

2030 Agenda
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Local Voluntary Report for Puerto Rico 2023

Produced by



**FUNDACIÓN COMUNITARIA
DE PUERTO RICO**

Supported
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Foundation**



I'm pleased to present a new look at today's Puerto Rico, framed in a comprehensive agenda that allows us to place ourselves on a global platform, through local action. The United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) allows us to reflect on the existing gaps in our society and give us the opportunity to envision the Puerto Rico we want.

We have collected and analyzed data for more than a year, as well as shared and received input from people from different sectors of our society to complete this report. I'm extremely alarmed by the poverty rates, the food insecurity experienced by a portion of the population, the prevalence of racial gaps in the homeless, the drop in our student population, the environmental impact of climate change that is increasingly affecting the most vulnerable, and the inaction of governments, even when there are laws and regulations that are not enforced.

Meanwhile, it fills me with hope to know and recognize what the community and nonprofit sector is doing to reduce the inequality gaps that exist in our communities. Some organizations work diligently to address the urgency of the problem and others, with a long-term view, focus on the root of the problem and its potential solution. Both approaches are valid and are part of what we can achieve from the community base.

Today we come together in a conversation about our island and its future; that island that we wish to strengthen and leave as a legacy to future generations. My sincere thanks to those who participated in the discussion to create this document and to those who will use this report to ENSURE equity and inclusion for all PEOPLE; to RESCUE our social RIGHTS; STRENGTHEN environmental resilience and sustainability; PROMOTE PROSPERITY to achieve sustained and inclusive economic development; and CLAIM PEACE through a government capable of guaranteeing security, equity, and justice.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nelson I. Colón Tarrats". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Nelson I. Colón Tarrats, EdD
President and Chief Executive Officer, PRCF

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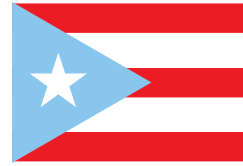
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Region: Caribbean Sea
Historical names: Borikén, Borinquén
Language: Spanish (primary) and English
Political Status: Unincorporated Territory of the United States, Organized government with local constitution (1952), U.S. Citizenship (1917)

Territorial extension:

9,104 km²

■ Land (8,959 km²) ■ Water (145 km²) ■ Coasts (501 km)

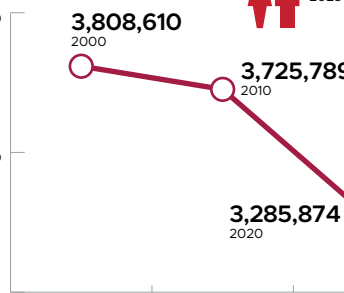
Population (2023):

3,057,311

Population growth rate
-1.29%
 2023

Net migration rate 2023
-10.76 For every 1,000 inhabitants
 Migrants

4,000,000
3,500,000
3,000,000



Birthrate 2023
7.84 For every 1,000 inhabitants

Mortality rate 2023
10.0 For every 1,000 inhabitants

Maternal mortality ratio 2020

34 Deaths For every 100,000 live births

Infant mortality rate 2023

5.92 Deaths For every 100,000 live births

Boys

6.5 Deaths For every 100,000 live births

Girls

5.31 Deaths For every 100,000 live births

Life expectancy at birth 2023

81.98 years Both genders

78.69 years Men **85.27** years Women

Fertility rate 2023

1.25 children For each woman

Urban population 2023

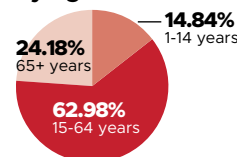


Median age 2020

43.6 years

41.6 years Men **45.3** years Women

Population distribution by age



Sex ratio

0.89 for every

At birth **1.06** for every

0-14 years **1.04** for every

15-64 years **0.92** for every

65+ years **0.75** for every

Labor participation rate August 2023

43.7% Total

51.2% Men **37.2%** Women

Unemployment rate 2022

6.1% Total

6.5% Men **5.6%** Women

Poverty rate August 2023

41.7% People **38.8%** Families

57.2% Under 18 years old

Infographic: José Hudo Castañer

Sources:

Puerto Rico, CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/puerto-rico/>

Employment and Unemployment in Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources): https://estadisticas.pr/files/inventario/empleo_y_desempleo/2023-09-19/DTRH-EmpleoDesempleo-2023-08.zip

"The level of poverty increases in Puerto Rico" (El Vocero de Puerto Rico, September 29, 2023)

https://www.elvocero.com/economia/aumenta-el-nivel-de-pobreza-en-puerto-rico/articulo_8ebe605a-57ba-11ee-aa0a-73eda9c0155c.html

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

Given the persistence of poverty, including extreme poverty, and the widespread impacts of climate change, the global community took on the task of reviewing the prevailing paradigms on economic development. Traditional development indicators such as gross national product or consumption indices did not shed light on progress in combating inequalities. Globally, the notion was advancing that an economic development model capable of responding to the challenges of climate change and effectively combating inequalities was necessary to achieve peace. After multiple processes of experimentation and evaluation of development models, on October 25, 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) adopts Resolution 70/1, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is an ambitious plan, which reaffirms the commitment to the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions and affirms the promise that no one will be left behind.

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, adopted by the 193 member countries, together with agents from civil society and the private sector, is a complex proposal of 17 goals and 169 empirical goals that integrate the goals of economic development, environmental protection, and equity for inclusion. The 2030 Agenda integrates several core concepts:

- 1. It places equality and dignity of the people at the center of development.**
- 2. Affirms the integrated nature of the goals.**

3. Combines the critical dimensions for humanity: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership.

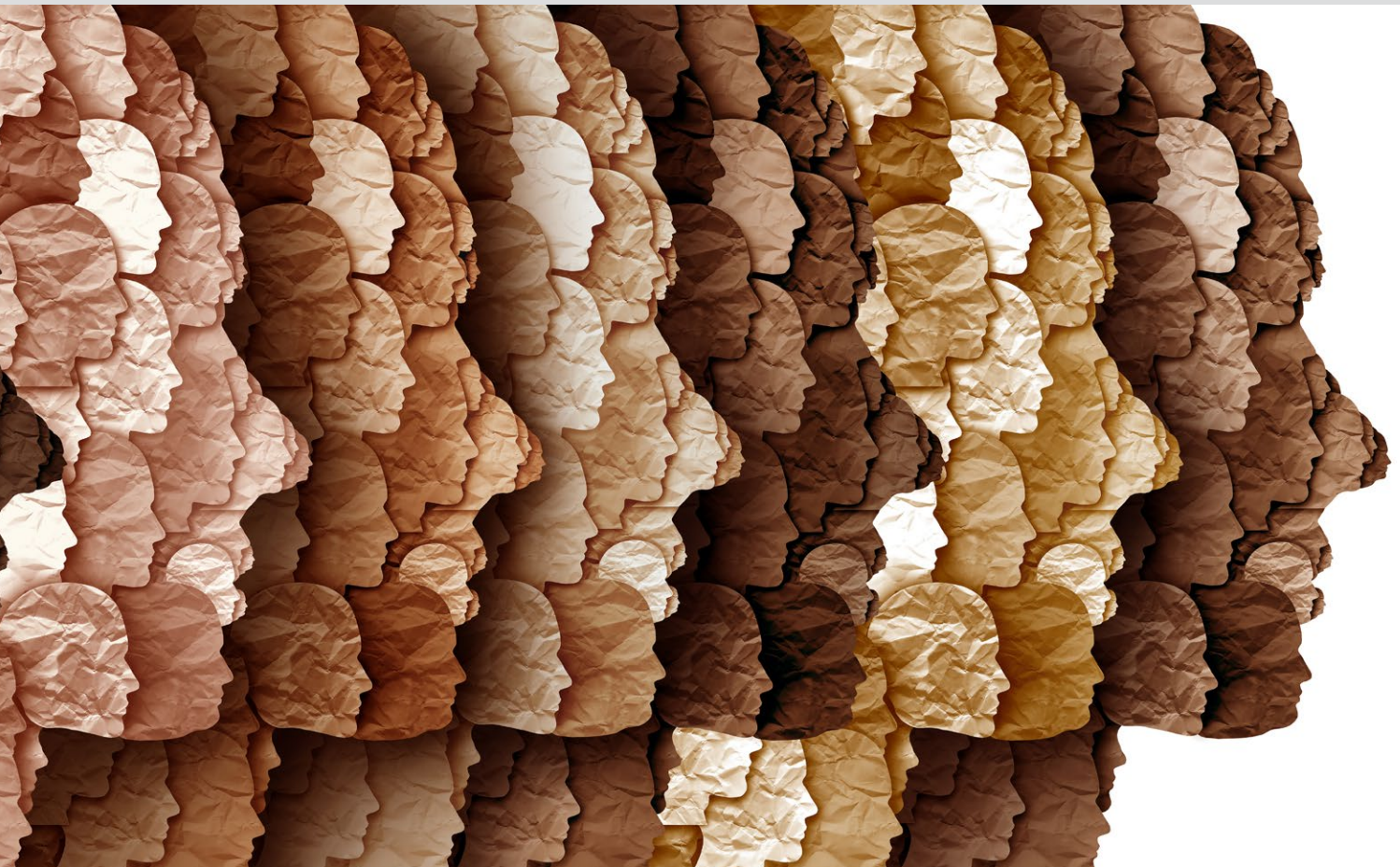
4. Recognizes the central role of public management and governance in achieving the goals.

