

Articles

Arrest and deportation of Mexicans from the United States during the first semester of Trump 2.0

Arresto y deportación de mexicanos desde Estados Unidos durante el primer semestre de Trump 2.0

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Abstract

This article examines the arrests and deportations of migrants from within the United States during the first half of Trump's second term (2025-2029). Its central objective is to analyze the extent to which this administration is succeeding in arresting and deporting "criminal migrants" in the volumes and terms it promised during the presidential campaign, with particular attention to the case of Mexican migrants. The methodology is based on establishing a historical baseline of deportations over the past 25 years. Given this context and the lack of government data on recent deportations, the Deportation Data Project database is used to analyze migrant arrests during the first half of 2025. The results indicate a rapid increase in arrests, which nevertheless contradicts the government's rhetoric of prioritizing the deportation of migrants with criminal records.

Keywords: deportations, arrests, Trump, United States, Mexico.

Resumen

Este artículo examina los arrestos y deportaciones de personas migrantes desde el interior de Estados Unidos durante el primer semestre de la segunda administración de Trump (2025-2029). Su objetivo central es analizar hasta qué punto este gobierno está logrando arrestar y deportar a "migrantes criminales" en los volúmenes y términos que prometió durante la campaña presidencial, con particular atención en el caso de los migrantes mexicanos. La metodología se basa en la construcción de una línea de base histórica de deportaciones en los últimos 25 años. A partir de este contexto y ante la ausencia de información gubernamental sobre deportaciones recientes, se utiliza la base de datos del Deportation Data Project para analizar los arrestos de migrantes durante el primer semestre de 2025. Los resultados indican un

Received on September 18, 2025.

Accepted on January 15, 2026.

Published on February 9, 2026.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE LANGUAGE:
SPANISH.



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CITATION: Alarcón, R. & Calva Sánchez, L. E. (2026). Arrest and deportation of Mexicans from the United States during the first semester of Trump 2.0. *Estudios Fronterizos*, 27, Article e179. <https://doi.org/10.21670/ref.2601179>

crecimiento acelerado de los arrestos, que sin embargo contradicen el discurso gubernamental de priorizar la deportación de migrantes con antecedentes criminales.

Palabras clave: deportaciones, arrestos, Trump, Estados Unidos, México.

Introduction

The start of Donald Trump's second presidential term marked the immediate implementation of restrictive immigration policies previously announced in his election platform. On January 20, 2025—a symbolic date that some media outlets labeled as the beginning of the “Trump 2.0 era”—the federal government issued a package of 26 executive orders covering multiple dimensions of its agenda. Among these, six provisions stood out for explicitly articulating the administration's anti-immigrant strategy: “Protecting the American people against invasion” (Executive Order 14159), “Protecting the meaning and value of American citizenship” (Executive Order 14160), “Protecting the United States from foreign terrorist and other national security and public safety threats” (Executive Order 14161), “Realigning the United States Refugee Admissions Program” (Executive Order 14163) and “Securing our borders” (Executive Order 14165) (Federal Register, 2025).

The issuance of these executive orders on day one of the administration not only reflects the continuation of policies promoted during Trump's first term (2017-2021) (Chishti & Bolter, 2017), but also expresses the connection with two strategies that the new administration began to implement in its first 100 days: increased border surveillance and mass deportations of migrants (Christi & Bush-Joseph, 2025). After the first frantic six months, this agenda shows that undocumented migrants are not the only target of the deportation policy—other groups are also under threat, such as beneficiaries of Humanitarian Parole and Temporary Protected Status, legal permanent residents, temporary visa holders (including international students), and even tourists, who now face increased scrutiny when attempting to enter the United States.

At the beginning of his second term, Trump set himself the goal of deporting one million people a year (Debusmann & Wendling, 2025), emphasizing that his priority was to expel the “worst of the worst illegal immigrants”, whom he considers criminals (US Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2025). After six months in office, on July 20, 2025, the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Kristi Noem, announced the arrest of “more than 300 000 illegal immigrants so far in 2025” and that 70% of the arrests made by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) were “criminal illegal immigrants with criminal charges or convictions” (DHS, 2025).

The U.S. government's crackdown on migrants set off alarm bells in many sectors, both among migrant advocacy organizations within the United States and among organizations and government actors in the countries of origin. In Mexico, the government designed strategies to assist a large number of Mexican nationals, including consular assistance and, in the event of deportation, access to welfare programs, employment, transportation, affiliation with the Mexican Social Security Institute and financial support of 2 000 pesos through the Tarjeta Bienestar Paisano. The Mexican government also established ten care centers for deportees in border cities (Gobierno de México, 2025).

Despite all the threats in the first few months of 2025, these centers did not reach full capacity; some even stayed almost empty. The same thing happened at the shelters run by civil society in Mexican border cities. Official figures published by the Mexican government on compatriots deported from the United States reflect this phenomenon: comparing the first seven months of 2024 with those of 2025, there was a 29.5% drop, from 118 527 to 83 532 events. Consistent with the above, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that between January 20 and August 23, 2025, 82 049 migrants had been deported from the United States, noting that more than half had received some form of consular assistance (Camacho Servín, 2025).

The apparent discrepancy between the Trump administration's initial expectations regarding the number of deportations of "criminal migrants" and the results observed during the first six months of his administration justifies this study. Its main objective is to analyze the extent to which the Trump administration is succeeding in arresting and deporting "criminal migrants" in the numbers and terms promised during the presidential campaign, with a particular focus on the Mexican-born population.

To this end, the dynamics of the arrest and deportation of migrants from within the United States between 2001 and 2024 are first analyzed to establish a frame of reference for evaluating the specific changes that occurred at the beginning of Trump's second administration (2025-2029). From a historical and comparative perspective, this paper reviews the policies implemented by the administrations of George W. Bush (2001-2009), Barack Obama (2009-2017), Donald Trump (2017-2021) and Joseph R. Biden (2021-2025).

Given that the second Trump administration has not published detailed official deportation statistics—it limits itself to general figures such as the arrest of more than 300 000 immigrants, of whom 70% are claimed to have criminal records (DHS, 2025)—the second part of this analysis focuses on identification and arrest processes within the country for the period from January 2011 to July 2025. This data series is used to analyze in greater detail what happened during the first half of that term.

