Asian ICE Removals

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Introduction

President Trump's initiative to enact the largest deportation of immigrants in U.S. history has had a significant impact on Asians. This xenophobic agenda was apparent in his 2016 presidential campaign when he claimed that the U.S. was a dumping ground for criminals and rapists.[1] During the 2024 campaign, Trump promised to deport millions of undocumented immigrants with a focus on criminals branded as "the worst of the worst."[2] On inauguration day (January 20, 2025), he signed an executive order, Protecting the American People Against Invasion,[3] which implemented the promised mass deportation. The significant impact of this effort can be seen in the records from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which is responsible for enforcing immigration laws within the United States.[4] This brief is part of a series examining ICE records, with a focus on deportation removal data. Previous analytical briefs documented how the number of Asians arrested and detained increased dramatically during the first months of Trump's second presidential administration, with arrests and detentions more than tripling compared with the previous year.[5]

This brief examines the third component of the deportation process, which is removals. Removal refers to the mandatory departure of a noncitizen from the United States, usually occurring after all avenues of appeal have been exhausted.[6] We find that the number of Asians removed was one and a half times more during the first six months of the Trump administration (February to July 2025) than during the period from February to July 2024 (the latter part of the Biden administration). This increase is tied to significant changes in processing immigrants within the immigration system, indicating a growing bias for rulings to expel them from the country. Over two-thirds of those removed came from India and the People's Republic of China, with the remaining individuals from 21 other countries. Some were sent to places other than their home country. The number of convicted criminals increased, but a significant share of the increase was comprised of those who committed a crime years ago. It is likely that the deportation drive will continue to escalate, ushering a new immigration system that is biased against people of color.

Methodology

This analysis is based on a dataset from the UC Berkeley School of Law's Deportation Data Project, covering the time from September 1, 2023, to July 29, 2025.[7] The ICE removal dataset[8] is a publicly available collection of individual-level records, compiled by researchers and lawyers using the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The data includes a number of key variables: dates of entry to and removal from the U.S., method of removal, and characteristics of those with criminal records. We utilize the ICE information to calculate the length of time that a person lived in the country, and estimate the duration an ex-convict lived in the community after completing their sentence.[9] An Asian is defined as an immigrant who is a citizen of a country in Asia. For convenience, the term referring to the Biden administration or period covers the months from February to July 2024, and the term referring to the Trump administration or period covers the months from February to July 2025. When reporting counts, we round numbers because the data are not absolutely precise due to possible reporting, recording and other errors.

Temporal Pattern

Figure 1 reports the trend in ICE removals using a three-month moving average. The counts include a few individuals who re-entered the country and were subsequently removed; therefore, they are counted more than once.[10] The pattern for Asians differs dramatically from the pattern for all others. (For illustrative purposes, the two lines in the graph use different scales.) The number of Asians increased secularly from less than two hundred at the beginning to nearly seven hundred at the end. In contrast, the trend for non-Asians exhibits a cyclical pattern, with no consistent long-term increase.[11] Due to these disparate patterns, Asians rose from less than one percent to nearly three percent of all removals.

Figure 1: ICE Removals, 3 Month Moving Average

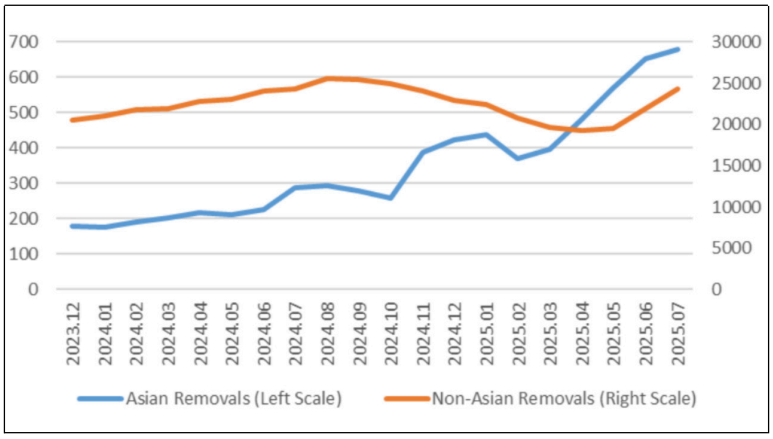
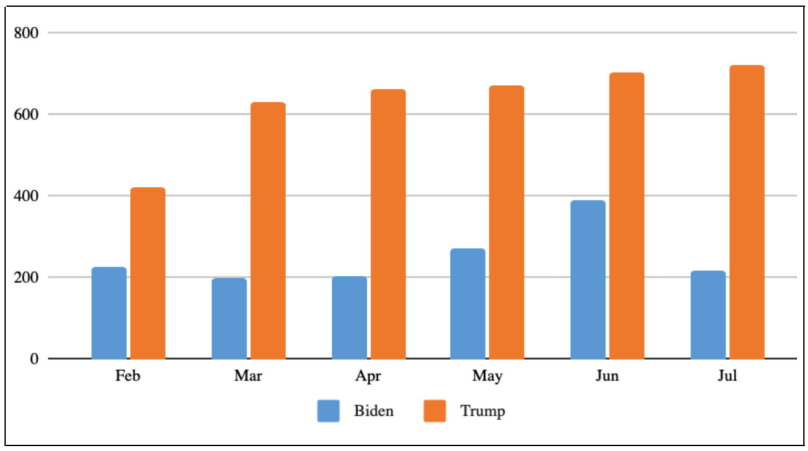


