



May 17, 2021

TO: Interested Parties

**FROM: Francisco Proskauer Valerio, Technical Data Analyst
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RE: Voters Support Action on the Status of Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.

With the recent passage of the Washington, D.C. Admission Act in the U.S. House, many have wondered whether there will also be legislative action regarding Puerto Rico's political status. There are currently two different bills being debated in Congress to resolve Puerto Rico's status: the Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act (HR 1522) and the Puerto Rico Self Determination Act (HR 2070). Change Research conducted a national survey of 1,025 voters from April 15th-20th to gauge American voters' opinions on the political status of Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.¹

Majorities support statehood for American citizens living in D.C. & Puerto Rico

For 123 years Puerto Rico has remained an unincorporated territory of the United States. Today, 3.2 million primarily Spanish-speaking U.S. citizens call the archipelago home. A majority (71%) of U.S. voters consider Puerto Ricans to be Americans, while just 16% do not and 13% are unsure. Black and Latinx voters equally consider Puerto Ricans to be Americans (75% and 77% respectively) while white voters are slightly less likely to believe this (68%). This belief divides along party lines: nearly every Democrat (93%) and a majority of pure independents (56%) believe Puerto Ricans are Americans. Republicans are more divided, with nearly half (49%) believing they are Americans and roughly 3-in-10 (29%) Republicans denying this.

A substantial majority of voters support statehood for Puerto Rico (59%). One-in-three voters (32%) oppose Puerto Rican statehood and 9% are unsure. By contrast, a smaller 53% majority of voters support statehood for Washington, D.C., and 43% oppose D.C. statehood. Puerto Rico and D.C. statehood have virtually identical levels of strong support (43% strongly support and 44% strongly support, respectively), but there are fewer strong negative opinions about Puerto Rican

¹ Change Research conducted a national survey of 1,205 voters April 15-20, 2021. The margin of error, as traditionally calculated, is $\pm 1.28\%$. Respondents were recruited into an online survey instrument via Dynamic Online Sampling* and SMS. Post stratification was done on region, gender, age, race, education, and past vote history with 2020 voters.

statehood: only 25% of voters strongly oppose Puerto Rico statehood, much less than the 40% that strongly oppose statehood for D.C.

Puerto Rico and DC statehood

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● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Not sure ● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose

The District of Columbia is home to nearly 700,000 American citizens and does not have voting representation in the U.S. Congress. Do you support or oppose the District of Columbia becoming a state?



Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States. It is home to 3.2 million primarily Spanish-speaking U.S. citizens and does not have voting representation in the U.S. Congress and cannot vote for President. Do you support or oppose: Puerto Rico becoming a state.



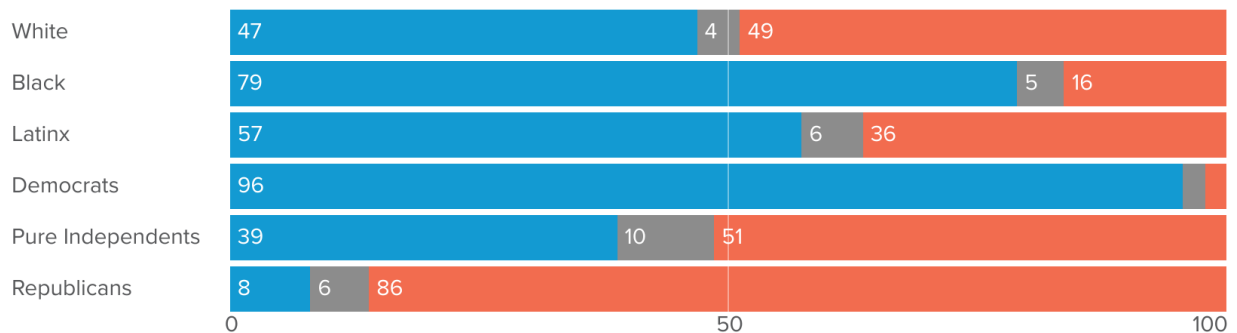
Although their support is more intense for D.C. statehood, Black voters are the biggest supporters of statehood for both territories. Majorities of Latinx voters support both statehood options, though they are slightly more supportive of Puerto Rican statehood. The biggest difference in support comes from white voters: more white voters oppose D.C. statehood than support it, while a majority of white voters support statehood for Puerto Rico. That difference in opinion is driven by white Republicans. Only 8% of Republicans support D.C. statehood, but 30% of Republicans support it for Puerto Rico. On the other hand, Democrats are initially 9 points less supportive of Puerto Rico statehood than they are of D.C. statehood.

