

## Central Florida Puerto Ricans

Findings from 403 Telephone interviews conducted in June / July 2017.

### *Background*

This memorandum summarizes a survey of Central Florida residents of Puerto Rican descent:

- ✓ We interviewed 403 Puerto Ricans residing in the Orlando and Tampa / St Petersburg media markets.
- ✓ Respondents were selected from a file of residents with Hispanic surnames. Respondents were interviewed if they were of Puerto Rican origin.
- ✓ The interviews were conducted in June and early July of 2017. 45% were conducted before the June 11 special election in Puerto Rico; 55% were conducted afterwards.
- ✓ The interviews were conducted by telephone from an opinion research facility located in Puerto Rico. Ninety-six percent of the interviews were conducted in Spanish.
- ✓ The margin of error associated with the results is +/- 4.9%.
- ✓ This survey parallels a similar survey we conducted in 2014. Where we compare results below the questions were worded identically and asked of a sample designed identically.

### *Demographics and Political profile*

Although most Puerto Ricans residing in Florida have lived in the US for a long time, the number of respondents who left Puerto Rico within the last 5 years has doubled, while the number of people who have lived in the US their entire life has declined. Further, more people now say they came directly from Puerto Rico to Central Florida, and fewer say they resided in another state before coming for Florida.

Specifically:

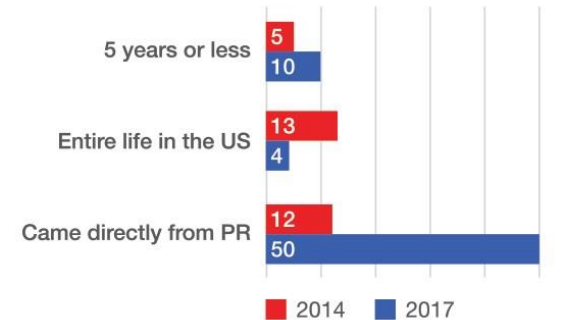
- ✓ The number of people who say they have lived in Central Florida 5 or fewer years has doubled from 5% in 2014 to 10% now.
- ✓ The number of Central Florida Puerto Ricans who have lived in the US their entire life has declined from 13% in 2014 to 4% now.
- ✓ The number of people who say they came to Central Florida directly from Puerto Rico has quadrupled, from 12% in 2014 to 50% now.

While these changes reflect the rapid emigration from Puerto Rico to Central Florida, most Puerto Ricans who live there continue to be long term residents who have lived in Central Florida for more than 10 years (71%) and most, whether they came directly or moved to another state, left Puerto Rico more than 10 years ago (80%)

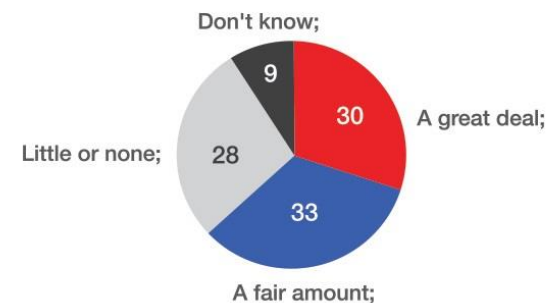
Central Florida Puerto Ricans maintain strong cultural and personal connections to Puerto Rico. As was pointed out earlier, when asked whether they preferred to do the telephone interview in Spanish or in English, nearly every respondent (97%) chose to conduct the interview in Spanish. Other questions show that Central Florida Puerto Ricans maintain strong ties to the island and strong ties to each other. For instance:

- ✓ 63% say they pay a great deal or a fair amount of attention to news coverage of issues and news from Puerto Rico.
- ✓ When asked how they get their news about Puerto Rico most people report television news as a principal source of information. However, roughly one quarter of the sample reported getting their news either from talking to friends / relatives / neighbors in Puerto Rico or from talking to friends / relatives / neighbors in the US

