



[Mounting Human Rights Concerns Drive Public Support for ICE to a Record Low](#)

Public sentiment across the United States towards Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is currently at an all-time low, driven by overwhelming opposition to multiple high-profile fatal shootings, the agency's brutal tactics, and grave human rights concerns. The recent killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis sparked widespread outrage, with over 50,000 people taking part in protests throughout the city alone following the shootings, in addition to more than 700 businesses closing in solidarity with the anti-ICE protests. On top of ICE's aggressive militarized tactics and valid humanitarian concerns regarding their conduct, the ambiguous rules and broad criteria given to the agency when making stops and a lack of accountability for its violations have eroded Americans' trust. A February 2026 poll found that roughly 60%-65% of Americans disapprove of the job that ICE is doing compared to only 30%-33% who approve. These percentages are significantly polarized, with around 73% of Republicans approving ICE's performance compared to a whopping 91% of Democrats who disapprove. However, perhaps most telling is the surge in disapproval among independents, with close to 70% now viewing ICE's actions as going too far. Furthermore, around 62% of Americans now believe that ICE's actions are making the country less safe. In totality, these unfavorable views have steadily risen since Trump's first presidential term – as ICE has notably expanded, becoming increasingly ubiquitous across the public domain and social media.

One of the biggest drivers of mistrust in the public sphere comes from the unclear rules and standards ICE agents follow. For instance, immigration agents are legally allowed to stop a vehicle if it is violating federal law, but they must have reasonable suspicion. However, the Supreme Court ruling back in September 2025 granted agents permission to use apparent ethnicity or race as a relevant factor to stop people. This caused a lot of confusion, as many were under the impression that racial profiling is illegal under the Fourth Amendment. The decision also gave ICE agents permission to look into someone if they speak Spanish or English with an accent, or are working specific jobs, like construction or landscaping.

While this decision was not final, critics argue that it legalizes and encourages racial profiling, endangering individuals, particularly in the Latino Community, even if they are legal citizens. Such is the case of George Retes, an honorably discharged veteran and American citizen, who was pepper-sprayed, forcefully apprehended, and detained for three days. ICE agents also used tear gas and broke his windshield in the process of his arrest. After Retes was released, the

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) accused him of assault, issuing a statement claiming he became violent and refused to comply with officers. However, Retes strongly refuted this claim and has yet to be officially charged with anything. There have been similar instances whereby U.S. citizens have been detained and later accused of obstructing or assaulting law enforcement officers, but investigations conclude that the majority of these charges are not filed or dismissed, and in some cases, have even been shown to be false statements. This decreases the amount of trust between the public and ICE because it creates fear that American citizens will be unlawfully detained, not have the right to due process, and then be wrongfully accused of assault or other crimes.

DHS and the Trump administration's findings largely contrast with that of various media sources and court rulings, which has also increased the amount of overall skepticism and distrust surrounding ICE. While DHS claims false narratives – including regarding the high-profile recent killings of Good and Pretti which are easily refutable through captured video evidence – reports and accounts show that ICE agents are smashing car windows, entering homes without a judicial warrant, and using excessive force to carry out their mission. It is therefore completely fair and understandable that when official government statements directly conflict with legal findings, personal experiences, and impartial reporting, public trust and confidence in agencies like ICE is bound to erode. This in turn reinforces the need for clear standards and strong oversight.