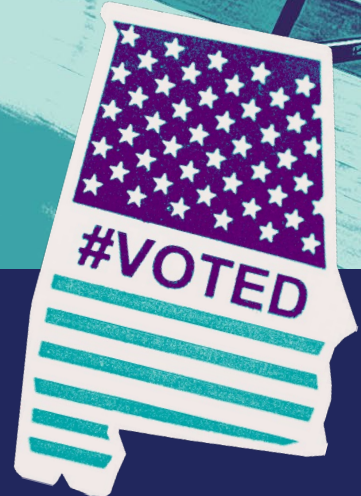




**MISSING**

**VOTERS**



The Real Threat to  
Alabama's Democracy

---

STAND UP MOBILE, DÉMOS, & SOUTHERN COALITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

APRIL 2026

# REPORT BY

## BEVERLY COOPER & DUSTIN TYLER BROUGHTON

---

Stand Up Mobile, based in Mobile, Alabama, is a non-profit voter education and advocacy organization committed to bringing the power of the Black vote to elections at all levels. We believe that it is important for all people to have their voices heard, especially those that are too often excluded from the political, economic, and social institutions that shape their lives.

Learn more at [standupmobile.org](https://standupmobile.org).



## KESHIA MORRIS DESIR & JENS MANUEL KROGSTAD

---

Dēmos is a non-profit public policy organization working to build a just, inclusive, multiracial democracy and economy. We work hand in hand to build power with and for Black and brown communities, forging strategic alliances with grassroots and state-based organizations.

Learn more at [demos.org](https://demos.org).



## LUCY KRUEGER & SARAH OVASKA

---

Southern Coalition for Social Justice, founded in 2007, partners with communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities in the South to defend and advance their political, social, and economic rights through the combination of legal advocacy, research, organizing, and communications. SCSJ created the Southern Leadership for Voter Engagement (SOLVE) Network to educate and mobilize Southern communities to defend and advance voting rights.

Learn more at [southerncoalition.org](https://southerncoalition.org) and follow our work on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 01 INTRODUCTION

## 03 DATA BEHIND THE REPORT

### 03 Definitions

### 04 Registration, Turnout, & Inactivity Rates

### 04 Likely Undercount of Black & Brown Voters

## 06 WHO'S MISSING

### 06 Unregistered Voters

06 Voting Age Citizens in Alabama

07 Registration Rates Among  
Eligible Voters

### 11 Inactive Voters

### 14 A Legacy of Exclusion

14 Systems-Impacted Voters

16 Voters with Disabilities

## 17 STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

### 20 Obstacles to Eligibility

20 Registration Barriers

21 No Early Registration  
or Voting Options for  
16- and 17-year-olds

22 Voter List "Purges"

23 Confusing Rules & Processes  
for Systems-Impacted People

### 24 Barriers to Casting the Ballot

24 No Early Voting

25 Confusing Absentee  
Voting Process

26 Polling Place Closures  
& Changes

## 30 BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

### 30 Disillusionment & Disengagement

### 31 Economic & Accessibility Barriers

32 Poverty

33 Transportation

33 Literacy

33 Digital Access

## 34 SOLUTIONS

### 35 What Alabama Voters Need

### 36 What We Can Do

## 38 ENDNOTES

# INTRODUCTION

Alabama is the birthplace of the modern voting rights movement. From Birmingham to Montgomery to Selma, Black Alabamians and their allies risked their lives to challenge laws designed to keep them out of the democratic process. Those struggles reshaped the nation and led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Yet today, Alabama remains one of the hardest states to vote in. While public debate frequently focuses on disproven claims of voter fraud and the supposed need for stricter election rules, those narratives ignore the far more pressing reality: Too many Alabamians are left out of the voting process entirely.

**The real threat to democracy in Alabama is not voter fraud, which is exceedingly rare. It is widespread exclusion.**

Across the state, hundreds of thousands of Alabamians are not participating in elections. This isn't because they lack interest or civic responsibility but because structural barriers, confusing rules, and long-standing exclusionary policies make participation difficult, uncertain, or even impossible. As a result, the state's elections are decided by a fraction of the population, and entire communities are left without a meaningful voice in decisions that shape their lives.

Missing voters include those who are eligible to vote but unregistered, as well as registered voters who have been placed on inactive status or face additional hurdles when attempting to cast a ballot. Alabama's felony disenfranchisement system further compounds exclusion and is a central barrier to participation in elections for those who are systems-impacted.

## DID YOU KNOW?

MORE THAN

**815,000**

OF ALABAMA'S 3.8 MILLION ADULT CITIZENS ARE MISSING FROM THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.



Alabama’s missing voters population is larger than the combined population of Alabama’s four largest cities — Huntsville, Mobile, Birmingham, and Montgomery.<sup>1</sup>

These numbers are perhaps unsurprising given Alabama’s racist and violent political history and its modern-day legacy of persistent barriers to civic engagement. According to Dēmos’ Power Scorecard, Alabama ranks 49th in terms of democratic vitality.<sup>2</sup> That places Alabama at the bottom in terms of how easily residents can engage in the political process to determine who represents them and how.<sup>3</sup> That ranking also highlights the need for reforms to improve and ensure all voices are heard. Even more concerning, a close look at Alabama’s elections data tells us the status quo leaves behind voters from our most historically marginalized communities, namely Black and brown voters, voters with disabilities, and young voters.

In this report, Stand Up Mobile, Southern Coalition for Social Justice, and Dēmos set the record straight regarding access to the ballot in Alabama. Using sound methodology and multiple data sources, we found Alabama has more than 815,000 missing voters. After providing additional data analysis concerning the unregistered and inactive voters in the state, we examine the structural barriers to voting in Alabama that are likely contributing to the large missing voter total. Our analysis of structural barriers includes the insights of some directly impacted voters who shared how they struggled to exercise their freedom to vote. Finally, we uplift commonsense policy changes the state could adopt to help every Alabamian exercise their fundamental right to vote. These policy recommendations are informed by the guidance and experiences of directly impacted communities. Lasting reform must be guided by the leadership of those most impacted by exclusion and the organizations already doing year-round civic engagement work across Alabama.

*Stand Up Mobile canvassing with local fraternities and sororities during the 2024 2nd Congressional District election.*



# DATA BEHIND THE REPORT

## DEFINITIONS

---

**Missing Voters** fall into two categories:

- **Unregistered Voters:** Unregistered voters are U.S. citizens age 18 and older who are not registered to vote.
- **Inactive Voters:** In every election, a sizeable number of registered voters do not cast a ballot. For purposes of this report, we define inactive voters as registered voters who have not voted for four years in their home county. This definition is consistent with state law.<sup>4</sup> Under Alabama law, voters who have not voted in four years are placed on the inactive list; they remain inactive until they confirm their current address.<sup>5</sup>

**Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP):**

This includes U.S. citizens over the age of 18, including those disenfranchised due to a disqualifying felony conviction.

**Disenfranchised Population:** The group of people banned from voting in Alabama due to a disqualifying felony offense. Not all felony convictions result in the loss of voting rights in Alabama — only those classified as involving “moral turpitude.” This applies whether the individual is incarcerated, on parole, or on probation.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note that disenfranchised individuals are not cleanly separated in voter data — some may appear among registered voters, while others appear among the unregistered. This means the data cannot tell us precisely how many people in either group are barred from participating due to a felony conviction.

**Racial and Ethnic Groups:** Racial groups in the 2024 Census data we obtained are defined as “Asian alone,” “Black or African American alone,” “American Indian or Alaskan Native alone,” “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander,” and “white alone” categories. In addition, racial groups do not include those who identify as Latino. This ensures multi-racial individuals are not double counted in estimates. To develop estimates for the Latino/Latina/Latiné (hereinafter “Latino”) population, we used the “Hispanic or Latino (of any race)” category, which the U.S. Census Bureau classifies as an ethnicity rather than racial category.

This report uses the labels “Black,” “white,” “Latino,” and “Asian.” Other racial groups had sample sizes that were too small to analyze.

In Alabama’s state voter file, racial and ethnic groups are self-reported.

## REGISTRATION, TURNOUT, & INACTIVITY RATES

To develop a profile of Alabama’s population, we used a combination of U.S. Census Bureau data and Alabama voter files obtained from L2, a national voter data provider.<sup>7</sup> For registration and voting data, we relied on a combination of U.S. Census Bureau and state election data. Registration rates are difficult to measure because of the unreliability of self-reported data and the undercount of unregistered people in commercial voter files (databases compiled by private companies that track voter registration and participation).

The **registration rate** is the number of people registered to vote divided by the number of citizens over the age of 18. We took registration rates from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS) November 2024 supplement because it contains demographic data on voter registration that other sources don’t provide.\* Also known as the

“voting and registration supplement,” these surveys ask people whether they are registered to vote and if they voted in the most recent election. It provides a useful baseline to compare trends across states and years.

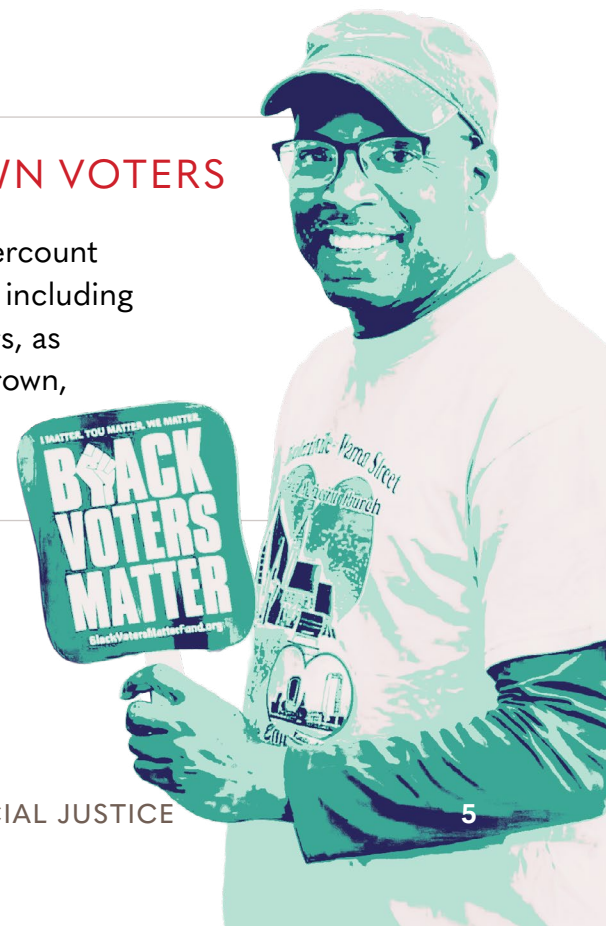
The **turnout rate** is the number of voters who cast a ballot divided by the number of citizens over the age of 18. We obtained turnout rates from the L2 database.

The **inactivity rate** is the percentage of registered voters who are classified as inactive. We obtained inactivity rates from voter registration data published by the Alabama Secretary of State in December 2025. The data includes year-to-date counts of registered voters, disaggregated by county and voter status (active and inactive). Registered voter totals are further broken down by race and ethnicity.<sup>8</sup>

### LIKELY UNDERCOUNT OF BLACK & BROWN VOTERS

Available datasets that tabulate unregistered voters often undercount or miss unregistered voters who are historically marginalized, including Black, Latino, Asian, and American Indian/Alaska Native voters, as well as young voters.<sup>9</sup> We believe the share of eligible Black, brown, and young people who are not registered to vote is likely even higher than what our analysis finds.

\* The CPS is a smaller national survey that is generally reliable at the state level. In states with smaller populations, reliable data may not be available among certain demographic subgroups or at the county or metropolitan-area levels.



