

RELEVANT RESEARCH

Untangling Immigration Data

A data-driven look at what has changed in immigration enforcement, and what it means for Boston.

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Political & legal geographer

Studies U.S. immigration enforcement: immigrant policing, detention, and deportation, and the data systems behind them. Uses the Freedom of Information Act to turn the government's own records into public analysis, maps, and reporting.

CURRENT

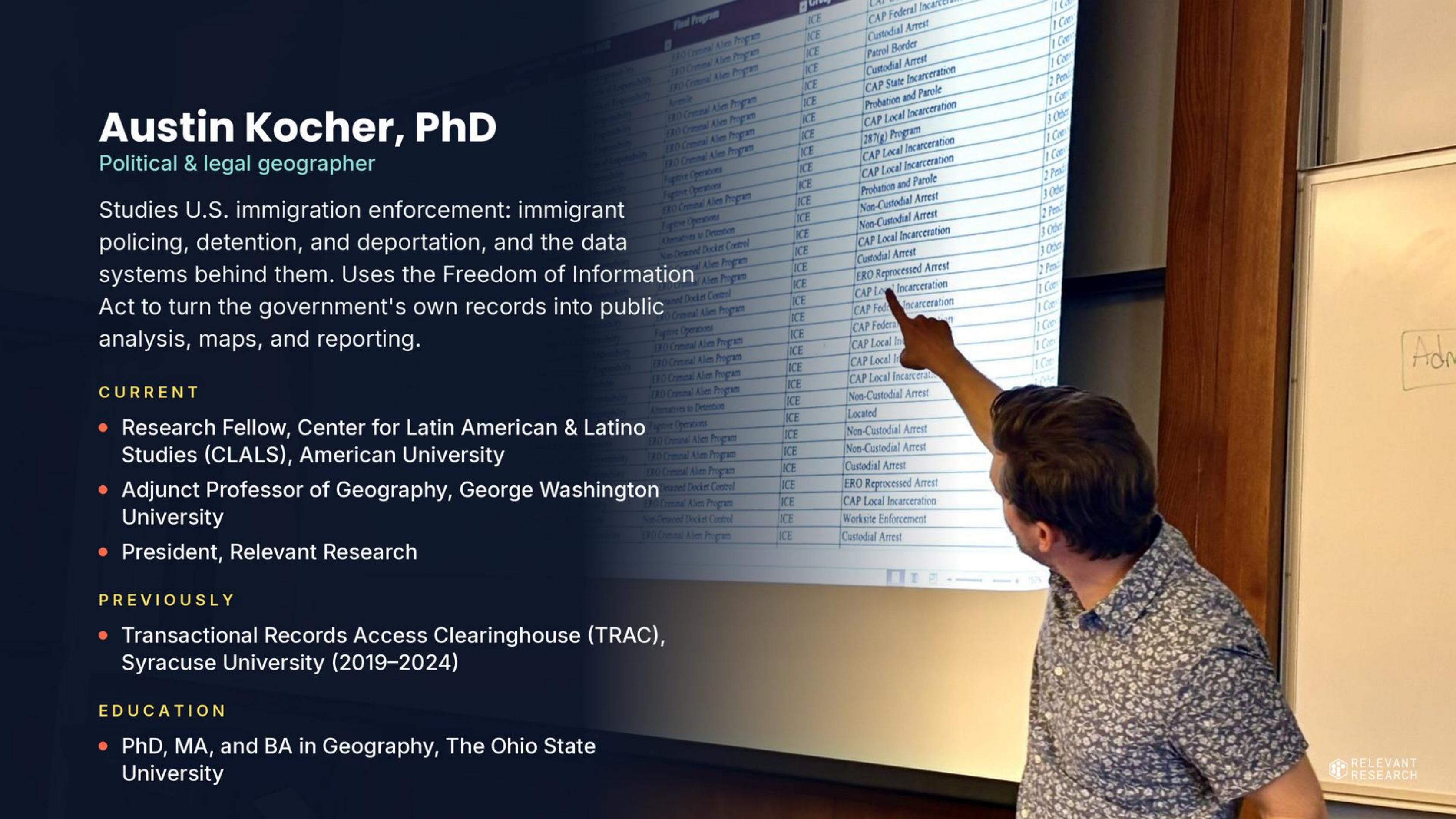
- Research Fellow, Center for Latin American & Latino Studies (CLALS), American University
- Adjunct Professor of Geography, George Washington University
- President, Relevant Research

PREVIOUSLY

- Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), Syracuse University (2019–2024)

EDUCATION

- PhD, MA, and BA in Geography, The Ohio State University

A man with dark hair, wearing a patterned short-sleeved shirt, is pointing his right index finger at a large digital display. The display shows a table with multiple columns. The first column lists various immigration programs, including 'ERO Criminal Alien Program', 'Fugitive Operations', 'Non-Detained Docket Control', and 'Detained Docket Control'. The second column lists the agency, mostly 'ICE'. The third column lists the type of enforcement action, such as 'CAP Federal Incarceration', 'Custodial Arrest', 'Patrol Border', 'CAP State Incarceration', 'Probation and Parole', 'CAP Local Incarceration', '287(g) Program', 'Non-Custodial Arrest', and 'Worksite Enforcement'. The fourth column shows counts, with some entries like '1 Con', '2 Pen', '3 Other', and '1 Con'. The man is standing in front of the display, which is mounted on a wall. To the right of the display is a whiteboard with some faint writing, including the word 'Adm'.

ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP Federal Incarceration	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Custodial Arrest	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Patrol Border	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Custodial Arrest	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP State Incarceration	2 Pen
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Probation and Parole	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP Local Incarceration	3 Other
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	287(g) Program	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP Local Incarceration	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP Local Incarceration	2 Pen
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Probation and Parole	3 Other
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Non-Custodial Arrest	2 Pen
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Non-Custodial Arrest	3 Other
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP Local Incarceration	3 Other
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Custodial Arrest	2 Pen
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	ERO Reprocessed Arrest	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP Local Incarceration	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP Federal Incarceration	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP Local Incarceration	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP Local Incarceration	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Non-Custodial Arrest	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Located	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Non-Custodial Arrest	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Non-Custodial Arrest	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Custodial Arrest	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	ERO Reprocessed Arrest	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	CAP Local Incarceration	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Worksite Enforcement	1 Con
ERO Criminal Alien Program	ICE	Custodial Arrest	1 Con



RELEVANT
RESEARCH

Agenda

01

The big picture

How enforcement works, where the data comes from, and how to read it

02

National trends

Arrests, detention, the courts, and deportations, one year in

03

Boston and the region

What the data shows close to home

04

Tools you can use

Free, public dashboards, shown live

01

HOW WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW

THE BIG PICTURE

THE BASICS

The main areas of immigration enforcement

Arrest

An administrative arrest by ICE or CBP

Detainers

A request to a jail to hold someone for ICE

Detention

Civil custody pending proceedings

Court

Removal proceedings before EOIR

Removal

A final order, or release

THE BASICS

A closer look: arrest, detainers, and detention

Arrest.

ICE or CBP makes an administrative, civil arrest, distinct from a criminal one. A field arrest happens in the community on an ICE administrative warrant (Form I-200) signed by an officer, not a judge. A custodial arrest takes the person from another agency's custody.

Detainers.

An immigration detainer (Form I-247) asks a jail or prison to hold a person up to 48 hours past their release, and to notify ICE of the release date. It is a request, not a judicial warrant.

Detention.

The person is held in civil detention pending proceedings, in a dedicated contract facility, a local jail under an IGSA, or a contract detention facility (CDF). For New England, that facility is usually out of state.

THE BASICS

A closer look: court and removal

Court.

A case reaches immigration court (EOIR) only when ICE files a Notice to Appear (NTA), the charging document that begins removal proceedings under INA section 240. The court sits inside the Justice Department, not an independent judiciary.

Removal.

A case can end in a final order of removal, voluntary departure, or relief. Removal also runs through expedited removal and reinstatement of a prior order, which carry no NTA and never generate a court case at all.

Why this shapes the data.

Each area is recorded in a different system, by a different agency. The path a person takes decides which dataset can see them, and which cannot.

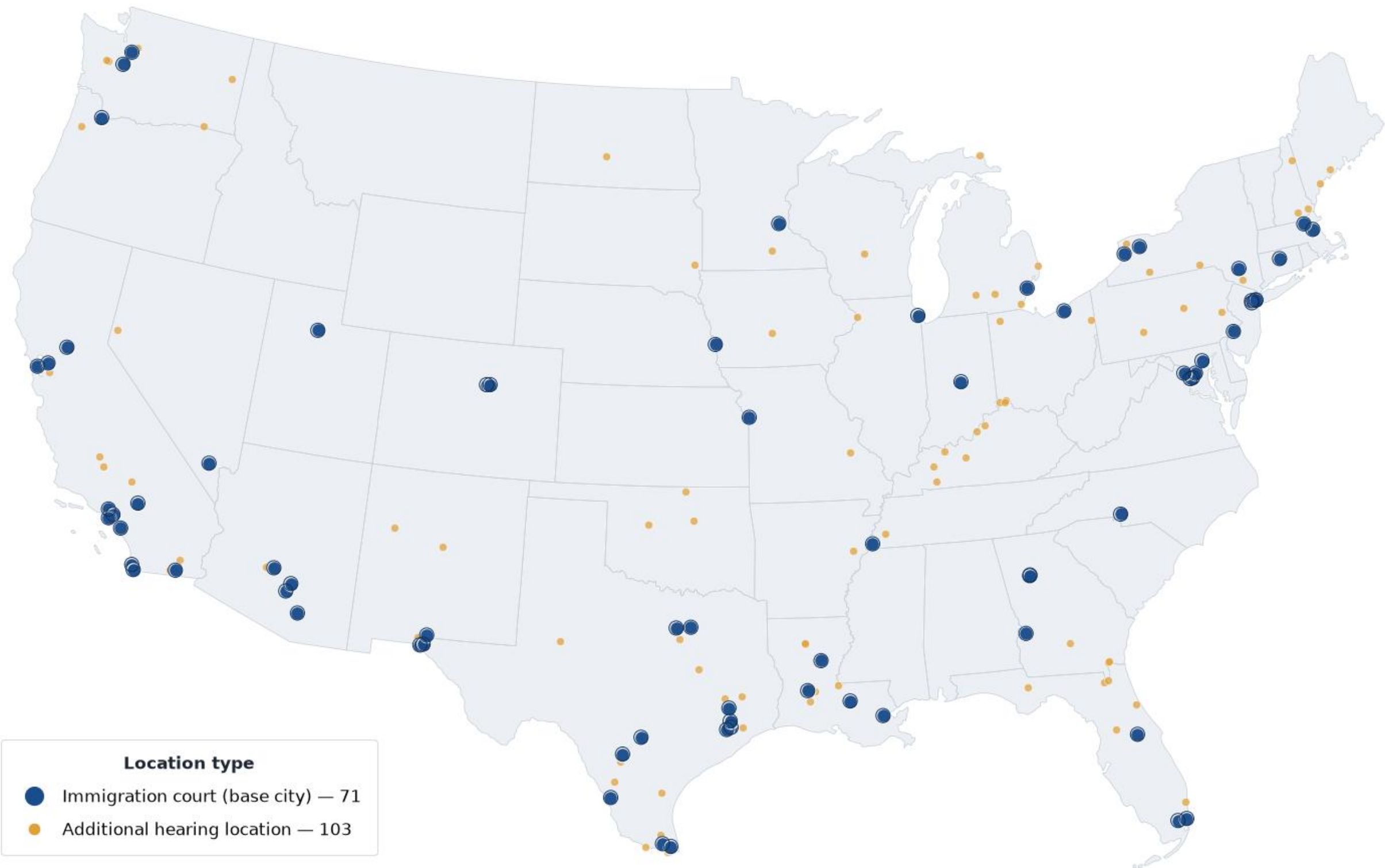
WHO RUNS ENFORCEMENT

Immigration enforcement is spread across four agencies



The U.S. Immigration Court System, Coast to Coast

71 immigration courts and 103 additional hearing locations across the contiguous United States



Source: U.S. DOJ Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR Case Data, released July 1, 2026); locations geocoded via U.S. Census Bureau. Data current as of July 2026. Continental U.S. only; Alaska, Hawaii and territories omitted. Graphic: Austin Kocher.

