

TRANSPARENCY IN FLORIDA LOBBYING

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INTRODUCTION

Lobbying and County Government

- Lobbying is the process through which individuals and organizations influence government decisions.
- Florida requires lobbyists to register at the state level, but several counties maintain their own systems.
- Counties make decisions about land use, development, and public services, making accountability essential.

County Registration Systems

- Large counties such as Miami-Dade, Broward, and Hillsborough maintain formal registration systems.
- Smaller counties including Lee and Alachua also require lobbyist disclosure.

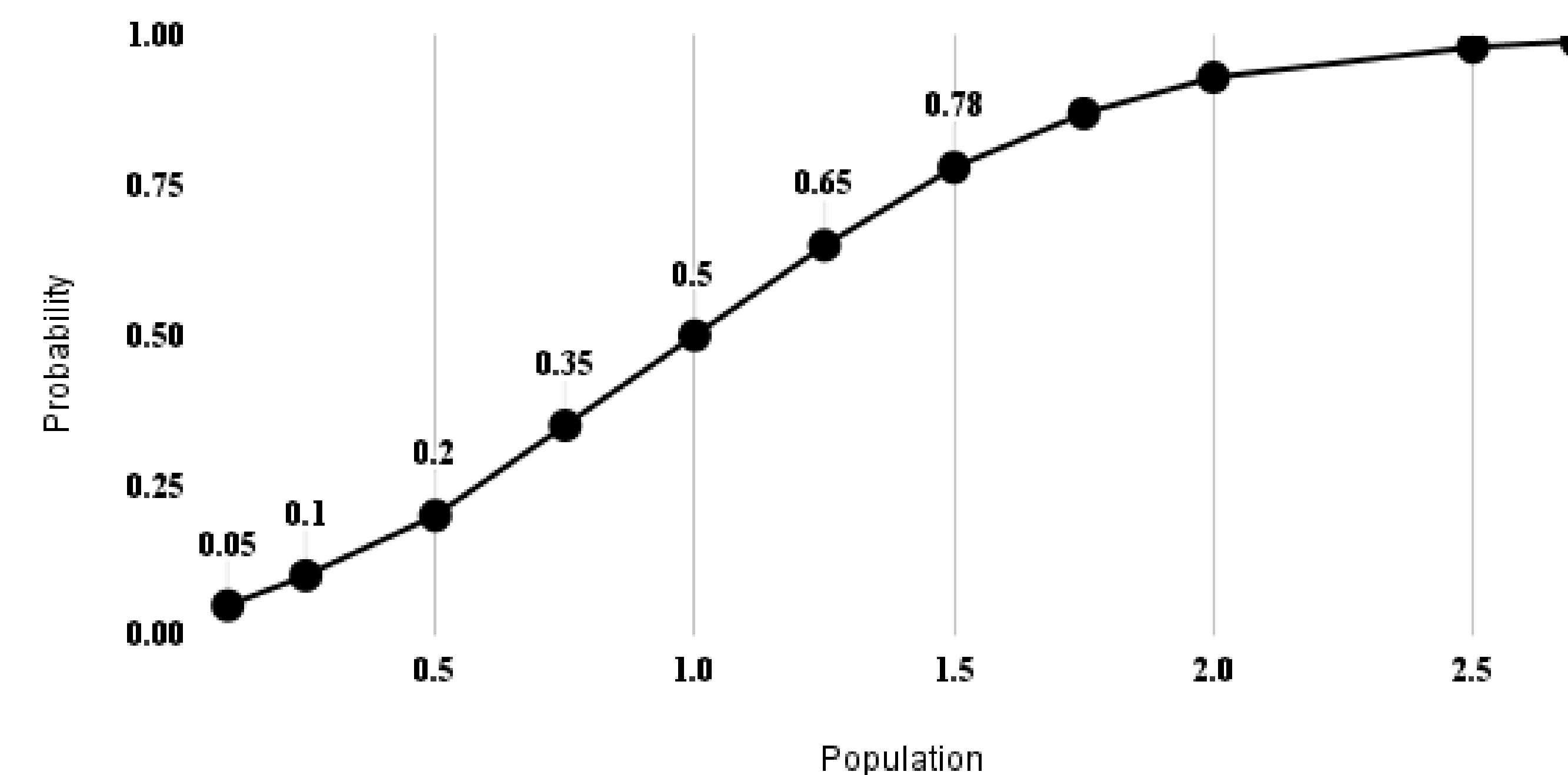
Problem and Purpose of the Study

- County lobbyist records are not standardized.
- Differences in formatting and accessibility limit the public's ability to track lobbying activity.
- This study compares counties of different sizes to evaluate transparency and accessibility.
- Little to no scholarly research has examined county-level lobbying practices in Florida.

