

ICE ARRESTS IN CALIFORNIA AND TEXAS: POLARIZED POLITICS AND OUTCOMES

Paul Ong and Jonathan Ong

September 2025

INTRODUCTION

Our previous analytical brief found that state-level ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) arrest rates under President Trump were positively correlated with the proportion of the electorate voting for him, after accounting for other factors.¹ ICE is responsible for enforcing immigration laws within the interior of the United States.

This new brief further examines ICE enforcement patterns by analyzing arrests in California and Texas during the first six months of the Trump administration, February to July, 2025.² These two states have disparate political leanings, with Democrats dominating in the Golden State and Republicans in the Lone Star State. A comparison provides insights into how policies shape the magnitude and characteristics of ICE arrests.

We find that California had more potential immigrant targets, but Texas arrests rates were three to four times higher after adjusting for the size of the at-risk population. Mexicans comprised about half of arrests in the two states, but the Lone Star State had proportionately more arrestees from other Latin American countries. One key difference is that California had significantly fewer arrestees with pending criminal charges, as well as those transferred from jails and prisons.

The brief has five sections: (1) the political orientation of the two states; (2) the absolute number and time trend of arrests; (3) estimated arrest rates, normalized by alternative targeted populations; (4) level of criminality and arrest methods; and (5) concluding remarks.

POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS

California and Texas have opposite partisan leanings. This is reflected in the 2024 presidential election. Trump received 50% of the national vote, 56% in Texas, and only 38% in California.³ The two states also vary sharply in public opinion on immigration. Only about one-fifth of Californians believe undocumented immigrants should be returned to their home country, while two-thirds believe they should be eligible for permanent residency or citizenship.⁴ On the other hand, a majority of Texans support their governor's pro-deportation policies⁵, and an overwhelming majority favor deporting undocumented immigrants convicted of a felony or denied asylum.⁶ At the same time, roughly two-thirds of Texans support offering a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants who are not criminals and who have relatives who are U.S. citizens.⁷

The states differ not only in popular opinion but also in party control of state government. Democrats hold majorities in the legislative bodies of the Golden State, while Republicans control those in the Lone Star State.⁸ An even greater divide exists among statewide elected offices⁹. (See Table 1.)

Because of this partisan disparity, the two states have taken opposing positions regarding cooperation with the federal government. In 2017, California passed Senate Bill 54, which restricts the use of state and local resources to assist federal immigration enforcement.¹⁰ Texas did the opposite that year, passing Senate Bill 4, which prohibits "sanctuary city" policies.¹¹ The state went further in 2025 by passing Senate Bill 8, mandating sheriffs in large counties to collaborate with ICE.¹² The policy disparities produced stark contrast in collaborations, with Texas having 140 active agreements and California none.¹³

Disclaimer: The analysis and views expressed in this brief are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of UCLA as an institution.

Acknowledgement: We thank Chhandara Pech for reviewing and providing input on this brief, and Alycia Cheng for its design and layout. The UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge also acknowledges that it is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples.

Table 1. Partisan Control of State Legislatures and Statewide Offices in California and Texas, 2025

Party	State	% State Senate	% State Lower House	% Statewide Offices
Democrats	California	75%	75%	91%
	Texas	35%	41%	0%
Republicans	California	25%	24%	9%
	Texas	65%	59%	100%

