

OPINION > OPINION COLUMNISTS

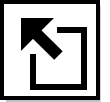
Reading born, Reading bred? Census numbers show that's less and less likely [Opinion]

While most Berks residents were born here, most people in Reading are from somewhere else.



Ben Hasty

People wave Puerto Rican flags during the rally. During a rally in support of Puerto Rico outside Reading City Hall Tuesday afternoon October 3, 2017, where a Puerto Rican flag was raised. Photo by Ben Hasty.





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Most people in Berks County are from here. But most people in Reading are from somewhere else.

In 2018, data from the U.S. Census Bureau's America Community Survey five-year estimates shows that about 47% of Reading residents were born in Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, about 8 in 10 people who live outside the city in Berks were born in the Keystone State.

Birthplace Breakdown

Where residents were born for Reading and the rest of Berks County (not including the city).

■ Born in Pa. ■ Born abroad (including born abroad of U.S. parents) ■ Born in another state
■ Born in Puerto Rico

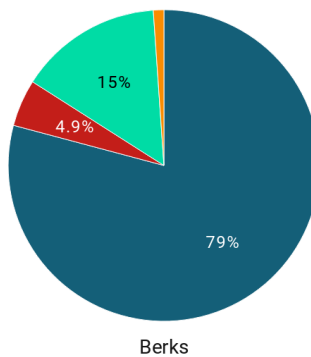
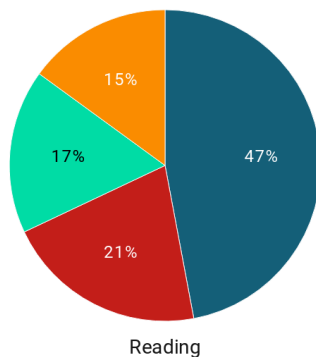


Chart: ADAM RICHTER - READING EAGLE • Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 5-year estimates
• Created with Datawrapper

Census survey numbers always have a margin of error built in; even accounting for those, the Pennsylvania-born population in Reading was over 50% in the middle of the decade (according to the 2014 ACS) and fell to less

This might not seem like a surprise, but it is instructive to know how and why Reading's demographics are shifting. If you want to know why Reading hosted a Puerto Rican Day parade last year or why the city hoists the Dominican flag each year, look at the numbers.

In Reading, the population growth was fastest among people born in Puerto Rico. From 2014 to 2018, the city saw an increase of about 2,300 U.S. citizens who hailed from the Caribbean island. [The devastation from Hurricane Maria](#) in 2017 might have had something to do with that number, but estimates of people who fled the island for Reading have been hard to find.

Among those born in foreign countries, the biggest increase was in the Dominican community. The number of Reading residents born in the Dominican Republic grew by more than 2,000 from 2010 to 2018, even though the growth of foreign-born city residents stayed pretty flat over the decade.

The other top countries where people came from were Mexico, El Salvador, Ecuador and Colombia.

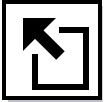
It's not just Reading. Pennsylvania has seven other cities where the population is over 50,000. In all of them, the percentage of the population born in the state has fallen slightly.

In all cases, immigration was a leading factor in the population growth. Take Allentown, for instance, where the number of native Pennsylvanians fell by about 5,000. But the Lehigh County city gained more than 4,700 residents who were born in a foreign country.

That number, by the way, counts more than immigrants; it also includes U.S. citizens and people born abroad to American parents.

Outside of Reading, the percent of native Pennsylvanians in Berks County fell slightly — by 1 percentage point — while the largest segment of growth was in people born in other states. Most of them — about 1,500 of the 3,100 in this group — moved here from the South.

None of this should be particularly shocking; it's been reported before that Reading and Berks County both are becoming older and more Latino.



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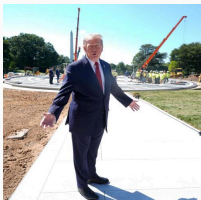
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Thursday, August 20



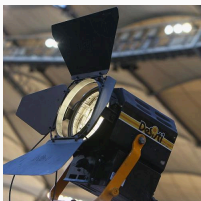
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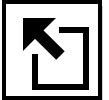


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Sunday, August 16



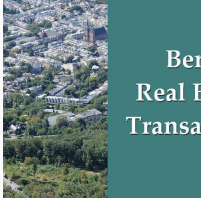
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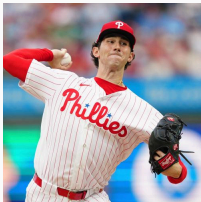
Report: Eagles sign former Berks Catholic standout Brandon George

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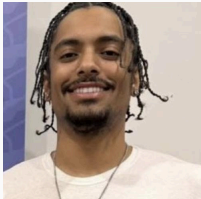
Berks County real estate transactions for Aug. 16

Sunday, August 16



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Sunday, August 23



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Thursday, August 20



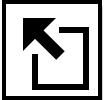
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