

Puerto rico



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Puerto Rico, officially known as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, is an island nation located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. East of the Dominican Republic, the island has a total area of 13, 790 square kilometers, with 8, 870 of it being land, while the remaining 4, 921 square kilometers is water. Like the rest of the Caribbean islands, Puerto Rico has a tropical climate, with very mild weather and little variation in the seasonal temperatures. In contrast to the mild weather is a terrain that is mostly mountainous, with coastal areas as well consistently mainly of sandy beaches.

With an estimated population of 3, 958, 128, Puerto Rico is one of the most heavily populated islands in the world. Were it not for the migration of approximately two million Puerto Ricans to the United States, the island would have so many people living on it that they would practically have no room to live. As it is, the island has the highest ratio of people living per square mile, with about one-third of the population being concentrated in the San Juan-Carolina-Bayamon metropolitan area, San Juan being the capital of the island. The people of Puerto Rico have another high: their literacy rate.

Approximately 94% of the population overall can read and write, with 93. 9% of the literate being male and 94. 4% of the literate being female. The cultural and racial mixture seen in Puerto Rico is a direct result of its history. Founded and populated for centuries by aboriginal peoples known as the Taino, in 1493 it was ‘discovered’ by Christopher Columbus, who claimed it as property for the kingdom of Spain. In the early years of Spanish colonization, the Taino were forced to become slaves, and over time they were practically destroyed.

Only a small group was able to escape into the mountains, but eventually they intermarried with the poor Spanish farmers, becoming known as jibaros. Eventually, slaves began being imported from Africa, and along with other ethnic groups brought to the island, were put to work on the plantations. During the early 1800s, there was a new influx of emigrants from South America: Spanish loyalists fleeing the independence movements of Simom Bolivar. Also moving to the island were French families from Louisiana and Haiti. Finally, there were Scottish and Irish farmers who moved to Puerto Rico, due to political upheaval in their respective countries.

In 1898, America acquired the island, and through this acquisition, American cultural aspects were infused into the already unique Puerto Rican culture. There was an influx of American expatriates that moved to the island after 1898, along with the arrival of laborers that were imported from countries such as China, France, Germany, and even Lebanon. Still coming to the island are Spanish immigrants, with the most significant number of new residents arriving in the 1960s, when thousands of Cubans fled the Communist government instituted by Fidel Castro.

The latest immigrants to the island have come from its neighbor, the Dominican Republic, where the economy has been experiencing a severe downturn for some time now. As a result of all this immigration and racial mixture, the ethnic groups residing on the island today are broken down as follows: 80.5% being whites of mostly Spanish origin, 8% being black, 0.4% being Amerindian, 0.2% being Asian, 4.2% being mixed, and the remaining 6.7% being of other origin. Another area where great diversity is seen on the island is in the religions that are practiced.

Catholics account for 85% of the population, while 8% percent of the population is Protestant. The remainder of the population is either non-religious or adheres to spiritualism, Santeria, or Judaism. Despite the racial, cultural, and religious mixture of the island, the primary languages spoken are Spanish and English. As previously stated, Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States with commonwealth status. The island is broken down into 78 municipalities, and has a legal system based on Spanish civil code, with inclusion into the United States Federal justice system.

Puerto Rico has a constitution that was approved by the United States Congress in July of 1952, and like the United States, has a government that is broken down into three branches. Also like the United States, the voting age is 18. Yet, despite being citizens of the United States, Puerto Ricans do not vote in presidential elections held in the United States, even though the president of the United States is considered to be the chief executive of the island. Puerto has one of the most vibrant economies within the Caribbean region.

Its diverse industrial sector has overtaken agriculture as the primary area of economic activity and income. Spurred on by the duty-free access to the United States, as well as by tax incentives, many companies and firms in the United States have invested heavily into the Puerto Rican economy since the 1950s. Another source of income for the island is tourism, which is currently in a decline due to the decline in the economy of the United States. Like all countries throughout the world, Puerto Rico exports and imports products.

With regard to exports, the island spends about \$46. 9 billion shipping out commodities such as chemicals, electronics, clothing, canned tuna, rum,

concentrated beverages, and medical equipment. All these commodities are exported to the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the Dominican Republic. With regard to imports, the island imports about \$29. 1 billion worth of commodities such as chemicals, machinery and equipment, clothing, food, fish, and petroleum products, all of which come from the United States, Ireland, and Japan.

As previously stated, Puerto Rico is an island with an extremely diverse culture. This is reflected in the numerous holidays celebrated during the course of a year. Along with traditional holidays such as Three Kings Day, Easter, Christmas, and Good Fridays are those that honor particular people and events in the history of the island. The most important holiday the island celebrates is most likely the day its constitution was put into effect: July 25. Another unique holiday that is celebrated is the Discovery of Puerto Rico day, which is celebrated on November 19.

Currently, there is a stir being raised over recent test results that showed Puerto Rican students to be far behind students on the U. S. mainland. This assessment has ignited a debate over the fairness of the test, particularly since the questions had to be translated from English to Spanish. The education department of Puerto Rico stated the scores were not a true reflection of the abilities of its students, and wanted to be exempted from the National Assessment Educational Progress math exams, which are needed in order for the educational department to receive federal school funding.

Education officials in the United States stood by the test scores, but did agree to conduct studies with Puerto Rican students and teachers to address

concerns they have with regard to the translation of the test. This controversy is part of a larger debate concerning the possibility of Puerto Rico becoming the 51st state of America. Despite these issues, Puerto Rico has been and will continue to be a unique island with a rich culture and heritage.