

Tracking Right-Wing Media's Spread of Immigration Misinformation in 2022

Throughout 2022, the Immigration Hub tracked right-wing media outlets on multiple platforms - television, online mediums, print publications, and podcasts - specifically analyzing the volume, tenure and impact of their focus on immigration. Using an analytical tool, Critical Mentions, and thorough examination of content, we determined that right-wing media's impact on immigration misinformation is massive, consistent, and serves as a pivotal political arm for the Republican Party and right-wing groups. Equally concerning, right-wing media's amplification of immigration misinformation and anti-immigrant rhetoric influenced mainstream media coverage without significant challenge or fact-checking.

Top Findings

» Surround-Sound Anti-Immigrant Messaging Reached Millions

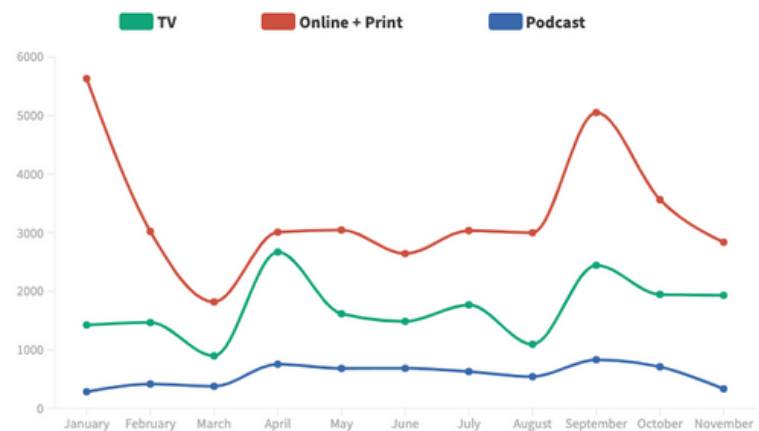
From Fox News programming to Breitbart News articles, right-wing media outlets maintained a steady volume of focus on immigration until Election Day, capitalizing on developments related to the border, such as the revocation of Title 42 by the CDC.

Right-wing media mentioned immigration topics, such as the border, nearly thousands of times a day in 2022:

over 61,000 mentions across print, podcast, and television outlets to an estimated audience of over 59 million people.

2022 Daily mentions of immigration in right-wing media

Jan 2022 - Nov 2022



» Top 3 Spikes in Media Mentions

This year, the three most significant surges in negative immigration mentions occurred in January (7,337), April (6,141), and September (7,925).

- | In early January, right-wing media latched onto the phrase “border crisis” after Fox News published court documents that revealed the number of border encounters in December before their official release.
- | In early April, the [CDC announced](#) it would repeal Title 42, causing outrage in right-wing media.
- | In mid-September, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis recklessly flew 50 migrants to Martha’s Vineyard unannounced resulting in the most prominent peak in mentions of the year.

