

# MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

## SOUTH AMERICA

### Puerto Rico

#### Snapshot Section

**Country Name:** Puerto Rico

**Country Founded in:** Puerto Rico has been a commonwealth of the United States since Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States in 1898. Puerto Ricans celebrate the United States Independence on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Population:** 3,944,259

**Government Type:** Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the United States.

**Geography/location in the world:** Puerto Rico is an island located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, east of the Dominican Republic.





Number of People Groups: 16

Picture of Flag:



## Religion

### Major Religion and % of population

|                      |        |           |
|----------------------|--------|-----------|
| Roman Catholic       | 75 %   | 1,650,000 |
| Protestant and Other | 15 %   | 616,000   |
| Non-religious        | 1.98 % | 76,600    |
| Spiritists           | 0.70 % | 28,000    |
| Muslim               | 0.13 % | 6000      |
| Jewish               | 0.07 % | 2900      |
| Buddhist             | 0.03 % | 1200      |

**Government interaction with religion:** This government is tolerant of all religions.

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*Operation World*

**Mission Atlas Project**  
**Puerto Rico**  
**Country Profile**

**Basic Facts**

**Country Name:** Puerto Rico

**Demographics:**

As of July 2007, the population in Puerto Rico is 3,944,259.

The population growth rate is .393%. The birth rate is 12.79 births/1,000 population. The death rate is 7.78 deaths/1,000 population. The net migration rate is -1.09 migrant(s)/1,000 population. The infant mortality rate is 7.81 deaths/1,000 live births. The life expectancy for men is 74.6 years, and 82.6 years for women (2007 est.). The total fertility rate is 1.77 children born/woman (2007 est.).

As of 1997 there were 7,397 people living with HIV/AIDS. As of 2002, the unemployment rate in Puerto Rico was 12%.

Puerto Rico has an overall population density of 445 persons per square kilometer (1,152 persons per square mile), a higher density than any US state.

In 2003, 98% of the people lived in Puerto Rico's urban cities. The major cities in Puerto Rico as of 2000 include the capital and chief port, San Juan (424,958), Ponce (155,038), Caguas (88,680), Arecibo (49,318), and Mayaguez (78,647).

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**Language:**

Spanish and English are the official languages of the commonwealth, but Spanish is the primary language of the people.

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**Society/Culture:**

Every town in Puerto Rico has its own feast honoring its own specific patron saint. On San Juan Bautista Day, partakers dip their fully clothed bodies into water so that that might bring them good luck.

Puerto Ricans celebrate American holidays such as the Fourth of July and Memorial Day. They celebrate Christmas on December 25, as well as Three Kings Day on January 6<sup>th</sup>. During the Christmas season, partakers go from house to house singing songs called *aquinaldos*. Members from each household join in and move on to the next house.

The rites of passage in Puerto Rico are mainly those used by the Catholic Church. Catholics practice infant baptism. There is great emphasis placed on the godparents (*padrinos*) of children, as well as the child's First Holy Communion.

Puerto Ricans have folklore with origins in *Taino*, Spanish, and African traditions. Several traditions are about demons who wander across the island at night looking to devour food or people, or protecting gold. Other stories speak of the severe damage caused by hurricanes.

There is a legend that spread in Puerto Rico in the 1990's called *El Chupacabras* (The Goat Sucker). *Chupa* is a panther-like creature that hops around like a kangaroo. Some believe the animal is an alien specimen because it leaves the bloodless animal carcasses with surgically precise incisions. Others believe the *Chupa* is the work of satanic cults.

The extended-family is more common among Puerto Ricans than the nuclear family. The role of Puerto Rican women is similar to the role of the American woman.

Puerto Rican men wear a traditional embroidered shirt called the *guayabera*. It is considered to be an elegant piece of clothing and is worn today in formal and informal settings. People wear casual attire for every day settings.

Popular cafeteria-like restaurants found in Puerto Rico are called "*Fondas*." *Fondas* are small places that offer large portions of food for a good price. *Arroz con gandules* (rice with pigeon peas) is a traditional Puerto Rican dish. *Pasteles* (tamales made with plantains and stuffed with meat) are a very popular treat in Puerto Rico. Many fast-food chains can be found in the larger cities.

Puerto Ricans have a simple breakfast, usually consisting of *café con leche* (coffee –usually espresso, with milk). If one visits a family at night, the visitor will be asked to stay for dinner. If the visitor refused, that would be considered impolite.

Puerto Rico is known for its Bacardi rum. The Bacardi family moved the center of its production of rum from Cuba to Puerto Rico in the 1930's. It remains to be the world's largest producer of rum.

Puerto Ricans are known for loving sweets. Most Puerto Rican desserts include ingredients that are grown on the island.

A recipe for Polvo de Amor ("Love Powder") is:

1 coconut

1 pound of sugar

Open the coconut and extract the milk. Grate the meat. Mix with sugar and cook in a kettle. Stir for 5 minutes on a high flame. Reduce heat and stir for an additional 10 minutes. Serve crisp and golden brown.

Puerto Rican culture has major roots in Spanish and African traditions. Salsa is the musical choice for the majority of Puerto Ricans. It blends the elements of Spanish music with African rhythms. Ballads are very popular and the most famous composer of ballads is Rafael Hernández. Jose Feliciano is a crossover artist best known for his English and Spanish recordings. His best known work is "Feliz Navidad," a bilingual song which has become a holiday classic.