Figure 2 compares the monthly trends in Asian removals for the first full months of the Trump administration (February to July 2025) and the equivalent months during the previous year (February to July 2024). The analysis is based on unique individuals within each period, meaning duplicate removals are not counted if they appear more than once within an administrative period. The relative number increased by 153% from the Biden months to the Trump months. The number of Asian removals during the first full month of the Trump administration (February) was over 400, significantly higher than the 250 average for the Biden period. The number jumped to over 600 in following month (March 2025), and steadily rose to over 700 by July 2025.

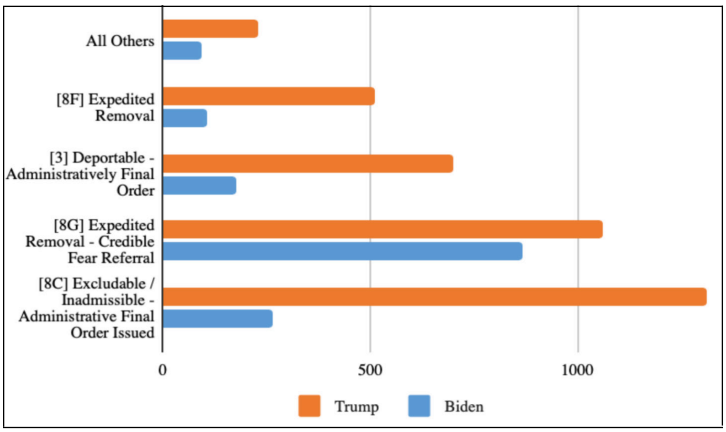
Figure 2: Asian Deportations by Month



Removal Category

Figure 3 summarizes the top four processes used to remove Asians as reported in the ICE datafile.[12] Prior to the Trump administration, expedited removals included individuals who illegally entered the country, were arrested within 100 miles of the border, and were not entitled to a hearing by an immigration judge.[13] President Trump expanded the geographic coverage to include the entire country.[14] Moreover, it appears that ICE was more willing to target those who had been in the country for more than a few months, taking greater advantage of the two-year period during which expedited removals can be utilized. This expansion contributed to a 61% increase shown in the two expedited categories in the graph. Much of this increase probably occurred within the country's interior because the number of illegal border crossings dropped dramatically between the Biden and Trump eras.[15]

Figure 3: Asian Removals by Case Category



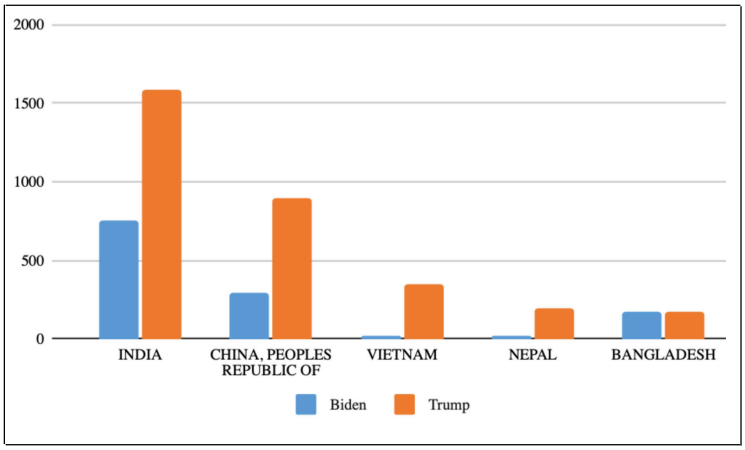
The other major category includes removals based on an administrative order, which occur after a hearing before an immigration judge.[16] The number of Asian removals in the two categories based on administrative order more than quadrupled between the Biden and Trump periods. This astonishing jump coincided with efforts by the Trump administration to remove immigration judges who were not aligned with the President's agenda.[17] The threat of dismissal likely placed pressure on the remaining judges to speed up the reviews and rule unfavorably against immigrants.