A KEY IDEA

What is administrative data?

Most of the numbers today are a by-product of enforcement, not a press release about it.

The plain version.

Administrative data is the records the government creates while doing its everyday work, rather than numbers it publishes to make a point. An arrest record, a court docket, a detention headcount.

Why it helps.

Because these records come out of the operation itself, they are harder to spin than economic or public-health figures, and they are open to public records law.

The catch.

They are messy and were never built for outsiders to read. There is no manual and no help desk, so someone has to obtain, clean, and check them first.

Two kinds of records

Summary records

- Totals the agency has already added up.
- Current, but coarse.
- A headline number with little behind it.
- Example: the total people detained today.

Detail (case-level) records

- One row per person or case.
- Older, but far richer.
- Lets a researcher ask brand-new questions.
- Example: every arrest, with its date, nationality, and record.

Where the numbers actually come from

Deportation Data Project

Raw, case-level records from ICE, CBP, and the courts, obtained through litigation. The backbone of the national arrest and removal figures.

TRAC, Syracuse University

A long-running clearinghouse that turns immigration-court and enforcement records into public tables.

The immigration courts (EOIR)

The courts' own case database, the basis for every backlog, outcome, and representation figure.

ICE detention statistics

The agency's own headcount of who is held, and where, released every two weeks.

HOW WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW

How we get the data



What the data can, and cannot, tell us

What it CAN show

- How many people ICE arrests, and in which state.
- Whether a person had a criminal record at arrest.
- How court cases end, by court and nationality.
- How many people are detained, and for how long.

What it CANNOT show

- The neighborhood or street of an arrest.
- A person's immigration status by itself. That is a legal finding.
- Why a particular person was targeted.
- People who left on their own, or never sought help.

A TOOL YOU CAN KEEP

How to read any immigration number

01 What is the unit?

A detention figure can count a facility book-in or a person's whole stay. Those are very different totals.

02 What is the date?

Detention and court caseloads are moving totals. A number without a date is half a number.

03 What is the geography?

Some data goes local. ICE arrest data stops at the state line and names no neighborhood.

04 How is the term defined?

Undocumented, qualify for asylum, and ordered removed each carry a precise legal meaning.

WHAT CHANGED IN ONE YEAR

NATIONAL TRENDS

02



Three directions in the new enforcement

AMPLIFY

Existing enforcement policies, intensified. Concentrating agents in one region, more detainers, more for-profit detention.



EXPLOIT

Atypical enforcement possibilities, newly used. Warehouses retrofitted to hold people, soft-sided tent camps, fines for not departing.



CROSS

Into illegal practices. Ending birthright citizenship by order, rendition flights after a court said no, detaining U.S. citizens.

The year in three shifts

Scale

arrests and detention climbed
to record highs

Geography

enforcement concentrated in
one region at a time

Who

the majority arrested now have
no criminal record

How ICE finds people

Technology.

The agency relies more on surveillance tools and data systems, reported as 'Immigrant OS', to identify and locate people.

Geography.

It concentrates staff in one place at a time: Minneapolis now, Los Angeles and Chicago before. This regional surge strategy is decades old.

The wider cost.

A surge reaches far beyond immigrants. It imposes real costs on a city as people avoid school, work, and public life.

Two kinds of arrest

Field arrest

- A street arrest.
- ICE goes out to find a person.
- Often warrantless, which the ACLU has challenged.
- A growing share involve use of force.

Custodial arrest

- ICE takes a person from another facility.
- Depends on a detainer.
- Usually a local jail or a prison.
- The handoff a city can actually see.

A TERM TO KNOW

Detainer

A federal request to a local jail or prison to hold a person past their release, so ICE can collect them.

IN PRACTICE

Holding someone for civil immigration reasons after the local basis has ended raises a Fourth Amendment concern. A detainer shows ICE interest, not a confirmed arrest.

A TERM TO KNOW

287(g) Agreement

A formal agreement that lets ICE deputize state and local police to carry out certain federal immigration functions.

IN PRACTICE

A county sheriff signs an agreement, and deputies begin screening people for ICE inside the local jail. These agreements grew rapidly this past year.

A TERM TO KNOW

Sanctuary

A local decision not to entangle local police and jails in federal civil immigration enforcement.

IN PRACTICE

It does not stop local police from acting against someone genuinely dangerous. It limits whether local time and resources go to ICE's civil enforcement work.

Four kinds of detention facility

01 For-profit • normal

Standalone facilities run by private contractors. Not new, though ICE is moving to own them.

02 Local jails, IGSA • normal

A jail holds people on civil grounds for the federal government, usually in small numbers.

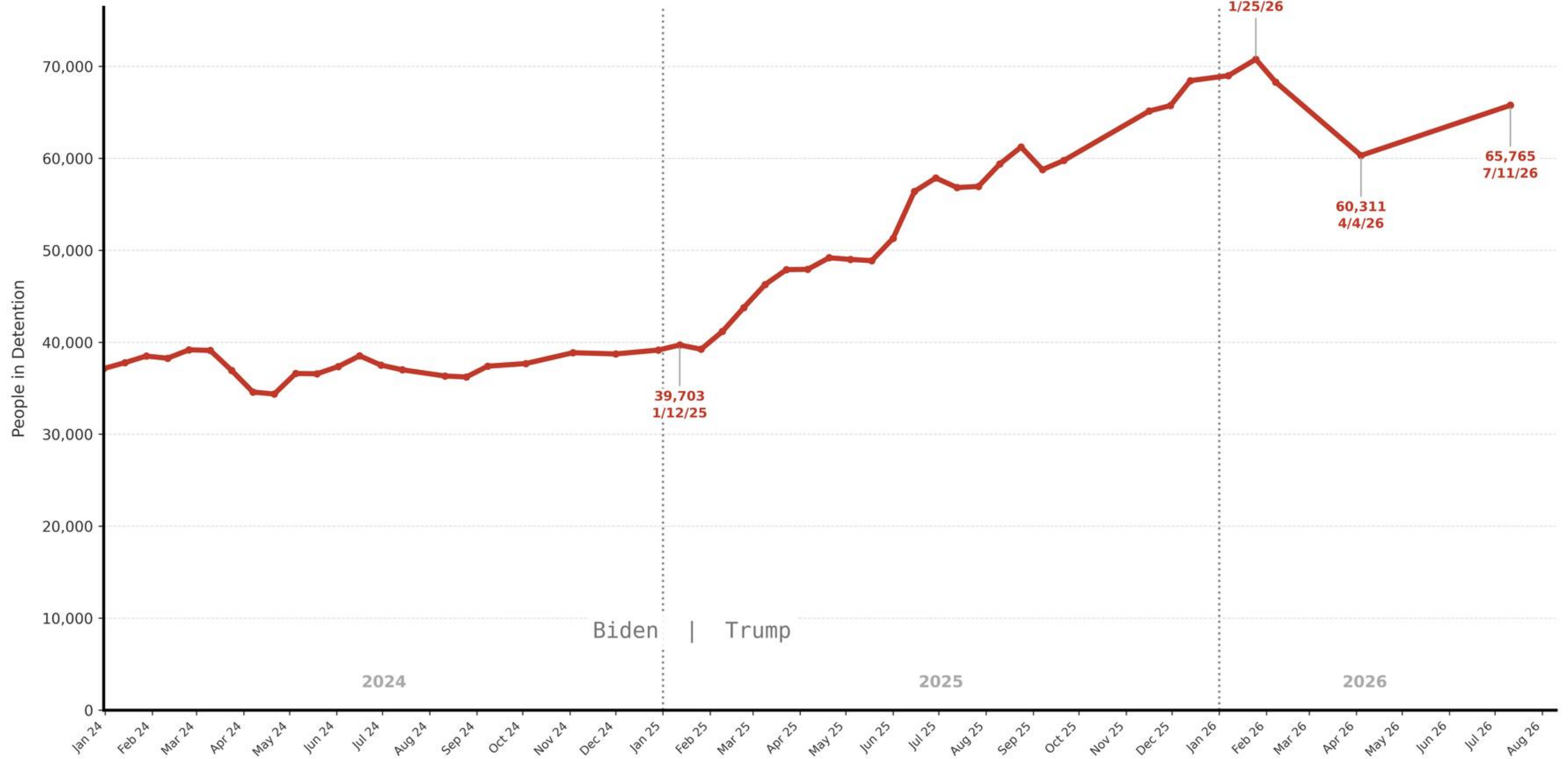
03 Warehouses • abnormal

Prebuilt shipping warehouses ICE wants to convert, as in Hagerstown, MD. Heavy legal and local pushback.

