

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

October 31, 2024

The Honorable Christopher Wray  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
935 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20535

Dear Director Wray,

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is investigating the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) failure to compile and report accurate, complete national crime data. In 2023, the FBI released its annual Crime in the Nation report, showing an estimated 1.7 percent decrease in violent crime in 2022.<sup>1</sup> The Biden-Harris Administration championed the purported decrease.<sup>2</sup> There was, however, no decrease. The FBI failed to include in its initial count "an additional 1,699 murders, 7,780 rapes, 33,459 robberies, and 37,091 aggravated assaults," resulting in an increase in violent crime of 4.5 percent. This is a staggering 6.2 percent revision.<sup>3</sup>

The FBI's recent failures<sup>4</sup> to report accurate data draws into question the veracity of the recently released 2023 Crime in the Nation report, which estimated a 3 percent drop in national violent crime.<sup>5</sup> Vice President Harris has touted the 2023 data too,<sup>6</sup> and the media has used it to dispel Americans' real concerns about crime.<sup>7</sup> The Committee is concerned that the FBI's recent failures to report accurate crime data are politically motivated. The Committee is seeking documents and communications to understand the FBI's failure to provide Congress and the American people with accurate crime data and whether the 2023 data is, in fact, accurate.

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<sup>1</sup> Press Releases, FBI Releases 2022 Crime in the Nation Statistics, FED. BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (Oct. 16, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Briefing Room, FACT SHEET: President Biden's Actions to Fight Crime and Make Our Communities Safer, THE WHITE HOUSE (Feb. 28, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> John R. Lott Jr., *Stealth Edit: FBI Quietly Revises Violent Crime Stats*, REAL CLEAR INVESTIGATIONS (Oct. 16, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> Priya Krishnakumar, *The FBI released its crime report for 2021 – but it tells us less about the overall state of crime in US than ever*, CNN (October 5, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> *Supra*, n.1.

<sup>6</sup> Briefing Room, Statement from Vice President Harris on Record Declines in Crime, THE WHITE HOUSE (Sept. 23, 2024).

<sup>7</sup> *Supra*, n.3.

The FBI's revision to the 2022 Crime in the Nation report showing an increase in violent crime was not publicized; the FBI "issued no press release."<sup>8</sup> One crime expert noted the "lack of transparency harms the FBI's credibility."<sup>9</sup> FBI revisions to provisional crime statistics is not unprecedented, but "[t]here were no revisions from 2004 to 2015, and from 2016 to 2020, there were small changes of less than one percentage point."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the 6.2 percent change is drastic compared to previous revisions.<sup>11</sup> This is not the first instance the FBI, under the Biden-Harris Administration, has failed to report accurate crime data. In 2021, the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program was the most incomplete ever with the FBI failing to receive data from 37 percent of law enforcement agencies across the country and, like the 2022 data, was later significantly revised.<sup>12</sup>

The Biden-Harris Administration and the media have leaned on the FBI's incomplete data to message a "rapid decline" in violent crime.<sup>13</sup> Vice President Harris recently touted the 2023 numbers: "Today's new data submitted to the FBI confirms that our dedicated efforts and collaborative partnerships with law enforcement are working[.]"<sup>14</sup> But Americans disagree.<sup>15</sup> The majority of American "voters say violent crime in the U.S. is getting worse (61%), not better (13%),"<sup>16</sup> and crime remains a top concern for Americans.<sup>17</sup> According to Pew Research, 61 percent of American voters consider violent crime a very important issue.<sup>18</sup>

Media outlets have chastised Americans for refusing to believe crime is not an issue: "U.S. Violent Crime Is Down. Many Voters Refuse To Believe It"<sup>19</sup>; "Trump says crime is out of control. The numbers tell a different story."<sup>20</sup>; "US stats show violent crime dramatically falling, so why is there a rising clash with perception?"<sup>21</sup> Presidential Debate moderator David Muir even used the incomplete FBI data to fact check President Trump's claim that crime is on the rise: "President Trump, as you know, the FBI says overall violent crime is coming down in this country."<sup>22</sup> Americans effectively have been told by the Biden-Harris Administration and the media to not believe their lying eyes, and that crime is down.

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*; see also *Supra*, n.4.

<sup>13</sup> Briefing Room, Statement from President Joe Biden on Historic Declines in Crime in 2024, THE WHITE HOUSE (Sept. 30, 2024).

<sup>14</sup> *Supra*, n.6.

