

In Brief: Alabama

According to the [US Crisis Monitor](#), Alabama has recorded 186 demonstrations since May 24 — ranking 25th in the United States (and 18th in terms of events per capita). **Of the 186 demonstrations, 91.4 percent (or 170) were recorded as peaceful.** 67.7 percent of all demonstrations were related to the Black Lives Matter movement, of which 88 percent were peaceful. Two percent of all demonstrations were COVID-19 related (considerably lower than the national average of 12 percent), and at least 2 percent were “Back the Blue” or “Blue Lives Matter” related.

63 percent of all demonstrations (118 events) occurred in one of six counties: Madison (Huntsville city), Jefferson (Birmingham city), Mobile, Montgomery, Lauderdale (Florence city), and Tuscaloosa. The other 37 percent (68 events) were spread across 32 counties.

In the broad category of contentious demonstrations, nine percent of all demonstrations (or 17 events) were contentious. Contention includes any peaceful demonstration met by state (police, other law enforcement) or non-state (active counter-protesters, citizens) intervention. It also includes excessive use of force by the state or violence by/associated with demonstrators. Though significantly less in number, these events may be potential flashpoints for further contention.

Of the 17 contentious demonstrations, at least 15 (88%) were met with state intervention. Of those, three (20%) saw the use of tear gas, pepper spray, or rubber munitions by the police as a crowd control measure. At least one contentious demonstration was met by an armed non-state actor.

All of the contentious demonstrations occurred in one of four counties (Jefferson, Madison, Mobile, and Montgomery), with Jefferson county seeing 10 of the 16 events.

Political violence & other risk factors

Five percent of all demonstrations saw the presence of counter-protesters — all of which remained peaceful. Of these 10 events, 60 percent were concerned with confederate monuments. All 10 events occurred in one of four counties (Madison, Marshall, Lauderdale, and Etowah). Of Marshall

County’s four total demonstrations, three recorded the presence of counter-protesters.

Alabama saw 34 police-involved killings in 20 counties since September 2018.¹ Police shootings have not only been salient flashpoints for large-scale protests but also may undermine community trust in and cooperation with police, further impeding the ability for the state and community to respond effectively to escalating violence.

The state recorded at least two white supremacist events, seven occurrences of white supremacist propaganda, and four anti-semitic events over the past year.² Given self-reporting methodology, these numbers may indicate a significant undercount.

43 counties in Alabama (64%) have at least one confederate monument or public symbol. With increased protests and dialogue around confederate monuments, these icons have the potential to serve as flashpoints through and beyond the electoral period.

Select Counties with State & National Comparison

[May 24 - September 19, 2020]

County	Recorded Militia Present	Total Demonstrations	% Contentious (Protesters, State, or External)	% With State Intervention	% Met with Counter-Protesters
Calhoun	No	5	-	-	-
Etowah	No	5	-	-	20%
Jefferson	No	31	32%	32%	-
Lauderdale	No	12	-	-	17%
Lee	No	9	-	-	-
Madison	Yes	33	9%	6%	15%
Marshall	No	4	-	-	75%
Mobile	No	16	13%	13%	-
Montgomery	No	15	13%	7%	-
Tuscaloosa	No	12	-	-	-
Alabama	-	186	9%	8%	5%
National	-	12608	9%	7%	5%

Total demonstrations include all peaceful and contentious protests. Demonstrations with state intervention are police force intervention. Source: [US Crisis Monitor](#), [ACLED \(2020\)](#)

¹ Includes all events from 6 Sept 2018 to 6 Sept 2020 from the [Mapping Police Violence data](#)

² Includes all events from 31 Aug 2019 to 31 Aug 2020 from the [ADL HEAT Map](#)

Actors of Concern

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has mapped [16 hate organizations in Alabama](#) (6 statewide), across roughly four ideologies: white nationalist,³ Black separatist, Neo-Confederate, and general hate. Specific groups that have been present at protests include the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the KKK.

