AAPI ICE Arrests, Detentions and Removals in Southern California Data & Research Brief Series Updates

UCLA Asian American Studies Center
ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER POLICY INITIATIVE
UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge

Introduction

The goal of the joint effort by UCLA's Asian American Studies Center and Center for Neighborhood Knowledge is to document the impacts from President Trump's initiative to enact the largest deportation program in American history. During his 2016 presidential campaign and again eight years later, Trump promised to remove millions of undocumented immigrants.[1] He has framed and justified this xenophobic agenda as a public safety issue, arguing he would deport violent criminals, branded as "the worst of the worst." On inauguration day (January 20, 2025) of his second term, Trump issued an executive order entitled *Protecting the American People Against Invasion,*[2] which initiated the mass deportation. ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) has been instrumental in implementing the executive order through an aggressive, occasionally deadly and arguably unconstitutional enforcement of immigration laws within the United States.[3]

Four previous analytical briefs documented the impact of ICE on Asian Americans.[4] The first brief finds that the number of arrests tripled during the first half of 2025, with less than a majority being convicted criminals.[5] The second brief analyzes detentions, and the hardship it created by frequently moving detainees between facilities, often to out-of-state locations.[6] The third in the series examines the deportation process, finding that the number of Asians removed was two and a half times as much during the first six months of the Trump administration than during the previous year.[7] Non-criminals (who only violated immigration law, a civil misdemeanor), comprised a significant and growing share of the deportees. The number of deportees who committed a misdemeanor a decade or more ago increased sixfold under the Trump administration.[8] The fourth brief updates the information on arrests, detentions and deportation to the first part of 2026. The major findings are consistent with those reported previously: a dramatic increase in the numbers arrested, detained and deported; an increase in targeting non-criminals; and the creation of fear within the community by utilizing extreme and questionable tactics. Collectively, these briefs show that the Trump administration did not go after the worst-of-the-worst. Instead, it has pursued a broader effort that has entrapped many long-term immigrants who are not a threat to public safety but are productive residents. These are immigrants that a majority of the American public believe should have a pathway to becoming legal.[9]

This new brief focuses on the arrests of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) in the greater Southern California region. The brief has three major sections. The first traces arrests, deportations and detentions by month, and finds a dramatic increase during the Trump administration relative to the Biden administration. The second major section examines the characteristics of AAPI arrestees, and that those from three countries made up an overwhelming majority. The third section finds that the majority of the arrestees were not the "worst of the worst."

Data & Methodology

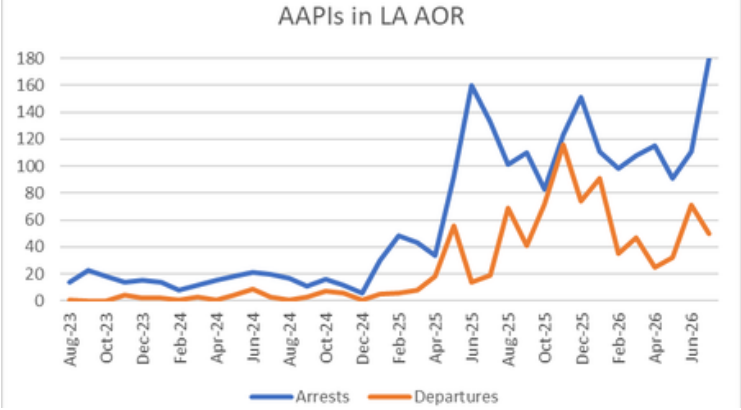
The analysis utilizes data provided by the UC Berkeley School of Law's Deportation Data Project documenting ICE activities August, 2023 to early August, 2026, which covers the last 18 months of the Biden administration and the first 18 months of the current administration.[10]

The dataset is a publicly available collection of record-level immigration enforcement actions, compiled by researchers and lawyers through the use of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). We utilized information from the ICE arrest file, which also includes information on departures (deportations), and utilized the file containing arrests joined with detention stays.[11] The latter file enabled us to estimate the number of detainees in custody for the 15th of each month.[12] The analysis focuses on those arrested in ICE's Los Angeles Area of Responsibility (LA AOR), which covers five counties (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura). The population of interest are immigrants with citizenship in an Asian or Pacific Island country.[13] While there are data limitations, the reported results are reasonable and the best available statistics.[14]

PART I: ARREST, DEPORTATIONS AND DETENTIONS:

