



EXCLUSIVE Politics

ICE's detainee population reaches new record high of 73,000, as crackdown widens

By [Camilo Montoya-Galvez](#)

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The number of detainees held at the agency's detention facilities has reached a record high of 73,000, according to data obtained from a Freedom of Information Act request.

As of Thursday, the number of detainees in its custody at the agency's detention facilities had increased to 73,000, up from 40,000, the agency said.

The Trump administration has made a major effort to crack down on illegal immigration, and the number of detainees has risen sharply.

Former Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Homan said in an interview with ABC News that the number of detainees in American custody has increased significantly since he took office.

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"It is absolutely a record, certainly in modern times," said Doris Meissner, a Clinton administration official who led the now-defunct Immigration and Naturalization Service, or INS, a predecessor of ICE and other federal immigration agencies.

The DHS figures obtained by CBS News show nearly 67,000 of the individuals in ICE custody on Thursday were single adult detainees facing deportation because of alleged violations of U.S. immigration law. Another 6,000 detainees were classified as family units, or parents and underage children taken into custody as families for alleged immigration violations.

ICE detains foreigners placed in deportation proceedings because of immigration violations, such as entering the U.S. illegally or overstaying a visa, as well as legal immigrants whose status lapses or is revoked because of criminal offenses. Some of those held by the agency have criminal charges or convictions, in addition to being accused of civil immigration violations.

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the second Trump administration, figures posted by the agency every two weeks show the non-criminal group has seen the most acute and rapid rise.

When focusing solely on ICE detainees initially arrested by the agency – and not Border Patrol – there has been a 2,500% surge in non-criminal detainees from Jan. 26, 2025 (945) to Jan. 7, 2026 (24,644), according to the latest publicly available government data. During that time, the number of detainees arrested by ICE who have criminal convictions or charges has grown by 80% and 243%, respectively.

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traditional use of county jails and for-profit prisons, ICE has expanded its detention capacity by using other facilities, including military sites like Fort Bliss in Texas.

Republican officials in places like Florida and Louisiana have offered state facilities, like the so-called "Alligator Alcatraz" detention center in the Everglades, to hold those facing deportation. ICE has also used field offices in major U.S. cities to hold detainees, often for days, even though such facilities are not designed for long-term detention.

"We are talking about a system that already, prior to the Big Beautiful Bill, constituted the largest detention and removal infrastructure of any country in the world – and now it's being put on steroids," said Meissner, now a senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute, a non-partisan think tank.

Under President Trump, ICE has been given a broad mandate to turbocharge immigration arrests and deportations, with the agency rescinding Biden-era rules that required officers to largely focus on arresting serious offenders, national security threats and recent arrivals in the U.S. illegally.

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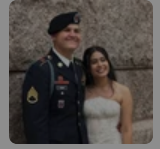
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DHS has called the largest in its history. Clashes and protests there have intensified since the killing of Minnesota resident Renee Good by an ICE officer last week.

Immigration More >

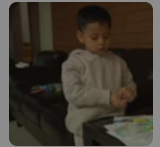
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