Another characteristic of this sustainable and inclusive development agenda is that it is oriented toward the evaluation of its results. The proposal includes empirical compliance indicators that allow monitoring progress and making comparative studies between countries and regions. This aspect imposes a great challenge on statistical systems because the evaluation of results requires valid, reliable, and longitudinal data.

Despite multiple challenges, particularly the pandemic, the international community continues to take steps forward. There are already more than 300 Voluntary Reports submitted by governments to the UN. There is also a proliferation of voluntary reports from state and local governments, regional entities, specialized organizations, and non-governmental entities that see in the 2030 Agenda proposal an alternative paradigm to the neoliberal policies of recent decades. It is in this context that the Puerto Rico Community Foundation took on the challenge of preparing a Local Voluntary Report for Puerto Rico that presents where the island is positioned in relation to the SDGs, which serves as a platform to promote sustainable and inclusive economic development in our archipelago, and that recognizes the contribution of the Puerto Rican community capital to achieve these goals¹.

¹ This report is accompanied by a statistical and informative appendix located on the Community Foundation's website, at this link: <https://www.fcpr.org/puerto-rico-acoge-el-dialogo-sobre-los-objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible/>





The Local Voluntary Report for Puerto Rico is organized around six axes or pillars that group the 17 SDGs:

Pillar 1

PEOPLE: Ensure equity and inclusion without leaving anyone behind. **SDG 1, 2, 5 and 10**

Pillar 2

RIGHTS: Rescue our social rights. **SDG 3, 4, 6 and 7**

Pillar 3

PLANET: Strengthen resilience and environmental sustainability. **SDG 11,12,13,14 and 15**

Pillar 4

PROSPERITY: Promote sustainable and inclusive economic development. **SDG 8 and 9**

Pillar 5

PEACE: Demand a government capable of guaranteeing security and justice. **SDG 16**

Pillar 6

PARTNERSHIPS: Convene a multi-sector alliance for sustainable and inclusive development. **SDG 17**

The practice of consolidating goals is one that is repeated in many voluntary reports, since it allows the SDG agenda to be linked to the priorities already identified at local levels. The model adopted for the Puerto Rico Report is initially based on the model developed by Community Foundations of Canada and supported by the Mott Foundation. We have added a pillar to the model presented by the Canadian model to represent social rights, which includes core aspects to achieve a more just and integrated society.

We have also integrated consultation with representatives of non-governmental sectors, particularly community organizations and public sector officials as part of the methodology. Roundtable discussions were held to consult priority areas for the report, as well as the most effective way to consolidate them.

Proposing an analysis of the SDGs in Puerto Rico faces several challenges that deserve acknowledgment. First, like most reports,

our review is limited to the available data. In most cases we do not have access to valid and reliable data, and in others the information is not updated.

Second, Puerto Rico is subject to the mandates of the PROMESA Act (2016), approved by the U.S. Congress to handle the Government of Puerto Rico's debt default and which imposes a Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico to manage the archipelago's finances and public affairs. The Board determines the goals of public policies and the use of public funds in Puerto Rico and has broad powers to impose its determinations on officials elected by the people of Puerto Rico. A look at the Board's enabling law shows that its goals — debt negotiation and return to bond markets — do not include the protection of inclusion and environmental sustainability. When examining Puerto Rico's situation regarding the SDGs, it forces us to recognize that the SDG model supposes an autonomous and decolonized political model. The current political relationship of a colonial nature prevents Puerto Rico from meeting several of the specific goals included in the 2030 Agenda.

Despite the multiple challenges in accessing updated and reliable data, the first Local Voluntary Report for Puerto Rico was produced, and promoted by the

philanthropic sector and with input from the community. The Report offers a diagnosis and presents some strategic lines of work that could facilitate the development of a territorial project with the potential to promote an agenda more aligned with the aspirations prevalent when establishing the Puerto Rico Constitution, approved in 1952; a model explicitly aimed at enforcing the principles of equality of all people and the protection of our territory.

With guidelines focused on the island's full economic and social development, it is possible to begin to draw a roadmap that identifies courses of action and the citizen role in these processes. Furthermore, the Report offers us evidence of the social resources available to promote a new agenda, resources that promote collaboration between the public, business, and non-governmental sectors. The enthusiasm generated by the project is fostering a deep conversation about the goals we can achieve together. More and more organizations are seeking to integrate the SDGs into their work plans, recognizing that they are a framework with an international reference. The Puerto Rican people recognize the need for a new development model and the convening of partnerships and alliances to continue the path toward building the society that our forefathers aspired when approving the Bill of Rights in the mid-20th century.

Women cultivating hydroponic lettuce at the Training Center for People with Disabilities, in Aibonito.

FCPR / Jorge Ramírez Portela





Pillars



Pillar 1. People

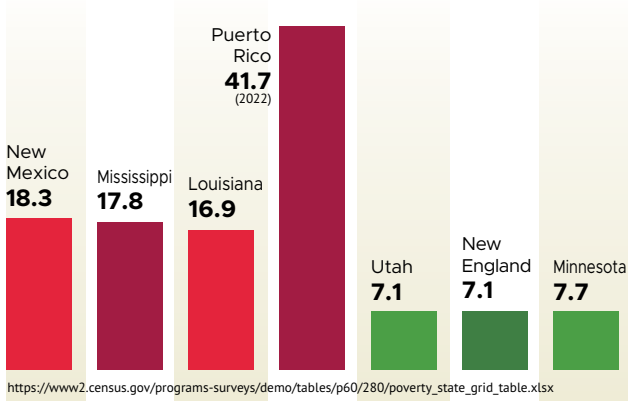
GUARANTEE EQUALITY AND INCLUSION WITHOUT LEAVING ANYONE BEHIND

One of the core goals of the SDGs is inclusion; leave no one behind. By deciding this, the global community recognizes that the enjoyment of human rights must be guaranteed to all and that the goal of economic development must respond as this pillar advances. It is no longer acceptable to measure development outcomes by referencing to economic growth to increase in cement sales for construction or automobile purchases. Today we should be asking if economic proposals reduce poverty, if they don't discriminate against women and other vulnerable sectors, or if they take into consideration the natural environment and reduce any negative impact on our planet. Economic development models in Puerto Rico historically did not consider their environmental impact and their responsibility for reducing inequality. The "Operación Manos a la Obra" program, one that was replicated in many countries, promoted mass migration to the United States and depended on women's birth control programs, as well as their subordinate insertion into the labor market. The first pillar we analyze allows the evolution of our progress in protecting people. This pillar will allow us to diagnose how successful we have been in achieving equity and inclusion of all people. It also integrates the goals of effectively combating poverty, hunger, and inequalities, including gender inequalities:

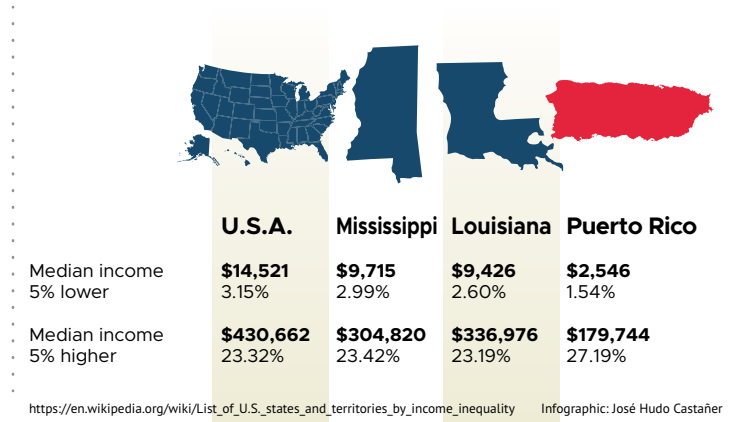
- **End poverty in all its forms.**
- **End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.**
- **Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.**
- **Reduce inequality in and between countries.**

An analysis of this pillar constitutes a reminder of the constant challenge of enforcing Puerto Rico's constitutional mandates. The equality and dignity of human beings, including the prohibition of discrimination based on race, color, sex, and social status, among others, are clearly established in our Bill of Rights. But a look at the statistics reveals that we are very far from enforcing these obligations. Inequality is extremely extensive and in too many cases its elimination does not constitute a guide in decision making. This situation is aggravated in the present context with the implementation of fiscal austerity measures and public debt negotiations, determinations that entail increases in the costs of essential services and that are not aimed at reducing the high rate of inequality in Puerto Rico. The PROMESA Act seeks to ensure the payment of the government's debt; it does not include combating poverty and inequality among its goals.