# WHO'S MISSING

We found that Alabama's electorate is missing more than 815,000 voters—including nearly 300,000 unregistered citizens and more than 515,000 inactive voters. Together, these exclusions silence hundreds of thousands of Alabamians and disproportionately affect young people and communities of color.

## UNREGISTERED VOTERS

In 2025, Alabama had 299,701 U.S. citizens of voting age who were not registered to vote, according to an analysis of L2 voter registration data and eligible voter data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The reasons eligible Alabamians remain unregistered are varied, but research consistently points to a set of structural and informational barriers that suppress registration broadly. An analysis of 2024 census voting data showed many unregistered voters are simply not aware of how or when to register or mistakenly believe they are already registered. Alabama also does not have automatic voter registration, meaning residents must proactively navigate the registration process on their own. For those who move frequently, such as college students or lower-income residents, keeping a registration current can be an ongoing challenge. We discuss these barriers in greater detail in the next section.



## VOTING AGE CITIZENS IN ALABAMA

Alabama has more than 815,000 missing voters.

○ = 10,000 people (rounded)

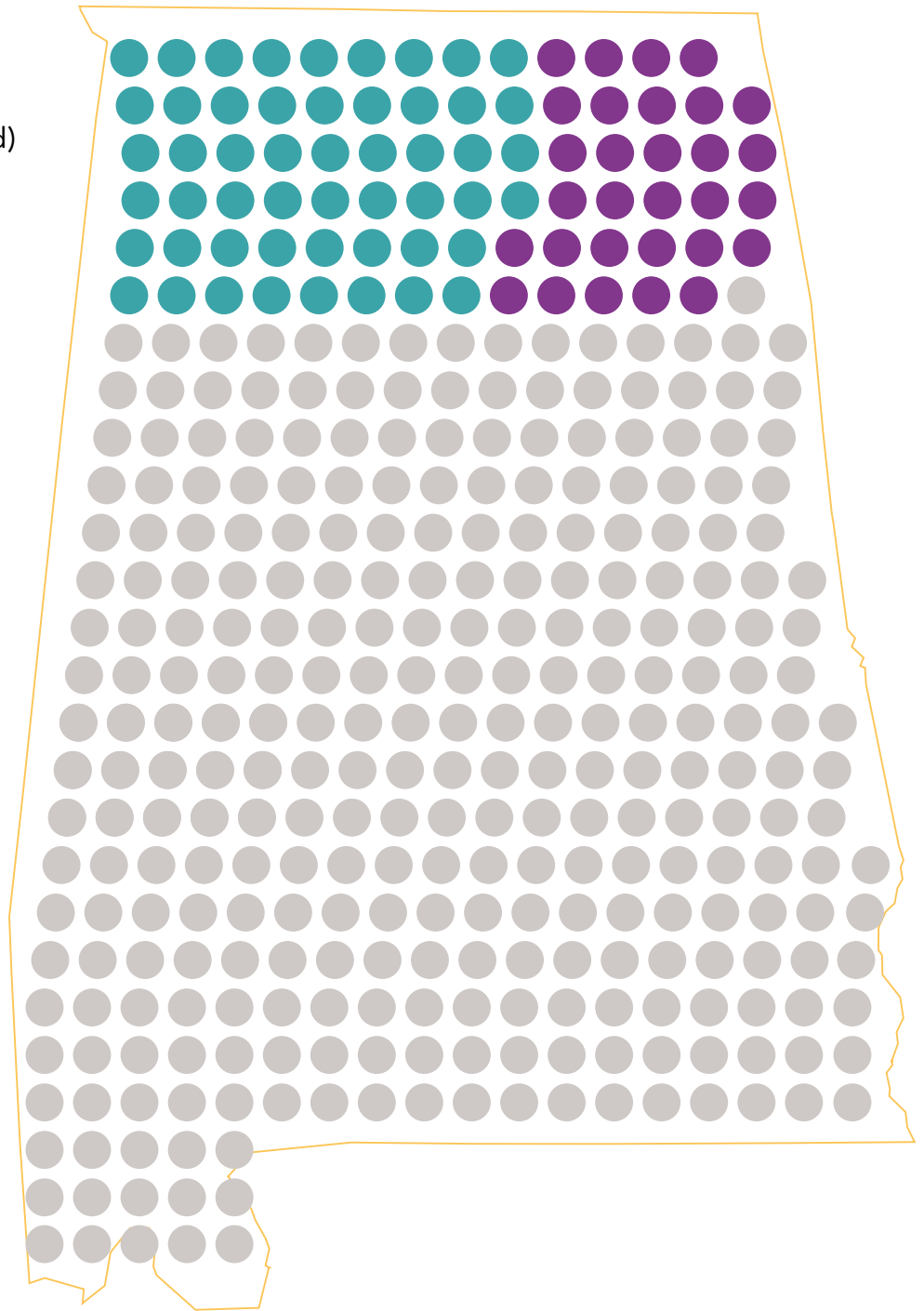
**3,800,000**

TOTAL ELIGIBLE VOTERS\*

● **515,000**  
MISSING VOTERS –  
REGISTERED BUT  
INACTIVE

● **300,000**  
MISSING VOTERS –  
UNREGISTERED

● **2,985,000**  
REGULAR VOTERS



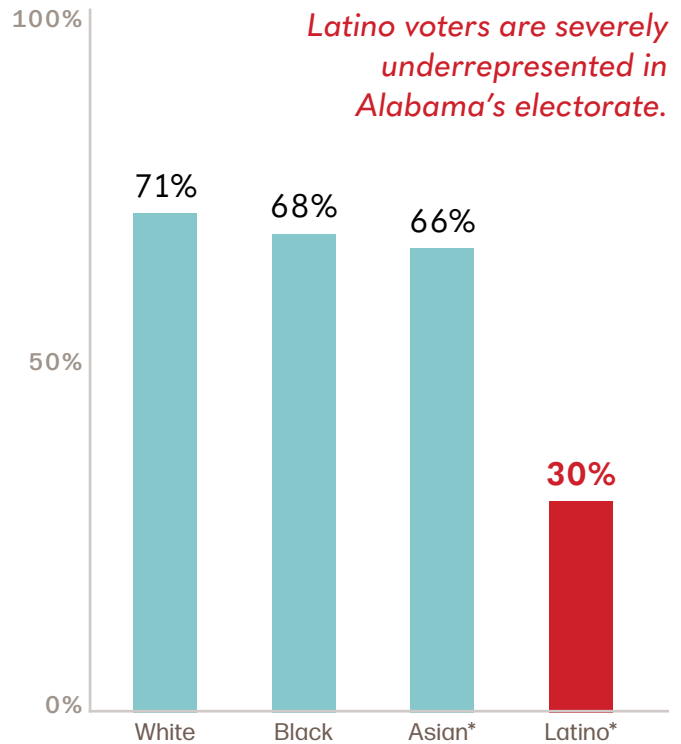
\* Eligible voters are U.S. citizens over the age of 18. Because of data limitations, the total includes those disenfranchised due to a disqualifying felony conviction.

## REGISTRATION RATES AMONG ELIGIBLE VOTERS

### RACE AND ETHNICITY

Alabama's registration rates in 2024 among white (71 percent), Black (68 percent), and Asian (66 percent) eligible voters are similar. With a registration rate of only 30 percent, Latino eligible voters are severely underrepresented in the electorate.

### Percent of Adult U.S. Citizens in Alabama Registered to Vote in 2024



**26%**

BLACK ALABAMIANS WERE 26 PERCENT OF STATE'S ADULT U.S. CITIZENS IN 2024

Note: For White, Black and Asian respondents, only those who indicated one racial group and did not indicate a Latino ethnicity are shown. Shares are among adult U.S. citizens.

\* A large margin of error exists for Asian (+/- 22%) and Latino voters (+/- 17%) because of each group's small population.

Source: 2024 Current Population Survey, November supplement. N=1,511



## CLOSER LOOK: ALABAMA'S LATINO VOTERS

Missing at alarming rates from the polls are Alabama's Latino voters, a small but growing population in the state. An estimated 103,000 Alabamians of Latino descent are eligible\* to vote, but only three out of 10 are registered.<sup>10</sup> In other words, 70 percent of eligible Latino voters are not represented in the Alabama electorate.

However, Census data show that 85 percent of Latino people in Alabama who were registered to vote did so in the 2024 election cycle.<sup>11</sup> Grassroots partner Carlos Javier Torres, director of policy and strategic partnerships at the Hispanic and Immigrant Center of Alabama (¡HICA!), has pointed to this data and to the strong culture of voting in Central and South America (where many Latino Alabamians

and their ancestors hail from) to emphasize that the high number of missing Latino voters has structural causes.

The challenge, as Torres has acknowledged, is educating second-generation Latino people about the voter registration process and encouraging them to be proactive about their registrations. He noted there is widespread confusion and cultural barriers concerning voter registration within Alabama's Latino population. This is in no small part due to the lack of election materials translated into Spanish. Federal law mandating language assistance in voting does not cover any minority language populations in Alabama, and there is very little infrastructure to help limited English-proficient voters in the state.<sup>12</sup>



# 30%

ONLY THREE OUT OF 10 ELIGIBLE LATINO VOTERS ARE REGISTERED TO VOTE

*"We have a system that creates barriers to entry for voter registration for people who do not look or sound white, [or] if you don't speak English. The system has actually ingrained [this] into their process ... as a way to keep us from engaging in the civic process of voting."*

**CARLOS JAVIER TORRES**  
HISPANIC AND IMMIGRANT CENTER OF ALABAMA (¡HICA!)

\* As used in this report, "eligible" means members of the group of U.S. citizens over the age of 18. We include those disenfranchised due to a disqualifying felony conviction because of measurement issues.

AGE GROUP

Voter registration rates in Alabama increase steadily with age. About half of eligible voters age 18–25 were registered in 2024, compared to more than three-quarters of those 66 and older. This enormous gap between the youngest and oldest eligible voters means younger Alabamians are substantially underrepresented in the electorate, while older residents are overrepresented relative to their share of the eligible population.

Alabamians ages 18 to 25 were 14 percent of state’s adult U.S. citizens in 2024

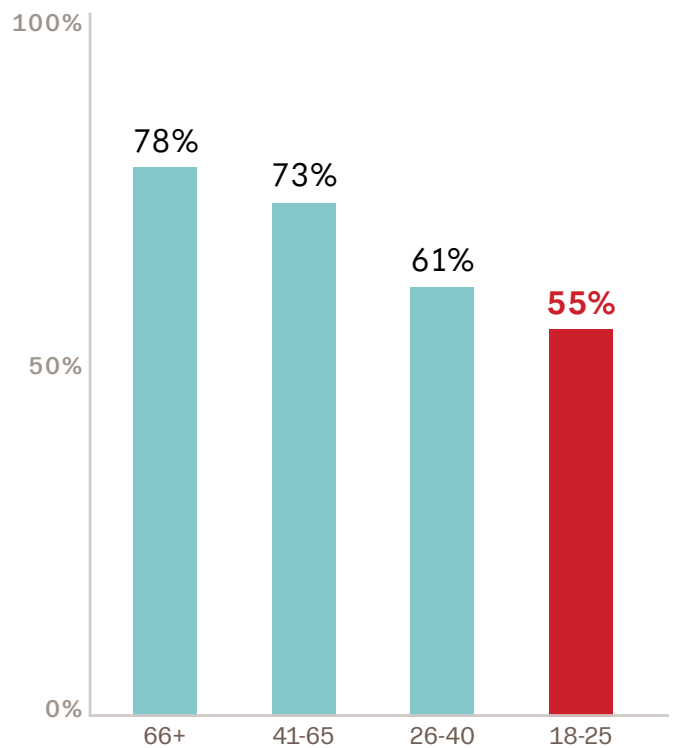
Alabama’s electorate underrepresents its youngest voting-age citizens.