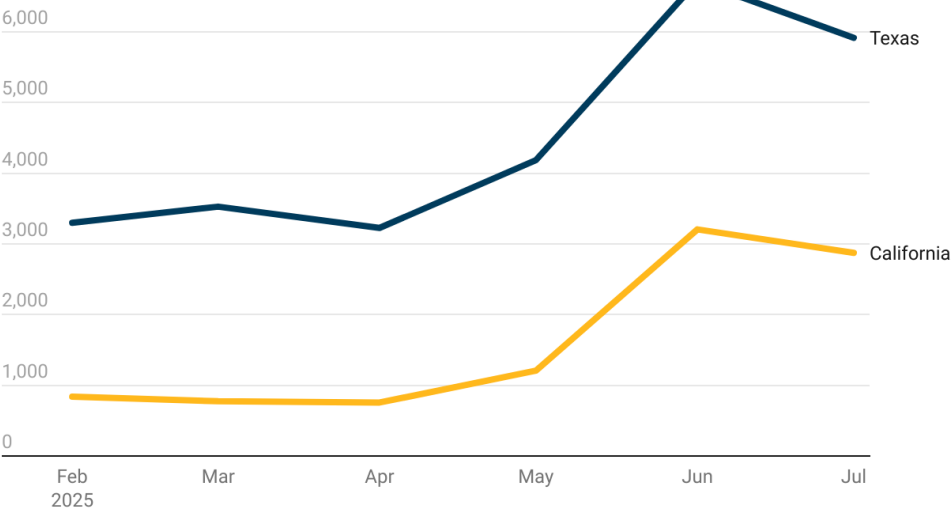
Source: Analysis by the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge using data from the National Conference of State Legislatures, *2025 State & Legislative Partisan Composition*, August 29, 2025 (accessed September 15, 2025); the Texas Secretary of State, “Statewide Elected Officials” (accessed September 15, 2025); and Ballotpedia, “California State Executive Offices” (accessed September 15, 2025). • Created with Datawrapper

ARREST OVERVIEW

Both California and Texas experienced a dramatic increase in the number of ICE arrests between February and July 2024 (Biden Administration) and the same months in 2025 (Trump Administration). The growth rate was higher in California, but the absolute number of arrests there was still only a fraction of those in Texas.

Between February–July 2024 and the same months in 2025, arrests in the Golden State increased by 223%, from 2,986 to 9,655, while arrests in the Lone Star State increased by 134%, from 11,503 to 26,865. Both states saw a sharp surge beginning in May 2025, likely linked to the administration’s ambitious goal of carrying out one million deportations per year.¹⁴ Arrests peaked in June and then declined in July, perhaps reflecting mounting opposition, adverse court rulings, and overworked ICE staff.¹⁵ (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Monthly ICE Arrests in California and Texas, February–July 2025

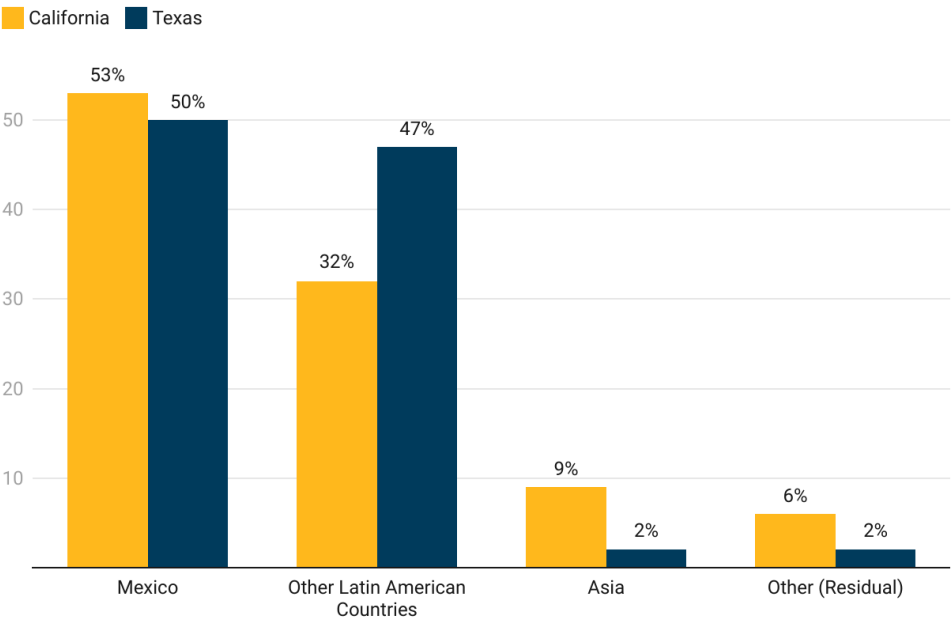


Source: Analysis by the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge using data from the Deportation Data Project (UC Berkeley Law School, accessed August 16, 2025). • Created with Datawrapper