04 Soft-sided camps • abnormal

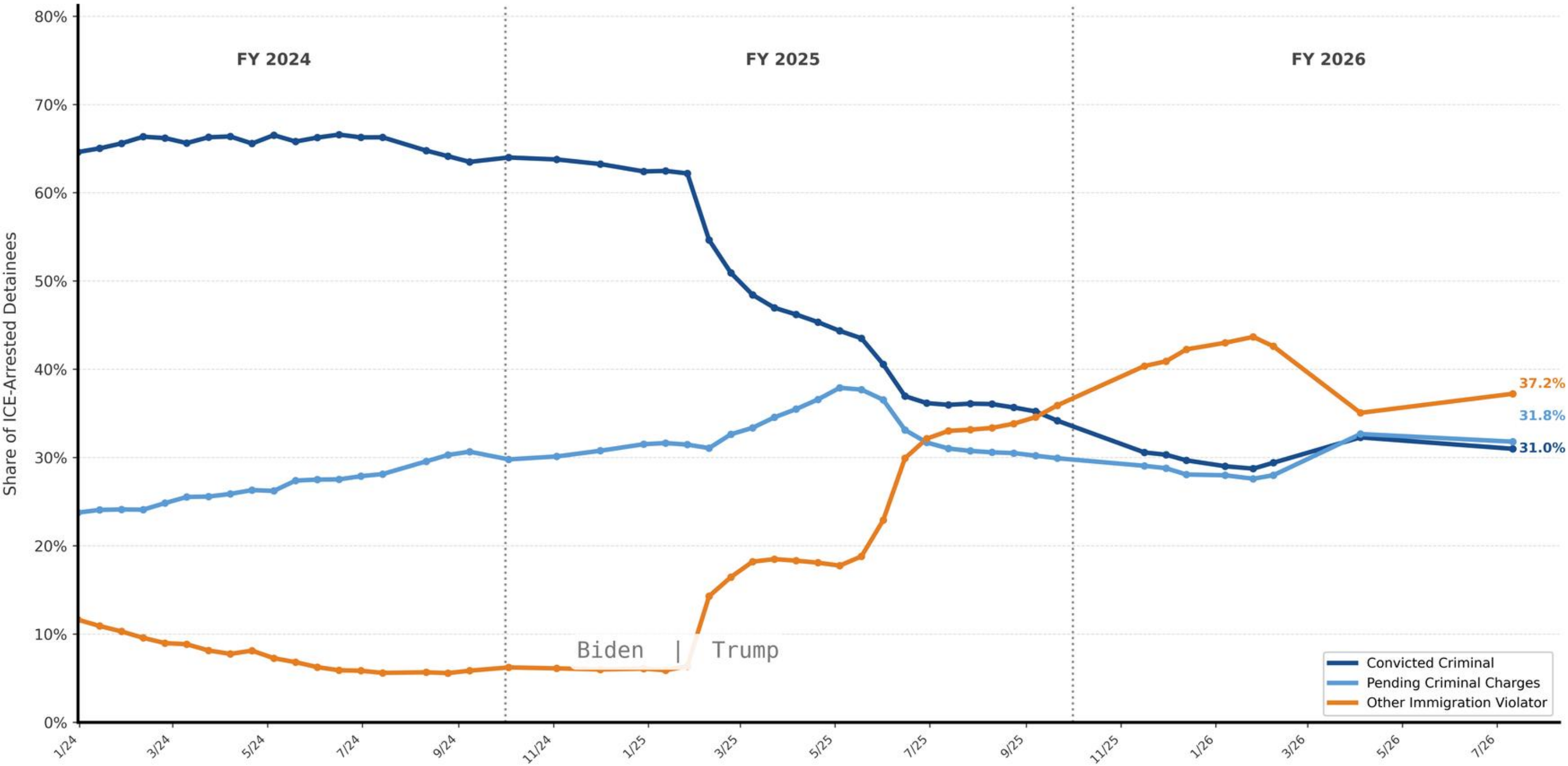
Large tent facilities, as at Fort Bliss, among the biggest, and the site of the first recorded homicide in detention.

ICE Total Detained Population (7/11/2026)



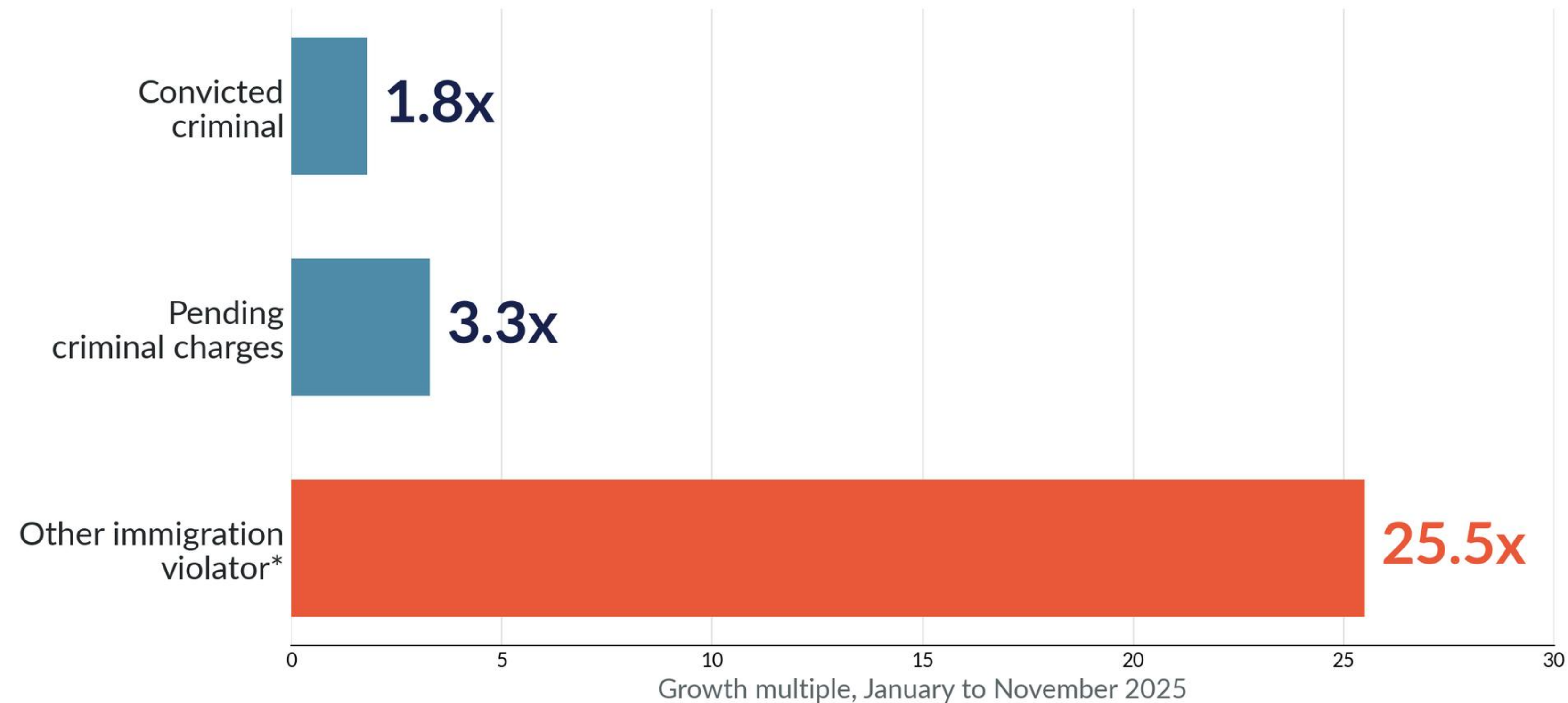
Data: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) biweekly detention statistics (current as of July 11, 2026). Includes all detained individuals regardless of arresting agency. Chart by Austin Kocher.

Share of Detained Population by Criminal History (ICE Arrests Only)



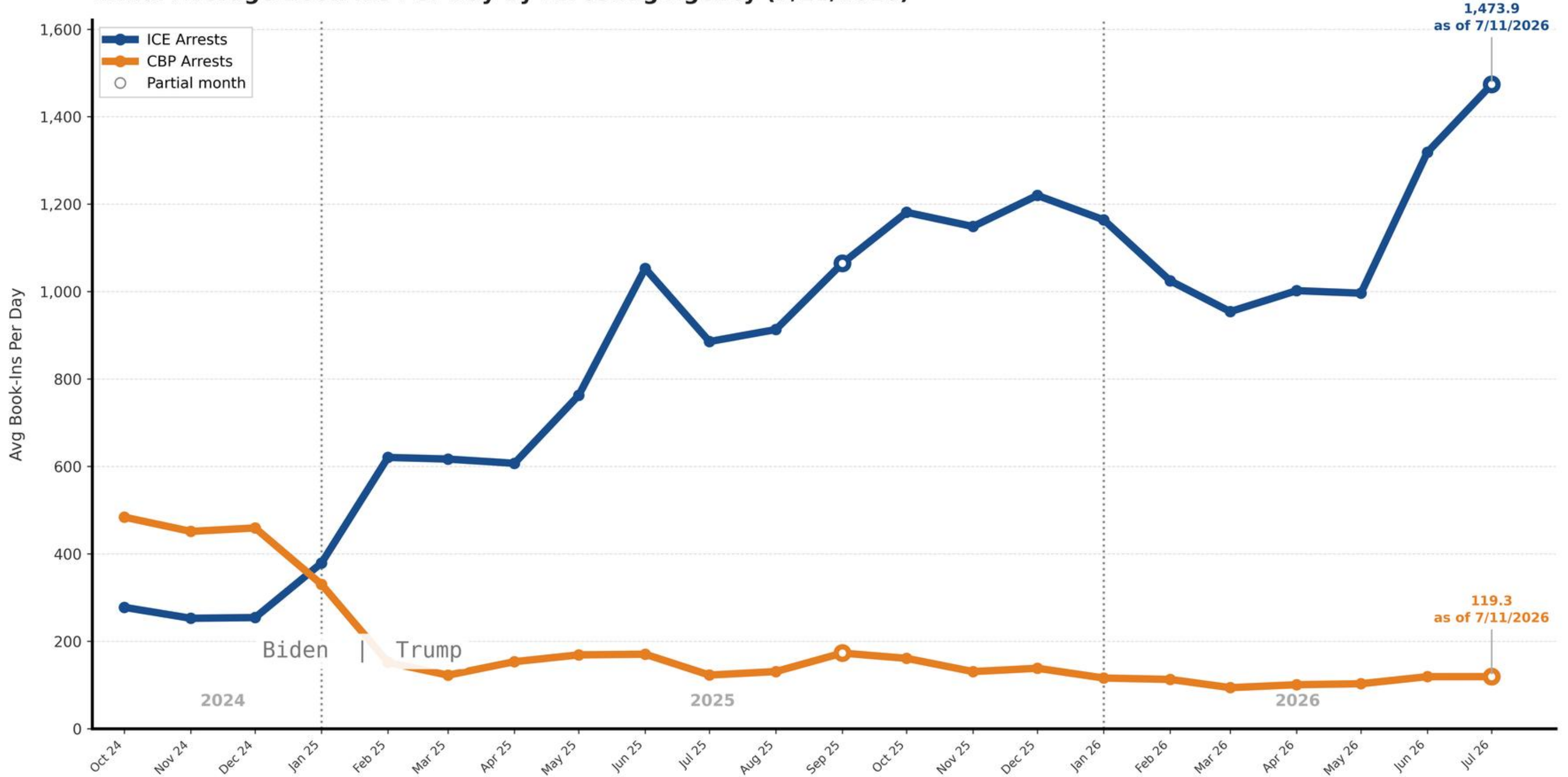
Data: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) biweekly detention statistics (current as of July 11, 2026). Each line is that category's share of the ICE-arrested detained population. "Other Immigration Violator" refers to individuals with no criminal record or pending charges on file. Counts reflect people arrested by ICE (excludes CBP arrests). Chart by Austin Kocher.

Relative growth of detained immigrants by criminal history (ICE arrests only)



*People without a known criminal conviction or pending charge at the time of arrest. Source: ICE. Chart: Relevant Research.

