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Let Freedom Read: Exploring Banned Books and Intellectual Freedom in Florida

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LET FREEDOM READ

EXPLORING BOOK BANS & INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM IN FLORIDA

PRESENTED BY THE ACADEMIC & INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE

Agenda

- ❖ Banned Book Reports
 - ❖ ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom
 - ❖ PEN America
 - ❖ Florida Freedom to Read Foundation
 - ❖ FIRE
- ❖ Trivia Game
- ❖ Conclusion
- ❖ Discussion

Report ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom

BOOK BAN DATA. **JAN 1—AUG 31,
2023.**

[HTTPS://WWW.ALA.ORG/ADVOCACY
/BBOOKS/BOOK-BAN-DATA](https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/book-ban-data)



Censorship attempts

 **20% Increase**

695 Materials & Services

531 Book Challenges

Titles challenged

1,915

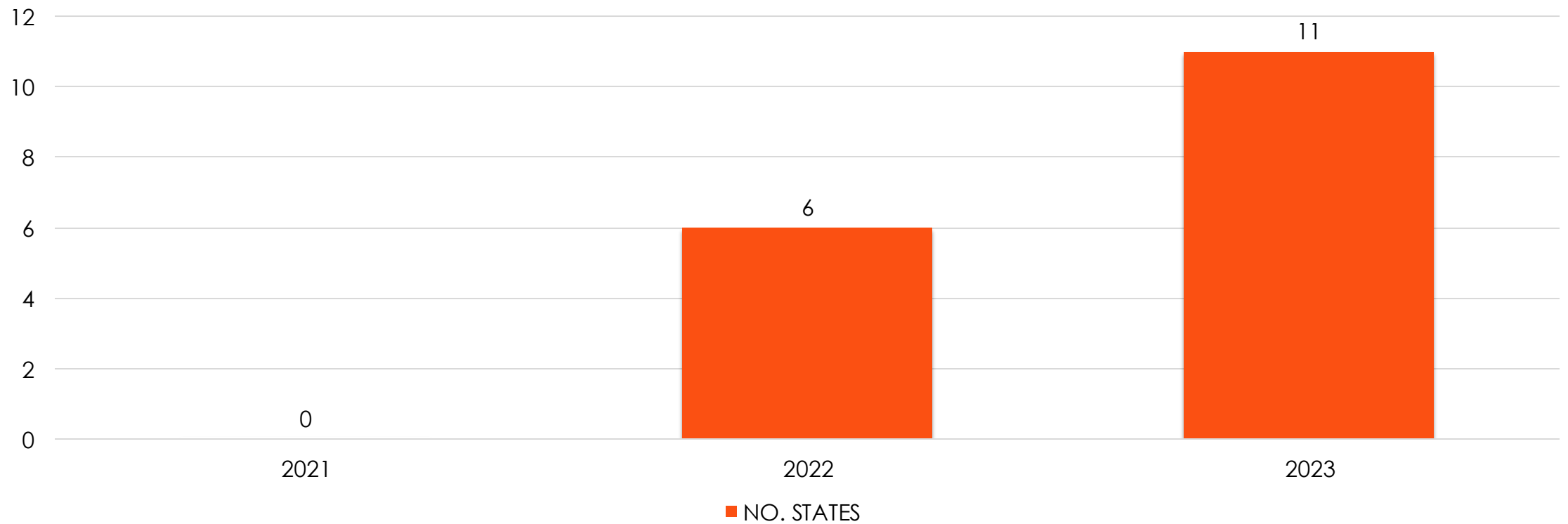
Unique titles
challenged

3,923

Total titles
challenged

States reporting challenges of 100+ books at one time

N= STATES





Report PEN America

BANNED IN THE USA: STATE LAWS
SUPERCHARGE BOOK SUPPRESSION IN
SCHOOLS. JUL 1 2022 – JUN 31, 2023.

[HTTPS://PEN.ORG/REPORT/BOOK-BANS-
PRESSURE-TO-CENSOR/](https://pen.org/report/book-bans-pressure-to-censor/)

