

Inequality in Popular Podcasts?

An Examination of Gender & Race/Ethnicity

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USCAnnenberg
Inclusion Initiative

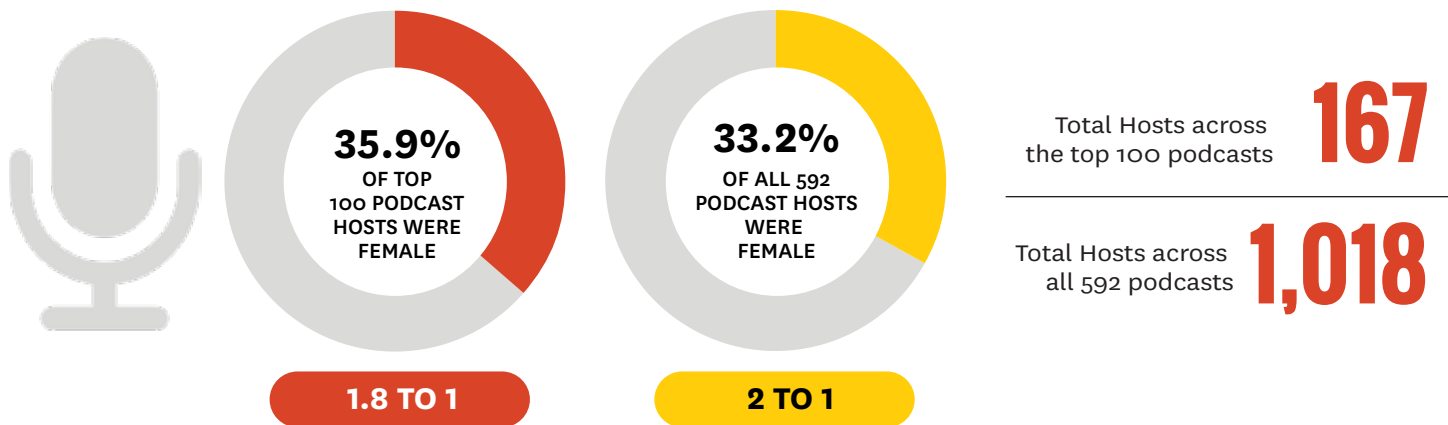
INEQUALITY IN POPULAR PODCASTS? AN EXAMINATION OF GENDER & RACE/ETHNICITY

DR. STACY L. SMITH & THE USC ANNEBERG INCLUSION INITIATIVE



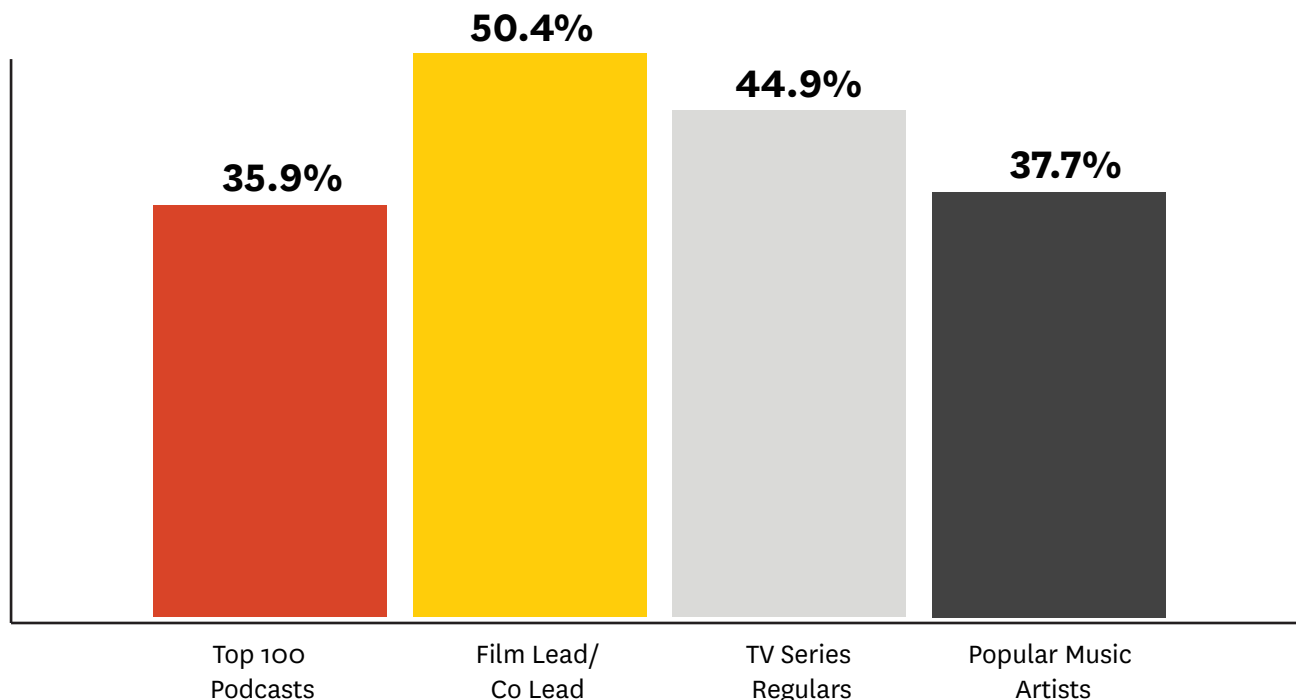
PODCAST HOSTS ARE PRIMARILY MALE

Podcast hosts by gender, 2024



PODCASTING FALLS BEHIND VISUAL ENTERTAINMENT