Since there is no single source of data on arrest and deportation events, the methodological approach integrates information from DHS and ICE reports, as well as from independent organizations such as FOIAproject.org and the Deportation Data Project (DDP, 2025). Through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, these organizations have obtained record-level databases that enable systematic access to information on arrest and deportation events from recent years.

The paper is divided into four sections. After this introduction, the theoretical and methodological framework is presented. The subsequent two sections analyze the events surrounding the arrest and deportation of migrants. Finally, the study's conclusions are presented.

Deportation of migrants: theoretical and methodological perspective

Conceptual elements

According to the Immigration and Nationality Act, U.S. citizens by birth or naturalization cannot be deported from the United States. Therefore, undocumented individuals, as well as legal permanent residents and foreigners who have some visa or temporary protection, are subject to deportation. For Kanstroom (2007, p. 5), deportation in the United States, in addition to being part of the immigration control system, is a powerful tool for social control, national security and xenophobia, as well as a mechanism for the creation of culprits, ostracism and family and community separation.

Deportations of non-citizens by U.S. immigration authorities can occur in the border regions with Mexico and Canada. However, they can also take place from within the country when immigrants who are in an irregular situation or who have been accused of committing a serious crime are deported. Since the mid-1990s, Mexican citizens who have not acquired U.S. citizenship have topped the list of deportees. Mexicans are the largest immigrant population and have the highest number of undocumented immigrants residing in the United States. The Pew Research Center estimates that in 2023, the undocumented population in the United States reached 14 million people, of which 4 250 000 were Mexican, constituting 30.3% of the total (Passel & Krogstad, 2025).

According to Kanstroom (2007, pp. 6-7), the current U.S. deportation system has its historical roots in the exclusion and expulsion of Chinese workers in the late 19th century, the war on crime in the early 20th century, the Palmer raids against anarchists and communists, the prohibition of alcohol and McCarthy's Cold War against communists. However, the reasoning behind deportation is based on theories that legitimized the expulsion of Native Americans from their lands and on laws that governed the capture and forced return of fugitive slaves to their owners between the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The criminalization of immigrants did not begin with Trump's first administration in 2017. In 1996, there was a radical shift toward the institutionalization of the criminalization of migrants, as Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), which eventually became the legal basis for enabling the formal mass deportation of non-citizens, many of whom are now accused of being criminals.

The IIRIRA brought about the convergence of the Immigration and Nationality Act and the U.S. criminal justice system, resulting in an increase in the prosecution of immigration-related crimes and in the number of state and federal crimes leading to removal. Likewise, the criteria for immigration judges to suspend removal have been reduced and the categories of non-citizens subject to arrest have been increased (Meissner et al., 2013, pp. 92-93).

Meissner et al. (2013, p. 98) consider that there are now five different categories of crimes for which non-citizens, if convicted, may be deported: crimes of moral turpitude; controlled substance offenses; weapons or destructive device offenses; crimes of

domestic violence or against children; and aggravated felonies, which include around 50 offenses, ranging from serious to relatively minor offenses, including those previously classified as misdemeanors.

Formal deportations of Mexican migrants, especially from within the United States, began to increase after September 11, 2001, when the Patriot Act became law and undocumented immigration became a matter of national security. In 2002, Section 287(g) of the IIRIRA began to be implemented, allowing the DHS to establish agreements with city and county law enforcement agencies to train their officers as immigration agents. Subsequently, other programs emerged, such as the Secure Communities Program and the Fugitives Program, which contributed to an increase in the number of Mexicans removed (Alarcón, 2016; Meissner et al., 2013).

Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013) state that deportations took a new direction after the September 11 attacks in a context of global economic crisis, which led to a shift toward the application of severe measures within the territory, so that deportation has become a widespread and racialized state removal project, focused on Latin American and Caribbean immigrants. In this regard, the concept of a “deportation regime” is very useful for describing this growing global mechanism of state control (De Genova, 2010). For their part, Menjívar and Abrego (2012), drawing on the experiences of Central American immigrants, observe that the implementation of immigration and criminal laws constitutes a form of legal violence that affects the daily lives of immigrants and their processes of incorporation into U.S. society.

From a theoretical perspective, a concept helps explain the intent behind Trump’s aggressive deportation policy in his second term: *deterrence by enforcement*. This concept was originally used in a military context. Mazarr (2018, p. 3) defines *deterrence* as “dissuasion through threat”. In this regard, the goal of deterrence is to convince a potential attacker that the cost-benefit calculation of aggression is unfavorable to them, emphasizing the costs of aggression and offering guarantees and benefits that make a world without aggression more attractive (Mazarr, 2018, p. 5).

Based on the theory of deterrence through law enforcement used for military purposes, Cornelius (2001) uses the concept of *prevention through deterrence* to apply it to undocumented migration from Mexico to the United States in the period following the implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, which, in addition to granting broad legalization of the undocumented population, sought to control future undocumented immigration. Cornelius (2001) analyzes how the U.S. federal government, with increased border surveillance, sought to deter unauthorized migration by making undocumented crossing more difficult, dangerous and costly.

In the era of Trump’s second administration, the theory of deterrence through law enforcement seems to be used, on the one hand, to deter potential irregular migrants from crossing the border in the face of the danger of being quickly arrested—given the large increase in the number of border agents—only to be held in detention centers in deplorable conditions and ultimately deported. For undocumented Mexicans already residing in the United States, aggressive ICE raids—which can arrest anyone

on the street based on their physical appearance and deport them to Mexico within 24 hours—along with the difficulty of finding formal employment and the fear of obtaining benefits for children born in that country, serve to make life in the United States impossible, to encourage undocumented individuals to self-deport to Mexico.

This seems to be the Trump administration's best option, as self-deportation of undocumented immigrants is the cheapest. To this end, the Trump administration designed the CBP Home app to persuade undocumented immigrants to opt for self-deportation and facilitate their voluntary departure from the United States. As of April 24, 2025, the Trump administration had announced that at least 5 000 immigrants had used CBP Home to report that they were leaving the United States (Chishti & Bush-Joseph, 2025).

