



2021 Online Ivory Listed for Sale in the United States



Introduction

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

All our reports and intel have been submitted to State and Federal wildlife agencies, which have already resulted in six 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, 2021 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 (AuctionZip, Invaluable, Liveauctioneers). This 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 the 2021 data with our past reports, wherever possible.

Results

Our year-long internet search yielded over 1269 ivory items offered by 204 vendors based in 30 states. The highest number of vendors selling ivory were found in Florida (28), Pennsylvania (8), Texas (7), and California (7) (Figures 1 and 2). Only 25% of the vendors had actual brick and mortar stores (physical stores). The highest number of items for sale were found in Florida, Arizona, Oklahoma, Virginia, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Missouri respectively (≥ 50 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 greater audience, represented over 90% 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 vendor 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 2021 remained fairly constant from the previous year (Figure 4). The number of new items appears to have increased by at least 15 percent from the previous year. 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.

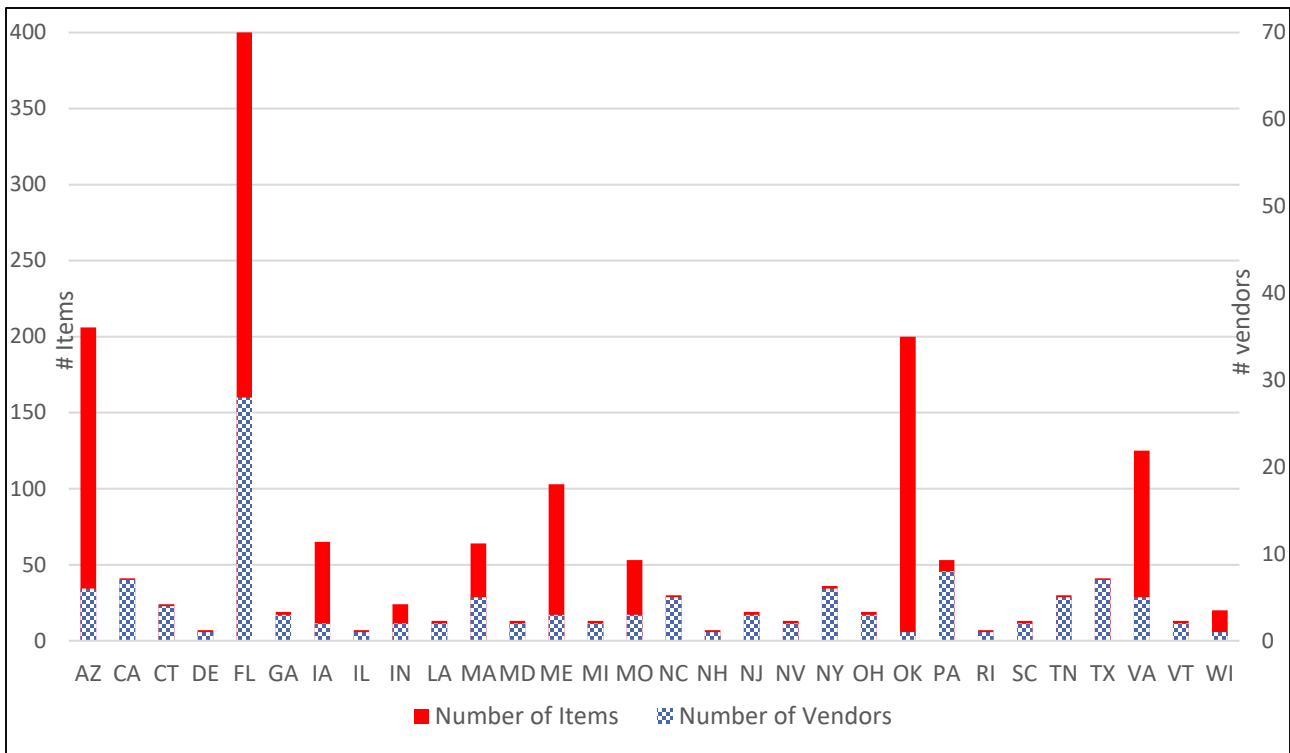


Figure 1. Online ivory for sale by state: number of vendors and items (January 1 to December 31, 2021).