July 2022—June 2023 Book Ban Data

3,362

Instances

1,557

Unique titles

130

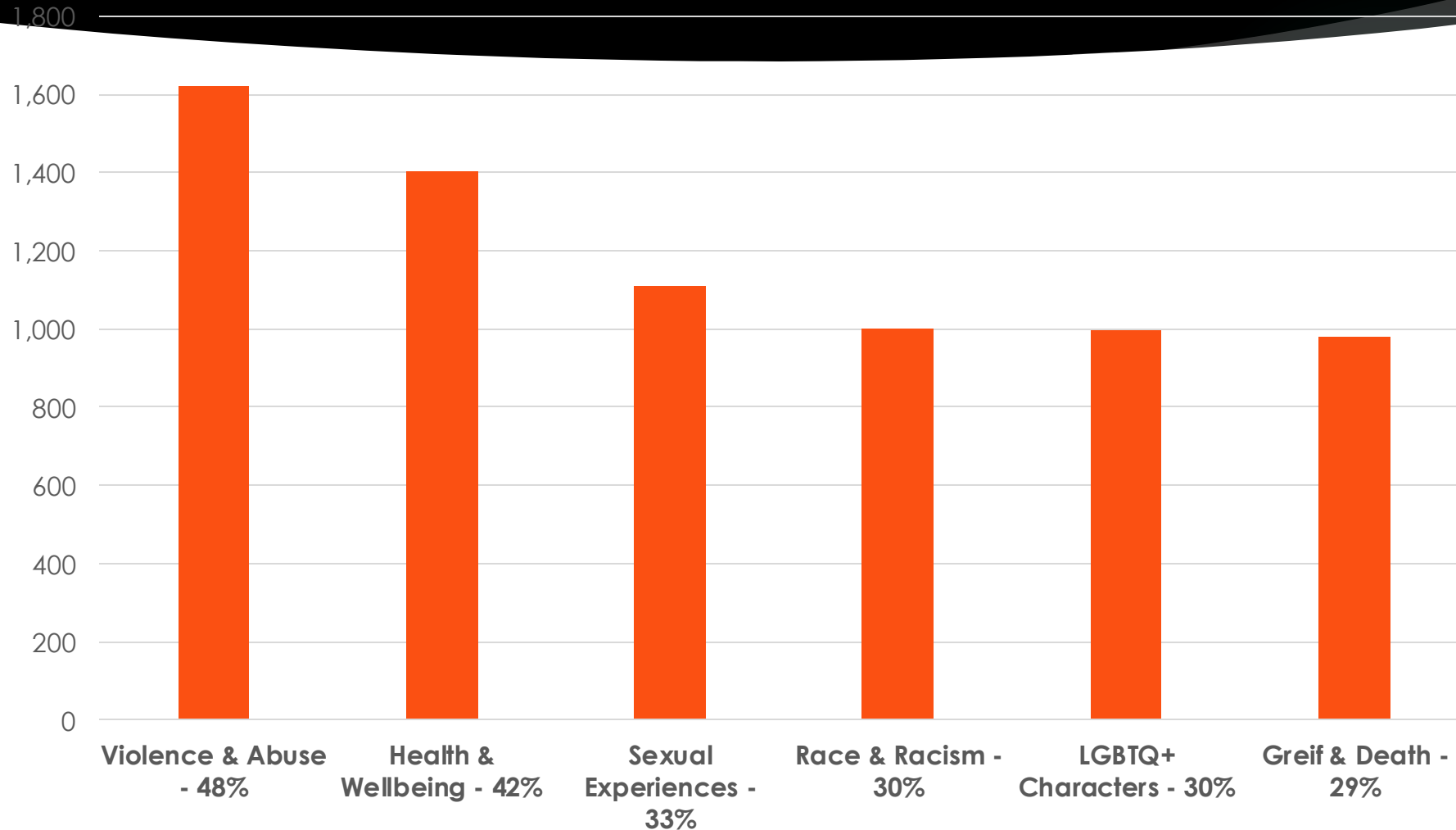
Titles per month

July 2022—June 2023 Book Ban Data

33%

Increase from the
2021-22 school year

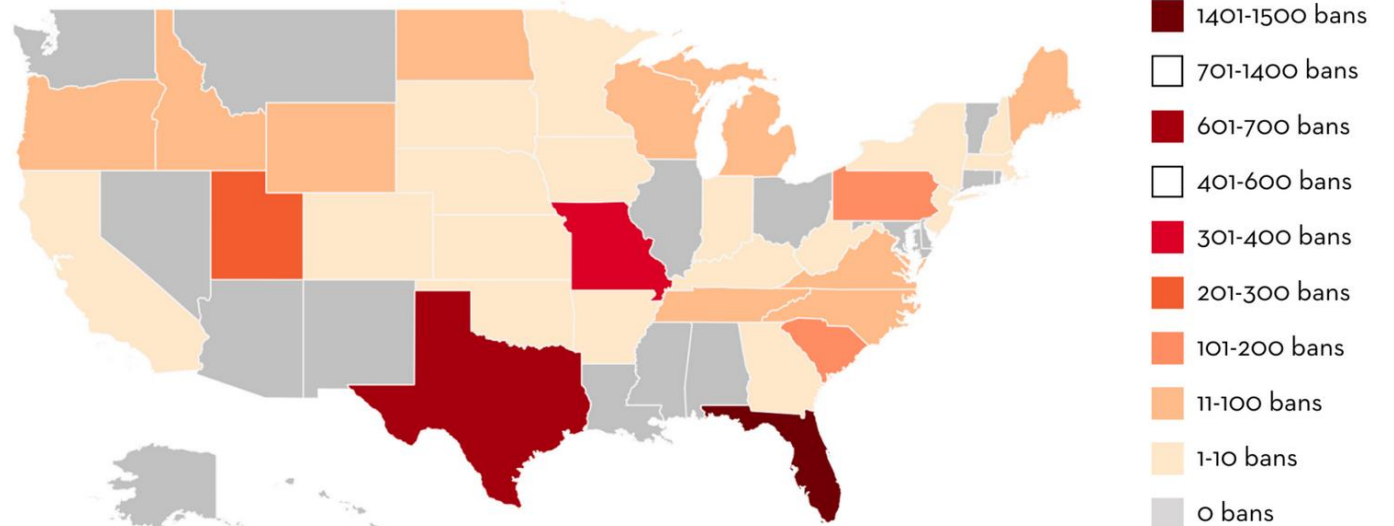
The kinds of books that get banned



State Leaders in Book Banning

1. Florida
> 40% of all cases
2. Texas
3. Missouri
4. Utah
5. Pennsylvania

School book bans by state
July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023



Data from PEN America Index of School Book Bans.

*There are no states with 401-600 bans and 701-1400 bans

Book Banning is an Organized Effort

- ❖ Moms for Liberty
- ❖ Citizens Defending Freedom
- ❖ Parents Rights in Education

100%

One or more of these groups operate in **32** of the **33** states represented in this report.

Utah is the exception. There, **Utah Parents United** is the advocacy group.

Book Banning is an Organized Effort

153

Number of districts
with instances of
book bans

124

Number of districts
with a chapter
nearby

81%

Percent of districts
with a chapter
nearby

Book Banning is an Organized Effort

2,912

Book ban cases
occurred near a
chapter

87%

Percent of
recorded bans

Report Florida Freedom to Read Foundation

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS SINCE
2021.

