



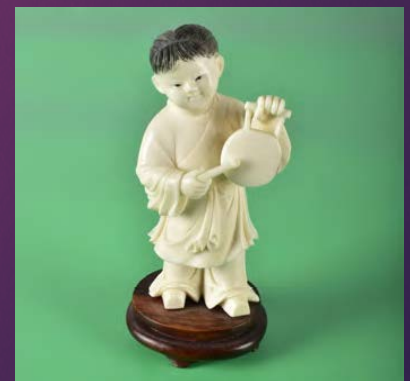
Biologists
WITHOUT BORDERS

2023 Online Ivory Listed for Sale in the United States



February 2024

Photo credit: Shannon Wild



Introduction

This report is a summary of our sixth year of searches for online vendors and auction sites listing ivory items for sale. As with previous summary reports (BWB 2018; BWB 2019; BWB 2020; BWB 2021, BWB 2022), the purpose was to identify sellers and to assess the current scope and locations of the online ivory trade in the US.

All our reports and intel have been submitted to State and Federal wildlife agencies, which have already resulted in seven successful prosecutions. In addition, we are collaborating with the National Whistleblowers Center and the Department of Homeland Security, which are also pursuing prosecutions and studying our data.

Survey Methods

We again limited our internet searches for ivory items to those offered by US-based sellers and auction sites (vendors). Searches were conducted daily between January 1 to December 31, 2023 and divided into six search periods for analysis. We used keywords (i.e., ivory, tusk) to search for target items being advertised or sold by a range of online vendors, including independent vendors (auction and non-auction) and large auction and non-auction sites. We also utilized the automated keyword search feature at three prominent auction platforms (i.e., AuctionZip, Invaluable, Liveauctioneers). This feature provided email alerts when items matched our keywords, which allowed for thorough and continuous coverage.

Our surveys methods (i.e., search protocols and criteria, data collection and analysis) were the same used in prior years and detailed in our 2018 report (BWB 2018). We also compared the results of the 2023 data with our past reports, wherever possible.

Results

Our year-long internet search yielded over 1300 ivory items offered by 104 vendors based in 24 states. The highest number of vendors selling ivory were found in Florida (23), Pennsylvania (11), California (8), New York (7), Ohio (7), and Texas (6) (Figures 1 and 2). Forty percent of the vendors had actual brick and mortar stores (physical stores). The highest number of items for sale were found in Florida, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Massachusetts, Arizona, Maine, Connecticut, and Iowa respectively (≥ 60 items) (Figures 1 and 3). Carved ivory figures were the most common items encountered across all states.

Online vendors again varied in size from large-worldwide operations to small independent sellers. Aggregator auction websites, which offer multiple sellers an online platform to access a much larger audience, represented over 95% of the online market. The top three aggregator websites were AuctionZip, Invaluable, and Liveauctioneers. Vendors often listed items on multiple aggregate auction sites. Table 1 presents the online vendors and

auction sites that had the highest number of items for sale or the greatest number of listings over the 12-month survey.

Number of newly found vendors selling ivory in 2023 decreased by 22% from the previous year (Figure 4). The number of new items appears to have remained fairly constant over the last two years (Figure 4). As in previous years, most of the vendors referred to their advertised items as being “antique,” or “vintage,” “from 1900 century”, or “pre-ban” - but none provided documentation of legal import. The states without ivory bans often stated the items could not be sold out-of-state.

