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Immigrant Communities of Philadelphia: Spatial Patterns and Revitalization

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Population Change
1970 to 2010

From 1970 to 2000, Philadelphia saw a decline in population of over 400,000 residents. When people discuss revitalization, it is often assumed that the people who left cities (suburbanites) are being enticed to re-enter the city limits. This process of gentrification is often the dominant narrative in how cities discuss their process of revitalization. In 2010, Philadelphia had its first increase in population since 1970. While this was seen as proof that the city is being revitalized (and it may well be), it is interesting to note, that this growth is only due to a net increase in Philadelphia’s foreign born population; the native born population has actually continued to decline. The following charts use historic census data* to compare the census years of 1980 and 2010 to show the net growth or decline in population for census tracts in Philadelphia.

* Because census tracts change shape and name overtime, not all census tracts were able to be compared. Using historical census data, 294 tracts were able to be used for comparison.