Gender of podcast hosts compared to other entertainment formats



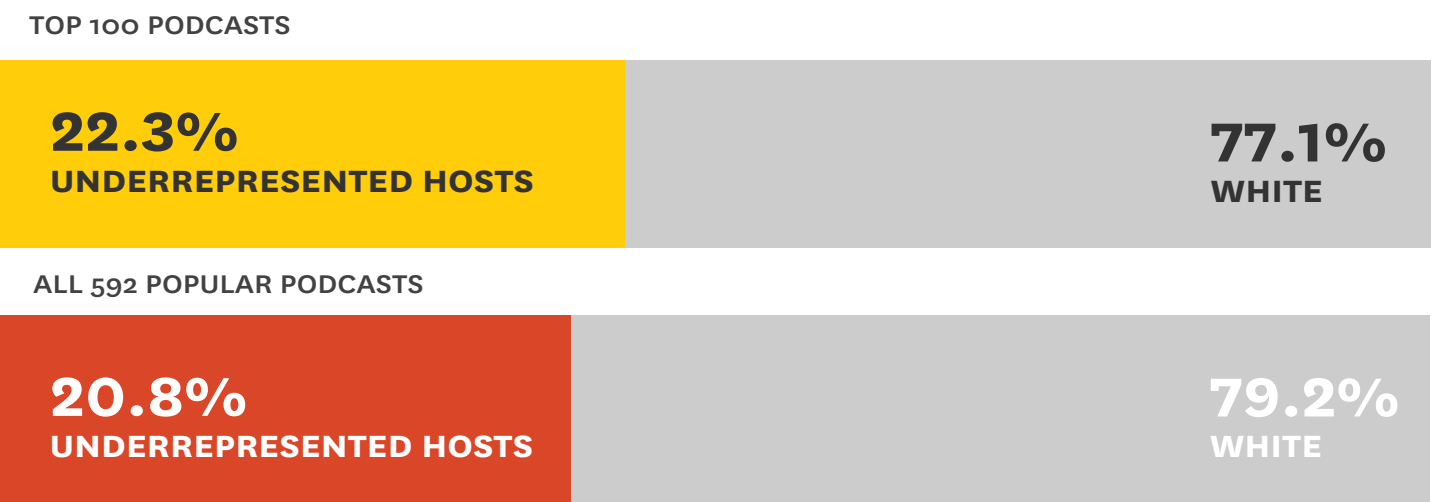
WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION AS PODCAST HOSTS DIFFERS BY GENRE

Gender of podcast host by genre across 592 podcasts

GENRE	MALES	FEMALES	RATIO
BUSINESS & TECH	92.3%	7.7%	12 TO 1
SPORTS & FITNESS	81.1%	18.9%	4.3 TO 1
COMEDY	76%	23.6%	3.2 TO 1
EDUCATION	60%	40%	1.5 TO 1
NEWS	58.8%	41.2%	1.4 TO 1
ARTS, SOCIETY & CULTURE	56.7%	43.3%	1.3 TO 1
TRUE CRIME	47%	53%	.89 TO 1
OTHER	71.4%	28.6%	2.5 TO 1