### Changing migration pattern

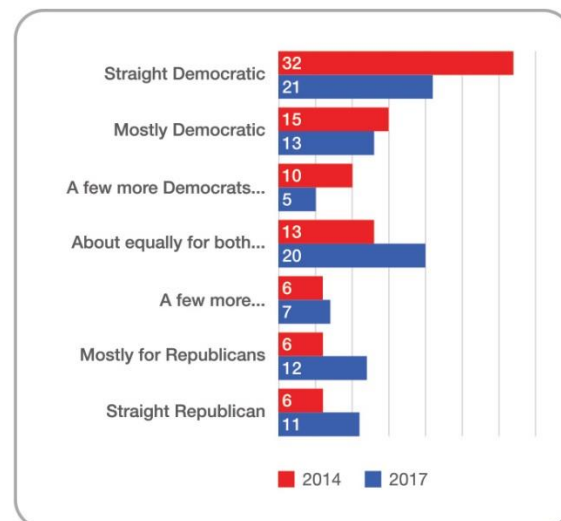
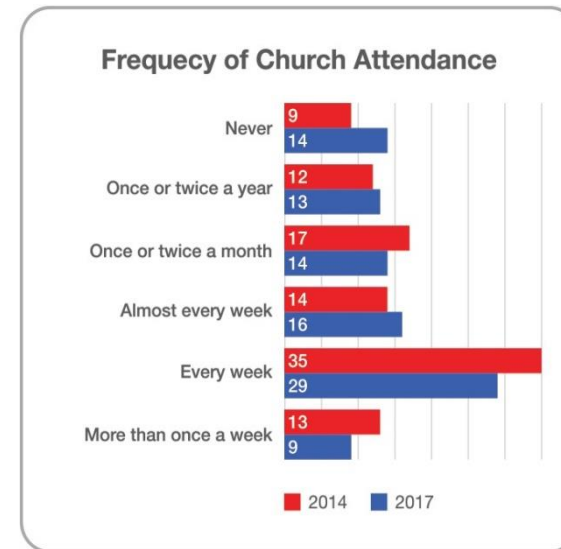


### Attention to news coverage from Puerto Rico



Comparing these findings to earlier surveys suggests some other trends as well. First, while Central Florida Puerto Ricans did not change religious affiliation, most report they are Catholics, reported church attendance is down a bit. In the current survey 44% said they were Catholics, which is within the margin of error of the survey we conducted 3 years ago. Thirteen percent said they were Protestants and 30% described themselves as Evangelical or as Christian. However, frequency of church attendance has declined a bit. The number of people who say they never go to church or go to church only once or twice a year, is 27% up a bit from 21% three years ago, while the number of people who say they go to church every week or more than once a week has declined from 48% to 28%. These attendance rates are still very high compared to the rest of Florida's population, but they represent a decline from 3 years ago.

Partisan affiliation has changed as well. We asked questions about both party registration and usual partisan voting. Republican registration has increased by 7% from 19% to 26%, while Democrat registration has declined from 55% to 47%; independent registration is stable at 17%. In line with this, the number of people who exclusively or mostly vote for Democrats has declined from 47% to 34%, while the number who vote exclusively or mostly for Republicans has increased from 12% to 23%. The number of pure ticket splitters has increased as well; pure ticket splitters are people who report that they vote equally for both parties (excluding people who vote for a few more Democrats than Republicans and people who vote for a few more Republicans than Democrats). Twenty percent of Central Florida Republicans report they are pure ticket splitters now compared to 13% in 2014.



A separate question about ideological affiliation shows two things. On the one hand Central Florida Puerto Ricans, while mostly Democrats are also mostly conservative. This replicates the findings of the survey we conducted 3 years ago. However, more now say they are liberal than did three years ago, while slightly fewer say they are conservatives. Specifically, the number of people who say they are liberals increased from 17% to 24%, while the number of people who say they are conservatives slipped from 48% to 42%.

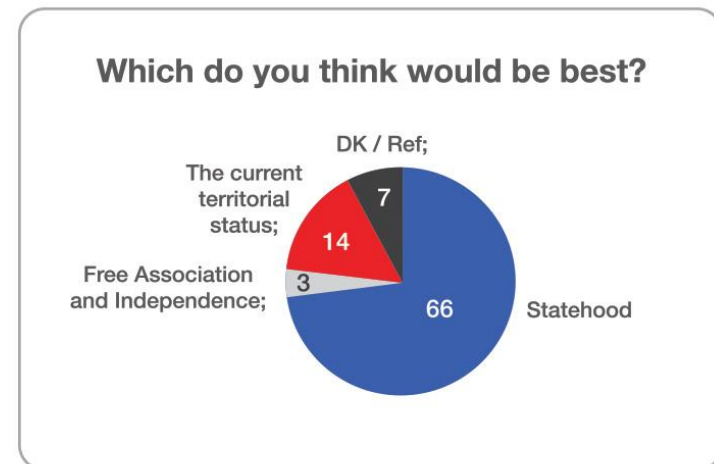
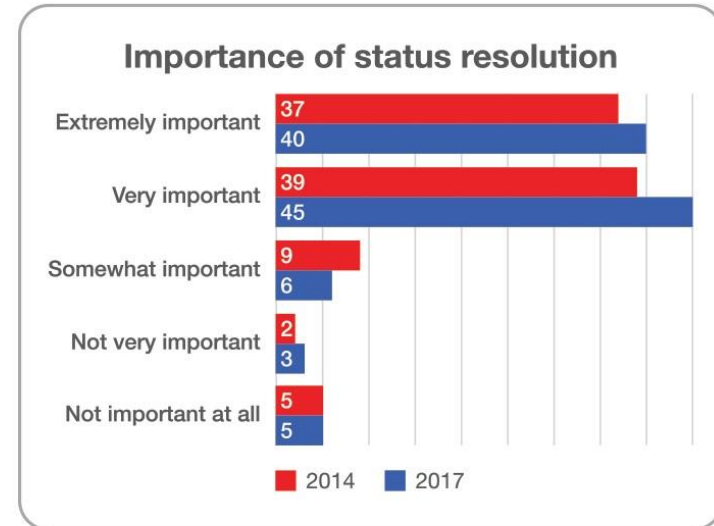
### *Status Resolution.*

