



Puerto Rico

Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

Caribbean

Geography

Area 9,104 sq km. Greater Antilles, between Dominican Republic and the Virgin Islands.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	3,998,010	0.43%
2020	4,134,563	0.29%
2030	4,195,467	0.09%

Puerto Ricans in the USA now number 3 million.

Capital San Juan. **Other major city** San Juan/Caguas/Guaynabo 2.7 million. Two-thirds of the population live in the metropolitan area.

Urbanites 97.6%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 20%.

Life expectancy 78.5 yrs.

Peoples

Latino-American 70.6%. Hispanic Puerto Ricans 70.4%. 98.7% of the population is Latino in orientation, language and culture.

African Caribbean 25.9%. African-Puerto Rican 15.5%; Mixed Puerto Rican 10.3%.

Other 3.5%. US citizen 2.3%.

Literacy 94%. **Official languages** Spanish, English. **All languages** 13. **Indigenous languages** 3. **Languages with Scriptures** 2Bi.

Economy

Mountainous and densely populated with few natural resources. A free market economy with manufacturing, trade and tourism the largest sources of income. One of the highest per capita incomes in the Caribbean, but also one of the highest costs of living. Un- or under-employment is a serious issue, the main stimulus to the historic and large-scale emigration.

Public debt 49.5% of GDP. **Income/person** \$21,845 (48% of USA).

Politics

A Spanish colony for 400 years. Related to the USA after the Spanish-American war of 1898. US president is chief of state, but Puerto Rico is administered by an elected governor.

Religion

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	95.28	3,809,304	0.1%
Non-religious	3.82	152,724	13.2%
Ethnoreligionist	0.70	27,986	0.4%
Hindu	0.10	3,998	0.4%
Jewish	0.06	2,399	-2.6%
Muslim	0.03	1,199	0.4%
Buddhist	0.01	400	0.4%

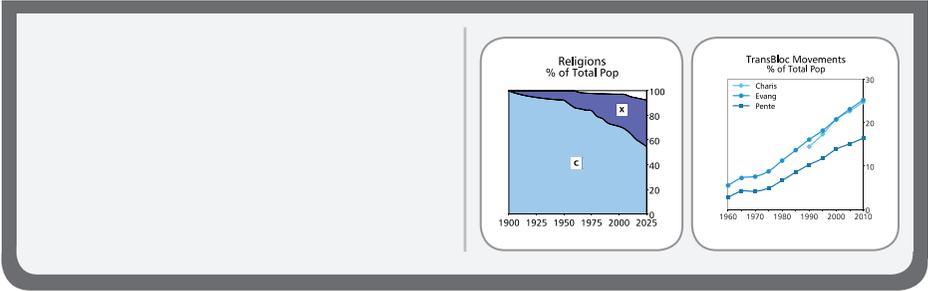
Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	44	12.18	487,000	1.1%
Independent	55	12.91	516,000	2.8%
Anglican	1	0.30	12,000	-0.3%
Catholic	1	67.16	2,685,000	-0.8%
Orthodox	3	0.03	1,000	0.5%
Marginal	8	2.76	111,000	-0.1%
Unaffiliated		2.35	94,000	-1.2%
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>		-2.41	-96,000	0.0%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	1,230	1,534,286	2,685,000
Other Pentecostal	I	2,484	223,602	360,000
Pentecostal Ch of God	P	592	82,000	123,000
Baptist Convention	P	110	37,500	75,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	315	24,100	68,926
Seventh-day Adventist	P	147	17,800	44,500
Defenders of the Faith	I	210	21,200	38,160
Assemblies of God	P	326	22,100	30,000
United Methodist Ch	P	25	10,000	27,000
Ch of God (Cleveland)	P	260	19,500	25,935
Disciples of Christ	P	107	11,700	19,539
Latter-day Saints	M	44	13,636	19,500
Chr & Miss Alliance	P	72	7,700	19,250
Boriquén Presby Synod	P	75	10,100	18,382
Other denominations[69]		1,417	127,647	257,396
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>				-96,352
Total Christians[112]		7,414	2,162,871	3,715,236

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	25.2	1,007,520	2.2%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	24.7	988,024	2.2%
Pentecostals	16.4	654,575	2.1%

Missionaries from Puerto Rico

P,I,A 176 (116 long-term) in 26 agencies: elsewhere in the Caribbean 47, Europe 34, North America 20, Mexico/Central America 17.



