



Key Findings on Governance, Autonomy, and Identity

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Overview

In 2025, the Laboratorio Puertorriqueño de Opinión Pública (LabPOP, or the Puerto Rican Public Opinion Lab) asked 1,266 adult residents of Puerto Rico about their views on a variety of issues affecting the archipelago. Surveys were administered in person, by telephone, and self-administered via internet-connected devices between April 26, 2025, and November 23, 2025. We obtained an overall response rate of 19.2% (using AAPOR Response Rate 6). Results have been weighted to reflect the full population of Puerto Rico, including both voters and non-voters. This allows us to capture the views of residents who do not or cannot participate in the electoral process, as well as those who do. Because plebiscite and election outcomes reflect only the views of those who turn out and complete a ballot, findings in this brief may diverge from election results.

In this brief, we document findings that illuminate how Puerto Ricans view governance structures, their perception of democratic constraints, and their own political agency.

There Is Widespread Distrust of Government — Especially Puerto Rico's Own Elected Officials

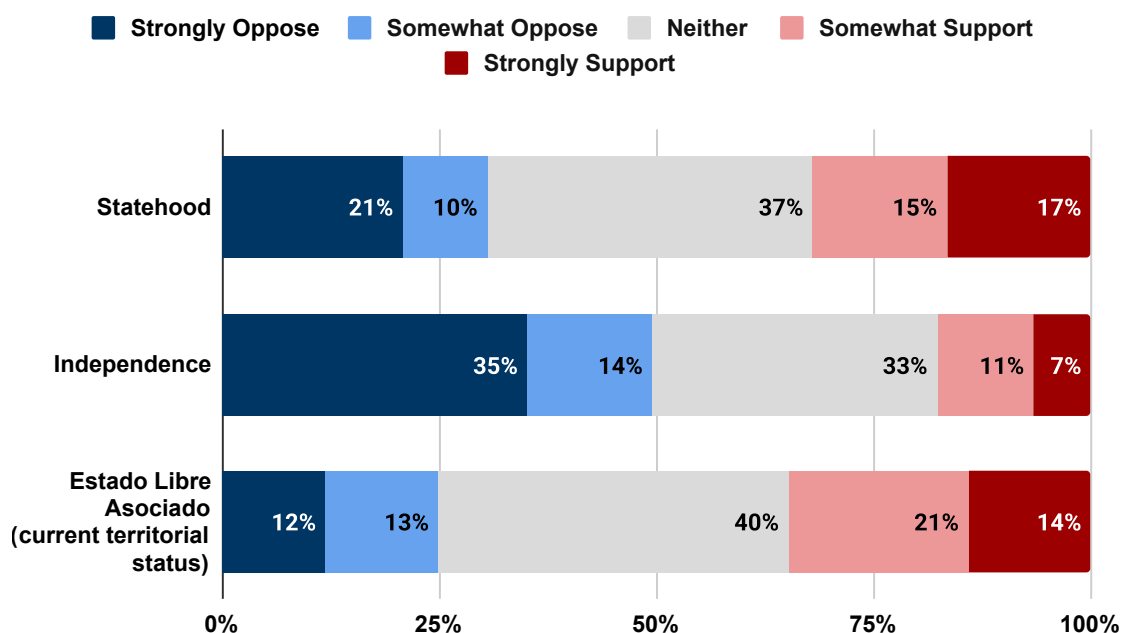
- Confidence in local governance is low. **Fifty percent (50%) of residents believe the majority or all of Puerto Rico's elected officials are corrupt.**
- Moreover, 63% of Puerto Ricans disagree that their government addresses residents' needs (including 39% of residents who strongly disagree).
- Seventy-one percent of residents feel their voice is not heard in government decisions.
- Governor Jenniffer González Colón faces particularly low approval. Just over 1 in 10 residents (13%) said that they approve of the way Governor González Colón is performing her job as governor, including 4% who strongly approve and 9% who somewhat approve of her performance. Nearly two-thirds of residents (63%), on the other hand, indicated that they disapprove of her performance as governor (including 50% of residents who strongly disapprove of her performance and 13% who somewhat disapprove of her performance).

