

A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of the Impacts and Implementation of Florida's Risk Protection Order (RPO) Law

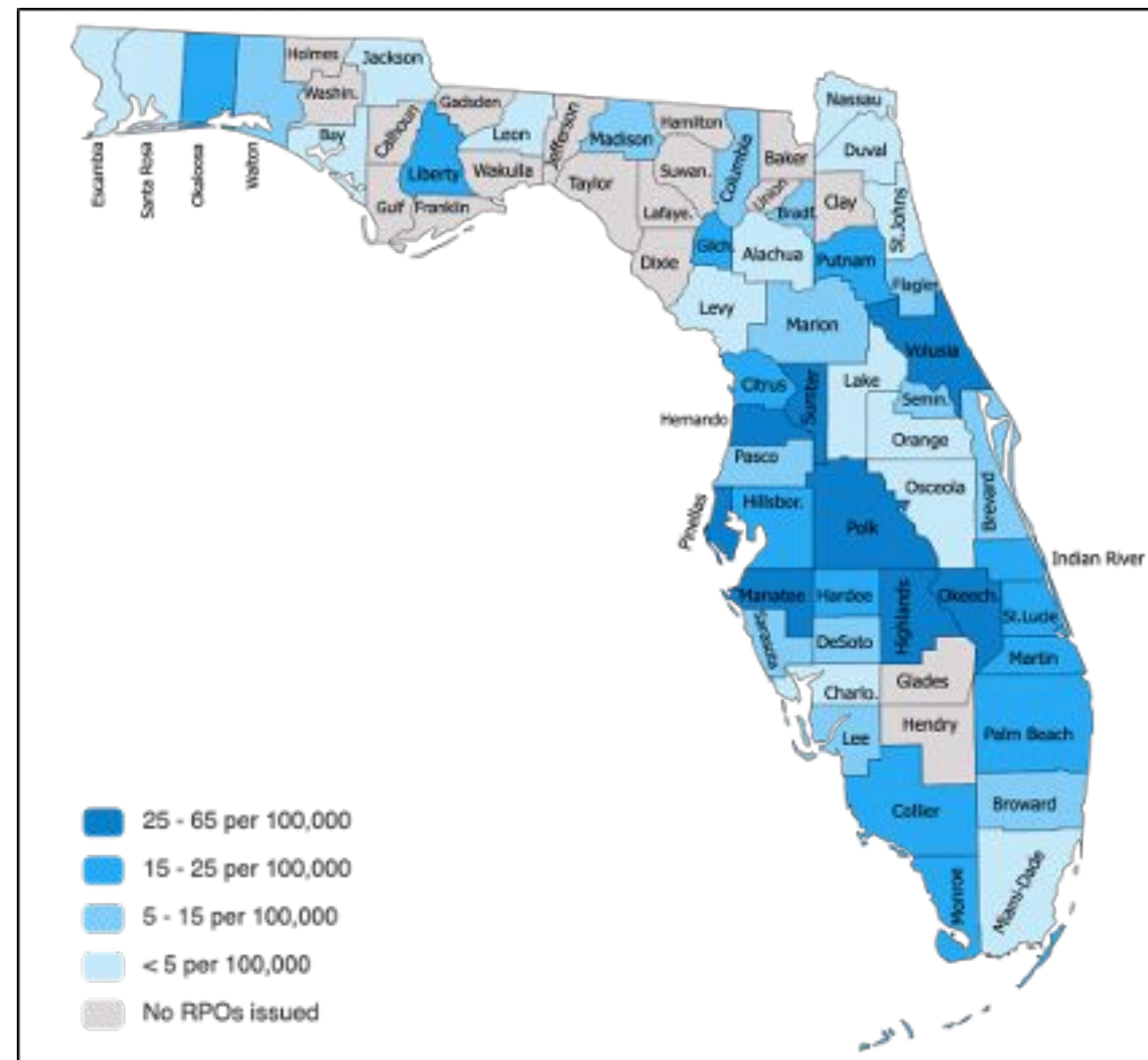
Introduction

In 2017, after the mass school shooting in Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, the Florida Legislature adopted a law to reduce gun violence. Florida statute 790.401 created the standard for Risk Protection Orders (RPOs) in the state of Florida. RPOs are petitions made by a sworn law enforcement agent or agency for the removal of a respondent's firearms, ammunition and concealed carry license if they find them to be a danger to themselves or others. A temporary RPO can last up to 14 days and if a final RPO is granted it can last up to a year, during which the respondent will have to surrender the aforementioned items to law enforcement or a third party.

Due to the recent adoption of this policy, little research has examined the impact of RPOs on gun violence using a large sample, which limits generalizability, prevents multivariate analyses, and precludes examination of rare outcomes. Inconsistent implementation of the Risk Protection Orders can disrupt the data as well as a myriad of other issues these studies often confront. As a result, we are still unsure of whether RPOs truly lower gun violence and whether their application varies greatly between law enforcement jurisdictions.

