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Bulletin

Puerto Rican
Migration to New York City

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PUERTO RICAN MIGRATION TO NEW YORK CITY

The probable future Puerto Rican migration to New York City has been analyzed in a new study, as part of the Department of City Planning's continuing studies on current and future population trends. The present estimate is based on a study of statistics and other information available from agencies such as the Migration Division, Department of Labor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; Puerto Rico Planning Board; and the Civil Aeronautics Board.

SUMMARY

According to the best estimate of the current situation, approximately 32,000 Puerto Ricans per year may migrate to New York City during the next three to five years. The estimate is based on the following assumptions:

1. The continuance of a high level of employment both in New York City and the rest of the United States.
2. The continuance of approximately the present rate of increase of economic activity in Puerto Rico.
3. The annual net out-migration from Puerto Rico averaging about 50,000 per year.*
4. Of this annual net out-migration from Puerto Rico about 65% will enter and remain in New York City.

It should be understood that because of the many possible variations in these factors, the actual figure may be higher or lower. In particular, this would be dependent on relative employment and housing opportunities in New York City and other areas of the United States, as well as unanticipated changes in the Puerto Rico economy. As of December 31, 1956, there were about 550,000** Puerto Ricans in New York City, of whom about 75% were born in Puerto Rico, and the remainder are of Puerto Rican parentage. Most of these people are

* For the past 3 years, the average has been slightly under 40,000.

** Allows for out-migration from New York City of past migrants.

young, with about 37% below the age of 20. The growth of Puerto Rican population in New York City is affected not only by the number of new arrivals, but by natural increase and the movement of past migrants to other communities and back to Puerto Rico. Since 1950 the rate of increase of Puerto Ricans in the rest of the United States has been more rapid than in New York City.

FACTORS INFLUENCING FUTURE MIGRATION

A. Employment Opportunities in the United States

A high level of employment in New York City and the rest of Continental United States will encourage a high rate of migration from Puerto Rico. Likewise, a lower level of employment will generate a low rate of migration. In 1954, when a minor economic recession occurred with a decrease in employment opportunities, net migration from Puerto Rico dropped very sharply from 69,124 in 1953 to 21,531 in 1954. (See Table 1).

As with earlier migrants from Europe, the Puerto Rican seeks in the Continental United States an opportunity to better his economic status. In the United States, Puerto Ricans are to be found in many types of industry and agriculture. Thousands of Puerto Ricans are employed on a seasonal basis as agriculture workers. Many of these workers return to Puerto Rico after their employment on the mainland is completed. As American citizens, Puerto Ricans may of course travel freely between the Island and the mainland.

Puerto Ricans are working in factories in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and over 90 other cities. The principal areas of Puerto Rican employment are in such manufacturing fields as textiles and garments, electronics, food processing, metals and machinery, and automobile assembly; also in construction and medical services.

In New York City the majority of Puerto Ricans now find employment primarily in three main fields. These are the apparel trades, service establishments (including hotels, restaurants and laundries), and a number of manufacturing assembly operations requiring manual skills, such as the manufacture of toys, radio and television sets, and other electronic-electrical equipment where numerous elements are assembled into a final product.

B. Economic Conditions in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico has an area of 3,435 square miles, roughly 70% of the size of Connecticut, inhabited by an estimated 2 1/4 million people as of June 30, 1955. This represents a population increase of 400,000 since 1940, and of over 50,000 since 1950, despite a net out-migration of about 335,000 since the latter date. While the annual death rate is now below that of the Continental United States, the birth rate is much higher than the United States and is decreasing only slightly. Thus Puerto Rico now has a population density of 659 people per square mile - a higher density than the United Kingdom - and is about 12 times as densely populated as Continental United States as a whole.

The steady rise in the living standard of the Island's citizens has resulted from a number of factors. During the post-war period "Operation Bootstrap" stimulated the economic and social development of the Island. This program is designed to attract new industries and thereby raise employment and wages, eliminate poverty and reduce illiteracy, and improve health and housing conditions. However, since the Island is underdeveloped, further growth and expansion of the economy is needed. Until this goal is reached, substantial migration to the United States will continue because of such factors as heavy unemployment in Puerto Rico, the attraction of better jobs on the mainland, and the low cost of transportation.

