



Puerto Rico
Public Health Trust

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UNVEILING COLORISM, DISPARITIES AND HEALTH INEQUITIES: SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH IN LOÍZA (P.R.)

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Figure 1. Community Engagement Division Staff in Community Activity at Parcelas Suárez (Loíza, P.R.).

LOÍZA

Loíza is a town located on the northeast coast of Puerto Rico, where its coasts and the Grande de Loíza River stand out. Currently, Loíza has 23,412 residents, of which 24.42% are senior citizens and 53% of the population is female (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

It is known as the capital of tradition. Culturally its standout for its typical music, *la Bomba y la Plena*.

However, the biggest challenges they face are racial prejudice, lack of accessibility to health services, food security and education.

Puerto Rico is an archipelago, which is considered the main island among other smaller islands such as Vieques, Culebra and others (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).



According to the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics (2020), the archipelago had a population of 3.2 million inhabitants. However, this population number has decreased over the years due to socioeconomic and political factors such as:

- 6% of unemployment among Puerto Ricans (Institute of Statistics of Puerto Rico, 2022)
- The Great Recession, which had global repercussions but severely hindered economic activity in Puerto Rico due to its unincorporated status within the United States (AMA J Ethics, 2022)
- the fiscal crisis that the archipelago has been facing since 2014, leading to the imposition of a federal fiscal control board tasked with addressing debts, making constitutional reforms, and privatizing certain public corporations (AMA J Ethics, 2022)
- Our geographical location in the Caribbean, exposing us to devastating hurricanes, as was María, Category 5 hurricane in 2017 (AMA J Ethics, 2022)

These factors contribute to growing inequalities and social disparities in health. In the context of Loíza (P.R.), colorism has a great correlation with disparities in health, bad or low living conditions, poverty. These factors contribute to inequality in access to health care, the prevalence of chronic diseases, the lack of economic resources and the lack of adequate infrastructure further aggravate these problems in Loíza.

COLORISM DISPARITIES AND INEQUITIES THAT LOICEÑOS FACE

In Puerto Rico, there is a phenomenon where people with darker skin tones often face health and social disadvantages compared to those with lighter skin tones (Godreau I. & Vargas-Ramos C., 2009). Loíza has a predominantly Afro-descendant population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) and some disparities and inequities in the social determinants of health that Loiceños face are :

- **Poverty: 44%**
- **Homes in vulnerable conditions: 65%**
- **Unemployment: 38%**

**These percentages correspond to the sample of the study "Community Housing Study in Loíza", Taller Salud (2022).*

Other accessibility factors due to its geographical location (Lanzó Cortijo J., s.f.) are:

- **Lack of medical personnel**
- **Lack of public transport infrastructure**
- **Lack of supermarkets, hospitals, shopping malls, pharmacies**

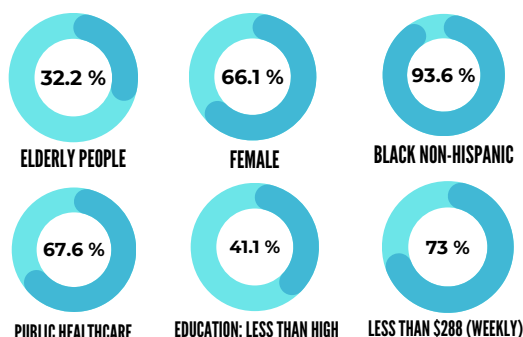


Figure 2. Community Engagement Division Staff in Community Activity at Puente Herrera (Loíza, P.R.).

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA

RadX-Up initiative with Yale University **we recruited 216** Loíza residents for a longitudinal study. The purpose was not only to increase COVID-19 testing capacity, but that it also collected information on social determinants of health through questionnaires and provided weekly financial incentives. Participants were residents of Loíza and testing sites were **elementary schools, day centers for the elderly, and community centers.**

WHAT DOES THE SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA TELL US?



This data reveals that a significant proportion of the populace comprises individuals aged 65 years or older, predominantly consisting of females. The majority of this demographic self-identifies as black, and their healthcare coverage is primarily provided by the government. Furthermore, a substantial portion holds educational qualifications below a high school diploma, with over 70% reporting a weekly income of less than \$288.

SOME INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES IN LOÍZA BY THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIVISION (PRPHT) TEAM HAVE BEEN :

- Co-creation of the third edition of "Achú" elementary school students from Loíza; an activity book about COVID-19 for children
- Carrying out a community census of Parcelas Suárez with residents and community leaders
- Distribution of 5,456 COVID-19 home tests
- 16 Distribution of newsletters related to chronic health conditions, COVID-19 and dissemination of data from the community census
- Network of leaders from different communities in Loíza
- Collaboration with Taller Salud in packing more than 200 hot meals in the communities of Loíza after Hurricane Fiona
- Collaboration with Taller Salud in cleaning homes after Hurricane Fiona
- Recruitment and training of 6 community leaders as Community Health Ambassadors (AAFAF Project)
- Hiring of 4 community health promoters (CDC and Medtronic Projects)

QR CODE: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DATA FROM THE COMMUNITY CENSUS OF PARCELAS SUÁREZ:



SHORT DOCUMENTARY OF THE RADX-UP PROJECT:



LITERATURE CITED:

