Fishtown was renovated through historical buildings. In 2022, around 70% of the total occupied housing units were built before 1939 and renovated for residents, with a six percent increase since 2012. Nearly half of them were rented. The increasing demand for housing, particularly for single-family homes, has driven the renovation of older buildings, enabling the neighborhood to accommodate a growing population while preserving Fishtown original character.

From 2012 to 2022, Fishtown's homeownership rates declined four percentage points, from 66% in 2012 to 62 % in 2022. Despite this decrease, the homeownership rate's LQ is 1.19, suggesting that owner-occupied households are still more prevalent in Fishtown than Philadelphia. At the same time, the average renter-occupied household type decreased as well. In 2022, the average renter-occupied household size was 1.85, an 18% decrease from 2012, which indicates a growing trend of smaller households driven by an influx of young professionals and single-person households.

4.2 Property values and housing burden

Fishtown's property values have surged in recent years, driven by the growing demand for housing and the neighborhood's steady influx of affluent residents. As of 2022, nearly 65% of the occupied housing units have property values exceeding \$300,000, with a Location

Quotient (LQ) of 2.23, indicating a much higher concentration of high-value homes than in other parts of Philadelphia. The property values also increased significantly over time. The property above \$300,000 increased by 50 percentage points than 2012. Eighty percent of the owner-occupied housing units carry a mortgage. Despite rising property values, Fishtown's residents experience a relatively low housing burden. About 80% of homeowners and renters allocate only 30% or less of their income toward housing costs. This balance between rising property values and a manageable housing burden balances suggests that while Fishtown is becoming more affluent, residents are not yet overwhelmingly strained by their housing expenses.

Section 5 Group of Special Interests

Fishtown's population includes several groups of special interest. School-aged children represent 14% of the population. Over the past three years, 2,676 residents were enrolled in school, with 7% in preschool, 8% in elementary school, and 31% in high school, and most of them attend college or graduate school. The composition of school-aged children has remained stable over the past decade and mirrors Philadelphia.

Fishtown continues to face socio-economic inequities, with 10% of residents living in poverty. More than 80% of them are African American or Hispanic/Latino. City officials need to pay close attention to this racial minority group disparities.

Additionally, seniors 65 and older now account for only 7% of the neighborhood's population, a six-percentage-point decline from 2012. Many of them were displaced because of the high housing costs. To mitigate the effects of rising property values and displacement, the city government should consider programs like affordable housing to support elderly residents and those living in poverty. Furthermore, with 12% of Fishtown's population living with disabilities.

Section 6 Conclusion