To overcome these barriers, we are creating a database of roughly 15,000 RPO cases in Florida from 2018 to 2023 and utilizing the resulting data as the basis for our analysis. This database will be the largest and most representative RPO database to date. Upon the creation of the database several levels of multivariate analysis and mixed methods will be employed to determine RPO's role in reducing gun violence and inform future policies.

Figure 1: Florida RPO Issuance Rate by County, 2022



Source: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 2023.

Preliminary Results

Current Progress

- Ongoing systematic coding of 15,000 RPO cases across 67 Florida counties
- Developing a comprehensive database structure to capture:
 - Case characteristics
 - Jurisdictional information
 - Implementation procedures
 - Demographic variables

Data Collection Status

- Successfully initiated data coding process
- Establishing standardized coding protocols
- Coordinating with multiple jurisdictions to ensure data accessibility
- Creating quality control measures for consistency across counties

Next Steps

- Complete initial data coding phase
- Conduct preliminary analyses of implementation patterns
- Prepare for law enforcement focus groups

Methods

Phase 1: Data Collection

- Currently in progress.
- Coding **15,000+** cases using an extensive codebook developed by Dr. Fridel.
- Data were collected using a Qualtrics Survey Tool.
- Extracting data from court documents, including:
 - Demographic information
 - Respondent's historical risk factors
 - Circumstances leading to the RPO
 - Judge's decision (granted or denied)