Cellist Pablo Casals is considered a national hero. Casals, who passed away in 1973 at age 97, is considered one of the greatest classical musicians of all time. He founded the Puerto Rican Symphony Orchestra, the Conservatory of Music, and the Festival Casals, a series of classical music concerts held in mid-June.

The most famous Puerto Rican painter is Jose Campeche. He lived during the eighteenth century and spent all of his time in San Juan. Campeche is known for his beautiful religious works. Popular poets and writers include Jose de Diego, Evaristo Ribera Chevremont, Antonio Pedreira, Enrique A. Laguerre, Pedro Juan Soto, and Rene Marques. Opera, ballet, and popular concerts take place throughout the year. The Fine Arts Center in San Juan is the island's primary artistic venue.

Baseball is the favorite sport of Puerto Ricans, both as a participatory and as a spectator sport. Professional baseball is played by teams in the Caribbean League. Fairly often players from the American Leagues will also play in the Caribbean League. Pittsburgh Pirate Roberto Clemente was one of the most famous athletes to come from Puerto Rico. Other important athletes to come from Puerto Rico include jockey Angel Cordero, tennis player "Gigi" Fernandez, and golfer "Chi Chi" Rodriguez.

Timothy L. Gall, ed. Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life. Vol. 2. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research, 1998.  
www.encarta.msn.com

## Government:

Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the United States. The Puerto Rican government upholds control over local issues. Puerto Ricans are citizens of the United States. They serve in the armed forces and are held to nearly all federal laws. Puerto Ricans have to pay commonwealth taxes. The U.S. government is responsible for the island's defense, foreign relations, and trade. Puerto Rican citizens must be eighteen years of age or older to vote.

*Executive Branch-* The chief executive of Puerto Rico is a governor. The governor is elected by the voters to a four-year term and may be reelected any number of times. With the approval of the legislature, the governor appoints the judges of the supreme and the subordinate courts, and the secretaries that head the executive departments of the government. The secretaries form the governor's advisory council. The governor recommends the annual budget and legislative program to the legislature. The governor commands the island's National Guard when it isn't in federal service. The secretary of state succeeds the governor should anything happen.

*Legislative Branch-* The Senate and the House of Representatives makes up Puerto Rico's Legislature. All legislators are elected to four-year terms. According to the 1952 constitution, the Senate must have at least 27 members and the House of Representative must have at least 51 members. The Legislature may override the governor's veto of legislation by a two-thirds vote in each house.

*Judicial Branch-* This branch consists of the Supreme Court, superior and district courts, and justices of the peace. The governor appoints judges with the approval of the Senate. The Supreme Court includes a chief justice and six associate judges. Judges can serve until they reach the age of 70. Appeals to the Supreme Court of the United States are allowed to be made from Puerto Rico's Supreme Court.

Puerto Rico has 78 municipios (Spanish for municipalities), similar to counties in the United States. A popularly elected mayor and municipal assembly govern each municipio. The Popular Democratic Party (Partido Popular Democrático, PPD) became the leading political party after 1940. The PPD was responsible for the creation of Puerto Rico's commonwealth and was the island's main party until the late 1960's. Most of the PPD supporters lived in the rural areas of Puerto Rica. The island rapidly urbanized the last half of the twentieth century and the PPD lost many supporters. During the 1968 elections, the PPD lost to the New Progressive Party (Partido Nuevo Progresista, PNP), which advocated for statehood because the island would then receive a larger share of federal funds and social programs. Since 1968, control of the government has alternated between these two political parties.

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## **Economy:**

Puerto Rico's gross domestic product (purchasing power parity) is \$75.82 billion (2006 est.). The GDP (official exchange rate) in 2006 is not available. The GDP real growth rate in 2006 was .5%. The GDP per capita is \$19,300 (2006 est.).

The GDP composition by sector is:

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Agriculture | 1%              |
| Industry    | 45%             |
| Services    | 54% (2002 est.) |

Concerning the budget, Puerto Rico's revenues are \$6.7 billion. Puerto Rico's expenditures are \$9.6 billion, including capital expenditures of \$NA. The Puerto Rican currency is the US dollar.

Exports: \$46.9 billion f.o.b. (2001 est.).

Export Commodities: chemicals, electronics, apparel, canned tuna, rum, beverage concentrates, and medical equipment.

Puerto Rico's export partners are:

|                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| United States      | 90.3%            |
| United Kingdom     | 1.6%             |
| Netherlands        | 1.4%             |
| Dominican Republic | 1.4% (2006 est.) |

Imports: \$29.1 billion c.i.f. (2001 est.).

Import Commodities: chemicals, machinery and equipment, food, fish, and petroleum products.

Puerto Rico's import partners are:

|               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| United States | 55%              |
| Ireland       | 23.7%            |
| Japan         | 5.4% (2006 est.) |

The labor force is estimated at 1.3 million.

The labor force by occupation is:

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Agriculture | 3%              |
| Industry    | 20%             |
| Services    | 77% (2000 est.) |



*Agriculture-* Agriculture has systematically become less important to Puerto Rico's economy. In 1947, approximately 40% of the labor force worked on farms. By 1978, only 5% of the nation's labor force worked on farms. The nation began to invest largely in industry instead of agriculture. In 2005, agriculture produced less than 1 percent of the country's GDP, and only 2.1% of the labor force worked on farms. By the late 1990's, dairy, cattle, and poultry farming had replaced the traditional export crops of coffee, sugar, and tobacco.

