



## Fact Sheet: Demonstrations over Critical Race Theory in the United States

### Key Trends

- Since former President Donald Trump issued an executive order widely seen as an attempt to ban critical race theory (CRT) in September 2020, six states have moved forward with their own bans, legislation is pending in 16 more, and statewide school boards have prohibited the theory's teaching in another three ([Brookings, 2 July 2021](#))
- Approximately 60% of all demonstrations over CRT have *opposed* its teaching in public schools
  - Anti-CRT demonstrations have taken place in 22 states
  - Militia groups have participated in 6% of all anti-CRT demonstrations
- Approximately 50% of all demonstrations over CRT have *supported* its teaching in public schools
  - Pro-CRT demonstrations have taken place in 24 states and Washington, DC<sup>1</sup>
- Demonstrations over CRT were first reported in October 2020 and peaked in June 2021, with this month accounting for 70% of all CRT-related demonstrations

### Overview

CRT is an academic framework centered on the concept “that race is a social construct, and that racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies” ([Education Week, 18 May 2021](#)). Scholars of CRT argue that many of America’s formal institutions are inherently racist, as they create and maintain structures of inequality based on race ([Encyclopaedia Britannica, 16 June 2021](#)). Conversely, opponents of CRT argue that it is rooted in Marxism, promotes anti-white racism, and demeans Black Americans ([Texas Public Policy Forum, 6 May 2021](#)).

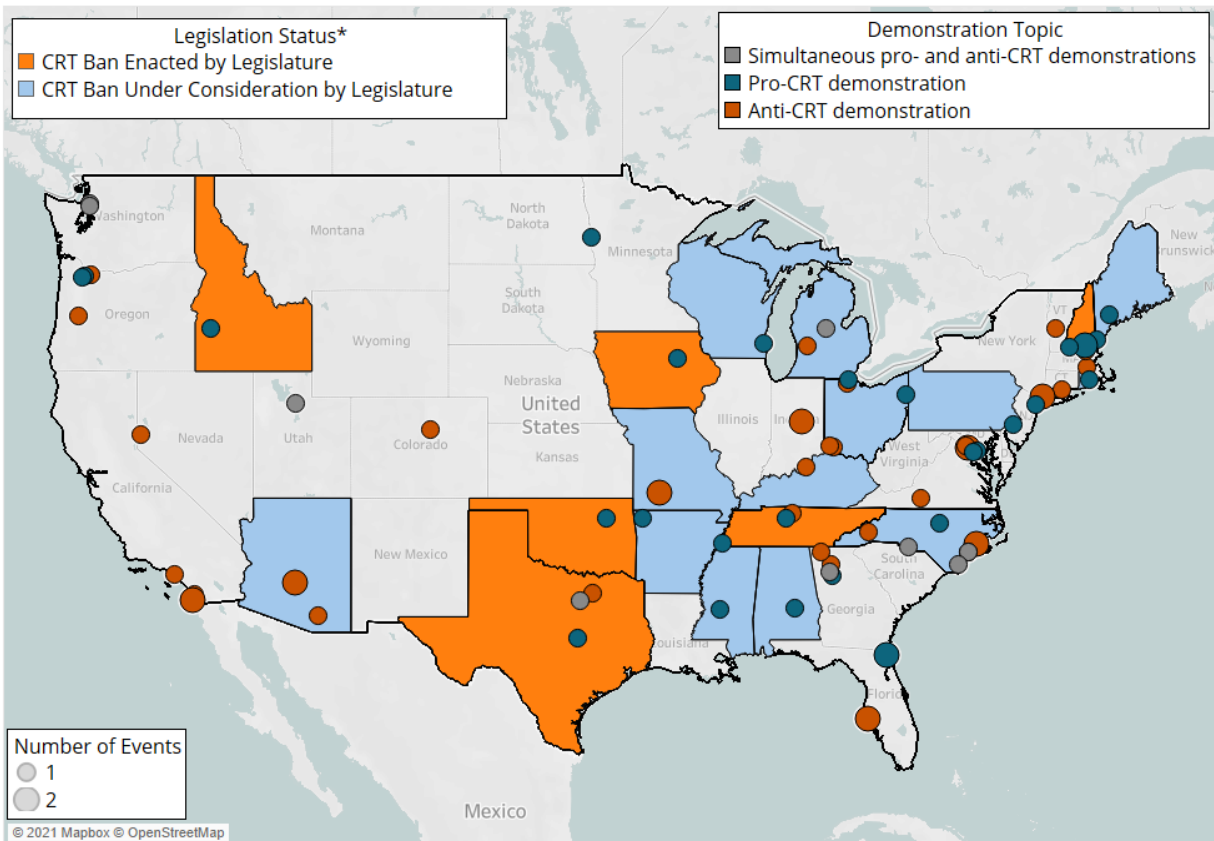
After former President Trump singled out CRT as the “target of an executive order” in September 2020 ([USA Today, 20 January 2021](#)),<sup>2</sup> legislation designed to ban CRT in public schools has been passed in Idaho, Iowa, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. Another 16 states have proposed or prefiled legislation designed to ban the teaching of CRT in public schools. The map below depicts these trends. Teachers unions and education policy analysts, meanwhile, have noted that CRT is predominantly taught in colleges and law schools, not elementary schools and high schools, suggesting that anti-CRT legislation “is really aimed at erasing and whitewashing American history” for young students ([CBS News, 8 July 2021](#)).