In addition to actions to encourage self-deportation, Trump continues to strengthen the government apparatus used to identify and deport non-citizens. There are three main forms of expulsion from the United States, with different modalities and legal consequences. The first, called *removal*—also defined as formal deportation—is the compulsory departure of a non-citizen from the border or from within the country, based on a formal removal order issued by an immigration judge or certain DHS officials. The second, *expedited removal*, is issued by DHS officials, so it does not go through an immigration judge, can be decided more quickly than removal and offers fewer due process protections than immigration proceedings conducted in court. Non-citizens who have been in the United States for less than two years and do not have legal status or an application for protection may be subject to this simplified deportation process. Those who receive a removal order are prohibited from re-entering the United States for a period determined by the circumstances of their deportation. There are four types of bans: five years for those removed through expedited removal; 10 years for those removed by an immigration judge; 20 years for those who have been previously removed and receive a second removal order. Finally, there is a lifetime ban for those who have committed repeated immigration violations or have been convicted of certain serious crimes (Gelatt & Bush-Joseph, 2025, pp. 3-6).

The third type of expulsion is called *return*. It applies to non-citizens who are declared inadmissible at a port of entry, detained near the border, or considered removable and may have been arrested within the country. These individuals may be offered the opportunity to withdraw their application for admission or voluntarily return to their country of origin rather than undergo removal proceedings (Moskowitz & Lee, 2022, p. 3). Unlike removal, return has no legal consequences for the future. Gelatt and Bush-Joseph (2025, p. 3) refer to this as *enforcement return*. This type of removal has been observed mainly among people arrested at the Mexican border, which is why historically the largest number of returnees have been Mexican citizens. It should be noted that this figure has decreased dramatically. An analysis of events involving Mexicans expelled—removed or returned—between fiscal years 2000 and 2015 shows that the proportion of those removed out of the total increased dramatically, from 10% in 2000 to almost 90% in 2015. This shows that the U.S. government decided to drastically apply the legal consequences of removal to most Mexicans arrested and expelled from the border (Calva Sánchez & Alarcón Acosta, 2018, p. 54).

Methodological approach

This paper analyzes the actions against migrants implemented by the Trump administration during the first six months of his second term, focusing on understanding and systematizing the process that includes arrests and removals. The analysis focuses specifically on actions aimed at expelling non-citizens from within the United States—who are presumed to be residing in the country—which expressly excludes those arrested at the borders with Mexico and Canada. In other words, it focuses on a subset of so-called *removals*.

The figures on removals are used to construct a scenario of what happened during the presidential administrations of this century: George W. Bush (2001-2009), Barack Obama (2009-2017), Donald Trump (2017-2021) and Joseph R. Biden (2021-2025). The purpose is to provide a historical reference point for contextualizing the changes observed, both during Trump's first administration and, primarily, at the beginning of his second term.

One way to construct this historical series is to use aggregate data on removals published by the Office of Homeland Security Statistics (2023), which date back to 1892. Based on this series, for example, it has been claimed that the Obama administration deported the most people (Chishti et al., 2017). Nevertheless, not all removals result from detentions within the country. Since the end of the last century, procedures have changed, affecting these figures. For example, the IIRIRA of 1996 allowed immigration officers to determine whether a foreign national was inadmissible and to process them through *expedited removal* (INS, 1999). In this century, the removal process has also been used to punish undocumented crossings more vigorously and has been applied more frequently to individuals arrested at the border who are repeat offenders (Calva Sánchez & Alarcón Acosta, 2018).

Therefore, in addition to reviewing the total number of removals, this study sought to specifically identify those related to the deportation of people within the country. To this end, the distinction made since the end of the last century between "removals from within the country" was used for the first part of the series (2001 to 2004), complementing it with data on removals in which ICE is the authority involved in the arrest or identification covering 2008 to 2024. For the period between 2004 and 2007, an estimate is presented using a straight line that aligns with the amounts for the extreme years, as figures were not available in the reports.

This approach has some limitations. In principle, during the first period, other processes also involved individuals who could have been arrested in the interior and deported. For example, in fiscal year 1997, 74 000 foreign nationals who admitted to having been in the country for more than three days were expelled through voluntary departure: 35% had stayed for more than a year and 42% had stayed between one month and a year (INS, 1999, p. 166).

The figures on removals specifically associated with the start of Trump's second term had not been published at the time of this study. To complement the scenario and delve deeper into the arrest process, figures were used from events in which

foreign nationals were identified for violating immigration laws. To focus on those identified within the United States, it was considered that, of the two main operational agencies of the DHS, it is ICE—and not U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)—that is responsible for operations within the national territory. Among the data sources used to obtain this information are the Deportation Data Project (DDP, 2025) and the dynamic tables of TRAC Immigration (TRAC Reports, 2018). From these sources, a historical series was constructed for the period from the fourth quarter of 2011 to the second quarter of 2025.

These databases provide information on arrests, so it should be clarified that in the context of immigration operations within the United States, an “administrative arrest” carried out by ICE’s Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) division constitutes the initial act by which an agent takes physical custody of a person for alleged violations of immigration law. This is an administrative, not a criminal, action based on the authority conferred by immigration statutes. Its main purpose is to initiate a removal process.

The purpose of analyzing these data is, on the one hand, to identify how the number of events and their distribution has changed according to the type of action taken by the authorities to identify foreign nationals. When considering these actions, it is clear that there are various situations in which a non-citizen may be identified and arrested in order to initiate removal proceedings. Among the most common is Program 287(g), which delegates immigration enforcement powers to state and local law enforcement agencies. Under this program, police officers trained and supervised by ICE can perform specific immigration functions within their jurisdictions, including identifying individuals in irregular immigration status (ICE, 2025a). Another measure to identify and detain non-citizens is the Criminal Arrest Program (CAP), designed to identify, arrest and deport foreign nationals who pose a threat to public safety. Its main focus is on foreign nationals incarcerated in federal, state, or local prisons, as well as those who are free but have criminal records. This program operates through detainers issued by ICE for individuals in police custody who are subject to deportation, preventing their release (ICE, 2025b).

In addition to these programs, ICE classifies identification and arrest events into other categories, such as *located* and *non-custodial arrest*. East and Cox (2025) note that although these arrests are not particularly well documented, they may encompass a wide range of situations that cannot be classified within the Criminal Arrest Program or any other existing category. Regarding the latter, Gelatt and Bush-Joseph (2025) refer to them as ICE control operations in workplaces or in the community.