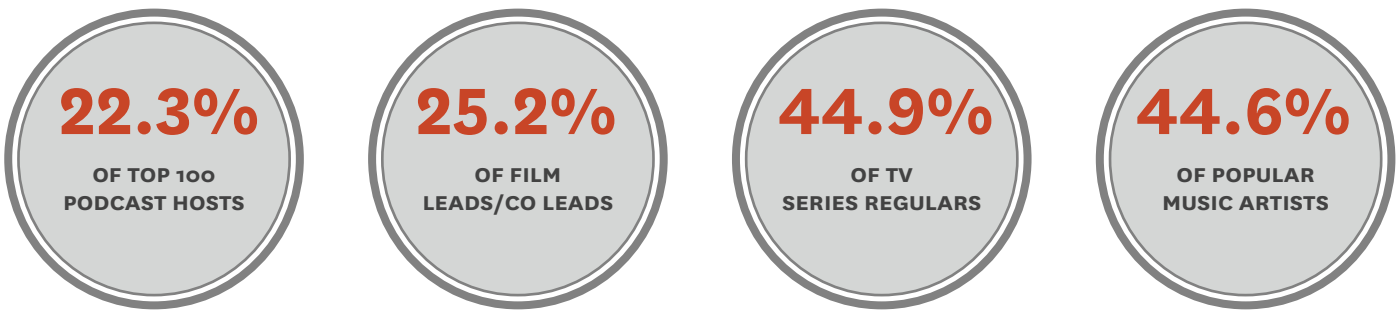
PODCAST HOSTS ARE PRIMARILY WHITE

Percentage of podcast hosts by underrepresented race/ethnicity, 2024



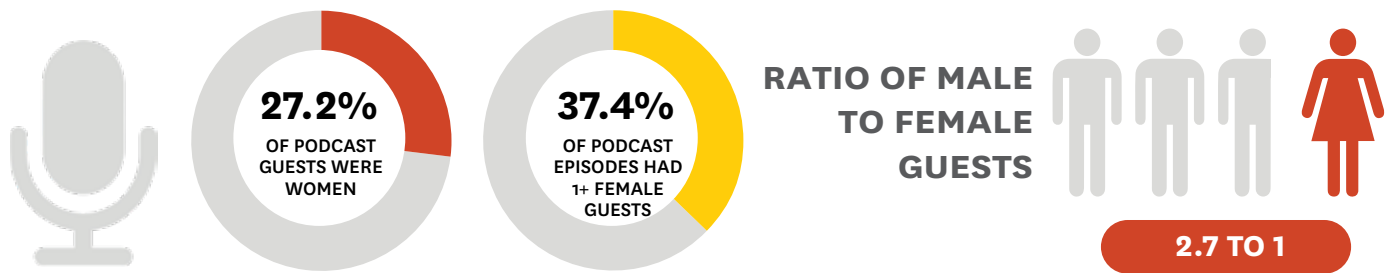
PODCASTS PERFORM LIKE OTHER TYPES OF ENTERTAINMENT

Percentage of underrepresented creatives across entertainment



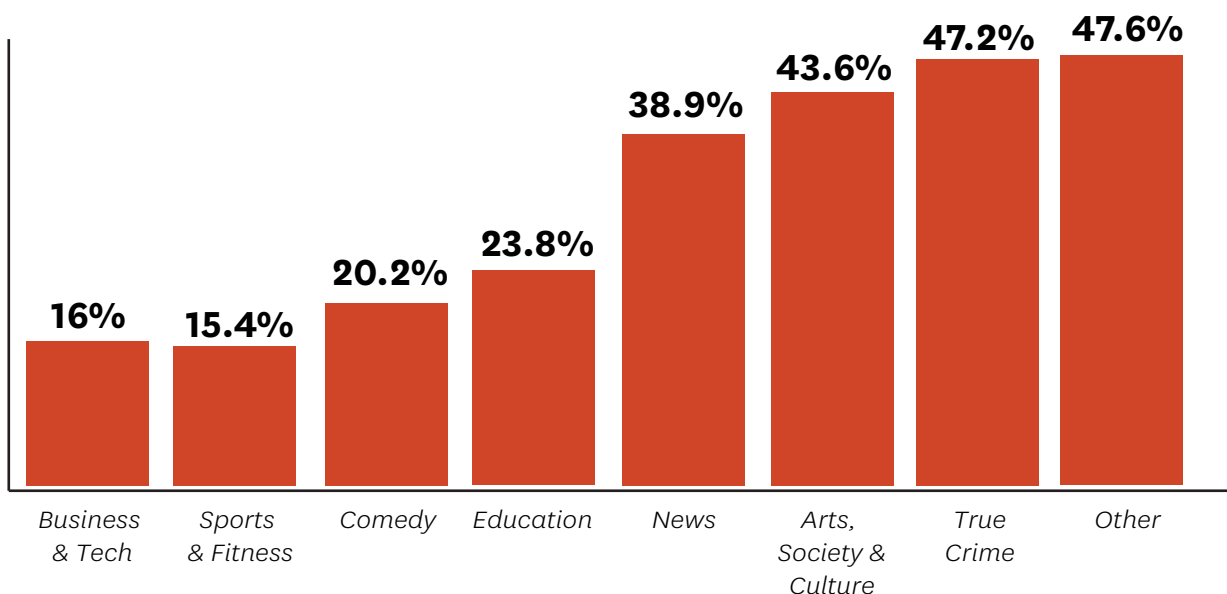
PODCASTS SKEW TOWARD MALE CONVERSATION

Of 6,340 guests across the top 100 podcasts, the percentage of guests by gender



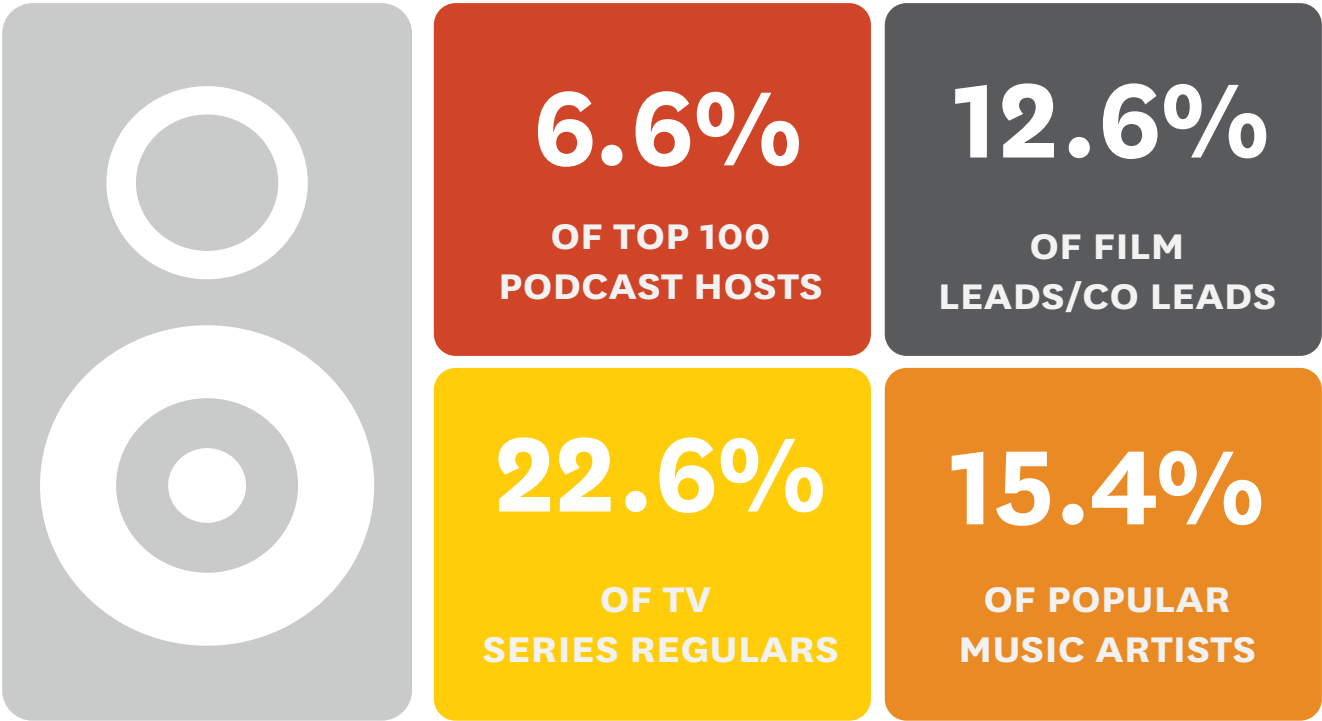
PODCAST GUEST GENDER VARIES BY GENRE

Percentage of female guests by podcast genre



WOMEN OF COLOR ARE NEARLY INVISIBLE IN POPULAR PODCASTS

Women of color as creatives across entertainment formats



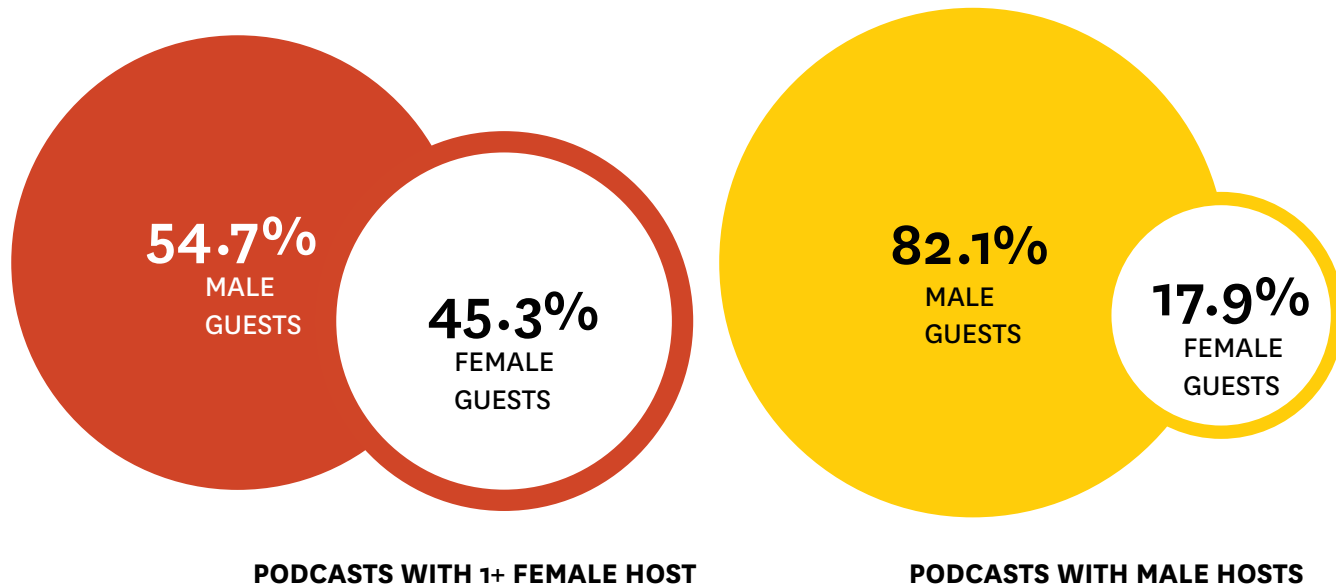
UNDERREPRESENTED HOSTS ARE MISSING IN EVERY GENRE

Host race/ethnicity by genre across all 592 podcasts

GENRE	% WHITE	% UR	RATIO
TRUE CRIME	90.2%	9.8%	9.2 TO 1
SPORTS & FITNESS	80%	20%	4 TO 1
EDUCATION	80%	20%	4 TO 1
BUSINESS & TECH	80%	20%	4 TO 1
COMEDY	78.8%	21.2%	3.7 TO 1
ARTS, SOCIETY & CULTURE	76.9%	23.1%	3.3 TO 1
NEWS	72.9%	27.1%	2.7 TO 1
OTHER	72.1%	27.9%	2.6 TO 1

FEMALE-HOSTED PODCASTS HAVE MORE FEMALE GUESTS

Percentage of female guests by gender of podcast host



Inequality in Popular Podcasts? An Examination of Gender & Race/Ethnicity

USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative

Americans spend a significant portion of their time each week listening and/or watching podcasts. And, the rate of listening has increased substantially over time. According to *The Infinite Dial*, 8% of Americans aged 12 and older listened to a podcast per week in 2014. By 2023, the percentage jumped to 31%.¹ In 2014, Americans spent 5.6 minutes per day listening and in 2023, 25.5 minutes.²

Given this uptick in exposure to podcasting, it is important to examine what consumers may be listening to and/or receiving. At the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, we have documented that males outnumber females across film, television, streaming, music, video games, and some forms of advertising. This imbalance is demonstrated both on screen in terms of who is participating in storylines as leads, main characters or the entire cast as well as people working behind the scenes.³

The popularity and financial prosperity around podcasting caused us to wonder if the same tilted trends we see in other media will populate this medium. As money moves into entertainment via production, marketing and advertising, we typically see women and people of color pushed to the margins.⁴ Consequentially, we anticipated the same trends in podcasting -- particularly with those shows that were more popular or money makers.

To this end, we examined the gender and race/ethnicity (white, underrepresented) of *hosts* across 604 of the most popular podcasts on Spotify from January 1st to September 1st 2024.⁵ We supplemented this analysis by taking a deep dive into guest representation by gender across the 100 top podcasts across the same time frame.⁶ Only English-speaking podcasts were included in the analysis and rankings were based on U.S. audience popularity. Footnotes 5 and 6 provide a detailed overview of the study's methodology.

