

Asian ICE Arrests, Detentions and Removals Data & Research Brief Series Updates

ASIAN AMERICAN &
PACIFIC ISLANDER
POLICY INITIATIVE

UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge

Introduction

As documented in previous briefs, President Trump's initiative to enact the largest deportation program in American history has had a significant impact on Asians. This xenophobic agenda, first announced during the 2016 presidential campaign and renewed eight years later, promised to remove millions of undocumented immigrants.¹ He rhetorically inflamed his supporters by framing this as a public safety issue, arguing he would deport violent criminals, branded as "the worst of the worst." One of his first executive orders issued on inauguration day (January 20, 2025) was *Protecting the American People Against Invasion*,² which initiated the promised mass deportation. ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) has been instrumental in implementing the executive order through an aggressive and arguably unconstitutional enforcement of immigration laws within the United States.³

Three previous analytical briefs documented the impact of ICE on Asians. The first brief documents a **tripling of arrests** during the first five months of Trump's second presidential administration, with less than a majority being convicted criminals.⁴ The second brief analyzes **detentions, and the hardship it created by frequently moving detainees between facilities, often to out-of-state locations**.⁵ 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**.⁶ Some were sent to places other than their home country. Non-criminals (who only violated immigration law, a civil misdemeanor), comprised a significant and growing share of the deportees. The results starkly show that the Trump administration has not only or primarily gone after the worst-of-the-worst. Instead, it has cast an indiscriminate dragnet entrapping many long-term immigrants who are otherwise law-abiding and productive residents. These are immigrants that a majority of the American public believe should have a pathway to becoming legal.⁷

This new brief updates our analysis of Asians with more recent data extending to the first part of 2026.⁸ The major findings for 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.

Data & Methodology

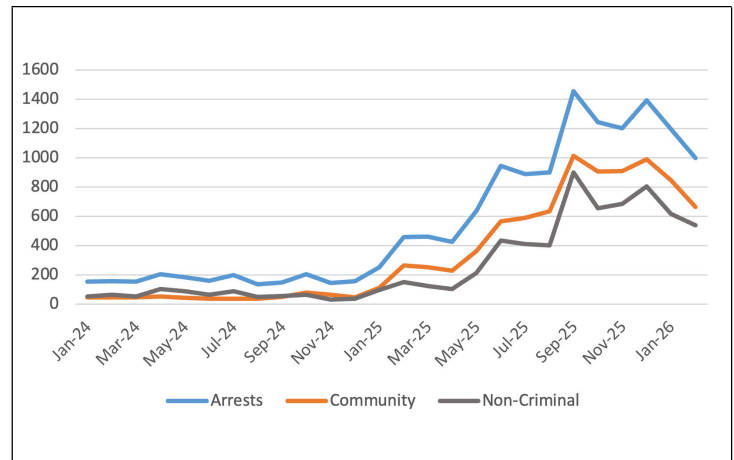
The analysis utilizes data provided by the UC Berkeley School of Law's Deportation Data Project documenting ICE activities January, 2024 to February, 2026, which covers the last 13 months of the Biden administration and the first 13 months of the current administration.⁹ The dataset is a publicly available 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 and detention files. We deleted duplicate records, retaining only the most recent arrest. We also deleted records with no unique identifiers. We also tested alternative deletion methods to validate the robustness of our analysis, and these alternatives produced very similar analytical results and qualitative interpretations. Arrest and stays records were merged using the unique identifier, keeping only records where the stay started within a week of the arrest. We estimated the number of detainees in custody for the 15th of each month. The brief includes an analysis of two subgroups. The first is comprised of non-criminal immigrants -- those without a criminal conviction nor facing a pending charge. These are unambiguously not

the “worst of the worst.” The second subgroup is comprised of those arrested in public spaces, homes, and work places, a practice that creates fear and insecurity within immigrant communities. Asians are defined as those who are a citizen of a country in East, Southeast and South Asia. Due to data limitations, statistical results may be imprecise and biased. The data limitations include but are not limited to duplicate and inconsistent records, data-entry errors, and missing information. Potential biases, however, are likely to be minimal because incomplete information and errors appear to be rare and random. Consequently, the reported results are reasonable and the best available statistics.