As of 1954-55 the employed labor force in Puerto Rico was 540,000 - an increase of 53.3% from 1939-40. However, 97,000 persons or 15.3% in the labor force were unemployed in 1954-55, compared with 3.5% for the United States. This reduction from higher levels of unemployment in previous years reflected the gains in economic opportunities.

Similarly, per capita annual income rose from \$122 in 1939-40 to \$442 in 1955-56. Gross national product of the Island during the same year was \$1,242,000,000 - an increase of 156% over 1939-40 as measured in dollars of constant purchasing power.

Until recently Puerto Rico was an agrarian economy, with sugar cane and molasses as the major products. Today agriculture is still an important source of income. However, industry has been expanding at a rapid rate, with

the addition of over 400 manufacturing firms between 1948 and 1956. A substantial portion of income now comes from manufactured goods. Income from manufacturing in 1955-56 amounted to \$175,000,000 - an increase in constant dollars of 182% from 1939-40, considerably greater than that experienced by the total economy of the Island. Nevertheless in 1955-56 per capita income in Puerto Rico was only 50% that of Mississippi, the State with the lowest per capita income.

A recent statement of Governor Munoz Marin of Puerto Rico describes the Island's present plans for economic improvement. "The real problem is not over-population but under-development. We are, therefore, directing every energy to creating more jobs at home and to curtail migration to the States. We are pinning our major hopes to our industrial development program. Puerto Rico needs to create only 100,000 new jobs to solve its present problem."

C. Transportation and Migration Pattern

Nearly all Puerto Ricans migrating to the United States travel by airplane because of its low cost and convenience. The low-cost airplane fare from San Juan to New York is only \$52. At the present time the three major ports of entry are New York City, Miami, and New Orleans.

"Operation Bootstrap," providing more jobs each year on the Island, tends to reduce the migration rate. At the same time it provides more money and enables some to purchase airplane tickets for transportation to the United States.

The Civil Aeronautics Board recently held a hearing in Washington to determine if it was desirable to arrange new and additional air flights at low cost from San Juan to other major cities such as Cleveland and Chicago. Recent surveys indicate that job opportunities in Chicago for Puerto Ricans may be increasing at a greater rate than in New York, and that Cleveland may also develop into a major employment center for Puerto Ricans. If these low-cost air flights were established, more migrants may find it convenient to by-pass New York City.

The hearings of the Civil Aeronautics Board in July, 1956, revealed a rising trend of departures from Puerto Rico to parts of the United States other than New York City. The Veterans' Administration recently reported a higher percentage than in past years of Puerto Rican veterans transferring residence

from Puerto Rico to places in the United States other than New York. All these are indications of continuing changes in the movement pattern from the Island. The net migration rate to New York City, which was as high as 95% in part of the past decade (See Table 1), has been declining steadily and is estimated at 65% for 1956.

MIGRATION ESTIMATES

Estimates of yearly net migration to the United States for the next three to five years range from 43,000 persons by the Puerto Rico Planning Board to 50,000 to 60,000 by the Migration Division. In line with past trends, the migration rate to New York may continue to drop. However, using the current 65% migration rate for initial net arrivals in New York City, and assuming 50,000 net departures, about 32,000 Puerto Ricans are expected to migrate to New York. Whatever the rate of initial arrival, the net growth of the Puerto Rican population of New York City will be reduced by an increasing number leaving New York City for other cities which have equal or greater attraction because of available employment opportunities and housing facilities.

MOBILITY OF PAST MIGRANTS

It is difficult to estimate how many Puerto Ricans who originally came to New York City move out of the City into the Metropolitan Region and to other parts of the country, and how long this comes after their arrival. From Table 2, it is clearly evident that since 1950 there has been a substantial movement to the major industrial cities of the Northeast and Midwestern sectors of the United States. For example, New Jersey shows an increase from 5,640 in 1950 to an estimated 40,000 in 1956. Similarly in Philadelphia there has been a rise from 1,910 in 1960 to 13,000 in 1956; and in Chicago over the same period, a change from 2,555 to 22,000. Recent preliminary reports indicate continued growth of Puerto Rican communities in the New York Metropolitan Region, especially in the industrial sections of New Jersey.