Percent of Adult U.S. Citizens in Alabama in 2024 by Age Group

66+	22%
41–65	40%
26–40	25%
<b>18–25</b>	<b>14%</b>

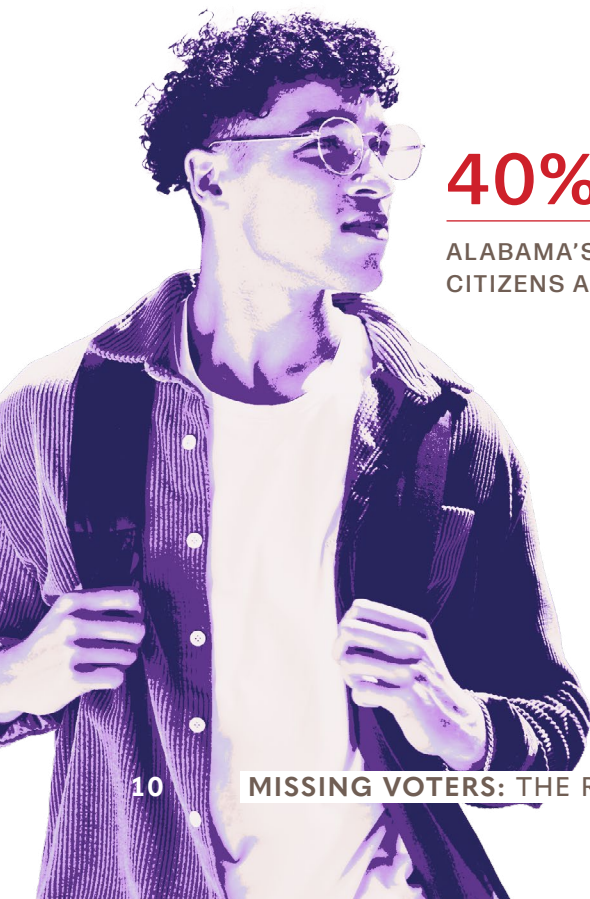
Source: 2024 American Community Survey, 1-year (IPUMS). N=53,710

Voter Registration Rates in Alabama in 2024 by Age Group



Note: Shares are among adult U.S. citizens.

Source: 2024 Current Population Survey, November supplement. N=1,511



**40%**

ALABAMA'S ADULT CITIZENS ARE UNDER 40

## INACTIVE VOTERS

Among the missing voters in Alabama are those who are registered to vote but not regularly showing up to make their voices heard in local, state, or federal elections.

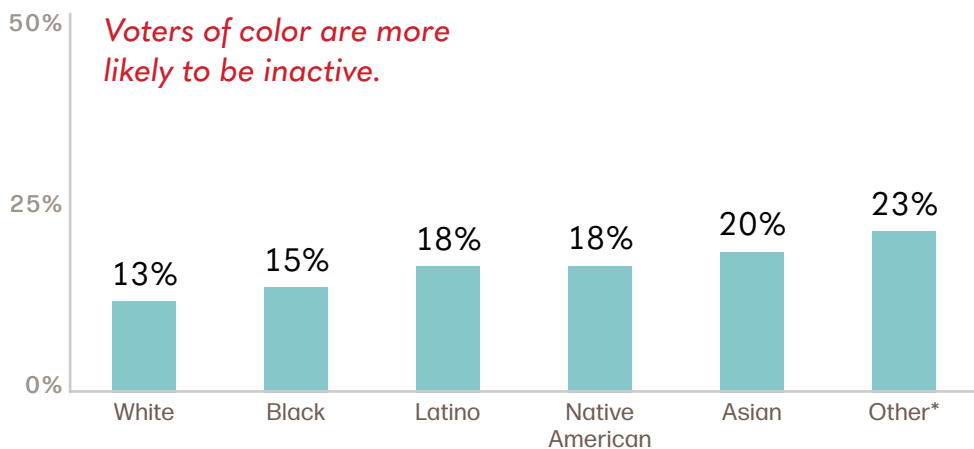
Alabama had 515,878 inactive voters as of December 2025, according to data provided by the Alabama Secretary of State's office. This represents a substantial share of the state's 3.5 million registered voters and a pool of potential voters who could be reengaged.

These inactive voters are eligible to vote but must complete a reidentification form at their polling place before casting a ballot. Many voters, especially students, don't realize that they'll be put on inactive status if they don't

respond to confirmation mailings and discover this only when they check or try to vote. While the reidentification form can be completed on Election Day, being told on Election Day that you are on the inactive list can be a negative experience that prevents some from exercising their right to vote.

Black voters have higher inactivity rates than white voters in 63 of 67 counties in Alabama. Statewide, 14.9 percent of Black voters are considered inactive, meaning they haven't voted in four years, compared to 12.7 percent of white voters, a worrisome gap that underscores how Alabama's structural barriers to voting can disproportionately harm Black voters.

### Percent of Alabamians Who are Inactive Voters by Race/Ethnicity



# 15%

OF BLACK VOTERS  
IN ALABAMA ARE  
CONSIDERED INACTIVE

Note: The data collected by the Alabama secretary of state's office is updated monthly rather than real-time, and it could include people who have moved out of state. However, Alabama is a "high inbound" state with more people moving in than moving out, according to a 2024 study. Sznajderman, Michael. "More folks 'inbound' to Alabama than moving out, study says," (Jan. 1, 2024) Alabama News Center. Accessed at [www.alabamane.wscenter.com/2024/01/05more-folks-inbound-to-alabama-than-moving-out-study-says/](http://www.alabamane.wscenter.com/2024/01/05more-folks-inbound-to-alabama-than-moving-out-study-says/)

\* Other includes voters categorized as Other, Federally Registered, Korean, and Not Identified in state records.

Source: Alabama Secretary of State, 2025 Voter Registration Statistics

**Counties with the Largest Gaps in Black-White Voter Activity**

COUNTY	BLACK INACTIVITY RATE	WHITE INACTIVITY RATE	GAP
Cleburne	25.8%	14.3%	+11.4 pts
DeKalb	25.6%	14.5%	+11.1 pts
Macon	24.8%	14.8%	+10.0 pts
Cullman	17.3%	8.6%	+ 8.8 pts
Choctaw	21.4%	12.7%	+ 8.7 pts
Blount	17.1%	9.3%	+ 7.8 pts

Source: Alabama Secretary of State, 2025 Voter Registration Statistics

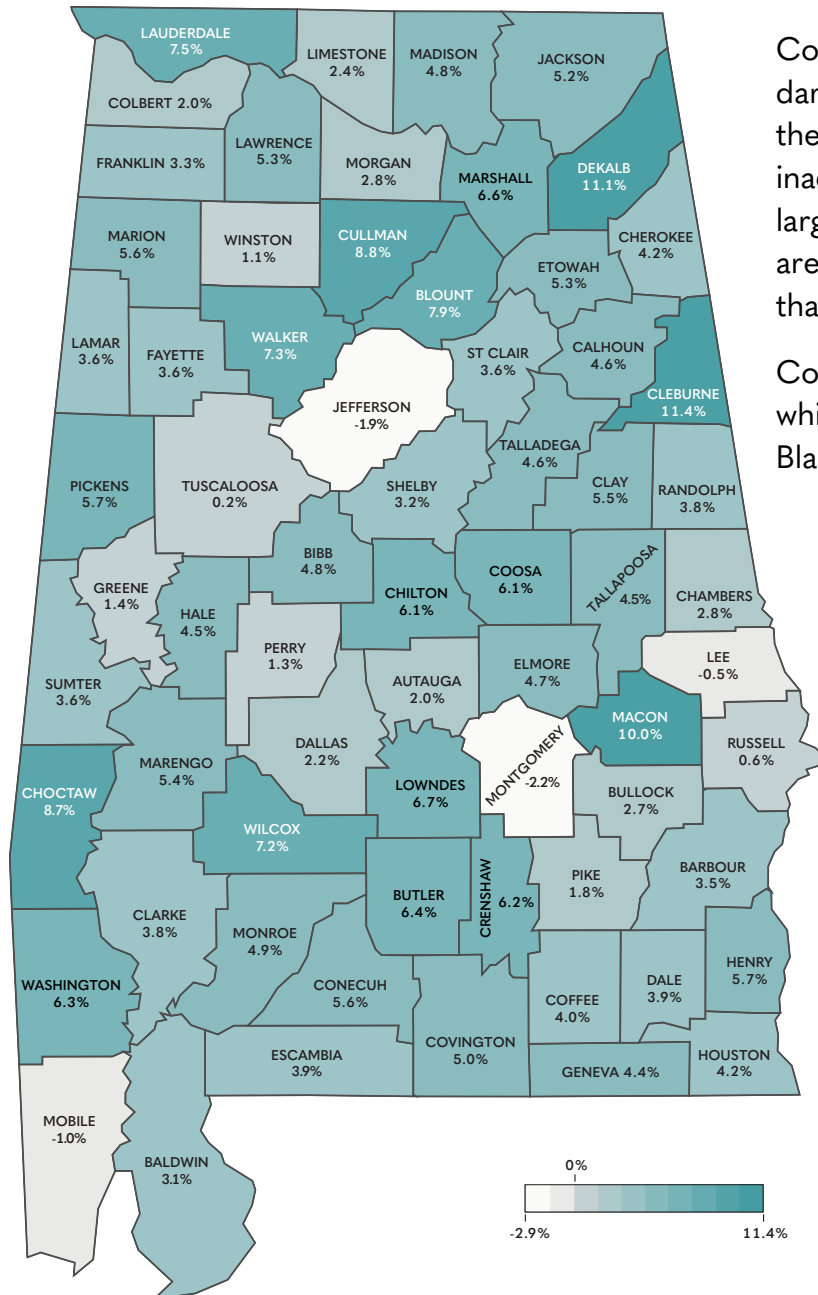
The only four counties where Black voters do not face higher inactivity rates than white voters are Jefferson, Mobile, Montgomery, and Lee. These are among Alabama’s most urban counties and have the state’s strongest Black political organizing infrastructure and long traditions of Black civic participation.

**Counties Where Black Voter Engagement Outpaces White Voter Engagement**

COUNTY	BLACK INACTIVITY RATE	WHITE INACTIVITY RATE	GAP
Montgomery	13.0%	15.2%	-2.20 pts
Jefferson	12.1%	14.0%	-1.90 pts
Mobile	12.1%	13.2%	-1.04 pts
Lee	19.2%	19.7%	-0.60 pts

Source: Alabama Secretary of State, 2025 Voter Registration Statistics

## RACIAL DISPARITIES IN VOTER INACTIVITY BY COUNTY



Counties are shaded on a spectrum from dark teal to white, reflecting the size of the gap between Black and white voter inactivity rates. Darker teal indicates a larger disparity – where Black voters are inactive at significantly higher rates than white voters.

Counties shown in white are those where white voter inactivity rates meet or exceed Black voter inactivity rates.