*Manufacturing-* The major manufactures of Puerto Rico include apparel making, electronic equipment, processed foods, chemical production, pharmaceuticals, industrial machinery, printed materials, rubber and plastics, metal items, furniture and fixtures, and leather products. The Economic Development Administration (also known as Fomento), founded in 1950, was a government agency that encouraged industrial production. In the late 1990's the Puerto Rican Industrial Development (PRIDCO), a subsidiary of Fomento, took over the powers of the industrial development in Puerto Rico.

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### **Literacy:**

Approximately 94.1% of the Puerto Rican population, age 15 and over, can read and write.

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### **Land/Geography:**

Puerto Rico is an island surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the north and the Caribbean Sea to the south. The island is just east of the Dominican Republic.

The total area of Puerto Rico (including its three largest offshore islands) is 13,792 square kilometers (5,325 square miles). The main island is shaped like a rectangle, and is approximately 180 kilometers wide (110 miles) and 65 kilometers long (40 miles). Hills and mountains cover about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the country's terrain.

The central mountain chain is the Cordillera Central. It extends east and west, dividing the island into the north and south regions. Other mountain ranges include the Sierra de Luquillo (in the northeast), the Sierra de Cayey (in the southeast), and the Sierra Bermeja (in the southwest). The highest point on the island is Cerro de Punto (4,390 feet). The most popular peak in Puerto Rico is El Yunque (3,496 feet). El Yunque is part of the Caribbean National Forest, and it has a tropical rain forest. The only low-level terrain exists with some inland valleys and a narrow coastal plain.

Puerto Rico's largest offshore islands include Vieques (has a population of 9,106 people), Culebra (has a population of 1,868), and Mona (the only island that is uninhabited). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintain the island of Culebra as a natural preserve.

The longest river in Puerto Rico is the Grande de Arecibo, which flows to the northern coast. None of Puerto Rico's rivers are navigable by large boats. Some of the rivers are dammed in order to get hydroelectric power, thus some rivers have small lakes along their courses.

Puerto Rico's coastline measures 500 kilometers (310 miles) and has few inlets, natural harbors, or protected bays. The ocean around the island is very deep. The Puerto Rico Trench is located just north of the island and is 28,231 feet below sea level at its greatest depth. That is the deepest known point in the Atlantic Ocean.

Puerto Rico has a very lovely year-long climate. The climate is tropical at the lower elevations and subtropical at higher elevations. The seasons don't differ much and the length of the day stays basically the same all year round. San Juan has a July average temperature of 83°F and a January average temperature of 77°F. The average temperature of the seawater surrounding the island is 81°F. The entire island is cooled by trade winds from the northeast. San Juan receives an average of 52 inches of precipitation a year. The mountain areas receive a substantial amount of precipitation, about 200 inches per year at El Yunque. The southwestern coastal region receives the least amount of precipitation and has a dry season from December to March.

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## History

Some archaeologists believe that the island of Puerto Rico was first inhabited around the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The Spanish arrived in 1493 and found an indigenous people group on the island that spoke a language belonging to the Arawakan family. The Spanish called this indigenous people group *Táinos*, however this people group was also known as Island Arawak. The *Táinos* originally called the island Boriquén (or Borinquén). The original settlers lived in villages, in small thatched- roof houses or huts called bohios. The people slept in hammocks and they molded clay into plates and jars for use. The *Táinos'* diet consisted of a type of bread called casaba, pineapples, and sweet potatoes. They also ate fish, clams, snails, rodents, and iguanas. They smoked tobacco during religious ceremonies. The *Táino* village chief was called cacique. The *Táino* society was a matrilineal society and the cacique was succeeded by the eldest son of one of his sisters. Equality was found between sexes and the chief of the village was often a woman (*cacica*).

Christopher Columbus landed on the island of Puerto Rico in 1493 and claimed the island for Spain. He named the island San Juan Bautista. The island remained unsettled until by

Europeans until Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León colonized it in 1508. Approximately 30,000 Taínos were living on the island when Spanish settlers arrived. Unfortunately most Taínos died from European diseases or maltreatment. By 1550 fewer than 100 pure blood Taínos were living on the island. In 1513 Spain began the process of importing African slaves to Puerto Rico.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Spanish settlers focused on mining for gold, but the resources went fast. After the resources were exhausted, the population became scarce and the economy became meager. Puerto Rico became a military outpost that guarded trade routes and Spanish armies traveling to the American mainland. Spanish ships carried gold and silver from America and passed by Puerto Rico on their way to Spain. Wealthy settlements in New Spain (a Spanish colony in Mexico) gave financial support (called the “situado”) annually to Puerto Rico to support Puerto Rico’s administrative and military expenses.

Many of Puerto Rico’s inhabitants made a living through farming. The majority of the farmers owned their own land and had a small farm. The primary crops that the farmers grew were cassava, corn, vegetables, fruit and rice. The island started producing sugarcane in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. A merchant class arose out of Puerto Rico and began trading with ships and between towns. Merchants of all kinds began starting businesses and that became vital to Puerto Rico’s economy. By the end of the eighteenth century, Puerto Rico had several cities with populations more than 5,000.

For the first 250 years of Spanish rule, the Spanish authorities created an economic policy for Puerto Rico known as mercantilism. This policy allowed Puerto Rican farmers and merchants to trade only with Spain. They were not allowed to trade with Spanish colonies or anyone else. Spain would buy Puerto Rican products at cheap rates and sell their imported goods to Puerto Rican citizens at high rates. During this time though, Puerto Rican products were also sold illegally to other Spanish and foreign colonies. The center for smuggling was the southern port of Ponce. Sometimes even the government authorities dismissed the restrictions to conduct this illegal trade.