Below, we first present the results on gender (male, female, nonbinary) and race/ethnicity (white, underrepresented) across the 100 most popular podcasts and then we focus on the full sample of hosts ($n=592$). This will allow us to compare inclusion in podcasting to popular film, TV shows, and music. Second, we turn our attention to guests across the 100 top podcasts. Using a modified approach to collecting data on guests developed by the Pew Research Center⁷, we were able to examine the gender of 6,413 guests appearing on the 100 top podcasts across 12 months of 2024.

Hosts

Based on a modified definition from the Pew Research Center definition, a host was *"a person who provides information to listeners that breaks down or analyzes information, interviews a guest, offers commentary on a topic or recaps an event/media, or provides an overview of current topics that are the focus of the podcast."*⁸

Across the 100 most popular podcasts of 2024 on Spotify, a total of 167 hosts were identified. A full 64.1% ($n=107$) were men, 35.9% ($n=60$) were women and none were nonbinary. Almost identical findings were observed across the full 592 podcasts and 1,018 hosts. One notable deviation emerged, however. Six non-binary hosts were identified across the full sample.

To see how women fare in podcasting when compared to other media in 2024, we looked at gender of leading/co leading characters (protagonists) across the 100 top theatrically-released films⁹, and percentage of girls/women as series regulars (main cast) across the 100 top television programs¹⁰ and artists across the Hot 100 Billboard songs¹¹. As shown in Table 2, podcasting and music were far less likely than film and TV series to center content on women and girls. Given the strong platform connectivity between podcasting and music, this is not surprising that both of these media oppress women.

Table 1
Gender of Hosts Across Popular Spotify Podcasts:
2024

Gender	Males	Females	Gender Ratio	Total
% of 100 top podcast hosts	64.1%	35.9%	1.78 to 1	167
% of 592 podcast hosts	66.3%	33.2%	2 to 1	1,018

Note: Only 6 hosts were identified as non-binary across the 592 podcasts evaluated. Given the small n, they were not included in the table.

Table 2
Percentage of 2024 Content Centered on Females across Podcasting, Film, TV & Music

Indicator	% Female
% of female hosts across 100 top podcasts	35.9%
% of female leads/co leads across 100 top films	50.4%
% of female series regulars across 100 top TV shows	44.9%
% of female artists across top 100 songs	37.7%

We also explored how podcast genre was related to host gender. Each podcast was categorized into one of 8 mutually exclusive all inclusive content categories (see Table 3). Then, we examined the number and percentage of hosts by gender within each genre. As shown in Table 3, male hosts dominate **every** genre except True Crime. Business & Tech, Sports & Fitness and Comedy were almost solely the genres male hosts worked in. Podcasts falling into the genres of education, news and arts, society and culture featured females as roughly 40-44% of hosts. A list of the top 10 hosts of the sample time frame in 2024 can be found in Table 4. Only 2 of the top 10 feature women hosts.

Beyond genre, we were curious whether the inclusion of video differed by host gender. Overall, 55.1% ($n=54$) of the top 100 podcasts included video. Nearly two-thirds (62.3%, $n=33$) of podcasts with all-male hosts included video, whereas 46.7% ($n=21$) of the podcasts with at least one female host featured video. This same trend was noted across all 592 podcasts—61.4% ($n=205$) of podcasts with only male hosts had video compared to 49.6% ($n=128$) of those with at least one female host did.

Table 3
Podcast Genre by Host Gender

Genre	Males	Females	M to F Ratio
Business & Technology	92.3%	7.7%	12 to 1
Sports & Fitness	81.1%	18.9%	4.3 to 1
Comedy	76.4%	23.6%	3.2 to 1
Education	60%	40%	1.5 to 1
News	58.8%	41.2%	1.4 to 1
Arts, Society & Culture	56.7%	43.3%	1.3 to 1
True Crime	47%	53%	.89 to 1
Other	71.4%	28.6%	2.5 to 1

Note: Non-binary hosts appeared in Comedy (66.7%), Arts, Society, & Culture (16.7%), and Other (16.7%).

Table 4
Top 10 Spotify Podcasts of 2024

Rank	Name of Podcast	Host
1	The Joe Rogan Experience	Joe Rogan
2	Crime Junkie	Ashley Flowers & Brit Prawat
3	This Past Weekend w/Theo Von	Theo Von
4	Call Her Daddy	Alexandra Cooper
5	Smartless	Jason Bateman, Sean Hayes, Will Arnett
6	Lex Fridman Podcast	Lex Fridman
7	Matt & Shane's Secret Podcast	Matt McCusker, Shane Gillis
8	2 Bears, 1 Cave w/Tom Segura & Bert Kreischer	Tom Segura, Bert Kreischer
9	New Heights	Jason Kelce, Travis Kelce
10	What Now? With Trevor Noah	Trevor Noah

Pivoting to race/ethnicity, a full 77.1% of podcast hosts in the top 100 were white and 22.3% were from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. This translates into hearing from roughly 3.5 white podcast hosts to every 1 underrepresented host. The findings across the full sample of 592 podcasts were virtually identical (see Table 5).

