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Researchers Say Protests Didn't Increase Covid-19 Spread—But Republicans Are Still Blaming Them



Nicholas Reimann Forbes Staff

Business

I'm a news reporter for Forbes, primarily covering the U.S. South.

TOPLINE Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Giménez, a Republican, is placing some of the blame for the recent coronavirus spike in south Florida on protesters who took to the streets following the death of George Floyd in support of Black Lives Matter, repeating an explanation that is becoming increasingly popular among Republicans, while many in the scientific community remain skeptical.



MIAMI, UNITED STATES - 2020/06/05: Protesters march through the streets of Miami protesting against ... [+] SOPA IMAGES/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

KEY FACTS

- Giménez said on CBS' "Face the Nation" Sunday that protests "had a lot to do with" causing a renewed coronavirus spike in south Florida.
- The area has seen a major rise in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations recently, leading Miami's Jackson Memorial Hospital—one of the biggest hospitals in the world—to suspend elective surgeries, while [beaches](#) closed for the Fourth of July weekend throughout south Florida.
- Giménez's explanation is one that has gained a foothold recently, especially among Republicans, even with a lack of scientific evidence backing it up.
- The scientific evidence so far doesn't back up that explanation: Last week, a team of economists also released a [60-page paper](#) through the National

Bureau of Economic Research, which found “**no evidence** that urban protests reignited Covid-19 case growth during the more than three weeks following protest onset.”

- New York City, for example, had large protests in the days following the death of George Floyd, but the city did not record a coronavirus spike as a result.
- Notably, Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.)—the top Republican in the U.S. House—said in an interview last week that he believed protests were partially to blame for coronavirus increases **nationally**.

CRITICAL QUOTE

“I think obviously the protests had a lot to do with it,” Giménez said. “We had, you know, thousands of young people together outside, a lot of them not wearing masks. And we know that when you do that and you are talking and you are chanting, etc. that really spreads the virus.”

KEY BACKGROUND

Much of the blame so far for the coronavirus spike has been on young people congregating indoors for parties and at bars—not marching outside as part of a protest. Florida's Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis has also placed some of the blame for the state's historic spike on young people gathering at bars, and he has ordered bars in the state to once again shut down. The state is now one of the primary contributors to the recent record increases in coronavirus cases reported nationally, and the southern part of the state is among the areas that have been hit most hard. On Wednesday, Miami-Dade reported its **1,000th** coronavirus death.

BIG NUMBER

Over **20%** — That's how many tests are now coming back positive for coronavirus in Miami-Dade, Giménez said. That's a number that in the past had been at 8%.

FURTHER READING

[Research Determines Protests Did Not Cause Spike In Coronavirus Cases](#)
(Forbes)

[Miami-Dade Hits 1,000 Coronavirus Deaths As Patients In Health System Double](#) (Forbes)

South Florida Closing Beaches For Fourth Of July (Forbes)

House GOP leader suggests without evidence that protests are driving up coronavirus cases (CNBC)

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Nicholas Reimann

I'm a New Orleans-based news reporter for Forbes covering the U.S. South and breaking news. Previously, I wrote for The Times-Picayune | The New Orleans Advocate covering... **Read More**

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