METHODOLOGY

- This study evaluated transparency practices in selected Florida counties that maintain lobbyist registration systems using a six-point transparency index (0–6) measuring database availability, ease of access, historical coverage, financial disclosure, contact information and search ability/ usability. Counties were scored using publicly available online records, and systems that were inaccessible or nonfunctional during data collection were coded as inconsistent (0), including Duval County.
- County population (in millions) was analyzed as the independent variable, and a linear regression was conducted to assess whether population size predicts transparency scores.

Probability of Lobbyist Registration Requirement by County Population

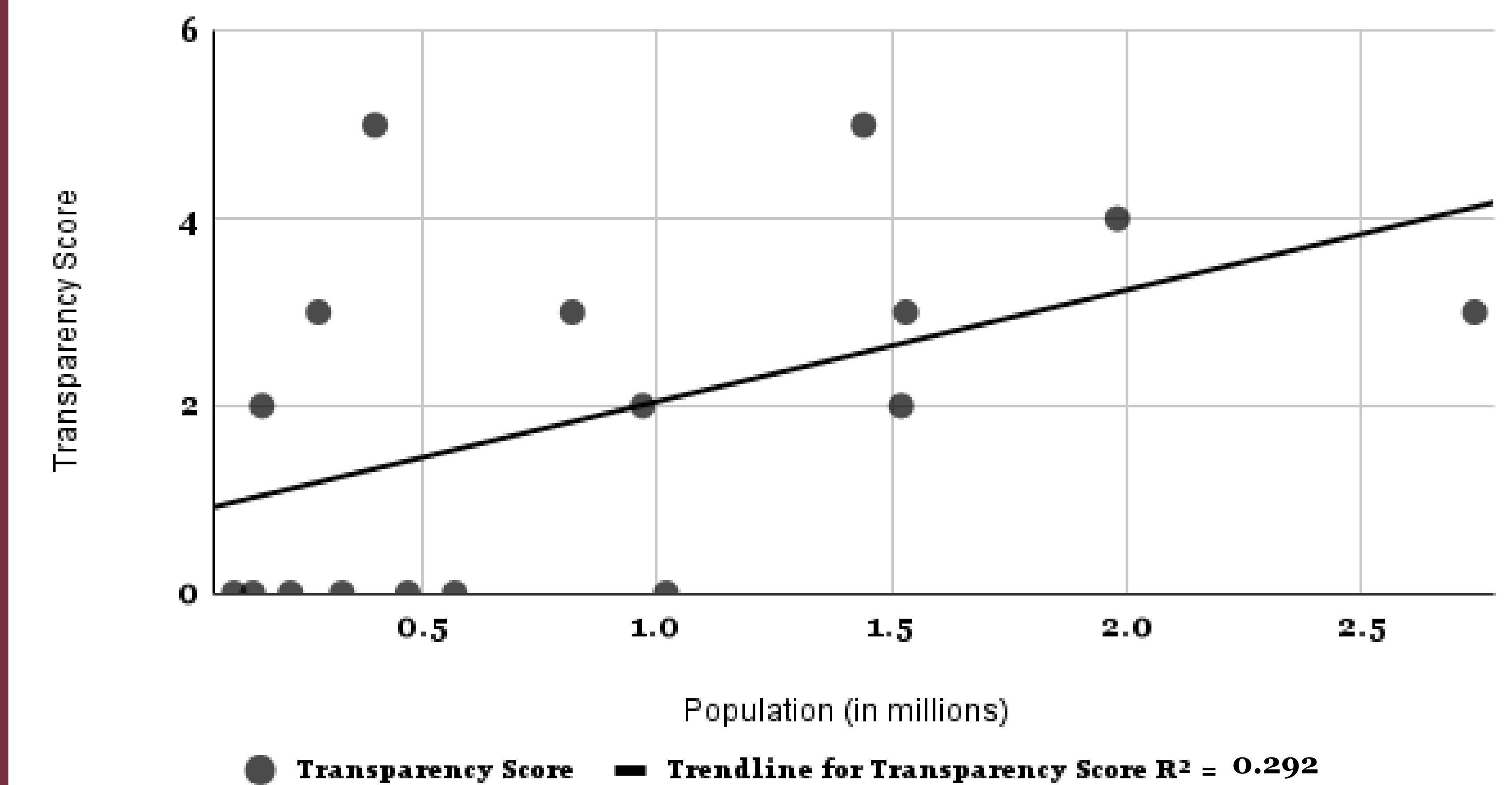


- Population coefficient: 4.179
- Larger counties significantly more likely to require registration
- For each additional 1 million residents, odds increase by approximately 65%
- Model based on analysis of all 67 Florida counties

RESULTS

- Transparency practices vary widely across Florida counties. Scores ranged from 0 to 1 on a six-point index, and many counties scored at or near zero, indicating limited public access to lobbyist registration information. Only a small number of counties provided highly accessible, searchable, and comprehensive records.
- Linear regression analysis shows a statistically significant positive relationship between population and transparency ($p < .05$). Transparency scores increase by approximately 1.3 points for every additional one million residents, suggesting that larger counties tend to provide more accessible lobbyist registration systems.
- The model produced an R^2 of approximately 0.29, indicating that population explains about 29% of transparency variation. Although larger counties generally score higher, substantial variation remains, as some mid-size counties exceed predicted transparency levels while several large counties fall below expectations.