Geographic Pattern

Figure 4 reports the top five countries of citizenship for Asian removals, which together accounted for over four-fifths of all Asian removals. The highest number of removals were from India, doubling between the two administrations, increasing from almost 750 to nearly 1,600. They made up half of all removals in 2024 and over two-fifths in 2025. Removals from China (PRC) ranked second during both administrations, tripling from nearly 300 to nearly 900. Removals of Vietnamese immigrants grew by twelvefold from about two dozen to over 340, pushing them up from seventh to third place. The numbers from Nepal also significantly increased, with ten times as many under Trump compared with Biden, repositioning it from ninth to fourth place. The number of individuals removed to Bangladesh remained essentially the same.

Not all Asian removals were repatriated to their country of citizenship. During the Biden period, over 800 were sent to a third country (other than the country of citizenship). Despite concerns about the Trump administration's efforts and threats to deport immigrants to dangerous third-world countries,[18] the data does not show that this was a noticeable issue for Asians. In fact, the number fell to around 250. Most of the difference is due to the number of Present Without Authorization (PWA) immigrants sent or returned to Canada. Eliminating these persons, the number of immigrants sent to a third country was three times greater under Trump (around 180 compared with around 60). Costa Rica was the largest destination during the 2025 period, which seems to have been willing to cooperate to avoid tariffs.[19] The relatively low numbers suggest that the administration's motivation for using the third-country tactic is to create fear among immigrants, potentially leading them to self deport.[20]

Figure 4: Top 5 Countries for Asian Removals



Convicted Criminals

As mentioned in the introduction, President Trump's promise focused on deporting "the worst of the worst" criminals. This was partially accomplished as the number of convicted Asian criminals nearly quadrupled, increasing from less than 200 during the Biden period to over 700 during the Trump period. Nonetheless, non-criminals (other than violating immigration laws) continued to make up a super majority of those removed (84% and 74%, respectively), more than doubling in size. Convicted criminals continued to be small minority (12% and 19%, respectively).

The data analysis provides insight into whom the Trump administration targeted. They were not necessarily going after more hardened criminals. For example, the average (median and mean) estimated sentence of convicted criminals under Biden is essentially the same as under Trump. The major difference and key to the Trump administration's increase was going after persons who committed a crime years ago. The average (median) time between conviction and departure dates was 2.5 years under Biden and 5.5 years under Trump. The difference can also be seen in Figure 5. The most dramatic change was among those convicted a decade or more ago, which increased sixfold.

Figure 5: Time Between Conviction and Removal

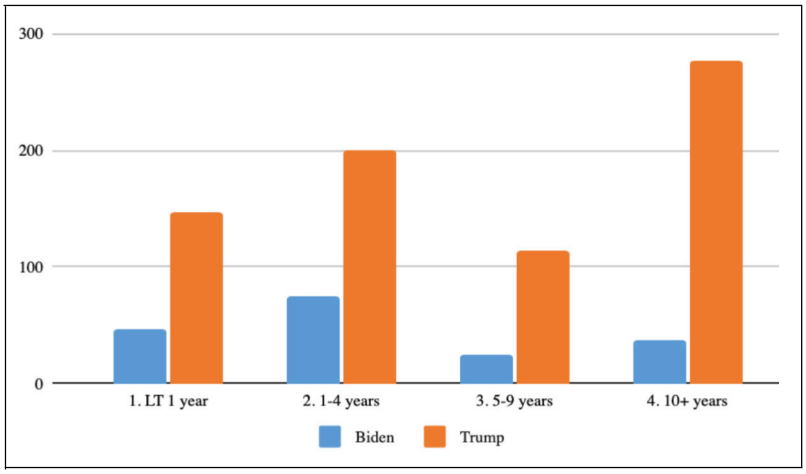
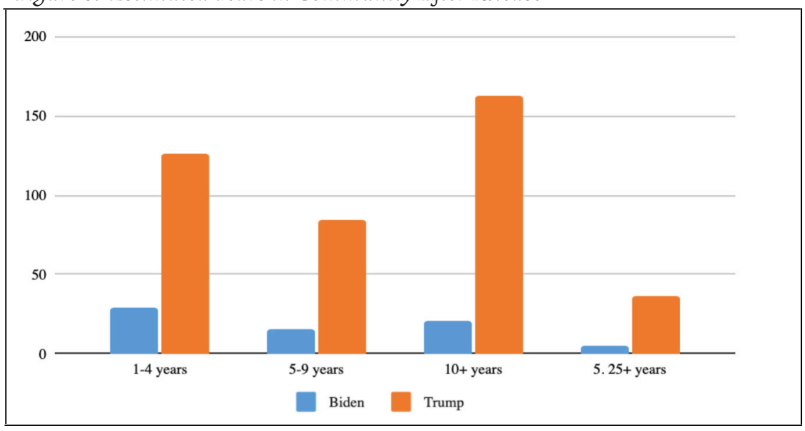