Central Florida Puerto Ricans continue to report that status resolution is important to them. If anything, the importance has increased. When asked *'how important is it to you that Congress and the President move to resolve the status of Puerto Rico'* forty percent said it is extremely important, while 45% said it is very important. Three years ago, 76% said it is very or somewhat important, compared to 85% today.

Two-thirds of Central Florida Puerto Ricans support statehood as the preferred option, compared to 13% who preferred free association or independence and 14% who preferred to maintain the current territorial status.

Agreement on statehood was widely distributed across age, gender and other demographics of the sample. We saw some although relatively small differences by partisanship:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Statehood	76	60	65
Free association / independence	6	16	14
Current territorial status	13	17	12



### *The June 11 Election*

About ½ of Central Florida Puerto Ricans were aware that Congress had authorized funding to conduct a referendum on the status question in Puerto Rico. The interviews were conducted both before and after the June 11 election was conducted; probably as a result awareness of the Congressional funding had increased from 33% in 2014 to 49% in the current survey. Most people approved of the decision to go forward with this election even after the Department of Justice declined to provide funding:

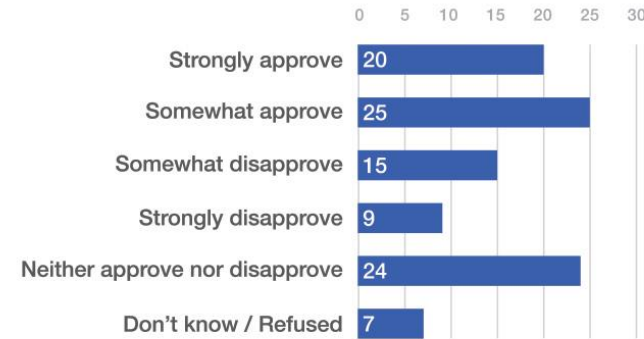
***Recently the Department of Justice announced it would not provide funding for a referendum on status, even after Puerto Rico made changes that the Department of Justice had requested. The Governor of Puerto Rico nevertheless decided to go forward with a referendum that reflects the changes the Department of Justice had originally requested. Do you approve or disapprove of the decision to go forward with the referendum on Puerto Rico's status?***

<b><i>Approve</i></b>	<b><i>45</i></b>
<b><i>Disapprove</i></b>	<b><i>24</i></b>
<b><i>Neither approve nor disapprove</i></b>	<b><i>24</i></b>
<b><i>Don't know / Refused</i></b>	<b><i>7</i></b>

It is worth noting that Republicans were more likely to approve of the decision to go forward than either Democrats or Independents. However, the principal driver of approve was the respondent's view of statehood. The following show the percentages that approved of the decision to go forward:

- ✓ Among statehood supporters: 56%
- ✓ Among supporters of Free Association / Independence: 30%
- ✓ Among supporters of the current status: 19%