SCAN FOR COUNTY INACTIVE VOTER RATE MAPS [OR CLICK HERE.](#)

Source: Alabama Secretary of State, 2025 Voter Registration Statistics

## A LEGACY OF EXCLUSION

### SYSTEMS-IMPACTED VOTERS

An analysis of missing voters in Alabama would not be complete without discussion of the state's felony disenfranchisement laws. Alabama has some of the most restrictive felony disenfranchisement laws in the country, resulting in a substantial number of missing voters.\*

As of 2024, Alabama barred 227,437 of its citizens from voting due to a felony conviction classified as "crime of moral turpitude," including 82,674 Black residents.<sup>13</sup> As a result, Alabama has one of the highest felony disenfranchisement rates in the nation, with nearly six percent of the citizen voting-age population barred from the polls.<sup>14</sup> These policies also have a significant impact on women, with Alabama being one of only eight states where more than one percent of the voting-eligible female population is disenfranchised due to a felony conviction.<sup>15</sup>

Alabama's disenfranchisement structure is rooted in the state's 1901 Constitution. Delegates to the 1901 Constitutional Convention were explicit about their goals—on the record, they stated their intent to "establish white supremacy in this State." One of the key tools they used to achieve this was the vague concept of "moral turpitude" as the standard for stripping away voting rights. Rather than clearly defining which crimes would disqualify

a person from voting, drafters intentionally left the term undefined, giving election officials in each county broad discretion to decide which convictions applied.<sup>16</sup> This ambiguity was intentional. It allowed officials to target Black voters by selectively applying the label of "moral turpitude" to crimes Black voters were stereotypically assumed to commit, while exempting crimes more commonly associated with white residents. The 1901 Constitution was written amid a resurgence of white supremacist laws across the South, and this provision was one of many that laid the groundwork for Jim Crow laws and practices that have continued to plague Alabama.<sup>17</sup>

### DID YOU KNOW?

People currently incarcerated in Alabama have the right to vote if they are not convicted of a crime of moral turpitude. Scan or click here to learn more.



SCAN OR  
[CLICK HERE](#)  
TO LEARN MORE

\* As noted earlier, disenfranchised individuals are not cleanly separated in voter data—some may appear among registered voters, while others appear among the unregistered. This means the data cannot tell us precisely how many people in either group are barred from participating due to a felony conviction.

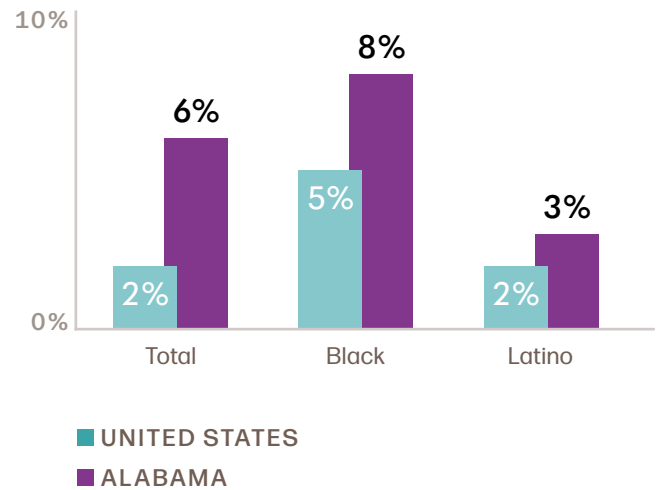
Today, there remains an enormous amount of confusion about what is and is not a crime of moral turpitude. This has created a chilling effect, where many people who have been convicted of a felony are unlikely to vote, because they are uncertain about whether they are eligible and do not want to risk further penalties.

In 2024, the Alabama Legislature passed a bill that added additional offenses to the list of crimes classified as involving moral turpitude, significantly increasing the number of convictions that permanently disqualify individuals from voting.<sup>18</sup> This passage was especially disappointing considering that in 2003 and 2017, Alabama streamlined its rights restoration process which allowed more than 83,000 people to again be eligible to vote.<sup>19</sup>

The scope of disenfranchisement in Alabama underscores the lasting and structural nature of Alabama’s voting restrictions, which

continue to exclude thousands of citizens from democratic participation long after their involvement with the criminal legal system.

### Felony Disenfranchisement Rates in Alabama and United States Race/Ethnicity



Source: Uggen, C., Larson, R., Shannon, S., Stewart, R., & Hauf, M. (2024). Locked Out 2024: Four Million Denied Voting Rights Due to a Felony Conviction, The Sentencing Project



Ronald McKeithen, a reentry coordinator and director of Second Chances in Alabama, voted for the first time in 2022, after spending 37 years incarcerated. He never thought he’d be able to vote, a common belief in prison, where people aren’t aware of their rights.

*“One of the things that I think is lacking is the education of how powerful an individual vote can be.”*

**RONALD MCKEITHEN**, REENTRY COORDINATOR AND DIRECTOR OF SECOND CHANCES IN ALABAMA

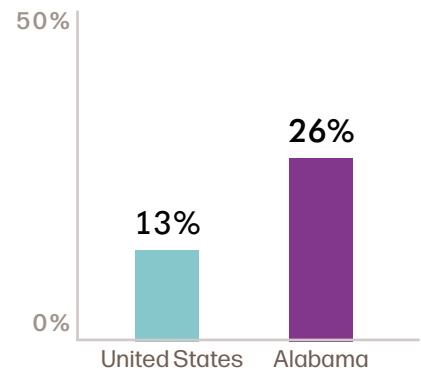
## VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES

Nearly one in three adults in Alabama have a disability, according to the CDC.<sup>20</sup> Yet Alabama, unlike many other states, does not provide robust accommodations to enable those with hearing, physical, cognitive, or other accessibility needs to comfortably cast their ballot. As a result, voters with accessibility needs are missing from Alabama's elections at alarming rates.

One of the biggest reasons Alabamians report not voting is "Illness or disability (own or family's)," according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2024 Current Population Survey (CPS) Voting and Registration Supplement.<sup>21</sup>

More than one in four nonvoters in the state, 26 percent, cited this reason for not casting a ballot, which is much higher than the national rate of 13 percent.<sup>22</sup> This highlights the state's failure to accommodate voters' illnesses and disabilities, creating disproportionate barriers to voting in Alabama.

### Percent of Voters Who Did Not Vote in 2024 Due to Illness or Disability



Source: U.S. Census

**1 in 3**

ADULTS IN ALABAMA  
HAVE A DISABILITY

# STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Alabama's civil rights activists have always been at the center of the fight for voting rights in the U.S.<sup>23</sup> In the 1960s, civil rights leaders in cities like Birmingham,<sup>24</sup> Montgomery,<sup>25</sup> and Selma<sup>26</sup> worked tirelessly and at great sacrifice to fight unfair voting rules, facing the violent opposition of white segregationists in the state and the South more widely.

Their efforts, coupled with the nation's shock at seeing brutal violence unleashed on Black protesters and their allies in the Bloody Sunday attack on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the landmark civil rights legislation into law while noting Alabama's long and painful history of blocking Black voters from the ballot box.<sup>27</sup>

Because of its history, Alabama was one of the six initial states included in what is known as the VRA's "preclearance system," which required places with a history of racial discrimination to get federal approval before changing their voting laws or practices.<sup>28</sup> Preclearance was a huge success. The review process prevented discriminatory voter suppression laws from taking effect, and in turn, disparity in registration rates between white and Black Americans fell from nearly 30 percentage points in the early 1960s to just eight points by the 1970s.<sup>29</sup>

## 58%

ALABAMA VOTER TURNOUT IN THE STATE IS AMONG THE LOWEST IN THE NATION.

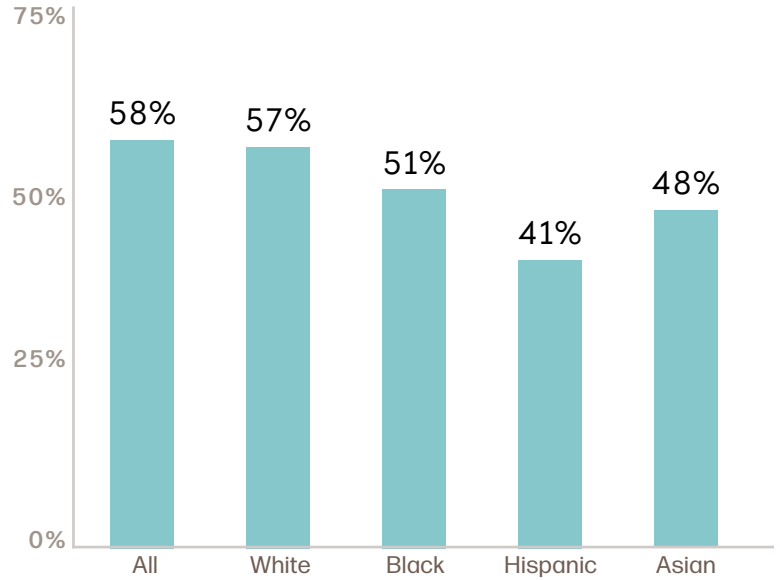
But that pendulum of progress swung back nearly 50 years later, when Alabama again was plunged into the center of our nation's fight for equitable access to the ballot. In the 2013 decision *Shelby County v. Holder*, the United States Supreme Court struck down key parts of the VRA and gutted the preclearance system, allowing Alabama and a host of other Southern states to pass a number of harmful laws restricting access to the ballot.<sup>30</sup>

Alabama citizens are now burdened with some of the most restrictive rules when it comes to voting access. These restrictions create conditions that contribute, in no small part, to Alabama's large missing voter population. Voter turnout in the state is among the lowest in the nation at 58 percent, trailing only Hawaii, Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas.<sup>31</sup>

**Voter Turnout in Alabama in 2024 by Race/Ethnicity**

All Alabama	2,212,302
White	1,495,084
Black	502,685
Hispanic	44,032
Asian	18,105

**Turnout Rates of Alabama Voters in 2024 by Race/Ethnicity**



*The Bloody Sunday attack on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA).*

Note: White, Black, and Asian voters identify with a single race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Eligible voters are U.S. citizens ages 18 or older.

Source: Voter totals are from L2 estimates based on the Alabama Secretary of State voter file (December 2025). Voter turnout rates are calculated using eligible voter estimates from U.S. Census Bureau, Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) by race and ethnicity, 2024 American Community Survey (5-year).





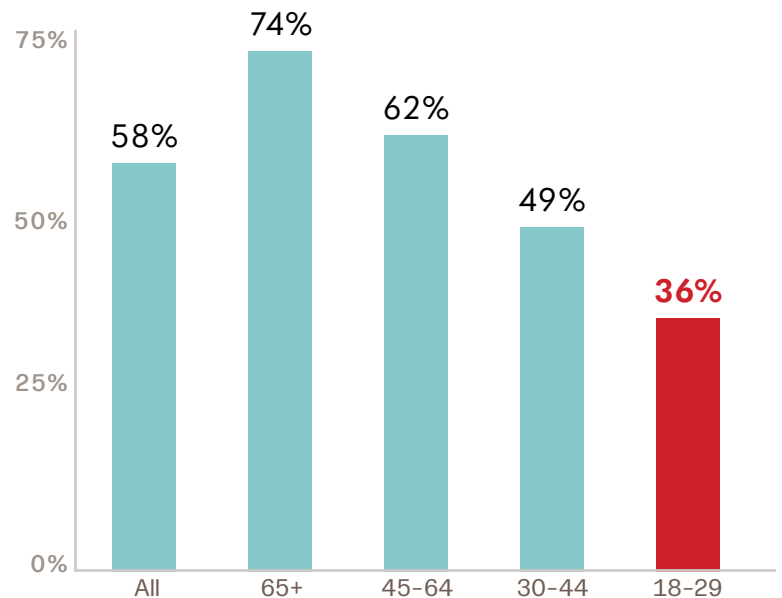
Residents from Mobile and Prichard participating in Advocacy Day at the Statehouse.