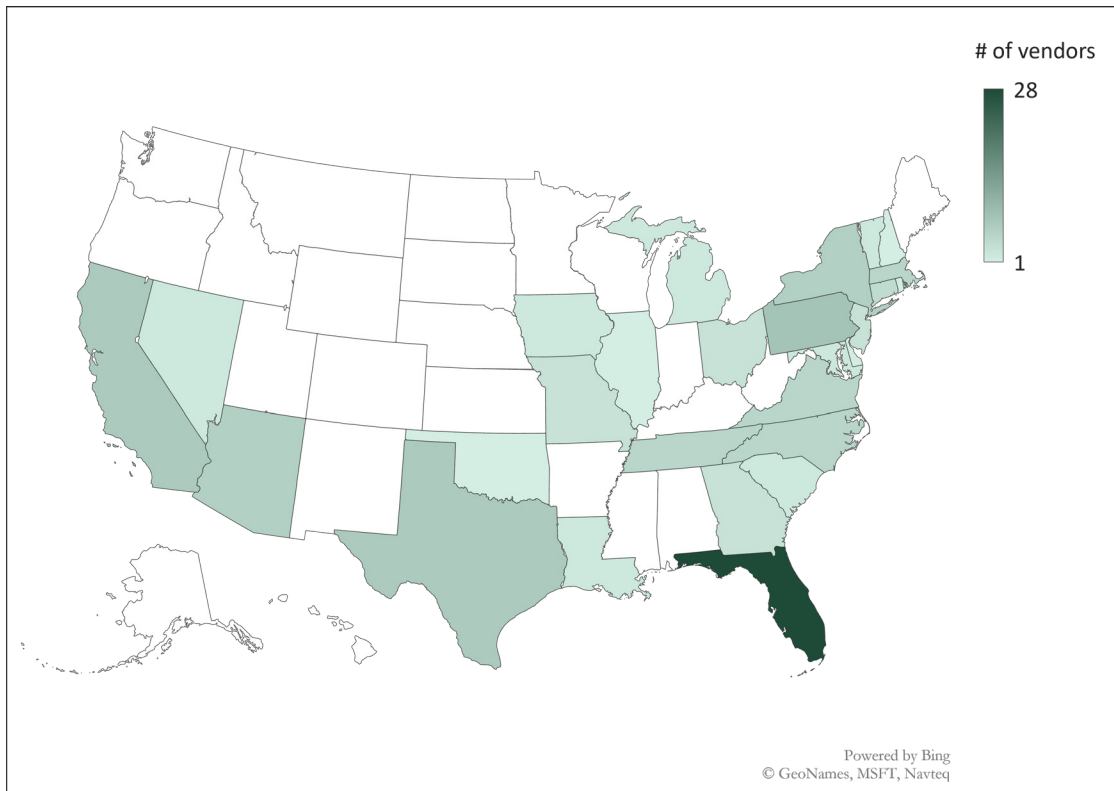


Figure 2. Number of online vendors selling ivory by state (January 1 to December 31, 2021).

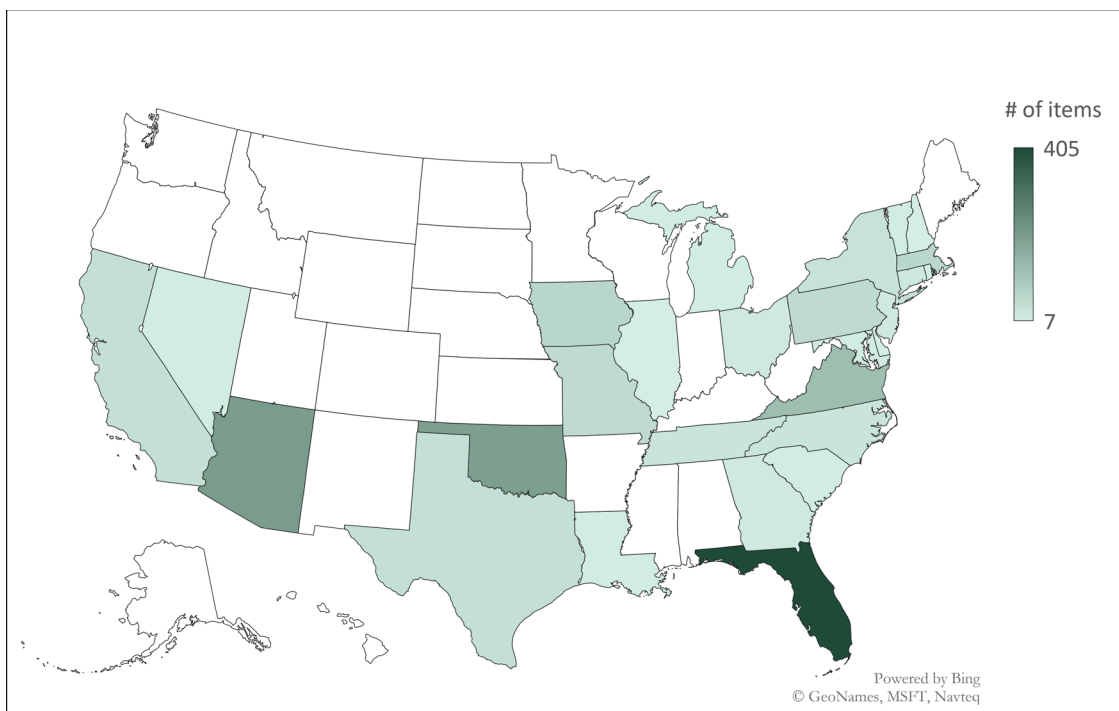


Figure 3. Number of online ivory items for sale by state (January 1 to December 31, 2021).