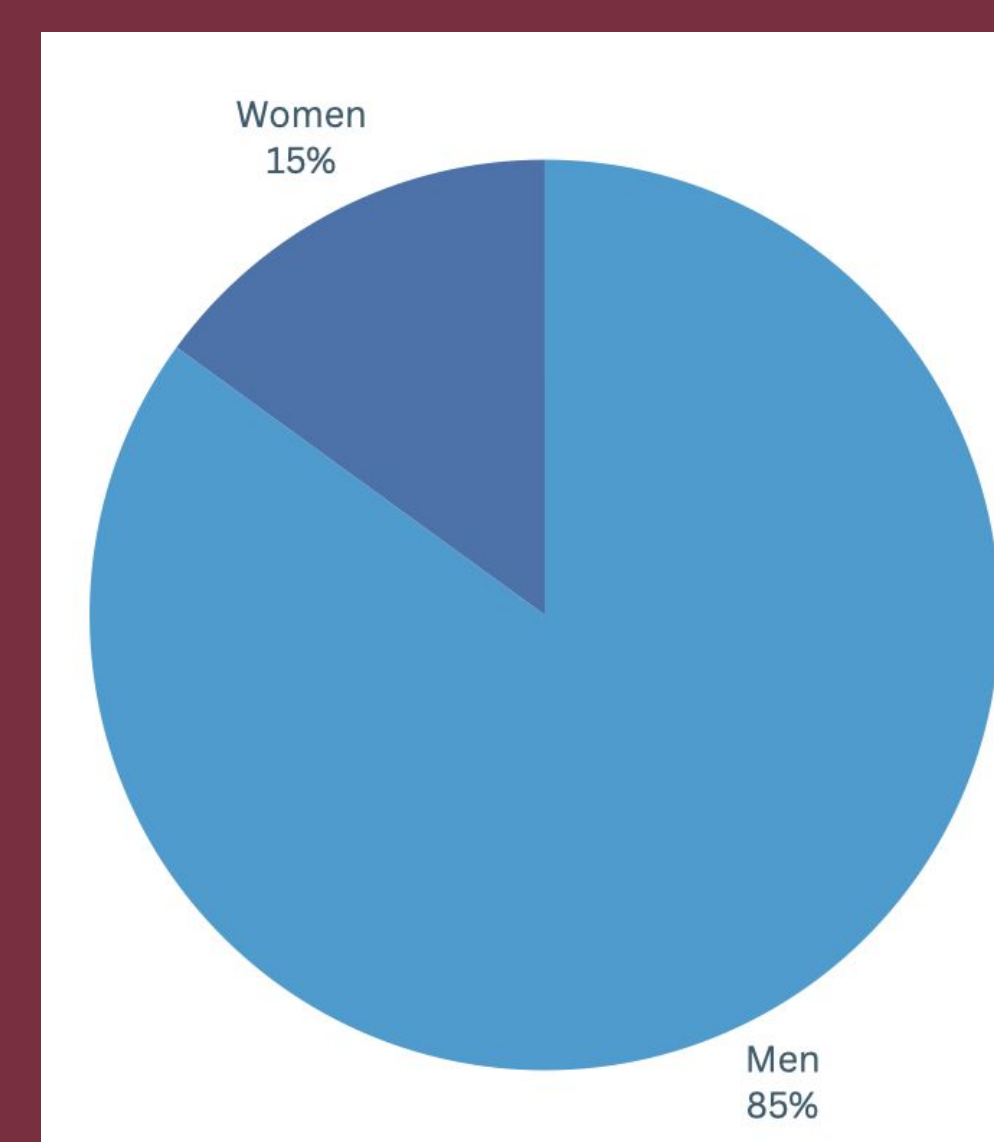
Phase 2: Quantitative Analysis

- Assessing **RPO effectiveness** at the **individual, agency, county, and state level**.

Phase 3: Mixed Methods

- Evaluating **variations in RPO implementation** across agency jurisdictions.