Table 5
Underrepresented Status of Hosts Across Popular Spotify Podcasts:
2024

Gender	White	Underrepresented	UR Ratio
% of 100 top podcast hosts	77.1%	22.3%	3.49 to 1
% of 592 podcast hosts	79.2%	20.8%	3.8 to 1

Similar to gender, we examined whether podcasting was providing more or less access and opportunity for underrepresented voices. As shown in Table 6, podcasting features far *fewer* underrepresented voices than music. Underrepresented voices in podcasting was similar to the percentage of underrepresented leads in film and series regulars in TV shows. Given that roughly 41.6% of Americans identify with a non white racial/ethnic group, it is surprising their participation is so woefully low across media.¹²

Table 6
Percentage of 2024 Content Centered on Underrepresented Voices across Podcasting, Film, TV & Music

Indicator	% of UR
% of UR hosts across 100 top podcasts	22.3%
% of UR leads/co leads across 100 top films	25.2%
% of UR series regulars across 100 top TV shows	44.9%
% of UR artists across top 100 songs	44.6%

Table 7
Podcast Genre by Host Underrepresented Status

Genre	White	Non White	W to UR Ratio
True Crime	90.2%	9.8%	9.2 to 1
Sports & Fitness	80%	20%	4 to 1
Education	80%	20%	4 to 1
Business & Technology	80%	20%	4 to 1
Comedy	78.8%	21.2%	3.7 to 1
Arts, Society & Culture	76.9%	23.1%	3.3 to 1
News	72.9%	27.1%	2.7 to 1
Other	72.1%	27.9%	2.6 to 1

Across all 8 genres evaluated, underrepresented podcast hosts appear far below proportional representation with U.S. census (41.6%). Non white podcast hosts were more likely to appear on News podcasts, Arts, Society and Culture shows, and those podcasts from “other genres.” Very few underrepresented hosts had podcasts in the True Crime, Sports & Fitness or Comedy genres. Four of the top 10 podcasts featured hosts that were not white.

Podcasts with underrepresented hosts were more likely to feature video than those with only white hosts. Of the top 100 podcasts with at least 1 underrepresented host, 59.4% ($n=19$) included video while 53% ($n=35$) of the top 100 podcasts with only white hosts had video. A similar finding occurred across all 592 podcasts—60.7% ($n=99$) of podcasts with at least 1 underrepresented host had video versus 54.7% ($n=234$) with only white hosts.

Table 8
Gender & Underrepresented Status of Hosts of Popular Spotify Podcasts:
2024

Intersectional Identity	White Males	UR Males	White Female	UR Females
% of 100 top podcast hosts	48.2%	15.7%	29.5%	6.6%
% of 592 podcast hosts	53.8%	12.6%	25.5%	8.1%

While it is important to examine gender and race/ethnicity separately, we also intersected the two measures to evaluate access and opportunity for women of color specifically. As shown in Table 8, the intersectional approach revealed that white males receive the most opportunity and women of color the least. This is true for both the 100 top podcasts or across a wider sample of 592 shows. Further, Table 9 shows that podcasting was the least likely media format in 2024 to feature WOC as hosts.

Table 9
Percentage of 2024 Content Centered on Underrepresented Women across
Podcasting, Film, TV & Music

Indicator	% of UR
% of WOC hosts across 100 top podcasts	6.6%
% of WOC leads/co leads across 100 top films	12.6%
% of WOC series regulars across 100 top TV shows	22.6%
% of WOC artists across top 100 songs	15.4%

Podcasts featuring women of color as hosts were less likely to leverage video components than those without any women of color hosts. Among the 100 top podcasts, 57.3% ($n=51$) of the programs without any women of color hosts used video compared to 33.3% ($n=3$) of the podcasts with at least one woman of color as host. Across all 592 podcasts, less than half (47.2%, $n=34$) of the podcasts with at least one host who was a woman of color featured video. In comparison, 57.5% ($n=299$) of podcasts without a woman of color host used video.

Guests

In addition to examining the hosts of popular podcasts, we further explored who appeared with these hosts as guests on the podcast. Guests were identified using the episode title and description provided by Spotify. Using a procedure based on Pew Research Center¹³, we used an AI-based script to identify all available episodes of the top 100 podcasts which aired in 2024. Episode titles and descriptions were obtained for each of these episodes. Then, we instructed AI-based tools to use episode descriptions to determine the names of any guests appearing in those episodes. We reviewed the results generated by the AI tool and refined the list of guests through steps listed in Footnote 13. Ultimately, we examined 86 of the top 100 podcasts that had at least one guest and assessed 7,841 total episodes. Our final analysis includes 6,413 guests across 4,070 episodes of these 86 podcasts.

Of the 6,340 individual guests who had an identifiable gender, 72.8% ($n=4,614$) were male and 27.2% ($n=1,725$) were female. There was 1 identified gender non-binary individual who was a guest on a podcast episode. The overall gender ratio of podcast guests was 2.7 men to every 1 woman.

How many podcast episodes featured at least one female guest? Of the 4,032 episodes that featured a guest with a discernible gender, 62.6% ($n=2,525$) did not feature any female guests and 37.4% ($n=1,507$) included one or more female guests. In other words, nearly two-thirds of the popular podcast episodes sampled did not include even one female guest.

Next, we examined whether guest gender varied by podcast genre. Using the same genres identified earlier, we assess the percentage of male and female guests appearing on every episode of the podcasts in each category. Female guests were outnumbered across every genre, but were most likely to appear in podcasts focused on True Crime, Arts, Society, & Culture, and those on Other topics. Female guests were least likely to appear in Sports & Fitness and Business & Technology podcast episodes.

Table 10
Podcast Genre by Guest Gender

Genre	Males	Females	M to F Ratio
Business & Technology	84%	16%	5.2 to 1
Sports & Fitness	84.6%	15.4%	5.5 to 1
Comedy	79.7%	20.2%	3.9 to 1
Education	76.2%	23.8%	3.2 to 1
News	61.1%	38.9%	1.6 to 1
Arts, Society & Culture	56.4%	43.6%	1.3 to 1
True Crime	52.8%	47.2%	1.1 to 1
Other	52.4%	47.6%	1.1 to 1

Another way to think about genre is on the format of a podcast. Using formats first identified by Pew Research Center,¹⁴ we assigned each of the top 100 podcasts into one of 6 format types, shown in Table 11. Again, male guests were more likely than female guests to appear across all formats. Females were most likely to be guests on news summary and deep reporting podcasts.