Mexicans comprised roughly half of all ICE arrests in 2025 in both states (see Figure 2). In absolute numbers, Texas had 2.6 times as many Mexican arrestees—13,389 compared with 5,120 in California. California had proportionally fewer arrestees from other Latin American countries (32%) than Texas (47%). The top three

countries of origin in Texas were Honduras, Guatemala, and Venezuela, while in California they were Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Asians made up a larger share of arrestees in the Golden State (9%) than in the Lone Star State (2%), likely reflecting California’s larger Asian population.

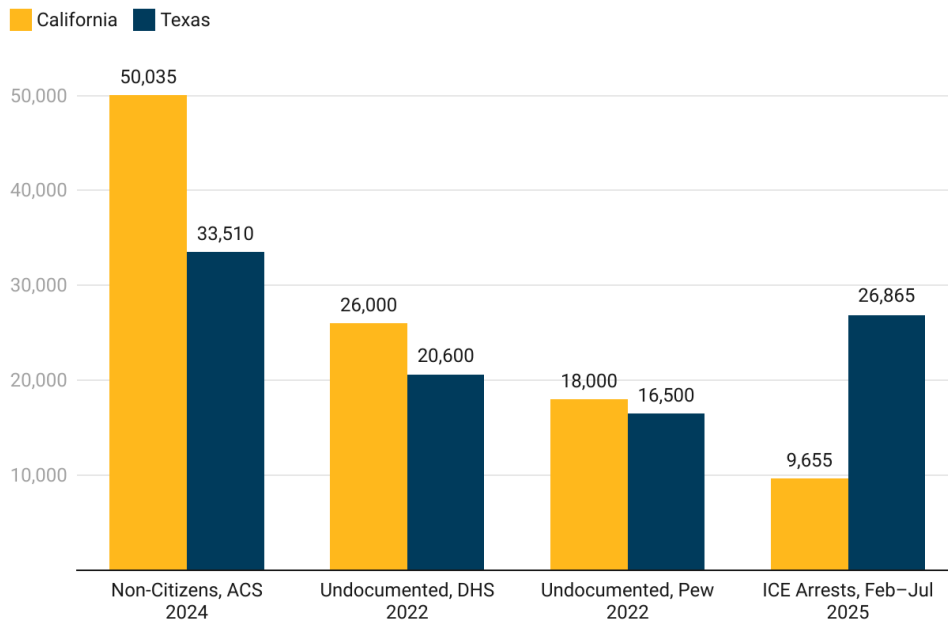
Figure 2. Percentage of ICE Arrestees by Citizenship Region, California and Texas (Feb–Jul 2025)



Source: Analysis by the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge using data from the Deportation Data Project (UC Berkeley Law School, accessed August 16, 2025). • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3. At-Risk Immigrant Populations and ICE Arrests in California and Texas

Population values are scaled ($\times 100$) to align with ICE arrest counts. For example, 50,000 = 5,000,000. ICE arrests are shown at actual counts.