After 1765, the Spanish government initiated new administrative policies. Trade restrictions ended and unused land was given to those were willing to till it. This greatly improved the island’s defense and infrastructure.

Puerto Rico started growing sugarcane in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but the product didn’t take off until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cuba and Puerto Rico became the leading Spanish sugar colonies. The Spanish government helped enlarge Puerto Rico’s sugar production in 1815 by passing the Cédula de Gracias, which relaxed trade restrictions with foreign nations. The government encouraged free slaves and mulattos to immigrate to the island, and to bring their slaves with them.

The country relied on slaves to help its large-scale sugar production, and by 1830 there were 30,000 slaves. However between the mid-1800s and the abolition of slavery in 1873, the amount of slaves decreased. Puerto Rican farmers continued to grow coffee, tobacco, fruits and vegetables, in addition to sugar. This helped to balance their economy.

Puerto Rican society was divided into castes. The upper caste was made up of whites who had full legal rights. The middle caste was made up of free people of color (blacks or mulattos) who had fewer legal rights than the whites. The lower caste was made up of slaves and was given very few legal rights. Free people of color were prohibited from becoming doctors or lawyers, or from becoming members of the civil and church bureaucracies. They were forced to serve in the militia in segregated units. However, they were given some economic rights. Free people of color could own property, houses, stores, and even slaves. They could also be members of all the craft guilds.

Between 1810 and 1826, most Spanish colonies in America gained independence. Puerto Rico however did not. Some possible reasons why Puerto Rico did not push for independence are: (1) Many Spanish allies immigrated to the island from nearby countries; (2) Puerto Rico's slave population was large enough to worry many whites on the island to fear that an independence war might prompt a slave uprising similar to the one at Saint-Domingue; (3) Lastly, the island was heavily armed with Spanish soldiers, making an independence movement unlikely. A few rebellions were snuffed out before any measures were taken.

As of 1830, Puerto Rico and Cuba were the only Spanish American colonies that had not gained independence. The two countries were rewarded by Spain with the lifting of economic restrictions.

Spain issued a royal decree to Puerto Rico in 1815 called "Cédula de Gracias." The decree allowed the reduction of tariffs and encouraged whites and free people of color to immigrate to the island. The decree gave free white immigrant heads of household, approximately 6 acres of land, with another 3 acres for each slave they brought with them. Free black mulatto immigrants received approximately 3 acres of land, and if they brought slaves with them they would receive an extra 1.5 acre for each slave they brought. Spain's constitution of 1837 deprived Puerto Rico of representation in the Spanish parliament (which was granted under the constitution of 1812). In the 1860's, a lot of political unrest was occurring among Puerto Ricans. Many wanted independence and the abolition of slavery. Puerto Rico's most famous uprising occurred in 1868. The uprising was called, "El Grito de Lares" (the Cry of Lares). Several hundred men declared independence for Puerto Rico and formed a provisional government. This revolt was put down by the Spanish government in just a few days.

In September of 1868, an insurrection occurred in Spain deposing the Spanish Queen Isabella II. A new constitutional monarchy was adopted in 1869 and King Amadeo accepted the throne in 1870. In 1870 the Spanish government established the Moret Law, which ordered the emancipation of all government –owned slaves in Puerto Rico, as well as slaves over the age of 60 and under the age of 2. The government emancipated about 10,000 slaves. In 1873, Spain abolished all slavery in Puerto Rico. There were approximately 30,000 slaves set free, but all of them were required to serve a three-year apprenticeship to their former owners. The government paid compensation to the former slave-owners for 10 years. Puerto Rico’s former slaves were called “libertos: (freed).

During the same year, Spain agreed to pass political reforms for Puerto Rico. The colony was represented in the Spanish parliament for the first time since 1837. Puerto Rico’s first political parties were formed. The first political party formed was the Liberal Reformist Party (Partido Liberal Reformista). The second political party followed soon after and was called the Liberal Conservative Party (Partido Liberal Conservador). The Liberal Reformist Party supported assimilation, while the Liberal Conservative Party favored the island’s colonial status. Disagreement among the PLR led to the formation of a new party called the Puerto Rican Autonomist Party (Partido Autonomista Puertorriqueño) in 1887. The Autonomists wanted self-government for Puerto Rico in internal matters while maintaining Puerto Rico’s association with Spain. The autonomista party split due to differences, and the Liberal Fusionist Party (Partido Liberal Fusionista) was created out of it.

In 1895, a major rebellion began in Cuba which led to the Spanish-American War of 1898. In 1897, the Spanish prime minister was assassinated and a new government came to power led by the Spanish Liberal Party. The Spanish government gave three fundamental reforms to Puerto Rico known as the “Autonomic Charter.” These reforms gave Puerto Rican citizens full political and civil rights, extended the vote to all Puerto Rican male citizens who were 25 years of age or older, and gave Puerto Rico local self-government within the Spanish system. The reforms gave Puerto Rico a governor-general, a cabinet, and a bicameral legislature. It maintained the island’s representation in the Spanish parliament.

The Spanish-American War occurred in 1898 between Spain and the United States. U.S. troops landed on Puerto Rico’s southern coast at Guánica. No serious fighting happened and the war was over in a couple weeks. The 1898 Treaty of Paris ended the war. Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States. The U.S. set up a military government for Puerto Rico.