1.1 Highest and lowest poverty rates 2020-2022



1.2 Median income

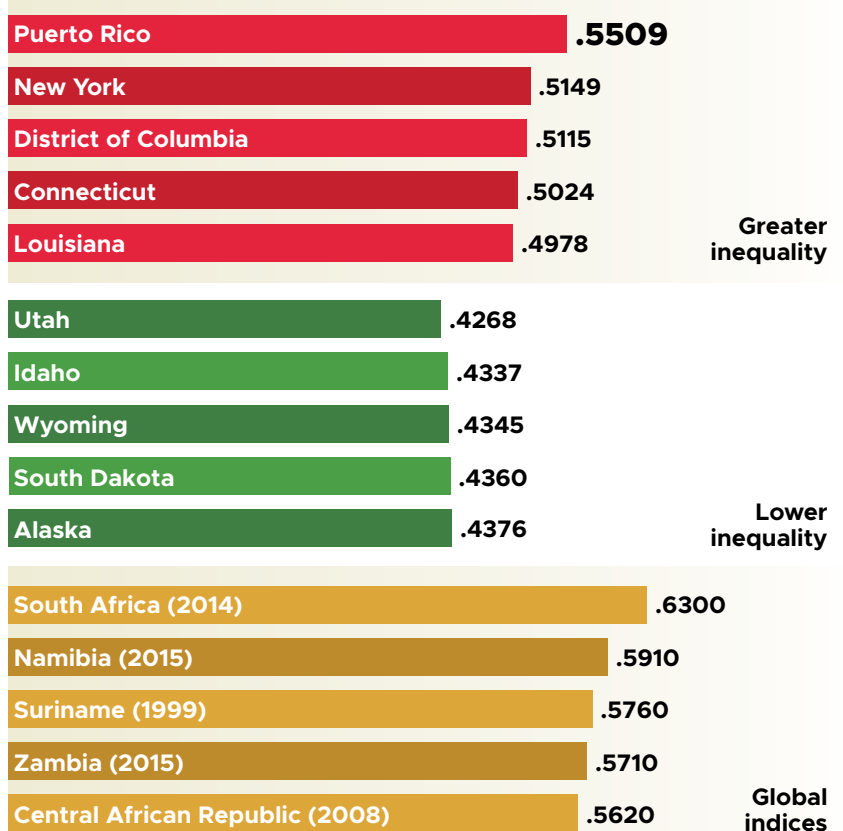


Puerto Rico suffers from high levels of poverty. The U.S. Census Bureau’s Community Survey report for the 2022 calendar year revealed that the poverty rate for individuals was 41.7%, for families it was 38.8%, and for those under 18 years of age it was 57.6%¹. The poverty rate for under aged Puerto Ricans contrasts significantly with that reported in the United States, which increased from 5.25% in 2021 to 12.4% in 2022². Special Report OC-24-16 of the Puerto Rico Comptroller’s Office dated September 2023³ reveals with respect to Goal 1 of the SDGs that the government has established a legal framework to achieve the No Poverty goal, but it does not meet the specific indicators shown in the SDG Agenda to combat child poverty and social inequalities in Puerto Rico.

A look at poverty and inequality rates in the United States illustrate the exceptionalism of the archipelago. First, Puerto Rico’s poverty rates are significantly higher than those of the United States and the states with the highest levels of poverty. Second, Puerto Rico’s poor are the poorest and receive the least amount of income. On the other hand, while the income of the richest in Puerto Rico is lower than that reported for the same group in the United States, the sector gets a higher proportion of the income generated in the territory. (Charts 1.1 and 1.2)

This finding is validated by the Gini Inequality Index, in which in 2019 Puerto Rico exceeded the inequality rates of the United States (48.11) positioning it among the top 10 most unequal jurisdictions worldwide. (Chart 1.3)

1.3 Gini Inequality Indices



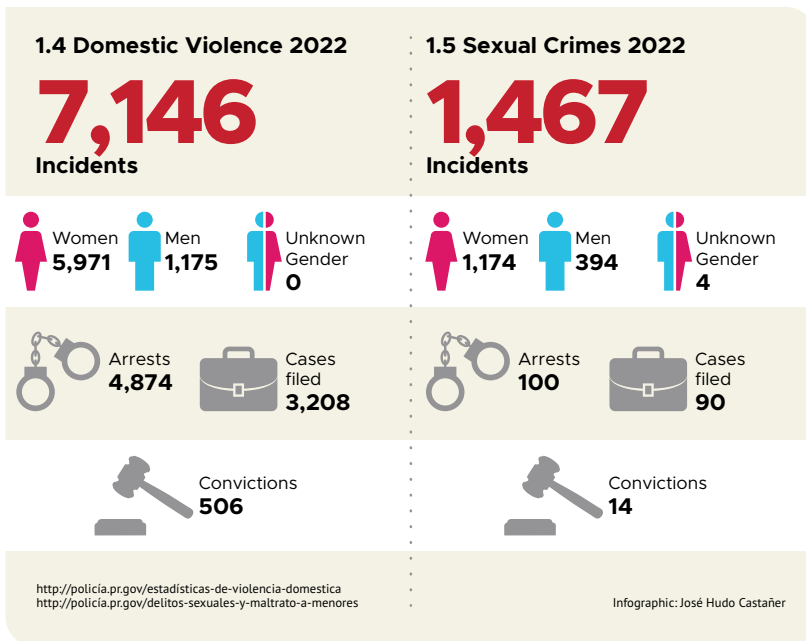
1 <https://estadisticas.pr/index.php/en/media/3641>

2 <https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/4221901-devastating-child-poverty-proves-we-needed-the-expanded-child-tax-credit/>

3 <https://www.ocpr.gov.pr/informes-de-auditoria-operacionales/informe-especial-oc-24-16-del-departamento-de-la-familia/>

Inequality is also manifested in other fields monitored under the SDGs and under the responses of social programs. Despite the extension of nutritional assistance programs, an estimated 33.2% of the adult population suffers from food insecurity and 9.9% is at a very low level. In 2022, it was reported that 1,479,073 individuals and 834,168 families participated in the Nutrition Assistance Program for a total of \$3,328,913,889 in benefits. This represented an average monthly allocation of \$187.59 per person or \$332.67 per family.

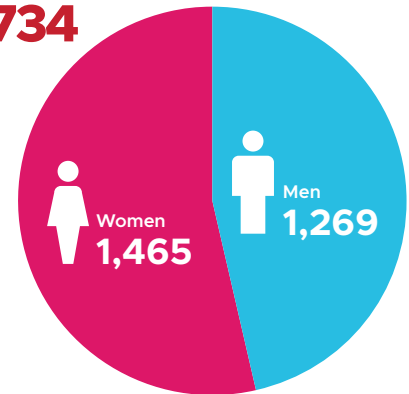
Regarding progress toward gender equality, we face the contradiction between regulations and their implementation. Puerto Rico has an extensive legal framework aimed at protecting women's rights, stemming from the Constitution all the way to the establishment of the Office of the Women's Advocate, to including employment opportunity and equal pay laws, the rights of pregnant women and nursing mothers, and the protection of victims of domestic violence, among many other laws. However, women represent the majority of victims of domestic violence and sexual crimes. According to reports from the Puerto Rico Police, the following cases were reported in 2022 (Chart 1.4)



Gender gaps are also manifested in labor markets and in political leadership positions. In 2023, the labor participation rate for women reported to be 36.9%; lower than 43.6% for all groups and 51.5% for men. Women are the largest group of adults outside the workforce (60.0%). However, women are the majority of public sector employees (54.6%) (Chart 1.6).