Source: Analysis by the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge using data from the Deportation Data Project (UC Berkeley Law School, accessed August 16, 2025), the U.S. Census Bureau (2024 American Community Survey, accessed September 15, 2025), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (accessed September 14, 2025), and the Pew Research Center (accessed July 23, 2025); see endnote for full citations. • Created with Datawrapper

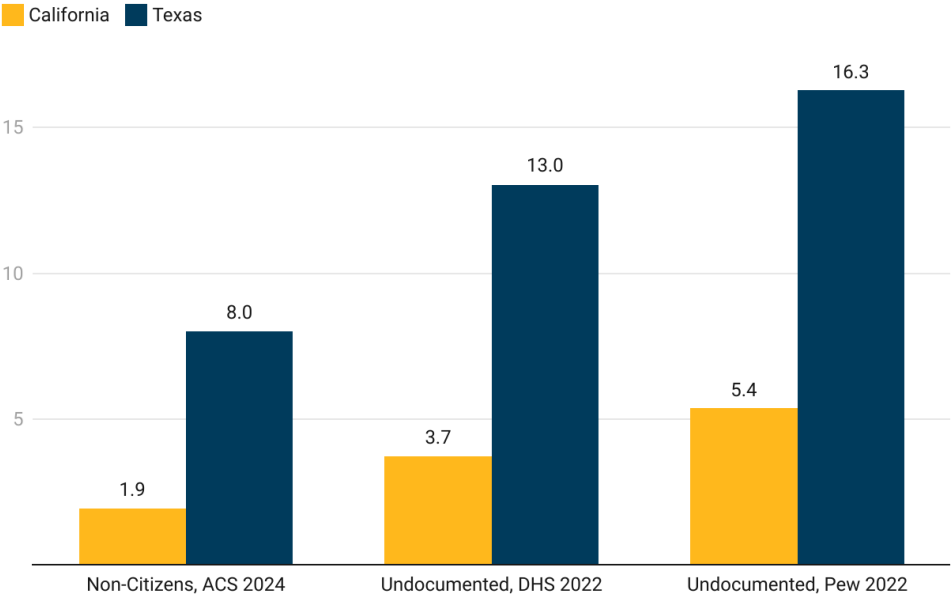
ARREST RATES

Because the two states differ in population size, it is useful to normalize arrests by the population at risk of ICE enforcement. We examined three benchmarks: (1) the number of non-citizens reported by the 2024 American Community Survey,¹⁶ (2) the estimated number of undocumented immigrants in 2022 reported by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS),¹⁷ and (3) the 2022 estimate of undocumented immigrants from the Pew Research Center.¹⁸ Figure 3 compares ICE arrests against these measures.

California had more non-citizens and undocumented immigrants overall. The difference in undocumented counts narrows somewhat after accounting for the potential influx of asylum seekers since 2022; however, the Lone Star State still had fewer—or at most a comparable number—of undocumented immigrants.¹⁹ Despite California's larger or equal pool of potential ICE targets, it recorded only slightly more than one-third as many ICE arrests as Texas (36%).

Figure 4 presents arrest rates normalized by population size. The variation in bar height reflects differences in the base population (the denominator for each estimate). Across all three measures, Texas had much higher arrest rates than California: 4.2 times as high based on non-citizens, 3.5 times as high based on DHS estimates of undocumented immigrants, and 3.0 times as high based on Pew’s estimates.

Figure 4. ICE Arrest Rates per 1,000 Individuals in California and Texas, by Population Benchmark