[HTTPS://WWW.FFTRP.ORG/FLORIDA
CENSORSHIP_ATTEMPTS](https://www.fftrp.org/florida-censorship-attempts)



Statistics since 2021

1,000+

Titles removed or
restricted

1,900+

Titles challenged

3,800+

Unique
challenges

Titles most frequently removed from circulation

According to public records requested by FFRF

TITLE	AUTHOR	COUNT
Tricks	Ellen Hopkins	29
The Hate U Give	Angie Thomas	27
Nineteen Minutes	Jodi Picoult	26
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian	Sherman Alexie	24
The Bluest Eye	Toni Morrison	24
The Kite Runner	Khaled Hosseini	22
A Court of Mist and Fury	Sarah J. Maas	21
Beloved	Toni Morrison	21
Crank	Ellen Hopkins	21
Drama	Raina Telgemeier	21
Looking for Alaska	John Greene	21
Me and Earl and the Dying Girl	Jesse Andrews	21

Titles challenged in Miami-Dade County

According to public records
requested by FFRF

N=7

TITLE	AUTHOR	INSTIGATOR
A Court of Mist and Fury	Sarah J. Maas	Activist
Fates and Furies	Lauren Groff	Activist
Countries in the News: Cuba	Kieran Walsh	Parent
Cuban Kids	George Ancona	Parent
Love to Langston	Tony Medina	Parent
The ABC's of Black History	Rio Cortez	Parent
The Hill We Climb	Amanda Gorman	Parent

Titles challenged in Broward County

According to public records
requested by FFRF

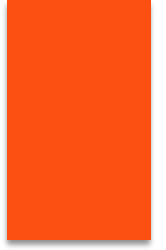
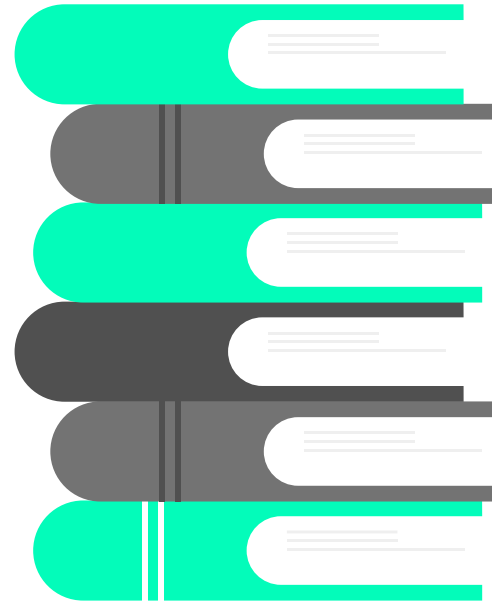
N=17