Initial Average Book-Ins Per Day by Arresting Agency (7/11/2026)

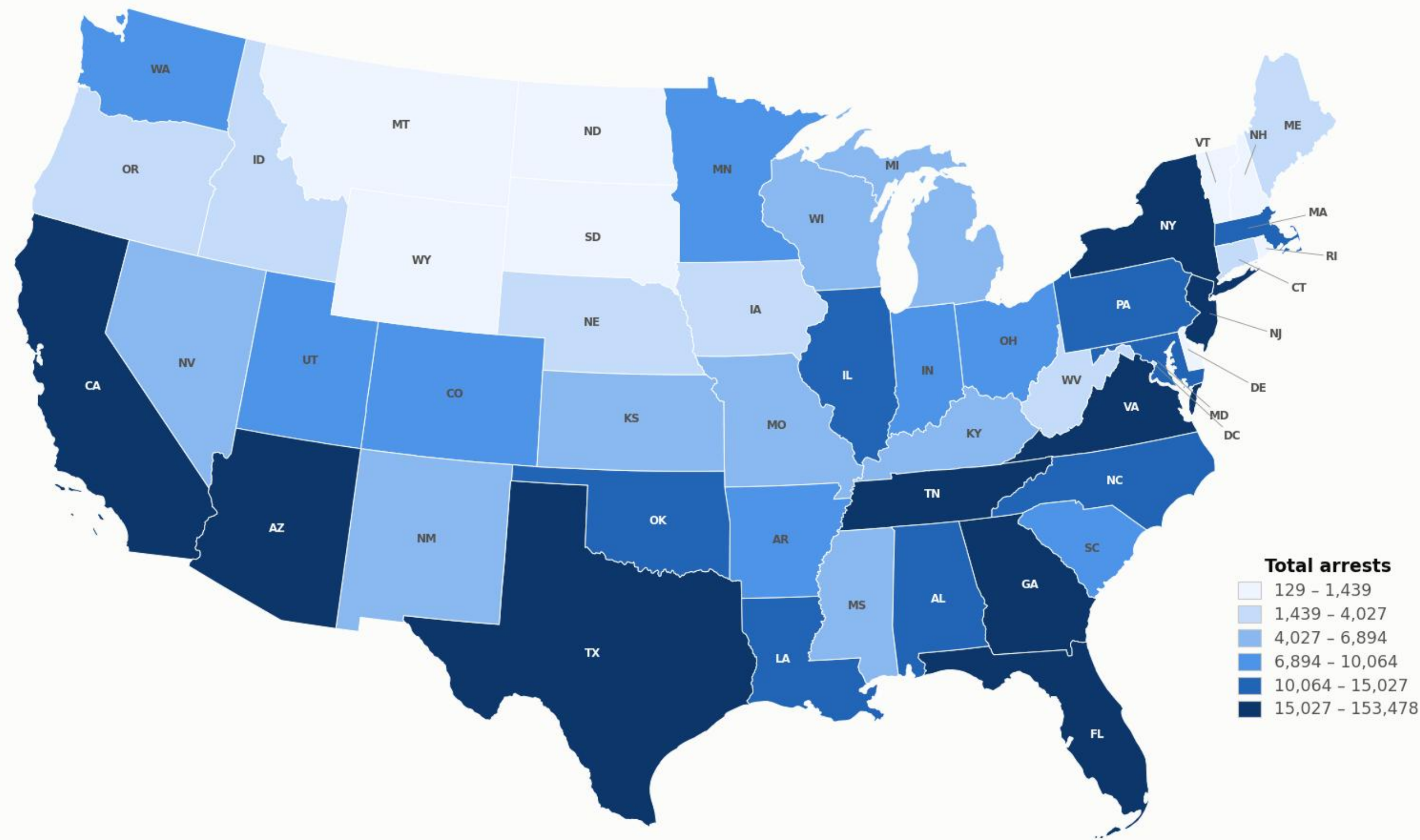


Data: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) biweekly detention statistics (current as of July 11, 2026).

Avg book-ins per day = monthly count ÷ calendar days in month (partial months: ÷ days elapsed through EID date). Open markers = partial month. Chart by Austin Kocher.

ICE Arrests by State

Total interior immigration arrests recorded in the Deportation Data Project, by state of apprehension



Source: Deportation Data Project — ICE FOIA release (fact_arrests, apprehension state), coverage Oct 2022–early 2026. Foreign-born population: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates, table B05002. Contiguous 48 states + DC shown; Alaska, Hawaii, U.S. territories and the ~15% of arrests with no recorded apprehension state are excluded. Map: Relevant Research.

ICE DETENTION FACILITIES

Currently in use across the United States

208 65,765

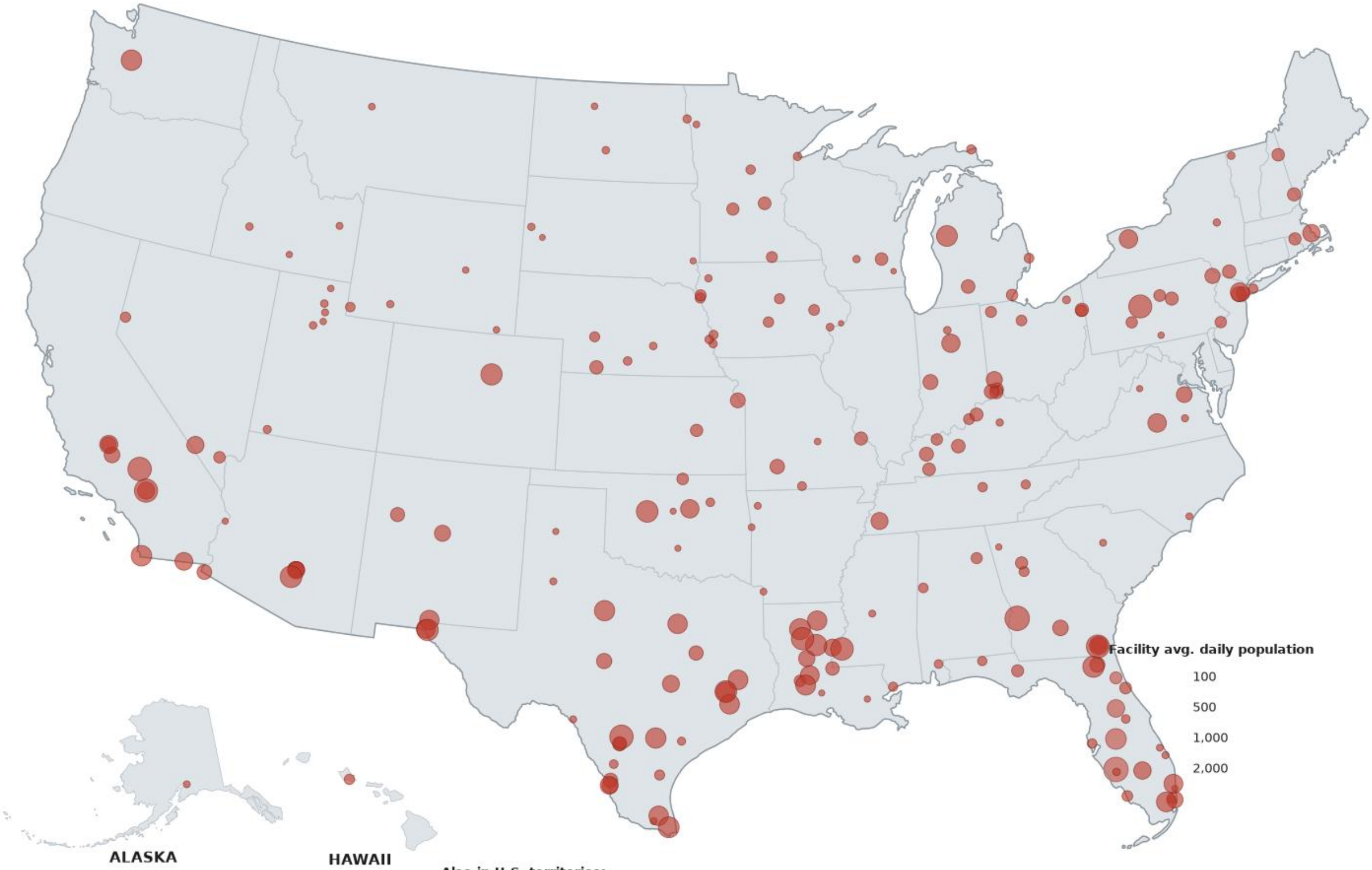
facilities in use people in ICE custody
(as of July 11, 2026)

Across 43 states and 3 U.S. territories.

TEN LARGEST BY CURRENT POPULATION

1.	Stewart Detention Center	1,979
	Lumpkin, GA	
2.	California City Immigration P...	1,657
	California City, CA	
3.	South Texas ICE Processing Ce...	1,632
	Pearsall, TX	
4.	Adelanto ICE Processing Center	1,597
	Adelanto, CA	
5.	Moshannon Valley Processing C...	1,535
	Philipsburg, PA	
6.	Folkston D Ray ICE Processing...	1,534
	Folkston, GA	
7.	Adams County Correctional Cen...	1,413
	Natchez, MS	
8.	Winn Correctional Center	1,370
	Winnfield, LA	
9.	Eloy Federal Contract Facility	1,199
	Eloy, AZ	
10.	Montgomery ICE Processing Cen...	1,193
	Conroe, TX	

Data: U.S. ICE FY2026 Detention Statistics (released July 20, 2026).
65,765 = people in ICE custody on the July 11, 2026 snapshot. Bubbles
and rankings show each facility's average daily population over the
most recent interval (Apr 4-Jul 11). Analysis: Relevant Research.