Figure 6 provides additional insights by reporting the estimated number of years that Asian ex-convicts spent in the community after serving their sentence.[21] During the Biden months, less than half (43%) of ex-convicts (who were removed) had lived in the community for at least one year.[22] In contrast, during the Trump administration disproportionately targeted those who completed their sentence and resettled back into the community. What is even more revealing is the extraordinarily high number of individuals who had returned back to the community for an estimated decade or more, nearly two hundred in the 2025 period, which is over six times greater than the number for the 2024 period. Moreover, we estimate that at least three dozen of the ex-convicts removed during the Trump administration had resettled in the community for a quarter century or more. It is likely that most of these long-term returnees had become law-abiding and productive community members.

Figure 6: Estimated Years in Community After Release



Conclusion

The analysis of available data on removals reveals unsettling findings about how President Trump's radical remaking of immigration enforcement impacted Asians. While Latinos were disproportionately targeted, Asians were also snared by the President's promise of deporting a million immigrants a year. Towards the end of the study period, the number of expelled Asians was several times higher than the previous year. The current administration achieved this by expanding executive powers and pressuring immigration judges to adhere to Trump's xenophobic agenda.

As part of an ambitious and politically motivated deportation goal, the administration targeted people who had been in the country for years and even decades. The large majority of whom had not committed any crimes, aside from being undocumented. They were not among the "worst of the worst." Convicted criminals made up a small numerical minority, accounting for less than a fifth of Asian removals. The administration, however, publicly painted a distorted picture. Selectively highlighting the most violent individuals[23] provided cover for and distraction from the deportation of non-criminals. The push to increase the number of convicted criminals required a change in practice. The administration went after those who had completed their sentence, many of whom had resettled crime-free in their communities for a decade or more.

The empirical results are likely a harbinger of a full implementation by the far right to restructure immigration policy. The escalating attack on immigrants can be seen in more recent arrest data from the Deportation Data Project. In a previous brief, we reported that ICE arrested nearly 900 Asians in July 2025. New available information shows that number increased to well over 1,400 in September 2025, which include over 300 South Korean workers at a Georgian battery plant.[24] There is no sign that this contemporary anti-immigrant movement will slow in the coming months, and is more likely to accelerate. If the upward trend continues, then the number of Asians harshly imprisoned in detention centers and ultimately forced out of the country will reach unprecedented levels.

Some have interpreted the Trump initiative as a broader effort to remake America's population demographically, aiming to make the country less racially and ethnically diverse.[25] One consequence will be the end of an immigration system based on non-racist and humane immigration policies and practices ushered in by the 1965 Immigration Act. Asians have benefited from that regime, after enduring more than a century of anti-Asian hate and racially motivated restrictions.[26] We seem to be on a course where Immigration will regress to being unfair and biased against people of color.

