



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on October 17, 2023

Is the Murder Rate in Red States Higher Than in Blue States? Yes, but...

For years the Left has touted [a flawed study](#) that “proves” that red (i.e., Trump/Republican) states have much higher murder rates than blue (i.e., Biden/Democratic) states. From that study, they have drawn flawed conclusions. The reasons for the discrepancy? Says Third Way: more guns, more poverty, poorer education, and less social spending in those nasty, high-crime, gun-toting, knuckle-dragging, Trump-loving, MAGA Republican states. So there!

[Now, finally, comes the truth.](#) Two data analysts from the Heritage Foundation — Kevin Dayaratna and Alexander Gage — have discovered Third Way’s dirty little secret: drawing conclusions from averages that don’t reflect reality.

From Dayaratna:

In January 2023, the Third Way think tank published a report claiming that homicide rates have been higher in “red” states than in “blue” states for the past 20 years.

The argument is critically flawed in a number of ways. First, the report’s authors fail to acknowledge that crime is a local phenomenon and that any meaningful analysis needs to be undertaken at the local level.

Second, the authors neglected to mention the fact that the electoral map changes over time. States that were “red” and “blue” in 2020 did not necessarily vote the same way in prior years.

Correcting for these errors shows that crime has been higher in blue counties than in red counties.

That’s just the beginning of the story. In their January report, the far-left think tank Third Way (supported back in the day by then-president Bill Clinton) revised and updated their previous study promoting the canard:

In March of 2022, we released a report that found murder rates in 2020 were 40% higher in Trump-voting states than Biden-voting states.

In this follow-up report, we studied homicide data going back to 2000 to see if this one-year Red State murder epidemic was an anomaly. It was not.



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Despite a media narrative to the contrary, a wide and widening Red State murder gap has spanned the past two decades.

According to its flawed study, murder rates “have actually increased at far higher rates in Trump-voting states over the past two decades,” and “the top 10 murder rate states have been dominated by reliably red states, namely Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Missouri.”

Third Way celebrated its accuracy and its honesty:

... The numbers don't lie. It is our hope that with this report we can create a more accurate political discussion about crime.

Those numbers, however, mask the truth through manipulation. [Dayaratna explains](#):

It is true that red states have higher homicide rates than blue states, but the problem with this is that crime is a hyper-localized phenomenon.

It doesn't make sense to talk about at the state level. It makes sense to talk about at the local level because that's where the prosecutions occur.

The local level crime is handled at the local level by local police, so when you look at this question on a local basis, namely the county level, you'll see that the trend is reversed.

How much of a reversal? Says Dayaratna:

If you look at the analysis on a state-by-state level, it's 34% higher in red states [than] blue states, according to the most recent data we analyzed, but then when you look at it [on] a county-by-county level, it is 60% *higher* in blue counties than red counties. [Emphasis added.]

And those blue counties are typically run by far-left liberals who are joined in their destructive policies by local AGs often funded by George Soros and friends.

Dayaratna goes deeper:

Looking at homicide rates by county, states show skewed distributions with many counties having little or no homicides, and a handful of counties with excessively high homicide rates.

Thus, state homicide rates can be heavily influenced by a few counties.

When those counties have different politics from the rest of the state, it can flip the conclusion about the association between political identifications and homicides.

How big a flip? “Between 2002 and 2008, there was an 88% higher rate of homicide in blue counties than red counties and between 2014 and 2022 there was a 62% increase.”

Does Third Way know that their analysis is flawed? Dayaratna thinks so:

It is undoubtable that this blue county murder problem has been persisting for quite some time. And it is quite disingenuous for the Third Way to just present the data as they did....



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The conclusion from the Heritage Foundation study is that the United States has a *blue county murder problem* that has persisted for the past 20 years! Only now is Third Way being called out for the promotion of its anti-gun, anti-Trump, anti-Republican mendacity, thanks to Heritage and its analysts.



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