Removals of non-citizens from within the United States

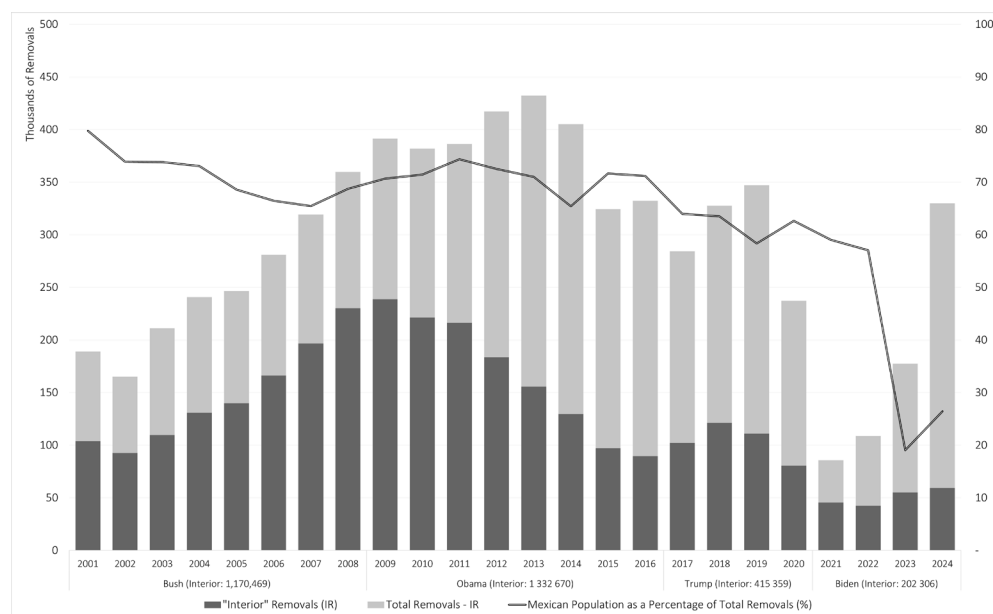
Although fiscal year 1997 is not included in the main period covered by this analysis, it was that year that a substantial increase in the number of removals was identified. Prior to that year, the figures had remained relatively low, with a maximum of 69 000 events. Nonetheless, beginning in 1997, the number grew rapidly, nearly doubling to

114 060 removals (INS, 1999). This increase occurred in the context of the implementation of the IIRIRA of 1996, which precipitated various changes in the procedures for formally deporting foreign nationals. According to the INS (2000, p. 200), the most significant reform was the expedited removal process, which allowed immigration officers to determine the inadmissibility of a foreign national and process them through this fast-track procedure.

Among the characteristics of removals during this period, the predominance of Mexican nationals stands out, representing 84.1% of the total. In addition, 46.4% of all removals involved individuals with criminal records. This percentage remained very similar for removals of Mexicans, but varied significantly among other national groups. For example, among Guatemalans, only 23.2% of removals fell into this category (INS, 1999).

For fiscal year 2001, already during the Bush administration, the total number of removals increased to 176 984. Of these, 55% were from within the country. Figure 1 shows the total number of removals—separating the total number of removals from within the country and their complement—and the percentage of events in which the migrant is a Mexican citizen. Mexicans remained the predominant group, accounting for 80% of those removed.

Figure 1. Number of removals from the United States and percentage of the population born in Mexico, fiscal years 2001 to 2024



Source: created by the authors using data from ICE (n. d., 2015, 2024), Office of Homeland Security Statistics (2023). Note: for the number of removals from within the country between 2004 and 2007, a straight line is used to present the estimate, adjusted to match the extreme-year numbers.

An analysis of the series in Figure 1, by presidential term, shows that during the two Bush administrations (2001-2009), the total number of removals rose from approximately 189 000 to 359 000, reaching nearly 2 million events. Subsequently, during the Obama administration (2009-2017), the annual number continued to increase, but at a different rate, reaching 432 000 in 2013 (the highest in the entire series), for a total of nearly three million removals. This situation was the reason why this president has been called the “deporter-in-chief” (García, 2016). Nevertheless, when comparing the Bush and Obama administrations, considering only removals within the country, the totals are closer: 1.17 million and 1.32 million, respectively. This leads to the conclusion that the evidence supporting the title of “deporter-in-chief” for Obama is no longer as compelling. At the end of his administration, some people put forward arguments similar to the ones above. They pointed out that under Obama, there was a shift in focus toward deporting people who had recently crossed the border and alleged “criminals”, rather than people arrested within the United States (Chishti et al., 2017).

During his first term (2017-2021), Trump continued with his specific threat to deport “bad hombres”, migrants from Mexico, since, according to him, this country sends its “rapists and criminals to the United States”. Peña (2017) points out that, through an executive action in 2017, Trump 1.0 restored the Secure Communities Program, which Obama had canceled, giving the government greater discretion to determine whether a migrant poses a threat to national security rather than to identify and arrest criminals who have committed serious crimes.

This administration began with a reduction in total removals, attributable exclusively to a decrease in border removals, as removals from within the country increased by 25% (ICE, n. d.). In absolute terms, removals from within the country rose from 65 332 (2016) to 81 603 (2017), reaching a peak of 95 360 in 2018. They subsequently fell to 62 739 in 2020—below the last year of the Obama administration—for a total of 415 359 over the four fiscal years. While the COVID-19 pandemic may have played a role, the downward trend was already evident in 2019, suggesting additional factors were at play. During the Biden administration (2021-2024), total removals rose rapidly, but removals from within the country fell to 31 557 (2021) and then to 28 204—just one-tenth of the 2008 peak (234 770). The period ended with an annual average of approximately 46 000, for a total of 202 306. This identifies a general downward trend in removals from within the country since 2008, accentuated during the pandemic.

Types of arrest of non-U.S. citizens

To complement the analysis of removals from within the United States and update it to the first six months of Trump’s second term, events resulting from the identification and arrest of non-citizens by ICE were analyzed, as well as determining how some of these actions are constant over time, while others become more or less important depending on determining factors, such as the specific actions taken by each administration or changes in the population liable to deportation.