Despite Decades of Status-Centered Politics, Many Puerto Ricans Today Don't Have Strong Preferences on Primary Status Options

- A striking share of residents do not hold clear preferences on the primary options for Puerto Rico's political relationship with the United States (often referred to as their political status, or just status). For each option, at least one-third of residents fall into the neither-support-nor-oppose category (see Figure 1).
- Although many have pointed to the last four plebiscites¹ (2012, 2017, 2020, 2024) as evidence that the majority of the population supports statehood for Puerto Rico, data from our representative survey of Puerto Rican adult residents **show a more divided electorate**: 32% support statehood, 31% oppose it, and 37% (the largest group) do not have a clear position on statehood.
- **Independence faces the strongest resistance, but plebiscite results may overstate how unpopular it is.** Only 18% of residents support Puerto Rican independence — Puerto Rico separating from the United States and becoming its own sovereign nation — while just under half (49%) oppose it, including 35% who strongly oppose it. Yet, a substantial portion (33%) neither support nor oppose independence.
 - Independence's low vote share in past plebiscites may collapse this undecided group into an appearance of outright rejection.²
- Estado Libre Asociado (or ELA, which is the current territorial status), draws the highest overall support at about 35%, compared with 25% opposition. However, more residents (41%) neither support nor oppose ELA than either support or oppose it.
- Despite limited enthusiasm for any single status option, 71% say the issue remains "very" or "somewhat" important in deciding how to vote — suggesting that status concerns persist even as preferences remain diffuse.

Figure 1: Attitudes toward Three Primary Status Options

% of adult residents of Puerto Rico who favor/ oppose...



Note: Values are rounded to the nearest percentage so totals may not sum to 100%.

Source: Laboratorio Puertorriqueño de Opinión Pública, 2025

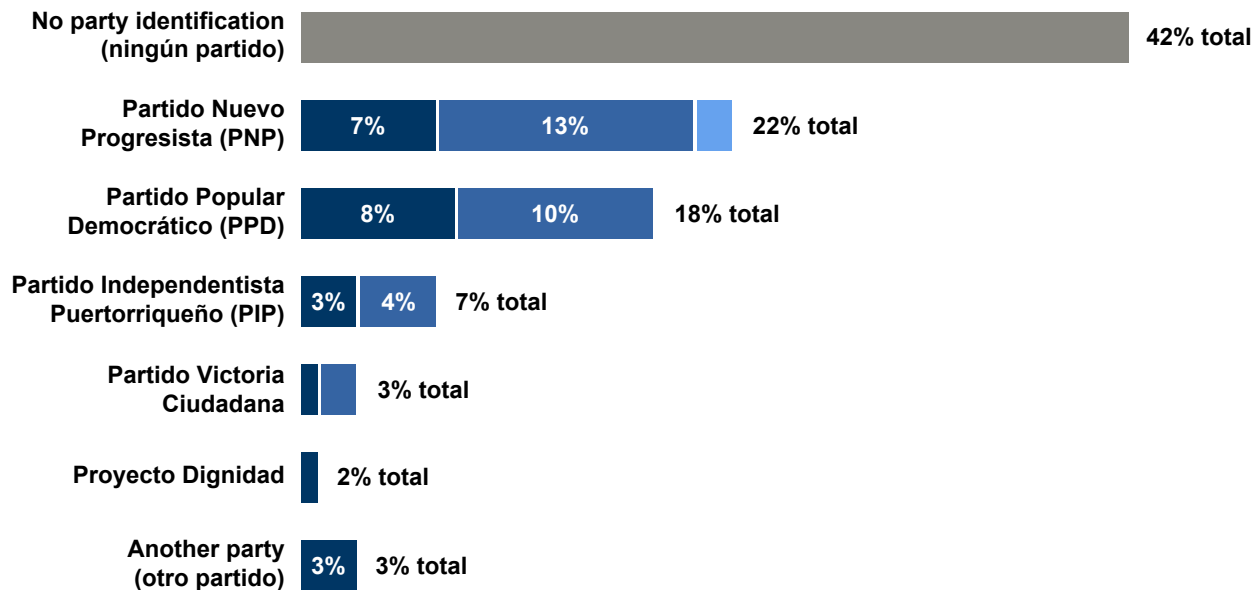
The Traditional Party System No Longer Commands Majority Allegiance