Election Factors

In 2016, Donald Trump won Alabama with 62.1% of the popular vote (to Hillary Clinton's 34.4%). While the state is once again expected to go to Donald Trump there are several local dynamics that may remain points of contention. While 22 counties voted overwhelmingly (i.e. >75%) for Donald Trump in the 2016 election, two counties — Green and Macon — did vote overwhelmingly for Hillary Clinton.

33 counties (including Green and Macon as well as Montgomery, Jefferson, and Madison) have recorded minority populations above 30% — a possible target for increased racially-motivated violence and/or intimidation ahead around the election.

Alabama has instituted temporary “no excuse” vote-by-mail measures to account for COVID-19. New election processes or distrust around the state-specific voting process may motivate contention.

Incidents and trends of note

Of the 16 contentious demonstrations in Alabama, 3 were protests met by the use of tear gas, pepper spray, or other munitions, all of which occurred over a three day period:

On May 31, thousands of people gathered in Mobile to demonstrate against the death of George Floyd and to support the Black Lives Matter movement. Police officers used [gas and smoke canisters to deter the protesters from trying to access Interstate 10](#). At night, an unknown number of people demonstrated on Airport Boulevard in Mobile for the same cause. [Police used pepper balls to disperse the demonstrators](#).

On June 1, police used smoke canisters and pepper spray to disperse upwards of 700 protesters in Huntsville. On June 3, more than 100 people attended a rally in Huntsville organized by the NAACP in

support of the BLM movement. [Police employed tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets and flash bangs](#) to disperse protesters who refused to leave after curfew.

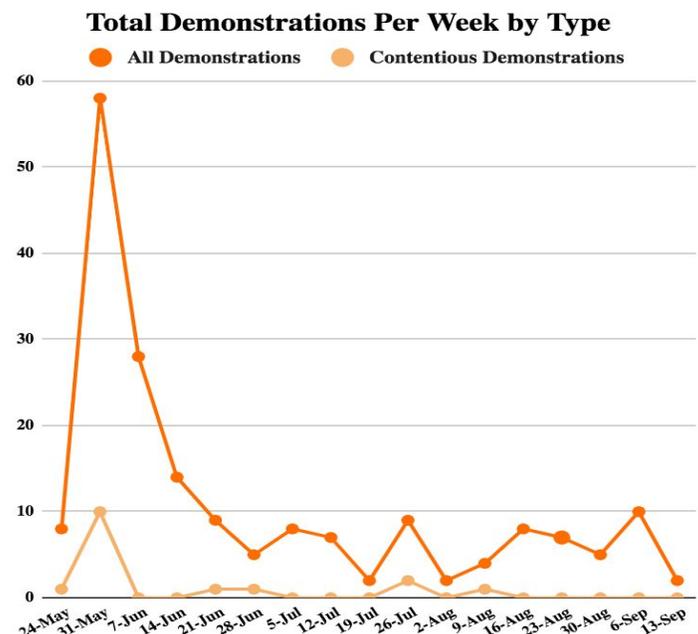
The use of tear gas sparked subsequent peaceful protests in Huntsville throughout June and July during which protesters called for the police to apologize for deploying tear gas against protesters. ([June 11](#), [June 12](#), [June 18](#), and [July 29](#)).

26 demonstrations were explicitly centered on the removal of confederate monuments. Of these demonstrations, only two resulted in some form of property damage or violence:

June 1, [rioters toppled a statue of Robert E Lee in Montgomery](#). No injuries were reported, but several demonstrators were arrested.

On May 31, a demonstration in Birmingham turned violent when rioters [toppled a statue of a Confederate State Navy Captain](#) and [vandalized the Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Monument](#) in Linn Park. Further property damage was reported across the city and two [two journalists were attacked by unidentified assailants](#).

Several of these demonstrations were met with counter-protesters, including [two protests in Florence](#) (Lauderdale County) and [three in Albertville](#) (Marshall County).



³ Includes neo-Nazi, neo-Volkisch, racist skinhead, Ku Klux Klan, and hate music organizations