Beyond variations in the number of removals from within the United States across presidential terms, it is crucial to recognize that elements of the regulatory and institutional framework for these removals transcend particular administrations. Likewise, the operational consolidation of some measures reaches its maximum impact in administrations other than those in which they were created. Below, some of the measures that are most relevant to these arrest processes are analyzed.

Program 287(g) allows local and state police to assume certain federal immigration powers that they would not normally have. It was established through the IIRIRA of 1996. There are three main models of 287(g) agreements. The first memorandum of understanding was signed in 2002. By 2005, only three localities had signed agreements between local police and immigration authorities, but the program expanded with increased federal funding, and by 2010, there were 71 agreements in effect (Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013). According to ICE, as of September 15, 2025, 287(g) agreements under the Jail Enforcement Model had been signed with 129 law enforcement agencies in 27 states, 287(g) agreements under the Warrant Service Officer program to execute arrest warrants had been signed with 371 law enforcement agencies in 35 states, and 287(g) agreements under the Task Force Model had been signed with 501 agencies in 33 states (ICE, 2025c). Of the agreements signed between 2019 and 2025, 86% were signed in 2025; of these, 32.0% were with agencies in Florida and 16.9% with agencies in Texas. The governors of both states aggressively support Trump's anti-immigrant policy.

The implementation of the 287(g) program has a direct impact on immigrant communities, primarily through an increase in arrests and deportations, but above all through racial discrimination. Critics point out that the 287(g) program increases racial profiling, as officers have more power to target immigrant communities, especially Latin American and Caribbean communities. It has been shown that police arrest Latinos much more frequently for minor offenses, such as traffic violations, which can lead to immigration status checks and deportations (Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013).

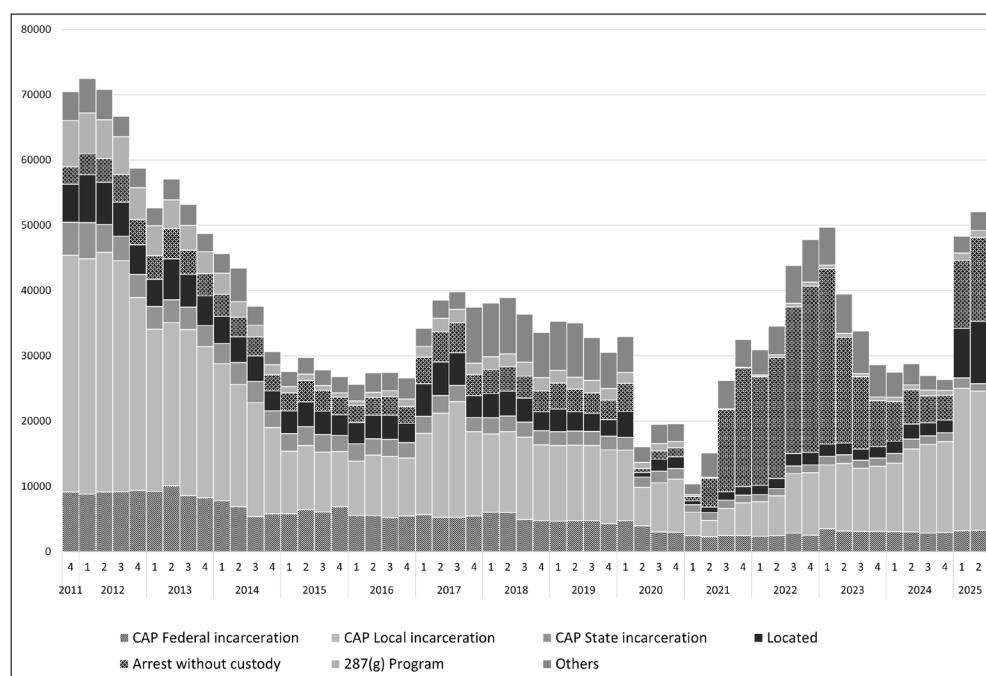
CAP is another of the main mechanisms used by ICE to identify individuals who are undocumented or subject to deportation. Its objective is to arrest individuals eligible for deportation who have been convicted of crimes. CAP is the largest of the four programs in terms of removals. For example, in fiscal year 2011, ICE issued 212 744 documents of accusation for deportation through CAP. In its operations, ICE issues detention orders against individuals whom the agency has probable cause to believe are foreign nationals subject to removal from the United States and who are currently in the custody of federal, state, or local law enforcement agencies (ICE, 2025b). In addition to the above programs, ICE also directly arrests migrants through raids or other strategies. For its general operations, this agency has, on several occasions since its inception, increased its agent staff.

Figure 2 shows the number of arrests from the last quarter of 2011 to the second quarter of 2025, already within Trump's second term. Several elements stand out: first, the total number of events per administrative period is higher during the Obama administration. Although the series does not cover his two full terms, in 2011 the quarterly amount was close to 70 000 events, but with a clear downward trend that reversed

with the arrival of Trump's first presidential term. This situation coincides with what is observed in the removal figures. In fact, the overall picture is very similar: during the pandemic, a downward trend in arrests that had begun in the middle of Trump's first term continued, and it increased under Biden. Nevertheless, these data clearly show that the number of arrests increased after the start of Trump's second term.

Various research groups have analyzed the figures from the Deportation Data Project and identified this increase. According to the Immigration Research Initiative, which has analyzed the figures from the Deportation Data Project, this increase occurred immediately after the start of Trump's second term. It intensified in mid-May 2025, when ICE implemented a quota requiring its agents to arrest 3 000 people per day (East & Cox, 2025).

