

In Brief: Arizona

According to the [US Crisis Monitor](#), Arizona has recorded more than 130 demonstrations since May 24 - ranking 29th in the United States. **Arizona ranks last out of 50 states in demonstrations per capita. Of the 133 demonstrations, 83 percent (or 110) were recorded as peaceful.** Over 60 percent of demonstrations were related to the Black Lives Matter movement, and 20 percent (or 27) were related to COVID-19 (considerably higher than the national average of 12 percent). Arizona has seen 11 demonstrations with actors supporting police forces, including “Back the Blue” or “Blue Lives Matter,” mostly in Maricopa (6).

These demonstrations are largely concentrated in Maricopa and Pima counties, which accounted for 88 and 21 demonstrations, respectively. Coconino County had the most demonstrations per capita, with 7 demonstrations.

In the broad category of contentious demonstrations, 17 percent of all demonstrations in Arizona were contentious in this period. Contention includes any peaceful demonstrations met by state (police, other law enforcement) or non-state (active counter-protesters, citizens) intervention, as well as excessive use of force by the state or violence by/ associated with demonstrators. Though significantly less in number, these events may be potential flashpoints for further contention.

15 percent of demonstrations were met with state intervention and 8 percent were met with counter-protesters. Of the 23 contentious events, 9 percent saw the use of tear gas, pepper spray, or rubber bullets by police to disperse or control crowds. Of the demonstrations associated with the Black Lives Matter movement, 24 percent (or 20 demonstrations) were contentious.

Political violence and other risk factors

Maricopa and Pima counties have the highest incidents of demonstrations met with force, excessive force, and the presence of militias or non-state actors. Arizona has double the national average of demonstrations with state intervention

(15%), as well as a higher percentage of demonstrations met by counter-protesters (8%). Arizona saw 83 police-involved deaths in 22 counties since September 2018, many in Maricopa County (55).¹ Police shootings have not only been salient flashpoints for large-scale protests but also undermine community trust in and cooperation with police, further impeding the ability for the state and community to respond to contentious events.

Arizona recorded 18 anti-semitic events and 62 occurrences of white supremacist propaganda over the past year, also predominately in Maricopa County.² Preliminary analysis suggests these incidents can be associated with future conflict.

Select Counties with State & National Comparison

[May 24 - September 22, 2020]

County	Recorded Militia Present	Total Demonstrations	% Contentious (Protesters, State, or External)	% With State Intervention	% Met with Counter-Protesters
Coconino	Yes	7	14%	-	-
Maricopa	Yes	88	19%	18%	8%
Mohave	No	4	-	-	-
Pima	No	21	19%	19%	5%
Arizona	-	133	17%	15%	8%
National	-	12,187	9%	7.5%	5%

Total demonstrations include all peaceful and contentious protests. Demonstrations with state intervention are police force intervention. Source: [US Crisis Monitor](#), [ACLED \(2020\)](#)

Election factors

Arizona is one of seven battleground states in the upcoming presidential election. In 2016, nearly 50 percent of Arizona voted for Donald Trump. Santa Cruz County voted overwhelmingly (i.e. >70%) for Clinton. Mohave County voted overwhelmingly for Trump (i.e. >73%).

Thirteen of Arizona’s 15 counties have nonwhite populations exceeding 35 percent, including Tribal lands. Mohave and Yavapai counties have nonwhite populations at 19 and 22 percent of the population,

¹ Includes all events from September 6, 2018 to September 6, 2020 from the [Mapping Police Violence data](#)

² Includes all events from 31 Aug 2019 to 31 Aug, 2020 from the [ADL HEAT Map](#)

respectively - a possible target for increased racially-motivated violence and/or intimidation ahead around the election

Actors of concern

The Southern Poverty Law Center mapped [21 hate groups in Arizona](#) in 2019, across roughly four ideologies: white nationalist,³ Black separatist, Neo-Confederate, and general hate.

Two counties, Coconino and Maricopa, have seen militia activity since June 2020, including III%ers, an unidentified communal militia, and an unidentified armed group at three Maricopa events.