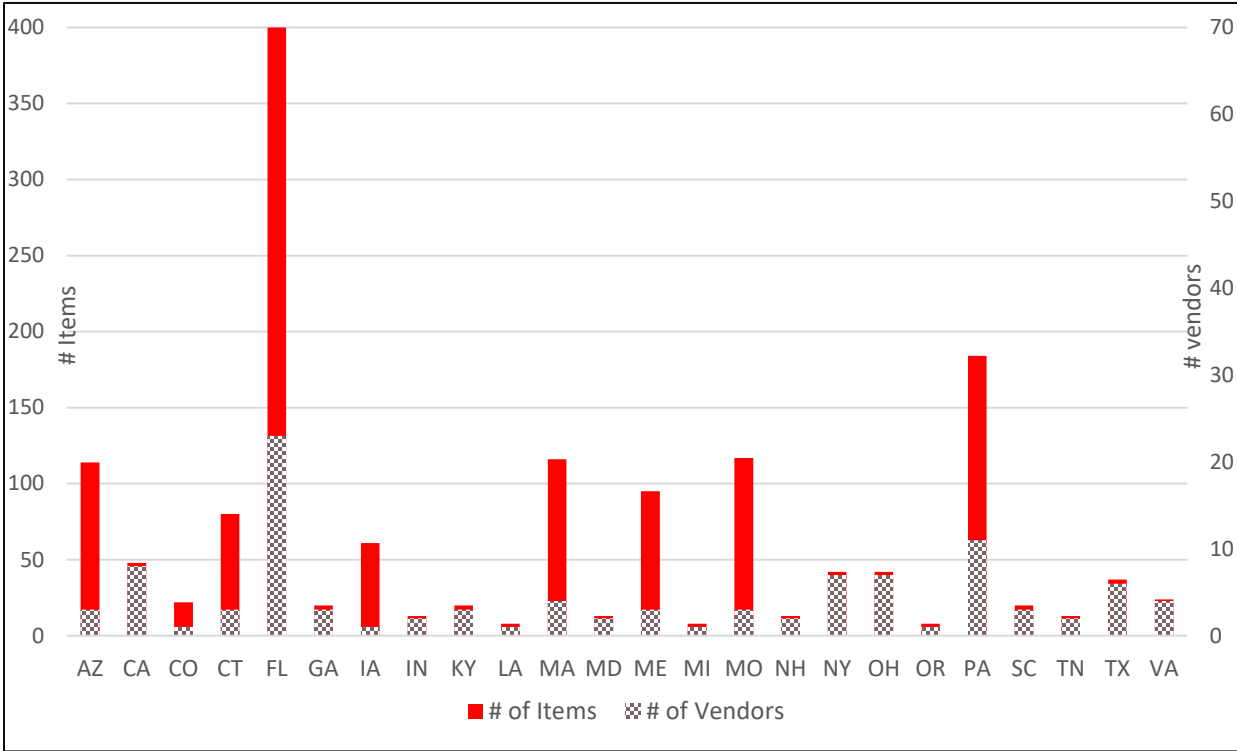


Figure 1. Online ivory for sale by state: number of vendors and items (January 1 to December 31, 2023).

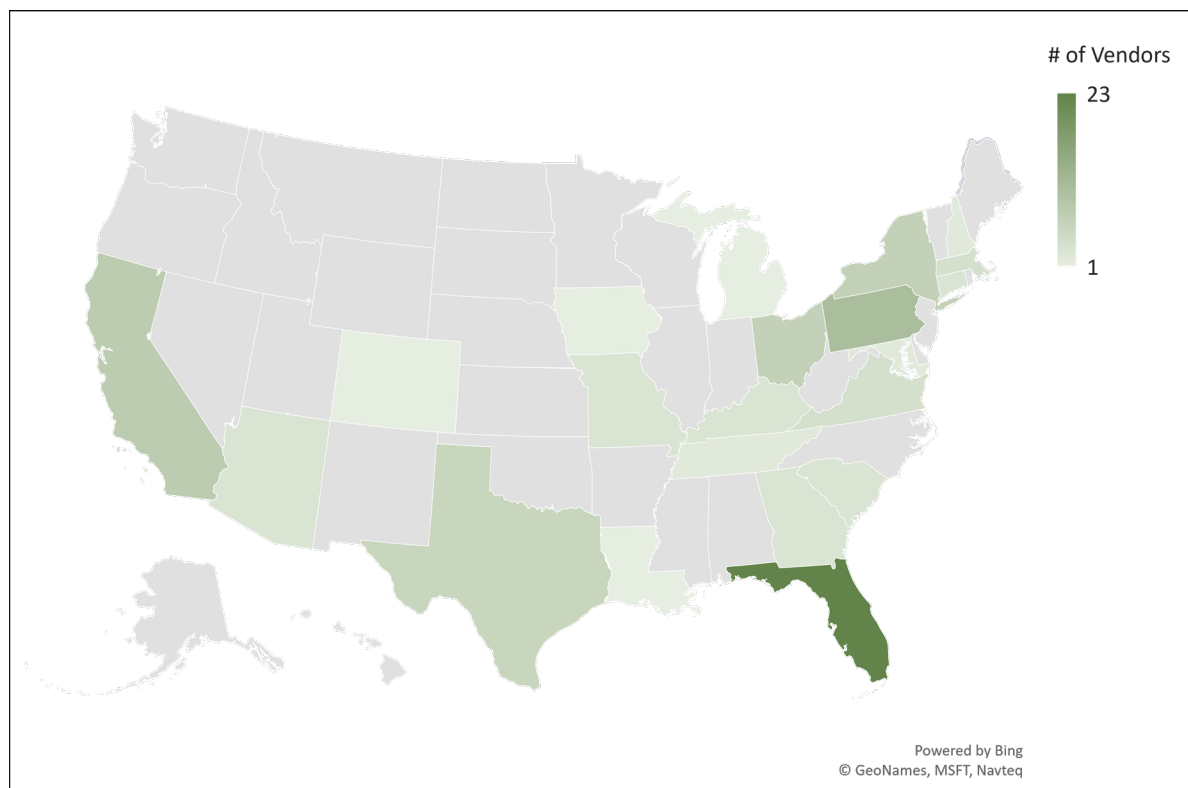


Figure 2. Number of online vendors selling ivory by state (January 1 to December 31, 2023).