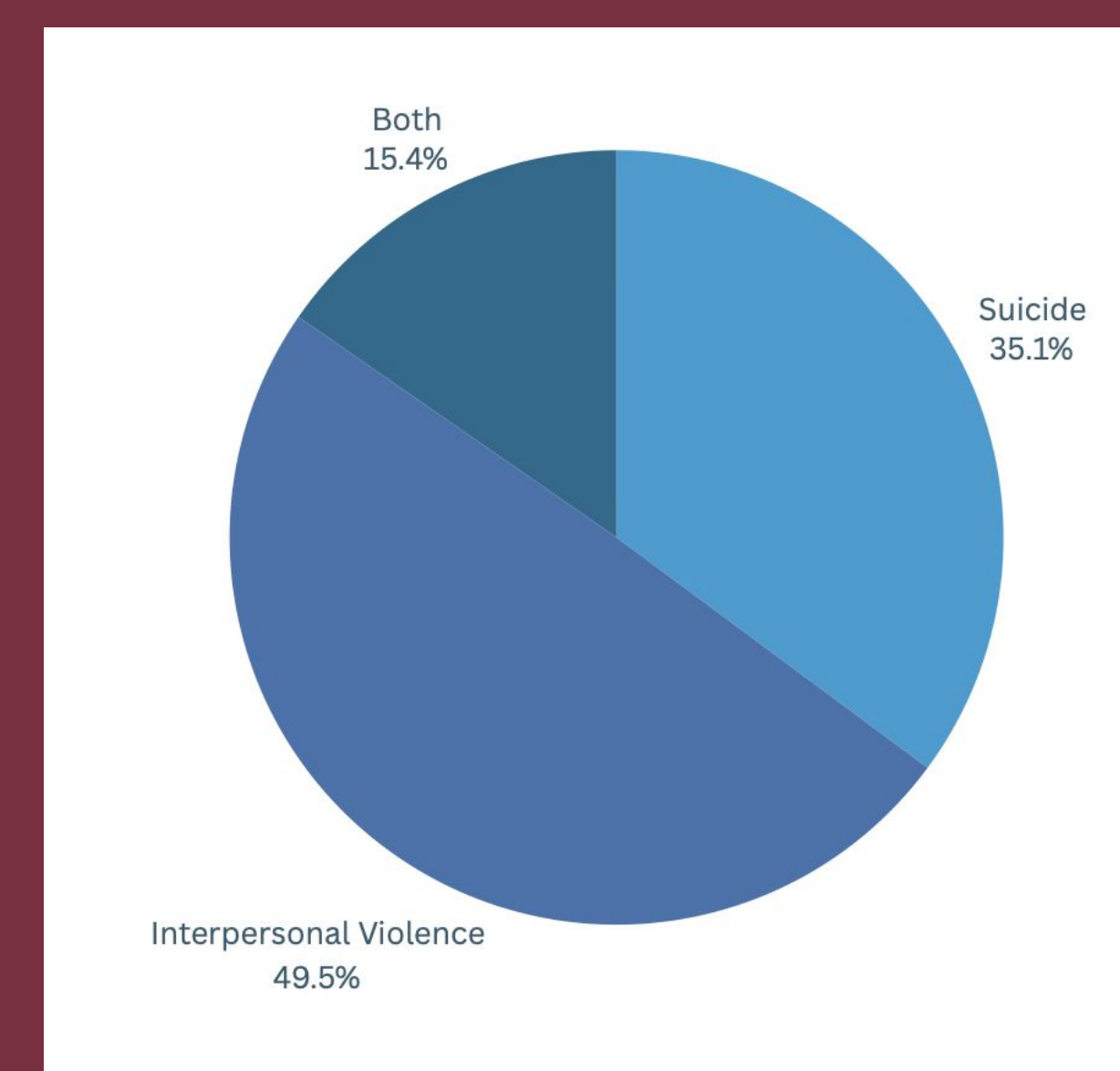
Respondent's Sex:



These figures are based off of a sample of 2,260 RPO cases.

Preliminary Statistics:

Respondent's Risk Type:



Discussion

● Insights from Preliminary Results

- Variability in RPO Usage: Initial findings indicate that RPOs are used inconsistently across counties, with five counties representing over half of all RPOs issued (including Broward, Hillsborough, Pinellas, Polk, and Volusia; see Figure 1).

● Addressing Gaps in Existing Research

- Expansion of Current Literature: This research aims to fill voids left by limited studies on the usage, efficacy, and implementation of RPOs
- Focus on Inconsistencies: Unlike previous studies, this project delves into the inconsistent implementation of RPOs to determine their actual impact on reducing gun violence and the reasons behind the dramatic variation in their application across jurisdictions

● Contributions to Knowledge and Policy

- Comprehensive Evaluation: This project represents the most thorough and rigorous assessment of any state's red flag laws to date
- Effectiveness of RPOs: Findings will highlight the conditions under which RPOs effectively reduce firearm violence at individual and community levels
- Exploring Constraints: The research will uncover the political, social, and practical barriers with implementing RPOs

● Practical Implications for Law Enforcement

- Guidance for Prevention Measures: Insights from this study will assist law enforcement agencies in identifying what measures they should take to prevent firearm violence through RPOs

References and resources can be found at this QR code!



Acknowledgements: This project was funded by the National Institute of Justice and National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research. A special thanks to Dr. Fridel and Kyle Knapp for their support!