



In Brief: Florida

According to the [US Crisis Monitor](#), Florida has recorded more than 600 demonstrations since May 24 - ranking 3rd in the United States (and 47th in terms of per capita). **Of the 621 demonstrations, 93 percent (or 578) were recorded as peaceful.** Over 65 percent of demonstrations were related to the Black Lives Matter movement, and 11 percent were related to COVID-19. Florida has seen 51 demonstrations supporting police forces, including “Back the Blue” or “Blue Lives Matter,” particularly in Miami-Dade (8), Palm Beach (7), Broward (4), and Hillsborough (4).

These demonstrations are concentrated in a few counties, with Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Orange, Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Broward, accounting for 292 demonstrations. Leon County had by far the most demonstrations per capita, followed by Walton and Alachua Counties, and totaled 61 demonstrations.

In the broad category of contentious demonstrations, seven percent of all demonstrations in Florida were contentious in this period. Contention includes any peaceful demonstration 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 or associated with demonstrators. Though significantly less in number, these events may be potential flashpoints for further contention.

Specifically in Florida, 6 percent of demonstrations were met with state intervention and 5 percent were met with counter-protesters. Of the 43 contentious events, 15 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, 10 percent (or 40 demonstrations) were contentious.

Political violence and other risk factors

Hillsborough and Leon Counties have the highest incidence of demonstrations met with force, excessive force, or the presence of militias or non-state actors. Hillsborough, Pinellas, Collier, and Orange Counties have the highest percentage of demonstrations with contention (i.e. >10%).

Florida saw 160 police-involved deaths in 22 counties since September 2018, particularly in Miami-Dade,

Duval, Broward, and Hillsborough.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.

Florida recorded at least 3 white supremacist events, 92 anti-semitic events, and 199 occurrences of white supremacist propaganda over the past year.² With white supremacist propaganda occurring mostly in Brevard, Pinellas, Orange, and Hillsborough; anti-semitic events occurring mostly in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach. Preliminary analysis suggests that the presence or activity of extremists groups, like white supremacist groups, 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
Alachua	Yes	21	5%	-	5%
Collier	No	14	14%	14%	7%
Duval	No	36	6%	6%	3%
Hillsborough	Yes	43	19%	16%	5%
Leon	Yes	34	9%	6%	3%
Miami-Dade	No	70	9%	9%	7%
Orange	No	48	10%	10%	2%
Palm Beach	No	51	4%	4%	2%
Pinellas	No	40	13%	13%	-
Volusia	Yes	19	5%	-	5%
Florida	-	621	7%	6%	5%
National	-	12,187	9%	7%	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

Florida is one of seven battleground states in the upcoming presidential election. In 2016, the Tri-County Area (Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach), as well as Orange, Osceola, Alachua, Hillsborough, Leon and neighboring Gadsden voted mostly (i.e. >50-67%) for Hillary Clinton, while the

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

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

majority of the state voted for Donald Trump (ie. >60%), with the Panhandle particularly voting overwhelmingly for Donald Trump (ie. >75%).

Twenty-nine counties (43%) have nonwhite populations exceeding 30% — a possible target for increased racially-motivated violence and/or intimidation ahead around the election.

Actors of concern

The Southern Poverty Law Center mapped [67 hate groups in Florida](#) in 2019, across roughly four ideologies: white nationalist,³ Black separatist, Neo-Confederate, and general hate. Seven counties have seen militia activity since June 2020.

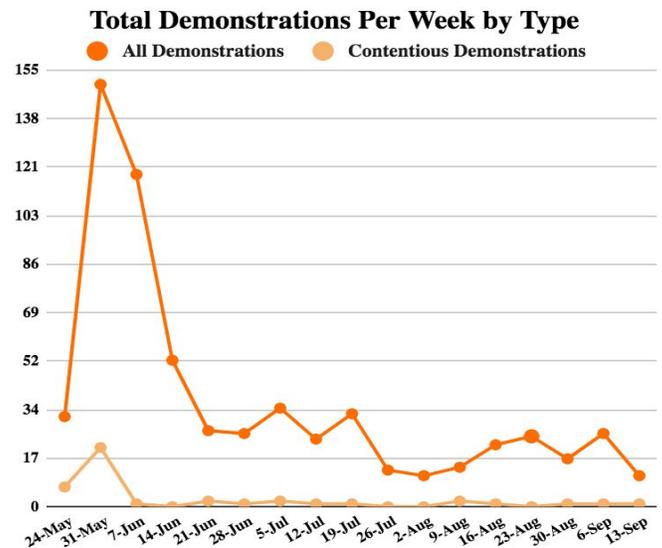
Actors present in Florida demonstrations included an unnamed white nationalist group and Groyperers in two Hillsborough events. Also, QAnon was recorded in two demonstrations in Miami-Dade and Polk counties.

Incidents and trends of note

Most contentious demonstrations in Florida occurred in late May and June, and were largely concentrated in Hillsborough (6), Pinellas (4), Orange (4), and Miami-Dade (3) counties. Between late May and June, at least four incidents of car rammings during BLM protests occurred across the state and almost all resulted in one person being hospitalized for injuries in [Alachua](#), [Volusia](#), [Escambia](#), and [Hillsborough](#).

Since August, demonstrations have largely been concentrated in Orange (19), Miami-Dade (17), and Hillsborough (15) counties. **There were only six contentious demonstrations in this period - in Miami-Dade, Leon, and Orlando, and two in Hillsborough.**

In Tampa, on August 8, [7 people painting a BLM mural were arrested](#); one man was beaten by 5 detention officers and suffered a concussion. On August 12, [3 people were arrested for defacing a Back the Blue mural](#). The same day, a [Tampa BLM protest was met with 20 counter-protesters](#) in support of Back the Blue. No violence was reported at the protest, but a BLM organizer, who had previously been hit by a car, was arrested after pushing a plainclothes officer and required hospitalization after officers did not provide initial medical help.



On September 15, [a Jeep with a Blue Lives Matter sticker attempted to drive into a Black Lives Matter demonstration](#) in Tampa. A vehicle that was part of the demonstration collided with the Jeep to allegedly “protect the protesters.” The collision was minor and the driver that collided with the Jeep was arrested for aggravated battery. In Tallahassee, a [counter-protester drew a gun at BLM protesters](#) on August 29. He was arrested by police, but will not face charges given Florida’s Stand Your Ground law.

On September 5, [100 protesters marched to the Capitol building to protest the Leon County grand jury’s decision](#) declaring the use of force justified in three causes of officer-involved shootings in Tallahassee. The protest became violent when shoving began between protestors and police after the driver who was leading the march was pulled over and ticketed by police. Fifteen protesters were arrested; three were treated at a hospital for injuries.

In Orlando, dozens gathered at the Florida Mall on August 21st to [protest the officer-involved shooting of Salayathis Melvin](#), a 22-year old Black man killed two weeks prior. Several protesters were arrested.

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