The U.S. Congress passed the Foraker Act in 1900. The Foraker Act established the island’s civil government, but did not define the colony’s relationship with the United States. Puerto Rico became subject to U.S. federal law, but they did not become American citizens, nor did they have to pay federal income taxes. The president of the United States appointed the governor of Puerto Rico (all Americans until 1946); the governor’s executive council, executive

officers who served as the upper house of the legislature; and the justices of the island's Supreme Court. The lower house, the House of Delegates, was popularly elected. The governor or the U.S. Congress had the power to veto any law passed by the legislature.

Puerto Ricans were not happy with the status that the Foraker Act gave them. In 1901, the Supreme Court held that Puerto Rico and other territory acquired from the Spanish-American War was "unincorporated territory" of the United States. This meant that Puerto Rico belonged to, but was not part of, the U.S. Also the court stated that the U.S. constitution didn't apply to Puerto Ricans. By 1909, the Puerto Rican people were so fed up that as a protest, the Puerto Rican legislature refused to pass any legislation at all. After years of debate, the U.S. Congress passed the Jones Act in 1917. This act gave Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship and allowed them to elect both of Puerto Rico's legislative chambers, replacing the appointed Executive Council with an elected Senate. The president still appointed the governor, executive officers, and Supreme Court judges. The U.S. Congress could still reject any Puerto Rican legislature.

The 1920's and 1930's were full of economic and natural disasters for Puerto Rico. A hurricane named San Felipe hit Puerto Rico in 1928. The hurricane destroyed one-quarter of a million homes on the island. Another hurricane hit the island in 1932. The world-wide depression in the 1930's made the island's economic situation far worse. The population had greatly increased since 1900, and the depression caused a great amount of unemployment.

A new political party named the Nationalist Party was created in the early 1930's by Pedro Albizu Campos. Albizu Campos was a Harvard Law School graduate and served in the U.S. Army. The Nationalist Party was unsuccessful at the 1932 elections. Afterwards, the Nationalist Party demanded independence and then stated that independence is a right that should be grasped violently if necessary. The Nationalist Party marched in protest of the island's legislature. The chief of police in San Juan was assassinated in 1936. The murder was attributed to the Nationalist Party. The worst violence in the island happened at Ponce in 1937 when police stopped a Nationalist Party parade. Approximately 20 people were killed and over 100 people were injured after the parade came to a halt. Albizu Campos was arrested and sentenced to prison terms several times for planning violence against the U.S. government.

In response to this violence, two bills were initiated to the U.S. Congress in 1936 and 1937 for the independence of Puerto Rico. Neither bill passed. Opponents argued that the island's economic and social status needed to be improved before talks of independence began.

The Popular Democratic Party (Partido Popular Democrático, PPD) was founded in 1938 by Luis Muñoz Marín. Muñoz Marín was son of the autonomist leader, Luiz Muñoz Rivera. Muñoz Marín was a great politician, a writer, and was bilingual. The PPD took over control of the Puerto Rican legislature in 1940. The party focused on improving the economic and social

conditions of the island. The party initiated the industrialization program called Operation Bootstrap in 1947.

In 1946, U.S. president Harry Truman appointed the first native Puerto Rican governor, Jesús Piñero, a former commissioner. In 1949, the U.S. Congress amended a law to allow Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor. Muñoz Marín was the first to be elected governor by the people in 1949. He was also elected governor in 1952, 1956, and 1960.

Muñoz Marín and the PPD desired to have a greater relationship with the U.S. and possibly obtain independence through a peaceful means. However, there were other Puerto Ricans who disagreed and in fact, took part in an attempt to assassinate U.S. president Harry Truman in 1950.

The PPD made efforts to obtain authority for Puerto Ricans to write their own constitution. The U.S. Congress passed a law that gave Puerto Ricans the freedom to write their own constitution and establish their own government. The document was prepared and in March of 1952, Puerto Rican voters approved the constitution in a popular referendum. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was officially established on June 25, 1952. The new constitution gave Puerto Ricans more freedom to control their own matters. The governor and the legislature now had the authority over the commonwealth's education, health, and social welfare systems. The government maintained control of the commonwealth's defense, trade agreements, postal system, and foreign relations. Branches of the U.S. military kept a presence on the island on military camps. Some Puerto Ricans were not satisfied with the commonwealth status and in March of 1954, four Puerto Ricans fired into the chamber of the House of Representatives, wounding five members.

The commonwealth's economy made steady improvements throughout the next decade. The unemployment rate on the island declined and private investment increased. The GNP increased an average of 5% annually from 1950 to 1960.

In 1964, Robert Sánchez Vilella became Puerto Rico's second elected governor. In 1967, the referendum was held and two-thirds of the Puerto Ricans approved commonwealth status. Puerto Rico had economic problems in the 1970's because of worldwide inflation and a recession in the U.S. economy. Because of these problems the PPD lost the 1976 governor election. Carlos Romero Barceló of the New Progressive Party won the 1976 election. Rafael Hernández Colón (PPD candidate) beat out Romero Barceló in the 1984 governor election and was reelected in 1988. Pedro Roselló (of the PNP) was elected governor in 1992 and reelected in 1996. Roselló promised to reduce taxes for the middle class and small businesses. He also promised to hold a referendum concerning the commonwealth's ties to the U.S.