### Voter Turnout in Alabama in 2024 by Age Group

All Alabama	2,212,302
65+	705,985
45-64	767,788
30-44	458,700
<b>18-29</b>	<b>279,725</b>

*Alabama's youngest voting-age citizens are underrepresented at the polls.*

### Turnout Estimates of Alabama Voters in 2024 by Age Group



Note: Eligible voters are U.S. citizens ages 18 or older.

Source: Voter totals are from L2 estimates based on the Alabama Secretary of State voter file (December 2025). Voter turnout rates by age are calculated using eligible voter estimates are from 2024 American Community Survey, Table 2901 ([data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov)).

## OBSTACLES TO ELIGIBILITY

*Below, we describe the most pressing barriers to voter eligibility, casting a ballot, and voter engagement that exist in Alabama today.*

### REGISTRATION BARRIERS

Alabama requires citizens to register to vote at least 14 days before an election, which is a barrier to participation. Many eligible voters become interested in voting in the final weeks before an election through campaigns, debates, or community outreach, only to find that they have missed the registration deadline.<sup>32</sup> This deadline is compounded by other challenges, including limited access to county boards of registrars during business hours, inconsistent voter outreach, registration cancellations due to mail issues or data errors, and voter roll maintenance practices that can inactivate or remove voters without clear, individualized notice (discussed in more detail below).<sup>33</sup> Together, these barriers disproportionately affect Black, rural, and low-income voters, and they contribute to low voter turnout in Alabama.<sup>34</sup> Alabama ranked 46th for voter turnout in the 2022 election, with 37 percent of the eligible population going to the polls. In the 2020 election, it ranked 39th, with 61 percent turnout.<sup>35</sup>

Alabama does provide multiple ways to register to vote, including online registration, in-person registration at county Boards of registrars, registration at certain state agencies, mail-in registration forms, and assistance through a voter hotline.<sup>36</sup> While offering multiple registration options is an improvement over a single registration pathway, these systems still fail to reach many eligible voters; hundreds of thousands of eligible Alabamians are not registered to vote.<sup>37</sup> This underscores the need for reforms that make voter registration more accessible, reliable, and responsive to how and when people engage in the electoral process.

#### SUGGESTED FIX

Alabama should implement automatic voter registration, a system that automatically registers citizens at departments of motor vehicles unless they actively decline.<sup>38</sup>

Alabama should also implement same-day registration, so that all eligible citizens who are not otherwise registered before Election Day can still cast a ballot.<sup>39</sup>

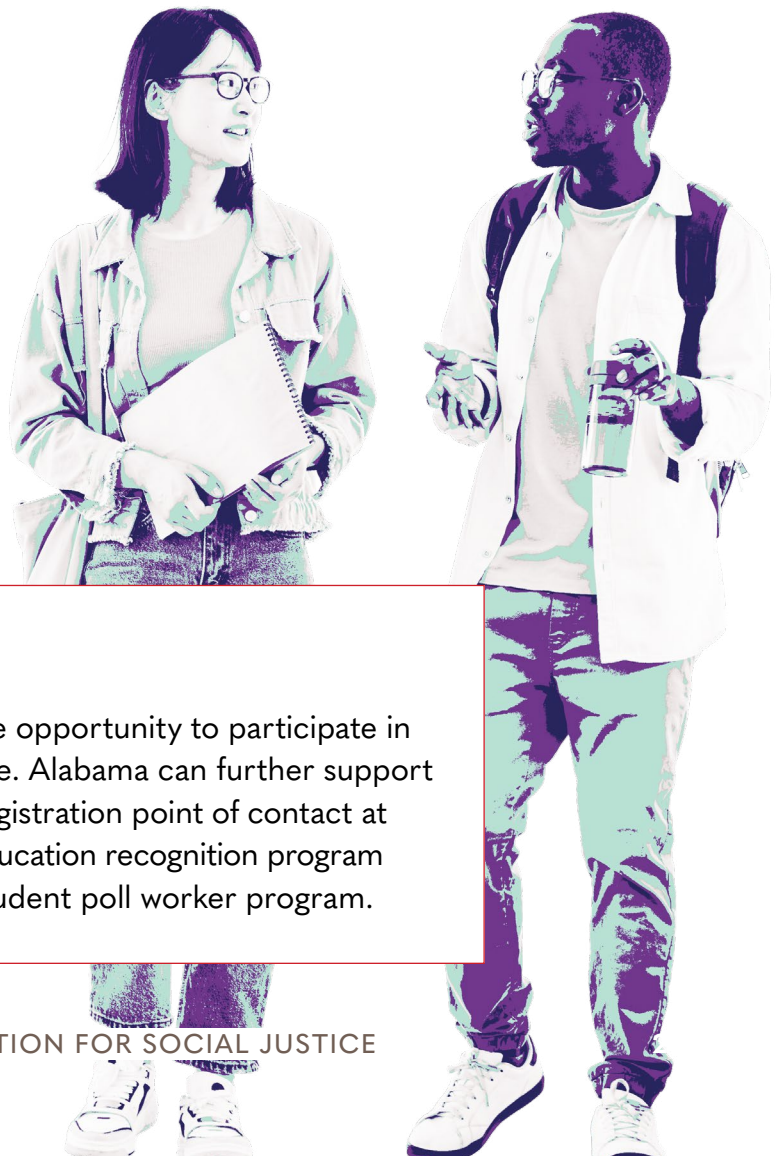
## NO EARLY REGISTRATION OR VOTING OPTIONS FOR 16- AND 17-YEAR-OLDS

At 16 and 17, people pay taxes, have jobs, and represent the next generation of leaders. They have ignited social movements from The March for Our Lives protests against gun violence<sup>40</sup> to the more recent anti-ICE school walkouts in protest of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations across the country.<sup>41</sup> Despite these efforts, young people are often ignored in the political process, as is the case in Alabama.

When jurisdictions allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local elections, young voters can directly influence decisions that shape their daily lives—such as school funding, curriculum, and disciplinary policies—while building life-long civic engagement habits. Localities in some states, including in Maryland, California, and New Jersey, have lowered the voting age to 16 for some local elections, such as school board elections.

Moreover, a substantial number of states offer pre-registration programs. Pre-registration in voting allows individuals younger than 18 years

of age to register to vote, so they are eligible to cast a ballot as soon as they turn 18. Typically, a pre-registrant will fill out an application and be added to the voter registration list with a “pending” or “pre-registration” status. Eighteen states and Washington, D.C., allow pre-registration beginning at age 16, and four states permit pre-registration beginning at age 17.<sup>42</sup> Alabama, by contrast, does not offer any opportunities for 16- and 17-year-olds to participate in local elections or for them to pre-register to vote.



### SUGGESTED FIX

Alabama should offer 16- and 17-year-olds the opportunity to participate in some local elections and to pre-register to vote. Alabama can further support young voters by establishing a specific voter registration point of contact at each high school, running a statewide voter education recognition program for high schools, and supporting a statewide student poll worker program.

## VOTER LIST “PURGES”

Assuming a voter can navigate registration barriers and does register to vote, staying registered as an active voter can also be difficult. Alabama regularly removes people from voter rolls through a process called “list maintenance.”

List maintenance is the process by which election officials periodically review and update voter rolls—removing people who have moved, died, or become ineligible. In Alabama, a voter may also be removed if, during a four-year election cycle, they fail to respond to the two-part mailing process and do not participate in any election during the same four-year period.<sup>43</sup>

In Alabama, this process has been particularly “aggressive,”<sup>44</sup> such that it can be best understood as a “voter purge.” Between 2015 and 2022, former Secretary of State John Merrill announced that more than 1.4 million voters were removed from the state’s voter rolls.<sup>45</sup> And in 2025 alone, nearly 500,000 people (more than the populations of Montgomery and Birmingham combined) were taken off the rolls.<sup>46</sup> People who are removed from the voter rolls can still vote, but they must fill out extra forms,<sup>47</sup> which can confuse or discourage voters. This especially affects people who move often, lack stable housing, or do not get mail regularly. As a result, these aggressive list maintenance practices can harm low-income, Black, brown, and rural voters more than others by disproportionately removing them from voter rolls.

### SUGGESTED FIX

Updates to voter rolls must be made lawfully and carefully, so eligible voters are not removed. Good list maintenance laws and practices should do the following:<sup>48</sup>

- Ensure the use of robust, current, and accurate data.
- Comply with the standards established by federal law, including the National Voter Registration Act.
- Have safeguards in place to protect eligible voters from wrongful removals.
- Place the burden on the state or county government to establish that removal is necessary, not on the voter to prove it isn’t.
- Leave list maintenance to election administrators rather than allowing third parties, who often have no training in election administration and rely on faulty data, to challenge voters’ eligibility.

## CONFUSING RULES & PROCESSES FOR SYSTEMS-IMPACTED PEOPLE

As noted earlier, Alabama disenfranchises more than 227,000 residents due to felony convictions. This large-scale disenfranchisement is not incidental; it is a continuation of Alabama's long history of denying access to the ballot. Moreover, Alabama's voter registration and voting rights restoration policies layer confusion and administrative burden onto an already punitive system, compounding barriers for systems-impacted people.

### REGISTERING TO VOTE

Alabama's voter registration form states that, to register, an individual must "[n]ot have been convicted of a disqualifying felony, or if [they] have been convicted, [they] must have had [their] civil rights restored."<sup>49</sup> However, the form provides no definition of "disqualifying felony," does not list which felonies trigger disenfranchisement, and offers no guidance on how an individual can determine their eligibility.<sup>50</sup> This lack of clarity is particularly harmful given that the list of disqualifying felonies is extensive and continues to grow. Following the passage of H.B. 100 in 2024, more than 120 additional felonies were added to the list, on top of the 46 that already existed, dramatically expanding

the scope of disenfranchisement while providing voters little information.

### VOTING RIGHTS RESTORATION

For individuals convicted of a disqualifying felony, regaining the right to vote is neither automatic nor straightforward. To restore voting rights, a person must apply through Alabama's felony rights restoration process, complete their full sentence, and pay all outstanding fines and fees, including a 30 percent surcharge on late payments.<sup>51</sup> These hurdles make restoration inaccessible for many people—particularly those with low incomes—effectively transforming a temporary punishment into a long-term or permanent loss of political voice.

The state also fails to clearly communicate who is eligible to vote or to make the Certification of Restoration of Eligibility to Vote (CERV) application readily accessible. This lack of transparency is especially damaging because Black Alabamians are disproportionately impacted by felony disenfranchisement laws. By maintaining unclear rights restoration processes, Alabama continues its long history of democratic exclusion.

### SUGGESTED FIX

Alabama should end the Jim Crow era practice of felony disenfranchisement. As a first step, Alabama should significantly reduce the number of disenfranchising felonies to ensure equitable access to the ballot. Voting rights restoration should also be automatic and not dependent on the payment of fines or fees. The voter registration form should clearly explain eligibility in plain language, and the State Board of Elections should proactively notify individuals when their rights are restored through mail, email, and text.

## BARRIERS TO CASTING A BALLOT

### NO EARLY VOTING

Alabama is one of just three states without early voting,\* an option that allows voters to cast their ballots in person in the days leading up to Election Day.<sup>52</sup>

That leaves most voters with only one choice—voting in person on Election Day. But that can be difficult, or even impossible, for many people. Balancing work, school, and family obligations can make it hard for people to get to their polling place, and challenges concerning transportation, accessibility, illness, child care interruptions, and disabilities can compound those difficulties.

While a small subset of Alabama voters can vote absentee by mail, that is an option only for those with an approved excuse, such as being required to work more than 10 hours on Election Day or being outside their home county on Election Day. The absentee voting process is also laden with confusing rules, as we detail below.

#### SUGGESTED FIX

Alabama should join 47 other states and adopt early voting to allow voters to cast their ballots in person in the days before Election Day.

