



DEFENSE AND SECURITY

What is ICE and what does it do?

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, aims to preserve American safety by detaining, deporting, and sometimes, convicting unauthorized immigrants.



Updated Jan 16, 2026
by the [USA Facts team](#)

Since 2003, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement ([ICE](#)) division of the Department of Homeland Security ([DHS](#)) has been responsible for enforcing federal laws governing customs, trade, and immigration.

ICE was created by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which was passed after 9/11. This act created the DHS and [reorganized](#) existing agencies, merging the US Customs Service (formerly under the Treasury Department) and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (formerly under the Justice Department) to [form](#) ICE.

ICE's mission is to preserve American security and public safety, mainly within US borders, by enforcing immigration laws. This primarily involves detaining, deporting, and convicting unauthorized immigrants. It also assists international investigations into criminal organizations and terrorist networks that threaten or seek to exploit US



Ask the data BETA

We use AI to summarize the data, charts, and analysis we have on USA Facts

How has the US population changed over time?



How many immigrants does ICE detain per year?

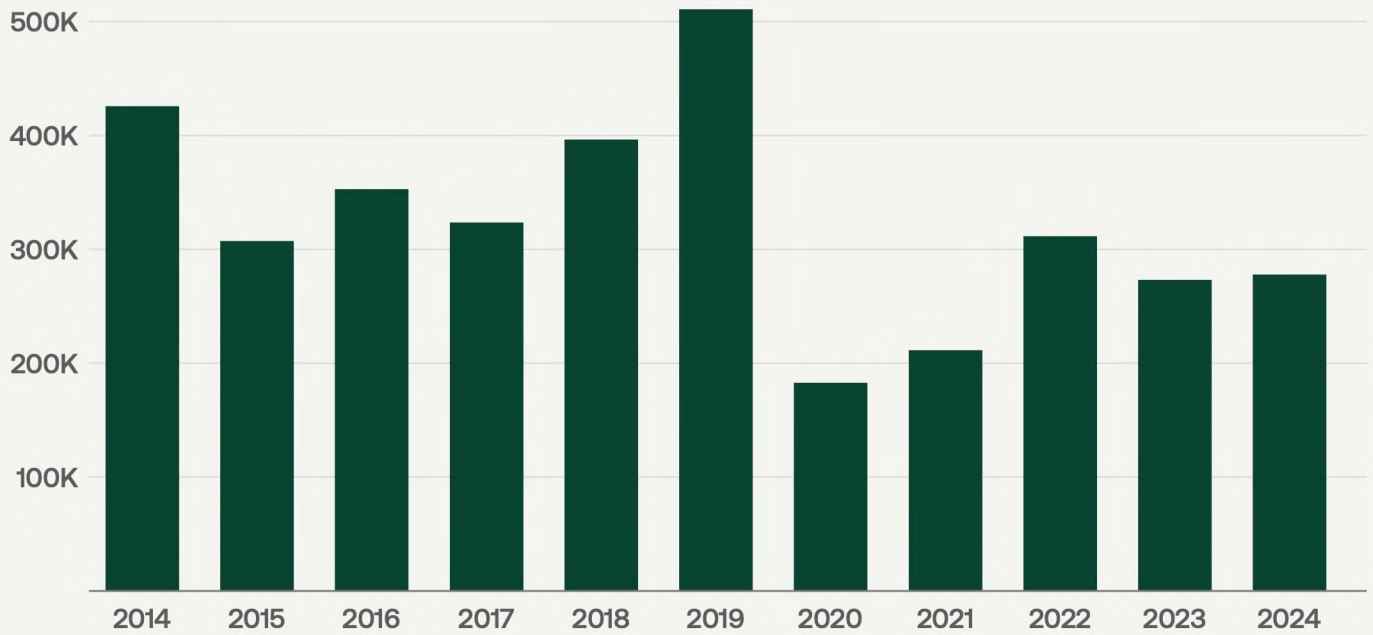
Between October 2014 and November 2024, ICE made approximately 3.62 million detention book-ins [□] — the physical transfer of a person to a detention facility — of people identified as unauthorized immigrants.

In the last decade, total book-ins peaked in 2019, at 510,850, and were lowest in 2020, at 182,870. Between 2014 and 2024, ICE averaged 324,900 book-ins a year.

Mexican citizens were the biggest group of people booked in between October 2014 and November 2024: they accounted for 31.1% of detainees, or 1,124,040 people. The next-largest groups were Guatemalans (17.1%) and Hondurans (12.8%).

There were nearly 278,000 detention book-ins in 2024, 34.7% fewer than in 2014.





The fiscal year begins October 1st of the calendar year prior to the stated year and ends September 30th of the stated year. Fiscal year 2025 data includes October and November 2024.

Source: Office of Homeland Security Statistics →

According to ICE data, approximately 29.0% of all detainees booked in between October 2018 and November 2024, had a criminal record in the US.