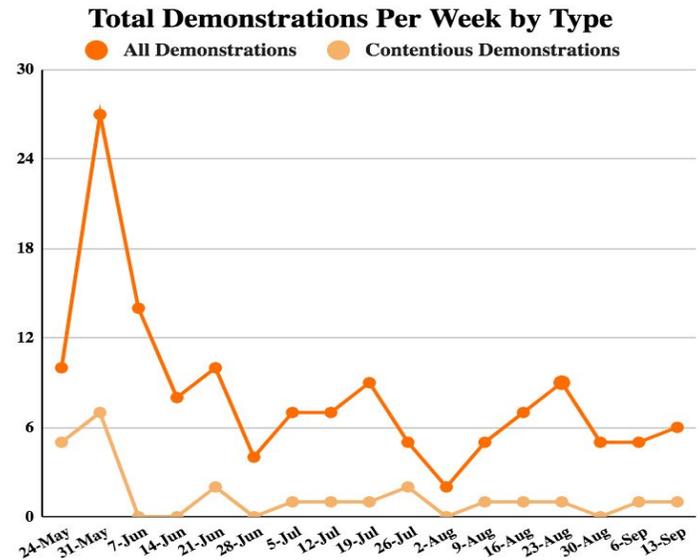
Incidents and trends of note

Seventy demonstrations occurred in Arizona in May and June, overwhelmingly in Phoenix. Eleven of the 70 events were contentious demonstrations, mostly in Phoenix, but also in Tucson and Scottsdale, between May 28 and June 5. These events included rioters throwing rocks and water bottles at police, property damage (police cars, vandalism of a police station, severe damage of public and private buildings), and looting. Police employed tear gas, pepper balls, and rubber bullets - injuring protesters and [two journalists](#). Hundreds were arrested and [dozens of people not associated with the violent demonstrations were arrested](#) and charged with rioting. Judges have been dismissing charges against these protesters due to lack of probable cause. [Four undocumented individuals were also wrongly arrested](#) and screened by ICE, as Phoenix allows ICE to operate in county jails.

Several demonstrations in July called for justice for Arizonans who were killed in police-involved shootings. On July 4th, [James Garcia](#), a homeless Latinx man was killed by Phoenix police during an encounter. City residents protested his murder on July 6, during which [a demonstrator pointed a laser into a police officer's eye](#) and was arrested. He faces a felony aggravated assault charge. On July 7, a protest was held calling for [justice for Ryan Whitaker](#), a 40-year-old man shot and killed by Phoenix police in front of his own home.

In Gilbert (Maricopa), a late-August [pro-police demonstration was met with dozens of BLM](#)

[protesters](#); the demonstration turned violent, with demonstrators shouting at each other and a BLM protester swinging a baseball bat before it was snatched by a pro-police demonstrator, who subsequently punched two people. Police formed a buffer between the two groups with a SWAT tank.



From August to late September, there were 54 demonstrations, only 12 of which were related to the BLM movement. Peaceful demonstrations were held for several issues, including: against COVID-19 restrictions ([“Not Our Last Call”](#) for bars reopening), for economic relief, and [for reopening Arizona schools](#); against the U.S.-Mexico border wall and [against Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#); and [in support of the USPS](#) and against budget cuts.

BLM demonstrations in September focused on justice for Breonna Taylor and [Dion Johnson](#), who was fatally shot by a state trooper. On September 21, the Maricopa County Attorney’s decision to not criminally charge and the trooper was released.

On September 21, demonstrators led by [women of the Tohono O’Odham tribe staged a blessing and prayer demonstration](#) against the desecration of ancestral tribal lands and the wall’s effect on land and wildlife - the group halted construction after getting past security at the site. Park rangers issued several verbal warnings before 25 Border Patrol agents carrying AR-15’s and paintball guns arrived. No injuries or arrests were made.

³ including neo-Nazi, neo-Volkisch, racist skinhead, Ku Klux Klan, anti-immigrant, anti-muslim, and hate music organizations