- **More Puerto Ricans reject a party label than claim one.** Forty-two percent (42%) of residents do not identify with any political party — nearly twice as many as those who identified with the most popular party (see Figure 2).
- Fewer than half of residents (47%) identify with any of the three longest-standing political parties in Puerto Rico. Among those who do identify with one of these parties, 22% identify with the pro-statehood Partido Nuevo Progresista, 18% identify with the pro-ELA Partido Popular Democrático, 7% identify with the pro-independence Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño, 3% identify with Partido Victoria Ciudadana, 2% identify with Proyecto Dignidad, and 3% identify with another party.
- Even among people who identify with a political party, attachment is more often lukewarm than strong. Across the three traditional parties, strong identifiers make up only 18% of all residents, compared to 27% who identify moderately and 2% who identify weakly — meaning most partisans lean toward their party rather than firmly claim it.

Figure 2: Party Identification in Puerto Rico

% of adult residents of Puerto Rico who most identify with...

Strength of identification: ■ Strong ■ Moderate ■ Weak



Note: Respondents could only report identification with one party. Values are rounded to the nearest percentage so totals may not sum to 100%. Segments below 3% are not labeled.

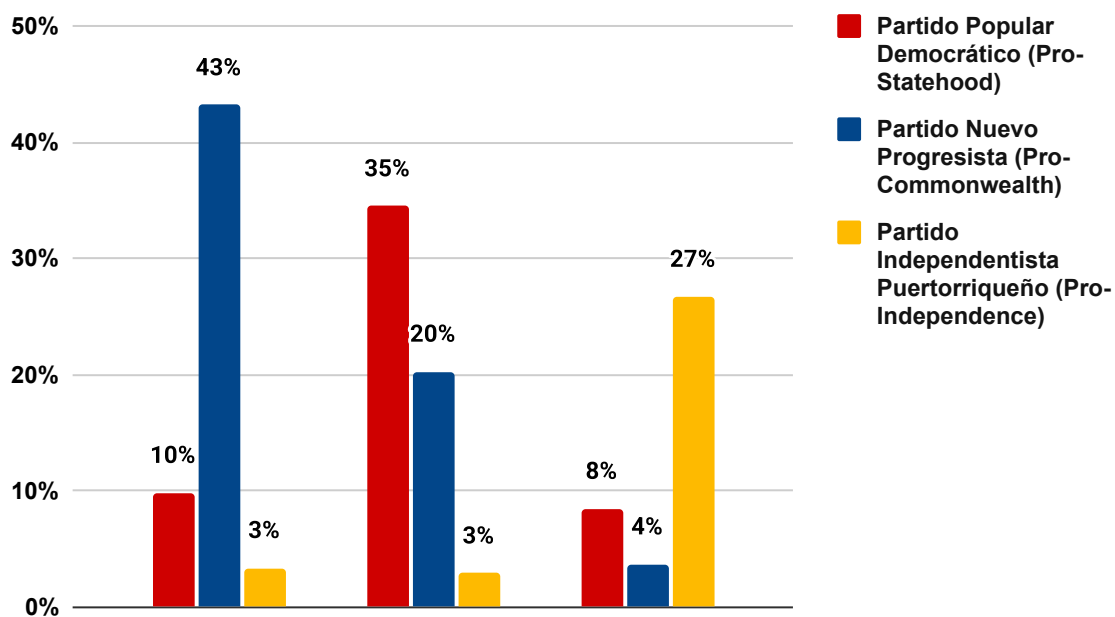
Source: Laboratorio Puertorriqueño de Opinión Pública, 2025

Alignment Between Political Status Preference and Party Identification Is Fracturing

