



Education Research Brief

Research Brief

Issued February 2013
Centro RB2013-01

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As of 2010, Puerto Ricans remained the second-largest national subgroup among all Latinos in the U.S., at 9.2 percent. In 2011 Puerto Ricans were the largest national subgroup among all Latinos in New York State, at 31.6 percent, and comprised 30.8 percent of the total Latino population of New York City (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). However, Puerto Ricans only made up 26 percent of Latino youth (ages 16 through 24) in New York City with Dominican youth having eclipsed them, at 29 percent (Treschan, 2010).

Whatever their evolving status in the demographics of New York City, New York State and the nation, Puerto Ricans continue to face numerous social and economic barriers along with poor academic achievement, high dropout rates and low college enrollment and graduation rates.

For the Puerto Rican population in the United States, the statistics reflect large disparities in educational attainment between this population and the white population and other Hispanic subgroups. For educational attainment beyond the high school level, this disparity is even more pronounced for Puerto Rican males and for Puerto Ricans located in New York City. Though educational attainment rates have steadily increased over the past decade, these disparities have remained constant.

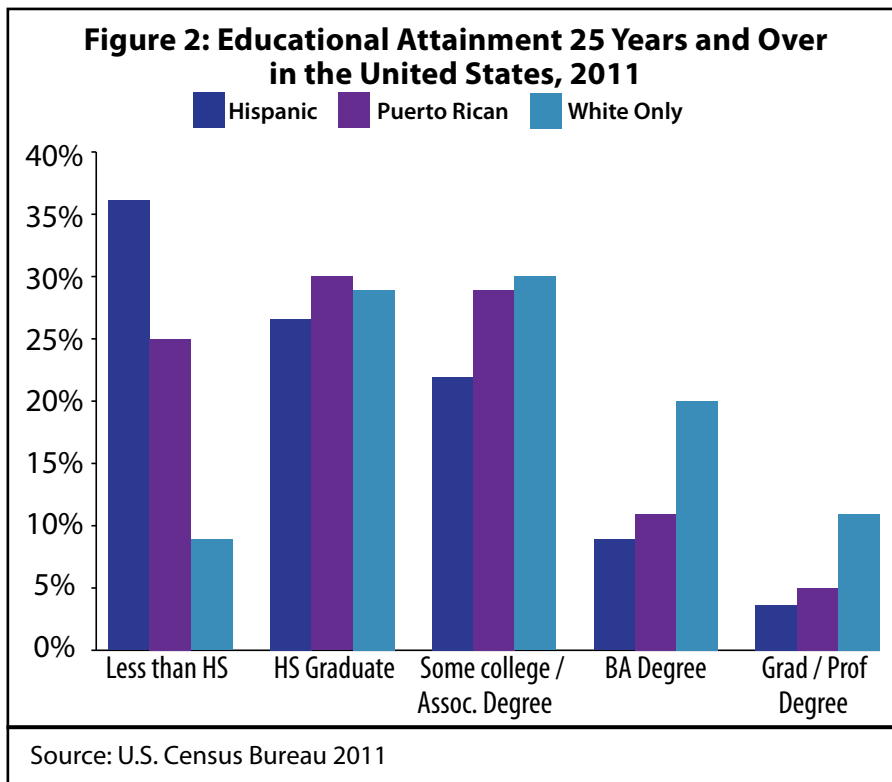
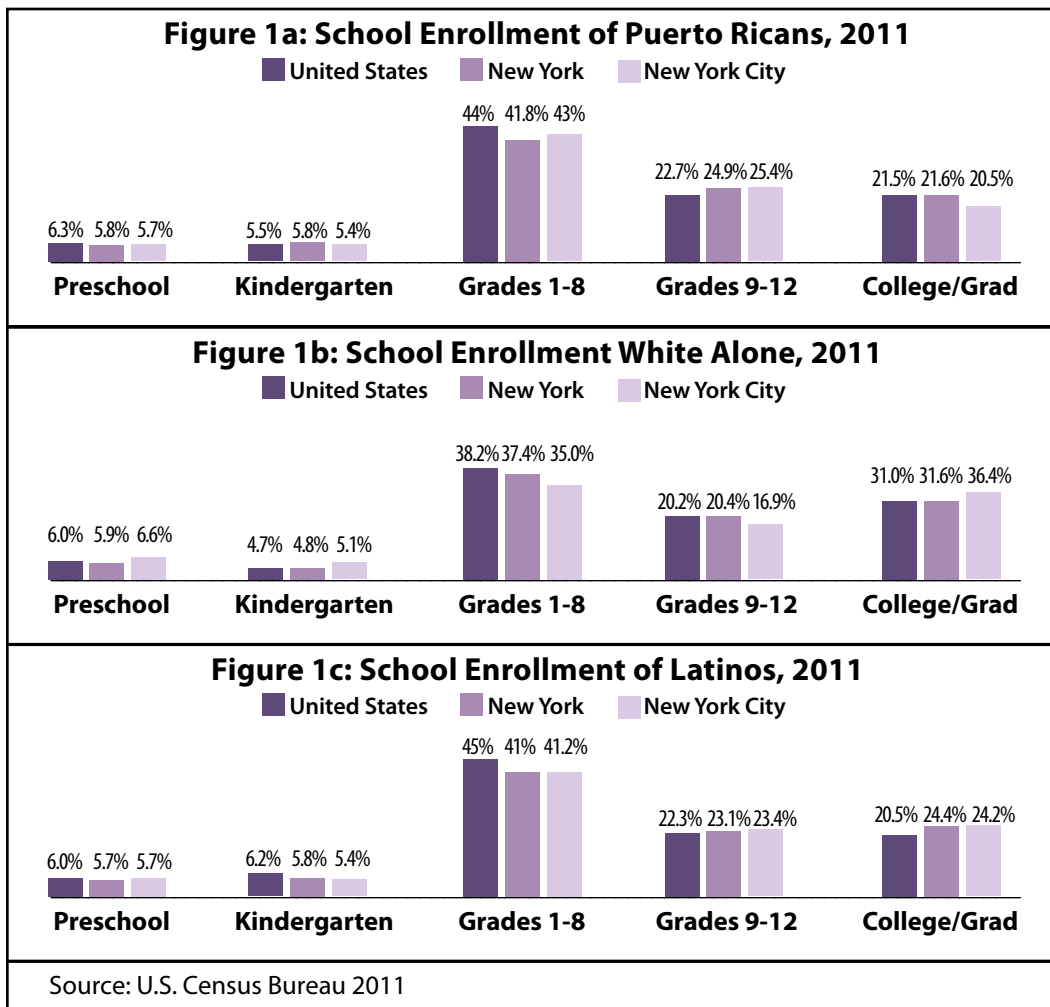