## 1 of 3

ALABAMA IS ONE OF JUST THREE STATES WITHOUT EARLY VOTING



The difficulties of making it to the ballot box on Election Day resonate with Sha'Marrion Johnson, a 19-year-old University of Alabama student from Boligee, Alabama, who sees voting as his “civic duty” despite feeling discouraged by the two-party system. He points to work and daily responsibilities as major obstacles to voting, especially for low-wage workers and parents who often have to choose between earning money and taking time off to vote. Even so, he believes participation still matters, noting that voting can “change the next four years of your life.”

**SHA'MARRION JOHNSON**, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA STUDENT

\* Mississippi and New Hampshire are the other two states denying voters access to this popular method of voting.

## CONFUSING ABSENTEE VOTING PROCESS

Alabama’s absentee voting system (the only way to vote by mail in the state) is one of the most restrictive in the nation.<sup>53</sup> Alabama is one of just 14 states requiring voters to provide an “excuse” to cast an absentee ballot by mail.<sup>54</sup>

Alabama restricts absentee voting to those who are any of the following:

- Away from their county on Election Day
- Ill or have a disability that prevents trips to polling places
- Physically incapacitated from life-altering disorders and over the age of 65
- Temporarily living outside their county (military members, college students, and their children or spouses)
- Election officers or poll watchers
- Working a 10-hour or more shift during polling hours
- Caregivers for those confined to the home
- Incarcerated in prison or jail but not convicted of a crime of “moral turpitude”
- Had a medical emergency within five days of election (physician must certify)

Source: Alabama Secretary of State’s website<sup>55</sup>

Voters who fall into this narrow band of exclusions must provide a copy of their photo ID with an application to their county election managers.<sup>56</sup>

Once voters have obtained approval to vote absentee, the state requires them to seal their ballot within two envelopes, have it notarized or signed by two witnesses, enclose all necessary documents in a third envelope, and send the entire packet by mail or hand it personally to a local election manager.<sup>57</sup> Alabama is one of just two states (joined by North Carolina) requiring the signature of two witnesses or a notary for mail-in ballots to successfully be counted.<sup>58</sup> Alabama also does not provide absentee ballot drop boxes, nor does it allow third parties to handle absentee ballots.

Given these restrictions, it is perhaps not surprising that only seven percent of people in Alabama voted by mail before Election Day, compared to the 29 percent who vote by mail nationally.<sup>59</sup>

### SUGGESTED FIX

Alabama should adopt no-excuse absentee voting, which allows any registered voter to cast their ballot by mail if they wish. The state should also allow ballot drop boxes at election board-approved sites and eliminate requirements for witness signatures on mailed-in ballots.

## POLLING PLACE CLOSURES & CHANGES

Since 2010, Alabama has closed at least 155 polling places across 31 counties.<sup>60</sup> These closures create additional barriers for voters — causing long lines at remaining polling locations, increasing transportation burdens for voters who have to travel farther to vote, creating confusion about where to vote, and, ultimately, disenfranchising many.

State and county officials often justify closures by citing population decline, but the data does not support this rationale. In Bullock County, for example, election officials closed nearly half of precincts in 2022 despite only a five percent population decline from 2010 to 2020.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, Jefferson County closed nine polling places even as its population grew by more than 16,000 people over the same period.<sup>62</sup> Polling place closures have disproportionately occurred in precincts serving Black voters, who already face barriers to the ballot box.<sup>63</sup>

Compounding these harms, counties vary widely in how much polling place information they provide, if any. Many fail to publish clear or accurate details online, leaving voters confused or uninformed.<sup>64</sup> The Secretary of State’s office does provide a public interactive poll locator on their website, but no exhaustive list of polling places exists for the public.



# 155

SINCE 2010, ALABAMA HAS CLOSED AT LEAST 155 POLLING PLACES ACROSS 31 COUNTIES.

### SUGGESTED FIX

Alabama should require transparency, advance public notice, and equity safeguards for any polling place closures to ensure voters of color and rural communities are not disproportionately impacted. All changes should be promptly posted on the Alabama Secretary of State’s website, with accessible options for voters to receive electronic notifications about polling place updates.

**BURDENSOME ID REQUIREMENTS**

Voters in Alabama must show their photo identification at the polls to cast a ballot.<sup>65</sup>

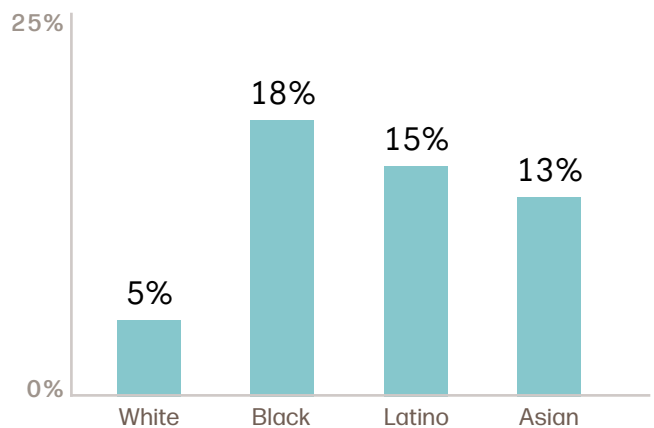
Forms of acceptable ID include an unexpired:

- Alabama driver’s license (can be expired within 60 days)
- Alabama state ID card (can be expired within 60 days)
- Alabama voter ID card
- Photo ID issued by U.S. government or any state
- U.S. passport
- Military or veteran identification
- Tribal identification
- Student or employee ID issued by an Alabama higher education institution
- Employee ID issued by the U.S., Alabama, or local government

If a voter doesn’t have identification handy on Election Day, they can cast a ballot if two election workers at the polls can identify them, or they can fill out a provisional ballot and bring an acceptable ID to their county election registrar’s office by 5 p.m. the Friday after an election.<sup>66</sup>

This strict requirement ignores the reality that not everyone has an unexpired ID, with nearly 29 million Americans lacking valid photo IDs, according to a recent study released by VoteRiders and University of Maryland researchers.<sup>67</sup> Eligible voters of color are disproportionately affected, with 18 percent of Black, 15 percent of Latino, and 13 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander adult citizens lacking a photo ID, compared with just 5 percent of white adult citizens.<sup>68</sup>

**Americans Lacking Photo IDs by Race/Ethnicity**



**SUGGESTED FIX**

Alabama should eliminate the photo identification requirement for in-person and absentee voting. At the very least, the state should allow people to use other proof of identification (such as utility bills or bank statements) to vote and adopt a “reasonable impediment” provision, similar to what exists in other Southern states, that allows a person without an ID to vote if there is a reasonable explanation for why they don’t possess an ID.

## LACK OF LANGUAGE ACCESS

---

Lack of language access prevents voters, and particularly naturalized citizens who are not proficient in English, from accessing the ballot. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, six percent of Alabamians ages five and older speak a language other than English at home, and among those, 39 percent speak English “less than very well.”

The rate of limited English proficiency is especially high in particular communities. Among Alabamians who speak Spanish at home, 41 percent speak English less than very well and are considered Limited English Proficient (LEP). However, not a single jurisdiction in Alabama is currently covered under the language access provision of the Voting Rights Act, which guarantees multilingual ballots in areas with larger populations of non-English-speaking communities.<sup>69</sup>

### SUGGESTED FIX

Election information, including election notices, polling location information, and sample ballots, should be translated into languages most commonly used in non-English-speaking households in Alabama, such as Spanish, Korean, Arabic, Vietnamese, and German.<sup>70</sup>

## POLICE PRESENCE AT THE POLLS

---

Alabama law permits law enforcement presence at polling locations on Election Day.<sup>71</sup> Research indicates that visible law enforcement at polling places can be intimidating and negatively affect turnout, particularly among Black voters. A 2017 study found that when police officers were stationed outside Alabama polling places, Black voter turnout declined by an estimated 32 percent, while turnout among white voters in predominantly white areas was unaffected.<sup>72</sup>

This impact cannot be separated from Alabama’s history of racial discrimination, in which law enforcement has been used to suppress Black political participation from the Jim Crow era through the Civil Rights Movement. Even when officers do not directly engage voters, their visible presence can create fear, discourage participation, and undermine trust in the democratic process.

### SUGGESTED FIX

To protect voters and ensure free and fair elections, Alabama should end any practice that mandates or routinely allows police presence at polling places except in true emergencies.

## LACK OF ACCESSIBLE VOTING OPTIONS

Alabama’s complex absentee voting system, described in more detail above, is especially burdensome to navigate for those with accessibility needs. And while Alabama does permit those with permanent disabilities to vote via absentee ballot, to qualify, a doctor must sign a notarized absentee ballot application each year or election cycle.<sup>73</sup> Limited access to polling places and long wait times (described above) can make it particularly difficult for people affected by illness or disability to participate in elections. Alabama also bans curbside voting, a voting method offered in other states like Texas and South Carolina, which allows voters with mobility issues or illness to cast a ballot from their car at polling locations.

*“If they [would] make it more accessible, if they would educate them more. If they would just give them some chairs to sit in when they get in a long line, you know?”*

**RONALD MCKEITHEN**  
REENTRY COORDINATOR AND DIRECTOR  
OF SECOND CHANCES IN ALABAMA

The state legislature created additional obstacles for voters with disabilities in 2024 by passing S.B. 1, a law that made it a crime for paid workers to help voters apply for absentee ballots, with felony penalties of up to 20 years in prison. While civil, voting, and disability rights attorneys are challenging that law in the courts, it has dramatically curtailed the ability of nonpartisan and nonprofit groups to help low-literacy, blind, deaf, and voters with disabilities fill out their absentee ballots.<sup>74</sup>

Additionally, Alabama doesn’t allow people found “mentally incompetent” by a court to vote. Judges can also take away the voting rights of a person under a guardian’s care if the guardianship order specifies a person cannot vote.<sup>75</sup>

### SUGGESTED FIX

Alabama should expand opportunities for people with disabilities to vote, including by offering curbside voting options, a simple “no-excuse” absentee voting process, and the elimination of criminal penalties for paid workers assisting voters in applying for absentee ballots. Polling places must also ensure access for individuals with disabilities.



# BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

## DISILLUSIONMENT & DISENGAGEMENT

In Alabama, many more eligible voters are missing from the polls not because they are barred from voting but because they feel disconnected from the political process.

Disengagement in Alabama is often the result of structural exclusion, not its cause. Brent Avery, an Indigenous parent from Phenix City, Alabama, said he doesn't trust the voting system. Avery said he did not vote and will not, citing a disconnect between elected officials and the community.

That disconnect spans generations.

Sha'Marrion Johnson, a 19-year-old University of Alabama student, said elected officials often fail to understand the realities facing everyday people.

These perspectives are also reflected in data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2024 Current Population Survey (CPS) Voting and Registration Supplement, which shows that "Not interested, felt my vote wouldn't make a difference" was the most common reason Alabamians gave for not voting among adult citizens.<sup>76</sup>

Bryana Austin, 27, a marketing professional and mom to a one-year-old, did not vote in the last mayoral election. "There have been times where I did not vote, I wasn't able to make it to the polls—whether that was an excuse, a lack of knowledge, or even anxiety," she said. For Austin, understanding the process is key.