In 2024, 43.8% of detainees with criminal records had been convicted of misdemeanors, 35.2% of felonies, and 17.0% of aggravated felonies. The remaining 4.0% were convicted either of crimes falling under other categories or of unknown categorization.

Who can ICE detain?



\$1,500 bond or under supervision if they are not considered flight or security risks. ICE can also choose to assign these detainees to an “Alt to Detention” program — a supervised release program that includes technological monitoring like GPS tracking, allowing people to remain in their homes and communities while awaiting a decision on their status — to ensure they appear at their hearings.

Mandatory detention applies to unauthorized immigrants who have committed serious crimes, such as those involving terrorism or “moral turpitude” (defined as conduct that shocks the public conscience as being inherently base, vile, or depraved). These individuals go into detention once they’re released from criminal custody and are generally not eligible for bond release, although they can request that an immigration judge review whether they truly fall into a mandatory detention category.

IMMIGRATION ARRESTS

In FY 2024, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) made 149,070 arrests

[Read more](#)

149

Where does ICE hold people in custody?



operated directly by ICE, while others are run by local government or independent contractors.

The centers holding the most people include:

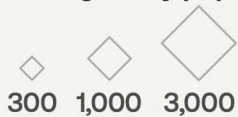
- ERO El Paso Camp East Montana in El Paso, Texas (2,902)
- Adams County Correctional Center in Natchez, Mississippi (2,184)
- Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia (2,001)
- Adelanto ICE Processing Center in Adelanto, California (1,814)
- South Texas ICE Processing Center in Pearsall, Texas (1,746)

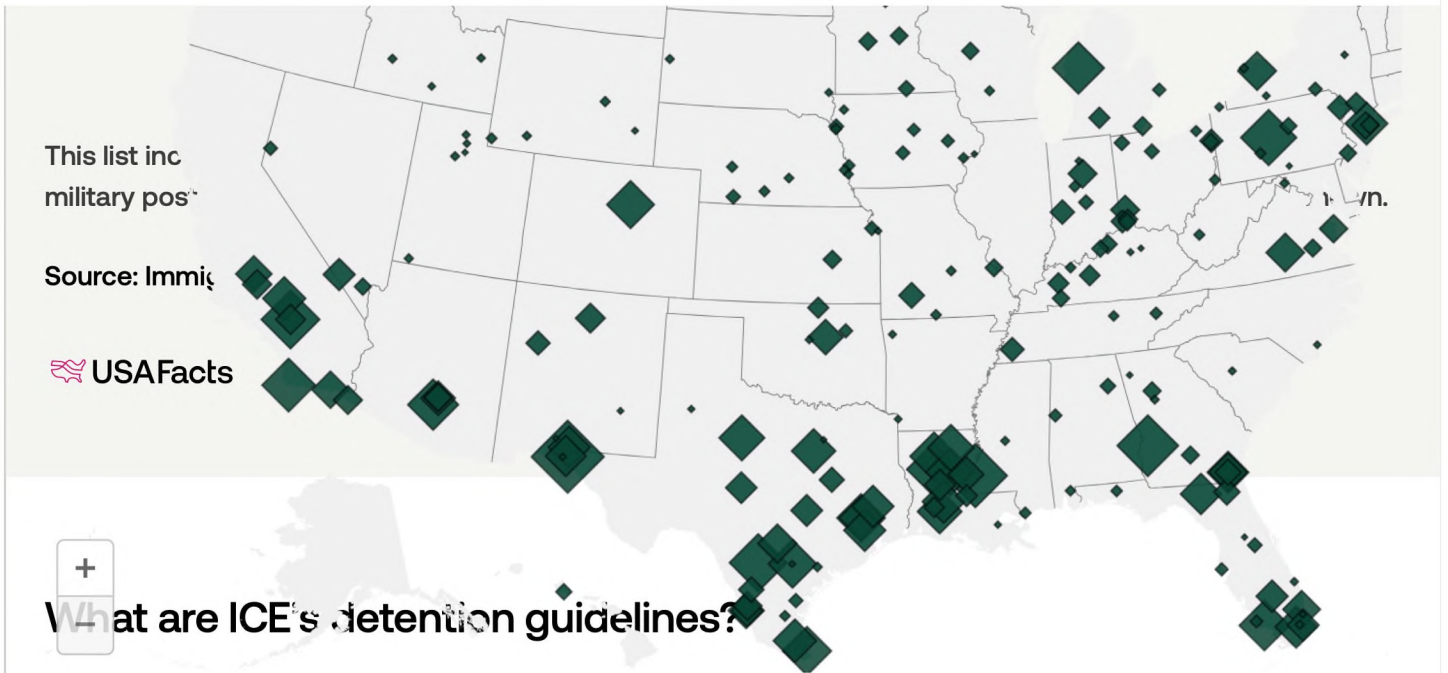
ICE has 212 active detention facilities.