Support for DC statehood

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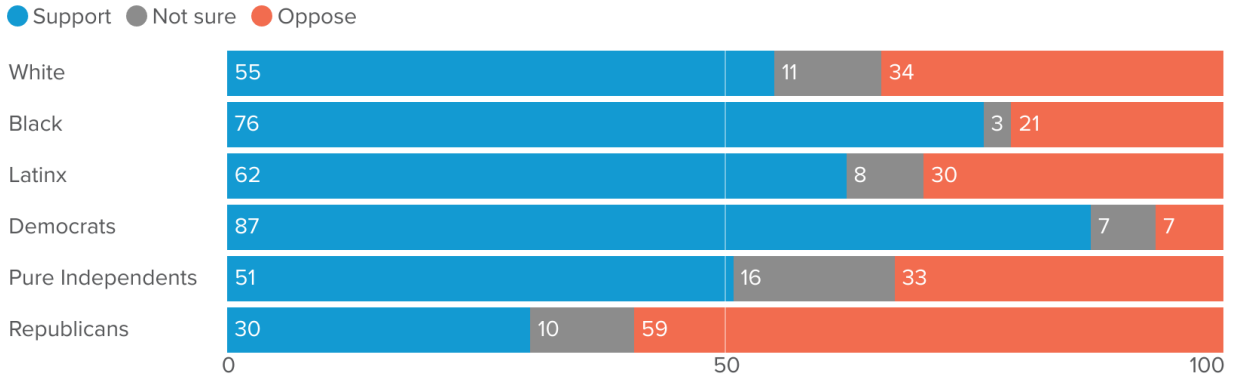
● Support ● Not sure ● Oppose



Support for Puerto Rico statehood

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Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States. It is home to 3.2 million primarily Spanish-speaking U.S. citizens and does not have voting representation in the U.S. Congress and cannot vote for President. Do you support or oppose: Puerto Rico becoming a state.



A 45% plurality of voters are supportive of statehood for both D.C. and Puerto Rico, while only 27% oppose statehood for both territories.

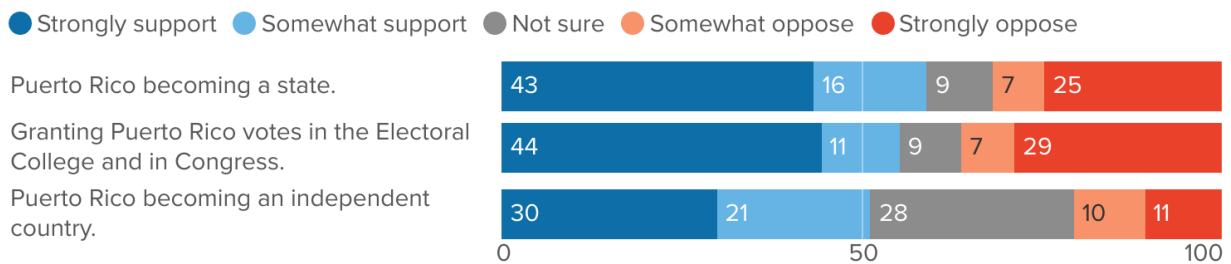
Voters are also open to other changes to Puerto Rico's status

The discourse about changes to Puerto Rico's status goes beyond statehood, however. Other options include independence or being granted votes in Congress and the Electoral College. While statehood enjoys the strongest support, majorities also support giving Puerto Rico voting representation in the Electoral College and in Congress (55%), and 51% support granting Puerto Rico independence, albeit with considerable uncertainty (28% unsure).

Views on Puerto Rico's options

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Important differences emerge by party identification. These suggest very different motives for supporting each of the different options. Democrats are clearly eager to extend voting representation: a 91% majority of Democrats support granting Puerto Ricans votes in the Congress and Electoral College and 87% support Puerto Rican statehood, but only 37% of Democrats support granting Puerto Rico independence.

Support among Democrats

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Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States. It is home to 3.2 million primarily Spanish-speaking U.S. citizens and does not have voting representation in the U.S. Congress and cannot vote for President. Do you support or oppose:

● Support ● Not sure ● Oppose



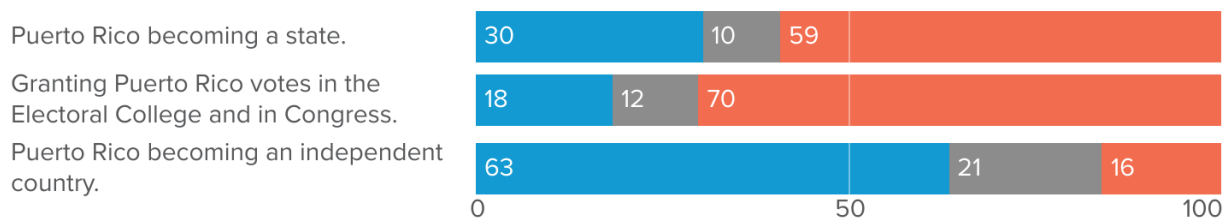
Conversely, a 63% majority of Republicans *support* independence for Puerto Rico, while 59% of Republicans *oppose* Puerto Rican statehood and an even larger 70% *oppose* granting Puerto Rico votes in the Electoral College and in Congress.

