

## **Introduction**

United States Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was created in 2002 under the Homeland Security Act as a federal agency for the enforcement of immigration laws as a matter of national security and public safety (ICE, n.d.). Split into two policing subdivisions—Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) & Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO)—as well as a handful of auxiliary divisions, ICE has arrested and deported millions of people. Just during Obama's two terms in office, 2.4 million undocumented immigrants were deported by ICE (American Immigration Council, 2017), and millions more have been arrested in the following decade. Trump took office, espousing hardline immigration policies and ingratiating himself with ICE amid strengthening calls from the public for the abolition of the agency. At time of writing during Trump's second term in office, ICE has seen vast budget increases and the removal of many regulations. Trump has openly threatened protestors with illegal ICE retaliation (The White House, 2025), SCOTUS has ruled such that ICE may legally racially profile (SCOTUSblog, 2025), and ICE officers (often HSI & ERO) have been ever more dressing undercover, wearing masks, and laying ambushes on main streets & at grocery stores (ICE, n.d.; Immigrant Defense Project, n.d.).

Academia is largely regarded as plagued by inaccessibility, citation unneeded. Among the innumerable structural ways that disciplines limit participation to the isolated upper-class (among others), one of the easiest to observe and address lies in the form in which it is presented: the art of writing. Between argot jargon, gratuitous *ad-hoc* appropriations of latin & french, and innumerable sesquipedalian terminological deployments, the shibboleths of academia are firmly entrenched in its formal registers. To counter this compositional calamity, this work will contend a contrastively codified constitution: normal fucking language. We don't want to pretend that we are unbiased agents—this project began from a radical ICE-abolitionist politics, and was only possible from that foundation. We will not equivocate endlessly around whether ICE should exist: we firmly hold that ICE is strictly an apparatus of state violence leveraged against some of the most vulnerable people in our

communities<sup>1</sup>. The problems with ICE are inherent to ICE from its initial goal and founding. Anything short of its total dismantling **is not enough; ICE cannot simply be reformed**. Neither will we interrogate *why* ICE is so harmful; many others have investigated this far better than we could. Instead, we will explore *how* ICE operates through their self-reported data, focusing on what it can tell us about pathways of resistance. First we will look into the quality of deportations overall and through time. Using descriptive statistics on arrests by State and presidential administration, we will investigate the partisan patterns in ICE operation (or lack thereof). Following this, logistic regression on predictive factors for deportation can help inform us on what proposed local legislation should target to restrict ICE activity. We also understand, however, that communities possess more avenues for resistance than the legislative. For this reason, we will also attend to *when*, *where*, and *how* ICE makes an arrest, and will recommend forms of grassroots direct-action that can focus on avoidance, interception, and diversion.

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<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the USA in many ways produces the global economic circumstances that result in undocumented immigration, such as NAFTA's destruction of local agriculture in Mexico forcing labourers into precarious and physically dangerous migratory fruit-picking work which necessitates their yearly undocumented crossing of the USA-Mexico border in California (Holmes, 2023). ICE and CBP are most blatantly a limb of the US Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) in these contexts, as it seeks to incarcerate people for behavior that the USA induced—though ICE's connections to the PIC extend far beyond California migrant labourers.

## Data

The *Deportation Data Project* is a group that publishes individualized data on USA immigration, including years-long datasets from CBP, ICE, EOIR, and EOUSA. While they don't have an explicit mission statement, they implicitly align themselves with other anti-ICE organizations, and many datasets published were only released due to lawsuits conducted by the project. Most of the published data comes from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, including the datasets we used. Our focused dataset is a compilation of various releases regarding ICE arrests published by the *Deportation Data Project* between October 2011 until July 2025, the most recent of which had to be acquired following a lawsuit due to ICE's refusal to comply with FOIA. It is unclear to us how ICE collects this data themselves. There are no official reports from them or otherwise about this. This could be because ICE prefers to keep their methods as secret as possible. Given that this information is demographic information, we hypothesize that the data is collected upon arrest via either directly "asking" the arrested person or observation by the arresting ICE officer. This is, however, just an educated guess since as far as we are aware, there is no public information about this process.