» Right-Wing Media’s Influence on Mainstream Media

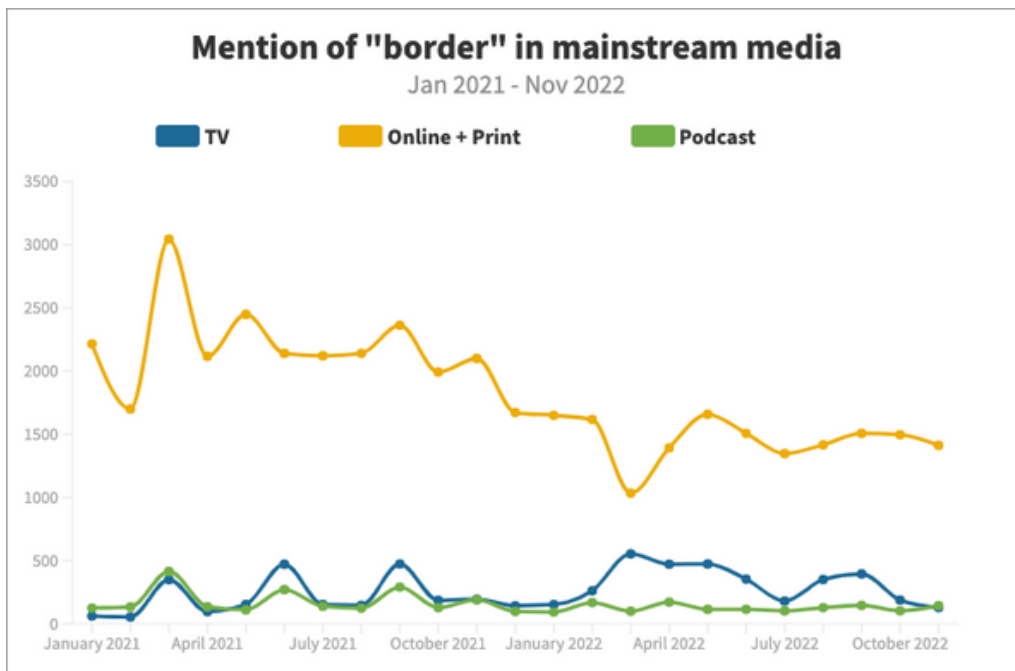
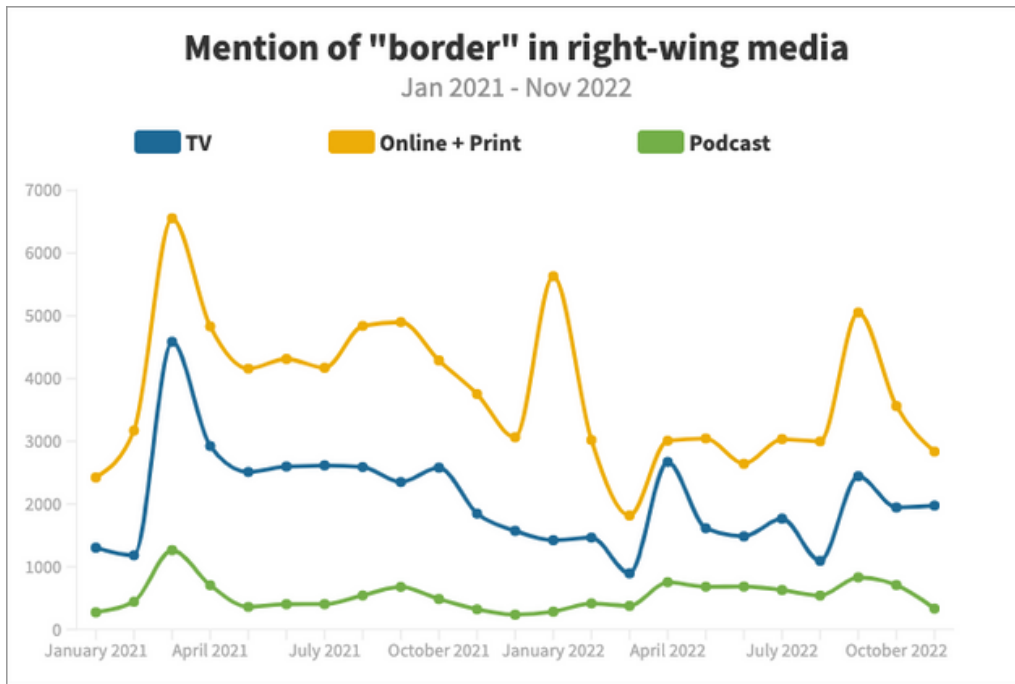
Right-wing media’s amplification of border surges, fentanyl at the border, and migrant “invasion” influenced major outlets, such as the New York Times and the Washington Post. From January 2021 through November 2022, there have been over 51,000 mentions of the “border” in mainstream media outlets and over 159,000 in right-wing media outlets. The mainstream media’s highest peaks of “border” mentions occur on similar dates as right-wing spikes.

The GOP’s talking points influence mainstream media’s coverage of immigration. For example, in late August, there was a spike after reports from [Breitbart News](#) that New York City received an influx of over 4,000 migrants because of Texas Governor Greg Abbot’s [busing stunt](#). Notably, there were criticisms from right-wing outlets over the [burden on New York City’s public school system](#) and that migrants are being [housed](#) in hotels. The New York Times framed its headline on this issue as a test to New York City’s identity, stressing that the new wave of migrants had caused a “strain” on social resources despite reporting that organizations on the ground articulated their readiness to welcome migrants, the city having managed to place new migrants in shelters, and schools announcing a program called Project Open Arms that would help children of asylum seekers. The NYT report fails to point out the primary problem behind the busing stunt that the [Texas Tribune](#) does underscore:

“lack of communication between Texas and the destination cities has led to missed opportunities to help the migrants by the receiving cities and politically motivated changes to the bus routes by Texas. The busing program also does not pay for any of the services that migrants need once they arrive in the destination cities, leaving the local governments and nonprofits to pick up those costs.”

Headlines and news articles that failed to capture the scope of the issue and instead build on right-wing media premises, contribute to misguided information on the issue of immigration, which influence decision-makers in Washington and chip away at the public’s pro-immigrant sentiment.

