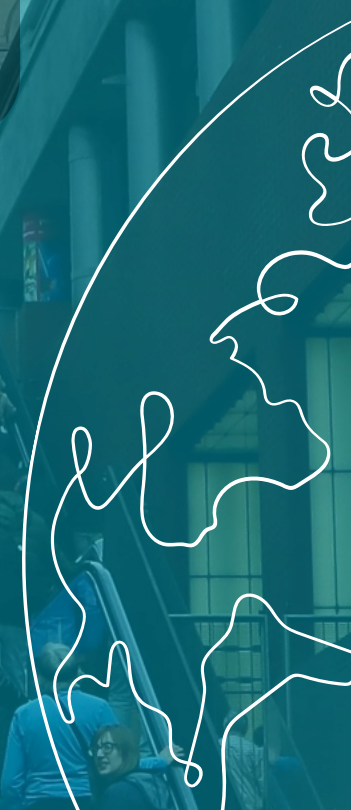


Mobile Pathways
April 2026



DETROIT IMMIGRATION BRIEFING

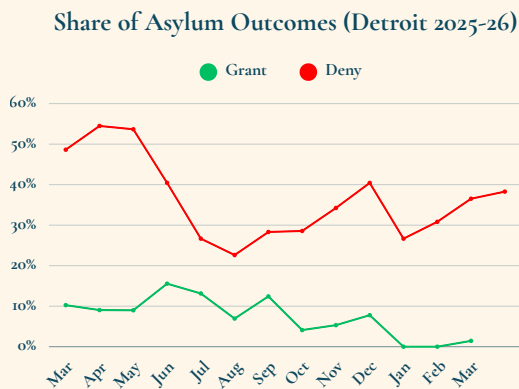


The Pull Is Stronger Than the Push

Detroit's immigrant communities have long anchored the city's revival, but that foundation is under unprecedented strain. As the federal government accelerates enforcement and narrows the path to protection, this report examines how a reshaped immigration court, expanded detention at the rural North Lake Processing Center in Baldwin, and sweeping policy shifts are foreclosing access to asylum and due process across the region.

Recent Findings

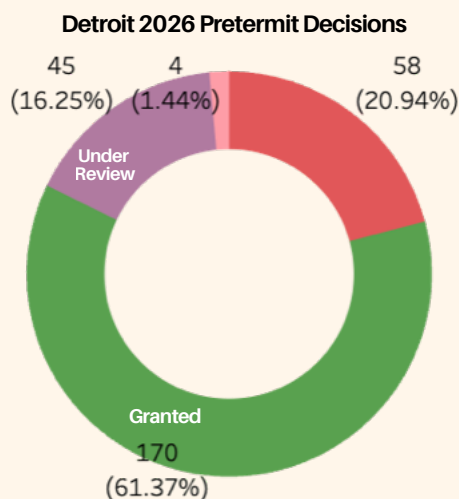
Zero Percent: Are We Witnessing the End of Asylum?



Detroit's asylum outcomes tell a stark story. Denials have overwhelmingly dominated since January 2025, with grants hitting zero in the first two months of 2026. Withdrawals and abandonments have grown to rival, and in some months exceed, grants and denials combined, suggesting a growing share of asylum seekers are exiting before any ruling is made. **Combined with work permit restrictions, steeper fees, expanded detention, and faster deportations, these trends point to an asylum system that is increasingly out of reach.**

In March 2026, denials outnumbered grants by more than 26 to 1 — the starkest ratio in the period. Source: Asylum Navigator

Third Country Removals Continue to Rise Despite Orders to Halt



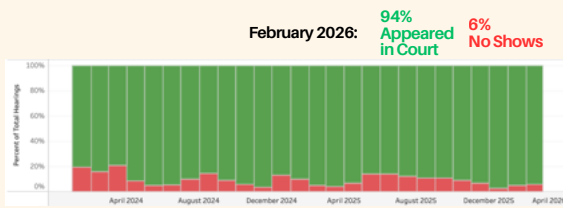
Our data on “third-country” deportations fueled growing public and legal pressure on prepermit motions (requests to end hearings before they begin). [The AP, citing our data, reports that DHS has ordered a stop to these deportations;](#) advocates are hesitant to confirm this stoppage as it is based on an unclear internal email.

Despite that, Detroit's third-country removal orders have already more than tripled 2025's full-year total — and DHS is winning 61% of all prepermit motions it files at the Detroit court.

Judge Ian Simons accounts for 62% of all unresolved prepermit motions at the Detroit immigration court. Source: EOIR Motions

The Shrinking Path to Protection in Courts

Unrepresented Asylum Seekers Missing Court



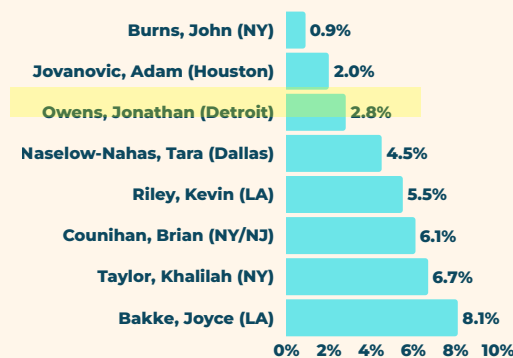
Cases voluntary departures granted since January 2026.

