



8 Can't Wait: A Use-of-Force Policy Analysis in Florida Police Departments



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Abstract

The use of force by law enforcement officers quickly became a pressing issue of legislation and in public discussion, specifically after the tragic deaths of civilians in police custody. As a result of these fatal encounters and the conversations being held about this issue, there has been increasing pressure to reform the police department's response to resistance. However, there has been little systematic research to contribute to analyzing policy discussions, making it essential for a systematic policy review to address the safety concerns of the public. In response to these concerns, Campaign Zero launched a proposal of eight policies titles "8 Can't Wait" to attempt and decrease police violence incidents within the United States. This project aims to answer the question "Does the presence of the "8 Can't Wait" policies reduce incidents of police use of force?". To answer this, the project conducts a systematic review of police use of force or response to resistance policies within police departments across the state of Florida, collected via email and public records requests. It evaluates which jurisdictions have adopted the "8 Can't Wait" policy proposals, along with an additional policy mandating the provision of emergency medical services in the case of an emergency. Concluding the systematic review, we will analyze for possible statistical correlations between policies and reported incidents of police use-of-force, along with any demographic trends in the areas where policies have been adopted.

Introduction

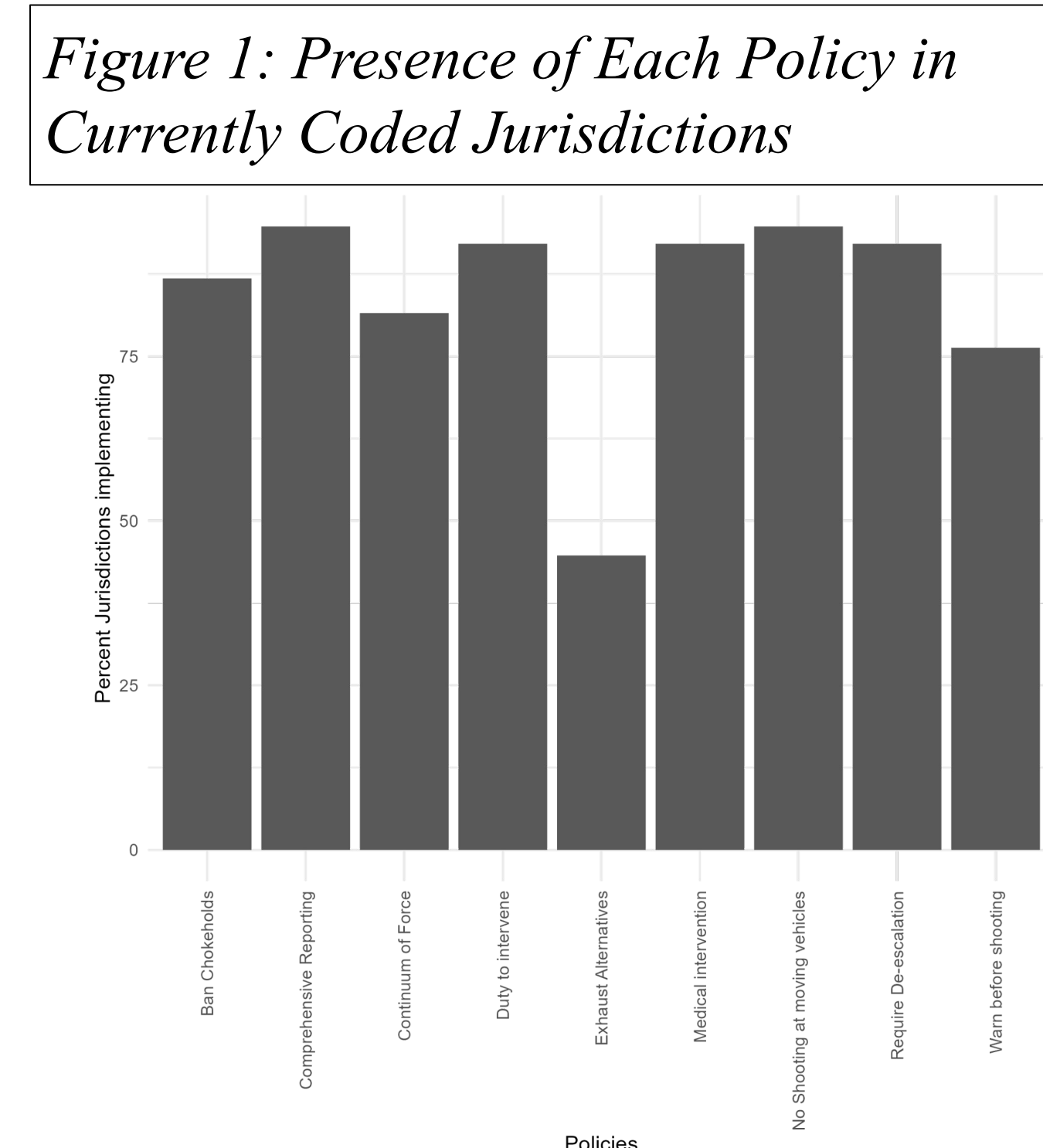
- The increase in pressure for police to reform their policies has been brought on in light of recent deaths of civilians at the hands of police officers.
- Due to this, conversations about what acts are defined as unjustifiable or excessive have been growing. Additionally, a growing demand for reform in training for police officers dealing with civilians has increased.
- Scholars have suggested reforms to appease these demands, these being:
 - Requiring the use of body-worn cameras
 - De-escalation tactics
 - Use of force continuums
 - Mandatory reportings of display or use of firearms
- Campaign Zero launched a survey in 2016 and surveyed ninety-one use of force policies within police departments. Concluding this survey, Campaign Zero launched "8 Can't Wait", a series of reform policies aiming to reduce the amount of violent police interactions in the United States
- The purpose of this study is to increase the amount of empirical research surrounding systematic policy review within police agencies.