Figure 1 reports the trend in monthly total AAPI ICE arrests and departures (deportations). Shortly after Trump's inauguration, the number of AAPI arrests jumped. There were 48 in February 2025, compared to only 8 in the prior year. There were nearly 1,900 arrests during the first 18 months under Trump (February 2025 to July 2026), nearly seven times the numbers during the previous 18 months (August 2023 to January 2025). The arrests came in waves. The first surge occurred in the early summer of 2025. ICE flooded the streets of Los Angeles with agents from numerous federal agencies in a highly aggressive and publicly visible show of force, serving as a model for subsequent similar actions in other parts of the country.[15] There was a renewed effort during the end of the year, followed by a pause in early 2026. It appears that this downturn was due to the public's negative reaction and outrage to the killing of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minnesota.[16] The Trump administration shifted strategy and tactics, starting with replacing Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem,[17] and reassignment of Gregory Bovino, who led ICE's aggressive enforcement.[18] However, the administration did not abandon Trump's goal of mass arrests and deportation. Arrests picked up again during the summer of 2026, a part of a less visible effort that nonetheless yielded the single largest number of national arrests in a month,[19] a surge that is also evident for AAPIs in the Los Angeles region.

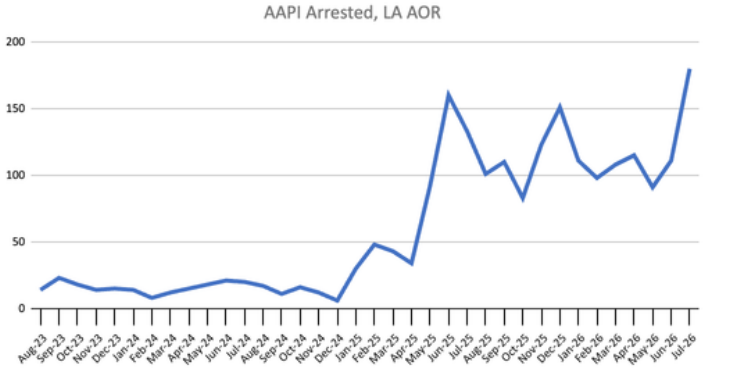
Figure 1: AAPI Arrests and Deportations by Month



Source: UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge analysis of ICE arrest data from UC Berkeley School of Law's Deportation Data Project.

Because those detained still have some due process rights,[20] departures have lagged behind arrests. (See Figure 1.) Nonetheless, the relative number of AAPIs from the LA AOR who were deported grew dramatically, from far less than a hundred to over eight hundred between the two administrations. Because of the delays, the number held in detention grew, peaking to well over five hundred in December, 2025. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2: AAPI Detentions in LA AOR

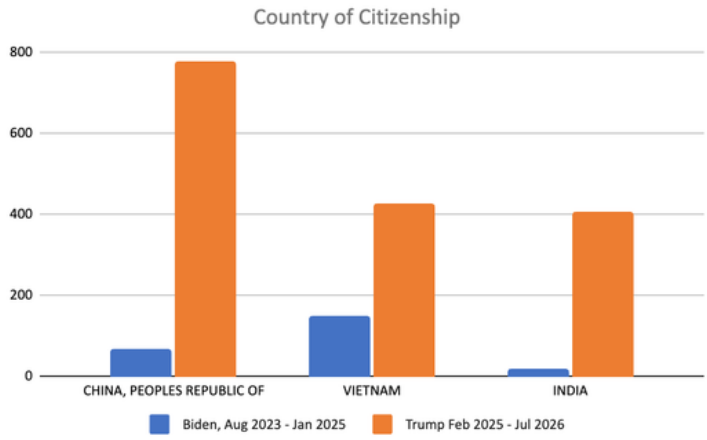


Source: UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge analysis of ICE arrest data from UC Berkeley School of Law's Deportation Data Project.

PART 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF AAPI ARRESTEES:

AAPI arrestees are a diverse group, holding citizenship in over two dozen countries. However, the top three (Peoples Republic of China, Vietnam and India, in ranked order) accounted for over four-fifths of the arrestees during both administrations. (See Figure 3.) Those from China increased the most in absolute numbers (over seven hundred), while those from India increased the most in relative terms (by well over twenty folds). Five countries went from single to double digit arrests (Indonesia, Laos, South Korea, Cambodia, and Thailand).