As our dataset was a compilation from 13 non-normalized releases, the cleaning process began by manually going through each dataset & mapping which category names had the same referents, as often the same variable would exist under a different header, or one dataset would have multiple similar headers that could all plausibly map to a single header in another. During this process, immediately irrelevant columns were manually deleted rather than synchronized. Once all column names had been matched, the files were imported into and concatenated by a Jupyter Notebook. Variables that pertained only to specific years (such as "case\_category") were dropped, as were any remaining redundant or irrelevant columns. All rows tagged with "Duplicate Likely" (A flag raised when the time & location of an arrest exactly matched, or when two cases shared a unique identifier) were dropped. This flag only existed within the 2023-2025 dataset, and resulted in approximately 6000 entries being dropped. After discarding duplicates, the final dataset came in at approximately 1.7 million entries.

To format this data for easy processing, the apprehension year was extracted from the overall date & granted its own column. Dates were reformatted as python datetime objects rather than strings (if no

time of day was listed, it defaulted to 12:00am), and the entire dataset was sorted by the date & time of arrests. Some variables had flags created out of them (such as “Has Time of Day” and “Charged”), and others were converted entirely into a flag (such as “Hispanic”). As many variables—especially demographic data—were only collected between 2015 and 2023, the extent of demographic analysis is somewhat limited.

#### Availability of Variables Over Time:

Apprehension Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015-2023	2024	2025
App. Date Time							
App. Method							
App. Site Landmark							
App. State							
Citizenship Country							
Deported							
Departed date							
Departure Country							
Hispanic							
Gender							
Race							
Charged							
Convicted							
Worst Criminal Charge							

*periods that do not contain a variable are greyed out*

While this format serves the tracking of single variables well, it is not as kind when attempting to track trends over time for the entire dataset. To aid in the creation of our descriptive statistics regarding deportations & administrations, we compiled a version which aggregated variables by month. This form does not lend itself well to demographic data, and so it was also more limited in scope: it tracked only daily arrests, deportations, and deportation quality (the ratio of deportations to an individual’s citizenship country against deportations elsewhere).

## **Methods**

### Administration Analysis: Deportations & Partisan Politics

When investigating party-politics, our focus lay in observing whether or not any *major* relationships existed, so we primarily relied on descriptive statistics rather than overly complex models. A core aim of this limb of the project was to observe whether there was a relationship between ICE activity and presidential administrations or state partisanship. For this question, all data was organized by week. By plotting how one's citizenship country impacts arrest under different administrations, large revealed discrepancies indicate potential nuances to this discussion, even as the overall trend in arrests seems less correlated to party than to simply being more recent—that is to say, ICE arrests seem to have mostly increased over time, with presidential administration playing a superficial (if any) role. When it comes to deportations by state, a similar approach of simple graphing was sufficient, as the resulting discrepancies between state arrests were great enough to not require further analyses. The same tactic was also employed for the same reasons when it came to demographic analysis on the basis of gender, ethnicity, and race.

Looking at our monthly aggregated dataset, there is a similar trend regarding deportation quality. The percentage of deportations to countries other than the deportees' countries of citizenship has not had much of a correlation with administration, but has recently sharply risen.

### Legislative Pathways: Predictors of Deportation

Attempting to find predictors for deportation required a mixture of descriptive statistics and regression. We began by focusing on criminality, as a substantial portion of the dataset references the Criminal Alien Program (CAP). “Criminality” here is understood not in the sense of *conviction*, but in the broad sense of any contact with the criminal justice system. For this purpose, the “Worst Criminal Charge” variable was employed; it was unfortunately non-normalized across or within years, implying a great amount of individual discretion when recording information. To normalize it, collections of keyword substrings were used to group the data into overlapping subsets—permitting double-counting—such that general comparisons could be conducted at the cost of precision. Criminal charges were grouped

into eight categories: Drug Charges, Traffic (Driving-related) Charges, Violent Charges (only violence against individuals; not counting property crime or drug offenses), Monetary Charges (relating to gambling, fraud, or theft), Immigration Charges, Sex-Crime Charges, Legal Charges (relating to obstruction of justice, failure to appear in court, or other failed interactions with the CJS), and Other Charges which could not be placed into any of the above categories. Of these, Drug & Traffic Charges were the most frequent. Subsequent keyword analysis within each category was then conducted: Drug Charges were grouped into Intoxicated Driving, Possession, Distribution, Transporting, Manufacturing, & Other. Traffic Charges were grouped into Intoxicated Driving, Traffic Stops, Car-Related Theft, and Other.