In November of 1993, the U.S. Congress authorized the referendum. Puerto Ricans had the opportunity to vote for commonwealth, statehood, or independence. The Puerto Ricans voted for the commonwealth relationship with the United States. The vote was close. The final tally

was 49% for commonwealth, 46% for statehood, and 4% for independence (approximately 1% of the vote were null).

Puerto Rico's economy faced difficult times in the mid-1990's. Hurricane Hortense brought great destruction to the island in 1996. There were 20 people killed and tons of damage to homes, businesses, and crops.

In December of 1998, Puerto Rico took part in another referendum. Roselló and the PNP were strongly encouraging the commonwealth to vote for statehood. Approximately 53% of the voters rejected statehood.

In April of 1999, a U.S. Marine jet pilot killed a Puerto Rican civilian during a practice bombing by accident. The horrible incident brought widespread opposition to the U.S. military presence on the island. More than 85,000 nationals marched in San Juan to protest the U.S. military's activity on the island.

In November of 2000, Sila M. Calderón of the PPD was elected governor. Calderón was the first female governor of the Puerto Rican commonwealth. She promised to halt the U.S. Navy's activity on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques and to remove the Navy's presence completely from the region. In June of 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush said the Navy presence would end its naval activities on Vieques by May of 2003.

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### **Christian History**

The first Catholic diocese in the New World was formed on the Puerto Rican island in 1511. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, 21 of the 25 priests on the island were killed by smallpox. Little Christian action took place for a hundred years. The island continued to have a shortage of priests until the Latin American wars of independence began. At that time, members of the hierarchy loyal to Spain migrated from Latin American countries to the Puerto Rican island. As Puerto Ricans began seeking for their independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the church was weakened by members of the hierarchy to Spain that were present on the island.

After the end of Spanish rule in 1898, the amount of Catholic priests declined. By 1930, there were only 45 diocesan priests, but the numbers rose some by 1955. A large amount of priests continue to belong to missionary societies from the United States and Spain.

Puerto Rico has two distinct cultural traditions (Hispanic and North American) that the Catholic Church must identify with. Catholicism was considered ancient by the Hispanic tradition and a foreign hindrance within the social status of the Protestant libertarianism of the North American tradition.



At the end of the Spanish rule approximately 1 out of 5 clergy were Puerto Rican born. By 1974, all Catholic bishops in Puerto Rico were born on the island.

Some Catholic movements or groups that were not related to the Catholic hierarchy became actively involved for the cause of socio-political liberation in Puerto Rico. The largest of these groups include the Juventud Obrera Cristiana, Juventud Estudiantil Cristiana, Juventud Universitaria Católica, Jornadas de Juventud, and segments of Cursillo de Cristiandad). Church authorities reacted in two ways; they either withdrew recognition or imposed sanctions. The liberal and separatist clerics were forced out of their parishes. Some abandoned their ministry all together, and others organized the Association of Priests (Asociación Puertorriqueña de Sacerdotes) in Rio Pedras in 1972. The Association of Priests is the only Catholic organization that is openly in favor of political independence and socialism for Puerto Rico.

The Holy See has no diplomatic relations with Puerto Rico in AD 2000.

The 1952 constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico states the separation of church and state. Article II, section 3 of the constitution says that “No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. There shall be complete separation of Church and State.”

The first Protestants came to Puerto Rico in 1860. Anglicans followed in 1872. In 1899, following the Spanish-American war, 5 denominations (Baptists, Disciples, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and United Brethren) migrated to Puerto Rico to begin work. The Methodists entered the island in 1900 and the Adventists came in 1909. These two denominations made a head way by giving attention to schools and medical work. Adventist missionaries make up approximately 26% of all foreign Protestant church workers on the island.

The Baptist Convention of Puerto Rico was founded in 1899. The convention is linked to the Northern American Baptists in the United States. The Baptist convention has gained a strong membership.

Presbyterians have gained their strongest following in western Puerto Rico. They were first introduced to independent worship by an English trader of Reformed faith in 1860. Presbyterians opened one of the nicest hospitals in 1904, and contributed the first president to the new interdenominational evangelical seminary in 1919.

Lutherans have a small population in Puerto Rico. Lutherans were responsible for starting the island’s first Protestant bookstore.

The United Evangelical Church was formed by a merger of 3 denominations: United Brethren, Christian Church, and Congregational Church. Though the purpose of merging was to build a unified body of believers, the church has been slow to grow because of internal dissensions over unresolved questions prior to the merge. In 1933, the disciples contemplated the joining of the UEC, but they decided against it and remain an independent body of believers.

In 1868, the English bishop of Antigua was permitted to build the first Anglican church in Puerto Rico, at Ponce. The responsibility of the Anglican work was transferred in 1901 to the Episcopal Church in the USA. In 1923, the Independent Church of Jesus (founded in 1902) merged with the Episcopal Church. Today, the church remains small, but has a strong educational and medical tradition.

Pentecostalism came to Puerto Rico in 1916. Puerto Rican natives returned home from Hawaii, where they became influenced by the Assembly of God churches. The Pentecostal Church of God is the currently the island's largest denomination outside of Roman Catholicism. The church is self-supporting and also has missionaries in Spain, Portugal, and nine other Latin American countries. Other Pentecostal groups on the island include the Church of God (Cleveland), Church of God of Prophecy, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and the United Pentecostal Church.

