

## Puerto Rico

### Overview:

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the smallest of the Greater Antilles, is located east of the Dominican Republic in the northeastern Caribbean. Populated for centuries by aboriginal peoples, the island was claimed by the Spanish Crown in 1493 following Columbus' second voyage to the Americas. In 1898, after 400 years of colonial rule that saw the indigenous population nearly exterminated and African slave labour introduced, Puerto Rico was ceded to the US as a result of the Spanish-American War. Puerto Ricans were granted US citizenship in 1917. Popularly-elected governors have served since 1948. In 1952, a constitution was enacted providing for internal self government. In plebiscites held in 1967, 1993, and 1998, voters chose to retain commonwealth status.

### Territory:

Puerto Rico consists of a main island of Puerto Rico and various smaller islands, including Vieques, Culebra, Mona, Desecheo, and Caja de Muertos. Of the latter five, only Culebra and Vieques are inhabited year-round. Mona is uninhabited through large parts of the year except for employees of the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources. Area: Land: 8,959 sq. km; Water: 145 sq. km; Total: 9,104 sq. km; Coastline: 501 km; The mainland measures some 170 km by 60 km (100 miles by 35 nautical miles). It is mostly mountainous with large coastal areas in the north and south regions of the island. The main mountainous range is called "La Cordillera Central" (The Central Range). Highest point, Cerro de Punta (1,338 m; 4,390 ft). Another important peak is El Yunque, located in the Sierra de Luquillo at the Caribbean National Forest, with a maximum elevation of 1,065 m (3,494 feet). Puerto Rico lies at the boundary between the Caribbean and North American plates and is currently being deformed by the tectonic stresses caused by the interaction of these plates. These stresses may cause earthquakes and tsunamis. These seismic events, along with landslides, represent some of the most dangerous geologic hazards in the island and in the northeastern Caribbean. The most recent major earthquake occurred on October 11, 1918 and had an estimated magnitude of 7.5 on the Richter scale. It originated off the coast of Aguadilla and was accompanied by a tsunami. The Puerto Rico Trench, the largest and deepest trench in the Atlantic, is located about 120 km (75 miles) north of Puerto Rico in the Atlantic Ocean at the boundary between the Caribbean and North American plates. The trench is 1,754 km (1,090 miles) long and about 97 km (60 miles) wide. At its deepest point, named the Milwaukee Deep, it is 8,380 m (27,493 feet) deep, or about 8.38 km (5.2 miles).

### Location:

Between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, east of the Dominican Republic, about 1,600 km (1,000 mi) southeast of Miami, Florida.

### Latitude and Longitude:

18 15 N, 66 30 W;

### Time Zone:

GMT -4

### Total Land Area:

8959

### EEZ:

### Climate:

Puerto Rico's temperatures average from 22.7 C (83 F) in the winter and 29.4 C (85 F) in the summer. Puerto Rico also experiences seasonal hurricanes, but generally not as often as other Caribbean islands.

### Natural Resources:

There are some copper and nickel deposits as well as a potential for onshore and offshore oil.

### ECONOMY:

| Total GDP: |                       |
|------------|-----------------------|
| 2003       | 65,210,000,000.00 USD |

| Per Capita GDP: |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 2003            | 16,730.00 USD |

| % of GDP per Sector: |         |           |          |
|----------------------|---------|-----------|----------|
|                      | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary |
| 2003                 | 2.7%    | 49%       | 48.3%    |

| % of Population Employed by Sector |         |           |          |
|------------------------------------|---------|-----------|----------|
|                                    | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary |
| 2000                               | 3%      | 20%       | 77%      |

### External Aid/Remittances:

### Growth:

Real Growth Rate (2003): 1.6%; Inflation Rate: 6.5 % (2003);

| Labour Force: |           |
|---------------|-----------|
| 2000          | 1,300,000 |

| Unemployment |                               |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Year:        | Unemployment Rate (% of pop.) |
| 2002         | 12%                           |

**Industry:**  
pharmaceuticals, electronics, apparel, food products, tourism

**Niche Industry:**  
Tourism

**Tourism:**

| Imports and Exports:         |         |
|------------------------------|---------|
|                              |         |
| <b>Tot. Value of Imports</b> | 0.00 () |
| <b>From Eu:</b>              |         |
| <b>Import Partners (EU:)</b> |         |
| <b>Partners Outside EU:</b>  |         |
| <b>Import Partners:</b>      |         |
| <b>Tot. Value of Exports</b> | ()      |
| <b>To Eu:</b>                |         |
| <b>Export Partners:</b>      |         |
| <b>Partners Outside EU::</b> |         |
| <b>Export Partners:</b>      |         |
| <b>Main Imports:</b>         |         |
| <b>Main Exports:</b>         |         |



#### TRANSPORTATION/ACCESS

**External:**

**Number of Airports:**

There are 30 airports in Puerto Rico, 17 with paved runways and 13 that are not. Several daily flights from the continental United States, the Caribbean and Latin America, South America, and Europe.

