PART ONE: COMPARING PUERTO RICANS
This section uses data from the 2010 American Community Survey one-year estimates to examine the socioeconomic characteristics of the 8 largest Puerto Rican Metro Areas outside Puerto Rico. The United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines a “Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)” as one or more counties that have an urban core of at least 50,000 people. In addition to raw population numbers, this definition takes into consideration the social and economic interconnectedness of the geographical region as a whole. This analysis was conducted at the MSA level because Puerto Ricans across the US have been moving out of urban centers and dispersing throughout metropolitan regions. Although the trend of moving to suburbs has been historically associated with upward mobility, the reality is that for minorities moving to the suburbs—including Puerto Ricans—this has not been the case. Instead, they are generally re-concentrating in economically declining suburbs, not moving up.

NOTE: the size of the Puerto Rican population of each metro area is proportionally indicated by the dot marking its location.
According to 2010 American Community Survey one-year estimates, there were a total of 3.6 million Puerto Ricans on the Island of Puerto Rico and 4.7 Puerto Ricans in the US, totaling 8.3 million. Fewer (43%) live in Puerto Rico. Between 2000 and 2010, the US Puerto Rican population gained about a hundred thousand, while the Puerto Rican population in the Island lost about a hundred thousand. Long-standing and complex political, economic, social, and cultural changes experienced by Puerto Ricans have led to waves of migration with a multiplicity of destinations that continue to this date. Today, it is difficult to find a Puerto Rican that has not been touched by migration, either directly or indirectly. The Puerto Rican diaspora has been over 100 years in the making.
Puerto Ricans are the second-largest population of Latino origin living in the US, accounting for 9.2% of the U.S. Latino population in 2010. The following statistical profile compares Puerto Ricans living in Puerto Rico, to those living in the US, and to Latinos living in the US. Puerto Ricans living in the US have levels of education in between the other two groups. For example, about 31% of Puerto Ricans living stateside—compared to 25% of Puerto Ricans living in Puerto Rico and about 40% of all U.S. Latinos—have obtained less than a high school diploma or equivalency certificate. 81% of Puerto Ricans living in Puerto Rico speak English proficiently, while 18% of Puerto Ricans living in the US reported speaking English “less than very well,” compared to 35% of all Latinos.

### Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico
- **Population**: 3,560,838
- **Receiving an Advanced Degree**: 16%
- **People in Poverty**: 45%
- **Housing Tenure**:
  - Owners: 71%
  - Renters: 29%

### Puerto Ricans on Mainland USA
- **Population**: 4,691,890
- **Receiving an Advanced Degree**: 11%
- **People in Poverty**: 27%
- **Housing Tenure**:
  - Owners: 38%
  - Renters: 62%

### All Latinos on Mainland USA
- **Population**: 50,740,089
- **Receiving an Advanced Degree**: 9%
- **People in Poverty**: 25%
- **Housing Tenure**:
  - Owners: 47%
  - Renters: 53%
The Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI MSA, with 196,113 Puerto Ricans, ranked fifth in population after the New York, Orlando, Philadelphia and Miami MSAs. The Puerto Rican population in the New York MSA was 6.1 times larger than the Chicago MSA. Nonetheless, the City of Chicago itself —not counting its surrounding suburbs—ranked as the mainland US’s third most-populous Puerto Rican city (102,703) after New York City (723,621) and Philadelphia (121,643). In the New York, Philadelphia, Orlando and Tampa MSAs, Puerto Ricans were the largest Latino origin subgroup. For example, while there were 577,823 Mexicans and 882,902 Dominicans in the New York metro, Puerto Ricans—with a population of 1,204,103—made about 28% of the total Latino population. In the Philadelphia, Orlando and Tampa MSAs, Puerto Ricans made up about 50%, 50%, and 31% of the Latino population.
For decades, the Northeast and the Midwest of the US—the more traditional regions for Puerto Rican migration—have been experiencing relatively slow growth in Puerto Rican population, while newer sites in the South, like Florida, have been gaining Puerto Ricans at a rapid rate. This is due, primarily, to two factors: the exodus of young professionals from the mainland joining the labor force, and seniors from the Northeast and Midwest seeking a place to retire. Despite pronounced population growth in Florida, the majority of Puerto Ricans are still concentrated in the Northeast, where 50% of all Puerto Ricans nationwide live.