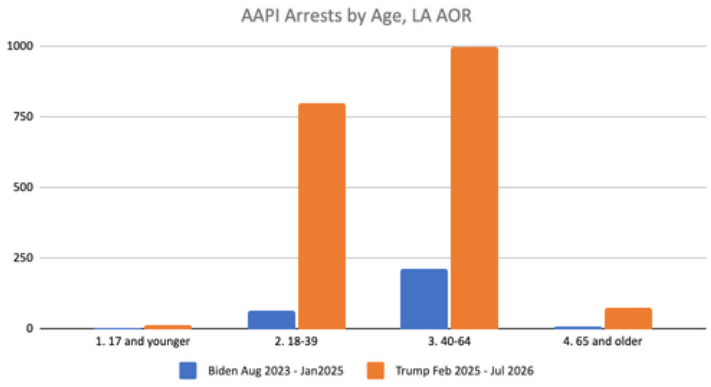
Figure 3: Country of Citizenship for AAPI Arrestees



Source: UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge analysis of ICE arrest data from UC Berkeley School of Law's Deportation Data Project.

During both administrations, an overwhelming majority (over nine-tenths) of AAPI arrestees were non-older adults. (See Figure 4.) However, there was a noticeable increase for seniors, increasing by about ten folds. While males made up an overwhelming majority, the number of females jumped dramatically under Trump to nearly twenty times their previous Biden level.

Figure 4: AAPI Arrests by Age

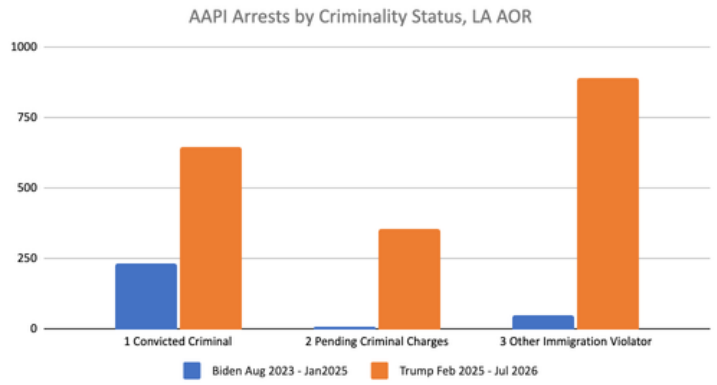


Source: UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge analysis of ICE arrest data from UC Berkeley School of Law's Deportation Data Project.

PART 3: NOT THE WORST OF THE WORST

Despite President Trump's political rhetoric focusing on "the worst of the worst" criminals, our analysis finds that the majority are not convicted criminals and pose no threat to public safety. The majority violated an immigration law and committed a civil misdemeanor. Figure 5 reports the criminality status. Between the two administrations, those who had been convicted went from a super majority of four-in-five to a minority of only one-in-three. On the other hand, those who were not convicted nor facing pending criminal charges went from one-in-six to nearly half.

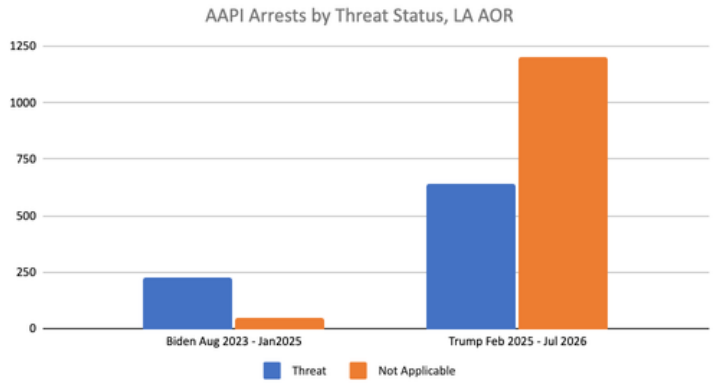
Figure 5: AAPI Arrests by Criminality Status



Source: UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge analysis of ICE arrest data from UC Berkeley School of Law's Deportation Data Project.

Figure 6 reports the distribution of AAPI arrestees by whether ICE classifies them as being a threat to public safety or not.[21] Between the two administrations, those who were designated as a threat went from a super majority of four-in-five to a minority of about one-in-three. Those who were not a threat increased by over twenty times from Biden to Trump.[22] These findings regarding threat level and the previous one on criminality status clearly show that a majority of additional arrests were not among the "worst of the worst." That political rhetoric hides the reality that the Trump administration is casting a wide dragnet entrapping those who are not a danger to public safety.