1.6 Employment status of population 16+ (March 2023)

Population (in thousands)
2,734



Total Worker Group (In thousands)
1,193

Men: 653
Women: 540

Total Jobs (In thousands)
1,123

Men: 614
Women: 510

Total Participation rate

43.6

Men: 51.5
Women: 36.9

Total Unemployment rate

5.8

Men: 6.0
Women: 5.6

Outside the work group (In thousands)
1,541

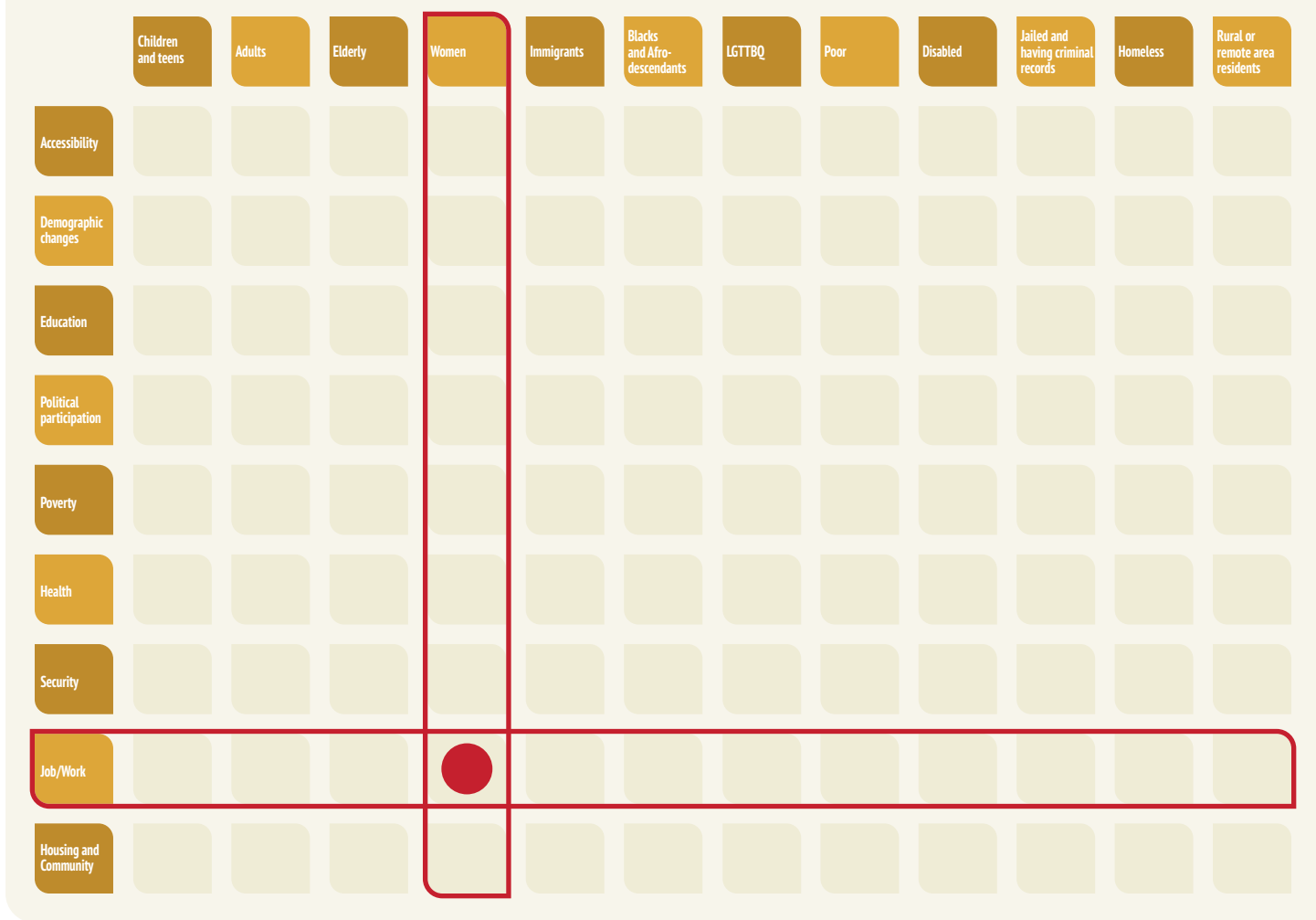
Men: 616
Women: 925

Regarding participation in political leadership, it should be noted that women represent the majority (51.8%) of the members of the Senate. Regarding other political bodies, the island has had one (1) elected female governor and another by political succession. Currently, women represent 19.6% of the members of the House of Representatives and 11.5% of the mayors.

It is worth mentioning that the Puerto Rico Supreme Court is presided by a woman, a position appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, and who represents the LGBTQI+ community.

The Inequality Matrix, adopted in 2016 by a Special Council to Address Social Inequality in Puerto Rico, identified the following as vulnerable social sectors that require urgent attention: children and youth, older adults, women, immigrants, Afro-descendants, LGBTQI+, poor, people with functional diversity, confined people and people with

1.7 Matrix to analyze inequality in Puerto Rico (2016)



criminal records, homeless people, and residents of rural and remote areas. The matrix would allow identifying and highlighting intersectionalities related to the state of inequality in Puerto Rico and would also serve as a guide for the legislative duty, including budgeting, and would allow evaluating the results of public policies. **(Chart 1.7)**

Recent reports document the persistence of inequalities faced by older adults because of ageism, the risks faced by immigrants — particularly those trying to arrive irregularly by sea — and the intersection of racial gaps in the homeless population, especially of youth. In 2021, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) conducted a study titled “Qualitative Study of Age Disparities in Rural and Urban Puerto Rico.” This study identified the disparities that affect the quality of life of older adults and the manifestations of ageism. Among them, the challenges of residents in rural areas and poor access to financial security, long-term support services, health services,

transportation, employment and income opportunities, social relations, technology, housing, and education are highlighted. The report concludes that “we lack a functional support infrastructure” and that “the system is not yet organized to serve a population of older adults.” Intersections in inequality are reflected in the 2022 and 2023 homeless count reports. The count of the population under the Continuing Care System, which covers 24 of the 78 municipalities, identified a modest increase in the homeless population from 1,026 in 2022 to 1,097 in 2023. Both reports coincided in identifying the vulnerability of people of African descent, who are overrepresented in this population. Particularly worrisome are the results regarding Afro-descendant youth on the streets, being the largest racial group within that youth population and with a higher prevalence of not getting shelter than their counterparts. In summary, the evaluation of compliance with SDG 10 once again shows the ineffectiveness of the implementation of laws and constitutional protections aimed at combating inequalities.

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND
CLEAN ENERGY



Pillar 2. Rights

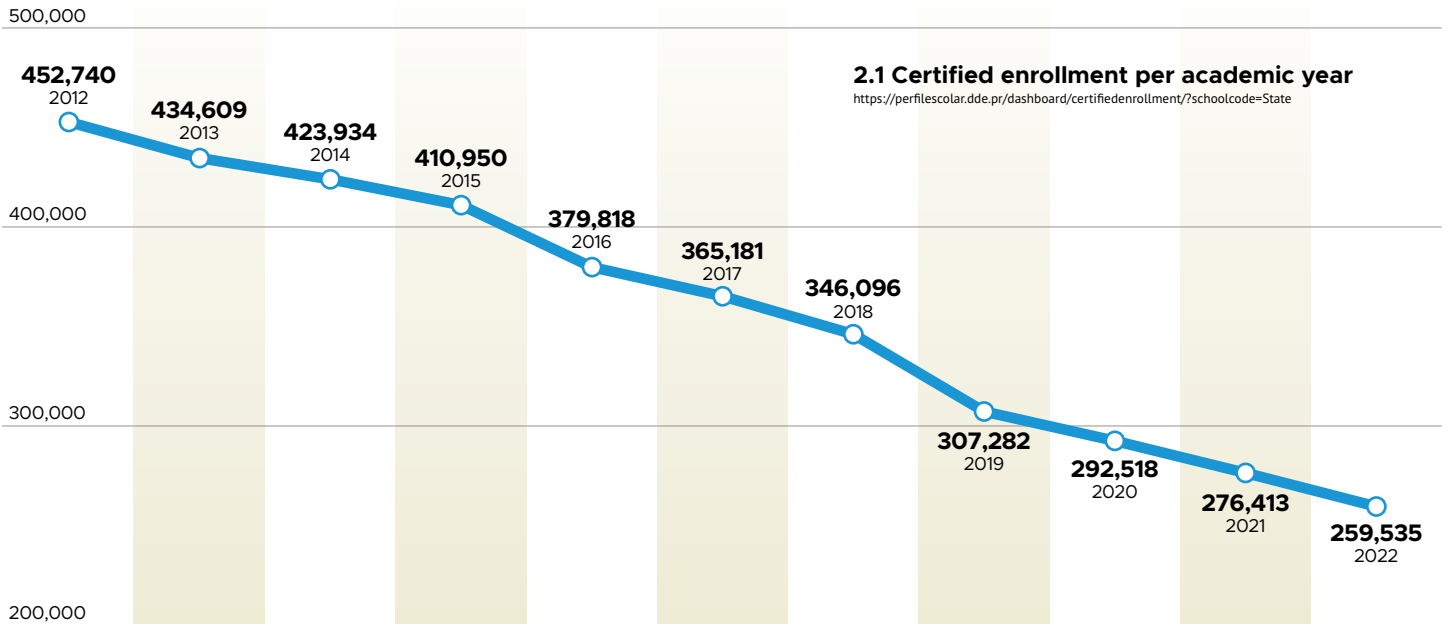
RESCUING OUR SOCIAL RIGHTS

With the approval of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution in 1952, Puerto Rico was positioned among the first jurisdictions to recognize human rights, including economic, political, social, and cultural rights, which make up the paradigm of human rights approved by the international community in 1948. However, repeated reports from several organizations, including the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, have concluded that these rights do not go beyond the aspirational level and that much remains to be achieved. The 2030 SDGs Agenda seeks to operationalize human rights for development agendas. This represents a challenge for the people of Puerto Rico since non-compliance constitutes evidence of the gap between constitutional mandates and their full execution. Compliance with these goals presents other challenges closely linked to Puerto Rico's colonial relationship: dependence on federal funds to offer services, the imposition of evaluative criteria by external entities, and the constant threat of a reduction of funds allocated for such purposes by the U.S. Congress.

