

## Puerto Rico History

Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States located in the northeast Caribbean Sea, approximately 1,000 miles southeast of Miami, Florida.

Puerto Rico is an archipelago among the Greater Antilles located between the Dominican Republic and the US Virgin Islands, and includes the eponymous main island and several smaller islands, such as Mona, Culebra, and Vieques. The capital and most populous city is San Juan. The territory's total population is approximately 3.4 million. Spanish and English are the official languages of the executive branch of government, though Spanish predominates.

Originally populated by the indigenous Taíno people, Puerto Rico was colonized by Spain following the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1493. It was contested by the French, Dutch, and British, but remained a Spanish possession for the next four centuries. The island's cultural and demographic landscapes were shaped by the displacement and assimilation of the native population, the forced migration of African slaves, and settlement primarily from the Canary Islands and Andalusia. In the Spanish Empire, Puerto Rico played a secondary but strategic role compared to wealthier colonies like Peru and New Spain. By the late 19th century, a distinct Puerto Rican identity began to emerge, with a distinctive creole Hispanic culture and language that combined indigenous, African, and European elements. In 1898, following the Spanish–American War, the United States acquired Puerto Rico, which remains an unincorporated territorial possession, making it the world's oldest colony.



Puerto Ricans have been citizens of the United States since 1917, and can move freely between the island and the mainland. As it is not a state, Puerto Rico does not have a vote in the U.S. Congress, which governs the territory with full jurisdiction under the Puerto Rico Federal Relations Act of 1950. Puerto Rico's sole congressional representation is through one non-voting member of the House called a Resident Commissioner. As residents of a U.S. territory, American citizens in Puerto Rico are disenfranchised at the national

level, do not vote for the president or vice president of the U.S., and in most cases do not pay federal income tax. Congress approved a local constitution in 1952, allowing U.S. citizens of the territory to elect a governor. Puerto Rico's future political status has consistently been a matter of significant debate.

By Latin American standards, Puerto Rico has the highest GDP per capita and the most developed and competitive economy; however, its poverty rate is higher than the poorest U.S. state, and the territory struggles with chronically large debt, considerable unemployment, and a high rate of emigration. The 21st century has seen several major challenges, including a government-debt crisis and devastation by Hurricane Maria.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puerto\\_Rico](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puerto_Rico) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>