

## PUERTO RICAN COMMUNITY IN NORTH TEXAS

### QUICK OBSERVATIONS

Country/region of origin	Puerto Rico
Population (community leaders)	22,000
Population (census 2000)	
Main reasons for migration	Economic hardship
Years in this region	10-20-years
Primary areas of residence	Close to the Dallas/fort Worth airport and scattered
General level of education	Bachelor's degree
Employment	Professional, management, technical, health care, education
Principal religions	Catholic, Protestant
Languages	Spanish, English
Media (newspaper or radio)	None
Community newsletter	None
Cultural organizations	5

Puerto Ricans are the only immigrant group that holds U.S. citizenship. This is also the only international community clearly indicated among the possible selections on the US census. As a result, this is the one instance in which the official population figure of 22,000 reported by the census also coincides with the figure offered by the ethnic community.

The expanding North Texas job market, contrasting vividly with the lethargic economic scene at home is the single reason Puerto Ricans have moved to the region. Nevertheless, they face many of the same challenges as foreign-born immigrants: learning English, having difficulty finding employment, prejudice and lack of social acceptance. Most area residents do not realize that they are US Citizens and discrimination and ignorance are frequently the result. "We are NOT illegal immigrants", says one community and "we deserve respect".

While first generation immigrants head most families with either young or middle-aged parents, a few are older, with third generation grandchildren.

Many Puerto Ricans would name 'salsa' as their greatest contribution to the cultural development of the North Texas region. The salsa/meringue club scene that is currently the rage crosses all ethnic barriers, appealing to Asians, Anglos and African Americans alike. Approximately twelve Puerto Rican style local bands have developed as part of this new phenomenon and are changing the face of the region. Salsa's lasting effect on U.S. music and arts is similar to the vast impact of foreign food across the nation. Puerto Ricans are hard working yet festive and family-oriented people and salsa music successfully manages to transmit this *joi d'vivre* to more traditional North Texans.

They also remind us proudly that many baseball superstars such as Roberto Clemente, Orlando Cepeda, Ivan (Pudge) Rodriguez and Juan Gonzalez were born in Puerto Rico.

Many have migrated from other parts of the country and some are here on work related transfers. They principally hold professional and managerial positions in accounting, education, engineering, medicine, law and informational systems. Several are managers for 500 Inc companies. They are highly educated and evenly distributed across the metroplex, generally living close to their places of employment.

As American citizens, Puerto Ricans do not need visas to re-enter this country and most travel frequently or at least once a year to visit their extended families.

The best organized and unified of all Latino communities in the area, the Puerto Rican Association is a model for other immigrant groups. Always culturally active until about seven years ago, divisions within

the community diminished their visibility until a strong and dynamic leader united and revived them in 1998.

Visionaries whose goals go beyond planning the usual social activities, their solidarity and high level organization is seen in the funds raised for their Scholarship Program, which rewarded ten high school seniors with over \$2,000 in cash and gifts. Their leaders are also actively involved in Pan Latino community development projects and civic affairs

No less than six community members answered our survey, while in many other ethnic communities; well-known spokespersons that are featured regularly in the media did not recognize the significance of their ethnic group.

### **OTHER SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Age Distribution	Primarily middle-aged
Percentage of men and women	50% men, 50% women
Ties to country of origin	Close and distant relatives remain, phone weekly, send money back
Frequency of travel to country of origin	Once a year
Estimate of undocumented	None (they are citizens)

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### **OUTREACH STRATEGIES**

Build Relationships  
ESL classes  
Find Ministry needs  
Become involved with issues important to Puerto Ricans, i.e.  
Home Bible studies  
Plan to celebrate Puerto Rican holidays together with the Puerto Rican Community in your area  
Invite Puerto Rican leaders to your church to speak about concerns and culture  
Workplace ministries  
Business groups

### **HOW DO YOU OPEN THE DOOR TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FAITH?**

Share your everyday relationship with God...answered prayers, Scriptures that comfort  
Ask about how needs are met through their faith...loneliness, courage, direction  
Offer to pray for their needs  
Give books/videos that tell a faith story  
Discover their interests and find Christians in that field to share their story  
Look for Bible stories or principles that teach a value they respect.