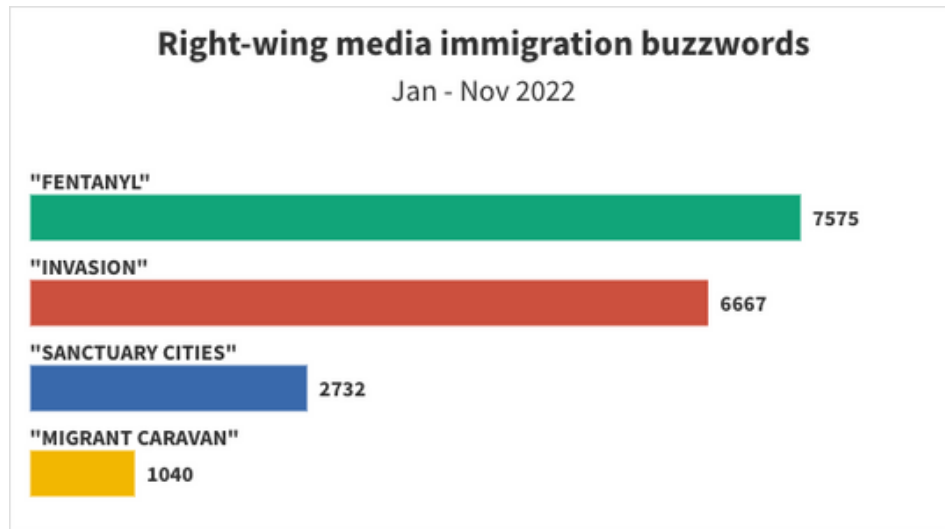
» Comparison on Border Mentions: Right-wing media v. Mainstream Media



»» GOP's Immigration Buzzwords

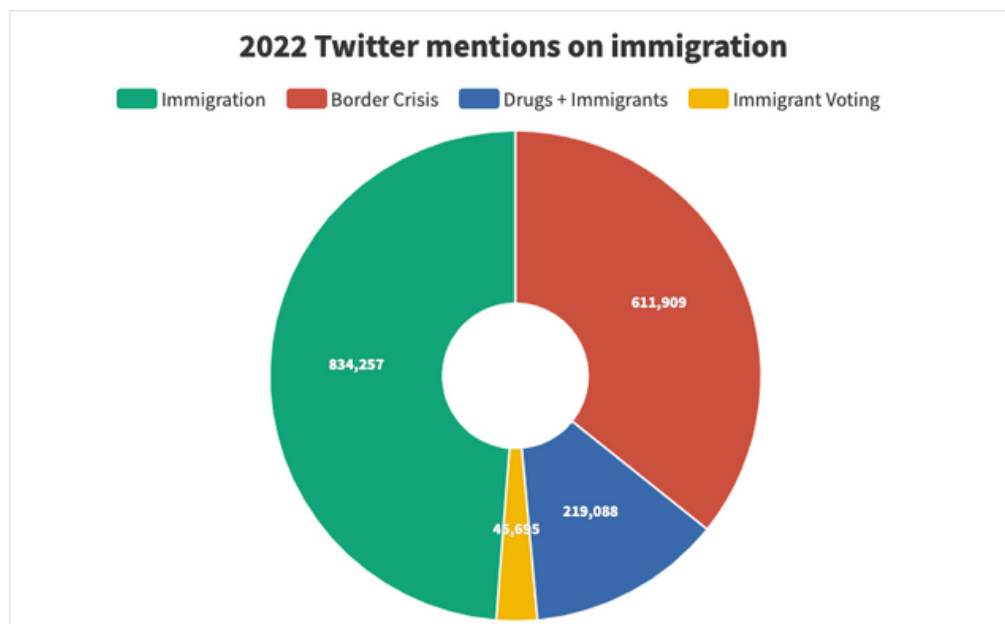
Right-wing media repeatedly showcases anti-immigrant buzzwords to prop up misinformation. Since January, right-wing media outlets have featured approximately:

- **over 7,000 mentions** of “fentanyl” or “rainbow fentanyl,”
- **over 6,000 mentions** of an immigrant “invasion” at the border,
- **over 2,000 mentions** of “sanctuary cities,”
- and **over 1,000 mentions** of “migrant caravan.”



»» The Twitter Effect

Right-wing media dominated the immigration conversation this year, translating into over **1.7 million negative immigration mentions** within all of Twitter. GOP Twitter accounts generated **over 21,000 mentions of immigration**, and **71% of those tweets** referenced the border.



» Conclusion

Right-wing media and Republican politicians often get little to no pushback when they consistently promote evidence-free, often exaggerated claims about undocumented immigrants and the Biden administration's immigration policies. **In fact, Fox News dedicated about 32% of its coverage to the border and immigration across all platforms this year.** The result is a public that's primed to believe the GOP and anti-immigrant right-wing groups when they distort the narrative on immigration.

To counter the dominant messaging from right-wing media outlets, it is incumbent on pro-immigrant politicians, from federal to local elected leaders and officials, to lean into pro-immigrant messaging and hold right-wing media and misinformers accountable for their extremist anti-immigrant rhetoric. This is particularly true for leaders in Washington who stand on a larger platform with the ability to influence mainstream media. Nonprofit advocates and service providers can not stop anti-immigrant misinformation and messaging alone, specifically against multi-million right-wing media companies with enormous reach. There must be an intentional and a concerted effort from pro-immigrant politicians at all levels of government and political campaigns to disrupt right-wing media's narrative assaults on the issue of immigration.

"Tracking Right-Wing Media's Immigration Misinformation in 2022" was authored by the Immigration Hub's Taslim Taverez and Beatriz Lopez.