Once criminality had been decomposed, the associated demographics were added: the *Hispanic* and *Deported* flags were considered. First, multi-variable bar charts were created to illustrate the disproportionate hispanicism & risk of deportation for charged individuals. Next, a set of logistic regressions were run to determine how well criminality, case status, and ethnicity could predict deportation outcomes. By comparing the accuracy of regressions run on different demographics, we were able to determine the strength of correlation between criminal and demographic information to deportation. By pairing the strength of that predictive with the knowledge of the most common criminal charges, we are able to make suggestions of non-immigration policy that may still inhibit ICE activity.

#### Grassroots Mobilization: Tracking an Arrest

Developing grassroots resistance strategies out of an ICE-created dataset may seem slightly absurd at first blush, but ICE's self-reporting—as dubious and incomplete as it is—can still tell us a lot about how they operate. By aggregating the data by time of day, a heatmap bar chart can display ICE activity throughout the day for any state or time period, albeit restricted to post-2015 due to the limitations of the 2011–2014 datasets.

To analyze how ICE comes to make an arrest, keyword substring matching (using a similar schema to criminalization) aided in the analysis of the *Apprehension Site Landmark* and *Apprehension Method* variables, though these were grouped as discrete categories rather than overlapping subsets of the original variable. Landmarks were

grouped into 11 categories: General Area (for nonspecific regions, such as counties), Incarcerated (for local incarceration, such as detention & correctional facilities or parole), Jail, Police Department, Store, Plaza, Prison, Traffic (arrests made on the road), Transit (arrests made on trains, busses, boats, or planes), Courthouse, and Other. As *General Area* was disproportionately large and fairly useless, it is dropped in all visualizations. Methods were grouped into only six categories: Seized from Incarceration (individuals already incarcerated at time of arrest), Targeted Arrest (made by any officer acting on behalf of ICE<sup>2</sup>), Patrols, Inspections, Transport Checks, and Other Efforts. By demonstrating *when*, *where*, and *how* ICE makes arrests, we hope to be able to suggest cursory recommendations to community resistance efforts towards where energy and effort may be best allocated.

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<sup>2</sup>Under the 287(g) Program, local law enforcement can partner with ICE to conduct immigration enforcement specific arrests, detentions, and other actions. 40 states have such partnerships, and only five states actively bar them.

## **Findings**

### Administration Analysis: Deportations & Partisan Politics

Presidential administration appears to have a bearing on immigration, but the party of the administration seems less relevant. The spike following Trump's second inauguration is fairly anticipated given recent policy decisions, but the greater spikes during the Biden administration seem to show less consistent – but similar intensity – ICE behavior. State – not administration – seems a much stronger predictor of ICE activity: The top 5 states for ICE activity (Texas, California, Florida, New York, Georgia) near-exactly match all other states combined for arrests:

These areas generally make some level of sense – Texas is a border state, highly republican, and is the biggest hub of ICE activity in the nation – at triple the arrests of the runner-up (California), its hard-on-immigration reputation is upheld. Florida & Georgia follow for similar reasons. California & New York may come as a surprise to some as blue states, but as was indicated with administration, immigration policy seems to not be quite so partisan. Looking at population shows us a possible explanation: Texas, California, Florida, and New York are the four most populous states, with Georgia being eighth. We would expect the most populous states to have the most arrests. However, this does not explain the fact that these five states add up to the total arrests of the rest of the states. The large difference is notable.

When it comes to demographics, some oft-reported claims are easily validated: Men are much more likely to be arrested than women and hispanic people make up the **vast** majority of ICE arrests.

The wonder of such discrepancies is that the data is clear enough to not need to do statistics on it!