Arrests

Figure 1 reports the trend in monthly total Asian ICE arrests (blue line), and non-criminal arrestees (grey line) and those arrested in the community (orange line).¹⁰ The number of arrests nearly doubled when the administration changed, from January 2025 to February 2025. The counts increased through most of the Trump months, peaking in December 2025 at nearly 1,400, about nine times as high as in December 2024. Overall, the number of arrests during the Trump months increased to five and a half times as much as Biden years.¹¹ The number of non-criminal arrestees and community-at-large arrests increased even more (to over seven times and nearly twelve times, respectively). The number of arrests dropped in early 2026, perhaps due to the public’s negative reaction to the killing of Renee Good and Alex Pretti.¹²

Figure 1: Asian Arrests by Month

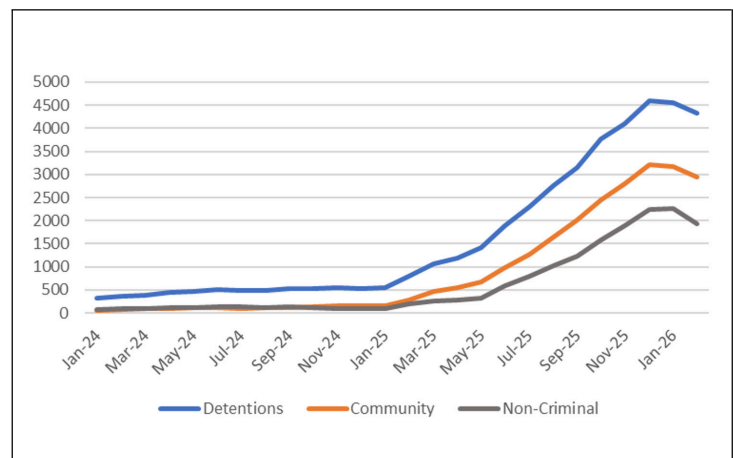


Source: UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge analysis of ICE arrest data from UC Berkeley School of Law’s Deportation Data Project.

Detentions

Figure 2 traces the trend in monthly total Asian ICE detentions (blue line), and non-criminal detainees (grey line) and detainees who were arrested in the community (orange line).¹³ Detentions increased continuously throughout most of the Trump months, peaking in December 2025 at nearly 4,600. The increase was driven by the fact that the number of persons entering facilities tended to outnumber those exiting facilities, resulting in continuous growth of detainees held during the middle of each month.¹⁴ Overall, the number of detainees during the Trump months increased to nearly six times as much as the Biden years. The number of non-criminal detainees and detainees arrested in the community increased faster (to nearly ten and a half times, and over fifteen times, respectively). Similar to the arrest trends, the number in detention dropped in early 2026.

Figure 2: Asian Detentions by Month



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

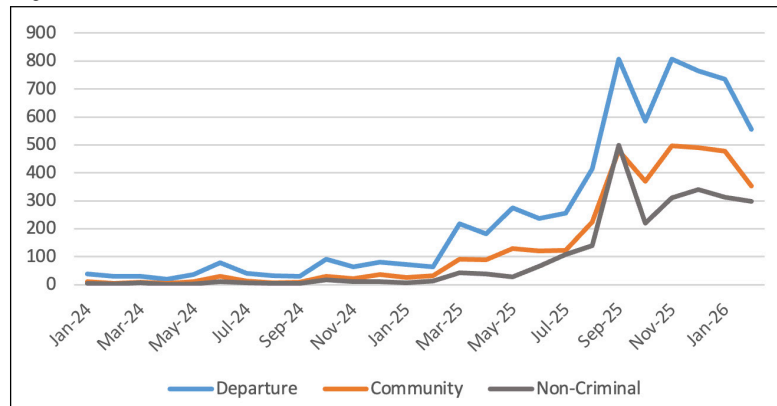
Removals

Figure 3 tracks the deportation of Asians, using the same color scheme as in the previous section (blue line for all removals, grey line for non-criminal deportees, and orange line for those who were arrested in the community). The number tripled between the first and second months of the Trump administration (February and March 2025) as ICE started implementing the promised mass deportation agenda. Removals generally increased for the rest of the year, with a peak of over 800 in September 2025, which included the removal of Koreans arrested during a large-scale ICE operation at the Hyundai plant in Georgia.¹⁵ Deportations during the Trump months were nine-fold as high as during the Biden months. As with arrests and detentions, removal of non-criminal immigrants and those arrested in the community increased more (to nearly twenty-five times and nearly sixteen times, respectively). Similar to the arrest and detention trends, the number deported dropped in early 2026.