Table 11
Podcast Format by Guest Gender

Genre	Males	Females	M to F Ratio
Commentary	79.6%	20.4%	3.9 to 1
Deep Reporting	61%	39%	1.6 to 1
Interview	74.3%	25.6%	2.9 to 1
News Summaries	58.6%	41.4%	1.4 to 1
Recap	70.3%	29.7%	2.4 to 1
Other	87.1%	12.9%	6.8 to 1

Finally, we were interested in whether having host gender was related to guest gender in podcasting. To conduct this analysis, we first bifurcated all of the podcasts into those with a woman host or not. Then, we looked at the percentage of female guests in both of these areas. The results demonstrate a significant association. The percentage of women guests on female hosts' podcasts was substantially higher (45.3%) than the percentage of women on male hosts' podcasts (17.8%). Put differently, less than

1 in 5 guests were women on podcasts that only feature male hosts. For women, the percentage of female guests approximates equality (45%).

Table 12
Guest Gender by Podcast Host Gender

	Male Guests	Female Guests
Female Host	54.7%	45.3%
No Female Host	82.1%	17.9%
Total	72.8%	27.2%

The findings on guests indicate that there are gender differences in who is invited to provide commentary on podcasts. Women are less likely to appear overall, and particularly in the genres of business and technology, sports and fitness, and comedy. Having a female host increases the likelihood that a female guest will take part in a podcast. These findings suggest that podcasting is replicating patterns across film and television.

Conclusion

The goal of this research report is to provide insights into the gender and race/ethnicity of popular podcast hosts from 2024. To that end, a total of 592 popular podcasts were examined to identify host identity and demographics. We are not aware of any other research study that has assessed this attribute of the podcasting space. Below, we review the major findings and provide recommendations for future research and intervention.

Women's Participation in Podcasting is Lacking

As a newer entry into the entertainment space, the hope for podcasting has been that a lower barrier to entry and a more democratized process could yield an environment that is more open to women's participation. That hope has not been met by reality. Female hosts are outnumbered by roughly 2 to 1 across popular podcasts. The only space where women reach 50% of hosts is in true crime— where stories focus on grisly acts often committed *against* women. Women are less likely to have video components alongside the audio of their podcasts. The lack of women podcast hosts stands in contrast to improvement for women leads and series regulars in film and television, but also parallels the lack of women artists in music. Put differently, women's participation in audio-focused entertainment lags behind the visual-focused parts of the industry.

Podcast Hosts are Primarily White and Male

Less than a quarter of popular podcast hosts were from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. This figure falls far below the percentage of underrepresented artists on the popular charts and the percentage of people from underrepresented groups in the U.S. population.¹⁵ The lack of underrepresented voices spans all genres, but is particularly notable in true crime. Notably, podcasts with underrepresented hosts were more likely to feature video than those with only white hosts.

When gender and underrepresented status were examined simultaneously, it became clear which group was least likely to serve as a podcast host: women of color. Fewer than 10% of the top 100 or all 592 evaluated podcasts featured a woman of color in a host role. This figure falls below other indicators that track the participation of women of color in entertainment roles— as film leads, as series regulars on television, or as artists on the popular charts.

Guest Spots are Geared Toward Guys

The analysis of the guests of the top 100 podcasts revealed that males were more likely to be featured than females. This was true across genres, formats, and even when the podcast had a female host. One explanation for this finding may be that true crime podcasts are less likely to have guests than other genres,¹⁶ and women were more likely to host true crime podcasts. The findings regarding podcast guests extends our earlier findings on hosts to demonstrate just how male-dominated the podcast sphere is.

Recommendations and Future Directions

This study is the first to our knowledge to investigate the gender and race/ethnicity of popular podcast hosts and to examine the gender of podcast guests. As such, these findings provide a baseline for future research and insights into what is most needed to create a more balanced podcast ecosystem.

Research on the factors that predict popularity. By one estimate, there are more than 4 million podcasts and there were more than 450 million podcast episodes in 2023.¹⁷ Though the array of podcasts is vast, not all are popular. While a study of all podcasts is not feasible, there are two factors that could be explored. The first is why listeners choose specific podcasts— and what role the host plays in that decision. The second factor is how recommendation engines and algorithmic design may privilege podcasts with male hosts. For instance, if popularity is a factor in recommendations, then podcasts with male hosts will be more likely to be pushed to listeners (and grow in popularity). Understanding these factors may be one way to address *why* podcasts with female hosts are either less popular or less prevalent (or both) than those with male hosts.

Research into barriers facing female and underrepresented podcasters. Our prior work on other areas of entertainment has revealed key psychological and structural impediments that prevent women and people of color from accessing leadership roles. Through interviews with content creators as well as decision-makers, the reasons for exclusion and pathways toward inclusion were identified. Conducting similar research with podcast hosts and creators would offer insights into the challenges that may particularly face women and people of color as hosts. Along these lines, understanding the support women and people of color receive in terms of marketing, advertising, and other aspects of podcast creation will help clarify what may be needed to advance their work to greater success. With the results of these studies, interventions could be designed that equip new creators for the difficulties they may face as they try to break into the podcast space.