Given that recent college graduates from Puerto Rico are moving to Florida, it is not surprising that the ACS 2010 showed that Puerto Ricans living in the Miami and Orlando MSAs had higher rates of individuals with bachelor’s degrees than any other MSA (24 and 18%, respectively). The Chicago MSA ranked third among those MSAs with high rates of Puerto Rican college graduation, with 15% receiving 4-year degrees.
Puerto Ricans not finishing high school

Puerto Ricans graduating with four-year college degrees

Heads of Puerto Rican families with children under 18

Single fathers
Single mothers
Married couples

Puerto Rican health insurance*

Private health insurance
Public health insurance
No health insurance

Puerto Ricans in the Chicago MSA also had the fourth highest median household income ($35,638) and the second lowest rate of poverty (19%) after Miami (17%). Puerto Ricans based in Florida MSAs (Miami, Orlando, and Tampa) had higher homeownership rates than any other MSA. Of the MSAs outside of Florida, Chicago and Philadelphia stood out as having about 50% of the Puerto Rican population being homeowners. The difference in homeownership rates are a reflection of the housing markets in these regions, for example about 45% of the total population of Chicago were homeowners in comparison with Miami, where, about 70% were homeowners. The Boston MSA had the highest rate...
of Puerto Rican poverty, as well as the lowest incomes and homeownership rates. In addition, the Boston MSA had the second largest percentage of single female households (59%), after Hartford (60%), which also had the lowest rates of college graduates (8%).

When looking across all these socioeconomic characteristics (income, poverty levels, percent of population with bachelor’s degrees, etc.) in traditional to less traditional regions of Puerto Rican migration, Puerto Ricans in the Chicago MSA are doing very well in comparison to other MSAs.

* Note: it is possible for health insurance percentages to add up to more than 100% because some people have more than one form of insurance.
As of 2010, the state of Illinois had 182,989 Puerto Ricans, ranking 9th of 52 States. About 93% of these Puerto Ricans (170,353) were living in Chicagoland, which includes the city and a 7-county metropolitan area (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties). Of the 93%, 60% were living in the city of Chicago and 40% were living in the suburbs.

Although it is beyond the scope of this report to address the migration of Puerto Ricans to the suburbs, it is important to note that the presence of Puerto Ricans in the suburbs responds to key demographic and economic issues. The Puerto Rican diaspora led to the migration of working class Puerto Ricans to cities like New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and some went directly to suburbs where established industrial companies offered Puerto Ricans jobs. In Illinois, four suburbs near Chicago attracted early migrant families: Aurora, Waukegan, Elgin, and Joliet. Migrations in later decades seemed to go in both directions depending on job opportunities or family concerns.

The figure to the right shows the population for Puerto Ricans from 1960 to 2010, divided as a percentage of the total population. In comparison to other cities where Puerto Ricans are concentrated in the Chicago Metro Area, the suburban cities of Aurora, Waukegan, Elgin and Joliet had the largest share of Puerto Ricans as a percentage of their total population. As the figure shows, Puerto Ricans made up 8%, 2.5% and 2% of the entire population of Waukegan, Aurora, and Elgin respectively in the year 1980. In comparison, the Puerto Rican population in the city of Chicago peaked in 1990 both in terms of gross numbers (119,866) and concentration (4.3% of a total population of 2,783,726), while the city of Joliet has continued to concentrate, growing its Puerto Rican population almost 75% from 2000 to 2010.
According to our focus group discussions, one of the major challenges for the Puerto Rican community in most of these enclaves is the dwindling numbers of Puerto Ricans. Local residents are older, and young people are leaving the area in search of new opportunities. In addition, focus group participants noted that the third generation has assimilated to the extent that many may no longer identify as Puerto Rican. Some mentioned that there is a lot of intermarriage between Puerto Ricans and whites or Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. Focus group members were concerned that, with the loss of young people, the ability to maintain Puerto Rican institutions such as Waukegan’s Puerto Rican Society (founded in 1957) and the Aurora Puerto Rican Cultural Council (founded in 1967) would become increasingly difficult.

