

## In Brief: Alabama

According to the [Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset](#) (ACLED), Alabama has recorded at least 347 demonstrations since January 01, 2020 - ranking 26th in the United States in overall demonstrations and 39th in terms of demonstrations per capita. Jefferson County saw more demonstrations than any other county in Alabama with 66 demonstrations, or 19% of the total. Other counties with significant numbers of demonstrations include Madison County, Montgomery County, Mobile County, Tuscaloosa County, and Lauderdale County. All together, these top 6 counties saw 227 demonstrations, accounting for 65.4% of the state's total.

During this time, 49% of demonstrations (170) were related to the Black Lives Matter movement. 8.6% of demonstrations (30) were related to COVID-19, and 10 demonstrations (2.9%) were related to the Back the Blue, or Blue Lives Matter, movement.

Of the 347 demonstrations, 5.5% (or 19 events) were contentious. This is less than the national rate of 6.9% of contentious events over this time period. Contention includes any peaceful demonstration met by state (police, other law enforcement) or non-state (active counter-protesters, citizens) intervention, as well as any demonstrations with violence by, against or associated with demonstrators. Though significantly less in number, these events may be potential flashpoints for further contention.

### Political violence & other risk factors

5.2% of all demonstrations were met with state intervention, and 6.9% were met by counter protesters. 15.8% of contentious events involved the use of tear gas, pepper spray, or rubber bullets by police to disperse or control crowds.

Alabama has seen 42 police-involved killings in 23 counties since March 2019.<sup>1</sup> Police shootings have not only been salient flashpoints for large-scale protests but may also undermine community trust in and cooperation with police, further impeding the state and community ability to respond to contentious events.

<sup>1</sup> Includes all events from March 31, 2019, to March 31, 2021 from the [Mapping Police Violence data](#)

Alabama has experienced eight anti-Semitic events and 54 occurrences of white supremacist propaganda over the past year.<sup>2</sup> Most of these events occurred in northeastern Alabama, including Gadsden, Piedmont, Jacksonville, Anniston, and Oxford.

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.

### Select Counties with State & National Comparison

[January 1, 2020 - April 16, 2021]

County	Militia Recorded at Demo or Other Event	Total Demonstrations	% Contentious (Protesters, State, or External)	% With State Intervention	% Met with Counter-Protesters
Jefferson	No	66	18%	18%	3%
Madison	Yes	50	6%	6%	10%
Montgomery	No	41	5%	2%	2%
Mobile	No	33	6%	6%	-
Tuscaloosa	No	21	-	-	-
Lauderdale	No	16	-	-	13%
Etowah	No	15	-	-	20%
Lee	No	15	-	-	13%
Marshall	No	15	-	-	37%
Limestone	Yes	5	-	-	20%
Alabama	-	347	5%	5%	7%
National	-	27,118	7%	6%	5%

Total demonstrations include all peaceful and contentious protests. Demonstrations with state intervention are police force intervention. Source: [ACLED \(2020-2021\)](#)

### Actors of Concern

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has mapped [20 hate organizations in Alabama](#) across roughly four ideologies: white nationalist,<sup>3</sup> Black separatist, Neo-Confederate, and general hate.

While ACLED data has not recorded any militia present at demonstrations in Alabama from January 2020 to April 2021, the Alabama chapter of the Oath Keepers held a recruitment event in Hazel Green in

<sup>2</sup> Includes all events from 1 January, 2020, to January 21, 2021 from the [ADL HEAT Map](#)

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

February 2020, and the Alabama Militia held a field training exercise near Elkmont in March 2021.

## Incidents and trends of note

While Alabama has seen a lower rate of both contention (5%) and state intervention (5%) at demonstrations compared to the national average (7% and 6%, respectively), Alabama has seen more counter protests than expected (7% compared to 5%). Half of Alabama's 24 demonstrations with counter protests occurred in either Albertville or Huntsville. In Albertville, Black Lives Matter protesters have engaged in heated debates with the Sons of Confederate Veterans over a [local Confederate memorial](#). In Huntsville, counter-protests have centered on [another Confederate memorial](#) and around the Black Lives Matter movement more generally.

9 of Alabama's 19 contentious demonstrations (47%) occurred in Hoover, a suburb of Birmingham. All 9 demonstrations involved state intervention and occurred between May 30 and August 15, 2020. These 9 demonstrations represent 69% of the 13 demonstrations recorded in Hoover. The only demonstration with a counter protest to turn contentious in any way occurred in Hoover on July 25, 2020, when Black Lives Matter protesters were [met by pro-police and pro-Trump counter-protesters](#). An argument ensued, and police [arrested one Black Lives Matter protester](#) for "disorderly conduct."

Of Alabama's 19 contentious demonstrations, 3 were protests met with tear gas, pepper spray, or other munitions, all of which occurred between May 31 and June 3, 2020 in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd.

On May 31, 2020 thousands of people gathered in Mobile to support the Black Lives Matter movement and were met with police officers using [gas and smoke canisters](#). 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, 2020 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](#).

On May 31, 2020 a demonstration in Birmingham was followed by rioters [toppling a statue of a Confederate State Navy Captain](#) and [vandalizing the Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Monument](#) in Linn Park. Further property damage was reported across the city and two [journalists were attacked by unidentified assailants](#).

From February through April 2021, Alabama saw 11 demonstrations in support of Amazon workers at a facility in Bessemer [attempting to unionize](#). Though it ultimately failed, the unionization drive attracted national attention, including at least 13 additional demonstrations throughout the United States and a [visit from Senator Bernie Sanders](#).

Total & Contentious Demonstrations in Alabama (counts per week)

