

□ **Statehood support remains strong in Puerto Rico despite recent events**

December 13, 2019

The Puerto Rico Herald obtained the key findings from a telephone survey of 804 Puerto Rico registered and likely voters conducted November 12th to November 19th, 2019 by a public opinion research nationally recognized firm. The poll, not conducted for any candidate or party, included questions on a wide array of important topics, using a scientifically designed sample across all of Puerto Rico regions, age groups, gender and socioeconomic levels to produce reliable findings regarding the current attitudes of registered voters about issues and potential candidates for office.

Key Findings

The combined effect of the scandals and corruption charges surrounding former governor Ricky Rosselló's administration have dealt what appears to be a career-ending blow to the former governor. Public opinion has swung sharply against Rosselló, making him the most disliked of any leaders tested in our survey.

- 81% of voters have unfavorable opinions of Ricky Rosselló
- 69% consider him corrupt
- Among PNP voters, 86% want him to stay out of politics

The PNP brand has also taken a hit, but not a fatal blow. Most voters (54%) have unfavorable opinions of the Partido Nuevo Progresista, while 37% are favorable, while 27% of all voters consider themselves PNP members. At the same time, the PPD has not capitalized on the situation, with 49% of voters unfavorable towards the Partido Popular Democrático and 41% favorable. Just 26% of all voters identify as PPD members.

Despite all this, the PNP remains a strong contender to hold the Governor's and Resident Commissioner's offices in 2020. Both Pedro Pierluisi and Wanda Vazquez Garced start with leads over top PPD candidates. However, both are polling well below 50%, with many voters saying they will vote for a third-party candidate or not vote, meaning the race is wide open at this early stage. Jenniffer González's lead in the race for resident commissioner is somewhat more robust, though she is also polling shy of 50%.

Within the PNP, voters heavily favor Pierluisi over Vazquez Garced and Thomas Rivera Schatz as their nominee for governor.

Fighting corruption is now the most important issue to voters (more important even than the economy and job opportunities) and potentially a

major vulnerability for the PNP in 2020. Corruption is voters' top-of-mind association with the PNP and 60% are dissatisfied with the job Governor Garced had done on the issue. Taking concrete and visible action against corruption can help offset this vulnerability. It is important to note that 63% of voters believe that statehood can help stop the seemingly endless cycle of corruption in Puerto Rico.

It is important to understand that voters remain frustrated with conditions on the island. Eight-in-ten are dissatisfied with the way things are going, large majorities are *extremely* dissatisfied with the lack of progress on key issues (corruption, crime/drugs, the economy, government finances), and 65% think improving things will require *major* changes. Many voters have (at least for now) abandoned the two major parties in the search for an alternative. In short, the underlying mood of the electorate remains quite volatile.

On the issue of Puerto Rico's political status, a solid majority (61%) remain in favor of statehood. At the same time, 65% of voters consider the status issue important to them personally, while 16% do so somewhat. Only 16% indicate it not very or at all important.

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