STATISTICS TIP: ALWAYS TRY TO GET DATA THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH THAT YOU DON'T NEED TO DO STATISTICS ON IT

As for deportation quality, the proportion of people sent to the wrong party has been mostly steady, but spiked from around 2021-2023, before steadily increasing until spiking in 2025.

#### Legislative Pathways: Predictors of Deportation

After sorting criminal charges into a handful of categories, the two most common charges appear to be drug charges & traffic charges. First tackling drug charges, some quick graphing corroborates the Administration Analysis findings regarding the Hispanic-dominated demographics. Additionally, the most common drug-related charge is driving under the influence—over double the frequency of the runner-up. Expectedly, the most common traffic charge is also intoxicated driving, as these are overlapping subsets, with a runner-up of traffic stops. As charges relating to intoxicated driving are almost entirely levied from traffic stops, it is reasonable to state that the most frequent criminal charges overwhelmingly result from traffic stops.

For charged arrestees, deportation is disproportionately common, and nearly every charged arrestee is Hispanic. Running a basic logistic regression with *Ethnicity* & *Criminality* as the only

predictors of deportation across the entire dataset, a trained model held a Mean Squared Error of 0.228. Introducing the *Charged* variable into the mix reduced the MSE to 0.190, and adding various other demographic information (such as country of origin and gender) further lowered it to 0.187. This seems fairly intuitive—if there are demographic discrepancies in arrests, they likely will also appear in deportation. This hypothesis is thrown into question, however, when a regression using only *Charged* and *Convicted* yields the lowest MSE of all, at 0.185! This indicates that these are not just strong predictors for deportation relative to other demographic data, but that demographic information is borderline *irrelevant* in comparison. As the MSE for *Hispanic* and *Charged* is nearly exactly the MSE for *Hispanic* and *Convicted*, we can assume that both factors have about equal relevance, demonstrating that while contact with the CJS alone is a major risk for undocumented individuals, convictions just as much need to be fought. In short, ICE operates such that people who are already affected by precarity have that status only further entrenched.

#### Grassroots Mobilization: Tracking an Arrest

ICE arrests have clearly visible patterns: they happen early in the day, around 10:30am, regardless of the year, state, or administration. Operations continue between dawn and dusk, but the peak spans the mid-morning to early afternoon. Approximately half of ICE arrests—when an identifiable location is listed at all—take place in local carceral institutions: jails, correctional facilities, detention centers, or in public for individuals on probation. Only 6% of arrest locations are recorded as near stores, in plazas, or on the road—though those public locations comprise 10% of all arrests which have *specific* locations recorded<sup>3</sup>. Regarding *Arrest Method*, 60% of arrests are reported as seizures from individuals in carceral facilities (jail, prison, or otherwise), and another 30% are targeted arrests carried out by ICE agents or 387(g) officers in communities,

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<sup>3</sup>Approximately 30% of the entire dataset has the landmark recorded as the county, city, or state the arrest was made in, the ICE AOR (which tells us county-level information), or is “Nonspecific”. We would guess that these arrests are more often near local shops, residential areas, and plazas than the reported information, but this is not a substantiable claim with only this dataset.

locating and apprehending individuals. Only 5% of arrests are reported as occurring on standard patrols. Taken together, this indicates that while the most major source of arrestees is individuals who are already incarcerated in some form, the day-to-day on the ground operations of ICE still comprise a significant portion of total arrests.

## **Discussion**

### Limitations

This analysis is somewhat limited in multiple regards. Our methods primarily used nonprecise descriptive statistics, often using partial substring matches to categorize data with variable accuracy. This meant that not only do our findings mostly apply to *hows* rather than *whys* (however much by design), but that our understanding of those *hows* is surface-level at best. Nuances are altogether lost in our observations. Of much more concern is the limitations latent within the data itself. This data comes directly from ICE, and its creation should not be overlooked as a political action. The release of the data required a lawsuit after ICE failed to comply with a FOIA request, and for a time contained partial or inaccurate information in the 2025 subset—only corrected after the Deportation Data Project demanded it be reviewed. Furthermore, many categories are clearly filled out by individual agents, which introduces potential biases (such as: what is considered a relevant landmark?). Additionally, the non-normalization of many of these categories produced the circumstances that made them difficult to analyze in the first place, such as criminality: many entries for the *Worst Criminal Charge* variable were nonspecific, sometimes listing the entire charge as just “cocaine” or “drug”. The hesitation on ICE’s part to release this data, the unreliability between releases, and the non-normalized data within each release all contribute to significant doubt towards its credibility. Finally, plenty of our aims here are touched by more than just arrest data—there are specific separate datasets regarding detentions, detainees, deportations, and even encounters, all of which may corroborate or contradict many of our findings.