Although most focus group participants are generally optimistic about upward mobility, our research showed that Puerto Ricans in the suburbs continue to lag behind whites and Mexicans in both median household incomes and homeownership rates. For example, in Waukegan in 2010, 65% of whites owned homes, compared with 56% of Mexicans and only 42% of Puerto Ricans. Income trends for the year 2000\(^1\) look very similar with about $45,000 for whites, $43,000 for Mexicans, and $36,000 for Puerto Ricans. Nonetheless, Puerto Ricans have been able to achieve higher educational levels than Mexicans. In Waukegan, for example, 14% have a college or graduate degree compared to 9% of Mexicans, which may give Puerto Ricans some advantage when competing for professional jobs\(^1\). In fact, in these suburbs many Puerto Ricans are in middle management positions. They work as school principals, government employees, public officials, business owners, and so forth. Participants in our focus group acknowledge that many of them are hired because of their bilingual skills that allow them to serve the incoming Mexican population.

It is important to note that Puerto Ricans living in the suburbs tend to be wealthier than their city counterparts. For example, the median income in the Chicago MSA in 2010 was $45,638 in comparison to $39,290 for the city. Puerto Ricans who live in the suburbs also tend to be more educated and have higher rates of homeownership, participation in private healthcare, and lower poverty rates. However, the meanings of these numbers may be more complex than we expect. The four suburbs that we have paid special attention to—Waukegan, Joliet, Elgin, and Aurora—are old industrial cities that attracted working-class Puerto Ricans. These populations are roughly comparable to Puerto Rican Chicago, but scattered throughout the region are other Puerto Ricans whose incomes may be raising the MSA aggregate. There are numerous questions here that could use more research.

\(^1\) 2000 data are used because—as of the publication of this report—2010 data were not yet available for small geographies.
Relative to the total City of Chicago population, as one might expect from any other minority group, Puerto Ricans have lower incomes, educational attainment, homeownership rates, labor participation rates and lower levels of individuals with income through earning—while, at the same time, higher rates of poverty for adults, single-female householders and households receiving food stamps. However, there is more nuance to be discovered when we start to compare Puerto Ricans with other races and ethnic origins. In order to understand the
The current socio-economic condition of Puerto Ricans this section utilizes several comparison groups: Mexicans, African Americans and whites.

The 2010 ACS one-year estimates showed that Puerto Ricans had a lower rate of individuals with income through earning (78%) than Mexicans (92%), but higher than African Americans (68%). However, Puerto Rican median household income ($39,290) was similar to Mexican income ($39,988) but substantially higher than African American median household income ($29,371). Nonetheless, Puerto Rican households still made $19,460 less than the median white household. Because Puerto Ricans are American citizens, and historically the island of Puerto Rico has had high rates of individuals receiving public assistance, the participation rates of mainland US Puerto Ricans in welfare benefits, although lower, tend to look more similar to those of African Americans—for example, in Chicago, 6.7% of Puerto Ricans receive public cash assistance and 26.8% of Puerto Ricans receive some sort of food stamp assistance. These percent-
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA (OE EQUIVALENCY)
SOME COLLEGE OR ASSOCIATE’S DEGREE
BACHELOR’S DEGREE
GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE

LABOR FORCE STRUCTURE
NOT IN THE LABOR FORCE  IN THE LABOR FORCE

HOUSING TENURE
renters owners

snapshot:
PUERTO RICANS IN CHICAGO COMPARED WITH OTHER RACES AND ORIGINS

ages are more than twice the average share. Since many Mexicans are recent immigrants, they tend to have lower levels of public assistance participation and lower rates of educational attainment. One could partially explain higher educational attainment among Puerto Ricans compared with Mexicans through the historical relationship between the US and Puerto Rico—at the time of migration they received more bilingual education and, as US citizens, can also access federal student
aid. Nonetheless, fewer Puerto Ricans achieve high levels of educational attainment than African Americans; 13% of Puerto Ricans age 25 and older held an advanced degree in 2010 (e.g., bachelor’s, master’s, Ph.D., M.D. or J.D.). The African American average is 18%.

Sixty years after the Puerto Rican great migration, as a group, whether as a demographic of minorities in Chicago or as a sub-group of Chicago Latinos, this study shows that Puerto Ricans have not fared as well as the general population in indicators of social status and wellbeing. This analysis has also shown there are important social differences between Puerto Ricans and other Latinos—these differences raise questions about social policy and justice in relation to the persistence of poverty and its allied consequences among all other racial and ethnic groups.