

**RESEARCH BRIEF**

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The share of the Puerto Rican population that is eligible to vote in the United States continues to grow and it is expected to keep growing as a result of the natural growth of the population and after the influx of Puerto Rican migrants settling in the United States after Hurricane Maria. Based on the United States Census Bureau, in 2017, the number of Puerto Ricans in the United States that were eligible to register to vote increased from 3.6 million people in 2015 to more than 3.8 million.



In 2017, Puerto Ricans represented 1.7 percent of the total citizen voting-age population in the United States and 13.3 percent of the total Hispanic population eligible to vote. Puerto Ricans in Connecticut, Florida, New Jersey and New York represented over five percent of the total citizen, voting-age population in those states.

In Connecticut, Puerto Ricans represented 7.5 percent of the population that is entitled to register to vote by virtue of the fact that they are U.S. citizens, eighteen years of age or older. This was an increase from 7.1 percent in 2015. Puerto Ricans in Connecticut represented 63.9 percent of the Hispanic population eligible to vote.

**Table 1. Voting-Eligible Population, 2017**

	Total Population	Total Citizen Voting-Age Population	Puerto Rican Population	Puerto Rican Voting-Eligible Population	Puerto Rican Share of the Voting-Eligible Population	Hispanic Population	Hispanic Voting-Eligible Population	Hispanic Share of the Voting-Eligible Population
Connecticut	3,588,184	2,611,667	291,192	195,650	7.5%	578,833	306,204	11.7%
Florida	20,984,400	15,014,950	1,135,447	810,244	5.4%	5,370,860	2,976,237	19.8%
Illinois	12,802,023	9,055,927	199,250	140,447	1.6%	2,206,927	1,018,331	11.2%
Massachusetts	6,859,819	4,993,001	336,369	219,886	4.4%	811,292	436,238	8.7%
New Jersey	9,005,644	6,199,409	471,327	323,752	5.2%	1,840,433	918,336	14.8%
New York	19,849,399	13,866,648	1,115,474	790,775	5.7%	3,811,654	2,029,519	14.6%
Ohio	11,658,609	8,830,185	124,970	80,146	0.9%	436,762	226,666	2.6%
Pennsylvania	12,805,537	9,764,119	438,776	283,147	2.9%	938,428	500,784	5.1%
Virginia	8,470,020	6,145,893	100,212	63,273	1.0%	790,662	329,257	5.4%
<b>United States</b>	<b>325,719,178</b>	<b>231,416,670</b>	<b>5,613,709</b>	<b>3,833,672</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>58,846,134</b>	<b>28,777,653</b>	<b>12.4%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates and 2017 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) File.

In highly competitive battleground states in the present election cycle, such as Florida, the Puerto Rican share of the population that is eligible to register to vote increased slightly from 5.2 percent to 5.4 percent between 2015 and 2017. In 2017, Puerto Ricans represented 27.2 percent of the Hispanic voting-eligible population. Since Florida is the state with the highest migration of Puerto Ricans from the island after Hurricane Maria, it is expected that the voting-eligible population will further increase<sup>1</sup>.

Pennsylvania had the country's second highest share of Puerto Ricans eligible to vote among the Hispanic population eligible to vote. In 2017, 2.9 percent of the total citizen, voting-age population in the state of Pennsylvania were Puerto Rican. They also represented more than half (56.5%) of the Hispanic voting-eligible population.

The share of the potential Puerto Rican voter pool also increased slightly in Illinois (1.6%), Massachusetts

(4.4%), and New York (5.7%) between 2015 and 2017, but remained the same in Ohio (0.9%) and Pennsylvania (2.9%). On the other hand, the share of voting-eligible Puerto Ricans in New Jersey decreased from 5.5 percent in 2015 to 5.2 percent in 2017. However, with a high migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland these numbers are expected to increase. Nearly 160,000 Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States after Hurricane Maria. Among the top migrants' preferences are: Florida, Pennsylvania, Texas, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Ohio, California, and Illinois<sup>2</sup>.

Voting-age Puerto Ricans need to register to vote and turn out to vote at election time in order to translate their potential impact at the voting booth into an actual impact. Mobilization efforts on the part of organized groups are key to making this potential a reality.

## Notes

1. See Centro's Puerto Rico One Year After Hurricane Maria.
2. See Jennifer Hinojosa, Nashia Roman and Edwin Meléndez's Puerto Rican Post-Maria Relocation by States.

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