Footnotes

1. Adam Gabbatt. "Donald Trump's Tirade on Mexico's 'drugs and Rapists' Outrages US Latinos." *The Guardian*, 16 June 2015.
2. Jack Herrera, "Trump Says He Wants to Deport Millions. He'll Have a Hard Time Removing More People Than Biden Has," *Politico*, July 28, 2024.
3. The White House, "Protecting the American People Against Invasion," January 20, 2025.
4. Enforcement is divided between Border Patrol (CPB) and ICE. The former operates at and near the border, focusing on illegal entry. ICE can also operate at the border but focuses on the country's interior.
5. Jonathan Ong and Paul Ong, "ICE Arrests of Asians Tripled from 2024 to 2025," *UCLA Asian American Studies Center*, July 2025; Paul Ong and Jonathan Ong, "ICE Detention of Asians: Increased Numbers and Hardships Under Trump," *UCLA Asian American Studies Center*, September 2025.
6. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "Removals," https://www.ice.gov/remove/removal, accessed December 1, 2025.
7. Deportation Data Project. (n.d.). https://deportationdata.org/index.html, accessed October 3, 2025. The file used for this brief covers the period from September 2023 to July 2025. The last month covers only up to the 29 th.
8. According to the Deportation Data Project, the file contains "Records [of] every deportation that ICE conducts, with a row for each individual deportation. An individual only has more than one row if that individual was deported more than once. Note that expulsions may occur directly at the border, by CBP, without involving ICE." We identified relatively few duplicates with the same identification number and departure date, which were deleted.
9. Unfortunately, the dataset does not report the length of prison sentence, so we use the average sentence by type of crime. The averages come from Danielle Kaeble, "U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics," March 2021.
10. Re-entries and subsequent removals account for 8% of the total.
11. Because existing laws provide immigrants facing removal with the right to some due process, the Trump administration appears unable to ramp up deportation as rapidly as arrests.
12. ICE "Expedited Removal" is a deportation without a hearing before an immigration judge. "Expedited Removal -Credible Fear Referral" is an expedited removal with an asylum claim. ICE "Deportable -- Administratively Final Order" is a deportation where an immigration judge has issued a removal order. An "Excludable/Inadmissible Administratively Final Order Issued" is a removal where a person is found to be ineligible to entry or stay in the country.

13. For details, see Donald Kerwin, with Daniela Alulema and Siqi Tu, "Piecing together the US immigrant detention puzzle one night at a time: An analysis of all persons in DHS-ICE custody on September 22, 2012." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 3, no. 4 (2015): 330-376. Also see American Immigration Council, "Expedited Removal Explainer."
14. National Immigration Forum, "Fact Sheet: Expanded Expedited Removal," https://forumtogether.org/article/fact-sheet-expanded-expedited-removal.
15. U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "National Encounters," n.d., https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters.
16. National Archives, "§ 1241.1 Final order of removal," https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/chapter-V/subchapter-B/part-1241/subpart-A/section-1241.1.
17. Kyle Cheney, "More than 220 judges have now rejected the Trump admin's mass detention policy," *Politico*, November 28, 2025.
18. See for example, International Refugee Assistance Project, "Trump Administration's Third Country Removals Put Migrants in Harm's Way," n.d. December 2, 2025. Also see Jacqueline Metzler, "What Are Third-Country Deportations, and Why Is Trump Using Them?" *Council on Foreign Affairs*, September 3, 2025.
19. "Why have Costa Rica and Panama agreed to take Asians deported by Trump?" *Al Jazeera*, March 1, 2025.
20. "The Strategy Is to Break Us," *Human Rights Watch*, May 22, 2025.
21. This is estimated by subtracting the number of days between conviction and departure and the estimated number of days sentenced. Two averages are used for the latter (length of sentence), the median sentence and the longer mean sentence. See footnote 9 for data source. The graph reports the more conservative estimates based on mean sentence.
22. We use a one-year buffer because the calculated time in community is based on average sentence length; consequently, the estimated time in community is not precise. This approach provides conservative estimates.
23. This is apparent on the ICE website. See for example, "ICE Arrests Illegal Alien Cambodian 'Asian Boys' Gang Member Suspected of Murdering Woman in TX and Wanted for Another Murder in CA," October 11, 2025.
24. Lauren Villagran, Destini Ambus and Jillian Magtoto, "Legal workers got caught up in ICE's biggest raid. Korean Americans haven't forgotten," *USA TODAY*, November 10, 2025,
25. See for example Jonathan Blitzer, "Trump Makes America's Refugee Program a Tool of White Racial Grievance," *The New Yorker*, June 1, 2025. See also Heba Gowayed, "Trump's obsession with immigration is really an obsession with segregation," *The Guardian*, February 12, 2025.
26. Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich, *Labor immigration under capitalism: Asian workers in the United States before World War II*, University of California Press, 1984; and Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich and Lucie Cheng, *The new Asian immigration in Los Angeles and global restructuring*, Temple University Press, 1994.

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