Figure 2. Quarterly number of migrant arrests by ICE in the United States, by primary arrest method, 2011-2025



Source: created by the authors using data from the Deportation Data Project (2025) and TRAC Reports (2018)

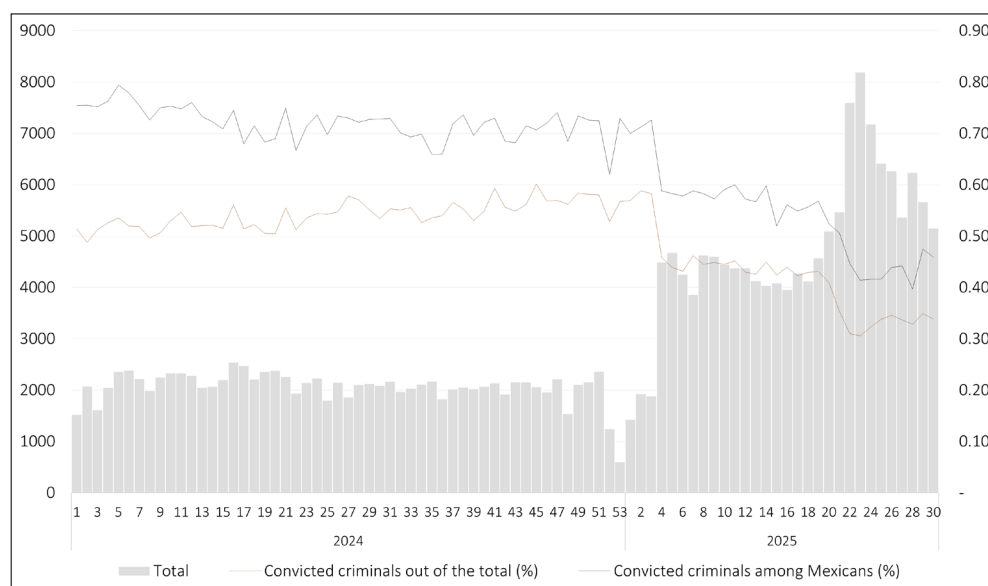
In addition to the number of arrests, the main analytical contribution of Figure 2 lies in identifying the methods that explain the variation observed in arrest figures. Among these, CAP is the most significant explanatory factor. As previously noted, this program focuses on foreign nationals incarcerated in federal, state or local institutions, as well as those on parole or with criminal records. The data also reveal that most of these cases involve local incarcerations. This subset not only represents the highest proportion of arrests (38% of the total cases analyzed and, in some quarters, more

than 50%) but also exhibits the greatest temporal variability during the period studied. Metaphorically, it could be argued that this method is the most susceptible to the political interests of the administration in office and reflects its ability to adapt to changing government guidelines.

The other types of arrests do not show such drastic changes as local CAP, although there were notable increases in non-custodial arrests during the Biden period. In addition, particularly during Trump's second term, there has also been a significant increase in arrests labeled as *located*. The percentage of this type of arrest has not been as high, representing only 9% of the total cases in the historical series. However, in the first two quarters of 2025, it reached 16% and 18%, respectively. East and Cox (2025) indicate that only 33% of these cases result in a criminal conviction.

Related to the above and to round off the general picture of migrant arrests, it should be noted that one of the arguments put forward by the current administration is that efforts to expel undocumented persons focus on "criminal immigrants". Nonetheless, arrest statistics show that in 2024, the percentage of arrests involving "convicted criminals" remained around 50% (see Figure 3). In week three of 2025, before the administration took office, this percentage was 53%; by week five it had fallen to 43%, and it has continued to decline to 41%, just before ICE imposed its target of 3 000 daily arrests in week 20 (mid-May). As a result, the percentage of arrests associated with "convicted criminals" fell rapidly again to 30%. This suggests that the additional efforts being made by the Trump administration to expel migrants are particularly affecting those who are not labeled as "convicted criminals".

Figure 3. Weekly average of migrant arrests by ICE in the United States, and percentage of individuals identified as convicted criminals, January 2024 to July 2025



Source: created by the authors using data from the Deportation Data Project (2025)

Mexicans among those arrested and deported under the Trump 2.0 administration

As shown in Figure 1, people born in Mexico constitute the largest group among those removed between 2001 and 2024. In part, this is because they are the largest group of migrants in the United States and the group with the largest presence among the undocumented population. The data in Figure 1 suggest that the proportion of people born in Mexico among those removed from the United States is trending downward. Although this percentage is based on the total number of removals, the same trend is evident when analyzing ICE's figures on migrant arrests by citizenship. In fiscal year 2016, Mexicans accounted for 65% of all removals; since then, there has been a steady decline, reaching a low of 28% in 2023, although it subsequently rose to 38% in fiscal year 2024. This raises a key question: Will this percentage continue to rise during Trump's second term?

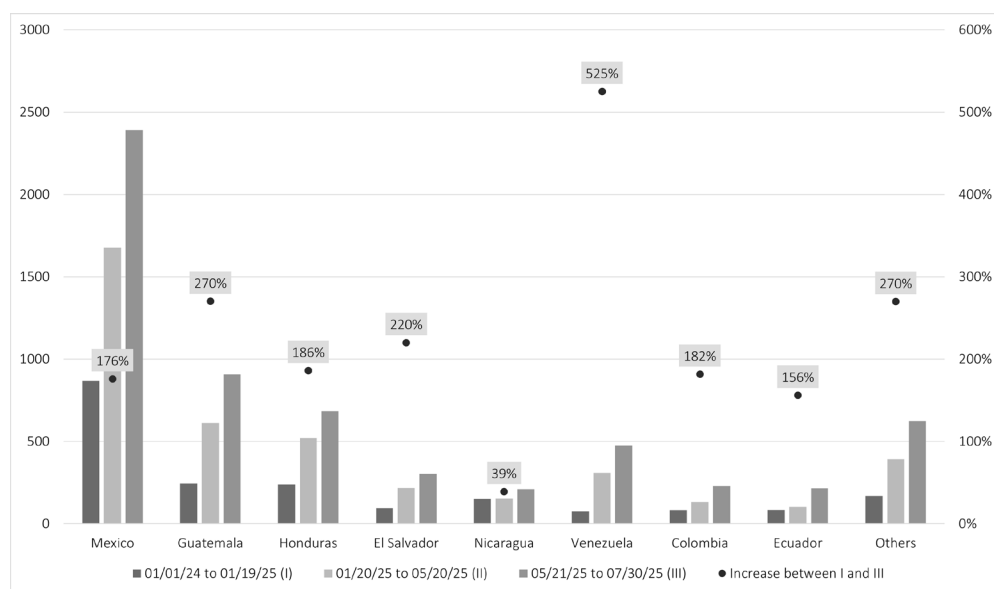
To address this question and other relevant aspects of ICE arrests of Mexicans, this final section focuses on three specific periods, defined based on the arrest trends shown in Figure 3. The first period, which serves as a baseline, spans from January 1, 2024, to January 19, 2025. The next two periods cover the first months of the Trump 2.0 administration, from January 20 to July 30, 2025, and are subdivided according to the implementation of the arrest quota directive—3 000 per day—in May 2025, which provides an opportunity to assess the impact of this measure on removal trends.