- Even the parties most closely tied to a status position don't come close to monopolizing that position's supporters. Only 43% of statehood supporters identify with the PNP, only 35% of ELA supporters identify with the PPD, and just 27% of independence supporters identify with the PIP (see Figure 3). Sizable shares of each group claim no party affiliation at all — 34% of statehood supporters, 35% of ELA supporters, and 45% of independence supporters.
- People who identify with a political party do not necessarily align with the party's position on Puerto Rico's status. Rather than uniting behind statehood, PNP identifiers are split: 63% support statehood, 32% support the current territorial status (ELA), and 3% support independence. Rather than uniting behind ELA, PPD identifiers are similarly split: 64% support ELA, 17% support statehood, and 8% support independence. PIP identifiers show a comparable pattern: rather than uniting behind independence, 70% support independence, 16% support statehood, and 15% support ELA.

Figure 3: Party Identification in Puerto Rico, by Status Preference

Among adult residents of Puerto Rico who support each status option, % who most identify with...



Note: Data reflect only respondents who indicated support for at least one of the three primary status options; respondents could support more than one option. Respondents who identify with Movimiento Victoria Ciudadana, Proyecto Dignidad, another party, or as not identifying with any party were excluded, as these parties do not have a clear, unified position on Puerto Rico's status.

Source: Laboratorio Puertorriqueño de Opinión Pública, 2025



Note: The image above depicts La Puerta de la Bandera in San Juan, which was repainted in black and white a few days after the passage of the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA; Pub. L. 114–187) in 2016 — the law that established a fiscal oversight board for Puerto Rico — to reflect a sense of mourning over the loss of local governance autonomy. Photograph by Allyson Pérez.

The Sovereignty Crisis: Perceptions of Constrained Self-Governance³

- A defining feature of Puerto Ricans' political consciousness is the perception that their island lacks genuine self-governance. **Seventy-two percent (72%) of residents say the Puerto Rican government has little or no power to make independent decisions without U.S. federal intervention.**
- Even more striking, 68% believe the Fiscal Oversight Board (PROMESA or La Junta) — an unelected, federally-appointed body — has more power than the elected government over the laws implemented in Puerto Rico.
- When asked directly, 78% of Puerto Ricans say the island needs the U.S. federal government “a lot” or “very much” to survive. This economic and political lack of sovereignty fundamentally shapes how residents view democratic possibility.