A large number of indigenous churches have been formed out of Pentecostalism. The most successful churches are the Missionary Church of Christ, Defenders of the Faith Church, Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ, and the Church of Christ in the Antilles.

Protestants have excelled among the Puerto Ricans largely because of their schools. However, Protestants are also represented in professions such as business and government.

David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson. World Christian Encyclopedia. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 2001.

## **Religions**

### **Non-Christian**

#### *Spiritism*

In its various forms, has gained a small following. It involves the use of native herbs to cure illness and mediums to contact the dead. They also believe the divine has the power to cause and solve problems. Where the existence of witches is believed, bracelets (asabache) are placed on the arms of children to protect them from the evil eye (mal del ojo). There are also forms of Afro-American spiritism that were brought over by immigrants from Cuba.

#### *Jehovah's Witnesses*

The Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced a significant amount of growth. They have become the fourth largest non-Catholic church as of 1990. Presently the Jehovah's Witnesses report 328 congregations with over 26000 members with 75000 adherents

### *Roman Catholics*

The first Catholic diocese in the New World was formed on the Puerto Rican island in 1511. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, 21 of the 25 priests on the island were killed by smallpox. Little Christian action took place for a hundred years. The island continued to have a shortage of priests until the Latin American wars of independence began. At that time, members of the hierarchy loyal to Spain migrated from Latin American countries to the Puerto Rican island.

As Puerto Ricans began seeking for their independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the church was weakened by members of the hierarchy to Spain that were present on the island. After the end of Spanish rule in 1898, the amount of Catholic priests declined. By 1930, there were only 45 diocesan priests, but the numbers rose some by 1955. A large amount of priests continue to belong to missionary societies from the United States and Spain.

Puerto Rico has two distinct cultural traditions (Hispanic and North American) that the Catholic Church must identify with. Catholicism was considered ancient by the Hispanic tradition and a foreign hindrance within the social status of the Protestant libertarianism of the North American tradition.

At the end of the Spanish rule approximately 1 out of 5 clergy were Puerto Rican born. By 1974, all Catholic bishops in Puerto Rico were born on the island. Some Catholic movements or groups that were not related to the Catholic hierarchy became actively involved for the cause of socio-political liberation in Puerto Rico. The largest of these groups include the Juventud Obrera Cristiana, Juventud Estudiantil Cristiana, Juventud Yniversitaria Catolica, Jornadas de Juventud, and segments of Cursillo de Cristiandad). Church authorities reacted in two ways; they either withdrew recognition or imposed sanctions. The liberal and separatist clerics were forced out of their parishes. Some abandoned their ministry all together, and others organized the Association of Priests (Asociación Puertorriquena de Sacerdotes) in Rio Pedras in 1972. The Association of Priests is the only Catholic organization that is openly in favor of political independence and socialism for Puerto Rico. The Holy See has no diplomatic relations with Puerto Rico in AD 2000.

Catholics today report over 1100 congregations with as many as 1,650,000 members and 2,900,000 adherents.

### *Orthodox*

The Orthodox reports one congregation and less than 1000 members.

### *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)*

The Mormons report over 70 congregations with over 16.000 members

## **Christian Groups**

The first Protestants came to Puerto Rico in 1860. Anglicans followed in 1872. In 1899, following the Spanish-American war, 5 denominations (Baptists, Disciples, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and United Brethren) migrated to Puerto Rico to begin work.

### *Methodist*

The Methodists entered the island in 1900 and now report 75 congregations with more than 10,000 members

### *Baptists*

The Baptist Convention of Puerto Rico was founded in 1899. The convention is linked to the Northern American Baptists in the United States. The Baptist convention has gained a strong membership. Baptists report over 108 congregations with a combined membership of in excess of 35,500.

### *Presbyterians*

Presbyterians have gained their strongest following in western Puerto Rico. They were first introduced to independent worship by an English trader of Reformed faith in 1860. Presbyterians opened one of the nicest hospitals in 1904, and contributed the first president to the new interdenominational evangelical seminary in 1919.

### *Lutherans*

Lutherans have a small population in Puerto Rico. Lutherans were responsible for starting the island's first Protestant bookstore.

### *The United Evangelical Church*

The United Evangelical Church was formed by a merger of 3 denominations: United Brethren, Christian Church, and Congregational Church. Though the purpose of merging was to build a unified body of believers, the church has been slow to grow because of internal dissensions over

unresolved questions prior to the merge. In 1933, the disciples contemplated the joining of the UEC, but they decided against it and remain an independent body of believers.

In 1868, the English bishop of Antiqua was permitted to build the first Anglican church in Puerto Rico, at Ponce. The responsibility of the Anglican work was transferred in 1901 to the Episcopal Church in the USA. In 1923, the Independent Church of Jesus (founded in 1902) merged with the Episcopal Church. Today, the church remains small, but has a strong educational and medical tradition.

### *Seventh Day Adventists*

The Adventists came in 1909. Like the Methodists, the Adventists made a head way by giving attention to schools and medical work. Adventist missionaries make up approximately 26% of all foreign Protestant church workers on the island. Adventists report over 260 congregations with more than 32,000 members

### *Pentecostalism*

Pentecostalism came to Puerto Rico in 1916. Puerto Rican natives returned home from Hawaii, where they became influenced by the Assembly of God churches. Around 30 independent Pentecostal Churches have a total of 1950 congregations with a combined membership of as many as 230,000.