ICE detention centers, sized by average daily detainee population, October 1–December 26, 2025

Average daily population





Detention facilities follow strict guidelines, including [National Detention Standards](#) and [Performance-Based National Detention Standards](#), to ensure the safety, security, order, and care of detainees. These guidelines also outline standards for detainee activities (such as religious practices, recreation, telephone access, and visitation), justice (including access to law libraries and legal material), and staff management.

ICE detention policies are designed to [ensure detainees' presence](#) for immigration proceedings. Someone who isn't considered a flight risk or a threat to public safety may be released, especially if they also have extenuating circumstances like health issues or family responsibilities.

There are specific detention standards for [families](#), but ICE stopped housing families by December 2021. Instead, ICE collaborates with US Customs and Border Protection to leverage [alternatives](#) to detention. The Department of Health and Human Services takes unaccompanied children, following specific legal guidelines for their care.

A DATA-DRIVEN GUIDE TO

Immigration channels in the US, both authorized and unauthorized



How many immigrants does ICE deport? Where are they from?

Between October 2014 and November 2024, ICE returned about 2.32 million book-ins to their country of citizenship.

Removals and returns were highest in 2014 (315,940) and lowest in 2021 (59,010); fiscal years 2014 through 2024 averages about 206,565 a year. So far in FY 2025, (October 2024 to November 2024), ICE has facilitated 52,220 removals.

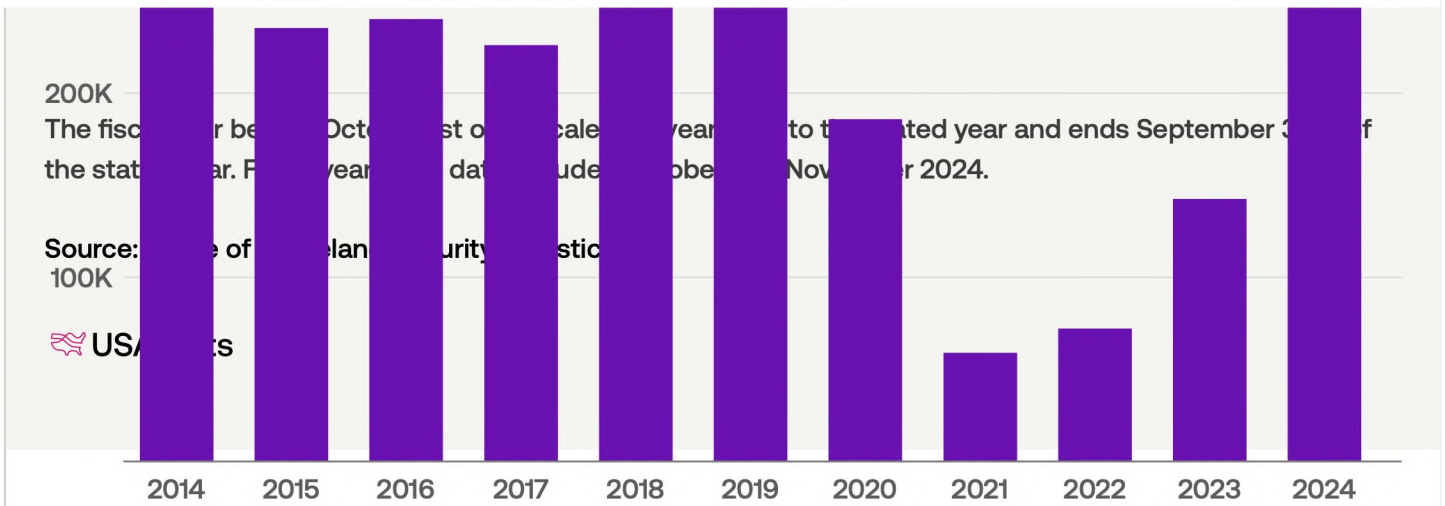
As with detentions, the majority of those removed or returned in the past decade were Mexican citizens, at 51.8% of all ICE removals and returns, or 1.20 million people. The next largest groups were again Guatemalans (17.2%) and Hondurans (12.1%).

2024 ICE removals and returns were the second-highest in a decade.



ICE removals and returns by selected citizenship, fiscal years 2014–2025 YTD

Total



Those who can't return to their country of origin due to natural disasters, ongoing armed conflict, or "other extraordinary temporary conditions," may be granted temporary protected status until safe passage is an option. This status allows people to remain in the US rather than being sent into a dangerous situation, but doesn't necessarily lead to lawful permanent residency or grant any other legal immigration status.

Citizens of 17 countries are currently designated for temporary protected status, including Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Where does this data come from?

This data comes from the Office of Homeland Security Statistics Immigration Enforcement and Legal Processes Monthly Tables dataset, which includes ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations by citizenship, criminality, and initial arresting agency. Additionally, the information for ICE detention facilities comes from the organization's Detention Management page.

Learn more about deportations and get the data directly in your inbox by signing up for our weekly newsletter.

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Immigration Enforcement and Legal Processes Monthly Tables



US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Detention Management



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