In two separate studies that examine Latino school, work and income trends in New York City, researchers from the Center for Puerto Rican Studies and the Community Service Society found that school enrollment disparities between Puerto Ricans and student of other races and ethnicities are even more pronounced for New York City than for the nation as a whole (Reyes and Melendez, 2012; Treschan 2010). In New York City, Latinos make up the largest share of the population under age 25, and Puerto Ricans represent 26 percent of that group. Data from both of these reports, derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, indicate that Puerto Rican youth are the most disadvantaged of all comparable groups in terms of access to services, educational attainment and rates of poverty, with 33.4 percent of their households having incomes under the Federal Poverty Level (Treschan, 2010).

Disparities in School Enrollment, Population 3-Years-and-Over Enrolled in School

We examined the most recent school enrollment and attainment data from the U.S. Census Bureau, for the year 2011 for the U.S., New York City and New York State. We find that the greatest disparity in school enrollment is the college and graduate school levels (Refer to figures 1a, 1b and 1c).

The enrollment disparity in college or graduate school between Puerto Ricans and Latinos as compared to whites is about 10 percentage points lower in the U.S and New York State, but the disparity is almost 16 points lower in New York City, with 20.5 percent for Puerto Ricans and 36.4 percent for whites.

Latinos in New York City, 24.2 percent, and New York State, 24.4%, have a higher college or graduate school enrollment than Latinos in the rest of the U.S., 20.5%. This is not true of Puerto Ricans, whose enrollment is approximately equal to that of Puerto Ricans nationally.