Support among Republicans

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Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States. It is home to 3.2 million primarily Spanish-speaking U.S. citizens and does not have voting representation in the U.S. Congress and cannot vote for President. Do you support or oppose:

● Support ● Not sure ● Oppose



There may be some places where voters break from the mold of their party leanings. For instance, despite being overwhelmingly Democrats, majorities of 18 to 34 year olds support each of the options for Puerto Rico. Specifically, 69% of them support statehood, 66% support independence, and 71% support granting Puerto Rico votes in the Electoral College and in

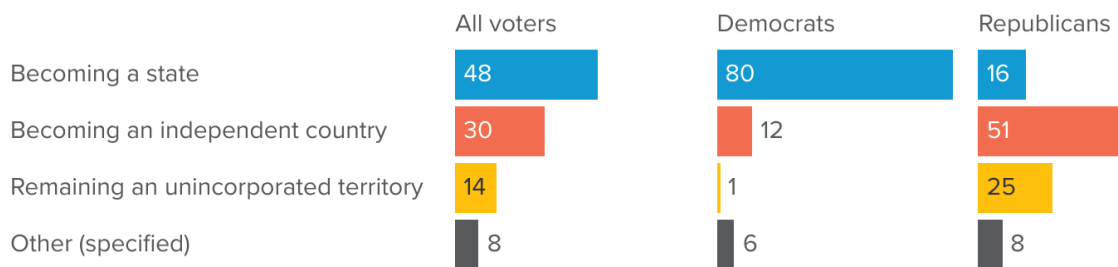
Congress. Seniors are also particularly unlikely to support independence as an option. A majority of seniors support statehood and votes in the Electoral College and in Congress, but only 38% support independence for Puerto Rico.

Statehood emerges as the most popular option in a forced choice between the status quo, statehood, independence, or something else. Of the 59% who previously expressed support for statehood, 76% think statehood is the best option. By comparison, only half of the 51% of voters who support independence think it is the best option. Voters were also given the opportunity to specify some other choice. Of the 8% who selected that option, the vast majority said some version of “I don’t know” or “whatever Puerto Ricans decide.”² The status quo is the most unpopular option, as only 14% think that the best option is remaining an unincorporated territory.

Forced choice on Puerto Rico's status

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Based on what you know, what is the best option for Puerto Rico:



Views on self-determination

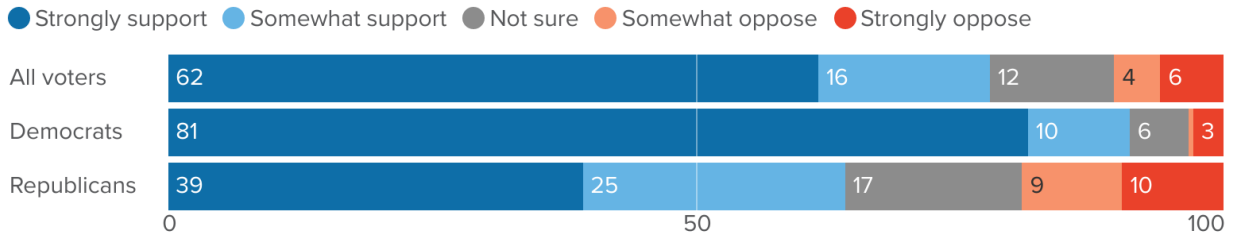
More popular than any of the individual options tested was “Allowing Puerto Ricans to decide whether to become a state, to become an independent country, to remain an unincorporated territory, or arrange another agreement with the US.” This garners support from 78% of voters, including 91% of Democrats and even a 64% majority of Republicans. Only 10% of voters express opposition to self-determination. However, this may suggest more about voters’ support for the options that they believe Puerto Ricans would prefer, rather than voters’ true interest in self-determination.

² The non-territorial options generally considered to be constitutional are statehood and independence (with or without a compact of free association). Voters chose between these two options and the current status. Unsurprisingly, no respondents who selected ‘Other’ specified any of the other options that have been floated by parties on the archipelago (but never really defined) such as the “enhanced commonwealth.”

Support for self-determination

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Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States. It is home to 3.2 million primarily Spanish-speaking U.S. citizens and does not have voting representation in the U.S. Congress and cannot vote for President. Do you support or oppose: Allowing Puerto Ricans to decide whether to become a state, to become an independent country, to remain an unincorporated territory, or arrange another agreement with the US.