Challenges for Prayer

1 **The issue of Puerto Rico’s political identity** divided the nation in the past. Independence, US statehood or the current arrangement of commonwealth are all options, but most people now seem content with the status quo. Many are concerned with the increasing Americanization of government. The biggest problem may be, however, the high levels of corruption that plague local government. Pray for wise governance that works for the best interests of the islands’ inhabitants.

2 **Puerto Rico is traditionally Catholic**, but evangelicals have grown steadily from 0.1% in 1900 to 25.2% in 2010, with some claiming even higher. A strong majority of evangelicals are renewalist in theology. A host of small indigenous groups, mostly neo-Pentecostal and charismatic, accounts for the majority of denominations and churches, and this is where most growth is currently happening. There is also a large charismatic movement in the Catholic Church, which is otherwise in marked decline. Sadly, the churches make little impact on the many social needs of the nation.

3 **Societal problems cry out for Christian involvement.** The incidence of substance abuse, disease, corruption, crime and poverty are some of the highest in the Americas. This being so in a land that is 97% Christian and 25% evangelical is an affront to the gospel. Specific prayer needs are:

- a) **Poverty.** Over 45% of the population live below the poverty line. It is significantly poorer than the poorest US state of Mississippi, and half of the island relies on food aid (in the form of food stamps).
- b) **Education.** Only 11% have a college degree, while 62% fail to complete secondary school – the highest dropout rate in the USA. These low education levels are profoundly linked to unemployment, poverty and crime issues.
- c) **Home life.** An astonishing 61% poverty rate for households headed by females. Given the widespread family breakdown on the island, this accounts for a large portion of the population; many youths grow up deprived of material security as well as a father figure and male role model.
- d) **Health and substance abuse.** Puerto Rico endures some of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS, drug addiction and alcoholism of any US state or territory.

4 **The spiritual ministry of the Church.**

- a) **Discipleship ministry** is much needed. Most of the new and growing Puerto Rican churches and pastors are not connected with international ministries, but are impacted by **COMIBAM** events or training conferences in the USA. However, the fragmented denominational scene gravitates against rapid changes in church life. Pray for effective grassroots movements that will meaningfully transform the lives of ordinary believers.
- b) **Missions vision** is on the rise, but still needs nurture after decades of uninvolvement. Spain is a field of particular interest. Puerto Ricans serve in indigenous movements such as **AMIES-WEC** and international missions such as **YWAM, OM** and **WBT**. But most promising is the increasing presence and influence of mission boards in local denominations. Pray for effective training and support of new mission ventures. **RECOMI(COMIBAM)** networks the various agencies and organizations, facilitating their efforts and providing a shared platform for furthering world evangelization.

c) **Student ministry** is proving both fruitful and vital. ABU(**IFES**) has a growing work on the bigger campuses but is limited by lack of funds and personnel. However, indigenous student movements across almost all campuses (called “confras”) are backed by the *Asociación Cristiana Interuniversitaria*. Many of Puerto Rico’s current evangelical church leaders were strongly influenced by this movement. Pray for these ministries to reach all remaining campuses and to continue shaping future leaders.

d) **Media ministry** flourished with the explosion of renewal churches. There are many Christian media ministries (10 Christian TV channels, many local radio stations, Internet sites and others). These hard-hitting new programmes offer practical and relevant answers to questions of faith and life. One notable ministry is the Bible Correspondence School of the Caribbean, now with 23,000 students in 62 nations.

5 **Puerto Ricans number nearly as many in the mainland USA** as in their own land. Urbanization and unemployment in Puerto Rico crowd the cities and fuel emigration but leave rural areas fairly empty. But the traditional stereotype of a US Puerto Rican – that of a ghetto-dweller in New York City – paints an incomplete picture. There are now pockets in Florida, New England, Chicago and elsewhere, and they span the entire economic spectrum. Pray for those ministering to Puerto Ricans living in the USA.