<sup>15</sup> John Gramlich, *What the data says about crime in the U.S.*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Apr. 24, 2024).

<sup>16</sup> *Supra*, n.3.

<sup>17</sup> Emma Colton, *Violent crimes have increased under Biden-Harris admin despite Dems' denials: expert*, FOX NEWS (Sept. 24, 2024).

<sup>18</sup> *In Tied Presidential Race, Harris and Trump Have Contrasting Strengths, Weaknesses*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Sept. 9, 2024).

<sup>19</sup> Arthur L. Kellerman, *U.S. Violent Crime Is Down. Many Voters Refuse To Believe It*, FORBES (Oct. 24, 2024).

<sup>20</sup> Ken Dilanian & Laura Strickler, *Trump says crime is out of control. The numbers tell a different story.*, NBC News (Oct. 2, 2024).

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Supra*, n.17.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), “the Department of Justice’s actual statistical agency,” recently published its 2023 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which comports more with Americans’ perception of violent crime rates.<sup>23</sup> BJS, in contrast to “the FBI’s [3 percent] drop in the reported violent crime rate in 2023,” “found a 4.1% increase in the reported violent crime rate.”<sup>24</sup> The difference in 2022 was even more stark: In 2022, NCVS found a 29.1 percent increase in violent crime compared to the FBI’s finding of a 4.5 percent increase.<sup>25</sup> The NCVS survey “interviews 240,000 people each year about their personal experiences.”<sup>26</sup> While the FBI relies on reported crimes to compile its data,<sup>27</sup> the NCVS survey captures unreported crimes, too; “[i]t found that in 2022, only 41.5% of violent crimes and 31.8% of household property crimes were reported to authorities.”<sup>28</sup> Not all categories of crime are susceptible to nonreporting to the same degree. For example, “[n]onreporting of murder and motor vehicle theft is relatively rare.”<sup>29</sup>

Murder and motor vehicle theft rates, however, remain higher than pre-pandemic levels. Amidst the Black Lives Matter riots, pandemic lockdowns, and defund the police movement in 2020, “the U.S. murder rate saw its largest single-year increase on record . . . and by 2022, it remained considerably higher than before the coronavirus pandemic.”<sup>30</sup> While there has been a “16.2% drop from 2020 to 2023” in the murder rate, it remains “9.6% higher than pre-COVID levels.”<sup>31</sup> The motor vehicle theft rate “had fallen precipitously from its peak in 1991” but has risen over the past four years.<sup>32</sup> According to the Council on Criminal Justice, “in a sample of 34 American cities” the average rate “was 105% higher in 2023 than in 2019” and “[t]here were 29% more motor vehicle thefts in 2023 than in 2022.”<sup>33</sup>

The FBI’s failure to accurately report crime data and be transparent regarding revisions is unacceptable. To assist the Committee in understanding the FBI’s failure, please provide the following documents and communications, covering the time period January 20, 2021, to the present, no later than November 14, 2024:

1. All documents and communications internal to the FBI related to the 2021, 2022, and 2023 Crime in the Nation statistics;
2. All documents and communications between the FBI and the Department of Justice related to the 2021, 2022, and 2023 Crime in the Nation statistics;

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<sup>23</sup> *Supra*, n.3; Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Victimization, 2023, U.S. DEP’T OF JUSTICE (Sept. 2024), available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv23.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> *Supra*, n.3.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Supra*, n.15.

<sup>29</sup> *Supra*, n.3.

<sup>30</sup> *Supra*, n.15.

<sup>31</sup> *Supra*, n.3.

<sup>32</sup> *Trends in Motor Vehicle Theft: What You Need to Know*, COUNCIL ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE (Jan. 2024), available at <https://counciloncj.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/motor-vehicle-theft-factsheet-2.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

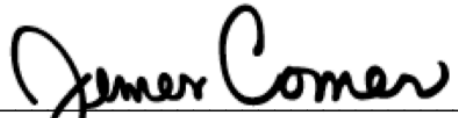
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3. All documents and communications between the FBI and the White House related to the 2021, 2022, and 2023 Crime in the Nation statistics.

To arrange for the delivery of responsive documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Accountability staff at (202) 225-5074. Attached are instructions for complying with the Committee's request.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for cooperating with this inquiry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Comer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" and last name "Comer" clearly distinguishable.

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James Comer  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

cc: The Honorable Jamie B. Raskin, Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Accountability