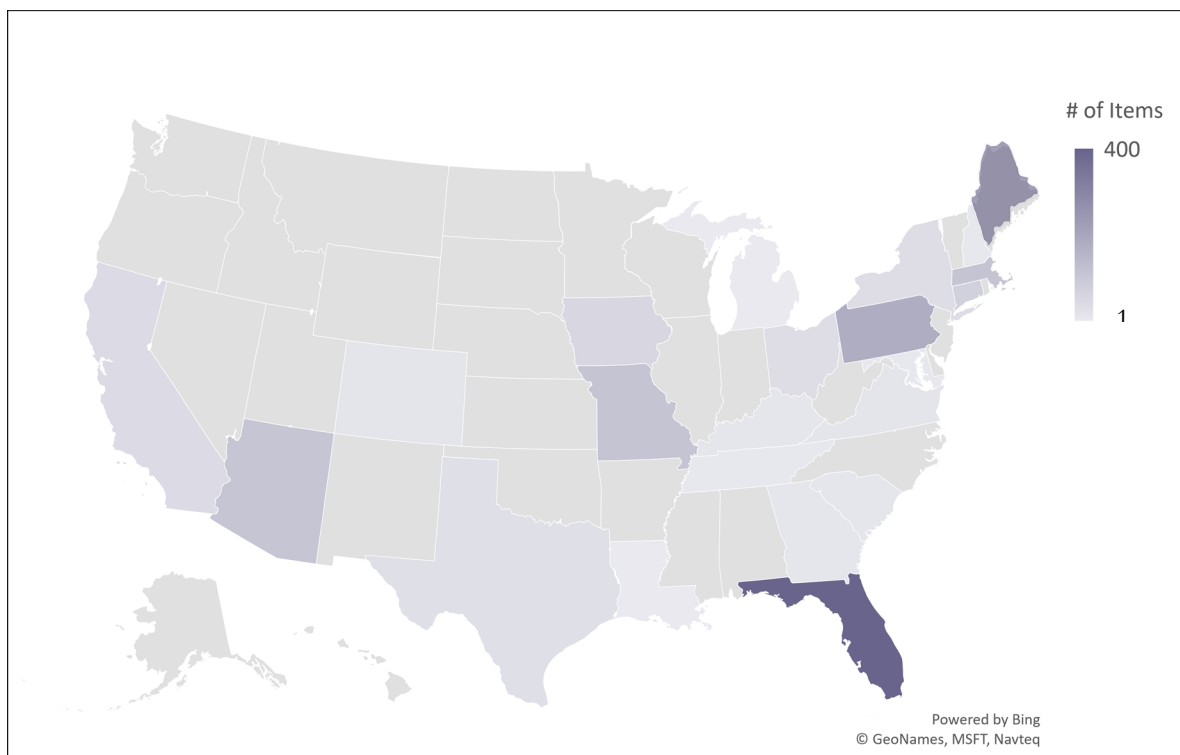


Figure 3. Number of online ivory items for sale by state (January 1 to December 31, 2023).

Table 1. Top Fourteen Vendors/Auctions Selling Ivory – 2023 ¹

Store Name	Location	# items	# listings	Auction/Store
Morphy Auctions	Denver, PA	160	4	Auction
Seminole Estate Auctions	Orange, FL	129	6	Auction
Selkirk Auctioneers	St. Louis, MO	112	5	Auction/Store
Thomaston Place	Thomaston, ME	92	6	Auction/Store
Winter Auctions	Plainville, CT	75	5	Auction
Jackson's Auctions	Cedar Falls, IA	61	3	Auction/Store
R & R Auctions	Peoria, AZ	60	6	Auction/Store
Auctions by Daum	Hobe Sound, FL	43	6	Auction
Affiliated Auctions	Tallahassee, FL	42	6	Auction
Monarch Auctions	Peoria, AZ	41	5	Auction
Eldred's Auctions	East Dennis, MA	36	5	Auction/Store
Amero Auctions	Sarasota, FL	29	4	Auction/Store
Blackwell Auctions	Clearwater, FL	26	3	Auction
Artemis Auctions	Louisville, CO	22	5	Auction

¹ Selection Criteria: ≥ 20 items and/or ≥ 4 listings. Listings are number of search periods the store/auction had a listing (6 search periods).