### **Decision to go forward with a referendum on status**

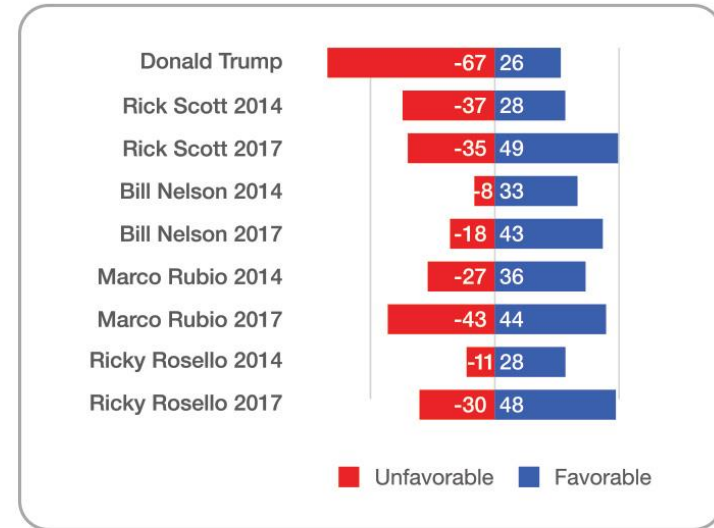


### Issues and Voting

As we have previously we looked at some prominent people in the news, as well as the issue preferences of Puerto Ricans residing in Central Florida. Except for President Trump, the chart on the right updates image ratings of prominent Florida elected officials from the survey we did in 2014.

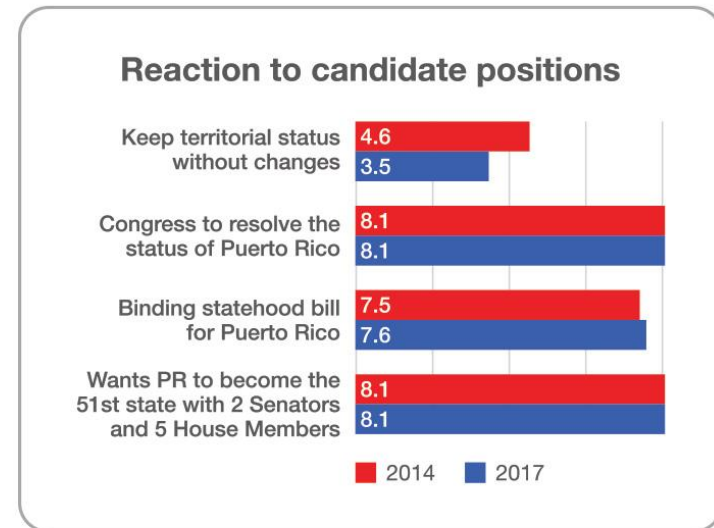
The results suggest Puerto Rican voters today are a lot more familiar with leading public figures than they were in 2014. We don't have comparable data for President Trump, but Scott, Nelson, Rubio and Rosello had more people rate them and fewer people saying they did not know who they were, or did not know enough about them to rate. For Nelson, Rubio and Rosello this led to both higher favorable and higher unfavorable ratings. For Scott, the unfavorable ratings were about the same, while his favorable ratings improved substantially.

We also asked Central Florida Puerto Ricans what their current plans were for voting in next year's Senate race between Nelson and Scott. As is the case with general voter samples, Nelson's name id ratings are quite low, quite a few Central Florida Puerto Ricans don't know who he is or don't feel they know enough about him to rate him. However, to the extent they do know him he gets positive ratings. Even though Scott has slightly higher favorable than Nelson does, his unfavorable are twice as high. When asked who they would vote for as of today Nelson has a 17% lead, getting 49% of the vote against Scott's 32%. This leaves roughly 20% up for grabs, suggesting Central Florida Puerto Ricans will be an important target group in next year's elections. Younger voters, younger men in particular, younger women to a lesser extent, are more likely to support Scott. Even more pronounced are partisan differences, where predictably Republicans are more likely to vote for Scott, while Democrats are more likely to vote for Nelson.



	Statehood	Independence / Association	Current territorial status
Scott	40	23	12
Nelson	44	55	68

The status resolution issue is important in voting for Congress. We explicitly asked questions about the positions a candidate might take and asked people to react by saying how likely / unlikely they would be to vote for a candidate fitting that description. Our finding from 2014 indicated that resolving the status question is very important. Comparing the results shows that fewer Central Florida Puerto Ricans would vote for someone supporting the current territorial status. The responses were scored on a 0 to 10 scale, and the numbers in the chart are average scores. The higher the score the more likely people would be to vote for a candidate fitting that description.



As before we also looked at issues unrelated to status resolution, and found that for the most part Central Florida Puerto Rican positions continue to be pretty conservative, more conservative than is suggested by their partisan affiliation. With one exception, prayer in public schools, the responses are the same or slightly more conservative than they were in 2014. The exception is support for candidates who favor prayer in public schools, which has slipped. Otherwise:

- ✓ Attitudes towards immigration policy are unchanged.
- ✓ Support for Obamacare has slipped marginally.
- ✓ Support for incentives for home ownership and small business startups has increased.