TITLE	AUTHOR	INSTIGATOR
The Bluest Eye	Toni Morrison	Parent
The Kite Runner	Khaled Hosseini	Parent
Killing Mr. Griffin	Lois Duncan	Parent
Melissa (George)	Alex Gino	Parent
Sold	Patricia McCormick	Parent
Flamer	Mike Curato	Parent
It's Perfectly Normal	Robie Harris	Activist
Lawn Boy	Jonathan Evison	Parent
It Feels Good to be Yourself: A book about gender identity	Theresa Thorn	Activist
A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo	Jill Twiss	Activist
Let's Talk About It: A teen's guide to sex	Erika Moen	Parent
This Day in June	Gayle Pittman	Educators
Different Kinds of Fruit	Kyle Lukoff	Educators
Book of Mormon, New Testament, Old Testament, Talmud	Various	Citizen

Titles challenged in Monroe County

According to public records
requested by FFRF

N=0





Report FIRE

2024 COLLEGE FREE SPEECH
RANKINGS.

[HTTPS://WWW.THEFIRE.ORG/RESEARCH-LEARN/2024-COLLEGE-FREE-SPEECH-RANKINGS](https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/2024-college-free-speech-rankings)



Florida University Rankings, Ratings, & Scores for Free Speech & Campus Climate

Florida State University

5

Above Average

69.64

University of South Florida

12

Above Average

66.08

Florida International University

46

Slightly Above Average

55.48

University of Miami

205

Slightly Below Average

36.74

University of Florida

231

Poor

29.37

University of Central Florida

235

Poor

26.64

Top 5 Universities according for Free Speech & Campus Climate

#1 Michigan Technological University

Good

78.01

#2 Auburn University

Good

72.53

#3 The University of New Hampshire

Good

72.17

#4 Oregon State University

Good

71.56

#5 Florida State University

Above Average

69.64

Classroom Trends

56%

Damage their reputation due to a **misunderstanding**

26%

Pressure to avoid discussing **controversial topics**

20%

Report **self-censoring** either "often" or "very often"

When students report they self-censor

25%

Around other Students

27%

Around professors

28%

During classroom
discussions

The most difficult topics

- 49% Abortion
- 43% Gun Control
- 42% Transgender Rights
- 42% Racial Equality

Opposition to Controversial Speakers

57-72%

Oppose
Conservative
Speakers

29-43%

Oppose
Liberal
Speakers

What is acceptable?

45%

It is acceptable to block other students from **attending a speech.**

Up from 37% in 2022

27%

It is acceptable to use **violence to stop a campus speech.**

Up from 20% in 2022

Support from Administration

21%

Administration's stance on free speech on campus is **unclear**.

27%

Administration is **unlikely** to defend a speaker's rights if a controversy occurred on campus.

FIU Data from FIRE

52%

Shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is **rarely acceptable**.

National Avg. 63%

45%

Self-censored on campus at least **once or twice a month**.

National Avg. 33%

47%

Worried about **damaged reputations** because of a misunderstanding.

National Avg. 56%

1.6:1

Ratio of liberal to conservative students on campus.

National Avg. 5:1

Kahoot:
Let Freedom
Read Trivia

WINNERS GET
A STARBUCKS
GIFT CARD!

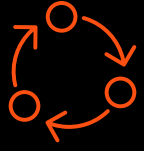
Conclusion

Our Response

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ALL THIS DATA & HOW CAN WE RESPOND?

[HTTPS://LIBRARY.FIU.EDU/ACADEMIC-FREEDOM](https://library.fiu.edu/academic-freedom)





Grassroots to Policy Policymakers to Grassroots

- ❖ **Thinktanks** are influencing legislation.
- ❖ **Hillsdale College's** influence on **Florida policy** (Despite PEN's designation as one of the worst colleges for First Amendment Rights)
- ❖ Challenges are trending
 - ❖ **away from individuals** (parents / citizens)
 - ❖ **toward activist organizations** (Moms for Liberty, No Left Turn in Education, Florida Citizens Alliance)

What can I do?

- ❖ Support a pro-reading organization
 - ❖ Red, Wine, and Blue, Moms for Libros, Unite Against Book Bans
- ❖ Join a banned book reading club
- ❖ Join & support your union
- ❖ Vote and write to your representatives
- ❖ Sharpen your media literacy expertise: Credo & SAGE SKILLS from FIU Libraries!

Standing up for Academic & Intellectual Freedom



Disagreement
is largely
theoretical



Never pull up
the **ladders**



Link the **town** &
the **gown**



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So, What are you reading?

- ❖ What is **your experience** reading banned books?
- ❖ Have you ever read a book that was **actively banned** in your area or for your age group? What was that like? How did you benefit?
- ❖ Have you ever been **shamed** for reading a banned book?
- ❖ Think about your favorite book or an influential book in your life. **How would your life be different** if you did not have access to read that title?
- ❖ What suggestions do you have to **resist book banning or censorship**?