

From: Data for Progress

To: Interested Parties

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Puerto Ricans Overwhelmingly Support the Immediate Right to Vote for President and Support Joe Biden, Despite Mixed Partisan Identification

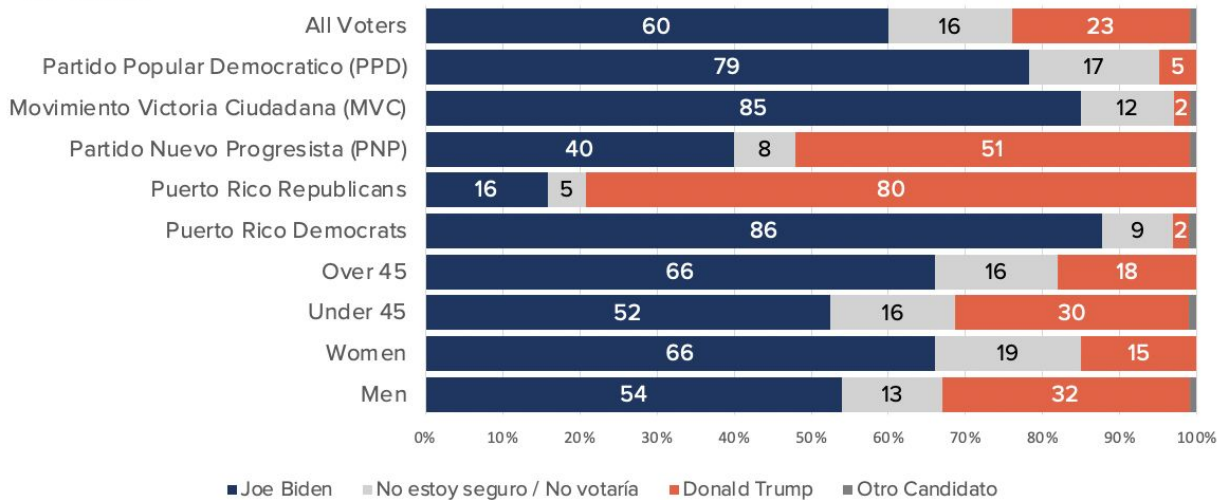
Our October poll of Puerto Rico showed broad support for Joe Biden. Overall, 60 percent said that they would vote for former Vice President Biden if they could vote for President. Twenty-three percent said they would vote for President Trump, while 11 percent were undecided. Presidential candidate preference on the island closely resembles the results from [polling](#) of Puerto Ricans on the mainland (Univision - 64 percent for Biden to 21 percent for President Trump).

This broad support is sustained in both under 45 and over 45 groups as well as across gender. Only those self-identifying as members of the local New Progressive Party (PNP) and the Republican Party had majority support for President Trump.

These results must be understood in the context of a Puerto Rican population whose primary political affiliation is to local political parties rather than U.S. national parties. Even if Puerto Rican voters sympathize more with the Democratic candidate, those polled mostly self-identify as Moderate (32 percent) and Conservative (44 percent).

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Actualmente, los residentes de los territorios de los Estados Unidos no pueden votar por el Presidente de los Estados Unidos. Si pudiera votar por el Presidente, ¿por cuál de los siguientes candidatos votaría?