Disparities in Educational Attainment (25<)

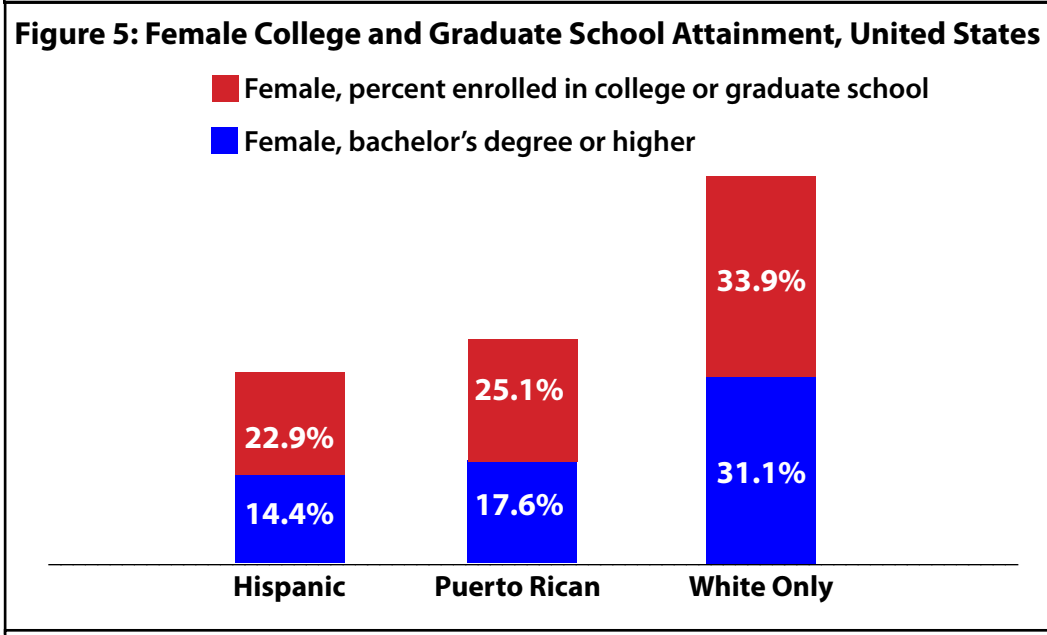
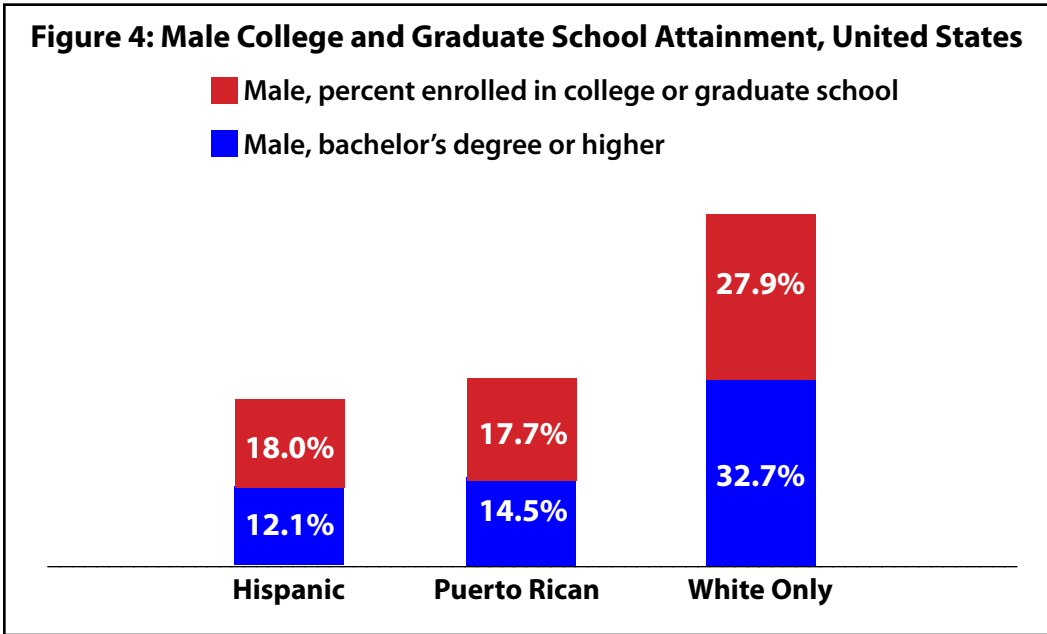
Nationwide, Puerto Ricans show substantial educational attainment disparities (see Figure 2). While 19.9 percent of whites completed a bachelor’s degree and 12 percent of graduate or professional degrees, only 10.7 percent of Puerto Ricans completed a bachelor’s degree and 5.4 percent a graduate or professional degree. Latinos show a similar disparity, with 9.1 percent of the population having attained a bachelor’s degree and 4.1 percent a graduate or professional degree.