### Recommendations

Based on our Administration Analysis findings, we feel it is reasonable to conclude that party-politics have little—if any—impact on ICE deportations and arrests. The policing of borders and resulting production of an immigrant underclass is not a partisan matter. In keeping with this, we do not recommend advocacy for legislation at the local, state, or federal level that directly targets or inhibits ICE. While such advocacy is vital in pursuing abolition and should be engaged in, it is unlikely to achieve the support of democratic contingents or policymakers. As the *majority* of ICE arrests are made

of individuals already incarcerated in local jails & facilities, preventing initial contact with the CJS is **vital** in protecting community members. Legislation that decriminalizes drug usage and that decreases police discretion in traffic stops (really, any legislation that pursues anti-police reform) would go a long way to reducing the options ICE has for making contact.

Legislation, however, takes time to move through bureaucracy. Reforms are important, necessary ways that progress can be codified, and non-reformist reforms are the blood of abolition, but they do not help your neighbors today. Community and mutual aid, however, can stand in the way of this necropolitics: undergrounds and support networks can facilitate *help*, and robust notification-response systems can keep people away from police. One form of this is participatory defense: criminal *convictions*, once a person has been charged with a crime, make their odds even worse. Community defense hubs, which have been very successful in reducing sentencing or even avoiding charges altogether, are one way that communities can protect each other right now (Silicon Valley De-Bug, n.d.).

Communities can do more than this though. ICE arrests peak at 10:30am, though activity is high from mid-morning to early afternoon. While 60% of arrests are made in incarceration facilities, another 35% happen on the ground, during patrols and on street corners. HSI and ERO agents make plenty of arrests, but local police acting under the 287(g) program may also conduct immigration arrests, and police contact of any sort increases the chance of ICE contact for individuals. Communication networks where “safe” individuals can scout frequented locations (such as main streets, plazas, grocery stores, schools, and residential areas) and then report any ICE or police-identified persons or vehicles let at-risk community members avoid rolling the dice. Alert systems that notify neighbors when an ICE arrest or raid is taking place can get observers on the scene fast who can then record information and distract officers. These alerts also enable friends and family to help take care of children, pets, finances, notifying employers, and other life events during a person’s detainment (or worse). Finally, they keep eyes on the case, which can help the detained individual get legal aid sooner.

During events where at-risk individuals may be congregating, assigning safe & trained people to stand security or ICE-watch can help ensure safety. Exit plans to avoid kettling should be pre-made,

and the alert network should be pre-negotiated: you do not want to create a panic over every new Ford, but it is more important that ICE agents are spotted and the community protected before they can escalate. Areas like soup kitchens and thrift stores should be especially wary of nearby ICE or police presence, and the patterns of officers over time should be recorded to predict future action. **At every turn, in every community, ICE should be avoided, inhibited, distracted, and neutralized to the best of everyone's abilities.**

#### Final Word

This is scary. It is terrifying to have what can feel like an omnipotent, unstoppable force destroying people's lives. It is understandable to want to retreat into cynicism and nihilism. Because if it is simply human nature or a consequence of reality, then we can rationalize it as something that is "okay" for us to go through. We understand it, but we see this as the enemy of change. We refuse to accept what has been given to us. We refuse to give up a better world. As bad as things are right now, there is always hope to fight back. We will win, because people will outlast any State. The goal then is not just to win, but to win *well*, and to support each other on that road as best we can.

#### Reflection (if we were able to redo this project)

Largely, we do not have regrets with this project. We all regard this as important work that is worthwhile to more than just us. I think we simply wish we devoted more time to this. That's why we want to continue our project: there's only so much research that you can fit in a semester.

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