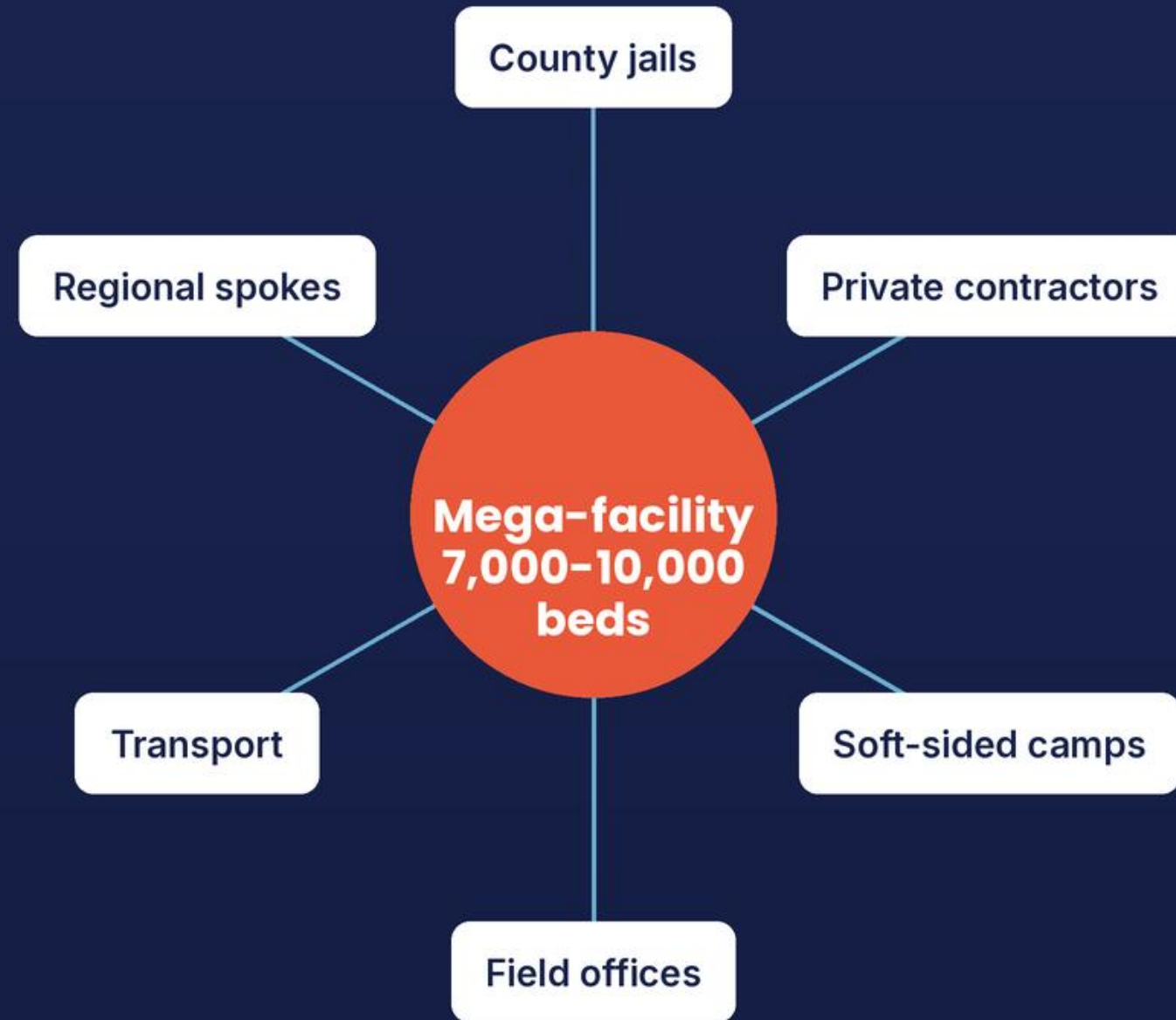


ALASKA

HAWAII

Also in U.S. territories:
Hagatna (GU), Saipan (MP), Guaynabo (PR)

The next phase: a 'warehouse' model



A projected \$38.3 billion, in a hub-and-spoke system officials have compared to Amazon fulfillment.

THE ILLEGAL TIER

The clearest illegal case: 'Alligator Alcatraz'

Off the books.

The Florida facility was built to hold people in federal custody, yet operated off the books and was reported inconsistently in the federal data.

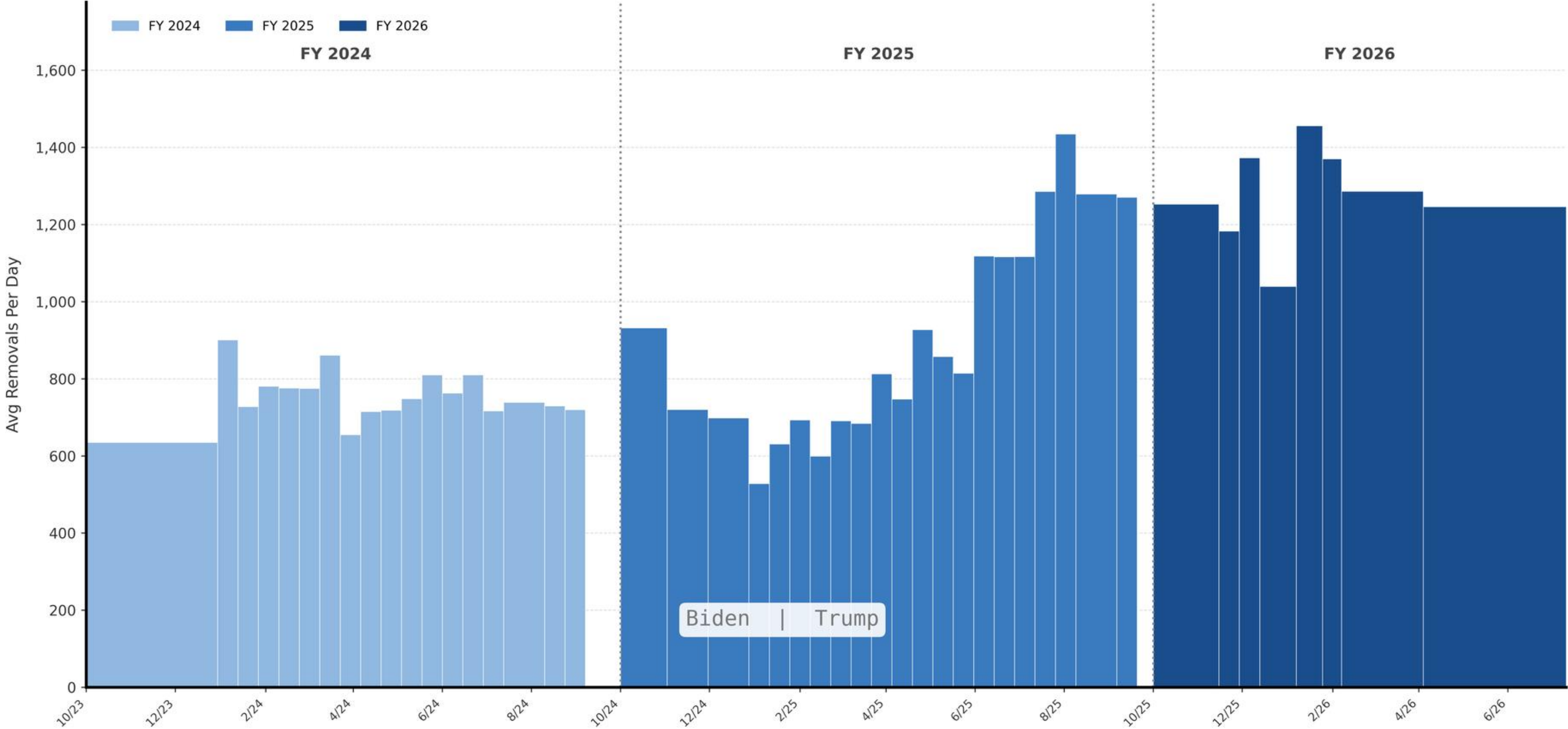
Shut down.

It was closed after legal challenges, largely on environmental law, having skipped the review a major construction requires.

Why a city cares.

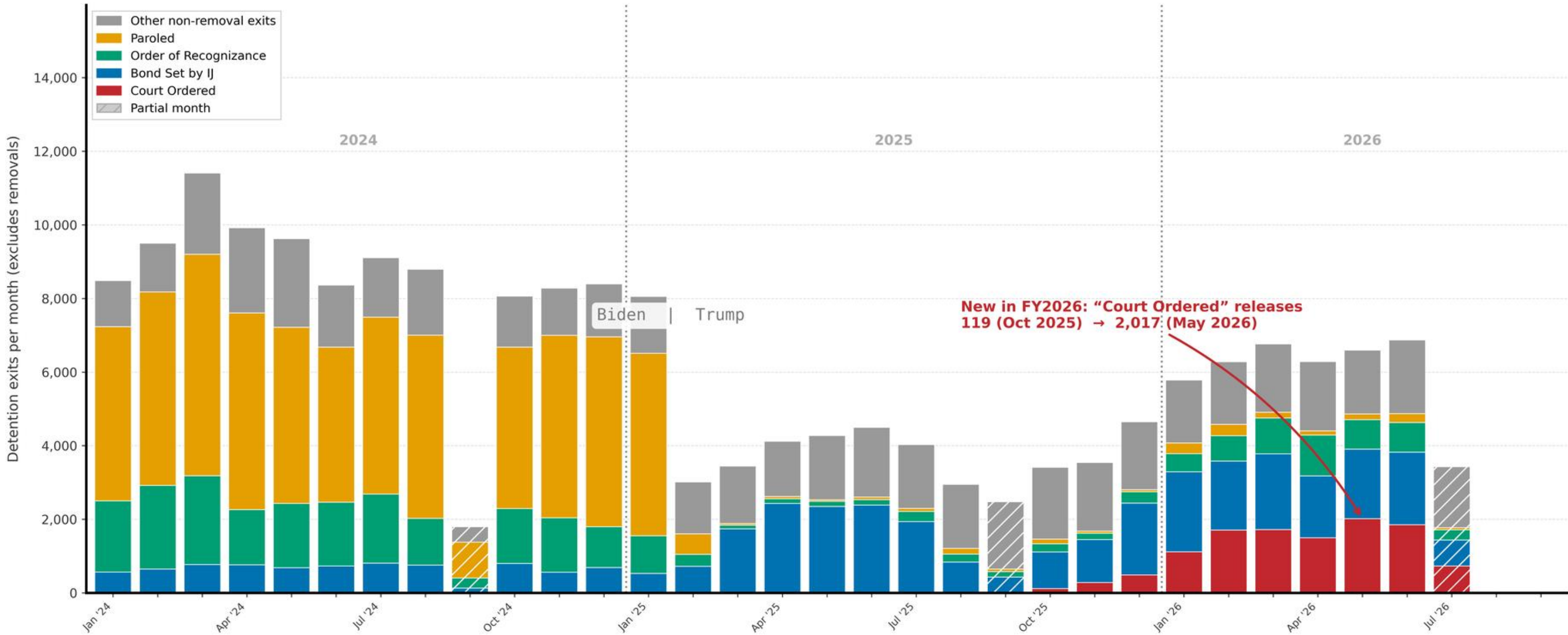
Standing up a facility for thousands puts real demands on water, power, food, and sanitation, and creates real legal exposure when those are skipped.

ICE Removals (Avg Per Day)



Data: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) biweekly detention statistics (current as of July 11, 2026). Each bar spans the interval between consecutive ICE data releases. End-of-fiscal-year gaps (September-November) reflect the days between the final biweekly release and September 30. Chart by Austin Kocher.