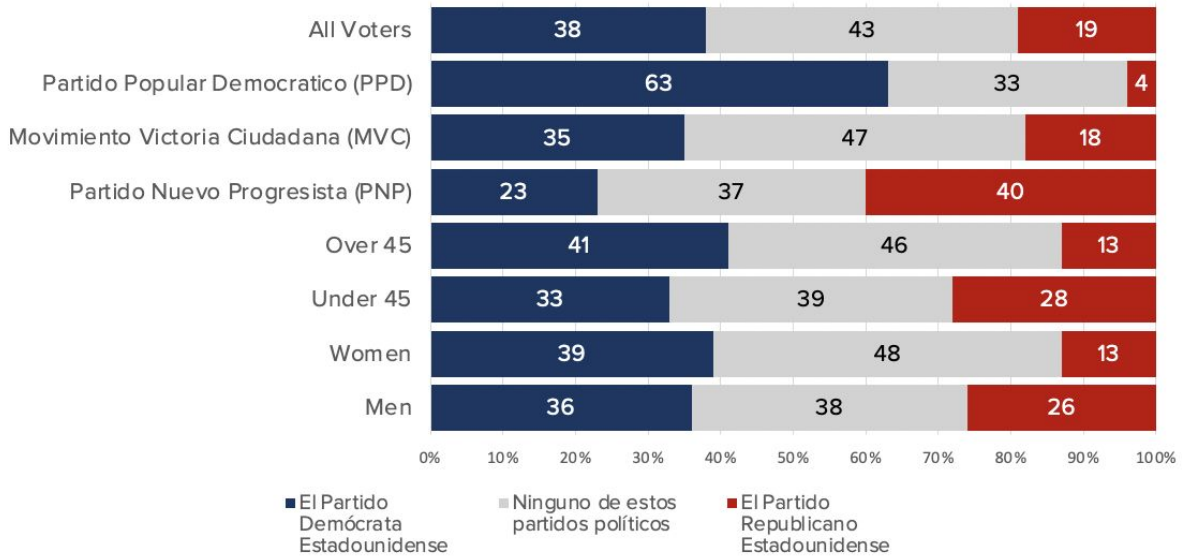


Our polling suggests that 43 percent of Puerto Ricans don't consider themselves members of either the Democratic or Republican parties. This is lower than party identification of Puerto Ricans on the mainland where just below 70 percent of Puerto Ricans identify with [either of the two major parties](#). Thirty-eight percent of Puerto Ricans on the island consider themselves members of the Democratic Party and 19 percent consider themselves members of the Republican Party. Meanwhile, among Puerto Ricans on the mainland, it's 51 percent Democrat and 17 percent Republican.

Among members of the local Popular Democratic Party (PPD), 63 percent identify as Democrats and only 4 percent as Republicans. Among members of the other major political party, the New Progressive Party (PNP), most consider themselves to be Republicans (40 percent) and about a quarter consider themselves to be Democrats (23 percent).

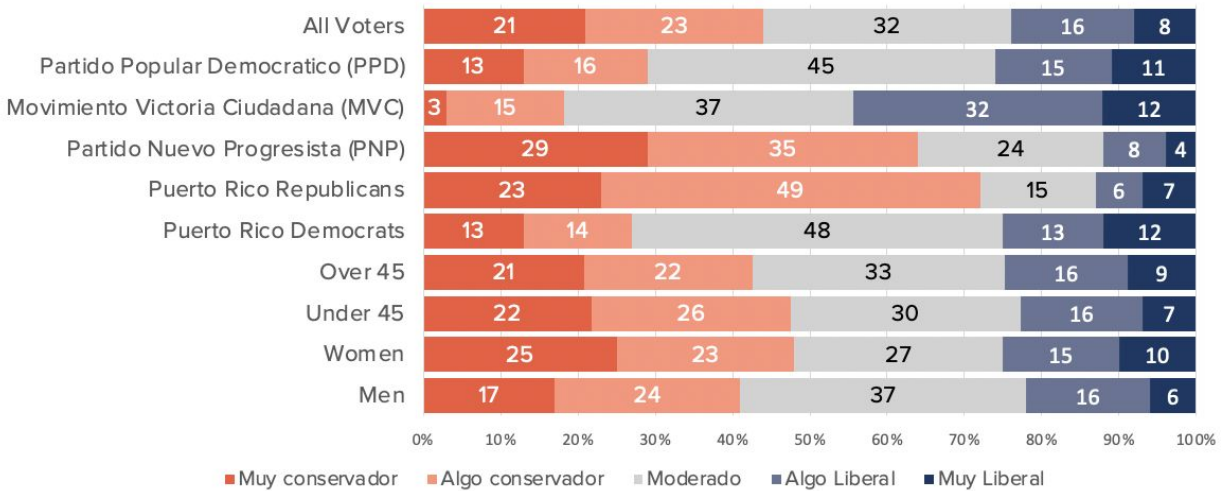
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En términos de la política continental, ¿Se considera usted miembro de alguno de los siguientes partidos políticos?



Ideologically, 44 percent of survey respondents describe themselves as Very or Somewhat Conservative (21 percent and 23 percent respectively), with 32 percent describing themselves as Moderate. These results were broadly similar across age and gender. Of those that identified as Democrat, most considered themselves to be Moderate while a roughly equal amount (27 percent and 25 percent) considered themselves to be Conservative or Liberal.

¿Cómo te describirías políticamente?



It must be noted that notions of conservatism and liberalism can differ from those in the United States and so does the role of national parties. For example, high profile members of the local government - like the Governor and Resident Commissioner - may self-identify as Democratic or Republican, but they don't run under the banner of those parties in local elections. Democrats and Republicans don't field candidates in any of Puerto Rico's local or state-level elections. Thus, for local officials, claiming affiliation with a national party might be more akin to a statement of personal positions while their policy positions are determined by local parties.