**Number of Main Ports:**

**Internal:**

**Air**

**Road:**

There are about 14,400 km of paved roads in addition to 96 km of railway. Public transport, car rental, taxi service and bus service is available.

**Sea:**

Ferry service to Culebra and Vieques is available at the small port of Fajardo on the east end of the island. Private boats can also be chartered at many of the marinas on the east coast.

**Other Forms of Transportation:**

**Economic Zones:**

The Pharmaceutical industry is very prosperous for Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico currently manufactures 16 of the 20 top-selling drugs in the U.S. and approximately 50 percent of the pacemakers and defibrillators sold in the U.S. With continued tax incentives and special policies aimed at the pharmaceutical companies, Puerto Rico persists to be a viable, prosperous, and attractive location for offshore manufacturers.

**Energy Policy:**

| Year | Total Energy Production (Mwh) | Type          |                  |             | Total Energy Consumption (Mwh) | Sector         |                  |                      |                |                       |
|------|-------------------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
|      |                               | Thermic (Mwh) | Geothermic (Mwh) | Other (Mwh) |                                | Domestic (Mwh) | Commercial (Mwh) | Public Service (Mwh) | Industry (Mwh) | Public Lighting (Mwh) |
|      |                               |               |                  |             |                                |                |                  |                      |                |                       |

**Official Currency:**  
United States Dollar (USD)



**Banking and Insurance:**

Number of Banks and Credit Unions:

Number of Agricultural Credit Unions:

Number of Insurance Companies:

There are no strict regulations or restrictions on banking and insurance in Puerto Rico.

**Financial Services:****Communications/E-Commerce:**

Outward and open. Government and private web sites on economy and tourism extensive. English and/or Spanish

**Public Ownership:**

There are no strict regulations or restrictions on public ownership in Puerto Rico.

**Land Use:**

2001: Arable land: 3.95%; Permanent crops: 5.52%; Other: 90.53%;

**Agriculture/Forestry:**

sugarcane, coffee, pineapples, plantains, bananas, livestock products, chickens

**Marine Activity:****Fishing:**

territorial sea: 12 nm; exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

**Marine Life:****Critical Issues:**

Environmental Issues: Urbanization, development and degradation of coastal and waterfront areas, erosion, destruction from hurricanes to property, crops, and coastlines, periodic drought. Critical Issues: More strict regulations protecting coastal and waterfront areas, more protection on forested, agricultural, water sources. Transshipment of illicit drugs from South America to the continental United States is becoming more of a threat to society, law enforcement, and health in Puerto Rico.

**JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES****Capital:**

The capital, San Juan, is located on the main island's north coast. Admin. divisions: none (commonwealth associated with the US); there are no first-order administrative divisions as defined by the US Government, but there are 78 municipalities (municipios, singular - municipio) at the second order; Adjuntas, Aguada, Aguadilla, Aguas Buenas, Aibonito, Anasco, Arrecibo, Arroyo, Barceloneta, Barranquitas, Bayamon, Cabo Rojo, Caguas, Camuy, Canovanas, Carolina, Catano, Cayey, Ceiba, Ciales, Cidra, Coamo, Comerio, Corozal, Culebra, Dorado, Fajardo, Florida, Guanica, Guayama, Guayanilla, Guaynabo, Gurabo, Hatillo, Hormigueros, Humacao, Isabela, Jayuya, Juana Diaz, Juncos, Lajas, Lares, Las Marias, Las Piedras, Loiza, Luquillo, Manati, Maricao, Maunabo, Mayaguez, Moca, Morovis, Naguabo, Naranjito, Orocovis, Patillas, Penuelas, Ponce, Quebradillas, Rincon, Rio Grande, Sabana Grande, Salinas, San German, San Juan, San Lorenzo, San Sebastian, Santa Isabel, Toa Alta, Toa Baja, Trujillo Alto, Utuado, Vega Alta, Vega Baja, Vieques, Villalba, Yabucoa, Yauco

