

Peak millennial: Has Philadelphia reached its young-person population high point?

Philadelphia Business Journal | Jan 30, 2017, 2:26pm EST

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A [recent report showing the decline of people](#) moving into urban areas may raise the alarm for Philadelphia that has seen its population rising for the past 10 years. The report points to the millennial generation aging and eyeing the suburbs as they think of raising families in larger homes, educating their school-age kids in suburban public schools and having less interest and time for the diverting amenities of the city.

But it's too early for Philadelphia to sound the alarm. The fact is that Philadelphia's population growth has been driven by recent college graduates — who, for the past 10 years, we've been calling millennials — and immigrants. While millennials might be aging, our regional colleges and universities are not reducing their student enrollments. And, while immigration might be facing new challenges from the new administration, Philadelphia has strong infrastructure for welcoming immigrants, including the pull of immigrant families who are already here.



A group of young people attend Campus Philly's First Friday event in Fall 2016. OLIVIA BROSKY/CAMPUS PHILLY

According to Campus Philly's 2014 study of recent college graduates, 64 percent said they stayed in Philadelphia after graduation, higher than the national average of 42 percent. In our most recent survey of current college students, 66% said they were very or somewhat likely to stay in Philadelphia for at least some time after graduating, up from 58% when we asked the question in 2010.

Though the generation following millennials — Generation Z, they're calling it — is smaller nationally, the pie of young people in Philadelphia is not shrinking. Our regional higher education institutions are not planning for smaller entering classes and are in fact improving their graduation rates. That means more

students coming into the region as freshmen and graduating four to six years later whether or not the national population of 18 year olds is shrinking. If we can continue to build connections to the employers in the region through internships and expose students to the vitality of our region through off-campus experiences – all in Campus Philly’s mission — we have a better chance than other metro areas of realizing continued population gains.

And, the work of organizations like the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, Global Philadelphia Association and the upcoming International Entrepreneurs Summit bode well for growing our immigrant population assuming federal policies don’t get in the way.

Macro trends like the millennial population aging won’t be felt evenly by all cities. Philadelphia’s large concentration of college students and appeal to immigrant families mean that we have strategies to win with the generation ahead.

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