TABLE 1

PUERTO RICAN MIGRATION TO NEW YORK CITY
1941 - 1956

Year	Net Out-Migration from Puerto Rico	Estimated Net Migration to New York City	
		Annual*	New York City** as Percent of Total
1941	643	600	95
1942	1,679	1,600	95
1943	3,204	3,000	95
1944	11,201	10,600	95
1945	13,573	12,900	95
1946	39,911	37,900	95
1947	24,551	23,300	95
1948	32,775	29,500	90
1949	25,698	23,100	90
1950	34,703	29,500	85
1951	52,899	42,300	80
1952	59,103	45,500	77
1953	69,124	51,800	75
1954	21,531	16,100	75
1955	45,464	31,600	70
1956	52,315	33,900	65

* Estimates are rounded to nearest hundred.

** Rate to New York City estimated by Migration Division, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Source: New York City Department of City Planning
Welfare and Health Council to New York City
Puerto Rico Planning Board

TABLE 2

ESTIMATED SIZE OF PUERTO RICAN POPULATION
OF UNITED STATES AND
SELECTED STATES AND CITIES

1950 - 1956

State and City	1950 Census Estimate of Puerto Rican Population	Latest Estimate of Puerto Rican Population	Date of Latest Estimate
<u>Continental U.S.</u>	301,375	675,000	1955*
<u>California</u>			
Los Angeles	1,825	2,500	1956
San Francisco	2,375	2,700	1956
<u>Connecticut</u>	1,305	--	
Bridgeport	590	7,000	1956
Hartford	--	2,000	1956
Waterbury	--	2,000	1953
<u>District of Columbia</u>	1,025	1,200	1956
<u>Florida</u>	4,050		
Miami	1,500	5,000	1956
Princeton	--	1,000	1951
<u>Illinois</u>	3,570		
Chicago	2,555	22,000	1956
<u>Indiana</u>	1,800		
East Chicago	--	2,500	1956
Gary	675	2,500	1956
<u>Massachusetts</u>	1,175		
Springfield	--	3,500	1956
<u>Michigan</u>	1,495		
Detroit	535	1,600	1955
<u>New Jersey</u>	5,640	40,000	1956
Camden	--	5,000	1955
Jersey City	655	2,500	1955
Newark	545	3,200	1955
Patterson	--	2,000	1955
Perth Amboy	--	4,000	1955
Trenton	--	1,000	1955

TABLE 2 (continued)

State and City	1950 Census Estimate of Puerto Rican Population	Latest Estimate of Puerto Rican Population	Date of Latest Estimate
<u>New York</u>	252,515	--	
Buffalo	--	3,000	1956
New York City	245,880	550,000	1956*
Rochester	--	4,000	1955
<u>Ohio</u>	2,115	--	
Cleveland	--	4,000	1956
Lorain	--	4,000	1956
Youngstown	--	2,000	1956
<u>Pennsylvania</u>	3,560	--	
Bethlehem	--	1,000	1956
Philadelphia	1,910	13,000	1956
Reading	--	1,000	1954
<u>Wisconsin</u>	310	--	
Milwaukee	--	3,000	1956

* December 31st.