When using the average number of weekly arrests as an indicator, a significant increase is observed for both Mexican migrants and other migrant groups (see Figure 4). In the case of Mexican migrants, the figure rose from 867 arrests per week in the first period to 1 676 in the second, and after the arrest quota was imposed on ICE, it reached 2 393. This represents a 176% increase from the first to the third period. Compared to other migrant groups, this increase is not among the highest. For example, among Guatemalan migrants, the increase was 270%, and among Honduran migrants, 186%. Even higher percentages are recorded among other migrant groups, though with lower absolute numbers, as in the case of Venezuela, where the weekly number of arrests rose by 525%. However, the volume represents approximately one-fifth of the total number of arrests of Mexicans.

The methods used by ICE to arrest non-citizens that have the greatest impact on the Mexican population are those carried out through the CAP program, specifically at the local level. In the first period analyzed, these accounted for approximately 52% of all arrests, followed by the other two categories of federal (15.6%) and state (6.8%) CAP operations, as well as arrests labeled as "located" (15.6%) and "non-custodial" (9.1%).

In the third period, these five categories remained dominant, but significant changes were observed in their distribution: *located* and *non-custodial* arrests each increased to 21%, while local CAP cases decreased. This pattern reinforces the argument that, contrary to official rhetoric, U.S. government efforts to remove migrants do not focus predominantly on individuals with criminal records. Among the Mexican population, the percentage of arrests classified as "apprehensions of convicted criminals" decreased from 72.1% to 43.9% between the first and third periods (see Figure 3). Conversely, cases classified as "other immigration violations" increased from 7.0% to 30.7% over the same period.

Figure 4. Weekly average of migrant arrests by ICE in the United States, by period and country of nationality, January 2024 to July 2025



Source: created by the authors using data from the Deportation Data Project (2025)

This shift in the mechanisms used to detain migrants—which includes intensified measures such as raids and targeting individuals at their workplaces—may be altering the profile of those detained. As evidenced, one such change is reflected in the decline in the proportion of Mexican nationals among all cases, as well as in other sociodemographic characteristics. In the Mexican population, the majority has consistently been men. In the first period analyzed, this group accounted for 93.2%, while in the third period the figure dropped slightly to 91.9% (see Table 1). This profile is very specific and differs markedly from that observed in other migrant groups, where the percentage of women is significantly higher; for example, among Ecuadorians, the proportion of women was six times higher in the first period. Nonetheless, in general terms, the percentage of women has also declined in groups such as the one mentioned.

Changes in arrest procedures could also affect the age distribution of those arrested, particularly increasing the number of children and adolescents. Nevertheless, there is currently no evidence that this is occurring. If the percentage of individuals aged 0 to 17 is used as an indicator, it is observed that, overall, this percentage decreased from 3.8% to 1.5% between the first and third periods. For Mexicans, these percentages are even lower. Other migrant groups stand out again, such as Ecuadorians, where the percentage of minors was 19.4% in the first period but has dropped to just 1.9% in the third period.

Table 1. Percentage distribution of ICE arrests in the United States, by selected characteristics of migrants (January 2024 to July 2025)

Country of origin	01/01/24 to 01/19/25			01/20/25 to 05/20/25			05/21/25 to 07/30/25		
	Total	Women	Age	Total	Women	Age	Total	Women	Age
			0-17			0-17			0-17
Mexico	41.2	6.8	1.9	38.6	6.5	0.5	37.1	8.1	1.1
Guatemala	11.6	9.6	3.8	14	7	1.0	14	9	1.7
Honduras	11.3	10.8	3.6	11.9	10.8	1.1	10.4	12.9	2.2
El Salvador	4.5	11.5	3	5.0	11.6	1.0	4.6	15	1.8
Nicaragua	6.3	29.2	4.2	3.5	15.9	0.9	3.2	15.1	0.9
Venezuela	3.5	19.1	3.2	7.0	12	0.5	7	18	2.4
Colombia	3.7	29.1	9.9	3.0	21.6	3.7	3.4	23.6	4.6
Ecuador	3.6	36.2	19.4	2.3	11.7	3.0	3.2	13.9	1.9
Other	14.3	17.7	4	14.9	13.3	0.8	12.2	14.9	1.3
Total	100	13.1	3.8	100	9.6	0.9	100	11.7	1.5

Source: created by the authors using data from the Deportation Data Project (2025)

One key point to consider when analyzing arrest statistics is that not all cases result in removal. In some cases, this is because the process is ongoing and has not yet been concluded. Although there are differences, it can be summarized that the process involving the migrant may be ongoing or may have concluded either negatively or favorably for the individual—for example, if charges are dropped or if the individual is granted permission to remain in the United States—with the latter situation occurring in only about 1% of the cases analyzed across the three periods. The case of Mexican nationals also stands out here, as they represent the group with the highest percentage of concluded cases across all three periods. This appears to be linked to the specific profile of Mexican nationals and the circumstances of their arrests, with a high percentage of cases originating from the local CAP.

Finally, it should be noted that, although the media has reported cases of Mexican nationals who have been formally deported to countries other than their country of nationality, these cases represent a very small proportion. In the case of Mexico, they account for less than 0.02% of total deportations across the three periods analyzed. In fact, since the start of the Trump administration, there has been a downward trend in the percentage of migrants deported to countries other than their own, a trend that is consistent across the groups analyzed.

