

CIA World Factbook–Style Country Report

Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (United States)





Introduction

Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory and self-governing commonwealth of the United States located in the northeastern Caribbean Sea. Positioned at the eastern end of the Greater Antilles, it serves as a strategic gateway between North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Since becoming a U.S. territory in 1898, Puerto Rico has maintained its own elected government while remaining under U.S. sovereignty. Its economy is among the largest in the Caribbean, with significant pharmaceutical manufacturing, financial services, tourism, and logistics sectors.

Key Facts

Category	Information
Official Name	Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
Political Status	Unincorporated Territory of the United States
Capital	San Juan
Area	9,104 sq km
Population	Approximately 3.2 million
Official Languages	Spanish, English
Currency	United States Dollar (USD)

Category	Information
Time Zone	Atlantic Standard Time (UTC-4)
Internet TLD	.pr
Calling Code	+1 (787, 939)

Geography

Puerto Rico consists of the main island and several smaller islands, including Vieques, Culebra, Mona, Desecheo, and Caja de Muertos.

Terrain

- Central Cordillera mountain range
- Fertile coastal plains
- Tropical rainforests
- Extensive coastline and coral reefs

Highest Point

- Cerro de Punta – 1,338 m

Climate

- Tropical marine
 - Warm year-round
 - Wet season from May through November
 - Hurricane-prone
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People and Society

Category	Information
Population	~3.2 million
Urbanization	Approximately 94%

Category	Information
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Median Age	Around 45 years
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Life Expectancy	Approximately 81 years
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Literacy	Over 94%
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Puerto Rico has experienced substantial population decline since 2006 because of low birth rates, economic migration to the U.S. mainland, and the impacts of hurricanes.

Government

Category	Information
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Government Type	Self-governing Commonwealth under U.S. sovereignty
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Chief of State	President of the United States
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Head of Government	Governor of Puerto Rico
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Legislature	Bicameral Legislative Assembly
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Legal System	Based on U.S. federal and Puerto Rican law
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Residents are U.S. citizens by birth.

Puerto Rico elects:

- Governor
- Resident Commissioner to the U.S. House of Representatives (non-voting)
- Local legislature and municipal governments

Puerto Rican residents generally do not vote in U.S. presidential elections unless residing in one of the fifty states or the District of Columbia.

Economy

Category	Information
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GDP	Approximately US\$120–130 billion
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Category	Information
GDP per Capita	Approximately US\$35,000–40,000
Currency	U.S. Dollar
Major Industries	Pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, tourism, manufacturing, finance, rum production, medical devices

Major exports include:

- Pharmaceuticals
- Medical equipment
- Chemicals
- Electronics
- Beverages

Tourism contributes significantly through:

- Cruise ships
- Beach tourism
- Ecotourism
- Historic sites

Infrastructure

Transportation

Airports

- Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport (primary international gateway)

Major seaports include:

- San Juan
- Ponce
- Mayagüez

Road network exceeds 26,000 km.

Energy

Puerto Rico imports nearly all petroleum and natural gas used for electricity generation.

Current priorities include:

- Grid modernization
 - Renewable energy expansion
 - Hurricane resilience
 - Battery storage
 - Solar deployment
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Communications

- High internet penetration
 - Extensive cellular coverage
 - Fiber broadband expanding
 - U.S. communications regulations largely apply
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Military and Security

Defense is the responsibility of the United States.

Puerto Rico hosts:

- U.S. National Guard units
- Coast Guard facilities
- Federal law enforcement agencies
- Customs and Border Protection operations

Strategically, Puerto Rico supports:

- Caribbean maritime security

- Counter-narcotics missions
 - Disaster response
 - Regional logistics
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International Relations

Although Puerto Rico cannot conduct an independent foreign policy, it participates in numerous regional organizations involving Caribbean cooperation, trade, culture, and emergency management through U.S. representation or territorial arrangements.

Environmental Issues

Major concerns include:

- Hurricanes
 - Coastal erosion
 - Coral reef degradation
 - Flooding
 - Landslides
 - Water management
 - Invasive species
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Natural Hazards

Puerto Rico faces:

- Atlantic hurricanes
- Tropical storms
- Earthquakes
- Tsunamis
- Flooding
- Drought episodes

The island experienced major earthquakes in 2019–2020 and devastating impacts from Hurricanes Maria (2017) and Fiona (2022).

Strategic Assessment

Puerto Rico occupies one of the most strategically important locations in the Caribbean. Its position allows rapid access to the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, the Panama Canal approaches, and major maritime trade routes. The territory serves as a key U.S. platform for disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, maritime domain awareness, and counter-illicit trafficking operations.

Economically, Puerto Rico remains a major center for pharmaceutical manufacturing and advanced medical production, giving it outsized importance within U.S. supply chains. Long-term challenges include public debt management, population decline, infrastructure modernization, and increasing resilience to natural disasters. Nevertheless, Puerto Rico is expected to remain a vital strategic, economic, and logistical hub for both the United States and the wider Caribbean.