Non-Criminals

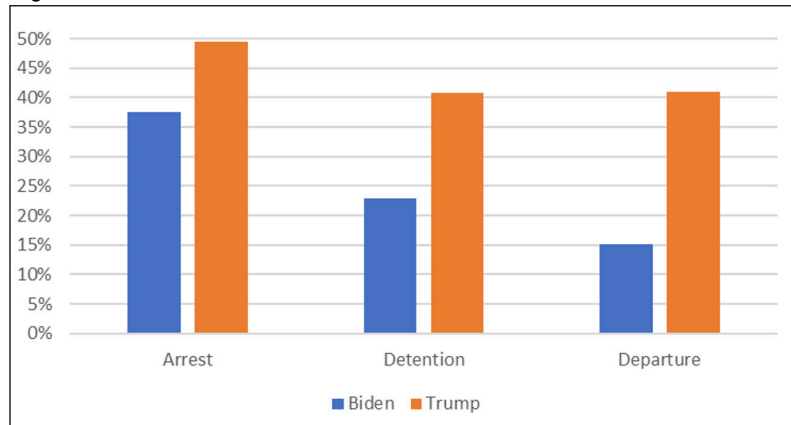
Despite President Trump’s political rhetoric focusing on “the worst of the worst” criminals, our previous brief found that non-criminals (those without any previous convictions nor facing pending charges) became an increasing share of those arrested, detained and deported. We find similar patterns in the updated and newer data, as shown in Figure 4. As a proportion of all arrestees, non-criminals accounted for almost half (49%) of those arrested under Trump, compared with 37% during the Biden months. The change in percentage points was even greater among detainees, climbing from 23% to 41%, a net increase of 18 points. The gap among deportees is an astonishing 26 percentage points, from 15% to 41%. The results reveal that ICE increasingly targeted immigrants who were not a threat to public safety.

Figure 3: Asian Removals



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

Figure 4: Asian Non-Criminal Share



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

Community Arrests

ICE not only went after those with no criminal history, but also largely arrested immigrants in public places, homes and worksites.¹⁶ These at-large apprehensions often relied on harsh, militarized and violent methods without accountability.¹⁷ This tactic was also used against Asians. Under Trump, two-thirds (67%) of Asian

arrestees were apprehended in the community, mostly non-criminals but also those who were paroled or on probation as shown in Figure 5. This proportion is over twice of that during the Biden months. We see similar jumps for detainees and removals, with community arrests going from a small minority to a large majority. This dark new reality has created fear and insecurity, disrupting the daily lives of immigrants.¹⁸

Conclusion

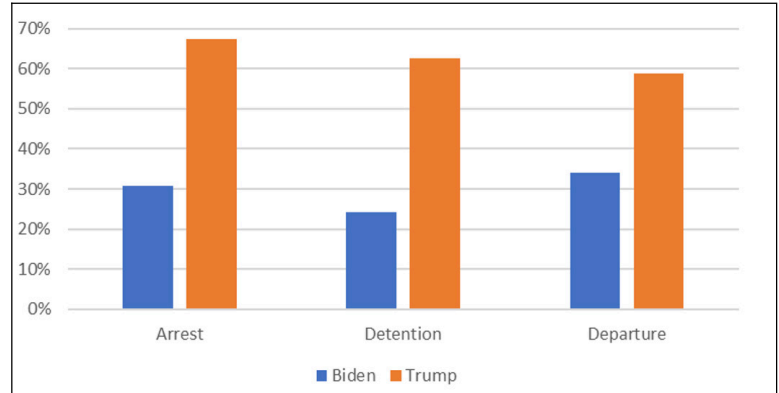
The updates to our previous analyses of ICE activities find that the negative impacts on Asians continued and, in some cases, worsened. Under Trump, the number of arrests jumped, non-criminals were more targeted, and at-large apprehensions disrupted communities. While these harmful impacts continuously increased in the early months, there was a pause in the escalation at the start of 2026, as evident in the statistics. As mentioned in the brief's introduction, this was due to worsening public opinion.¹⁹ The administration appears to have pivoted politically. There was a change in leadership of the Department of Homeland Security (which houses ICE) with the firing of Secretary Kristi Noem²⁰ and transferring of Gregory Bovino, who led ICE's aggressive enforcement.²¹

These developments in early 2026 are likely temporary phenomena, a regrouping without abandoning the mass-deportation agenda. There is no sign of renouncing this central component of MAGA's goal to transform the nation. Radical restructuring of the immigration system is instrumental to demographically remake the country into one less racially and ethnically diverse.²² Consequently, we are likely to see a resurgence of ICE activities, different in form but with the same objective of removing millions. This would require a dramatic increase in the numbers arrested, detained and deported. Restructuring the immigration system will require a major revision to the laws governing legal entry. Asians have benefited from the principles embedded in the 1965 Immigration Act, which eliminated racially biased quotas.²³ The United States is now on a course where immigration will regress to being unfair and discriminatory against people of color.

Footnotes

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2. The White House, "Protecting the American People Against Invasion," January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-american-people-against-invasion/>, Accessed December 1, 2025.
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Figure 5: Asian Community Arrests Share



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

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10. The counts do not include individuals who re-entered the county and were subsequently removed.
11. We use the formula of dividing the Trump arrests by Biden.
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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.

The Center for Neighborhood Knowledge is dedicated to translating its findings to inform actionable neighborhood-related policies and programs that contribute to positive social change. We specialize in empirical spatial analysis and emphasize the study of diversity, differences, and disparities among neighborhoods, and explicitly covers immigrant enclaves, low-income neighborhoods, and minority communities. We examine neighborhoods through multi-disciplinary lenses and in collaboration with community partners.