Research into the behind the scenes roles. On screen roles— or on air roles, in this case— may be the first place where inequality is revealed, but is unlikely to be the last. Given the gender and racial/ethnic divergence in the figures in this report, it becomes important to understand the demographics of who supports podcasts hosts and who books guests. Our research on gender representation in music reveals significant disparities for women producers and engineers— does this carry over to the podcast arena?

Assessing the gender and race/ethnicity of who works behind the scenes in podcasting may also reveal which individuals are responsible for booking guests and making decisions about who appears on popular podcasts. Expanding research in this area can provide a more holistic view of the field, even as efforts are necessary to promote greater inclusion overall.

Limitations

As with all research reports, a few limitations must be noted. First, our metrics on popularity spanned the majority of 2024 but may not account for podcasts that became popular in the final quarter of 2024. Given the stability of the list, similarity to external sources (e.g., Edison, published Spotify reports), and ongoing popularity of top podcasts, we believe this sample captures the majority of popular podcasts in the U.S. in 2024. Second, the hosts of the assessed podcasts may vary slightly given seasons of a show. Every effort was made to confirm that the hosts were working on the podcast in 2024 but there may be differences based on other sources. Third, our method of assessing episode guests relied on artificial intelligence models. While the results were scrutinized by human researchers, there may be gaps between published information and who actually appears as podcast guests. Any omissions are unintentional, and we believe our data provides a key snapshot of podcast guests in this time frame.

This report provides the first look at the demographics of podcast hosts and guests. It reveals the key disparities facing women and underrepresented hosts in this arena. As the popularity, financial possibilities, and audience for podcasting grows, ensuring the promise of a field in which everyone can participate is met with reality is essential.

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Footnotes

1. Edison Research (October 4, 2023). *Weekly Insights 10.4.2023 The Growth in Podcast Listening Time*. Retrieved from <https://www.edisonresearch.com/weekly-insights-10-4-2023-the-growth-in-podcast-listening-time/>
2. Edison Research (October 4, 2023) *Weekly Insights 10.4.2023 The Growth in Podcast Listening Time*. Retrieved from <https://www.edisonresearch.com/weekly-insights-10-4-2023-the-growth-in-podcast-listening-time/> See paragraph 5.
3. Smith, S.L. & Annenberg Inclusion Initiative (2025). *Inequality in 1,800 Popular Films*. Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-2025-inequality-popular-films-full-report.pdf>.
4. Smith, S. L., Pieper, K., & Wheeler, S. (2023, October). Gender, Race/Ethnicity & Box Office Performance: Do Films with Female and/or Underrepresented Protagonists Make as Much Money as Films with White Male Leads? Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. Los Angeles, CA.
5. Spotify provided a list of 656 popular podcasts based on their platform traffic from January 1 through September 1, 2024. Spotify included only podcasts from U.S. creators, ranked based on U.S. audience popularity, in English, for shows that published at least 1 episode in 2024. Podcasts were ranked by the average first-run listeners per episode (within the first 56 days after the episode was published). To supplement Spotify's list, we used Edison's ranking of popular podcasts per quarter. The top 50 podcasts are based on rankings of those with the largest weekly audience among listeners aged 13 and older. There was considerable overlap between the lists. After reviewing both lists, we excluded podcasts that did not meet the original criteria (English language, number of episodes, year released), were duplicates of another entry, or were "deceptive" or "dangerous" according to Spotify's platform rules (e.g., uploaded by a user other than the creator; violates platform rules). This yielded a total of 604 podcasts. Of those, 12 had no host and were excluded from further analysis. In total, our sample included 592 podcasts.

For this study, the definition of a host was adapted from Pew Research Center and included "the individual(s) listed on a distributor or show website as the host, or is a person who provides information to listeners that breaks down or analyzes information, interviews a guest, offers commentary on a topic or recaps an event/media, or provides an overview of current topics that are the focus of the podcast. When a podcast focuses on a re-enactment or fictional story, the central cast and/or the narrator are considered to be the host" (See Footnote 8).

To determine the host of a podcast, we used two sets of sources. First, we examined IMDb to determine whether there was a host. Second, we verified this data by checking the show listings on Spotify, Apple, and the show's official website and social media. On Spotify, the title, description, and distributor were used to identify the host. On Apple, the title, description, and "hosts and guests" section were checked. Finally, on the show's website and social media, we looked for mentions of the host in any part of the page (e.g., bio, about, etc.). Everyone listed across those three sections was included as a host, except for a host who had left the show before 2024.

Once the host(s) was identified, the gender and race/ethnicity of each individual were determined. Evidence from online sources was used, including online databases, photos, pronoun usage, and other referents. If the host's gender or race/ethnicity was purposely opaque (e.g., they are meant to be anonymous or their face was obscured in photos), then their gender and/or race/ethnicity was listed as "can't tell."

6. The guest(s) appearing on the 100 top podcasts, according to Spotify data, were also determined. This was done using a modified procedure based on a 2024 study from the Pew Research Center (See Footnote 7). Using published descriptions of podcast episodes, a ChatGPT query was used to extract guest information from each episode available on Spotify as of June 2025. This yielded more than 10,000 individual guests across the podcasts examined. To verify the accuracy of the ChatGPT model, we developed a definition of a guest that included live contributors to a podcast episode who were listed in the title or description. Any episode that did not have a guest was scrutinized to determine if a guest did appear. Then, 10% of the total episodes were checked by research assistants to validate the AI-generated list of guests. Finally, research assistants reviewed the list of guests to remove any hosts who ChatGPT mistakenly identified as a guest. Lastly, a further subset of episodes were checked to remove individuals who were the topic of an episode rather than a guest appearing on the podcast. In total, 6,413 guests appeared across the episodes of the top 100 podcasts on Spotify in 2024.
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