Population Size and Variation in County Transparency



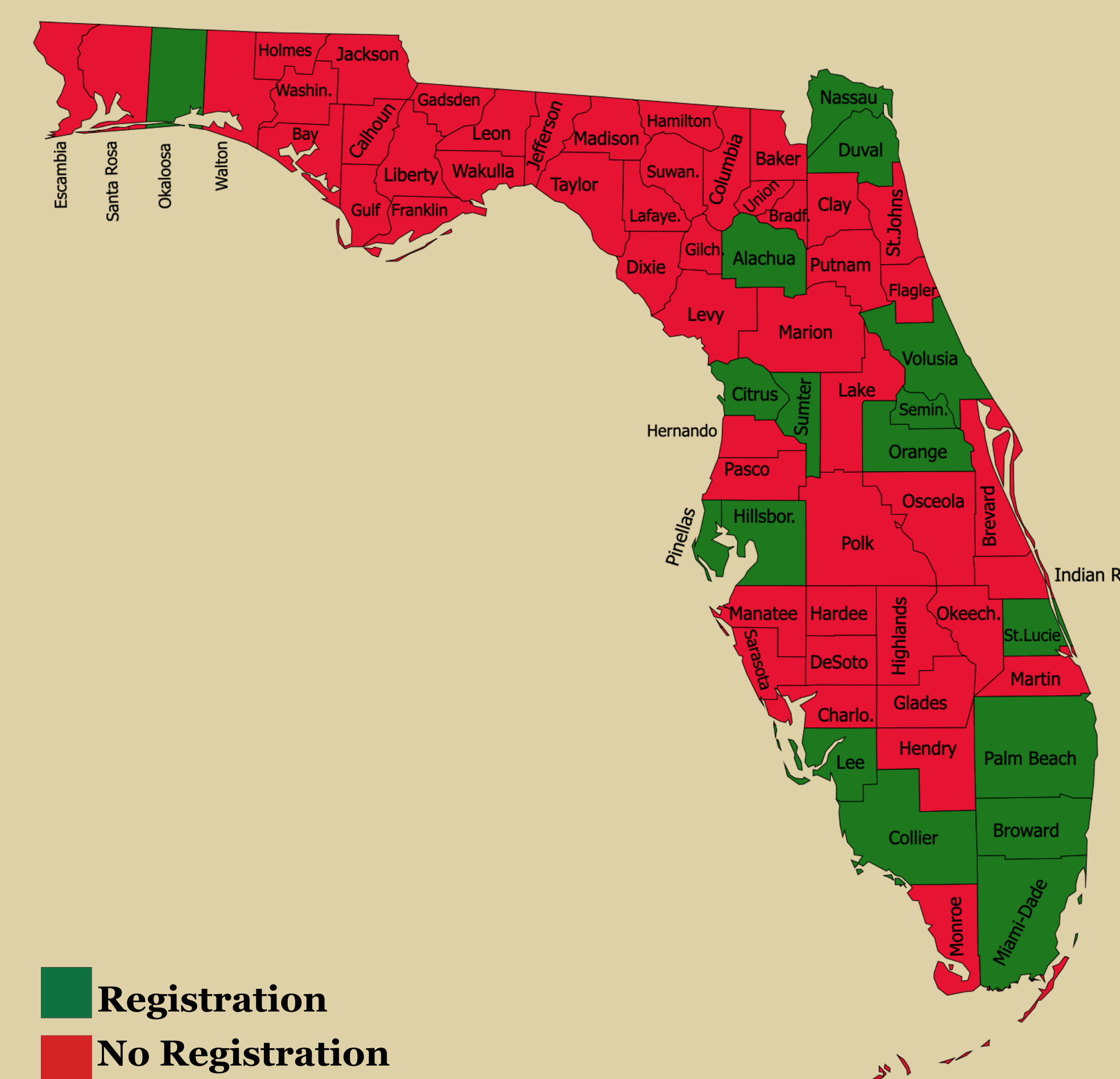
- The upward trendline shows that transparency tends to increase as county population grows, indicating that larger counties often have greater capacity and resources to provide accessible lobbyist registration systems.
- The clustering of low scores and the moderate R^2 (0.29) reveal substantial variation across counties, showing that population alone does not determine transparency and that accessibility practices remain inconsistent.

DISCUSSION

- Population size is a meaningful predictor of transparency, suggesting larger counties may have greater resources and administrative capacity to support accessible lobbyist registration systems. However, wide variation in scores indicates transparency practices remain inconsistent, limiting public access and accountability in local governance.
- This study introduces a standardized transparency index and highlights patterns that have received little prior attention. Duval County's website was not functioning during data collection and was coded as inconsistent (0), and the index simplifies complex practices while population explains only part of the variation.

REFERENCES/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Florida Map of all 67 counties