---

<sup>1</sup> ACLED does not code whether an event was in favor or against CRT. Additional analysis of the ‘Notes’ column was performed to determine these figures, focusing on media coverage of events in addition to signs, chants, and quotes attributed to demonstrators. Approximately 10% of all CRT-related demonstrations include both proponents and opponents of CRT counter-demonstrating against each other in the same location simultaneously.

<sup>2</sup> Current President Joe Biden has since rescinded the order ([USA Today, 20 January 2021](#)).

## Anti-CRT Legislation and Demonstrations in the United States (1 January 2020 - 2 July 2021)



\*Data on the legislative actions regarding CRT drawn from Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2021/07/02/why-are-states-banning-critical-race-theory/>

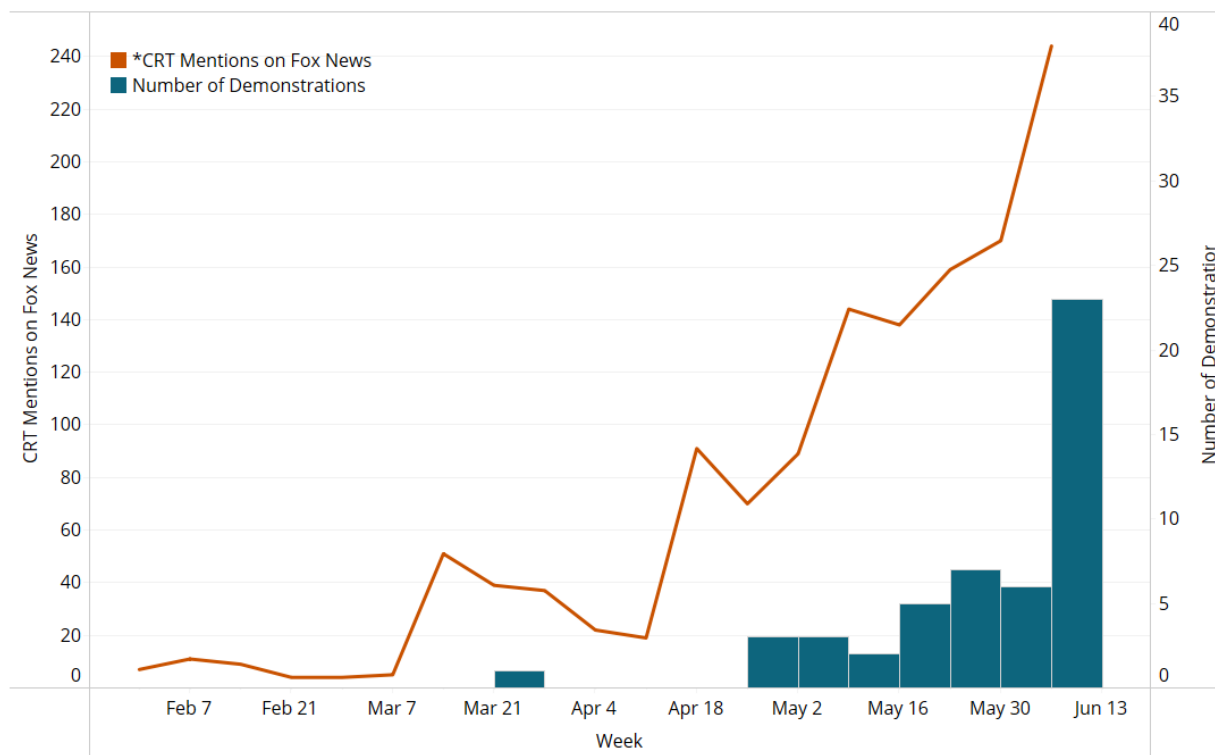
The frequency of demonstration events focused on CRT has been strongly correlated with media coverage and debates over CRT-related legislation. For example, three states passed bills designed to ban CRT from public schools in June 2021 — the same month in which a majority of CRT-related demonstrations took place. A combined look at analysis of ACLED data (bars in graph below) and Media Matters analysis of CRT mentions by Fox News (line in graph below) shows a powerful correlation between increased demonstration activity and increased negative media coverage ([Media Matters, 15 June 2021](#)).