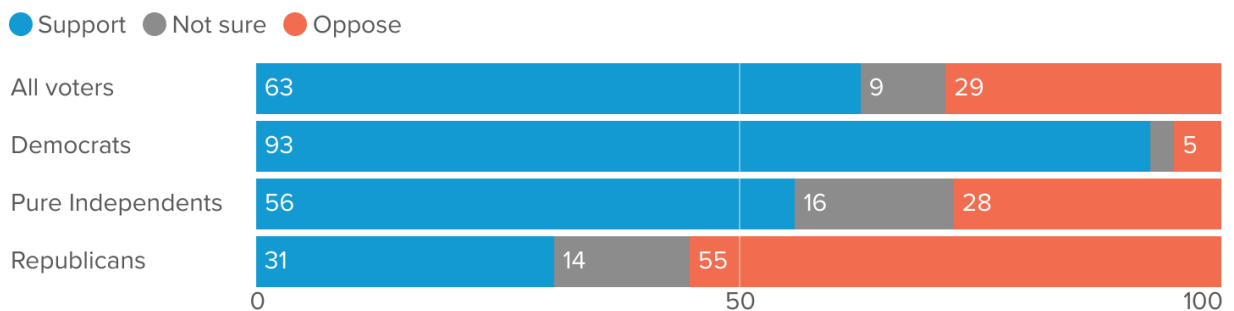


Voters became even more supportive of statehood when informed that “In the November 2020 election, 53% of Puerto Rican voters voted ‘Yes’ in a non-binding ballot referendum on the following question: ‘Should Puerto Rico be admitted immediately into the Union as a State?’” Support increases to 63% (from 59%), while opposition falls to 29% (from 32%). This was driven by three factors: Democrats consolidating behind statehood in a way that reflects their support for D.C. statehood³, an increase in support among pure independents, and a similar small decrease in opposition among Republicans.

Informed support for Puerto Rico statehood

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In the November 2020 election, 53% of Puerto Rican voters voted “Yes” in a non-binding ballot referendum on the following question: “Should Puerto Rico be admitted immediately into the Union as a State?” Do you support or oppose Puerto Rico becoming a state?



³ We also see an interesting break between self-identified liberals and progressives. Progressives almost unanimously support self-determination, 97% to 1% opposed, while liberals only support it 81% to 10% opposed. In addition, upon being told about the referendum, strong support for statehood among progressives shoots up from 72% to 85%, while liberals remain stagnant at 74%. Progressives were also much more supportive of independence, with 46% supporting it and 15% opposed, while liberals were lukewarm, with only 36% supporting it and 33% opposed.

Although 64% of Republicans express support for Puerto Rican self-determination, a majority are still opposed to statehood after being informed about the referendum. Republican support for Puerto Rican self-determination is driven by the hope that Puerto Rico would choose independence. Overall, 75% of voters who express support for Puerto Rican self-determination support statehood after being told about the referendum, with only 19% opposed.

Methodology

Change Research surveyed 1205 registered voters nationally from April 15-20.

We used the following sources to recruit respondents:

- targeted advertisements on Facebook
- targeted advertisements on Instagram
- text messages sent, via the echo19 platform, to cell phone numbers listed on the voter file for individuals who qualified for the survey's sample universe, based on their voter file data

Regardless of which of these sources a respondent came from, they were directed to a survey hosted on SurveyMonkey's website.

Ads placed on social media targeted all adults. Those who indicated that they were not registered to vote were terminated. As the survey fielded, Change Research used dynamic online sampling: adjusting ad budgets, lowering budgets for ads targeting groups that were overrepresented and raising budgets for ads targeting groups that were underrepresented, so that the final sample was roughly representative of the population across different groups. The survey was conducted in English.

The survey was funded and conducted by Change Research. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. Post stratification was done on region, gender, age, race, education, and past vote history with 2020 voters. Weighting parameters were based on the demographic composition of voters in the 2020 general election, obtained from the voter file. That is, if a given age bracket or gender group represented $x\%$ of all voters who voted in November 2020, then that same group would be weighted to $x\%$ in this survey." 2020 presidential results were based on numbers released publicly.

The modeled margin of error* for this survey is 1.28%, which uses effective sample sizes** that adjust for the design effect of weighting.

* We adopt The Pew Research Center's convention for the term "modeled margin of error"(1) (mMOE) to indicate that our surveys are not simple random samples in the pure sense, similar to any survey that has either non-response bias or for which the general population was not invited at random. A common, if imperfect, convention for reporting survey results is to use a single, survey-level mMOE based on a normal approximation. This is a poor approximation for proportion estimates close to 0 or 1. However, it is a useful communication tool in many settings and is reasonable in places where the proportion of interest is close to 50%. We report this normal approximation for our surveys assuming a proportion estimate of 50%.

*** The effective sample size adjusts for the weighting applied to respondents, and is calculated using Kish's approximation (2).*

(1)

<https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2018/01/26/for-weighting-online-opt-in-samples-what-matters-most/>

(2) Kish, Leslie. Survey Sampling, 1965.

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