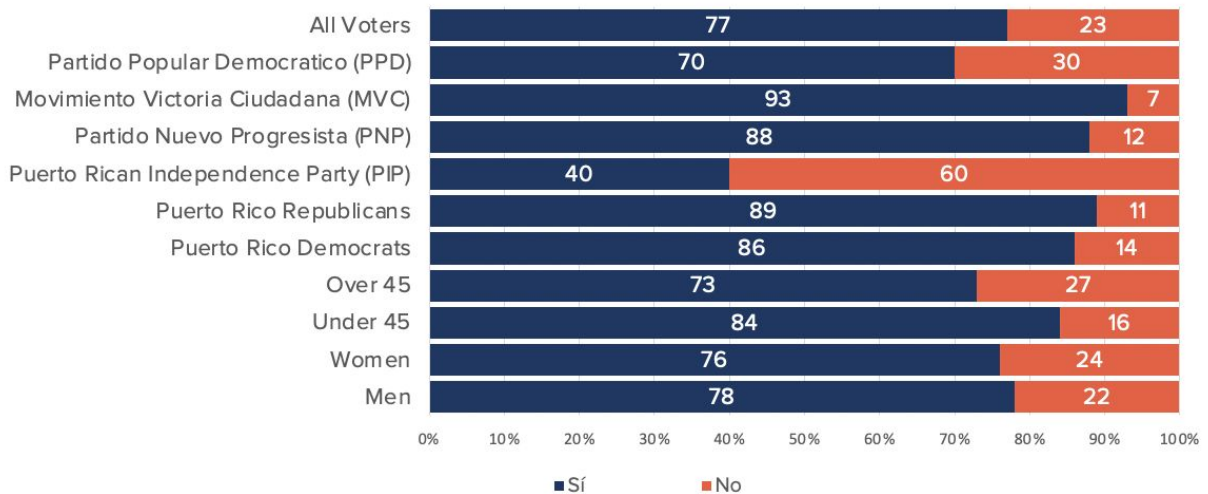
While explaining Trump's unpopularity and Biden's relative popularity lies outside of the scope of this report, it's clear that President Trump is deeply unpopular in Puerto Rico across broad demographics, suggesting that perceptions of his Presidency's impact on Puerto Rico have been negative. Events like the response to Hurricane Maria, the administration's handling of recovery funds, and the President's misinformation about funding to Puerto Rico might have all played a part in these perceptions. President Trump's racist rhetoric against other Latinx groups might also explain apathy from Puerto Ricans towards him.

Regardless of presidential preference, what stood out most from our polling is the overwhelming support for the right to vote for President right now - regardless of

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future status. Across age and gender, support is 70 percent or greater. Only members of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) would mostly reject a measure that granted Puerto Ricans the chance to vote for President before changing the current political status.

¿Le gustaría que Puerto Rico pudiera votar por el presidente de los Estados Unidos antes de cambiar su estatus político?



Overall, Puerto Ricans are not as set on their Presidential preferences as Puerto Ricans on the mainland. However, there is a clear consensus in favor of being able to vote for president with 77 percent of voters saying they would like to get the right to vote for president even before changing the territorial status. In the face of this data, arguments for denying Puerto Ricans on the island the right to vote hold little water.

It's not inconceivable for a US territory to have the right to vote for president. The 700,000 citizens in Washington DC can vote for president even though the district has not yet been admitted as a state to the union.

It's worth noting that arguments based on the misguided notion that Puerto Ricans do not pay taxes are not sustained by the facts nor from the standpoint of an inclusive democracy - low income people on the mainland who don't pay income

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tax still have and should have the right to vote. In [US vs. José Luis Vaello-Madero](#), the United States Court of Appeals for the First District brought to light that “the residents of Puerto Rico not only make substantial contributions to the federal treasury, but in fact have consistently made them in higher amounts than taxpayers in at least six states, as well as the territory of the Northern Mariana Islands. From 1998 up until 2006, when Puerto Rico was hit by its present economic recession, Puerto Rico consistently contributed more than \$4 billion annually in federal taxes and impositions into the national fisc.”

Enfranchising Puerto Ricans on the island isn't just the right thing to do from the standpoint of democracy, it's the right thing to do from a policy perspective too. Puerto Rican enfranchisement in presidential elections would pressure presidents to address the island's socio-economic challenges because if they fail to do so, as Trump did with Hurricane Maria, they would be punished electorally by both Puerto Ricans on the mainland and on the island as well. Moreover, it may even help bring more attention to solving the island's colonial status once and for all.

Regardless of Puerto Rico's political future - whether as a state or a republic - there is no basis for denying Puerto Ricans the presidential vote, beyond those rooted in undemocratic notions, false pretenses and century-old colonial jurisprudence. Puerto Ricans on the island should have a say in presidential elections, and the fact that they don't have it yet is another failure of American democracy.

Methodology

From October 19 to October 26, 2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 439 Puerto Rico voters using SMS and web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, income, religion, partisanship and senate district. The survey was conducted in Spanish and English. The margin of error is ± 5 percentage points.

[Presidential Vote Topline](#)



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