

# Children in Puerto Rico

By Nayda I. Rivera-Hernández\*

## Overview

Data from the most recent decennial Census show that the total population of Puerto Rico consisted of 3,808,610 people in 2000. Children 17 years of age and younger constitute almost one-third of Puerto Rico's total population. While most of these children live in two-

parent families, almost one-third of them live with only one parent. As outlined below, children in Puerto Rico face a number of social and economic challenges, including poverty, low educational levels, low birth weight, and a high rate of adolescent births.\*\*

## Population

- Children 17 years of age or younger constitute almost one-third of the total population.
- There are more male children than female children, distributed among the four age groups, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

TABLE 1										
Child Population in Puerto Rico By Sex and by Age Group, 2000										
Sex	Age Group								Total	Percent of Total PR Population (3,808,610)
	Under 5 years		5 to 9 years		10 to 14 years		15 to 17 years			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Female	144,119	13.2%	148,909	13.6%	149,816	13.7%	90,678	8.3%	533,522	14.01%
Male	151,287	13.9%	156,253	14.3%	155,984	14.3%	95,055	8.7%	558,579	14.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>295,406</b>	<b>27.05%</b>	<b>305,162</b>	<b>27.94%</b>	<b>305,800</b>	<b>28.00%</b>	<b>185,733</b>	<b>17.01%</b>	<b>1,092,101</b>	<b>28.67%</b>

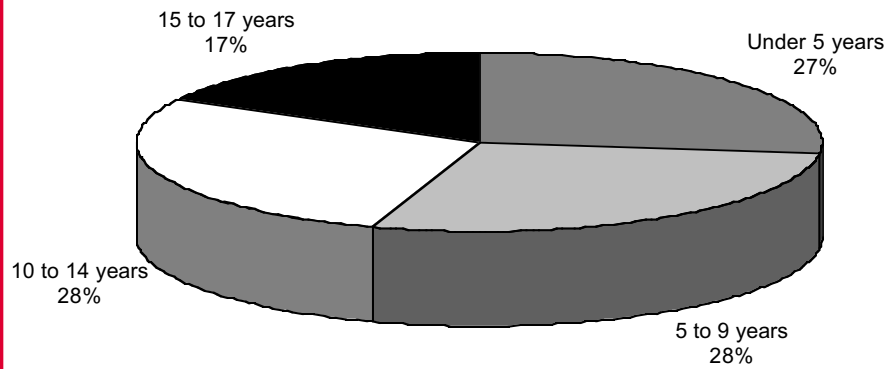
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1)

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\*\* Most of the data presented in this statistical brief are taken from the 2000 Census, except where otherwise noted. The response rate for the 2000 Census was 53% in Puerto Rico, compared to 67% in the mainland United States. Many observers note that, for some indicators, results from the 2000 Census do not reflect data from local agencies or the full reality of children in Puerto Rico.

**FIGURE 1**

**Child Population in Puerto Rico  
By Age Group, 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1)

## Family Structure

- According to the U.S. Census, in 2000, the average family size in Puerto Rico was 3.41 people.
- Most children in Puerto Rico live in married-couple families, as shown in Table 2.
- Almost one-third of children in Puerto Rico (31%) live in one-householder families, which are predominantly headed by females, as illustrated in Figure 2, on page 3.