Yet, despite its prominence within mainstream media and in state legislatures, CRT’s effect on demonstration trends within the United States has been limited compared to movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), Stop Asian Hate, and Cancel the Rents.<sup>3</sup> ACLED records 78 total demonstration events related to CRT as of early July 2021. This is fewer than 1% of all demonstrations recorded in the country since the first CRT-related demonstration was recorded on 30 October 2020 in Lewiston, Maine. Additionally, although nearly 70% of CRT-related demonstration events occurred in June 2021, they still account for fewer than 5% of all demonstration events reported around the United States that month. CRT-related demonstrations have largely been independent from other protest movements. For instance,

<sup>3</sup> ACLED does not code participation in public forums as participating in demonstration events. Such participation in democratic governance through formal channels is viewed as a part of regular bureaucratic processes; this is seen as distinct from engagement in informal channels, such as demonstration movements, which ACLED tracks.

fewer than 5% have included demonstrators associated with the BLM movement. Teachers and students account for the largest portion of associated actors, having participated in over 25% of all CRT-related demonstration events, 95% of which have been in support of teaching CRT in schools.

**Demonstrations Related to Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Number of Mentions of CRT On Fox News  
(1 February - 13 June 2021)**



\*Source of data for CRT Mentions on Fox News from Media Matters: <https://www.mediamatters.org/fox-news/fox-has-mentioned-critical-race-theory-nearly-1300-times-past-35-months>

Slightly over 60% of CRT-related demonstration events have broadly opposed the teaching of the theory in public schools, while slightly under half have supported the theory or opposed legislation designed to ban its teaching. Although demonstration events in opposition to CRT have been greater in number, demonstrations in support of CRT are slightly more widespread geographically: anti-CRT demonstrations have been reported in 22 states, while pro-CRT demonstrations have been reported in 24 states and Washington, DC.

Approximately 20% of all CRT-related demonstration events have occurred in the six states that passed legislation to ban CRT in publicly funded schools. In these states, more than 70% of the protests have been in favor of CRT, while another 7% have included both supporters and opponents counter-demonstrating one another.

Meanwhile, over a third of all CRT-related demonstration events have occurred in the 16 states that have prefiled or proposed legislation to ban CRT in public schools. Approximately 50% of the demonstrations in these states have opposed teaching CRT in public schools, while another 14% have included both supporters and opponents counter-demonstrating. North Carolina accounts for the most demonstration

events related to CRT of any state — over 10% of all CRT demonstration events — and accounts for 33% of events with both pro-CRT and anti-CRT contingents counter-demonstrating against each other, pointing to its polarizing effect in the state. North Carolina also accounts for the most anti-CRT demonstration events of any state — nearly 15% of all anti-CRT demonstration events — and shares the lead with New Hampshire for the most pro-CRT demonstration events — each at slightly over 10% of all pro-CRT demonstration events recorded in the country. Over 60% of CRT-related demonstration events in North Carolina occurred in the days leading up to the 3 June 2021 commencement of the state GOP convention, during which former President Trump referred to CRT as “toxic” ([PBS, 24 June 2021](#)).

In at least three events, militias and other militant right-wing actors have directly reacted to the perceived threat of CRT — engaging in 6% of anti-CRT protests in the country — though all anti-CRT events involving these actors have remained peaceful. Militia and militant right-wing engagement includes 11% adherents who participated in an anti-CRT event in Kentucky on 22 June, members of the Proud Boys who participated in an event in New Hampshire on 23 June, and armed members of the United American Defense Force who participated in an event in Colorado on 24 June. Through participation in such demonstrations, militias and militant social movements normalize their activity around populist and conservative issues.

Although CRT demonstration rates are unlikely to return to their June 2021 peak, a recent torrent of school board recalls over CRT-related issues may keep the topic on the political agenda, in turn driving further protest activity through the end of the summer. With the school year resuming in August and September and prefiled bills up for debate in adjourned state legislatures several months later, CRT demonstrations may see a resurgence this fall and winter.

*[Access this fact sheet and download the data on the ACLED website.](#)*

*A US-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2014, [ACLED](#) is the highest quality and most widely used real-time data and analysis source on political violence and demonstrations around the world.*

*If you would like to use ACLED [data and analysis](#), please review our [Terms of Use & Attribution Policy](#). For more information about ACLED methodology, please check our [Resource Library](#).*

**For interview requests and press inquiries, please contact:**

**Sam Jones**

Senior Communications Manager

[communications@acleddata.com](mailto:communications@acleddata.com)

###