Methodology

1. To begin the process of obtaining policies, each law enforcement department in the state of Florida was contacted, approximately 320 in total. Emails were sent out asking for a copy of either the Use of Force policy or a Response to Resistance policy. These policies are then read by a research assistant for coding utilizing the software Dedoose.
2. The following items were utilized when analyzing the policies:
 - a. Requiring de-escalation
 - b. Employing a use-of-force continuum
 - c. Banning use of chokeholds and strangleholds
 - d. Providing a warning prior to shooting
 - e. Banning shooting at moving vehicles
 - f. Requiring officers to exhaust all reasonable alternatives before implementing deadly force
 - g. Establishing a duty to intervene and stop fellow officers from using excessive force, and
 - h. Ensuring comprehensive reporting of each instance where force is threatened or used.
3. Additionally, we coded for medical intervention as a ninth item.
4. An Excel sheet was utilized to code each policy on a numerical scale based on its effectiveness in implementing the nine policies above.

Preliminary Results

At this point in our research, around 40% of the 320 jurisdictions have been coded. Figure 1 displays the current implementation percentage of these policies. Variations among our three coders have led to averaging the percentage presence of the policies.



The maps in Figure 2 show the locations of coded policies and incidents, illustrating the connection between policy presence and use of force incidents. Initial statistical analysis on a limited dataset indicates potential relationships between policies and incidents, but further coding is needed for conclusive findings. Currently, the comprehensive reporting policy stands out as statistically significant in reducing the likelihood of a use of force incident.

