

BASIC FACTS ABOUT PUERTO RICO

Snapshots of History

- In 1898, the treaty that ended the Spanish-American War made Puerto Rico a territory of the United States.
- Laws beginning with a 1900 statute authorized Puerto Ricans to exercise increasing measures of self-government on local affairs.
- The 1917 law also granted United States citizenship to individuals born in Puerto Rico. The granting of self-government on local affairs was largely completed with federal approval of a locally-drafted territorial constitution in 1952.

Facts about Puerto Rico's Current Relationship with the United States

- Puerto Rico does not have votes in the election of the President of the United States. The territory does, however, elect delegates to the Democratic and Republican National Conventions that choose presidential candidates.
- The 3.97 million people of Puerto Rico are represented in the Federal Government solely by an elected Resident Commissioner who has a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives with votes in committees, including the Committee of the Whole, but who cannot vote on the final passage of bills.
- There is a U.S. District Court for the District of Puerto Rico, which falls under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.
- Puerto Ricans are subject to federal taxes as determined by federal law. They currently pay income taxes on income from outside of the island and other taxes such as Social Security and Medicare taxes.

Defending Democracy: Puerto Ricans in the U.S. Armed Forces

- There are currently over 10,000 active duty military personnel from Puerto Rico serving across all the branches of the U.S. Armed Forces.
- Tens of thousands of Puerto Rico's sons and daughters have served and fought, with valor and distinction, in all U.S. wars since World War I. Among them, five soldiers from Puerto Rico have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.
- According to the latest data from the Department of Veterans Affairs, over 120,000 American veterans currently call Puerto Rico home. Approximately 30 veterans organization are currently active in Puerto Rico.

- The U.S. Army's 65th Infantry Division was one of the most decorated units in the Korean War, and consisted almost entirely of Puerto Ricans.
- Today, Puerto Rico's National Guard units are considered among the best in the Nation.

Local Government:

- U.S. territory exercising self-government on local affairs.
- Divided into three separate branches of government, modeled after the Federal and the various state constitutions.
- Head of State: President Barack H. Obama
- Head of local government: Governor Luis G. Fortuño (elected every four years).
- Legislative Branch: bicameral legislative assembly (all seats elected simultaneously every four years).
- 78 municipalities.
- Local Courts: Supreme Court, Circuit Court of Appeals, and a First Instance Court.
- Official Languages: Spanish and English.

The Island:

- Located between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, approximately 950 miles southeast of Miami, Florida.
 - Comprises 3,492 square miles, nearly the same size as Connecticut.
 - With nearly 4 million residents, in population Puerto Rico is larger than Oregon, and slightly smaller than Kentucky.
 - The territory's capital, San Juan, founded by Juan Ponce de León in 1521, is the oldest city under the American flag.
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- Metropolitan San Juan has a population of more than 1.5 million.
 - Subtropical climate with little seasonal variation (avg. 75 F° in Winter and 81 F° in Summer)