

In Brief: Florida

According to the [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#), Florida has recorded at least 1,400 demonstrations since January 1, 2020 - ranking 3rd in the United States (and 47th in terms of per capita). Of the 1,407 demonstrations, 96% (or 1,346) were recorded as peaceful.

Over 38% of demonstrations were related to the Black Lives Matter movement, and 19% were related to COVID-19. Florida has seen 53 demonstrations supporting police forces, including “Back the Blue” or “Blue Lives Matter,” mostly in Miami-Dade (8), Hillsborough (5), and Palm Beach (4). Demonstrations are concentrated in a few counties, with Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Orange, Hillsborough, and Broward, accounting for nearly 600 demonstrations. Leon County had by far the most demonstrations per capita, followed by Alachua and Monroe counties.

7% 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 any demonstrations with violence by or associated with demonstrators. These events may be potential flashpoints for further contention.

Specifically in Florida, 4% of demonstrations were met with state intervention and 6% were met with counter-protesters. Of the 61 contentious events, 10% 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 (529), 8% (or 44 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 and Pinellas have rates of contentious demonstrations higher than the national average of 7%.

Florida saw 173 police-involved deaths in 42 (of 67) counties since March 2019, particularly in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Duval.¹ Police shootings have not only been salient flashpoints for large-scale protests but also

¹Includes all events from March 14, 2019, to March 14, 2021 from the [Mapping Police Violence data](#)

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, 103 anti-semitic events, and 114 occurrences of white supremacist propaganda over the past year.² With white supremacist propaganda occurring overwhelmingly in Brevard, but also in Orange and Pinellas; anti-semitic events occurring mostly in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach. The presence or activity of extremists groups, like white supremacist groups, can be associated with violence.

Select Counties with State & National Comparison

[January 1, 2020 - April 16, 2021]

County	Militia Recorded at Demo or Other Event	Total Demonstrations	% Contentious (Protesters, State, or External)	% With State Intervention	% Met with Counter-Protesters
Alachua	Yes	56	2%	-	4%
Collier	No	30	7%	7%	7%
Broward?	No	97	2%	1%	1%
Duval	No	86	3%	3%	2%
Hillsborough	Yes	103	11%	10%	4%
Leon	Yes	92	3%	2%	4%
Miami-Dade	Yes	185	7%	6%	8%
Orange	No	104	6%	5%	5%
Palm Beach	No	109	3%	3%	5%
Pinellas	Yes	90	8%	7%	6%
Volusia	Yes	29	3%	-	3%
Florida	-	621	3%	4%	6%
National	-	26,636	7%	6%	5%

Total demonstrations include all peaceful and contentious protests. Demonstrations with state intervention are police force intervention. Source: [ACLED \(2020-2021\)](#)

Actors of concern

The Southern Poverty Law Center mapped [68 hate groups in Florida](#) in 2020, across roughly four ideologies: white nationalist,³ Black separatist, Neo-Confederate, and general hate. Seven counties have seen militia activity since June 2020.

Thirteen counties have seen unlawful paramilitary activity from January 2020 to April 2021. Prominent

²Includes all events from January 1, 2020, to January 21, 2021 from the [ADL HEAT Map](#)

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

unlawful paramilitary or militia-related organizations include the Proud Boys and III%ers. The highest militia activity has been recorded in Miami-Dade and Okeechobee, with 5 and 6 demonstrations with militia presence, respectively. Actors present in Florida demonstrations included an unnamed white nationalist group and Groypers 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, 2020 [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.

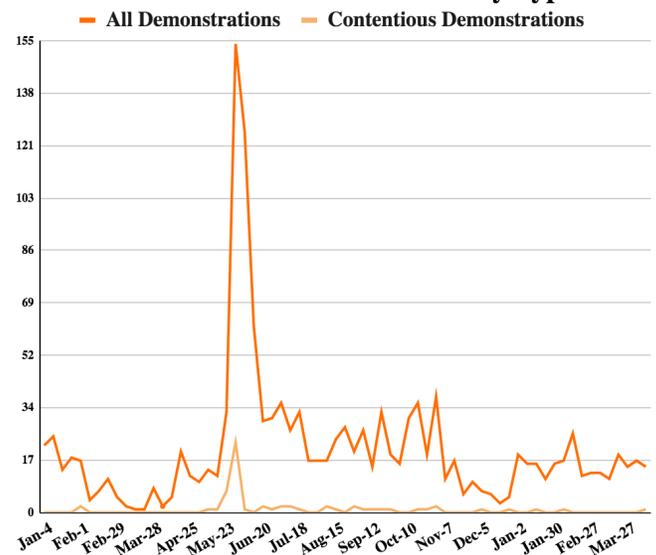
On September 15, 2020 [a Jeep with a Blue Lives Matter sticker attempted to drive into a Black Lives Matter demonstration](#) in Tampa. A vehicle that was part of the demonstration collided with the Jeep to allegedly "protect the protesters." The collision was minor and the driver that collided with 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, 2020 [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 21, 2020 to [protest the officer-involved shooting of Salayathis Melvin](#), a 22-year old Black man killed two weeks prior. Several protesters were arrested.

Total Demonstrations Per Week by Type



The US Crisis Monitor recorded 42 Stop the Steal demonstrations since November 5, 1 demonstration was contentious.

About 150 Trump supporters, including dozens of Proud Boys, [rallied outside of the Old Capitol building in Tallahassee on January 6 2021](#) in support of the Stop the Steal movement. In the afternoon, there was a confrontation [between a group of Trump supporters wearing Proud Boys shirts](#) and a counter protester who had stopped to talk to them. Two Tallahassee Police officers broke up the incident. No arrests were made.