Elderly population in Puerto Rico: Sociodemographic characteristics among the poor and non-poor.

Extended abstract

Near half of the general population, enumerated by the 2000 Census of Population and Housing, in Puerto Rico was living below the poverty level. This social problem has been analyzed in the country from various perspectives. Nevertheless, very few studies had taken into account the poverty among Puerto Rico's 65 and over population. It is very important to study this topic because of the constant increase in the number of elders. Due to elders conform a subpopulation with different needs to the rest of the general population, the poverty affects them not necessarily in the same magnitude as other age groups.

Within the analysis is important to know the elders' sociodemographic characteristics that live below the poverty level because possibly those are the same characteristics that place them at risk of living in poor conditions, like having a lower education and not being in the labor force.

The research main objective is to know the sociodemographic characteristics of the 65 and over population in Puerto Rico in 2000, below and above the poverty level, as classified by the US Census Bureau. Among the specific objectives, are the following: to describe the poverty level by ample age groups (14 and under, 15 to 44, 45 to 64, and 65 and over), to describe the poverty level of 65 to 74, 75 to 84, and 85 and over age groups, to examine the sociodemographic characteristics of 65 and over population below and above the poverty level, and to describe the geographic distribution of 65 and over population below the poverty level. The population considered as the research object is

the elderly (65 years old and over), residing in 2000 in Puerto Rico, for whom poverty status was determined. Among the sociodemographic characteristics to study, are the following: gender, place of birth, immigration to Puerto Rico, relationship with householder, marital status, educational attainment, employment status, total income, Social Security income, public assistance income, and retirement income. The data source used is the 5% Public Use Micro data Sample (PUMS), created by the US Census Bureau. The analysis to realize will be descriptive.

The analyzed data is expected to indicate that poverty in 65 and over population increased, as the age increased. Also, some expected findings are a greater percent of non-poor elders with higher education, income from Social Security and retirement, and still participating in the labor force in comparison with poor elders. Besides, other expected results are a greater poverty level amongst the feminine population, ones born in Puerto Rico, non immigrants, householders or householders' spouses, and the married or widowed elders. With regard to the socioeconomic characteristics, it is expected to observe a greater proportion of poverty in the elderly population amongst the ones with lower education, not in the labor force, who received Social Security income, who do not received public assistance, and who do not received retirement income. In terms of the geographic aspect, the *municipios* (counties) that constitute the geographic areas, denominated as PUMAs (Public Use Microdata Area) in the Census of Population and Housing, that are located in the central and mountainous area, could be the ones with the greater percent of elders living below the poverty level.

The sociodemographic characteristics are associated with different life events, such as the retirement from the labor force. Events like that can increase the risk of the

elder of being poor. Another characteristic event at old age is a change in the marital status to widowhood, associated to the high mortality prevailing in that group. So, when became widowed, this elder will no longer have the economic support that his/her dead partner gave before; therefore, increasing the risk of being poor. In this way, those sociodemographic characteristics along with having 65 or more years old, could increase the vulnerability of this important subpopulation to live in poor conditions.