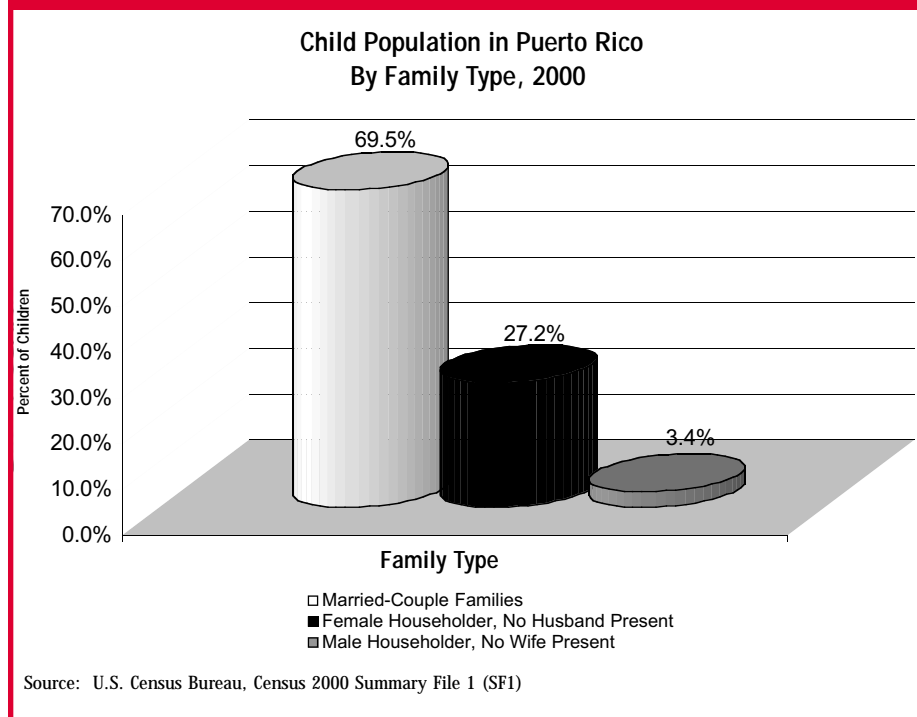
**TABLE 2**

**Child Population in Puerto Rico  
By Family Type and Age Group, 2000**

Family Type	Age Group										Total	
	Under 3 years		3 and 4 years		5 years		6 to 11 years		12 to 17 years			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Married-Couple Families	104,556	11.2%	71,823	7.7%	36,579	3.9%	222,389	23.7%	215,279	23.0%	650,626	69.5%
Female Householder, No Husband Present	26,877	2.9%	25,254	2.7%	13,985	1.5%	92,111	9.8%	96,199	10.3%	254,426	27.2%
Male Householder, No Wife Present	5,197	0.6%	3,357	0.4%	1,653	0.2%	10,248	1.1%	11,212	1.2%	31,667	3.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>136,630</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>100,434</b>	<b>10.7%</b>	<b>52,217</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>324,748</b>	<b>34.7%</b>	<b>322,690</b>	<b>34.4%</b>	<b>936,719</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1)

**FIGURE 2**



## Poverty\*

■ More than half (58.4%) of the child population in Puerto Rico lives below the poverty level.

■ Elementary school-age children (between 6 and 11 years of age) constitute the group with the highest proportion of children in poverty, as Table 3 shows, although this share does not differ greatly from that of other age groups.

■ More than two in five (43.5%) female-headed households and related children under 18 years in Puerto Rico live below the poverty level, as shown in Table 4 and illustrated in Figure 3\*\*.

\* According to Census definitions, poverty thresholds vary by family size and composition. In 1999, the poverty threshold for a family of two adults and two children was \$16,895. Poverty status is not determined for people in military barracks or institutional quarters, or for unrelated individuals under age 15. The 2000 Census, like the 1990 Census, asked questions about income in the previous calendar year. Therefore, income and poverty are reported for 1999.

\*\* Related children include people under age 18 related to the householder (excluding spouses).

**TABLE 3**

Child Population in Puerto Rico By Poverty, by Age Group, 1999			
Age Group	Total Population of Children	Children Below Poverty Level	
		Number	Percent
Under 5 years	291,113	167,510	57.5%
5 years	59,796	35,095	58.7%
6 to 11 years	365,617	217,872	59.6%
12 to 17 years	364,985	211,412	57.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,081,511</b>	<b>631,889</b>	<b>58.4%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3)

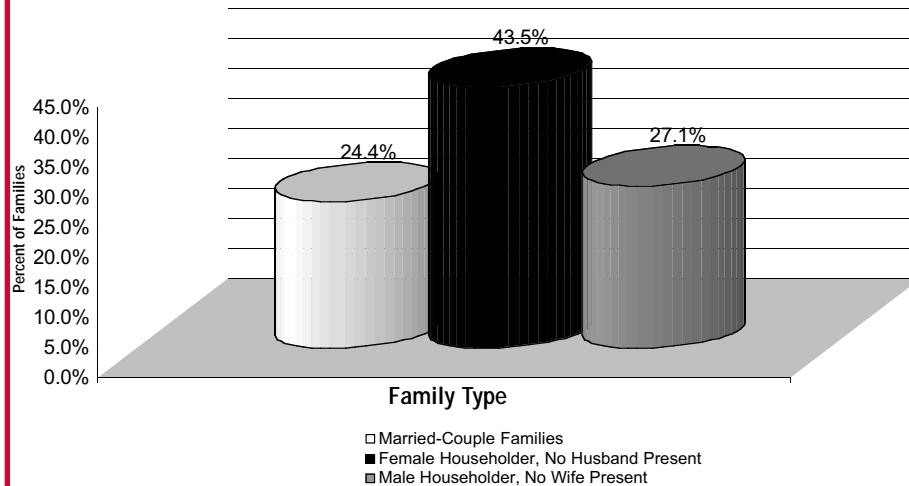
**TABLE 4**

Total Population of Families Below Poverty in Puerto Rico By Family Type, and by Presence of Related Children Under 18 Years, 1999			
Family Type	Total Population of Families	Families Below Poverty With Related Children Under 18 Years	
		Number	Percent
Married-Couple Families	693,509	169,396	24.4%
Female Householder, No Husband Present	262,232	113,942	43.5%
Male Householder, No Wife Present	52,814	14,311	27.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3)