Pillar 2 integrates the goals that must be guaranteed for all people, such as:

- **Ensure a healthy life and promote well-being.**
- **Guarantee inclusive, equitable and quality education, and promote learning opportunities.**
- **Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation.**
- **Guarantee access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy.**

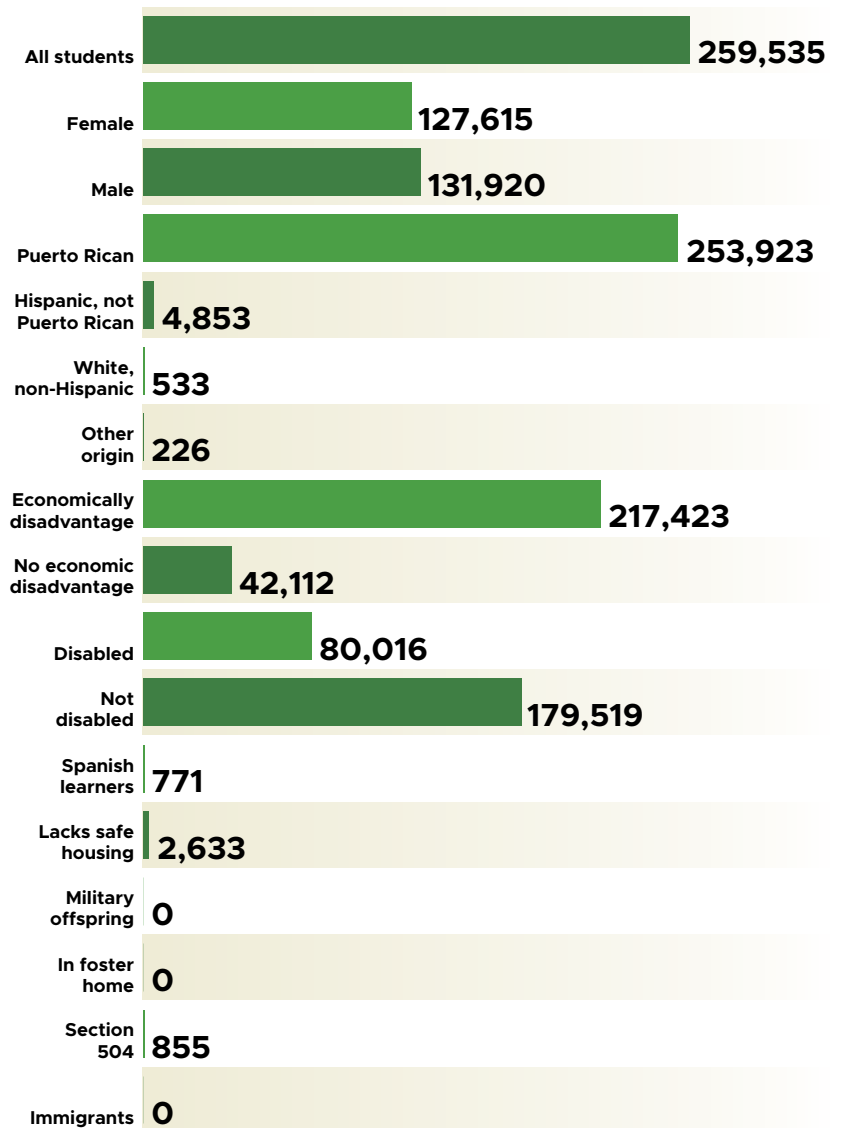
Education is a priority of the Government of Puerto Rico. This public duty has a budget assigned to it that represents 3.6% of the GDP (2021). The results are evident in the literacy rate. In 2021, Puerto Rico's literate population reached 92.4%. However, student enrollment in the public education system has suffered a significant decrease of 193,205 students in a decade. In the 2021-22 academic year, 49.1% of the enrollment were female. The enrollment of students with functional diversity or disabilities represented 69.1% of students. Most students in the public system, 83.7%, belong to poor families, including 2,633 who were homeless.



Puerto Rico’s public education system reflects the poverty and inequality that prevails in the island. (Charts 2.1 and 2.2)

Access to health services once again raises the challenge of equity. In comparison with the region, residents of Puerto Rico experience low mortality rates, including maternal and infant mortality, and an average life expectancy of 81 years. However, we observed rates that vary according to age and sex, with men having crude mortality rates higher than those of women. In 2022, the main causes of death in Puerto Rico were heart disease, malignant tumors, diabetes, Alzheimer’s, and Covid 19.

2.2 Enrollment by subgroup (2021-2022)



2.3 Main causes of deaths distributed by gender

Cause	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Heart Disease	18.3	18.3	18.3
Malignant Tumors	15.2	15.3	15.0
Mellitus diabetes	8.7	8.6	8.9
Alzheimer	8.4	5.5	11.7
Covid-19	5.7	5.8	5.7

Health Department. Epidemiological profile of mortality in Puerto Rico. Years 2015-2022. (February 22, 2023)

We present the main causes of death distributed by gender. Regarding access to safe drinking water, we can affirm that while, most of the population has access to water (99.5%), we cannot ignore that its quality presents risks and that the system itself is subject to environmental risks that threaten the island's aqueduct system. The water that reaches our homes is being monitored for problems such as microorganisms, disinfectants, and organic and inorganic chemicals. Likewise, reports of risks to the system resulting from climate change are worrying, forcing multimillion-dollar investments for infrastructure improvements, reservoir dredging, drought monitoring and adaptation to climate change. An example is the Carraízo dam, with a reduced capacity level of 44% of its original volume in 2020. Perhaps even more worrisome is recognizing that research on the impact

that climate change has on the aqueduct system date back to 2014 and 2015, and that adaptation plans did not get past the diagnosis stage.

We find a similar challenge with the goal of increasing access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all people. Although public policy is to move toward the use of renewable energy, it is estimated that about 78,000 customers are already connected to solar systems. Taking into consideration the high cost of solar energy and the high levels of poverty in Puerto Rico, the low coverage of these systems cannot be surprising, which now can be considered another criterion of inequality since few families are able to pay \$30,000 per solar systems. The expansion of sustainable energy systems will depend on public policies with clear inclusion goals.

FCPR/Jorge Ramírez Portela





Pillar 3. Planet

STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Another contribution of the 2030 SDG Agenda is that it highlights the intersection between sustainability and development goals — the recognition that there can be no economic development that lacerates the planet. Environmental damage constitutes intolerable physical, economic, social, and human costs for society and future generations. Furthermore, environmental damage and the impact of climate change have a greater effect on vulnerable sectors, which often cannot survive the impact of such phenomena. In recent years, the Caribbean region has been another example of the disproportionate effect due to economic status, gender, race or migration status, a situation that has resulted in the death of thousands of people as evidenced by Hurricane María in 2017. The goals grouped under this pillar promote:

- **Building inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements.**
- **Guaranteeing sustainable consumption and production patterns.**

- **Adopting measures to combat climate change.**
- **Conserving the sustainability of the oceans, seas, and marine resources.**
- **Protecting land ecosystems.**

We can assert that the SDGs reaffirm the recognition of environmental rights as human rights. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that an area of sustainable development that deserves attention is that of cities and human settlements. In Puerto Rico, a process of suburbanization of housing and the use of individual transportation to get to workplaces has been observed for decades. The poor — almost nonexistent — public transportation system has discouraged its use, a figure that in 2020 dropped to 2.7% of the population. The level of traffic generates pollution and encourages dependence on oil. Another challenge for the development of cities is the low investment in the protection of cultural and natural heritage.





\$39,410,000 (79%) is allocated for the conservation of natural heritage. (Chart 3.2) The environmental fight to preserve natural spaces in the public domain has relied on the nonprofit sector and the building of citizen coalitions who have become monitors and mobilizers to stop environmental injustice incidents. In terms of public policies, we observe a growing number of laws, executive orders, special committees, and international collaborations that suggest a recognition of the space that environmental issues occupy in public management. But when examining the evidence of compliance with Pillar 3 we must conclude that there is still much work to be done and that, on too many occasions, the commitments made are not followed through.

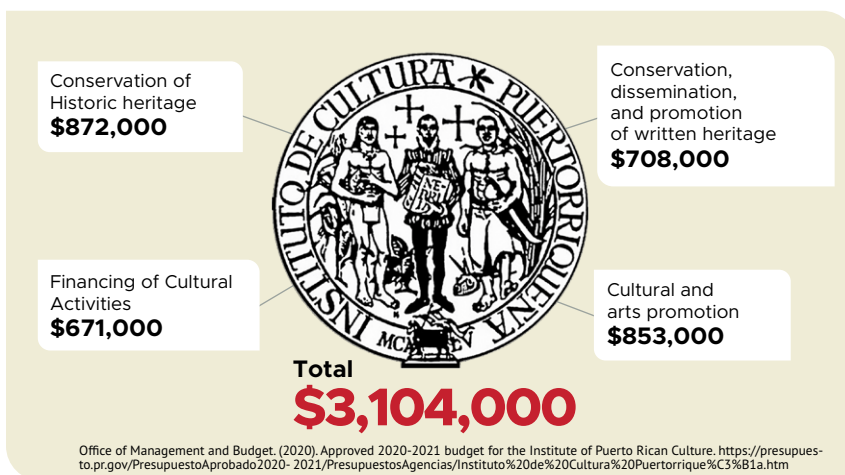
Environmental protection also includes promoting sustainable production and consumption practices. Public and private investment in this goal has been affected by the inflation that the island has experienced.

Municipalities have seen their budgets dramatically reduced and this type of investment has been extremely limited. In the 2020-2021 budget, a total of \$16,079,000 was assigned to the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. Of this, only \$3,104,000 (19.3%) is allocated for the conservation of historical heritage, financing of activities and the cultural promotion of the arts. The other part of the budget is assigned to general administration, service, and technical and administrative support. (Chart 3.1)

Puerto Rico has adopted control waste measures to promote recycling, but the results show the need to continue efforts. The island generates about 8,290 tons of waste daily, an amount equivalent to 5.19 pounds per person. Of that, 34% of waste is organic material, but we do not have reliable data on food waste. It is known that the recycling policy is very far from achieving its goals. There are very few municipalities that have recycling systems. It is estimated that in Puerto Rico between 9% and 14% of its garbage is recycled, although it is estimated that 35% of the waste generated is potentially recyclable. Achieving ecologically sound management is an urgent challenge for the island as the amount of garbage continues to grow while sustainability plans languish.