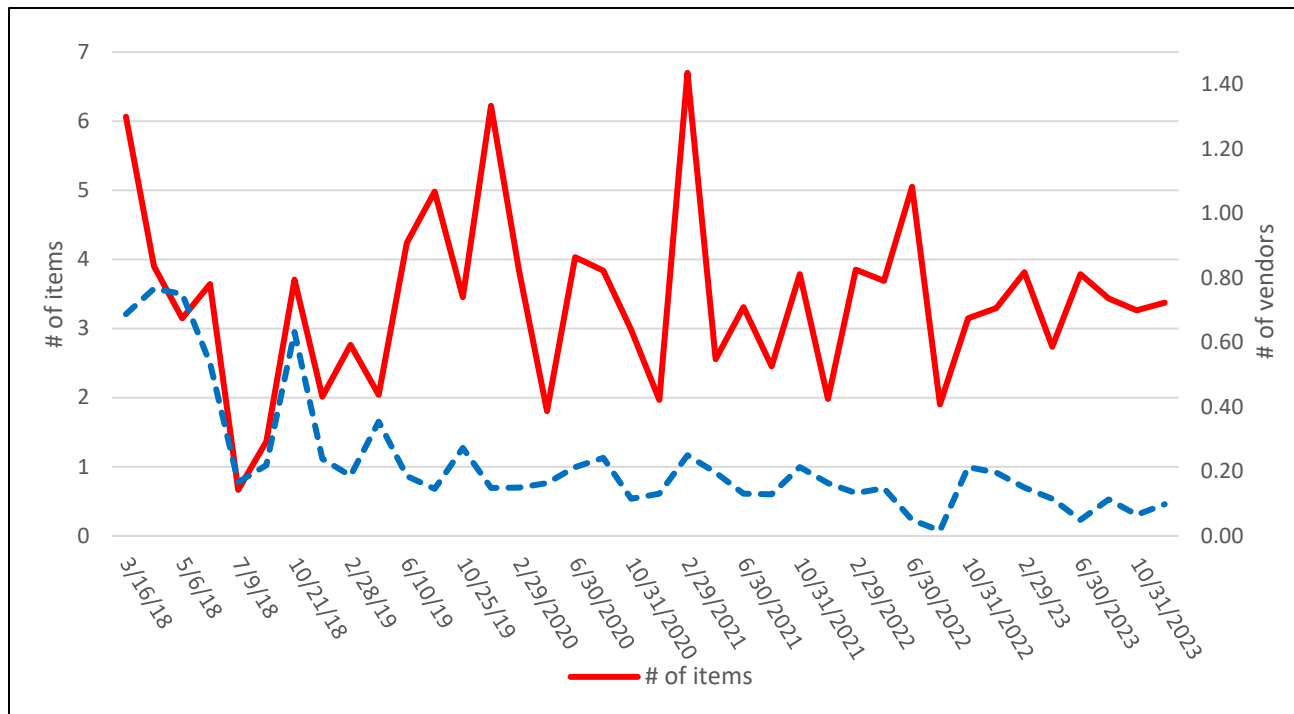


Figure 4. Number of new online vendors and new ivory items by search period (March 1, 2018 to December 31, 2023) (items were divided by number of search days in each period).

Discussion

As in previous years, our data show that the US ivory markets continue to flourish on the internet. Since 2020, Florida has far exceeded all other states in number of vendors and ivory items being sold. For the last four years, Florida has been responsible for between 30% to 43% of the top selling vendors and between 27% to 36% of all ivory items offered in the US.

Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Arizona also have continued to rank high in number of vendors and/or number of items for the last four years. Maine and Missouri were top ranked for the second year in a row. New top selling states in 2023 were Connecticut, Iowa, and California. Compared to last year, the number of items has remained fairly constant but the number of new sellers has decreased for the second year in a row.

Four of the vendors were among our top sellers in five of our last survey years: Blackwell Auctions (FL), Eldred's (MA), Seminole Estate Auctions (FL) and Thomaston Place (ME).

As with previous years, our findings make it clear that there is still a significant online market for ivory. However, if a state ban on ivory could be enacted in Florida alone, it would significantly reduce the ivory trade in the US. In addition, if the large aggregator sites were encouraged to ban the selling of ivory on their platforms, it would severely limit the US online market, principally AuctionZip, Invaluable, and Liveauctioneers.

Citations

BWB (Biologists without Borders). 2018. 2018 Online Ivory Listed for Sale in the United States. Biologists without Borders. ([2018 Report](#)).

BWB (Biologists without Borders). 2019. 2019 Online Ivory Listed for Sale in the United States. Biologists without Borders. ([2019 Report](#)).

BWB (Biologists without Borders). 2020. 2020 Online Ivory Listed for Sale in the United States. Biologists without Borders. ([2020 Report](#)).

BWB (Biologists without Borders). 2021. 2021 Online Ivory Listed for Sale in the United States. Biologists without Borders. ([2021 Report](#))

BWB (Biologists without Borders). 2022. 2022 Online Ivory Listed for Sale in the United States. Biologists without Borders. ([2022 Report](#))