**Political System:**

Puerto Rico is a self governing commonwealth in associated with the United States. The chief of State is the President of the United States of America. The head of the government is an elected governor. There are two legislative chambers; the House of Representatives with 51 seats, and the Senate, with 27 seats. Puerto Rico has authority over its internal affairs. United States controls: interstate trade, foreign relations and commerce, customs administration, control of air, land and sea, immigration and emigration, nationality and citizenship, currency, maritime laws, military service, military bases, army, navy, and air force, declaration of war, constitutionality of laws, jurisdictions and legal procedures, treaties, radio and television, agriculture, mining and minerals, highways, postal services, social security, and all other areas generally controlled by the federal government on the United States. The major difference between Puerto Rico and the other 50 US states is that the Puerto Ricans cannot vote in the Presidential or Congress elections. The executive power is exercised by the Governor, who leads a cabinet confirmed by 15 ministers. The government is elected by island wide elections every four years. The legislative power resides in the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate consists of 27 members, or 2 per electoral district, and 11 elected according to the different districts proportion of population. Two extra seats are granted in each house to the opposition if necessary to limit any party's control to two thirds. The House of Representatives has 53 members, 1 per electoral district, and 11 elected according to the different districts proportion of population. Legislators are popularly elected to 4 year terms. Court System: Supreme Court; Appellate Court; Court of First Instance composed of two sections: a Superior Court and a Municipal Court (justices for all these courts appointed by the governor with the consent of the Senate)

**Political Parties:**

National Democratic Party, National Republican Party of Puerto Rico, New Progressive Party or PNP (pro-US statehood), Popular Democratic Party or PPD (pro-commonwealth), Puerto Rican Independence Party or PIP (pro-independence). Elections: The Governor, Senators, and House of Representatives are all elected for a 4 year term.

**Important Legislation:**

Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico: ratified 3 March 1952; approved by US Congress 3 July 1952; effective 25 July 1952. It outlines the political functions, structures, and practices of Puerto Rico and is vital to the day-to-day functioning of Puerto Rico. Law of the Forests of Puerto Rico, enacted in 1972 and amended in 2000. This law outlines specific guidelines, restrictions, and protections to Puerto Rico's rich and limited forests. This is an important law because it limits the amount of harvesting of this natural resource and outlines the conservation of the forested lands of Puerto Rico. Law for the Plan of Land Use of the Associated Free State of Puerto Rico of 2004. This law was created to define the new public policy, create the Office of the Plan of Land Use, assigned to the Meeting of Planning, create the Inter-Agency Committee of the Executive Branch, authorize the designation of an External Advisory Advice, to establish the procedure of Declaration of Area of Reserve to Perpetuity, and to establish the transition process towards the Plan and for other aims. This law is important for Puerto Rico, as well as for all islands because it is necessary to carefully plan land because it is so rare and scarce. Law on Environmental Public Policy, adopted in 1977, amended in 1998 and 2000. The aims of this law are the following ones: (a) To establish a public policy that stimulates a desirable and advisable harmony between society and nature. (b) to foment the efforts that would prevent or eliminate damage to the atmosphere and the environment, and to stimulate the health and the well-being of society. (c) to enrich an important understanding of the ecological systems and natural sources for Puerto Rico, and (d) to establish a Meeting of Environmental Quality. Puerto Rico's, as well as all other islands environments is very fragile and protecting the environment through policies such as this one ensures that irreparable damage will not take place. Law to Protect the Purity of Potable Waters, enacted in 1977. This law ensures the protection and purity of the water system in Puerto Rico. This is a very vital law to Puerto Rico because water is very scarce on Puerto Rico due to long droughts and few sources of water. This law ensures that this important resource will be protected and keep safe for use.

**Principal Taxes:**

**Associated Power:**  
United States of America

**Citizenship:**  
US

**Paradiplomacy:**  
Puerto Rico is a member CFTU, Interpol (sub-bureau), IOC, UPU, WCL, WFTU, WTO (associate);

## HUMAN RESOURCES

Population by Age and Gender (2004): 0-14: 873,059 (22.4%); male 51.1%, female 49.9%; 15-64: 2,550,657 (65.4%); male 47.9%, female 52.1%; 65+: 474,244 (12.2%); male 43.3%, female 56.7%; Total: 3,897,960 (100%); male 47.4%, female 52.9%. Median age: Total: 33.8 years; male: 32.1 years; female: 35.4 years (2004 est.); Population growth rate: 0.49% (2004 est.).

| Island | Area (km sq.) | Population | % of Total Population |
|--------|---------------|------------|-----------------------|
|--------|---------------|------------|-----------------------|

| Population: |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Year        | Resident Population |

| Age of Population: | 0-14   | 15-24 | 25-49 | 50-64 | 65 and up |
|--------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|
| 2004               | 873059 | 0     | 0     | 0     | 474,244   |