*"The people at the top, they're not in the inner city, they're not in the areas where the actual community is at. They're just on their high horse at the top."*

**BRENT AVERY, PHENIX CITY, AL.**

*"I wish people in power could really understand the working people and the everyday people."*

**SHA'MARRION JOHNSON,  
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA STUDENT**

*"It needs to be in our face. Being knowledgeable—knowledge creates confidence, and the confidence cancels out the doubt and the fear of 'Who am I going to vote for? What do I need to do?'"*

**BRYANA AUSTIN**

## Why Alabamians Didn't Vote in 2024

MAIN REASON FOR NOT VOTING	ALABAMA	UNITED STATES
Not interested, felt my vote wouldn't make a difference	26.9%	20.4%
Illness or disability (own or family's)	26.3%	12.9%
Too busy, conflicting work or school schedule	12.3%	18.4%
Out of town or away from home	10.0%	7.7%
Didn't like candidates or campaign issues	6.4%	15.2%
Inconvenient hours, polling place, or hours or lines too long	5.1%	2.5%
Transportation problems	3.1%	2.3%
Registration problems (i.e., didn't receive absentee ballot, not registered in current location)	3.0%	3.7%
Forgot to vote (or send in absentee ballot)	0.8%	4.3%
Other	6.1%	12.6%

Source: 2024 Current Population Survey, November supplement

One major complaint would-be voters have is that their vote doesn't seem to matter because of the lack of competitive races and districts. In Alabama, a shocking 72 percent of federal, state, and local elections were uncontested in the November 2024 elections, meaning voters had no choice when they showed up to the polls.<sup>77</sup> This problem is not unique to Alabama. With 70 percent of races uncontested nationally, this phenomenon has been shown to lower voter turnout.<sup>78</sup>

This phenomenon did not manifest out of thin air. The increased use of gerrymandered voting maps (maps that are configured to benefit the political parties in power and remove competitive or toss-up districts) has left voters without true choices on Election Day in many cases.<sup>79</sup>

Alabama has recently had a notable victory in fair representation, however. A major U.S. Supreme Court gerrymandering case in 2023 (*Allen v. Milligan*) upheld an important piece of the Voting Rights Act and affirmed that Alabama's congressional districts were drawn in a way that discriminated against Black voters. Advocates in that case succeeded in creating a congressional district for the 2024 elections that united voters in Alabama's Black Belt and led to Alabama having two Black U.S. House members serving together for the first time in history.<sup>80</sup> That victory may be short-lived, however, with the Supreme Court poised to rule in a separate case, *Louisiana v. Callais*, that could weaken those protections.

## ECONOMIC & ACCESSIBILITY BARRIERS

Alabamians face economic pressures that can make it difficult for people to register to vote or cast a ballot and make them feel ignored or left behind by state leaders and the political system. Economic pressures present acute barriers to the ballot, particularly when it comes to lack of income, transportation, literacy, and broadband access.

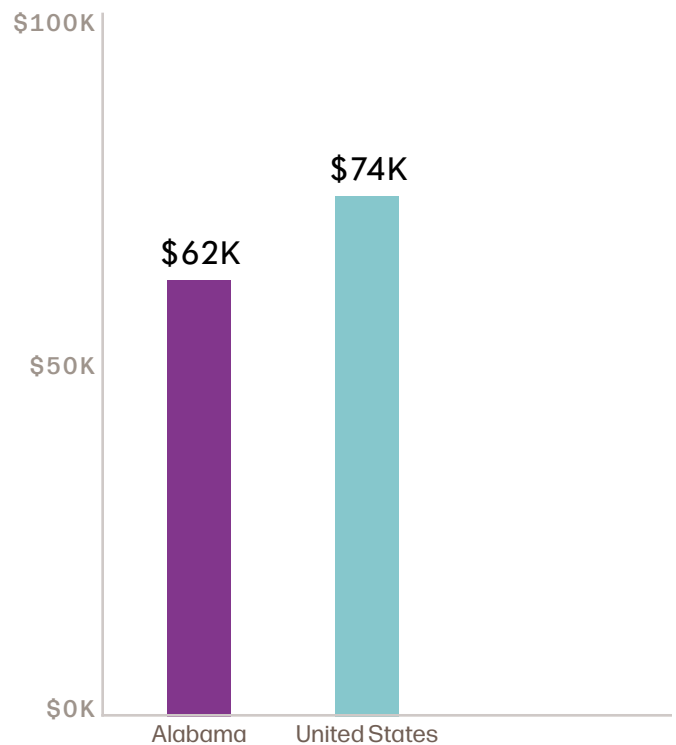
### POVERTY

Alabama has one of the highest poverty rates in the country.<sup>81</sup> More than 768,000 people in the state (16 percent of its population) live below the poverty line, and many families struggle with low wages, lack of jobs, and underfunded communities.<sup>82</sup> Economic hardship affects people across Alabama, but those in rural and historically neglected areas are especially hard-hit. Income and job prospects also differ by race, with Black Alabamians often facing bigger gaps in opportunities and pay.<sup>83</sup> Alabama's median household income, about \$62,000, is more than \$16,000 less than the national median, which makes it harder for people to afford basic things like housing, health care, and education.<sup>84</sup> Those who are faced with the pressures of making ends meet every day are unlikely to be able to take off even a few hours to register to vote or cast a ballot.

**16%**

OF ALABAMA'S POPULATION  
LIVES BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

### Median Household Income



## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is also a barrier, especially for those who live outside of cities. Inadequate public transportation prevents thousands of Alabamians from meeting basic needs and being able to make it to polling locations. Alabama is one of three states with no state funding for public transportation.<sup>85</sup>

## LITERACY

Low literacy remains a serious issue in parts of Alabama. In some rural counties, nearly two-thirds of adults read at or below an 8th-grade level, and more than one in four read below a 3rd-grade level, making it hard to get good jobs or navigate the voting process.<sup>86</sup>

## DIGITAL ACCESS

Alabama has a deep digital divide. Rural and low-income communities were lacking reliable high-speed internet long before the pandemic made broadband essential in everyday life. While the state has made recent progress by building a statewide “middle-mile” fiber network, access to internet in homes remains uneven, especially in the Black Belt.<sup>87</sup> As a result, many Alabamians are still cut off from basic services and information, reinforcing long-standing feelings of exclusion and neglect and preventing them from having the most up-to-date information about voting.



# SOLUTIONS

Structural barriers to voting and racist historical practices have compounded in Alabama, creating conditions whereby one out of every five Alabama voters is missing from our elections.

Throughout this report, we have offered ways to reverse this trend and bring the voices of more Alabamians into the political process.

**21%**

OF ALABAMA ELIGIBLE  
VOTERS ARE MISSING

*Alabama Deltas Vote canvassing during the 2nd Congressional District election.*



## WHAT ALABAMA VOTERS NEED

01 An Easier Voter Registration Process, Including Automatic or Same-Day Voter Registration

02 Early Voting

03 Vote by Mail for Everyone (Without Witness Signatures)

04 Ballot Drop Boxes

05 No Photo Id Requirements

06 No Unlawful or Excessive Voter List Purges

07 Pre-Registration and Local Voting Options for 16- and 17-Year-Olds

08 No Felony Disenfranchisement

09 Election Materials in Multiple Languages

10 Accessible Polling Locations

11 No Mandated Police Presence at Polling Locations

### DID YOU KNOW?

The proposed Alabama Voting Rights Act (ALVRA) includes many of the voting changes suggested in this report.<sup>88</sup>

## WHAT WE CAN DO

A foundational component of a strong democracy is community care. In Alabama, too many people are pushed out of the voting process by confusion, unnecessary barriers, and systems that were designed to exclude them. While lawmakers have a duty to reform voting policies, change starts with us demanding that our right to vote be protected.

## TO TAKE ACTION

**Check your voter registration status regularly**, and make sure your information is accurate and up to date.

**Help friends, family members, neighbors, and coworkers register to vote** and check their registration status, especially young people, elders, people who have recently moved, and people who have been impacted by the criminal legal system.

**Share clear, accurate voting information**, and debunk misinformation.

**Make a plan to vote together**, including offering reminders, transportation, or accompaniment when needed.

**Look out for one another at the polls**, and help people find support if they encounter problems, intimidation, delays, or confusion.

**Join advocates across the state to support passage of the Alabama Voting Rights Act**—because stronger voting rights make stronger communities.

**Support local, community-based organizations** that do year-round voter education, voter protection, and civic engagement.

**Get involved in your community** by volunteering, attending meetings, or serving as a poll worker.

**Voting is not a single event.** It is an ongoing process, and our rights are protected through participation in that process. When people cannot use their voices, lawmakers make decisions without them—decisions that deeply impact their lives, including policies on education, housing, transportation, and child care.



*Stand Up Mobile Co-Founder Beverly Cooper with Alvin Jarreau Jr. and Anitra Jarreau, standing together in support of voting rights and community power.*

## THANK YOU

We wish to thank the following individuals and organizations for their assistance and help with this report:

- Dori Miles of Return My Vote,
- Dr. Richard Fording from the University of Alabama,
- Deanna Fowler of Alabama Forward, and the
- Southern Poverty Law Center.



## VOTER REGISTRATION STATUS

You can find tools to check your voter registration status, get election information, and explore your voting options through the Stand Up Mobile Vote Center, along with resources from trusted partners across Alabama.

These tools are meant to support conversations, care, and connection, not replace them.

Visit [www.standupmobile.org](http://www.standupmobile.org) for more information.



SCAN TO  
LEARN MORE

# ENDNOTES

- 1 “City and Town Population Totals: 2020-2024,” U.S. Census Bureau, accessed January 2026, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-total-cities-and-towns.html>.
- 2 “Power Scorecard: Alabama,” Dēmos, as of September 2024, <https://power.demos.org/scorecards/alabama>.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 AL Code § 17-4-9, Justia (2025), <https://law.justia.com/codes/alabama/title-17/chapter-4/article-1/section-17-4-9/>.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Alabama Constitution Section 177, Justia, <https://law.justia.com/constitution/alabama/CA-245717.html>.
- 7 “Alabama Voter File List,” L2, accessed January 2026, <https://www.l2-data.com/states/alabama/>.
- 8 “Election Data Downloads,” Alabama Secretary of State, accessed January 2026, <https://www.sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes/voter/election-data>.
- 9 Miriam McKinney Gray, “Surfacing Missing Voters,” Democracy & Power Innovation Fund, January 2024), [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ed\\_3oI34JX-kJvT8oxZlwCipmmaCrx7n/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ed_3oI34JX-kJvT8oxZlwCipmmaCrx7n/view).
- 10 “2024 CPS Voting and Registration,” U.S. Census Bureau, accessed January 2026, <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/2024/demo/cps/cps-voting.html>
- 11 “Eligible Latino Voters in the United States, 2023,” Latino Data Hub, <https://latinodatabhub.org/#/issue-areas/democracy-and-voting>.
- 12 “The Alabama Language Access Coalition,” Hispanic and Immigrant Center of Alabama, <https://hicaalabama.org/en/languageaccess>; “Language Access and Voting Rights: An Overview of Federal, State, and Local Policies,” Dēmos, October 24, 2024, <https://www.demos.org/policy-briefs/language-access-and-voting-rights-overview-federal-state-and-local-policies>.
- 13 “Four Million Denied Voting Rights Due to a Felony Conviction,” The Sentencing Project, 2024, <https://www.sentencingproject.org/app/uploads/2024/10/Locked-Out-2024-Four-Million-Denied-Voting-Rights-Due-to-a-Felony-Conviction.pdf>.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Alabama Constitutional Proceedings, 1901, Vol. 1, at 8 (May 22, 1901), accessed at <https://alison.legislature.state.al.us/>.
- 17 “CLC, Alabamians Sue Over New Law Threatening Silence Voters Right Before 2024 Election.” [Press release], Campaign Legal Center, July 18, 2024, <https://campaignlegal.org/press-releases/clc-alabamians-sue-over-new-law-threatening-silence-voters-right-2024-election>.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Because Alabama does not track the number of people with crimes of moral turpitude, it is extremely difficult to track the number of Alabama voters who had their rights restored in 2017. The Sentencing Project provides an estimate of 83,000, while others estimate that more than 100,000 voters had their rights restored. Nicole Porter and Morgan McLeod, October 18, 2023, “Expanding the Vote: State Felony Disenfranchisement Reform 1997–2023,” The Sentencing Project, [www.sentencingproject.org/reports/expanding-the-vote-state-felony-disenfranchisement-reform-1997-2023/](http://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/expanding-the-vote-state-felony-disenfranchisement-reform-1997-2023/).
- 20 “U.S. State Profile Data: Adults 18+ years of age,” U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 3, 2025, <https://www.cdc.gov/dhds/impacts/index.html>.
- 21 “2024 Current Population Survey, November supplement,” U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/2024/demo/cps/cps-voting.html>.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 52 U.S.C. 10101: Voting Rights, [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:52%20section:10101%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:52%20section:10101%20edition:prelim)).
- 24 Diane McWortner, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution*, 2001.