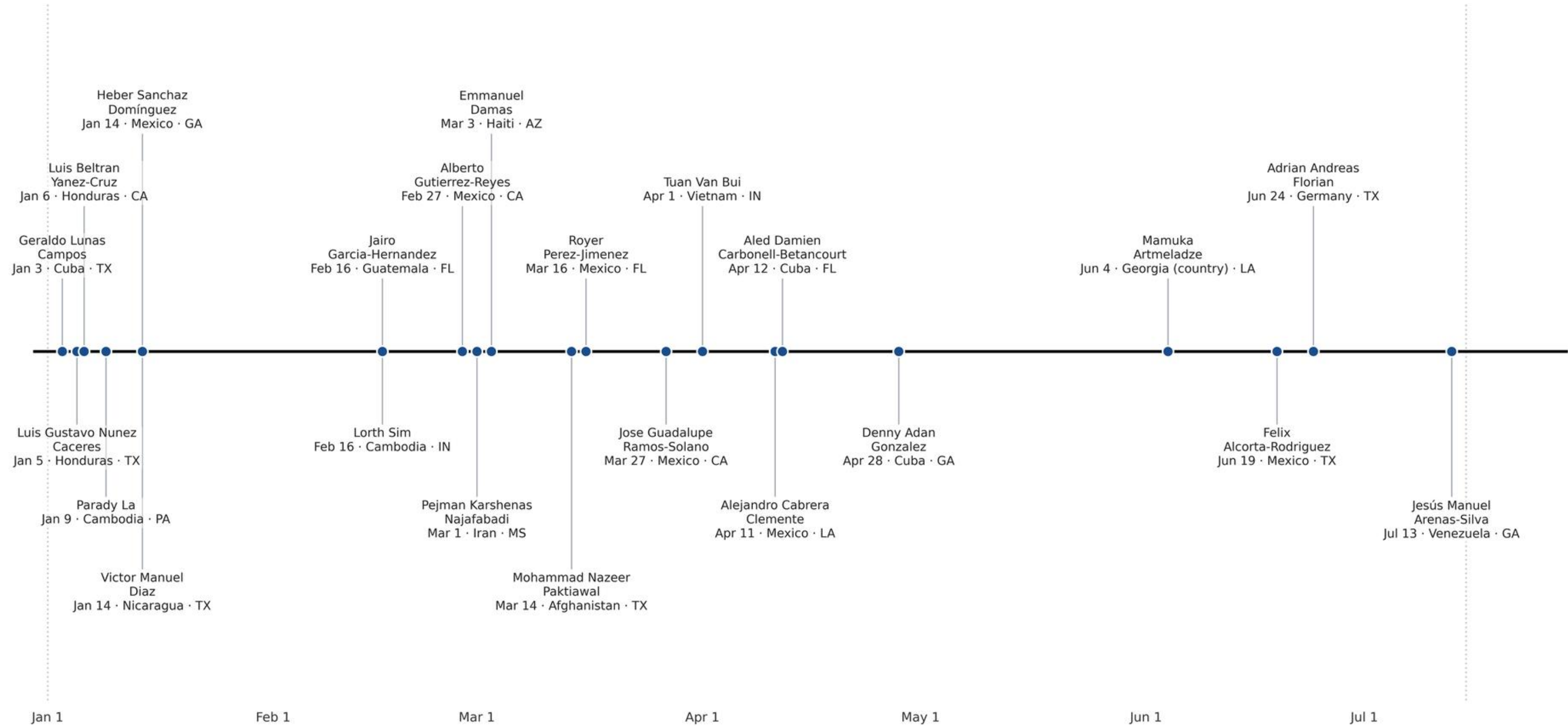
How People Leave ICE Detention — Non-Removal Exits by Month (7/11/2026)



Data: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) biweekly detention statistics (current as of July 11, 2026). Monthly ICE Final Book-Outs by release reason, all criminality categories. Excludes "Release to Remove" (removals), ~84% of all book-outs, so the non-removal routes are legible. Hatched = partial month. "Other" = transfers (USMS / other custody), order of supervision, relief granted by IJ, proceedings terminated, ICE-set bond. Chart by Austin Kocher.

ICE Detention Deaths — Every Person Who Died in ICE Custody Since January 1, 2026

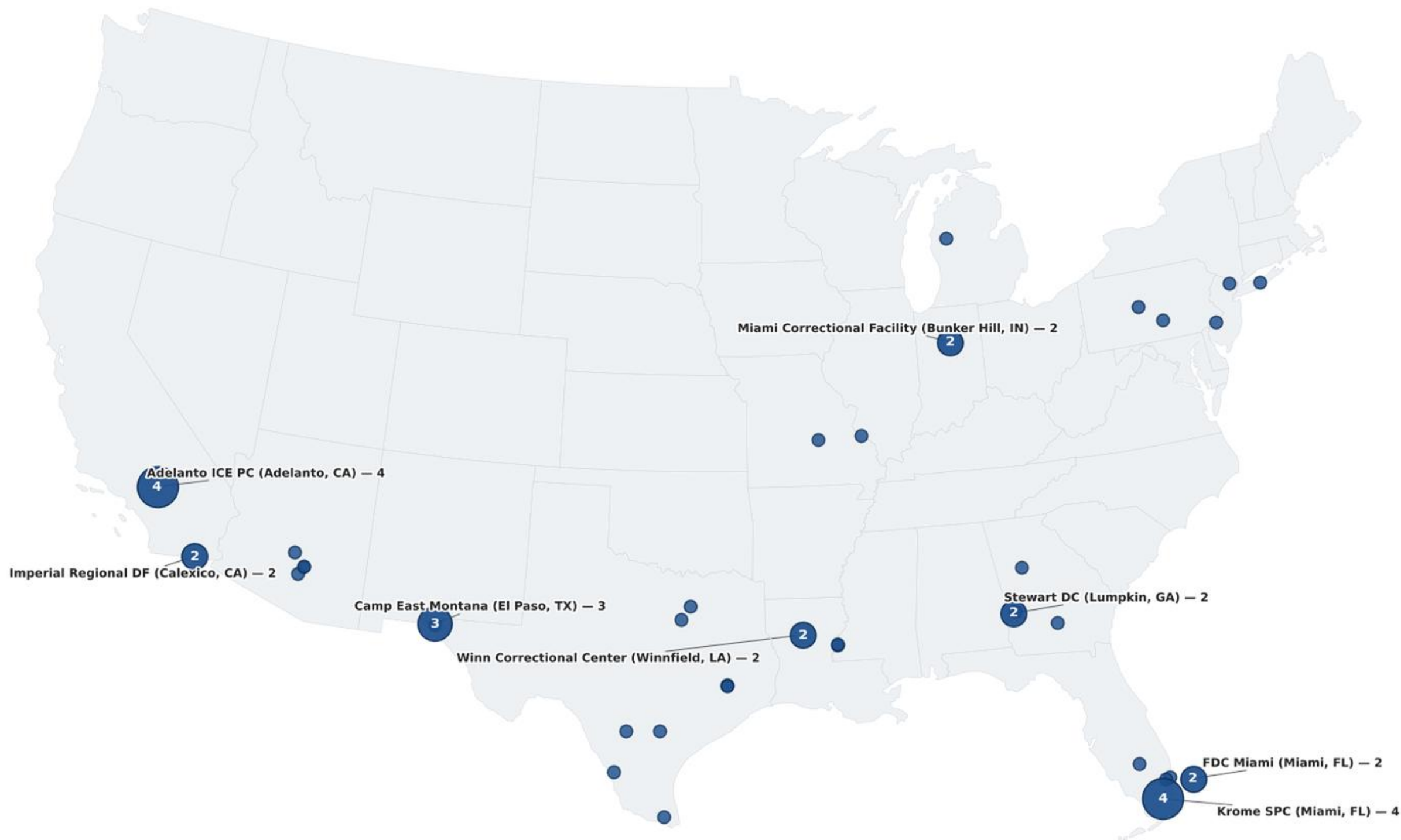
22 deaths in 193 days · average of one death every 8.8 days



Data: Publicly reported ICE in-custody deaths, January 1, 2026 through Wednesday, July 15, 2026. Each dot marks one person; same-day deaths appear as neighboring labels pointing to the same date. Each label shows the person's name, date of death, nationality, and the U.S. state where they died. Chart by Austin Kocher.

Where People Have Died in ICE Custody

50 deaths in ICE detention under the Trump administration, January 2025 - July 2026, mapped to the last facility of custody



Source: Austin Kocher, curated ICE detention-death record (ICE press releases + independent reporting); data current as of July 2026. Points mark the last facility of custody; hospital and in-transit deaths are placed at the treating hospital or transfer route. * Adams County Corr. Ctr is in Natchez, MS.

A new dilemma: a patient who is also in ICE custody

The bind.

A person brought to the emergency room from detention, or after an encounter with ICE, may be handcuffed to the bed. A doctor cannot treat a broken arm while ICE declines to remove the cuffs.

The ask.

The National Immigration Law Center, with physicians, has published best practices. Hospital leadership should train staff and set policy before this happens.

For the city.

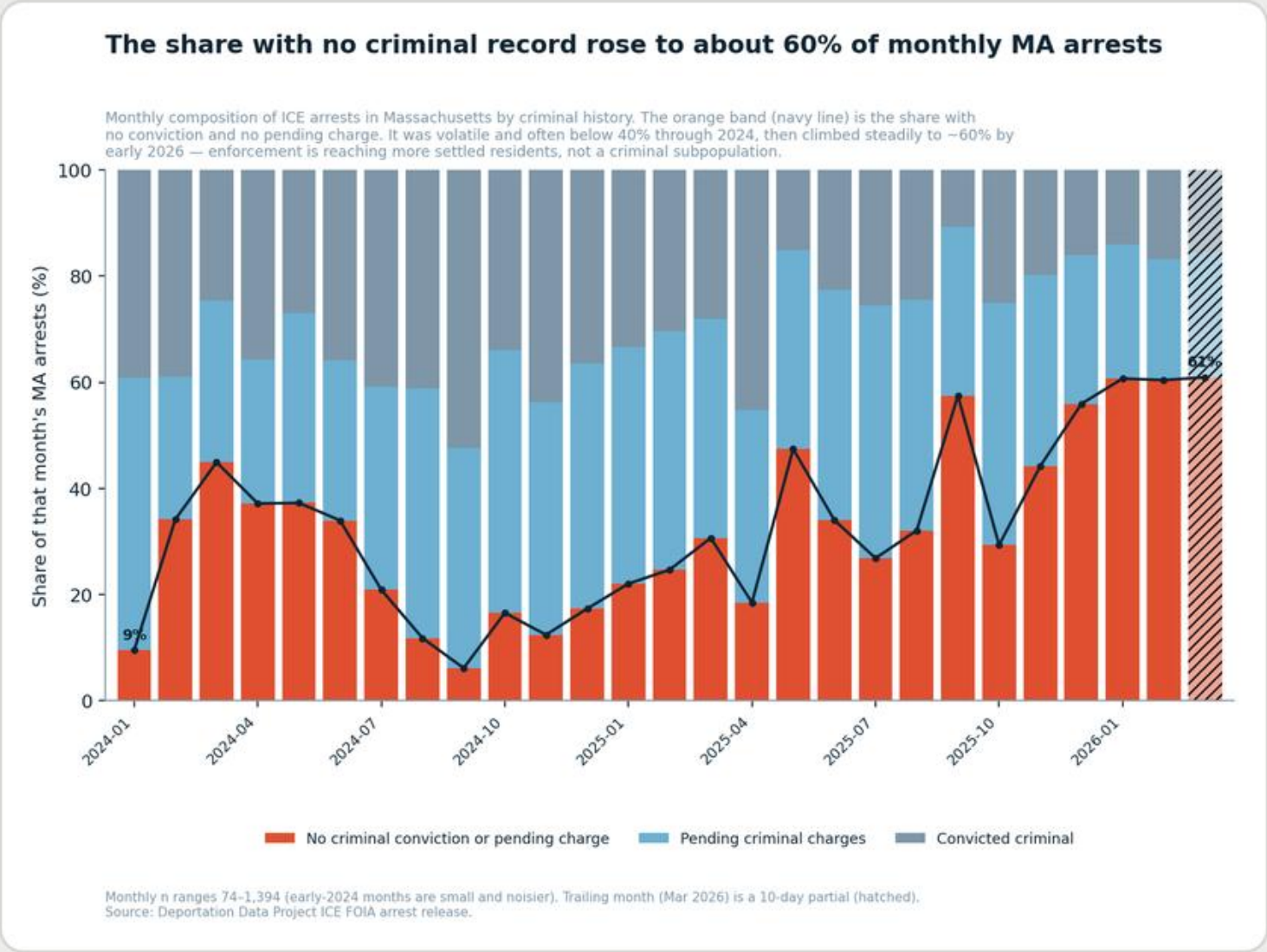
Consider sharing that guidance with medical facilities in Boston.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS CLOSE TO HOME