Table 1. Top Fourteen Vendors/Auctions Selling Ivory – 2020¹

Store Name	Location	# items	# listings	Auction/Store
Kerr and Kempf Estate Sales ²	Oklahoma City, OK	200	1	Auction
Bradford's Auctions	Sun City, AZ	174	4	Auction
Quinn's Auction	Fall Church, VA	112	3	Auction/Store
Affiliated Auctions	Tallahassee, FL	84	6	Auction
Auction Life	Loxahatchee, FL	83	2	Auction/Store
Jackson's Auction	Cedar Fall, IA	65	3	Auction/Store
Seminole Estate Auctions	Orange, FL	54	5	Auction
Amero	Sarasota, FL	54	4	Auction/Store
Eldred's Auctions	East Dennis, MA	53	6	Auction/Store
Thomaston Place	Thomaston, ME	49	4	Auction/Store
Selkirk Auctioneers	St. Louis, MO	41	5	Auction/Store
Tunicks Auction	Rockland, ME	32	3	Auction
Blackwell Auctions	Clearwater, FL	23	4	Auction
Winter Auctions	Plainville, CT	19	6	Auction

¹= Selection Criteria: ≥ 30 items or ≥ 4 listings. Listings are number of search periods the store/auction had a listing (6 search periods).

²= From mobile app.

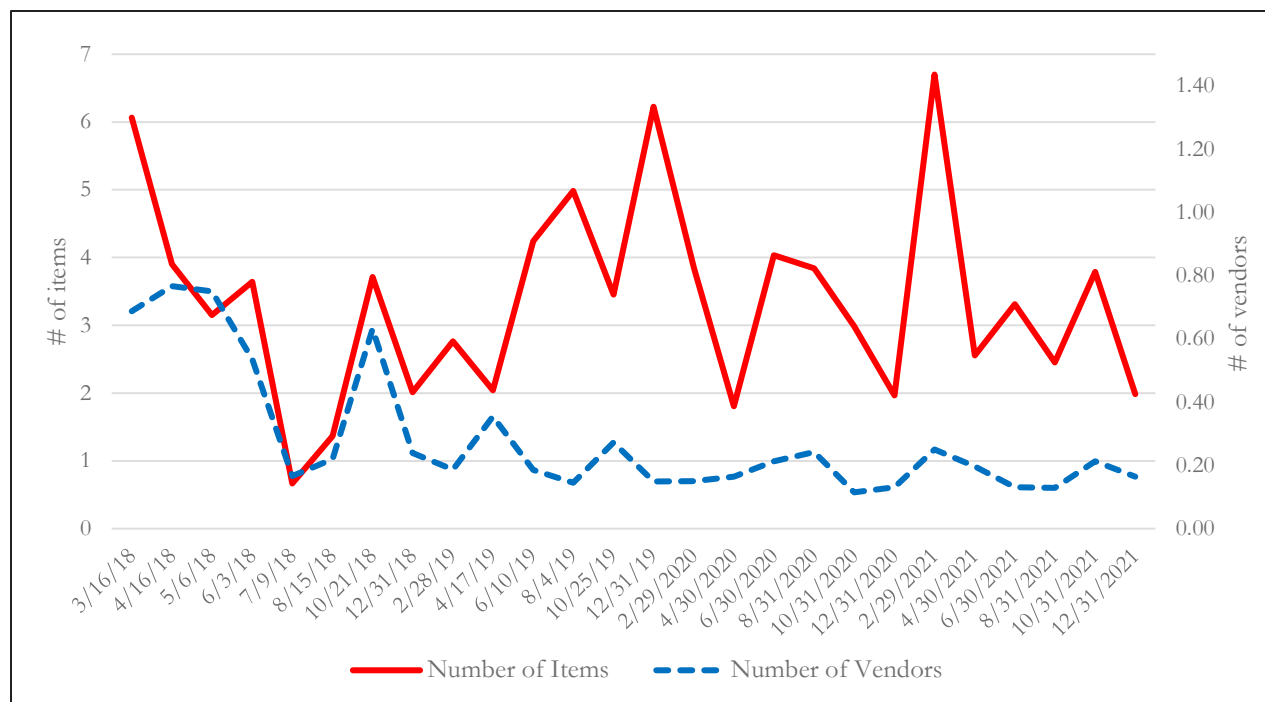


Figure 4. Number of new online vendors and new ivory items by search period (March 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021) (items were divided by number of search days in each period).

Discussion

Our data show that the US ivory markets continue to flourish on the internet. For the last four survey years, Florida has ranked first in number of vendors and ranked one or two in number of ivory items. This year, Florida has far exceeded all other states in number of vendors and items being sold. Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Arizona continue to rank high in number of vendors and/or number of items. New top selling states in 2021 were Oklahoma and Iowa. This year, the number of items has rebounded from last year's low but the number of new sellers has remained constant.

Two sellers were among our top sellers in all four survey years: Blackwell Auctions (FL) and Eldred's (MA). Eldred's was also among the top sellers in a 2014 study (IFAW 2014). Seminole Estate Auctions (FL) and Thomaston Place (ME) have been top sellers for the last three years.

As with the 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. [\(2020 Report\)](#).

IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare). 2014. Bidding Against Survival: The Elephant Poaching Crisis and the Role of Auctions in the U.S. Ivory Market.