- 25 Jo Ann Robinson, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson*, 1987.
- 26 David Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Voting Rights Act of 1965*, 2015.
- 27 “Remarks in the Capitol Rotunda at the Signing of the Voting Rights Act,” Lyndon B. Johnson, August 6, 1965, accessed at The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-capitol-rotunda-the-signing-the-voting-rights-act>.
- 28 Voting Rights Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-110, 79 Stat. 437 (1965).
- 29 “How Shelby County v. Holder Broke Democracy,” Legal Defense Fund, 2026, <https://www.naacpldf.org/shelby-county-v-holder-impact/>.
- 30 Jasleen Singh and Sarah Carter, June 23, 2023, “States Have Added Nearly 100 Restrictive Laws Since SCOTUS Gutted the Voting Rights Act 10 Years Ago,” Brennan Center for Justice, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/states-have-added-nearly-100-restrictive-laws-scotus-gutted-voting-rights>.
- 31 “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2024” (Table 4a) [Press release], U.S. Census Bureau, April 2025, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-587.html>.
- 32 Government Accountability Office. (June 2016). *Issues Related to Registering Voters and Administering Elections*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-16-630.pdf>
- 33 “Barriers to Voting in Alabama: A Report to the Alabama Advisory Council,” U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, February 2020, <https://www.usccr.gov/files/2020/2020-07-02-Barriers-to-Voting-in-Alabama.pdf>.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Thomas Spencer, June 10, 2024, “How Alabama Democracy Compares,” Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, <https://parcalabama.org/how-alabama-democracy-compares/>.
- 36 “Register to Vote / Update Your Information,” Alabama Secretary of State, accessed at <https://www.sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes/voter/register-to-vote>.
- 37 “2022 Voting and Registration Data,” U.S. Census Bureau, May 2, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/2022-voting-registration.html>.
- 38 For more information about automatic voter registration, see “Automatic Voter Registration,” Brennan Center for Justice, <https://www.brennancenter.org/topics/voting-elections/voting-reform/automatic-voter-registration>.
- 39 For more information about same-day voter registration, see “Same-Day Voter Registration,” National Conference of State Legislatures, <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/same-day-voter-registration>.
- 40 Mark Osborne, March 2018, “‘March for Our Lives Will ‘Start a Revolution,’ Parkland School-shooting Survivor Says,” ABC News, <https://abcnews.com/US/parkland-school-shooting-survivor-march-lives-start-revolution/story?id=53981583>.
- 41 Lex McMenamin. (February 9, 2026). “These Are the High Schoolers Taking a Stand Against ICE,” The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/09/us-high-schoolers-protest-ice>.
- 42 “Preregistration for Young Voters,” National Conference of State Legislatures, February 26, 2025, <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/preregistration-for-young-voters>.
- 43 “Barriers to Voting in Alabama: A Report to the Alabama Advisory Council,” U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, February 2020, <https://www.usccr.gov/files/2020/2020-07-02-Barriers-to-Voting-in-Alabama.pdf>.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Nolan Crane, March 30, 2022, “Alabama Voter Registration Purge,” WAFF 48, [www.waff.com/2022/03/30/alabama-voter-registration-purge](http://www.waff.com/2022/03/30/alabama-voter-registration-purge).
- 46 Colin Wood, March 5, 2025, “Alabama’s secretary of state removed nearly 500,000 names from voter file.” State Scoop, <https://statescoop.com/wes-allen-alabama-voter-registration-avid/>.
- 47 “Provisional Voting in Alabama,” Alabama Secretary of State, <https://www.sos.alabama.gov/sites/default/files/election-2024/ProvisionalBallotGuide.pdf>.

## ENDNOTES

- 48 “Voter Purge Legislative Resource Guide,” Dēmos, January 23, 2025, by the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, and Southern Poverty Law Center, [www.demos.org/research/voter-purge-legislative-resource-guide](http://www.demos.org/research/voter-purge-legislative-resource-guide).
- 49 State of Alabama Voter Registration Form, <https://www.sos.alabama.gov/sites/default/files/voter-pdfs/nvra-2.pdf>.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 “Barriers to Voting in Alabama,” United States Commission on Civil Rights, February 2020, <https://www.usccr.gov/files/2020/2020-07-02-Barriers-to-Voting-in-Alabama.pdf>.
- 52 “Early In-Person Voting,” National Conference of State Legislatures, November 6, 2025, <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/early-in-person-voting>.
- 53 “Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and Other Voting at Home Options,” National Conference of State Legislatures, August 1, 2025, <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/voting-outside-the-polling-place>.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 “Absentee Voting Information,” Alabama Secretary of State, <https://www.sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes/voter/absentee-voting>.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 “Table 14: How States Verify Voted Absentee/Mail Ballots,” National Conference of State Legislatures, February 24, 2026, <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/table-14-how-states-verify-voted-absentee-mail-ballots>.
- 59 “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2024.” (Table 4a). [Press release]. U.S. Census Bureau, April 2025, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-587.html>.
- 60 Letter to Alabama Secretary of State, LDF, October 31, 2022, [www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/AL-Polling-Places-Ltr-to-SOS-10.31.22-Updated.pdf](http://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/AL-Polling-Places-Ltr-to-SOS-10.31.22-Updated.pdf).
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 “Barriers to Voting in Alabama,” United States Commission on Civil Rights, February 2020, <https://www.usccr.gov/files/2020/2020-07-02-Barriers-to-Voting-in-Alabama.pdf>.
- 64 Letter to Alabama Secretary of State, LDF, October 31, 2022, [www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/AL-Polling-Places-Ltr-to-SOS-10.31.22-Updated.pdf](http://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/AL-Polling-Places-Ltr-to-SOS-10.31.22-Updated.pdf).
- 65 Ala. Code § 17-9-30, Justia, <https://law.justia.com/codes/alabama/title-17/chapter-9/article-2/section-17-9-30/>.
- 66 VoteRiders: Alabama, [www.voteriders.org/states/alabama](http://www.voteriders.org/states/alabama).
- 67 Novey Rothschild and Michael Hanmer, 2024, “Who Lacks ID in America Today? An Exploration of Voter ID Access, Barriers, and Knowledge,” Center for Democracy and Civic Engagement, <https://cdce.umd.edu/publicationprofile/1137>.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 “Voting Rights Act Amendments of 2006, Determinations Under Section 203,” December 8, 2021, Federal Register, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/12/08/2021-26547/voting-rights-act-amendments-of-2006-determinations-under-section-203>.
- 70 “Alabama,” DATA USA, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/alabama>.
- 71 Ala. Code § 17-9-1, Justia, 2025, <https://law.justia.com/codes/alabama/title-17/chapter-9/article-1/section-17-9-1/>.
- 72 David Niven, December 28, 2021, “Policing Polling Places in the United States: The Negative Effect of Police Presence on African American Turnout in an Alabama Election,” *Democracy and Security*. Vol. 18(2), pp. 170–183, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17419166.2021.2010551>.
- 73 “Assistance for Voters with Disabilities,” Alabama Secretary of State, <https://www.sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes/voter/assistance-disability>.

- 74 “Civil Rights, Voting Rights, Disability Rights Groups Sue Alabama Over SB1’s Extreme Anti-Voter Restrictions and Penalties,” [Press Release], League of Women Voters, April 4, 2024, <https://www.lwv.org/newsroom/press-releases/civil-rights-voting-rights-disability-rights-groups-sue-alabama-over-sb1s>.
- 75 “Constitution of Alabama 2022. Section 177 Suffrage and Elections” (section b), The Alabama Legislature, <https://alison.legislature.state.al.us/constitution?section=177>.
- 76 “Current Population Survey, November 2024 Voting Supplement File,” U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsnov24.pdf>.
- 77 “Election results, 2024: Uncontested races by state,” Ballotpedia, updated December 12, 2024, [https://ballotpedia.org/Election\\_results\\_2024:\\_Uncontested\\_races\\_by\\_state](https://ballotpedia.org/Election_results_2024:_Uncontested_races_by_state).
- 78 Daniel Jones, Neil Silveus, and Carly Urban, August 2023, “Partisan Gerrymandering and Turnout,” *Journal of Law and Economics*. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/725767>.
- 79 Dan Vicuna, Keshia Morris, and Dale Eisman, “Restoring Voter Choice: How Citizen-Led Redistricting Can End the Manipulation of Our Elections,” Common Cause Education Fund, [https://www.commoncause.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/VoterChoiceReport\\_WEB-10-26-16-v2.pdf](https://www.commoncause.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/VoterChoiceReport_WEB-10-26-16-v2.pdf).
- 80 Jemma Stephenson, November 11, 2024, “For 1st time in history, Alabama will have two Black U.S. House members serving together,” Alabama Reflector, <https://alabamareflector.com/2024/11/11/alabama-will-have-two-black-u-s-house-members-serving-together-for-1st-time-in-history/>.
- 81 “Poverty Rates by Race/Ethnicity,” KFF, <https://www.kff.org/state-health-policy-data/state-indicator/poverty-rate-by-raceethnicity/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Total%22,%22sort%22:%22desc%22%7D>.
- 82 “Why Alabama Can’t Wait for Economic Justice,” Southern Poverty Law Center, July 15, 2025, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/reports/why-alabama-cant-wait-economic-justice/#:~:text=Alabama%20has%20one%20of%20the,to%202019%2D2023%20ACS%20data>.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Mike Carson, April 24, 2024, “Lawmakers reject bill to add \$5 tag fee to support public transportation in Alabama,” AL.com, <https://www.al.com/news/2024/04/lawmakers-reject-bill-to-add-5-tag-fee-to-support-public-transportation-in-alabama.html>.
- 86 Marcus Hopkins, April 13, 2025, “Appalachian Alabama in 2025,” Appalachian Learning Institute, <https://www.appli.org/post/appalachian-alabama-in-2025>.
- 87 Trisha Powel Crain, December 9, 2025, “UA Report: Alabama Advancing Statewide Broadband, Rural Gaps Persist,” Alabama Daily News, <https://aldailynews.com/ua-report-alabama-advancing-statewide-broadband-rural-gaps-persist/>.
- 88 “Alabama Needs its own Voting Rights Act,” Legal Defense Fund, 2026, <https://www.naacpldf.org/case-issue/alabama-voting-rights-act-alvra/>.



[standupmobile.org](http://standupmobile.org)



[demos.org](http://demos.org)

368 9th Avenue, 6th Floor  
New York, NY 10001

Media Contact: [media@demos.org](mailto:media@demos.org)



[southerncoalition.org](http://southerncoalition.org)

P.O. Box 51280  
Durham, NC 27717

Media Contact: [media@scsj.org](mailto:media@scsj.org)