Additionally, Puerto Ricans in New York City have the greatest disparity in college attainment when compared to whites. While 25.2 percent of whites completed a bachelor’s degree and 20.23 percent a graduate or professional degree, only 8.1 percent of Puerto Ricans completed a bachelor’s degree and 4.1 percent a graduate or professional degree (See

Table 1). Latinos in New York City show a similar disparity with 10.2 percent of the population with a bachelor’s degree and 4.9 percent with a graduate or professional degree. While these disparities are great, they are less pronounced than the rates for the nation.

	White		Puerto Rican		Latino	
	B.A.	Grad.	B.A.	Grad.	B.A.	Grad.
U.S.	19.9%	12%	10.7%	5.4%	9.1%	4.1%
NY State	20.1%	16.5%	8.7%	5.2%	10.4%	5.4%
NY City	25.2%	20.2%	8.1%	4.4%	10.2%	4.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2011



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2011

Gender Disparities

In addition to educational attainment disparities among white, Hispanic and Puerto Rican populations in the United States, disparities in educational attainment at the college and graduate level are more pronounced for Puerto Rican men than for Puerto Rican women. Referring to Figures 4 and 5, the percentage of white men that have completed or are enrolled in college or graduate school (60.6%) is almost double that of Puerto Rican men that have similar attainment (32.3%). This disparity is not as great for women, where 65 percent of white women have completed or are enrolled in college or graduate school, while only 43 percent of Puerto Rican women have similar attainment. Further, the report by the Community Service Society states that Puerto Rican males in particular “emerge as the most disadvantaged youth group in New York City, with rates of school enrollment, educational attainment, and employment lower than any other comparable group, including young black males.” In 2010, approximately 17 percent of Puerto Rican men between the ages of 16 and 24 were not in school, employed or looking for work, compared with 9 percent of Dominicans and 8 percent of Mexicans (Treschan, 2010).

Conclusions

One of the main consequences of a broken educational pipeline and significant educational disparities is that Puerto Ricans are concentrated in low-wage jobs and experience higher rates of unemployment and poverty than other Latino subgroups. There are several factors that might contribute to the low rates of educational attainment among the Puerto Rican population. These include: lack of human and financial capital, few family resources, less access to early education and residential segregation. These conditions expose youth to structural disadvantage resulting in high rates of crime and a higher likelihood of dropping out of high school. In New York City specifically, many families are not likely to go outside of the public school system, which typically receives less funding in poorer areas than those in neighborhoods with lower rates of poverty. Additionally, many families have little knowledge about academically selective high schools, which require students to test into (Kasinitz et al., 2009).

In creating policies to lessen this disparity, there are some pathways programs with a proven record of servicing the needs of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos, especially in the 18 to 24 age cohort. These programs can be strengthened, replicated, and their best practices disseminated. However, other programs that promote higher education must be strengthened that focus explicitly on serving the Puerto Rican and Hispanic communities.

References

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The Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro De Estudios Puertorriqueños) at Hunter College, City University of New York, is the only university-based research institute in the United States solely devoted to the interdisciplinary study of the Puerto Rican experience in diaspora. It is the oldest and largest Latino research and archival institution in the Northeast, and boasts the world's only repository of archival and library materials dedicated exclusively to the Puerto Rican migration. Since its inception in 1973, Centro also has developed notable ties to academic, advocacy, and community-based constituencies, enabling it to document and respond to critical cultural and social conditions within the stateside community. This report is part of a series designed to provide up-to-date information on demographic changes in our communities.