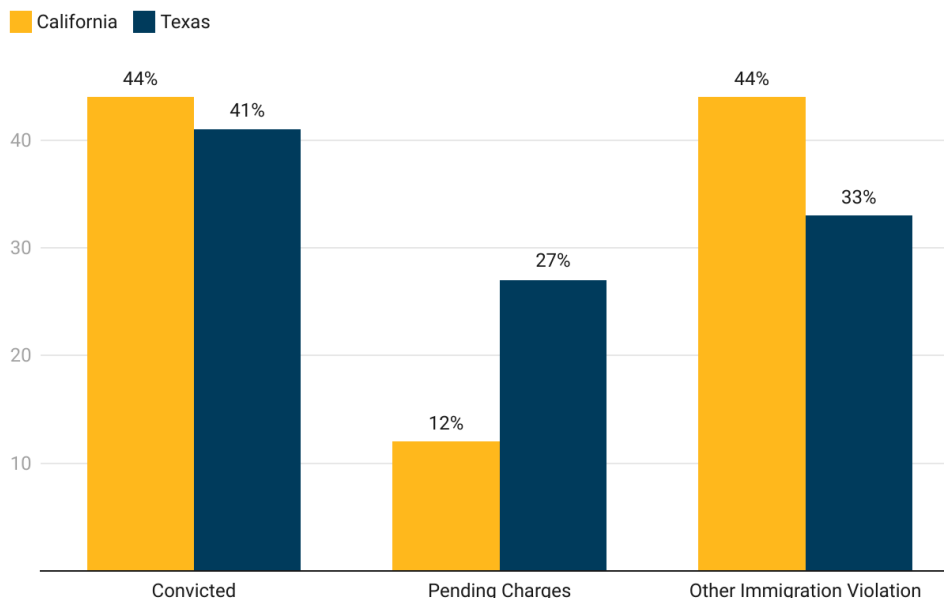


Source: Analysis by the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge using data from the Deportation Data Project (UC Berkeley Law School, accessed August 16, 2025), the U.S. Census Bureau (2024 American Community Survey, accessed September 15, 2025), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (accessed September 14, 2025), and the Pew Research Center (accessed July 23, 2025); see endnote for full citations. • Created with Datawrapper

CRIMINALITY AND ARREST METHODS

There was not only a disparity in the magnitude of arrests and arrest rates, but also in the criminality of those arrested and the methods used by ICE. Figure 5 presents the distribution of arrests by criminality categories. The share of convicted criminals was similar in both states—44% in California and 41% in Texas.²⁰ However, the other two categories show sharper contrasts. Only 12% of arrests in California fell into the “Pending Criminal Charges” group, compared with 27% for Texas.²¹ Those with no criminal record (“Other Immigration Violator”) made up 44% of arrests in the Golden State, compared with only 33% in the Lone Star State. In other words, non-criminals comprised a significantly greater share of those arrested in California.

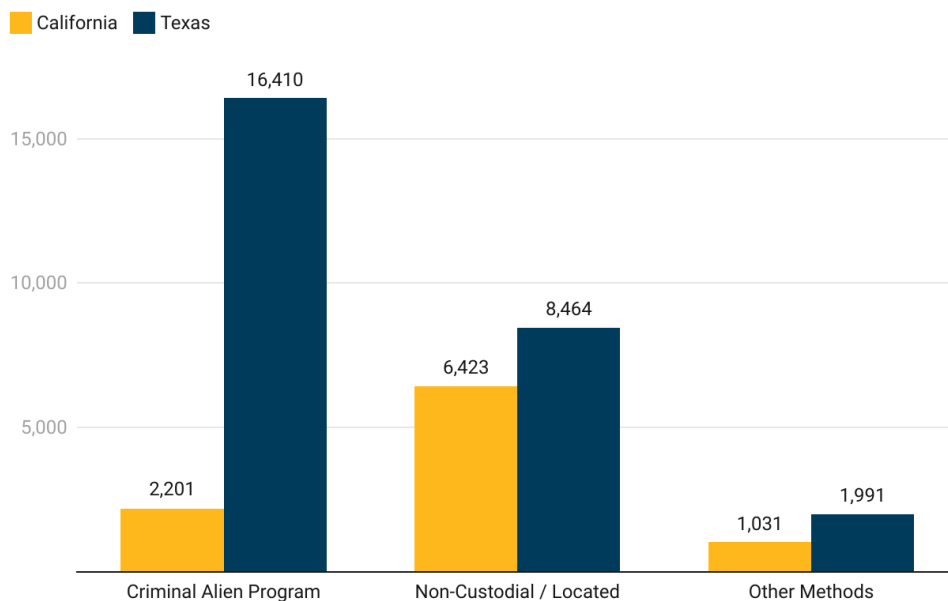
Figure 5. Percentage of ICE Arrestees by Criminality Category, California and Texas