BOSTON & THE REGION

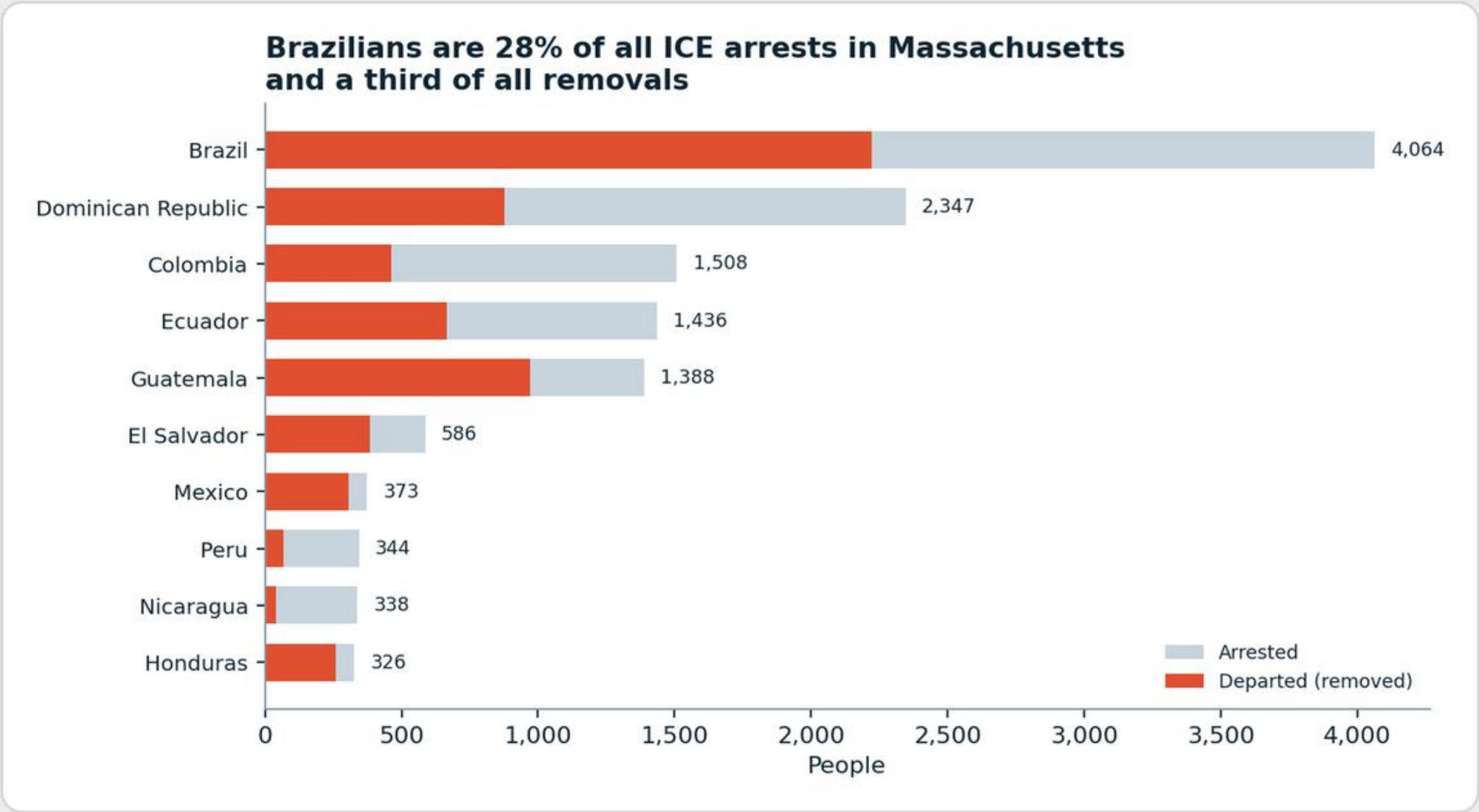
03

Massachusetts changed regime in 2025



TAKEAWAY Four to five times the 2024 baseline, and about 6 in 10 arrested had no criminal record.

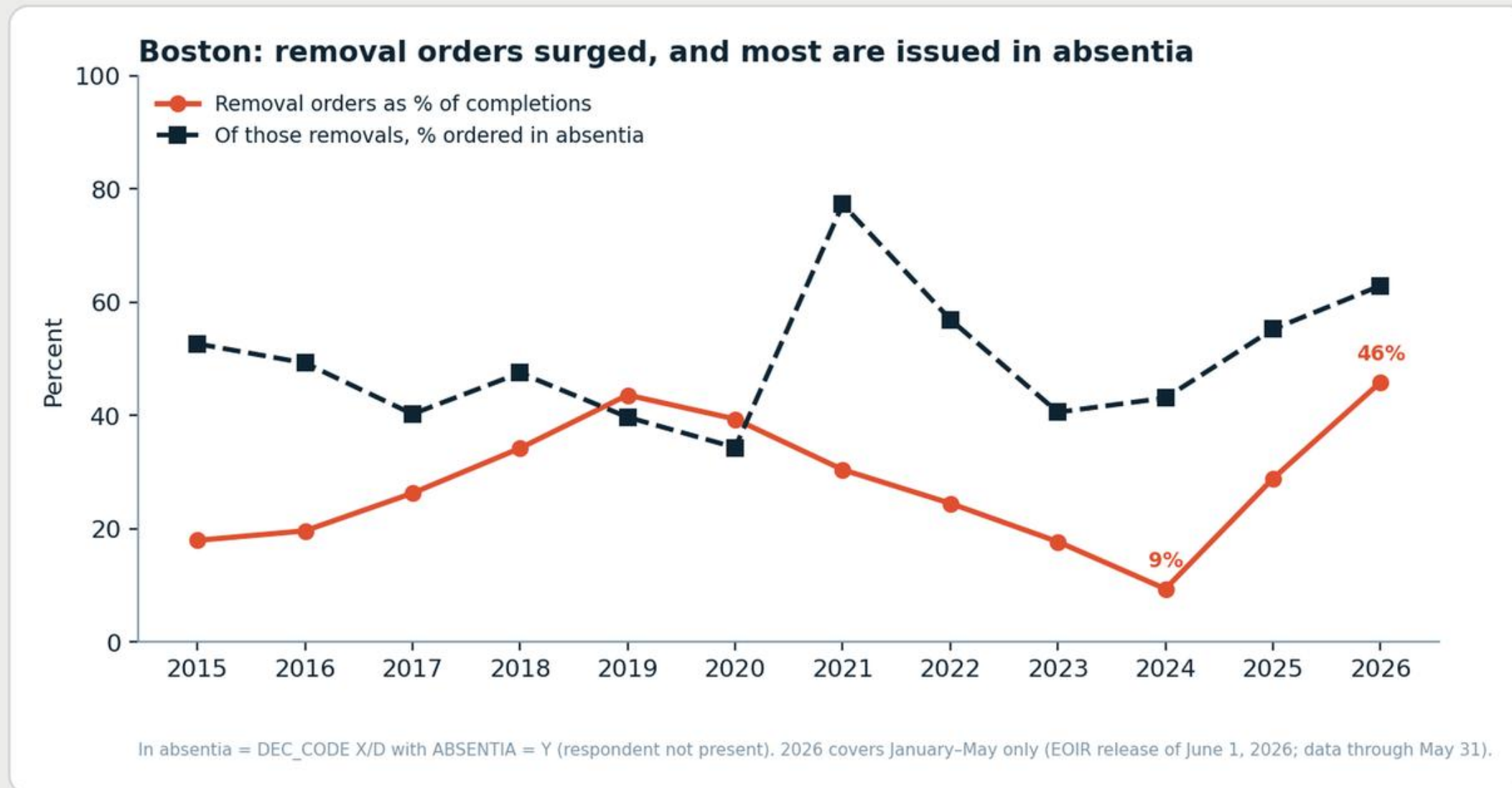
Who is being arrested here



TAKEAWAY Brazilians are the single largest group arrested in Massachusetts, by a wide margin.

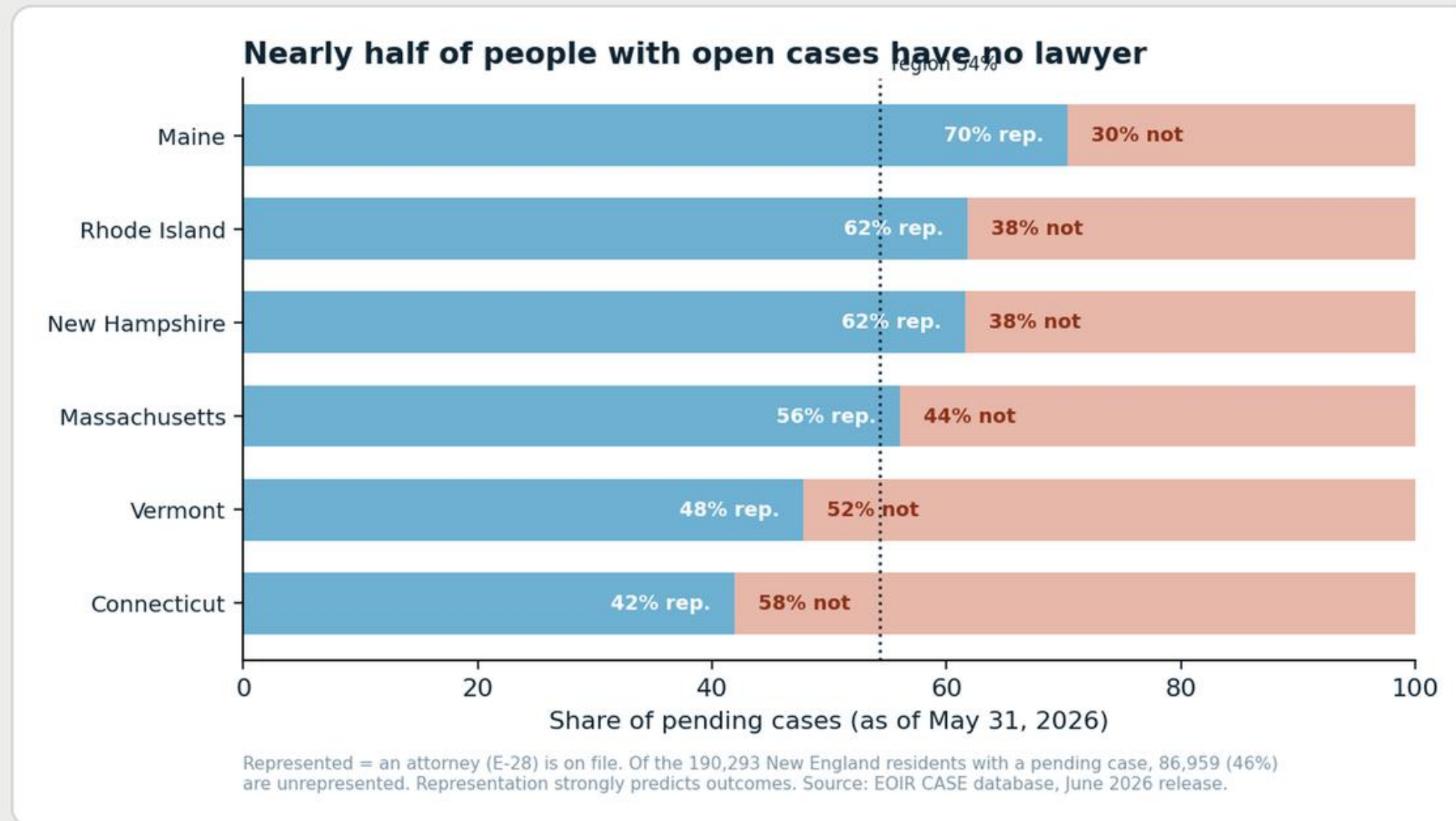
Source: Deportation Data Project (ICE arrest records).