QR:
Coding
Nodes
and
Variables

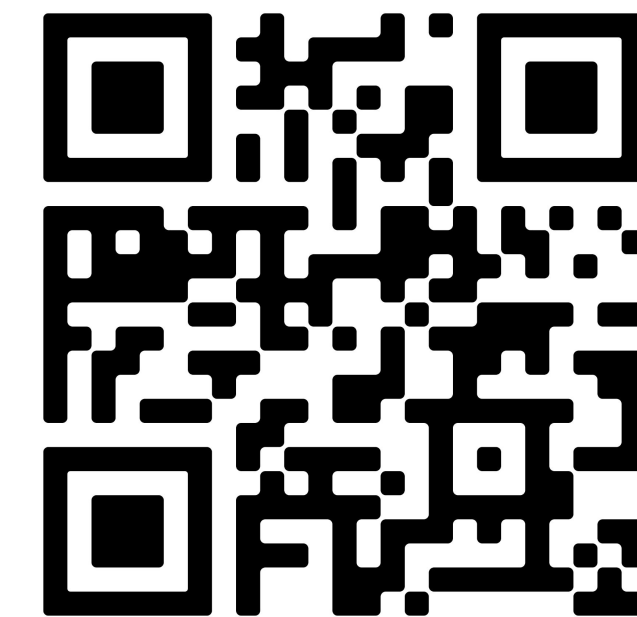
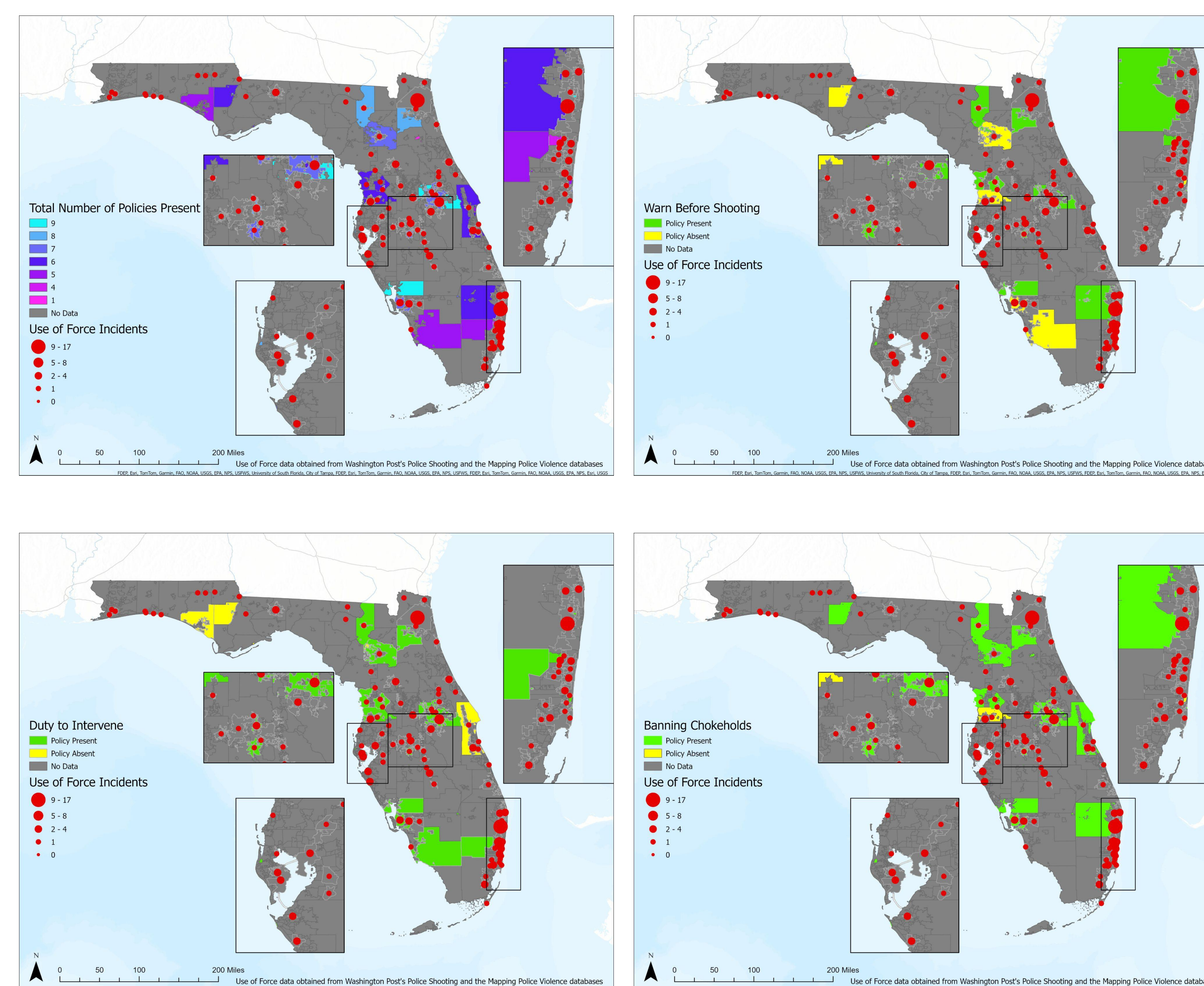


Figure 2: Number of Use of Force Incidents reported by the Mapping Police Violence Project for law enforcement agencies in Florida and the presence or absence of certain policies



Discussion

- Currently, we have about 65 policies coded in comparison to the "8 Can't Wait" recommendations. In total, there are about 320 policies acquired from police departments across the state.
- Due to some discrepancies between coders, we will be re-analyzing the codings to ensure the same criteria are being utilized while coding.
- Presently, the results with limited quantities of fully coded policies demonstrate no statistically significant relationship between the individual policies and the number of police uses of forced, aggregated by jurisdiction.
- Although the current results are very preliminary and do not account for the entire number of police departments within the state, there are still some conclusions that can be made.
 - The complicated relationship indicates that simply adapting the policies to fit the "8 Can't Wait" recommendations may not be enough to reduce civilian killings at the hands of the police. Although, further statistical tests can be continued utilizing a larger sample.

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