Data on the conservation of marine life and terrestrial ecosystems are limited. In 2017, ocean acidification levels were reported to have decreased by 0.04%. In 2014, it was reported that 55.61% of the surface of the islands of the archipelago was forested, with the big island having the least amount (54.8) of forest surface and the islands of Mona (99.3) and Culebra (91.0) the largest amount. It is also reported that 27.2% of marine areas and 16% of land areas are classified as protected. The number of acres identified as protected areas is estimated at 350,473. On the other hand, it was reported in 2019 that Puerto Rico has 133 vulnerable or endangered species¹. Budget cuts have

3.1 Institute of Puerto Rican Culture



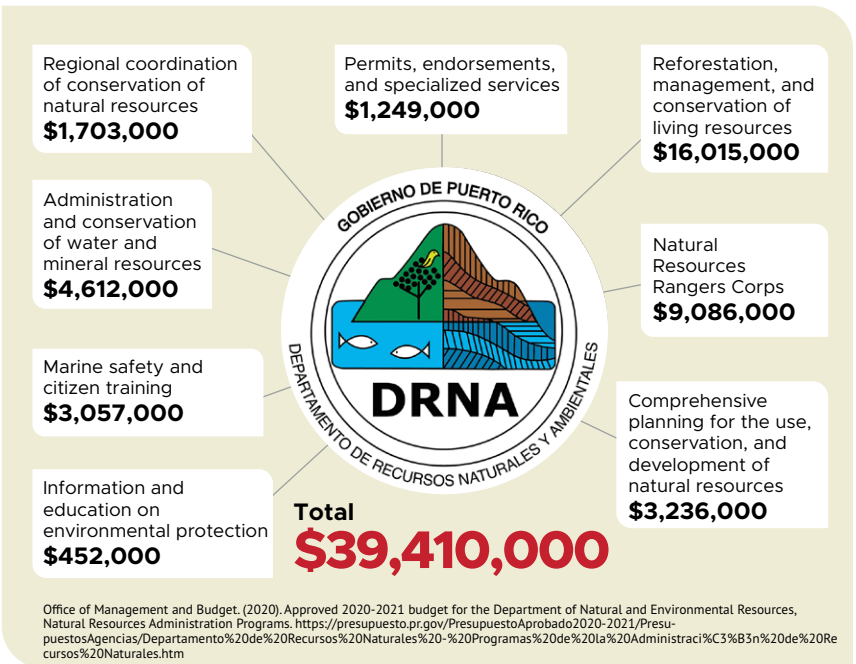
In the 2020-2021 budget year, a total of \$49,829,000 was allocated to the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources and its natural resource management program. Of this amount, only

1 Castro, J. Gould, W. Ortiz, C. Soto, S. Llerandi, I. Gaztambide, S. Quiñones, M. Cañón, M. Jacobs, R. (2019). Detailed inventory

reduced the number of government employees responsible for overseeing the protection of at-risk animal and plant life. Citizens are assuming this responsibility — actions that demonstrate the public’s growing support for the conservation of Puerto Rico’s biodiversity.

Climate action seems to be the environmental field with the highest priority and that has managed to influence public policies. The multiple environmental disasters that have impacted the archipelago in recent years have raised awareness of the importance of strengthening resilience to climate and natural events. Through Act 33, the government established the Climate Change Advisory Council. Meanwhile, several campuses of the University of Puerto Rico have established academic programs and services focused on climate change, which serve the island and the federal agencies responsible for protecting the region’s environment. Among them, UPR’s Mayaguez Campus is the host of the headquarters of the Sea Grant project, which collaborates with studies of islands in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and houses the monitoring systems for telluric movements and tsunamis throughout the archipelago. And the Río Piedras campus, where coastal erosion studies are carried out.

3.2 Department of Natural and Environmental Resources



of protected areas and other conservation mechanisms in Puerto Rico. Gen. Tech. Report IITF-GTR-50. San Juan, PR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, International Institute of Tropical Forestry. https://data.fs.usda.gov/research/pubs/iitf/iitf_gtr_50_spa.pdf
 Díaz, E. Hevia, K. (2017). Coastal zone management program: State of Puerto Rico’s coast. Department of Natural and Environmental Resources. Recovered from <https://www.drna.pr.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/EstadoDeLaCostaPR-2017.pdf>



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Pillar 4. Prosperity

PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Beginning in the second half of the 20th century, Puerto Rico embarked on a process of economic development aimed at modernizing the island's economy and shifting it from the agricultural economy and the poverty that this represented. "Operación Manos a la Obra," as this development model was called, promoted the industrialization of the economy, and transformed labor markets. As time went by, its limitations became evident. The model encouraged dependence on external funds, poverty and inequalities were not abolished, and the island continued to be besieged by the consequences of climate change. At present, different sectors recognize that a new model of economic and territorial development is needed, one that must address the challenges of inequalities and sustainability. Addressing these challenges today faces a major obstacle in the economic policies adopted by governments and those imposed by the Fiscal Oversight Board. Examining the challenges and progress of the Fourth Pillar contributes significantly to understanding the need to adopt a different view of the notions of development and prosperity. A country is prosperous when its economic development is accessible to all social sectors, when it reduces the

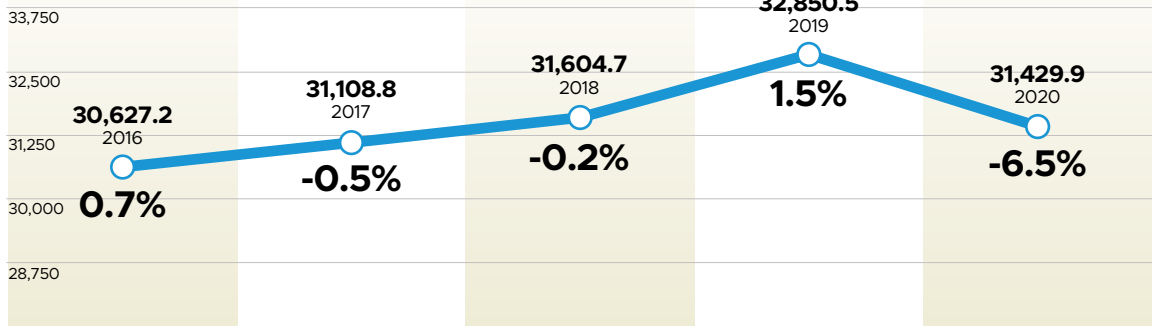
risks resulting from climate change, and when this generates a good quality of life for everyone. This is why we propose that the 2030 Agenda represents a superior alternative to the neoliberal policies that prevail in Puerto Rico. We must recognize that current economic practices have a high economic, social, and human cost that the Puerto Rican people can no longer sustain.

The Fourth Pillar of Sustainable and Inclusive Development includes two goals:

- **Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full employment, and decent work for everyone.**
- **Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.**

Assessing Puerto Rico's progress in these areas reveals several important challenges. Most significantly, the island has been experiencing economic decline for several years, even before the pandemic. Puerto Rico's gross domestic product per capita has seen

4.1 Gross domestic product per capita in Puerto Rico and economic growth



reductions and has remained virtually flat between 2016 and 2020. (Chart 4.1)

The regression in economic development is also manifested in low labor participation rates and in the persistence of gender inequality gaps in labor markets. In table 1.6 we were able to review the gender gaps in labor participation. The economic development model has been unable to create opportunities for most of the population. On the contrary, most of the adult population is outside the labor market, and in the case of women the trend is greater. Although some politicians celebrate the low unemployment rate, they ignore that the labor market has excluded most of the population. Women represent 60% of the adult population outside the labor force, a situation that will be linked to income levels, poverty rates and access to retirement systems, all challenges for Puerto Rican working women.

A look at the distribution of people employed in calendar year 2022 in Puerto Rico confirms the diagnosis of limited employment opportunities and persistence of labor segmentation and gender gaps. (Chart 4.2)

Industrialization and innovation offer two views

of the type of economic development that is generated in Puerto Rico. On the one hand, manufacturing is in decline and is not the main economic and labor generator as it was in the past. Already in 2023, manufacturing was the sixth source of jobs, following government, commerce and transportation, professional services, educational and health services, and recreation and lodging.

Simultaneously we see the growth of telecommunications in the archipelago. While the ratio of landlines in 2021 was 22 per 100 people, the ratio of mobile phones was 112 per 100 inhabitants. The proliferation of mobile telephony is evident in that the number of users exceeds the population (3,661,176) and the proportion of internet users was 77.7%. The expansion of mobile network coverage continues to the present, when in February 2023 a total of 3,878,282 wireless lines are reported.