In Boston's court, removal became the normal outcome



TAKEAWAY Removal is now the usual result, and most orders are entered when the person is absent.

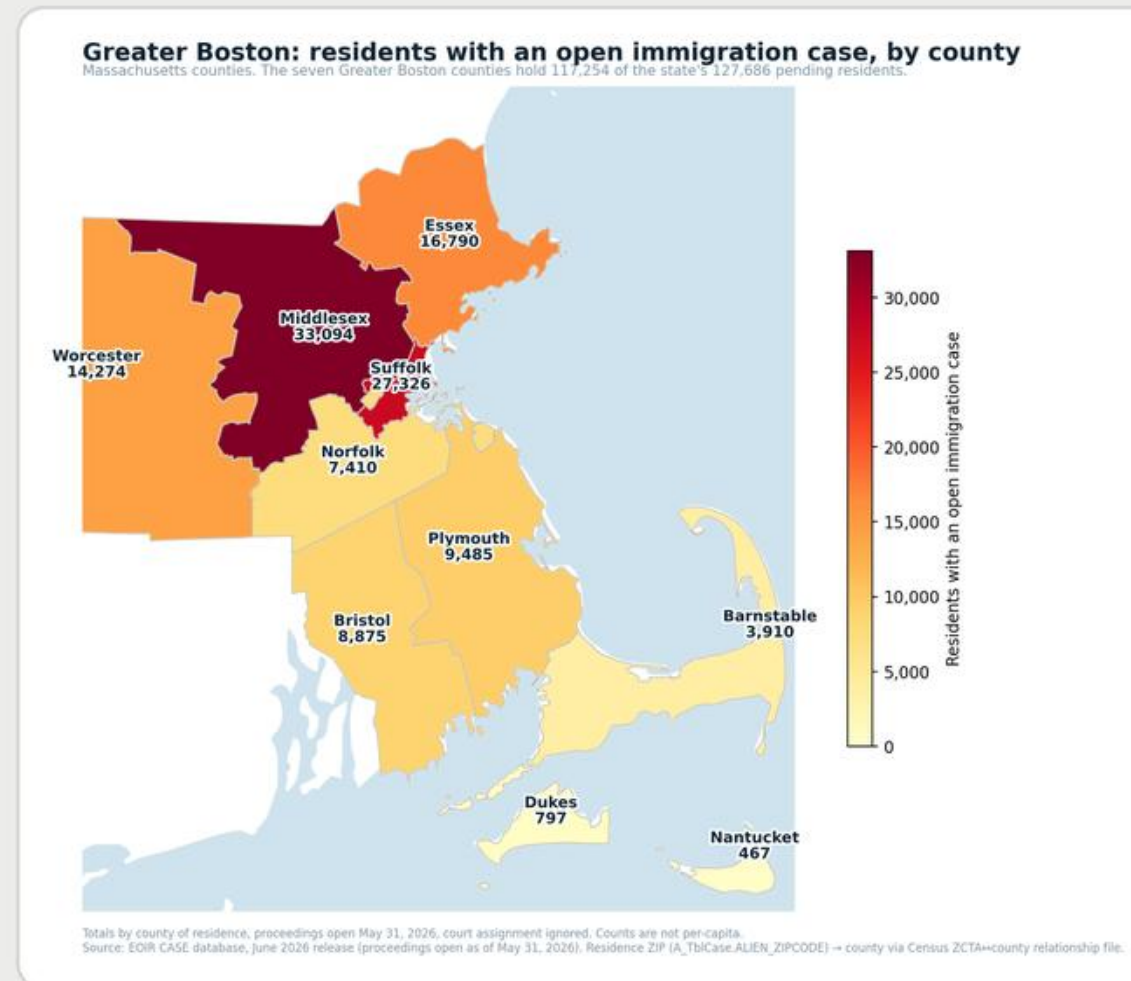
A lawyer changes everything



TAKEAWAY Representation shifts the outcome by roughly 15 times, and nearly half of people have none.

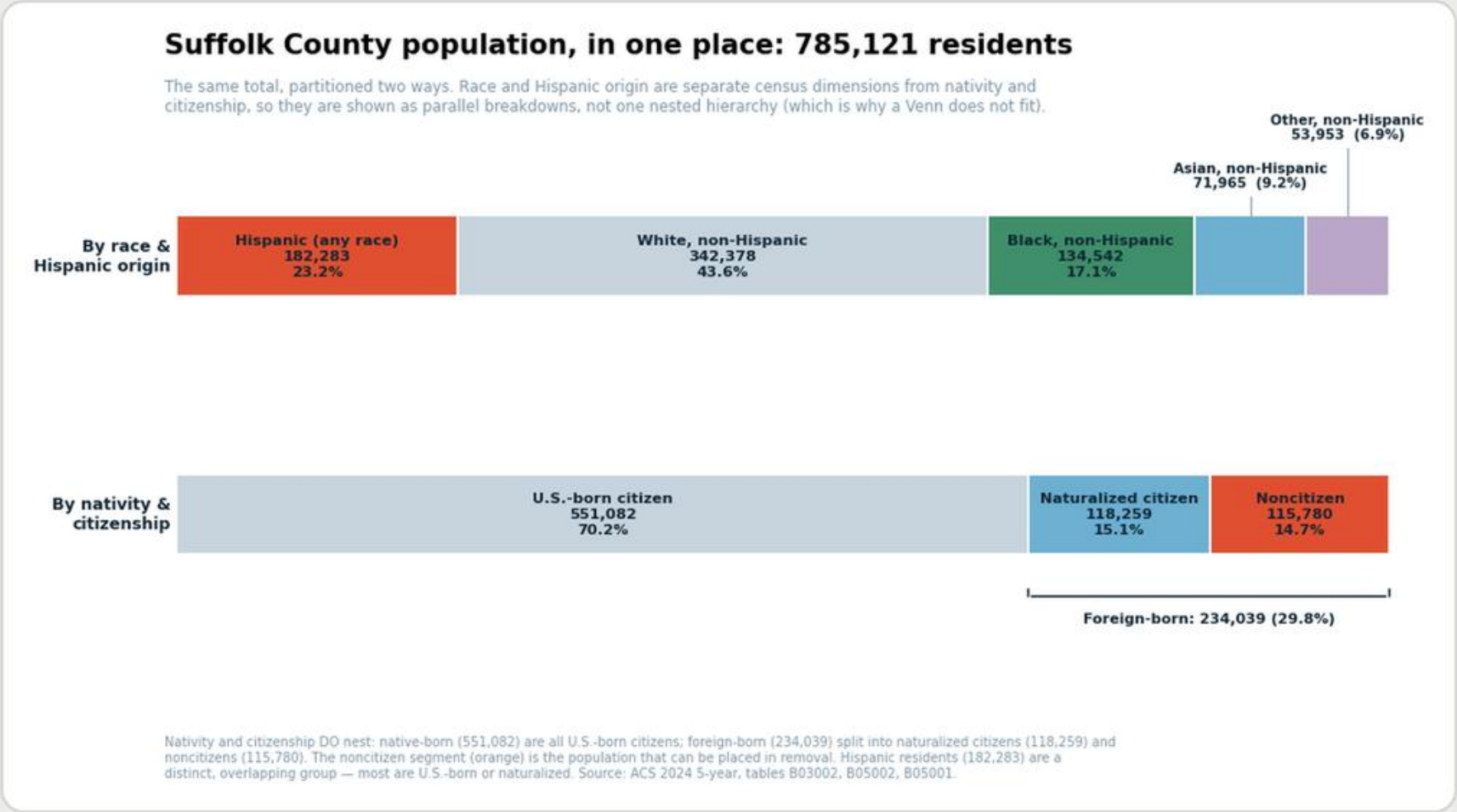
BOSTON + REGION

127,686 residents of Massachusetts have an open immigration case



TAKEAWAY 92% live in Greater Boston, a population that lives here now, in housing, schools, and work.

The word 'immigrant' hides several different populations



TAKEAWAY Measure exposure by nativity, where a person was born, rather than by ethnicity.

LIVE DEMO

Let's look at the tools

- 01 Detention Reports**
Every ICE facility, its population, and where people are held.
- 02 Detention Deaths Tracker**
Every death in ICE custody, tracked and mapped over time.
- 03 Enforcement Dashboard**
Filter ICE arrests by state, date, age, and criminal history.
- 04 Detention Pregnancy Tracker**
Pregnant and postpartum people held in ICE detention.
- 05 TRAC** IF TIME
The immigration courts: backlog, outcomes, and representation.

DetentionReports.com

austinkocher.substack.com

EnforcementDashboard.com

DetentionPregnancyTracker.com

tracreport.org

All free and public. You do not have to take my word for any of it, you can check it yourself.

The vision for what's next

Move it out of DHS

- ICE sits in a national-security department built after 9/11.
- Most immigration questions are not national security.
- The ACLU and American Immigration Council argue for a civil immigration agency.
- The goal: responsible enforcement, and laws a person can follow.

The Dignity Act

- A Republican-led bill from Rep. Maria Salazar.
- Pathways to legal status, not citizenship.
- For veterans, spouses of citizens, and workers.
- Tries to balance business, security, and humanitarian interests.

THANK YOU

Questions & Discussion

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