Source: In Absentia Dashboard

Detroit bucks the trend on in-absentia deportations. While no-show rates have surged in immigration courts nationwide, Detroit stands out: 94% of unrepresented asylum seekers appeared for their hearings in the most recent period, with just 6% failing to appear — a fraction of what peers like New York are seeing. For those with legal representation, the numbers are even stronger: Detroit courts granted 320 voluntary departures since the start of 2026.

New Court Leadership, Stronger Enforcement

ACIJ Merits Grant Rates

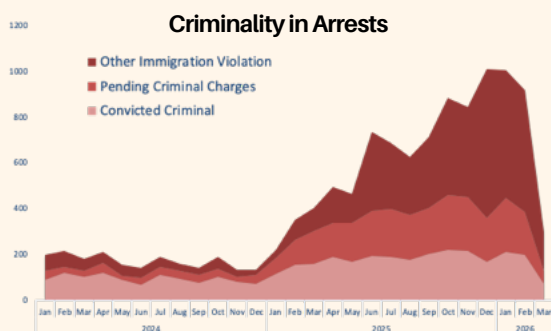


ACIJ Owens granted just 0.7% of cases in 2025, with a 67.3% abandonment rate — compared to IJ Hansen's court-leading 17.3% grant rate.

Source: Asylum Navigator, Judge Profiles

Detroit's immigration court has seen significant leadership change, with ACIJ Jonathan Owens among three new judges added to the bench. Owens granted just 2 asylum applications since the start of 2025 while driving the court's highest abandonment rate, accounting for nearly a third of all court-wide abandonments. IJ Mark Jebson rounds out the enforcement profile — issuing just 1 asylum grant while also leading the court in preterm motion grants, clearing cases both before and at the hearing stage.

From Check-Ins to Expulsions: Expanded ICE Enforcement



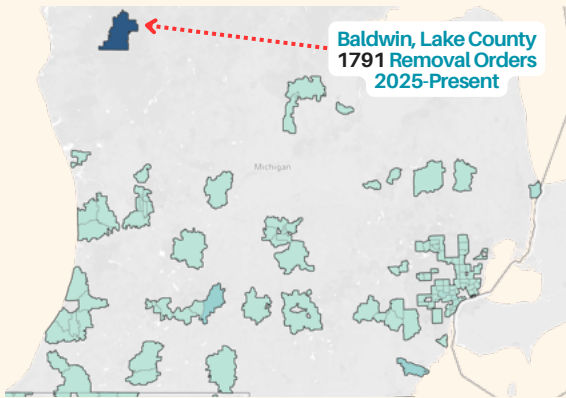
Total ICE arrests in the Detroit area rose 3.7x from 2024 to 2025, resulting in 6,869 deportations. 70% of those arrested had no criminal charges or pending charges.

Source: Deportation Data Project

Deportations more than quadrupled year-over-year, but the starker shift is who is being arrested: immigration-only arrests surged 15x while criminal violation arrests barely doubled.

Fear itself has become an effective enforcement weapon. Yet, the odds of being arrested in immigration court are low, roughly 1 in 100 nationally, while missing a hearing carries about a 99% chance of deportation. [Read more here.](#)

Deportation Hot Spots: Baldwin and Southwest Detroit



85% of Michigan detainees experienced more than one stint in ICE detention, averaging 2 to 3 transfers and 72 days in custody.

Source: US Deportations by ZIP Code, Deportation Data Project

Michigan removal orders hit hardest in **Baldwin**, where North Lake Processing Center, a GEO Group-operated ICE facility reopened in June 2025. More than half of the state’s detainees under the current administration have passed through North Lake, which has drawn sustained humanitarian concern over its remote location and the barriers it creates for detainees seeking legal representation. Metro Detroit follows, concentrated in Southwest Detroit's Mexicantown corridor, where large immigrant populations, low incomes, and a 287(g) task force agreement with Wayne County's Taylor Police Department converge.

Pressured to Leave: Voluntary Departures Spike



Detroit voluntary departures more than quintupled from 2024 to 2025, with 244 cases already granted in 2026.

Source: EOIR Motions

The consequence: immigrant requests for voluntary departure have reached record highs in Detroit. Faced with court backlogs, aggressive enforcement, and severely limited options once detained, many respondents are opting to forgo hearings and leave the U.S., raising serious concerns about due process and the future of asylum.

About Us

Mobile Pathways is a technology nonprofit that uses data, and AI to advance fair access to justice and economic opportunity for immigrants. Our **Pathfinder** platform aggregates 300M+ rows of federal immigration data to quickly surface immigration trends. Trusted by thousands of organizations and covered widely in the press, it highlights real-time patterns like these in Detroit.

Further Reading

[The Pressure Valve: Federal Courts as Immigration's Front Line](#)



How Habeas petitions are bypassing the bond hearing bottleneck.

[What Are The Odds of Being Arrested in Court?](#)



We explore the chances of being arrested in court against the harsh outcomes of missing your hearing.

[The Quiet Cruelty of America's Third-Country Removals](#)



Deportations to "third-country" destinations are skyrocketing nationwide. Here's what it means.

[The Bond Plummet. Is the Supreme Court Next?](#)



Bond hearings hit a record low while habeas filings skyrocket. This ends at the Supreme Court.





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