**Migration:**  
Net Migration: -1.46 migrant(s)/1,000 population;

| Crude Birth Rate: |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| 2004              | 14.1% |

**Life Expedctancy:**

| Crude Death Rate: |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| 2004              | 7.77% |

**Ethnicity:**  
white (mostly Spanish origin) 80.5%, black 8%, Amerindian 0.4%, Asian 0.2%, mixed and other 10.9%;

**Class Division:**

**Languages:**  
Spanish, English

**Religion:**  
Roman Catholic 85%, Protestant and other 15%.

**Literacy:**  
definition: age 15 and over can read and write total population: 94.1% male: 93.7%; female: 94.4% (2002).

**Education System:**  
The school system is Administered by the Department of Education and has several levels of learning. The language used in schools is Spanish, however, English is taught from kindergarten to highschool as part of the school curriculum. Some private schools provide English programs where all classes are conducted in English except for Spanish class. Puerto Rico has over 50 institutions of higher education. Puerto Rico has achieved one of the highest college education rates in the world (6th) with 56% of its collage-aged students attending institutions of higher learning.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Total Pre-schools:()</b>       |  |
| <b>Total Primary Schools</b>      |  |
| <b>First Level:</b>               |  |
| <b>Second Level:</b>              |  |
| <b>Third Level:</b>               |  |
| <b>Total Secondary Schools:</b>   |  |
| <b>Total Professional Schools</b> |  |
| <b>Universities:</b>              |  |

| Number of Schools per Island: |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
|-------------------------------|--|



|  |            |      |            |   |   |             |      |       |            |      |
|--|------------|------|------------|---|---|-------------|------|-------|------------|------|
|  | Pre-school |      | Elementary |   |   | High-school |      | Prof. | University |      |
|  | Pub        | Priv | 1          | 2 | 3 | Pub         | Priv |       | Pub        | Priv |

|                           |                   |                   |                    |              |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| <b>Students Enrolled:</b> |                   |                   |                    |              |                   |
| <b>Year:</b>              | <b>Pre-School</b> | <b>Elementary</b> | <b>High-school</b> | <b>Prof.</b> | <b>University</b> |

|                 |                   |                   |          |          |                    |              |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| <b>Teachers</b> |                   |                   |          |          |                    |              |                   |
| <b>Year</b>     | <b>Pre-School</b> | <b>Elementary</b> |          |          | <b>High-School</b> | <b>Prof.</b> | <b>University</b> |
|                 |                   | <b>1</b>          | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> |                    |              |                   |

#### Medical Services:

A full range of medical services and clinics are available in Puerto Rico island wide.