**FIGURE 3**

**Total Population of Families Below Poverty in Puerto Rico  
By Family Type, by Poverty Level, and by Presence of Related Children  
Under 18 Years, 1999**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3)

## Education

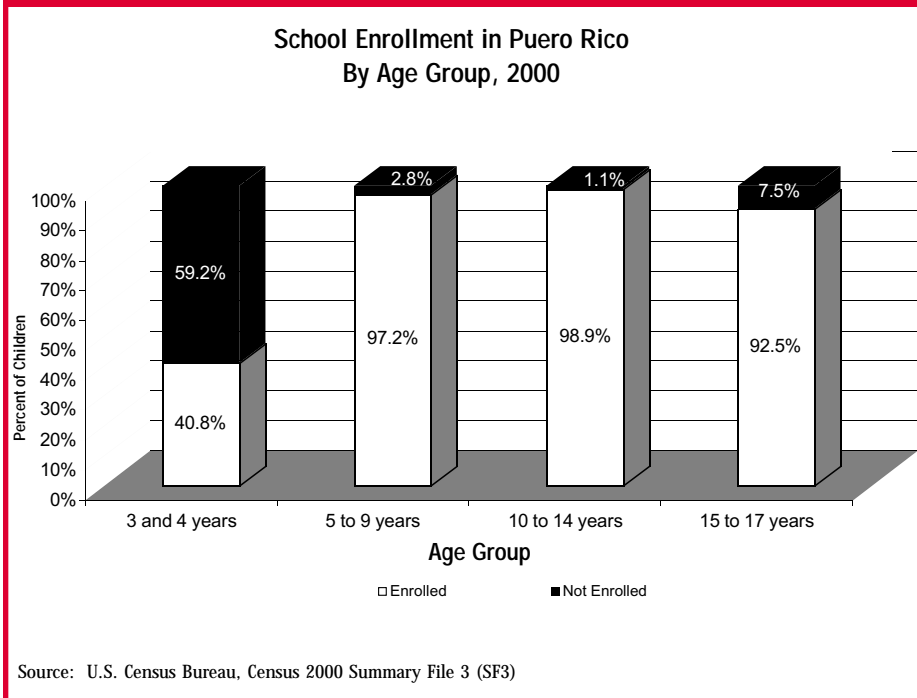
**TABLE 5**

School Enrollment By Age Population 3 years and older, 2000					
Age Group	Enrolled		Not Enrolled		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
3 and 4 years	48,832	40.8%	70,807	59.2%	119,639
5 to 9 years	294,581	97.2%	8,589	2.8%	303,170
10 to 14 years	305,320	98.9%	3,409	1.1%	308,729
15 to 17 years	170,421	92.5%	13,730	7.5%	184,151

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3)

- The majority (59.2%) of preschool-age children (3-4 years old) are not enrolled in school (see Table 5).\*
- The proportion of the child population 15 to 17 years of age enrolled in school (92.5%) is considerably smaller than the proportion of children 10 to 14 years of age enrolled in school (98.9%), as illustrated in Figure 4.

**FIGURE 4**



\* According to Census definitions, people are classified as enrolled in school if they reported attending a regular (including nursery school or preschool, kindergarten, elementary school, and schooling which leads to a high school diploma or a college degree) public or private school or college between February 1, 2000, and the time of enumeration.

**TABLE 6**

**Percent of Low Birth Weight in Puerto Rico and in the United States  
By Race/Ethnicity of Mother, 1990 to 2000**

Race/Ethnicity of Mother	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Low Birth Weight in Puerto Rico	9.1	9.3	9.4	9.6	9.9	10.1	10.4	10.7	10.9	11.4	10.8
U.S. Hispanic Low Birth Weight	5.2	5.3	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.4
U.S. Non-Hispanic White Low Birth Weight	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.9	4.9
U.S. Black Low Birth Weight	11.9	12.1	11.8	11.8	11.7	11.6	11.5	11.4	11.3	11.3	11.2

Source: Department of Health, Puerto Rico, January, 2002; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