The analysis of this pillar reveals the existence of a growing and complex economic sector that since its beginnings has advocated a responsible social philosophy that today allows it to enthusiastically assume the goals of the SDGs. The Puerto Rican cooperative sector constitutes a business space with social and environmental commitment that can be harmonized with the 2030 Agenda. Currently there are 231 cooperatives, the majority (98) are credit unions, 13 housing and 120 of several types. For example, several co-ops offer financing for the acquisition of photovoltaic systems that produce clean energy. Others also promote business activity with renewable materials, which reduce waste, and non-polluting materials that reduce the carbon footprint. It should also be noted that many co-ops serve towns outside the metropolitan area, making their services accessible to highly vulnerable populations. In summary, it is evident that the cooperative sector is an important player in the implementation of the goals of inclusive and sustainable development in Puerto Rico.

4.2 Distribution of people employed in calendar year 2022

	Both sexes 1,119	Men 613	Women 506
All industries			
Agriculture	14	12	2
Manufacturing	100	64	36
Construction	56	51	5
Commerce	281	149	132
Finance, insurance, and real estate	38	16	22
Transportation, communications, and utilities	53	37	16
Services	400	200	199
Public administration	177	83	94

Department of Labor and Human Resources, Employment, and unemployment in P.R. Average Calendar Year 2022. (San Juan, July 2023). www.mercadolaboral.pr.gov



Pillar 5. Peace

DEMAND A GOOD GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF GUARANTEEING SECURITY AND JUSTICE

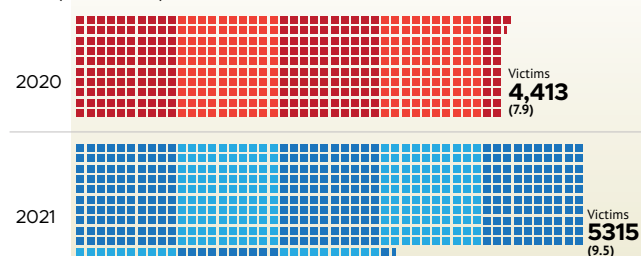
The 2030 Agenda recognizes that sustainable development requires contexts of peace and justice, and that this ambitious agenda will not be possible without efficient, effective, and inclusive public management. An open, participatory, transparent government capable of combating corruption will be able to have citizen trust to support the decisions that building peaceful societies will require. This goal includes several ambitious goals: reducing all forms of violence, reducing corruption, creating effective and transparent institutions, guaranteeing citizen participation and access to information, and applying laws and policies against all forms of discrimination. This logic proposes that development requires peace, and that achieving peace requires public institutions fully committed to their mission of good public management.

Achieving peace and justice represents a great challenge for Puerto Rican society since it is mired in multiple forms of violence. In 2020, 729 incidents of violent deaths occurred for a total of 790 fatalities. Of the total violent deaths, 551 were homicides and 210 were suicides. In that year, nine out of 10 victims of violent

deaths (89%) were men, the majority (88.9%) of the deaths were through gun violence. During that period, 68 domestic violence victims were reported. Murders due to gender violence mostly affect women. The female victims of these cases of violence were fatally attacked by their ex-partners or ex-spouses (61.5%) or current partner or spouse (38.5%). In the case of suicides, the crude suicide rates for men are six times higher than the rates for women.

Violence is extended to minors. According to statistics from the Administration for Families

5.1 Abused minors in Puerto Rico (2020-2021)
(2020-2021) ■ =10 minors



Zavala, D. Bezares, M. Santiago, M., Carrasquillo, G. Martinez, T. (2020). Violent Deaths in Puerto Rico, 2017. Puerto Rico Statistics Institute. https://estadisticas.pr/files/Publicaciones/Informe%20Muertes%20Violentas%202017_2020%200710-CEE.pdf

and Children, we have the following review of child abuse (**Chart 5.1**). Drug trafficking is another source of violence and murders on the island that threatens peace and public safety. To appreciate its magnitude, we must study the statistics of Police seizures for drug trafficking between 2019 and 2023: (**Chart 5.2**).

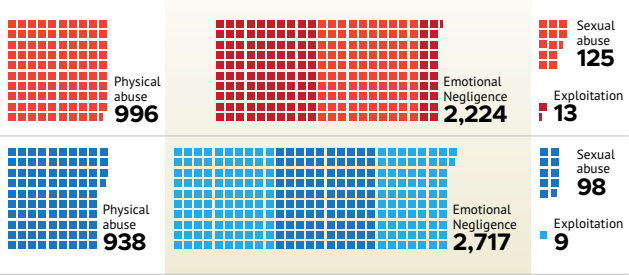
5.2 Police drug trafficking seizures
(2019-2023)

Money	\$24,975,290.79
Firearms	2,188
Vehicles	1,297
Marihuana (bags)	71,959
Cocaine (bags)	92,090
Heroin (decks)	116,896

*¿A dónde van las incautaciones del narcotráfico? <https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/seguridad/notas/a-donde-van-las-incautaciones-del-narcotrafico/>

Another dimension of SDG 16 is inclusion in creating inclusive and accountable institutions, in other words, open governments. This includes citizen satisfaction with the provision of public services, access to information, and the realization of an inclusive government that is representative of the diversity of society. Returning to these goals is of utmost importance for Puerto Rican society, since citizens repeatedly express their dissatisfaction with the quality and honesty of public service. Cases of corruption proliferate in all branches of government. The Corruption Report prepared by the Government Ethics Office shows that during the period from 2012 to 2020, violations of the Government Ethics Law were mostly by men (67.4%), employees who had between 0 and 5 years of service, 35% worked in senior and middle management, and 52% worked in public agencies and corporations.

We do not have enough information to evaluate many of the metrics recommended by the SDGs because such information is not collected or because public data is increasingly limited and courts have decided that citizens do not have the right to the information. Independent national human rights institutions have almost disappeared, either due to budget reductions or due to the designation of political elements to their leadership who do not fulfill their obligation. Open Government - transparent, participatory, and accountable - is a widespread demand in our archipelago.





Pillar 6. Partnerships

HEADING TOWARD THE MULTI-SECTORAL ALLIANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Goal 17 recognizes the role of alliances to achieve the 2030 Agenda. This effort contemplates a wide variety of collaborations between governments, the private sector, and non-governmental sectors to support and promote its implementation. An agenda as complex as this requires the participation of multiple actors who share a vision of the future, a commitment to the fight against poverty and the protection of the environment, and who are willing to contribute to sustaining these efforts. This global project also requires the development of inspection and monitoring skills. That is why universities and academia have played an important role in its execution.

The analysis of Puerto Rico's compliance with Goal 17 poses a challenge and a great opportunity. The challenge is that many of the indicators have the unarticulated premise that they apply to sovereign states, not to colonial territories that do not have the powers to participate in international affairs such as those that the SDGs invite us to join. This acknowledgment has motivated Puerto Rican organizations to raise the need to recognize

the assertions not articulated in the 2030 Agenda such as coloniality and recognize that colonialism constitutes an obstacle to achieving the SDGs.

On the other hand, Goal 17 presents a great opportunity to recognize the role that non-governmental organizations, including community foundations, can play - and often already play. Given that this report is an initiative of a community foundation, it was a natural exercise to show the knowledge about the SDGs that exists in our sector and document how it is applied. For these purposes, community-based organizations in Puerto Rico were surveyed and 66 organizations responded to the questionnaire. Although most responses were from organizations located in San Juan, we received responses from 22 municipalities. Most participating entities (61) indicated that they were aware of the SDG proposal and that they integrated them into their operations, as well as into their services and programs.

The analysis of the reported institutional missions allowed us to validate that the 17

goals are areas of work of these organizations, with SDGs 17, 3, 4, 10 and 11 being the most frequently mentioned. The community assets most affected by the incorporation of the 2030 Agenda are social capitals (65) and personal capitals (57). During the data gathering process, we identified several organizations highly committed to the agenda, including some actively participating in international projects around the SDGs. We also acknowledge the contributions of academia to the development of the SDGs in Puerto Rico. Among them, several universities stand out, such as the University of Puerto Rico, Sacred Heart University, and the Inter American University, which have research programs and academic offerings in this field. Private sectors such as cooperatives have taken significant steps forward in integrating the SDGs into their work agendas.

However, the evaluation of the information gathered reveals that some organizations are unaware of the SDG proposal, many are aware of it, but do not incorporate it into their work, and that the majority have an incipient knowledge of the goals but are generally unaware of the indicators and compliance metrics. Acknowledging this finding, the Puerto Rico Community Foundation will be proposing to strengthen the partnerships of community-based organizations and other sectors using, as an initial exercise, the 17 Rooms model developed by the Brookings Institute, adapted to six rooms in line with the pillars used in this report. We are confident that this initiative will strengthen the competencies of community organizations and the collaborative ties among them.

Forming a network of entities committed to sustainable development goals will allow us to advance this agenda in Puerto Rico, at a time when the island needs an alternative development model that allows us to combat poverty and inequality as well as respond to the risks of climate change. Now more than ever our island needs answers to its serious problems. The non-governmental sector, led by foundations and community organizations, can play a pivotal role in advancing this agenda and encouraging our government to join this effort.





