

In Brief: Michigan

According to the [US Crisis Monitor](#), Michigan has recorded 450 demonstrations since May 24 — ranking 10th in the United States (and 31st in terms of events per capita). **Of the 450 demonstrations, 95 percent (or 429) were recorded as peaceful.** 73 percent were related to the Black Lives Matter movement, of which 94 percent were peaceful. 11 percent of all demonstrations were COVID-19 related, and 5 percent were “Back the Blue” or “Blue Lives Matter” related.

Wayne County (Detroit) has seen the highest number of demonstrations (22% of all demonstrations), while Emmet, Oceana, and Ingham Counties have experienced the highest rate of demonstrations per capita.

In the broad category of contentious demonstrations, 5 percent of all demonstrations (or 21 events) in Michigan were contentious. 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/associated with demonstrators. Though significantly less in number, these contentious events may be potential flashpoints for further contention.

Of the 21 contentious events, 19 (90.5%) were met with some form of state intervention. Of those, 11 (58%) saw the use of tear gas, pepper spray, or rubber munitions by state forces as a crowd control measure.

All contentious demonstrations occurred in a cluster of seven counties, with Wayne, Kalamazoo, and Kent accounting for over 75 percent.

Political violence & risk factors

Four percent of all demonstrations (or 20 events) saw the presence of counter-protesters — 90 percent of which remained peaceful. These 17 events were spread across 12 counties.

Michigan saw 28 police-involved deaths in 15 counties since September 2018.¹ Police shootings have not only been salient flashpoints for large-scale protests but may also undermine community trust in and cooperation with police, further impeding the ability for the state and community to respond to contentious events.

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

Michigan, protests have also been regularly sparked by police arrests ([Washtenaw](#), [Wayne](#), and [Oakland](#))

The state has recorded 41 anti-semitic events and 28 occurrences of white supremacist propaganda over the past year, with the majority of these events occurring in the greater Detroit area (i.e. Oakland and Macomb Counties), Ann Arbor (Washtenaw County), and Grand Rapids (Kent County).² 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 - October 17, 2020]

County	Recorded Militia Present	Total Demonstrations	% Contentious (Protesters, State, or External)	% With State Intervention	% Met with Counter-Protesters
Ingham	Yes	42	2%	2%	7%
Kalamazoo	Yes	24	13%	8%	4%
Kent	No	29	14%	14%	-
Macomb	No	21	10%	10%	19%
Oakland	Yes	44	-	-	-
Ottawa	Yes	11	-	-	36%
Saginaw	Yes	13	8%	8%	-
Washtenaw	Yes	37	-	-	3%
Wayne	No	100	9%	9%	1%
Michigan	-	450	5%	4%	4%
National	-	14752	9%	7%	5%

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

Actors of Concern

Proud Boys, Michigan People’s Defense League, Michigan Home Guard, Michigan Liberty Militia, Michigan Militia of Love, Michigan Wolverine Watchmen, and other unidentified communal militias have been present at protests in Kalamazoo, Ingham, Grand Traverse, and Washtenaw Counties.

Additionally, the Southern Poverty Law Center has [mapped 27 hate organizations in Michigan](#) across roughly five ideologies: white nationalist,³ Black separatist, anti-Muslim, general hate, and anti-LGBTQ.

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

³ Includes neo-Nazi, racist skinhead, Ku Klux Klan, and hate music organizations

Election factors

Michigan is one of seven battleground states in the upcoming presidential election. In 2016, President Trump won all 16 electoral votes with 47.5% of the vote (to Hillary Clinton's 47.3%) — no counties voted overwhelmingly for either candidate.

Saginaw and Wayne counties have recorded minority populations over 30% (at 30.1% and 50.3% respectively) — a possible target for increased racially-motivated violence and/or intimidation ahead around the election. Chippewa, Washtenaw, and Ingham Counties also have high minority populations (>29%).

Incidents and Trends of Note

At least three incidents of **car rammings at BLM protests** have been recorded since late-May, with one incident being carried out by a police officer in Detroit ([Ingham](#), [Jackson](#), and [Wayne](#)).

On October 8, the [FBI and state authorities charged 13 men](#), many members of the local Michigan Wolverine Watchmen, for planning to abduct Go. Gretchen Whitmer.

On September 17, [upwards of 1000 protesters gathered at the State Capitol](#) in Lansing in support of open-carry gun rights and to protest a recent push to ban guns from the Capitol building. Members of the Michigan Home Guard, Michigan Liberty Militia, and the Proud Boys were present.

On August 15, members of the Proud Boys [staged a rally in support of police in Kalamazoo](#), clashing with members of the Michigan People's Defense League and other counter-protesters. Police used pepper spray as a crowd control measure and made several arrests, including a journalist. Kalamazoo's Mayor [denounced the Proud Boys at a news conference](#) the following day.

On [July 10, 50-300 protestors gathered in Detroit](#) to demand further information about a police shooting that occurred earlier that day. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd, and 8 arrests were made. In response to the protests, the police department released video clips from the dashboard cameras and body cameras.

On 12 June 2020, [hundreds of Black Lives Matter protesters demonstrated in Lambertville against a local gun store owner over racist social media posts](#). The protesters were met by a number of community members and supporters of the business carrying guns who were "mak[ing] sure no looting or property

destruction took place". According to the local news, the police contacted the gun store owner earlier in the week to inform him of the protests and note that police would be present.

[On June 18, 2020, several pro-militia organizers held an "American Patriot Rally"](#) in Lansing. The rally was met by counter protesters, demonstrating in support of BLM and against police brutality.

In late-May, a series of peaceful protests occurred in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Pittsfield (all cities in Washtenaw County) following the forceful arrest of a black woman and her husband on May 26. A social media video shows a [police officer repeatedly hitting the woman in the head](#).

In late-May and early-June, members of the National Guard were deployed to [Grand Rapids](#) and [Kalamazoo](#) at the request of local officials. This deployment coincided with the imposition of a state-issued curfew. Both measures were in response to several days of demonstrations (some involving violence) following George Floyd's death.