For example, in the first period, 60.1% of Venezuelan migrants who completed the deportation process were sent to their country of nationality. In comparison, in the third period this figure rose to 85.8% (see Table 2). While it is to be expected that deportations would take place to the country of nationality, this is relevant for challenging U.S. government rhetoric, which, by amplifying isolated cases of deportation to third countries, may aim to foster fear among the migrant population residing in the United

States. Quantitative data, however, suggest that direct repatriation is the predominant practice. Nonetheless, this observation must be qualified by considering the severe conditions faced by deported individuals in detention centers in third countries, such as those reported at the Center for the Detention of Terrorists (Cecot) in El Salvador. This qualitative aspect falls outside the quantitative scope of this study but is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Table 2. Cases concluded among the arrests of non-citizens by ICE in the United States and the percentage who were removed to their country of nationality, by period (January 2024 to July 2025)

	01/01/24 to 01/19/25		01/20/25 to 05/20/25		05/21/25 to 07/30/25	
	Concluded	Deported to their home country	Concluded	Deported to their home country	Concluded	Deported to their home country
Mexico	81.3	99.8	76.2	99.8	55.1	99.9
Guatemala	72.3	98.9	76.2	97.7	51.2	98.1
Honduras	75.2	99.0	75.6	98.3	48.6	98.3
El Salvador	72.3	98.8	64.9	98.2	37.8	98.5
Nicaragua	24	97.1	58.5	94.7	23.7	91.9
Venezuela	31.9	60.1	69.6	74.3	31.4	85.8
Colombia	48.8	99.0	62.8	98.7	24.6	95.8
Ecuador	33.6	98.7	63.0	99.5	30.6	99.0

Source: created by the authors using data from the Deportation Data Project (2025)

Conclusions

After the first six months of his administration, President Trump has celebrated his supposed successes: the securitization of the southern border and the mass removal of “criminal” foreigners labeled as the “worst of the worst”. Regarding border security, it is claimed that daily encounters between migrants and Border Patrol agents along the United States-Mexico border have decreased by 93% since Trump took office, with the lowest figure recorded in June 2025: 25 228 encounters (DHS, 2025). Regarding the mass removal of the “worst of the worst” foreign nationals, DHS celebrates the arrest of more than 300 000 immigrants in 2025 and states that 70% of these arrests involve non-citizens with criminal charges or convictions (DHS, 2025).

Nevertheless, the DHS document in particular and the Trump 2.0 administration in general have refused to provide clear data on the number of removals carried out; instead, they have provided figures on the different types of arrests made. In the analysis of the types of arrests of non-citizens carried out by ICE with the intent of formally deporting them, the main finding is that, historically, the CAP program—which targets foreign nationals incarcerated in federal, state, or local facilities, as well as those on probation or with criminal records—is the one that results in the most arrests—. Most

of these arrests occur at the local level. This pattern has persisted due to the significant increase in memorandums of understanding under the 287(g) Program, which enables the delegation of immigration enforcement authority to local and state officials. As shown in the analysis, 86% of the agreements signed between 2019 and 2025 were signed in 2025, primarily in Florida and Texas, which are governed by Republicans who support Trump.

There has also been a notable increase in arrests classified as *located* and *non-custodial* arrests, which, as East and Cox (2025) have pointed out, casts doubt on whether the current administration's efforts are primarily focused on individuals with criminal records. This study shows that during 2024, the percentage of such arrests remained at around 50%. Subsequently, in the third week of 2025—already during Trump's second term—this figure dropped to about 40%. When ICE imposed the target of 3 000 daily arrests in week 20 (mid-May), the percentage dropped rapidly again to 30%. This supports the argument that the U.S. government's additional efforts are affecting migrants who cannot be defined as *convicted criminals* and who are arrested in public spaces or at workplaces.

A similar situation is observed among Mexican migrants: ICE makes the majority of arrests of individuals of this nationality through the Criminal Arrest Program at the local level. This means that these individuals are already being held in local jails for minor offenses when ICE proceeds to arrest them. Nonetheless, the percentage of Mexican arrests categorized as *convicted criminals* decreased from 72.1% to 43.9% between the period immediately preceding the start of Trump's second administration (January 1-19, 2025) and the period from May 21 to July 30, 2025. Conversely, cases classified as "other immigration violations" increased from 7.0% to 30.7% over the same periods.

Regarding the increase in the overall number of arrests carried out by ICE, East and Cox (2025), based on their analysis of the Deportation Data Project (2025) databases, state that the measures implemented by Trump have resulted in a substantial increase in arrests within the United States, as the average daily number of migrant arrests tripled, rising from approximately 200 arrests per day in 2024 to around 600 immediately after the start of Trump's second administration, reaching about 1 000 per day in early May, when ICE set a quota of arresting 3 000 migrants per day.

An analysis of the same database, focusing on arrests of Mexican migrants, revealed a similar pattern: 867 arrests per week were recorded in the period leading up to the start of Trump's second term (January 1, 2024-January 19, 2025). At the start of this administration (January 20-May 20, 2025), the figure doubled, reaching 1 676 weekly arrests. Finally, in the third period (May 22-July 30, 2025), following the implementation of the quota of 3 000 daily arrests, ICE arrested an average of 2 393 Mexican migrants per week. This represents a 176% increase from the first to the third period. It is worth noting that other migrant groups with lower absolute numbers, such as Venezuelans, Guatemalans and Hondurans, experienced even greater percentage increases.

A key finding of this research is that the Trump administration has significantly increased the number of migrant arrests within the United States, exposing non-citizens to a real risk of arrest. This situation could intensify following the U.S. Congress's passage of the Reconciliation Act, which Trump signed on July 4, 2025. According to DHS, the bill—dubbed by Trump "Big Beautiful Bill"—will allocate \$14.4 billion to fund deportations, hire 10 000 additional agents and provide 80 000 new detention beds

for ICE. DHS concludes that “this will help ICE achieve up to one million deportations annually” (DHS, 2025).

ICE has not met its daily quota of 3 000 arrests. However, if it were to reach that quota, it could slightly exceed one million arrests per year, assuming that each arrest results in a deportation. The future outlook is worrisome for non-U.S. citizens, as the number of arrests and formal deportations—carried out harshly and cruelly—could rise dramatically, thereby increasing fear as a state policy to encourage the self-deportation of migrants.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank El Colegio de la Frontera Norte for its institutional support in preparing this article. In addition, Rafael Alarcón would like to thank the Secretaría de Ciencia, Humanidades, Tecnología e Innovación and the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas for their support through the sabbatical fellowship.

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