Source: Analysis by the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge using data from the Deportation Data Project (UC Berkeley Law School, accessed August 16, 2025). • Created with Datawrapper

Analyzing the method of arrest provides more insights (see Figure 6). “Non-custodial” and “Located” arrests (those occurring in the broader community rather than in government facilities) were less common in California, though they still totaled more than six thousand. The largest discrepancy was in arrests through the Criminal Alien Program (CAP), which targets individuals incarcerated at federal, state, and local facilities.²² Texas made over seven times as many arrests in this category as California. This disparity is largely due to the different policies discussed earlier: the Golden State restricts cooperation with ICE, while the Lone Star State requires it. The result is particularly noticeable in the number of arrests at local facilities—for every 20 such arrests made in Texas, less than one occurred in California.

Figure 6. ICE Arrests by Method in California and Texas, February–July 2025



Source: Analysis by the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge using data from the Deportation Data Project (UC Berkeley Law School, accessed August 16, 2025). • Created with Datawrapper

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The analysis highlights the disparate impacts of the surge in ICE arrests under President Trump across the two states. The increase in Texas was several times greater than in California, both in absolute numbers and relative to the potential at-risk population. Part of this divergence stems from state-level policies: the Golden State has restricted cooperation with ICE, while the Lone Star State has mandated it. This policy divide reflects broader differences in political philosophy regarding the role of states in enforcing federal immigration laws and the importance of maintaining trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement. Ultimately, these opposing positions are rooted in partisan politics, with California dominated by Democrats and Texas by Republicans.

Opposition to ICE, however, dampened but did not halt arrests. California was more effective in limiting transfers of incarcerated immigrants from state and local facilities. Many in this group had committed only non-violent offenses or misdemeanors, or had not yet had their cases adjudicated. They were not the so-called ‘worst of the worst.’

The Golden State was less effective in minimizing ICE arrests in the broader community, which drew grassroots protests. Most of those arrested had no criminal history and represented the type of immigrants that an overwhelming majority of Americans view as a “good thing...for this country today” and believe should have a path to citizenship.²³ At the same time, most Americans agree that individuals who have committed serious crimes should be deported. The unfortunate reality is that ICE’s broad dragnet, sometimes shaped by racial profiling, ensnares many productive and responsible immigrants²⁴ whom Americans say should be welcome as integral members of society and the economy.

