

ICE Arrests Increase Under Trump, But Fewer Are Convicted Criminals

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The Trump administration has overseen a significant rise in immigration arrests by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), but a smaller proportion of those apprehended have been convicted of serious crimes. Despite tough-on-crime rhetoric, data show a shift toward arresting more non-criminal immigrants for minor infractions.

From January 20 to late June 2025, ICE conducted nearly 112,000 arrests, a sharp increase from the same period in 2024 under the previous administration, which reported around 51,000. However, only 40% of this year's arrests involved individuals with criminal convictions, compared to 53% last year. Moreover, arrests of those convicted of violent crimes dropped from 10% to 7%, and drug-related convictions fell from 9% to 5%, according to the Deportation Data Project, a coalition of legal scholars who obtained the data through the Freedom of Information Act.

Although arrests of individuals convicted of violent or drug crimes have increased in raw numbers, by 45% and 21% respectively, those figures are being outpaced by detentions for non-criminal offenses. Arrests of individuals with no criminal record nearly tripled to 67,000 and now account for 60% of total ICE apprehensions.

Some legal experts suggest this broader enforcement approach is part of a strategy to meet high-volume deportation targets. Vanessa Dojaquez-Torres, practice and policy counsel for the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), noted that “policies seem aimed at bypassing the immigration court process to push detention numbers up.”

This emphasis on minor violations is reflected in recent charges. Driving under the influence remains the most common conviction among those arrested, followed closely by general traffic offenses. These include infractions such as expired vehicle registration tags and failure to appear in court, both of which have surged in ICE arrest data.

State-level disparities also emerged. Some of the highest shares of arrests involving violent crime convictions were recorded in traditionally Democratic states like Hawaii and California, while Republican-leaning states such as Alabama and Wyoming saw some of the lowest.

Even within conservative circles, the trend toward arresting non-criminals has raised concerns. Oregon State Representative Cyrus Javadi, a Republican, questioned the strategy: “The majority of recent ICE detentions involve people with no convictions. That’s a pattern I find troubling.”

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) defended the agency's approach. Tricia McLaughlin, Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, stated that ICE remains focused on “targeting dangerous criminal illegal aliens and taking them off American streets.”

Nonetheless, advocacy groups such as the Vera Institute of Justice argue that the focus on traffic violations opens the door to disproportionate enforcement and civil liberties concerns. Daniela Gilbert, who leads the group's Redefining Public Safety Initiative, urged policymakers to reevaluate traffic stop policies to prevent what she called "indiscriminate dragnet enforcement."

With arrests expected to rise further, officials have floated a target of 3,000 arrests per day, significantly above the current average. The debate continues over how best to balance public safety with constitutional protections.