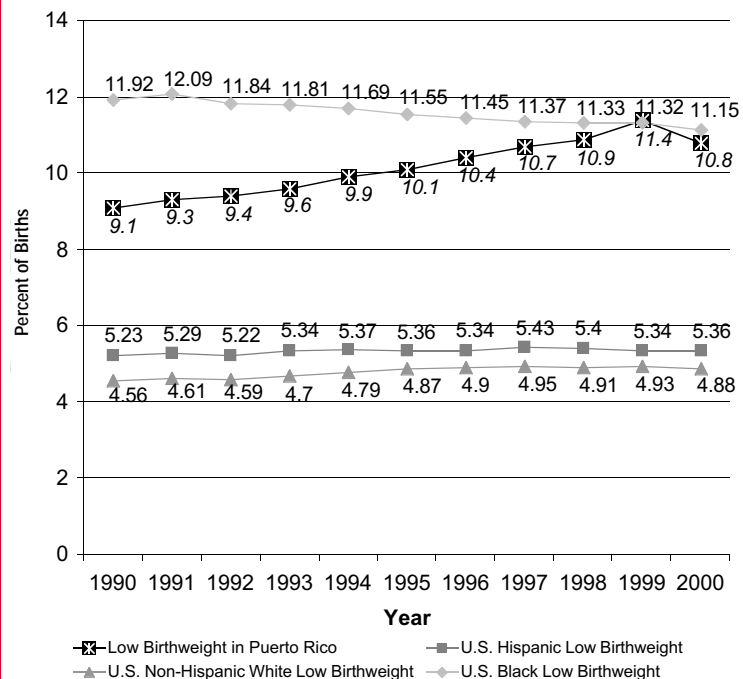
## Health Issues

### Low Birth Weight\*

- Puerto Rico has a high percentage of children born with low birth weight, compared to Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites in the mainland United States, as Table 6 shows.
- When compared to Blacks in the United States, Puerto Rico has a somewhat lower proportion of children born with low birth weight (see Table 6).
- The percent of low birth weight babies born in Puerto Rico increased from 1990 to 1999, but experienced a slight decrease from 1999 to 2000, as shown in Figure 5.

**FIGURE 5**

**Percent of Low Birth Weight Babies in Puerto Rico and in the United States By Race/Ethnicity of Mother, 1990 to 2000**



Source: Department of Health, Puerto Rico, January, 2002; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

\* Low birth weight is less than 2,500 grams or 5 lbs., 8 oz.

# Adolescent Births

■ The highest proportion of teenage births in Puerto Rico occurs among 18- to 19-year-olds, as shown in Figure 6.

■ Between 1997 and 2000, the birth rate for adolescents 15 to 19 years declined, as shown in Table 7.

**TABLE 7**

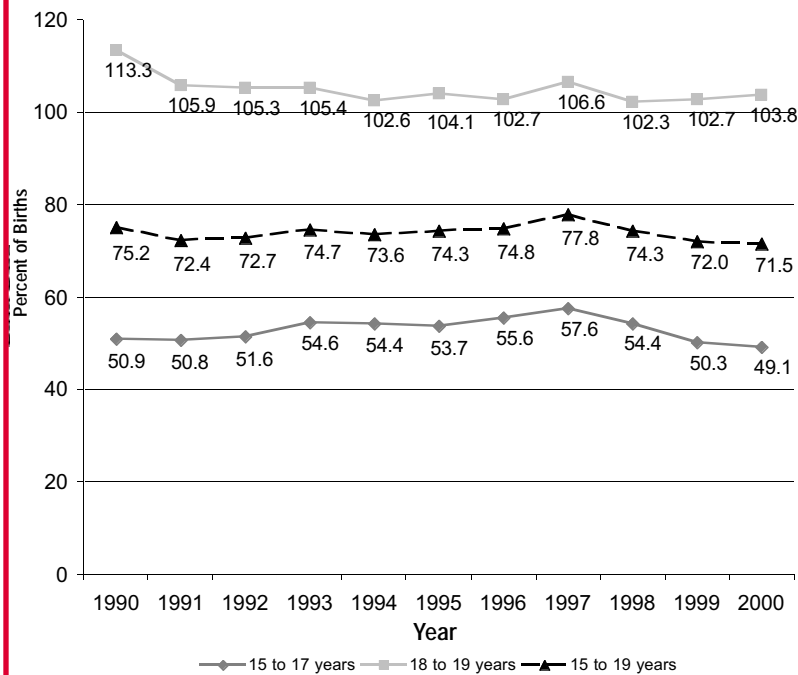
**Birth Rates for Teenagers in Puerto Rico  
By Age Group, 1990 to 2000**

Age Group	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
15 to 17 years	50.9	50.8	51.6	54.6	54.4	53.7	55.6	57.6	54.4	50.3	49.1
18 to 19 years	113.3	105.9	105.3	105.4	102.6	104.1	102.7	106.6	102.3	102.7	103.8
15 to 19 years	75.2	72.4	72.7	74.7	73.6	74.3	74.8	77.8	74.3	72.0	71.5

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002

**FIGURE 6**

**Birth Rates for Teenagers in Puerto Rico  
By Age Group, 1990 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002

## Sources

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### Health Issues

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