Figure 6: AAPI Arrests by Threat Status



Source: UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge analysis of ICE arrest data from UC Berkeley School of Law's Deportation Data Project.

CONCLUSION

The brief finds that AAPIs in the Southern California region have been swept up by ICE's mass deportation campaign. Arrests increased exponentially since the start of the new Trump administration. While the numbers have fluctuated, it is likely that the arrests will grow in the near future as a part of the current "quiet surge."[23] More arrests would be needed to achieve the goal of deporting a million immigrants a year. This will have severe consequences for AAPI communities, both in the Los Angeles region and elsewhere.

As we stated in a previous brief, ICE actions are only one part of a larger agenda to transform the entire immigration system. This is evident in changes to the programs for temporary or permanent legal status, such Temporary Protected Status,[24] H-1B visas,[25] and green-card visas.[26] These and other changes have a disparate adverse impact on communities of color, which is consistent with the white nationalism movement's goal to transform the nation demographically.[27] Restructuring the immigration system along these lines will reverse the current system and hurt AAPIs and other communities of color. Unless there is effective opposition and protections put in place, this nation is headed down a path where immigration is unfair and discriminatory. We are already witnessing how the Trump administration's immigration policies are having sweeping impacts on the U.S. economy, society, and demographic population stability.

Notes

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Notes

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10. UC Berkeley and UCLA, "Deportation Data Project," https://deportationdata.org/index.html. Access multiple times in August and September, 2026.
11. We also used the separate file on detention stays, which produced similar results on stays.
12. We also estimated the average number of detainees for each month, and the results are similar.
13. This includes Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, Peoples Republic of China, Fiji, French Polynesia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Federated States of Micronesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Tonga, and Vietnam. The Pacific Islander population is grouped together with the Asian American population because the total number of Pacific Islanders arrests is very small compared with other ethnic groups. Four PIs were arrested under the Biden administration compared with twelve under the Trump administration.
14. The data limitations include but are not limited to duplicate and inconsistent records, data-entry errors, and missing information. For the files used in this brief, potential biases are likely to be minimal because incomplete information and errors appear to be rare and random. Because of these limitations, we use rounded estimates unless the numbers are very small.
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21. There are three levels. Level 1 includes those with the most severe criminal history, convicted for a violent crime (i.e., murder, manslaughter, rape, kidnapping, robbery, or major drug offense), or those convicted of two or more felonies. The other two levels include those convicted of less serious crimes.

Notes

22. This finding is not limited to AAPIs in the LA AOR. Previous analysis of all ICE arrests also finds that persons classified as the "worst of the worst" are a minority. Paul Ong, Jonathan Ong, and Chhandara Pech, "The "Worst of the Worst" Pretext: ICE Arrest Patterns Under Trump," May 2026, UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge, https://knowledge.luskin.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/UCLA_CNK_Worst_of_the_Worst_ICE_Arrest_Patterns_Under_Trump_May2026.pdf Accessed September 30, 2026.
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Layout/Design Editor Miyako Singer

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The views expressed herein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the University of California, Los Angeles. The authors alone are responsible for the content of this report.

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The UCLA Asian American Studies Center (AASC) launched its Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Policy Initiative in the midst of the pandemic in 2021. We build on our long history as a recognized leader in Asian American Studies with a track record of excellence in applied policy research, publications, and leadership development.

The aim of the AAPI Policy Initiative is to support and produce research in collaboration with nonprofit advocacy organizations and policy makers to uplift AAPI perspectives in civic life and public decision-making in California and across the nation. As a nonpartisan research entity housed under AASC, the AAPI Policy Initiative will conduct applied research, develop and disseminate research reports and policy briefs, collaborate with stakeholders in policy formulation, conduct implementation and policy evaluation, and facilitate engagement between stakeholders, policy makers, and government decision-makers.

The Center for Neighborhood Knowledge (formerly the Center for the Study of Inequality) conducts basic and applied research on the socioeconomic formation and internal dynamics of neighborhoods, and how these collective spatial units are positioned and embedded within regions. We work with a broad set of data and employ a range of analytical skills to examine neighborhood phenomena across time and space. Many of our reports and findings are available on the publications section of our website and it is our hope that they might act as tools for community members, leaders, and organizations to inform and empower.