The *Pentecostal Church of God* is the currently the island's largest denomination outside of Roman Catholicism. The church is self-supporting and also has missionaries in Spain, Portugal, and nine other Latin American countries. This Church reports over 730 congregations with more than 100,000 members

Other Pentecostal groups on the island include the *Church of God (Cleveland)*, that reports over 240 congregations with a total membership of 18,000.

Church of God of Prophecy, International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and the United Pentecostal Church.

A large number of indigenous churches have been formed out of Pentecostalism. The most successful churches are the Missionary Church of Christ, Defenders of the Faith Church, Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ, and the Church of Christ in the Antilles.

David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson. *World Christian Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 2001; *Operation World*

## People Groups

### 00000

Afro-Puerto Rican (620,000)

The primary language of the Afro-Puerto Rican people group is Spanish. The primary religion of this people group is Roman Catholic (90%). Approximately 25 % of the Christian population is Evangelical.

The Afro-Puerto Rican people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

### 00000

Americans (91,000)

The primary language of Americans is English. The primary religion of Americans is Christianity (78%).

Americans have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

### 00000

Antillean Creole, *Papiamentu* (200)

The primary language of the Antillean Creole, *Papiamentu* is *Papiamentu*. The primary religion of the Antillean Creole is Christianity (87%).

The Antillean Creole has access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, and Jesus films.

### 00000

British (50)

The primary language of the British is English. The primary religion of the British is Christianity (70%).

The British have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

### 00000

Chinese, generic (2,100)

The primary language of the Chinese is Spanish. The primary religion of the Chinese is Ethnic Religions. Approximately 35% of the population is Christian.

The Chinese have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

**00000**

Cuban (8,300)

The primary language of the Cuban people group is Spanish. The primary religion of the Cuban people is Catholic (57%).

The Cuban people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

**00000**

Puerto Rican deaf (unknown)

The Puerto Rican deaf communicate through Puerto Rican Sign Language. The primary religion of the deaf is Christianity.

The accessibility of Bible translations and Jesus films is not available.

**00000**

East Indian (4,500)

The primary language of the East Indian people group is Hindi. The primary religion of the East Indian people is Hinduism. Approximately 15% of the population is Christian.

The East Indian people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

**00000**

French (2,700)

The primary language of this people group is French. The primary religion of this people group is Christianity.

The French have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, Jesus films, and radio broadcasts.

**00000**

German Swiss (1,500)

The primary language of this people group is German Swiss. The primary religion of the German Swiss is Christianity (75%).

The German Swiss have access to a translation of the New Testament, as well as Gospel recordings.

**00000**

Haitian (500)

The primary language of the Haitian people is Haitian Creole French. The primary religion of the Haitian people is Catholic (90%).

The Haitian people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, and Jesus films.

**00000**

Italian (1,700)

The primary language of this people group is Italian. The primary religion of the Italian people is Catholic (80%).

The Italian people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

**00000**

Jew (1,500)

The Jewish population in Puerto Rico primarily speaks Spanish. The primary religion of the Jewish people is Judaism

The Jewish people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

**00000**

Puerto Ricans (2,815,000)

The primary language of the Puerto Rican people is Spanish. The primary religion of this people is Catholic (90%). Approximately 25 % of the Christian population is Evangelical.



The Puerto Ricans have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

**00000**

Puerto Ricans, Mixed (414,000)

The primary language of this people group is Spanish. The primary religion of this people group is Catholic (90%).

This people group has access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

**00000**

Spaniard (4,100)

The Spaniard people group primarily speaks Spanish. The primary religion of the Spaniard people is Catholic (90%).

The Spaniard people have access to Bible translations, Gospel recordings, radio broadcasts, and Jesus films.

[www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net)

### **Missiological Implications**

1. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seize the opportunities of freedom to share their faith in Puerto Rico. The Catholic denomination has dominated the country's religious system, but evangelical work is growing.
2. Evangelical Christians and Churches should develop methods of sharing the Gospel with followers of Roman Catholicism. These methods should be given to believers in Puerto Rico and these believers should be trained in the use of the methods
3. Evangelical Christians and Churches should develop and share with the believers in Puerto Rico methods of starting reproducing congregations. These methods should be developed and Puerto Rico believers trained in their use
4. Evangelicals need to continue work on complete translations of the Bible for all people groups who are without. Completing translations of the New Testament or the complete Bible would really help in the multiplication and evangelism of these people groups. Translations would also help with the development and growth of new Christians.

5. Evangelical Christians and Churches should pray diligently for a spiritual movement on this island.
6. Evangelical Christians and Churches should help local believers develop methods of reaching followers of spiritism. Beliefs concerning spirits from Brazil, Africa, and Haiti have influence and people need to be freed from these fears.
7. Evangelical Christians and Churches should provide more evangelistic and church development tools—such as Jesus Film, radio materials, Gospel recordings, and translations.
8. Evangelical Christians and Churches should provide more workers to serve alongside the believers in Puerto Rico. Church planters and Christian development workers are greatly needed. New missionaries are needed to work amongst the people groups, to teach and disciple them.

**Links:**

[www.meetpuertorico.com](http://www.meetpuertorico.com)

[www.gotopuertorico.com](http://www.gotopuertorico.com)

[www.puertorico-guide.com](http://www.puertorico-guide.com)

[www.topuertorico.org](http://www.topuertorico.org)

[www.elboricua.com/recipes](http://www.elboricua.com/recipes)

[www.elcolmadito.com](http://www.elcolmadito.com)

[www.prcooking.com](http://www.prcooking.com)