Endnotes

- 1 Paul Ong, Jonathan Ong, and Chhandara Pech, "State Variations in Ice Arrests," UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge, July 30, 2025, <https://knowledge.luskin.ucla.edu/2025/07/30/state-variations-in-ice-arrests-following-the-2024-election/>. Accessed September 15, 2025.
- 2 Data for this analysis is provided by the Deportation Data Project, UC Berkeley Law School. <https://deportationdata.org/index.html>. Accessed August 16, 2025.
- 3 The American Presidency Project, University of California, Santa Barbara, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/statistics/elections/2024>. Accessed July 25, 2025.
- 4 Tyler Katzenberger, "Poll suggests Trump's ICE raids are backfiring in California." *Politico*, August 22, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/22/poll-suggests-trumps-ice-raids-are-backfiring-in-california-00519240>. Accessed September 16, 2025.
- 5 Bryan Luhn, "New Texas Trends Survey Finds Texans Remain Deeply Divided Over Immigration and Border Security Issues," August 15, 2024, <https://www.uh.edu/news-events/stories/2024/august/08152024-hobby-immigration-survey.php>. Accessed September 16, 2025.
- 6 University of Houston Hobby School, "Texans Weigh in on Immigration Issues," January 30, 2025, <https://www.uh.edu/news-events/stories/2025/january/01302025-tx-leg-immigration.php>. Accessed September 16, 2025.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 National Conference of State Legislatures, "State Partisan Composition," n.d., <https://www.ncsl.org/about-state-legislatures/state-partisan-composition>. Accessed September 15, 2025.
- 9 Texas Secretary of State, "Statewide Elected Officials," n.d., <https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/elected.shtml>; and Ballotpedia, "California state executive offices," n.d., https://ballotpedia.org/California_state_executive_offices. Accessed September 15, 2025.
- 10 California Legislative Information, "SB-54 Law enforcement: sharing data," n.d., https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB54. Accessed September 12, 2025.
- 11 Senate Research Center, "Bill Analysis, S.B. 4," January 23, 2017, <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/85R/analysis/html/SB00004I.htm>. Accessed September 12, 2025.
- 12 Texas Intergovernmental Affairs, "Bill Analysis, S.B. 8," n.d., <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/89R/analysis/html/SB00008H.htm>. Accessed September 12, 2025.
- 13 Mohamed Al Elew and Wendy Fry, "Here's Every Local Police Agency Enforcing for ICE," April 16, 2025, *The Markup*, <https://themarkup.org/tools/2025/04/16/law-enforcement-ice-cooperation-tracker>; and Immigrant Legal Resource Center, "287(g)," n.d., <https://www.ilrc.org/practitioners/national-map-287g-agreements>. Accessed Sept 12, 2025.
- 14 Stuart Anderson, "Stephen Miller's Order Likely Sparked Immigration Arrests And Protests," June 09, 2025, *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2025/06/09/stephen-millers-order-likely-sparked-immigration-arrests-and-protests/>. Accessed September 7, 2025.
- 15 See for example: Wendy Fry and Sergio Olmos, "Judge says immigration agents must stop 'roving patrols' that have upended Southern California," July 11, 2025, *Cal Matters*, <https://calmatters.org/justice/2025/07/11-immigration-restraining-order/>; Patrick Smith, Mirna Alsharif, Gary Grumbach and Dennis Romero, "As immigration raids continue, ICE protests spread coast to coast," June 11, 2025, *NBC News*, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/anti-ice-protests-held-coast-coast-l-unrest-national-movement-grows-rcna211980>; Ted Hesson, Tim Reid and Nicole Jeanine Johnson, "ICE agents face burnout and frustration amid Trump's aggressive enforcement," Sept. 1, 2025, *USA Today*, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/09/01/aggressive-immigration-enforcement-burnout-ice-agents/85859330007/>. Accessed September 7, 2025.
- 16 U.S. Census Bureau, "2024 Data Release New and Notable," n.d., <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/news/data-releases/2024/release.html>. Accessed September 15, 2025.
- 17 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Homeland Security Statistics, "Estimates of the Illegal Alien Population Residing in the United States," <https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/illegal/population-estimates>. Accessed September 14, 2025.
- 18 Jeffrey S. Passel and Jens Manuel Krogstad, "What We Know About Unauthorized Immigrants Living in the U.S." Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/07/22/what-we-know-about-unauthorized-immigrants-living-in-the-us/>. Accessed July 23, 2025.
- 19 We used the growth rate between 2022 and 2024 in the number of non-citizens reported by the American Community Survey to inflate the estimated number of undocumented immigrants.
- 20 The disparity in absolute counts was significant, with California having less than a third as many as Texas.
- 21 The disparity in absolute counts was even greater, with California having less than a seventh as many as Texas.
- 22 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "Criminal Alien Program," n.d., <https://www.ice.gov/identify-and-arrest/criminal-alien-program>. Accessed September 15, 2025.
- 23 Lydia Saad, "Surge in U.S. Concern About Immigration Has Abated," July 11, 2025, *Gallup News*, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/692522/surge-concern-immigration-abated.aspx>. Accessed September 7, 2025.
- 24 American Immigration Council, "How the Supreme Court's Latest Decision Clears the Way for Racial Profiling During Immigration Raids," September 9, 2025, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/supreme-courts-decision-racial-profiling-immigration-raids/>. Accessed September 17, 2025.