

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105366](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

ICE is the lead agency responsible for providing safe, secure, and humane confinement for detained noncitizens in the U.S. Individuals in segregated housing have limited access to facility amenities, and detention facilities are required to provide ongoing medical and mental health care and reviews to those in segregated housing.

GAO was asked to review ICE's management and oversight of segregated housing. This report addresses (1) ICE's processes for and oversight of segregated housing and ICE's collection of information on segregated housing placements; (2) the number and characteristics of segregated housing placements from fiscal years 2017 through 2021; and (3) the extent to which ICE receives and addresses segregated housing complaints.

GAO reviewed policies and documents on segregated housing; interviewed officials at 12 ICE detention facilities and four ICE field offices; and analyzed segregated housing data and segregated housing complaint data from fiscal years 2017 through 2021.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that ICE (1) provide specific guidance to ERO field offices for segregated housing documentation, and (2) identify all known detained noncitizens in vulnerable populations as defined in segregated housing policy. DHS concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-23-105366](#). For more information, contact Rebecca Gambler at (202) 512-8777 or [gambler@gao.gov](mailto:gambler@gao.gov).

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## IMMIGRATION DETENTION

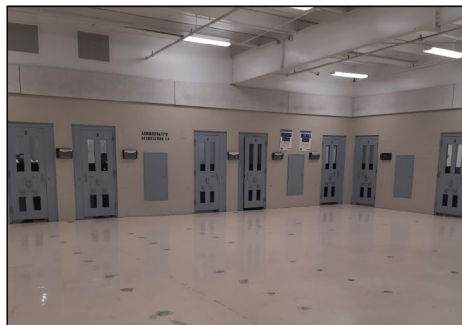
### Actions Needed to Collect Consistent Information for Segregated Housing Oversight

## What GAO Found

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities can, under certain circumstances, place detained noncitizens in segregated housing—one or two-person cells separate from the general population—for up to 24 hours per day. ICE has policies and processes for managing and overseeing detention facilities' use of segregated housing, but information used for oversight is inconsistent. ICE requires field offices to provide headquarters documentation with explanations of segregated housing placements. However, this supporting documentation does not always contain sufficient detail explaining the circumstances leading to placements. Further, although ICE requires field offices to report any placement involving an individual identified as vulnerable—such as those with medical or mental health conditions—segregated housing data did not always identify vulnerable detained noncitizens. Issuing specific guidance on the documentation needed to support segregated housing placements and identifying all vulnerable population placements would help ICE oversee these placements. In particular, these actions could help ICE ensure the appropriateness of placements and proper care for vulnerable noncitizens.

GAO's analysis of segregated housing placement data indicates that ICE made 14,581 segregated housing placements from fiscal years 2017 through 2021. About 40 percent of these placements were for disciplinary reasons, such as drug possession, and about 60 percent were for administrative reasons, such as protective custody or medical reasons. Available data also indicated that ICE placed individuals belonging to vulnerable populations in segregated housing from fiscal years 2017 through 2021 for various reasons and durations.

#### U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention Facility Segregated Housing Unit and Cell



Source: ICE. | GAO-23-105366

Overall, segregated housing-related complaints to ICE increased from 2017 through 2019, before decreasing from 2020 to 2021. However, ICE does not conduct ongoing analyses of segregated housing-related complaints from various ICE offices or require its field offices to record resolutions of those complaints. In 2020, GAO recommended that ICE conduct comprehensive and ongoing analyses of detention-related complaints and require its field offices to record any actions taken on, and resolutions of these complaints. ICE concurred and is taking some steps to address them. Implementing the recommendations would include such analyses of segregated housing-related complaints.