## HISTORY AND CULTURE

### History:

A number of Amerindian peoples have lived on Puerto Rico, which may be the earliest site of human habitation in the Caribbean. It was the TaÑnos who were in residence when Columbus arrived in 1493. This largely peaceful family of autonomous tribes had developed a sophisticated culture, language and religious system. Unusually, the TaÑnos had female chiefs as well as male, who were entitled to numerous husbands, the foremost of which was burned with his wife at the time of her death. TaÑnos received prophecy from gods and the dead through such mind-altering practices as inhaling a hallucinatory powder made from cohoba seeds and crushed shells. They were also remarkably nifty at ball games: they invented the rubber ball and the results of their contests were of oracular value. Unfortunately, game-playing and shell-inhaling did not leave the TaÑnos prepared to defend themselves against the well-armed Spanish settlers who arrived from Hispaniola with Juan Ponce de LeÃ³n in 1508. The settlers enslaved and evangelised the TaÑnos, and many of the mostly male conquistadors took local ladies as 'wives'. Although pockets of TaÑno resistance could be found in the mountains, swamps and other inaccessible areas of the island until the 19th century, the vast majority succumbed to superior weaponry and European diseases by the beginning of the 17th century. The Spanish settled at San Juan, which became one of the most strategic outposts in the New World. Over the next century it underwent massive fortification to protect it from British, French and Dutch maritime incursions. In response to a Spanish stranglehold on regional trade, Puerto Rico imported African slaves and dabbled with sugar, cotton and tobacco plantations in the 16th and 17th century, but there was more money to be made in black market trading with its neighbours. Spain's inability to prevent smuggling undermined its moral authority on the island, and Puerto Rico began to develop its own distinct identity during the 18th century. This was enhanced by a growing number of immigrants and an emerging bourgeoisie of coffee plantation owners. As revolution swept through the New World, Spain relaxed its totalitarian trade policies in a bid to keep Puerto Rico and Cuba in the colonial fold. Spanish loyalists and Puerto Rican nationalists spent the second half of the 19th century arguing the pros and cons of self-rule with the colonial government. An unsuccessful revolt in the mountain town of Lares in 1868 focused everybody's mind on the seriousness of the problem at hand. A degree of autonomy - including an elected local government, representation in Spain and their very own currency - was achieved in 1897. This became obsolete almost immediately when US forces invaded and occupied Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War. The USA ruled Puerto Rico as a colonial protectorate for the next five decades, despite continued calls for autonomy. Puerto Ricans were granted US citizenship in 1917, just in time for them to be eligible for military service in WWI. Reform and investment improved the economy for large landholders (particularly US sugar interests), but the 1930s depression hit the island hard and the independence movement turned to violence. During WWII, the US military appropriated extensive agricultural lands that have never been returned, including the loudly disputed island of Vieques. Puerto Rico won the right to elect its own governor in 1948, shortly after President Truman implemented 'Operation Bootstrap', aimed at kick-starting the island's economy, largely by forcing the sale of many publicly owned enterprises and giving tax breaks to resident US companies. Puerto Ricans voted three to one in a 1951 referendum to become a commonwealth of the US rather than remain a colony. Nationalists seeking full independence took the fight to the US mainland where they attempted to assassinate President Truman and opened fire on US congressmen from the visitors' gallery in the House of Representatives. Political support for full independence waned and calls for US statehood increased, though neither independence nor statehood has ever won a majority vote in any of numerous referenda on status. The Puerto Rican economy continued to post impressive gains in GNP. During the 1950s and 60s around one million Puerto Ricans went to work in the US (mainly in New York City). Return migration to Puerto Rico increased during the 1970s and 80s; US citizenship has helped facilitate a type of circular migration that has led some to label Puerto Rico the 'commuter nation'. The island has a high standard of living compared to most other Caribbean islands, but it still languishes behind the poorest US states and continues to suffer high unemployment. Puerto Ricans voted in 1993 and 1998 for commonwealth status in preference to statehood, though the margins were not decisive.

### Referenda:

#### Recent Significant Events:

On 21 February 2000, at least 100,000 Puerto Ricans gathered for what was possibly the nation's largest demonstration ever, to protest US Navy plans to resume training on the island of Vieques. The crowd, which had been summoned by religious leaders, carried the Puerto Rican flag and banners demanding peace. Although organisers claimed the march was not political, many leaders of the Independence Party participated, as did Governor Sila Calderon. On 24 April 2001, Calderon signed a law prohibiting activities that create more than 190 decibels of sound; US officials admitted that the repeated shelling of Vieques broke the new law, but stated that they would continue bombing. In June 2001, however, President George W Bush agreed to end the assault on Vieques, agreeing to phase out military activities on the island by May 2003. Although naval operations on the island resumed in 2002, that commitment was honoured, and the following year the last remaining US base in the territory, at Ceiba, was closed. Although the victory at Vieques has many Puerto Ricans celebrating, the US territory's ability to determine its own future continues to be compounded by an inability to vote in US national elections

### Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

#### Sources:

Bureau of Labour Statistics. Available online. <http://www.bls.gov> March 2005. CIA World Fact Book. 'Puerto Rico.' February 10, 2005. Available online. <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/rq.html> March 2005. Lex Juris Revista JurÃ¡dica (Lex Juris Legal Magazine) 'Puerto Rico Laws by Subject.' Available online. <http://www.lexjuris.com> March 2005. National Centre for Health Statistics. December 16, 2004. Available online. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/puertric.htm> March 2005. Puerto Rico Tourism Company. Available online. <http://www.gotopuertorico.com> March 2005. Welcome to Puerto Rico. March 10, 2005. Available online. <http://welcome.topuertorico.org> March 2005. U.S Census Bureau. March 1, 2005. Available online. <http://www.census.gov/statab/www> March 2005. US Department of Labour. Available online. <http://www.doi.gov> March 2005. US.



Useful Links:

[IslandStudies.ca](http://IslandStudies.ca)  
[www.upei.ca](http://www.upei.ca)  
[www.google.ca](http://www.google.ca)

Please address queries to:  
Institute of Island Studies  
University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI)  
550 University Ave  
Charlottetown, PE, Canada, C1A 4P3

Copyright 2007. Institute of Island  
Studies, UPEI. Educational and  
Non-Commercial Use Only