

## **Did you know violent crime is down? Not if you're watching right-wing media**

The FBI on Monday reported that violent crime dropped across the US last year, registering the steepest annual decline in murders in decades. But the report was almost entirely ignored by right-wing media outlets, which have pushed a false narrative that crime is surging under President Joe Biden.

The FBI data, which drew from 16,334 law enforcement agencies across the country, found that murder and non-negligent manslaughter fell almost 12% year over year, while the number of rapes fell by more than 9%. Overall crime fell by 3% and property crime fell by 2.4%.

The routine release of FBI data comes just weeks before a high-stakes presidential election in which perceptions of crime and safety have become a key political flashpoint. Former President Donald Trump has frequently told bleak and largely bogus stories about violence, claiming “our crime rate’s going through the roof” and “we have crime-ridden cities like we’ve never seen before.” CNN’s fact-checks have shown these claims to be false.

The FBI’s data on Monday affirmed those fact checks and was widely reported by news organizations, including CNN, The Associated Press, NBC and The New York Times. But it was met with a virtual blackout by pro-Trump media outlets.

The right’s dominant media outlet, Fox News, mentioned the FBI data just once on its air Monday, with “Special Report with Bret Baier,” devoting 28 seconds to the subject, according to TVEyes database searches.

During the segment, Baier told viewers, “critics say the report is not accurate because it does not include big cities,” a false claim promoted by Elon Musk and other Trump supporters on social media.

In fact, the FBI reported that “every city agency covering a population of 1,000,000 or more inhabitants contributed a full 12 months of data” to the bureau’s reporting program, meaning that the FBI collected and made use of data from the largest US cities, which it wasn’t previously able to include.

The decision by right-wing media outlets to bury the report underscores the disconnect between public perception on the issue of crime and the reality of falling crime rates. In November, Gallup reported a record 63% of Americans believed crime was either an extremely serious or very serious problem, even as the nation’s violent crime rate has fallen dramatically since the 1990s.

“You have a data vacuum that forces people to rely on anecdotes in their determination of whether crime is going up or down. As such they are poorly

positioned to evaluate whether they saw more stories about crime this year compared to last,” said Jeff Asher, criminal justice analyst.

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