Conclusions and recommendations

This report represents an innovative initiative to approach the implementation of the SDGs, documenting the relevance of this proposal for Puerto Rico today and for the future, as well as examining the progress achieved in the process. The process has fostered the establishment of alliances among organizations with shared concerns and commitments for social justice and the protection of human rights. Among the conclusions and recommendations of this investigation we can identify the following:

- 1. The 2030 Agenda on the SDGs is extremely relevant to respond to Puerto Rico's challenges. We must promote its adoption as a guide in the development of a Local Agenda aimed at achieving sustainable and inclusive development.**
- 2. The document and the discussions undertaken recognize the challenges brought by poverty and inequality. Also the risks that Puerto Rico faces regarding climate change, altogether represent serious obstacles for the sustainable development we aspire.**

- 3. The 2030 Agenda invites us to analyze the intersections between challenges and opportunities. Events cannot be viewed isolated from their context and their interactions with other social, economic, political, environmental, and cultural factors.**





4. Although both, the United States and Puerto Rico governments, have not formally adopted this agenda, we cannot rule out efforts to encourage both administrations to take affirmative steps in this direction.
5. Puerto Rico does not meet many of the goals and metrics in the 2030 Agenda, although many of them are aspirations that require support from the Puerto Rican people. Acknowledging non-compliance should not discourage us, instead it should motivate us to develop a model to guide our people's aspirations.
6. Community-based organizations can play a pivotal role in the implementation of the SDGs in Puerto Rico. The establishment of a great alliance can facilitate the formation of a successful work agenda.
7. The examination of the pillars led to identify situations where non-compliance lay in the execution

of laws, including constitutional mandates. The obstacle to adopting and implementing the SDGs lies not in the need for more laws, but in the effective implementation of the mandates. Another factor that contributes to non-compliance is the lack of continuity in the implementation of public policies. In several cases we were able to identify studies, projects, and initiatives with great potential for impact that were discarded or that fell by the wayside after changes in administration. The implementation of an agenda for inclusive sustainable economic development takes time, and its continuity is a requirement to achieve its goals. Changes in administrations cannot stop the progress that has been made.

8. The report has also highlighted the urgent importance of strengthening statistical systems that allow us to continue evaluating Puerto Rico's progress on the SDG agenda. Through agreements and collaborations, the FCPR can produce a continuation of this first local voluntary report in the near future.
9. The analysis of the various compliance reports with the SDGs forces us to recognize the importance of contextualizing these studies. The goal of a voluntary report is to evaluate the progress achieved in the adoption or implementation of the 2030 Agenda to strengthen its own sustainable and inclusive development initiatives. Puerto Rico must continue to seek ways and means to integrate the implementation of the SDGs with our goals and aspirations as people.

5 Rooms A Dialogue on the SDGs*

This document collects core contributions from the conversations generated in the *FIVE ROOMS*, a discussion model similar to the *17 Rooms of the Brookings Institute* and adapted by Fundación Comunitaria de Puerto Rico (FCPR). The FCPR clustered the objectives into six (6) pillars, each of the *ROOMS* addressed one pillar and all *ROOMS* incorporated the sixth pillar which refers to partnerships.

Each *ROOM* had two guiding premises for the discussion:

- Identify serious problems that are not being effectively addressed.
- How to solve these serious problems by stimulating collaborations.

The event took place on November 17, 2023, at the Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

*Sustainable Development Goals



PILLAR 1 People

SDG: End Poverty (1), Zero Hunger (2), Gender Equality (5) and Reduced Inequalities (10)

Given the reality established by the report on poverty in the archipelago, where the poverty rate is 41.7%, the group presented a series of suggestions to address them.

- Monitor and identify public policies that target poverty, identify those that are not being met, and stimulate the generation of data that supports advocacy and reporting.
- Establish and/or strengthen alliances and generate spaces for connection among organizations.
- Promote a binding education and empowerment project to facilitate the goals under this pillar and include risks and opportunities associated to the goals.
- Promote a conscientious vote and, especially have women understand the political parties' platforms.
- Seek unrestricted funds for nonprofit organizations that address different social problems.
- Undertake a mapping exercise of communities to better understand their socio-demographic composition and their community assets to design and execute a plan to reduce inequalities.

The group also suggested incentivizing agriculture and encouraging support for local farmers. Meanwhile, to advance gender equality, it is proposed to address gender violence as a systemic problem that requires comprehensive responses. It is also recommended to talk about new masculinities; emphasize the rights of women and those of LGBTQ+ communities.



PILLAR 2 Rights

SDG: Good Health and Well-being (3), Quality Education (4), Clean Water and Sanitation (6), and Affordable and Clean Energy (7)

The group identified education as the central SDG of this pillar and kicked-off the conversation identifying several challenges, as described below:

- The lack of essential services — health and education — especially in rural areas.
- The lack of strategies to approach the adult population to offer continuing or professional education, health, and other services.
- Non-recurring funds are a limitation for nonprofit organizations to effectively support these efforts.
- Few accessible financial opportunities for continuing education.
- The group, after an in-depth conversation, was able to provide several recommendations to address the education situation and how their institutions could support improvement in this area.
- Consideration of alternative models to formal education, focusing on informal and popular education.
- Incorporate the nonprofit sector on initiatives that focus on education and provide these non-profits with adequate resources.
- From the academia standpoint, design mentoring programs for students and understand community socio-economic contexts to identify areas of opportunity for collaboration, support and jointly work on solutions.
- Promote greater interaction between universities and surrounding communities to work on sustainable development initiatives for the communities.
- Promote accessible continuing education for adults and encourage programs that address gender gaps.

The group stressed the need to collaborate with governments (state and municipal) to ensure sustainability, regardless changes on administrations after election periods. They also highlighted this event and expressed how

stimulating this type of exchange becomes allowing a peer conversation, as for many, the community work becomes an isolated work. Precisely as a solution to the latter, they propose that

organizations work in a more synergistic and collaborative way and that there be multigenerational representation in the development of work groups.

To conclude, the group emphasized the need to facilitate processes among sectors and the reduction of government bureaucracy, especially in the allocation of state and private funds.



PILLAR 3 Planet

SDG: Sustainable Cities and Communities (11), Responsible Consumption and Production (12), Climate Action (13), Life Below Water (14) and Life on Land (15)

The group established that organizations that work with environmental issues have limited resources. Throughout the conversation they identified areas of concern and opportunities for effective management and conservation of natural resources.

- Incorporate the community and its residents in conservation and educational processes to empower a harmonious relationship between communities and the environment.
- Increase green coverage in communities, from a current 16% to 33%, a percentage recommended by land trusts and environmental organizations.
- Empower the designation of ecological corridors.
- An effective Land Use Plan development was recommended aligned with current environmental public policy.

A serious problem was recognized regarding house purchasing and rental on the island, especially after hurricanes Irma and María and the earthquakes of 2020. The group recommended a census of units that are vacant and in disuse, to rehabilitate

them instead of building more homes. They also suggested a strategic assessment on the potential repopulation of rural areas to create a generational balance, especially in communities in which elderly population is the majority.

Waste management and disposal was identified as a core problem in our communities, some recommendations were provided.

- Develop a recycled and used materials management program with minimum knowledge requirement, allowing new product elaboration. Put the circular economy into practice and establish tax incentives to promote entrepreneurship.
- Promote recycling of organic waste and facilitate access to related permits.
- Promote community nurseries to restore and preserve ecosystems.
- Design a replicable education/learning model for knowledge exchange and peer learning experiences, as well as identifying financing options for garbage disposal.

The group recognized that solid waste

management affects marine life and suggested the development of public policy focused on coastal preservation and the protection of coastal barriers in the face of climate change. The group believes that effective execution can be achieved through community groups.



PILLAR 5 Peace

SDG: Peace, justice, and strong institutions (16) and Alliances (17)

The lack of access to information and transparency was identified as one of the main problems affecting the execution of the SDGs under the Peace Pillar. The participants believe that access to information is essential for democracy because it allows decision-making, design of public policies, and the efficient use of public

resources and it is crucial in promoting citizen participation. However, as mentioned by the group, there is a lack of political will to implement the legal framework and regulations to facilitate a transparency and accountability agenda. Some specific recommendations:

- Empower communities by providing

access to vital information. This will allow communities to become advocates of the situations they face and stimulate the interaction among sectors.

- Involve communities in public decision-making and provide technical assistance to communities.



PILLAR 4 Prosperity

SDG: Decent Work and Economic Growth (8) and Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (9)

The group recognized that it is necessary to define what growth means from the labor context perspective, as well as to acknowledge that there is non-salaried work segment on the island. The intersection between both segments could be the starting point to define prosperity. The dependence on federal funds and its impact on the growth and decline of the economy was also brought to the conversation, as well as the importance of recognizing Puerto Rico's colonial situation and its impact on individual and collective prosperity. Other suggestions are listed below:

- Promote vocational skills training.
- Promote innovation for sustainable industries.
- Address the lack of desire to work, despite the availability of jobs.
- Promote strategies to facilitate and inspire prosperity.
- Address the loss of community capital as a reflection of not prospering.
- Rethink the economic development model.
- Address salary gaps and salary scales within organizations.

Conclusion

Each Room's contributions prove the participants' relevance, interest, and commitment to building a sustainable and inclusive Puerto Rico. Their ideas serve as a starting point for the development of new initiatives that advance the objectives, facing 2030. It also serves as inspiration for other groups to use the 17 Rooms model, as a mechanism to move the 2030 Agenda.



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