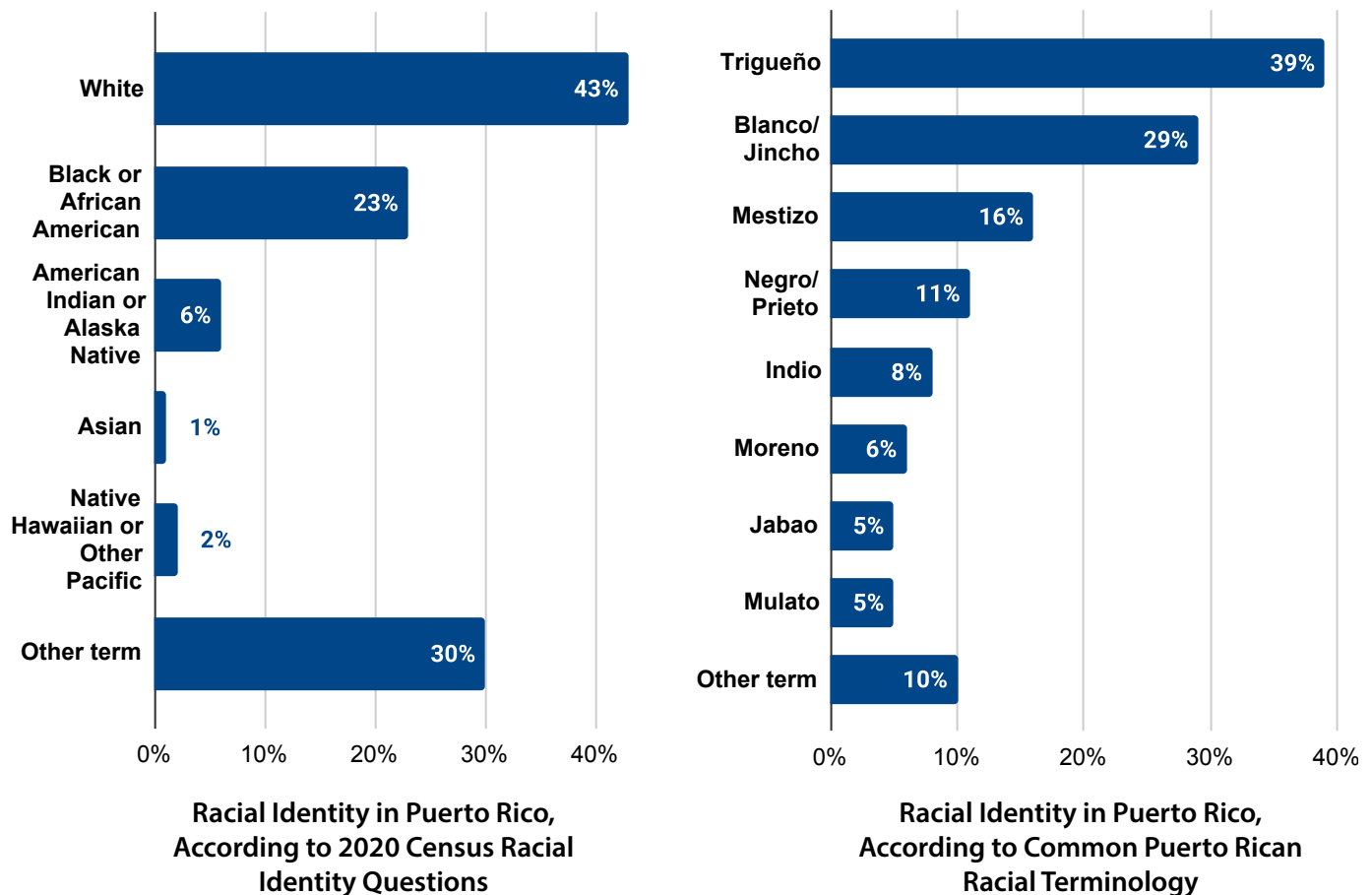


Reported Racial Identity Is Highly Susceptible to Survey Design Effects⁴

- To test how racial classification frameworks shape identity reporting, we randomized respondents to either Puerto Rican racial terminology or 2020 U.S. Census categories. The results reveal significant divergence (see Figure 4).
 - When using Puerto Rican racial terminology, 29% of residents identify as White and 11% as Black, with 39% identifying as “trigueño.”
 - When using U.S. Census categories, 43% of residents identify as White, 23% as Black, and 30% select “other.”
- These divergent results reinforce evidence that racialized identity terms capture different meanings in different contexts. This underscores why researchers, policymakers, and civic organizations working in Puerto Rico should be cautious about directly applying Census racial categories.

Figure 4: Racial Identity by Question Wording

% of adult residents of Puerto Rico who describe their racial identity as...



Note: Respondents could select more than one racial identity.

Source: Laboratorio Puertorriqueño de Opinión Pública, 2025

Acknowledgments

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Endnotes

- 1 Statehood received a majority of votes in each of the last four status plebiscites, earning 61.2% in 2012, 97.2% in 2017 (where turnout was particularly low), 52.5% in 2020, and 58.6% in 2024 (Recovered from Comisión Estatal de Elecciones: Eventos Electorales).
- 2 The independence option received 5.5% of the vote in 2012, 1.5% in 2017, and 11.8% in 2024. It was not included as an option in the 2020 plebiscite (Recovered from Comisión Estatal de Elecciones: Eventos Electorales).
- 3 See work of Salinas-Muñiz (<https://www.ignangelisalinasmuniz.com>) for further insights on this.
- 4 See work of Viviana Rivera Burgos (<https://www.vivianariveraburgos.com>) for further insights on this.