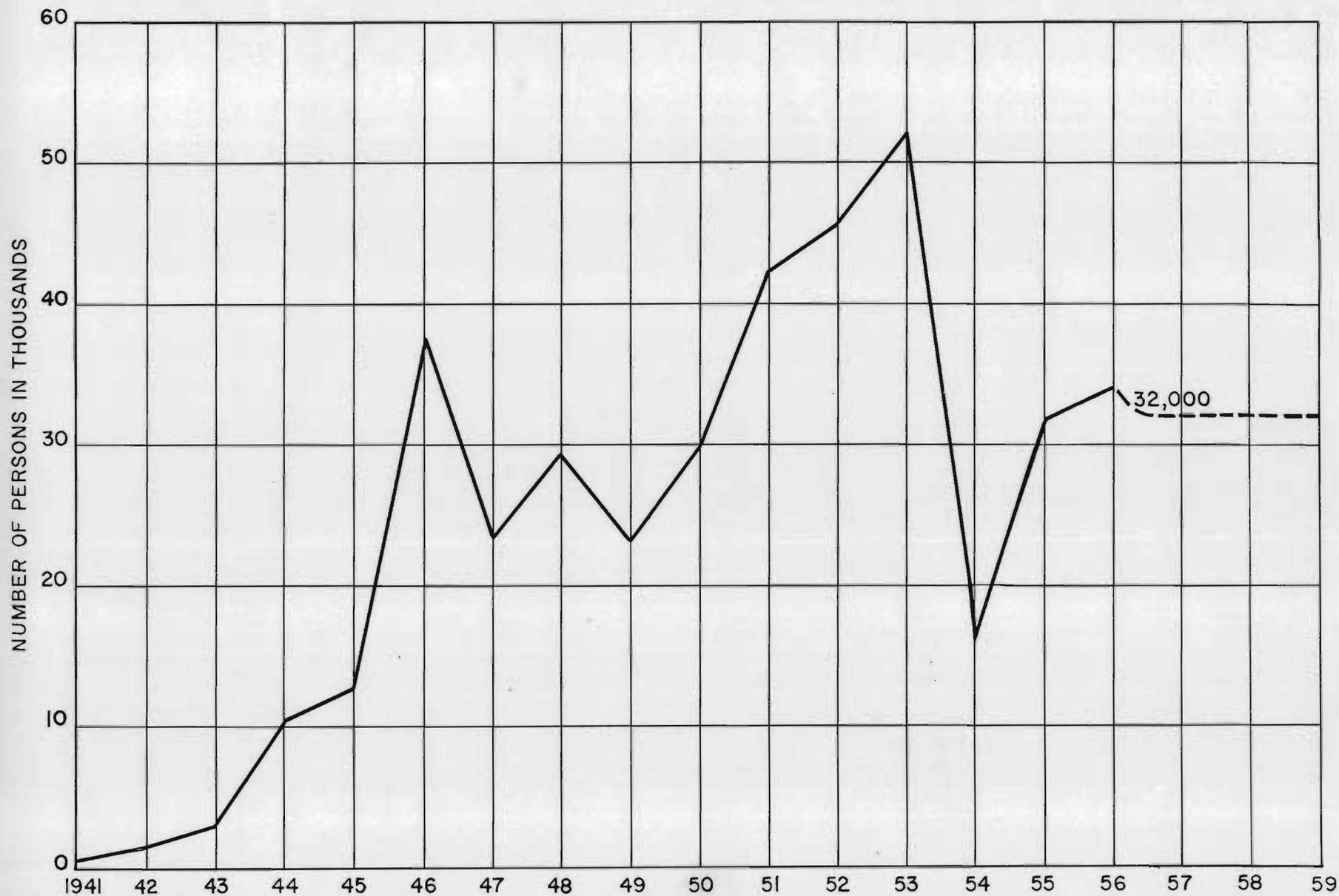
Note

1. Figures include persons both of Puerto Rican birth and parentage. 1950 estimates are based on a 20% sample. Latest estimates are from a variety of sources, in general are not based upon sufficient statistical data, and are subject to a wide margin of error. These data do not represent complete coverage of all cities in which there are Puerto Rican communities, but probably cover all of the largest communities.
2. Estimates have not been given for cities with less than 1,000 Puerto Rican people.

Source: Migration Division, Department of Labor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

PUERTO RICAN NET MIGRATION TO NEW YORK CITY ESTIMATED ANNUAL TOTALS, 1941-1956

PROJECTIONS TO 1959



SOURCE: PUERTO RICO PLANNING BOARD
N.Y.C. DEPT. OF CITY PLANNING