

# Gender And Ethnic Diversity in Prime-Time Cable News

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FOR AMERICA

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## Introduction

In the wake of Don Imus' racially and sexually insensitive comment about the Rutgers University women's basketball team in April 2007, new attention was paid to the issue of diversity in media, particularly on television. Soon after, *Media Matters for America* issued a report about the diversity of guests on cable news in prime time, to document the degree to which different programs and networks were presenting to their viewers a picture that resembled the American public. The results of the study, titled [\*Locked Out: the Lack of Gender and Ethnic Diversity on Cable News\*](#), were not encouraging: The guests on all three networks' programs were overwhelmingly white and male.

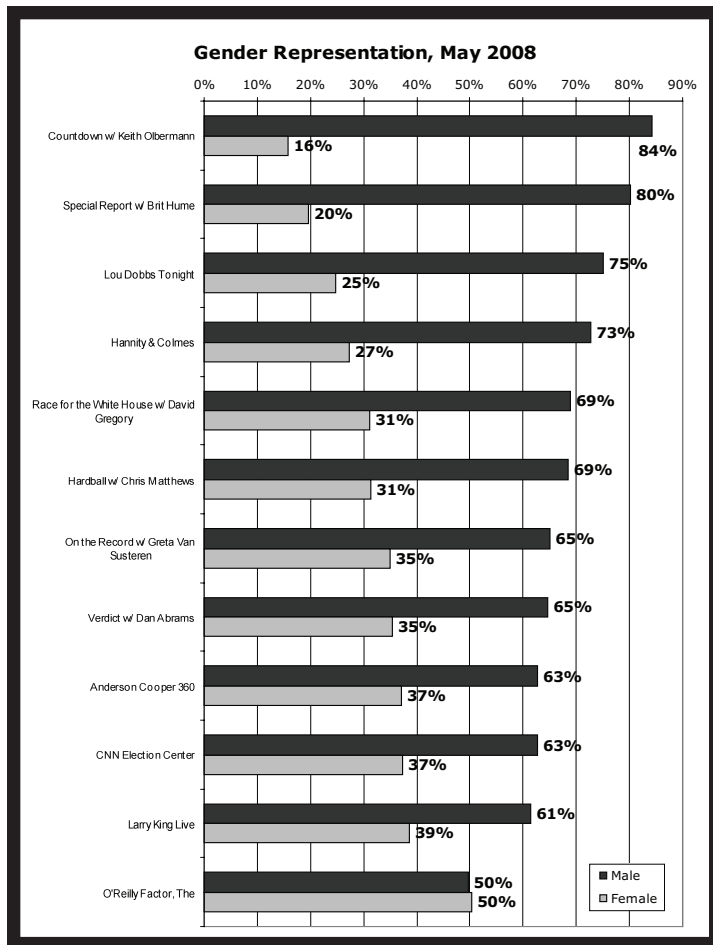
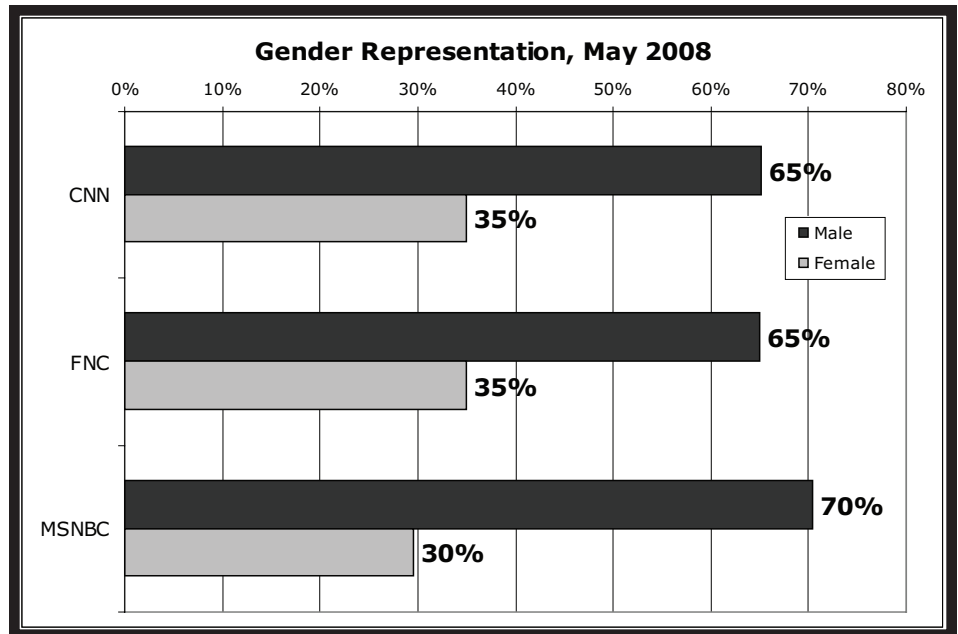
This report updates and expands those data for current cable network programs. We examined four programs on each of the three cable news networks during prime time, and recorded the gender and ethnicity of every guest who appeared during the month of May 2008 – nearly 1,700 guest appearances in all. The results demonstrate that, at least in prime time, whatever effort the networks have made to increase the diversity of their guests have borne little fruit. Although there may be more African-American political analysts appearing during the daytime hours (particularly on CNN and MSNBC) in prime time – when the audiences are largest – white men continue to dominate.

## Key Findings

- In total, 67 percent of the guests on these cable programs were men, while 84 percent were white.
- MSNBC showed the greatest gender imbalance, with 70 percent of its guests being male. CNN and Fox News were not far behind; each of those networks featured 65 percent male guests.
- Fox News was the whitest network, with 88 percent white guests. CNN and MSNBC were close behind, with both featuring 83 percent white guests.
- Latinos were particularly underrepresented. Though they now comprise 15 percent of the American population, they made up only 2.7 percent of cable news guests. The worst of the three networks on this score was MSNBC, which featured only six Latino guests out of 460 prime-time appearances during the entire month.
- A number of ethnic groups were shut out entirely, or nearly so, on some networks. During the month of May, Fox News and MSNBC each featured a single Asian-American guest. Across the three cable networks, there were only four appearances by guests of Middle Eastern descent, two on Fox and two on CNN. There was not a single appearance by a Native American during the entire month.
- Though white men make up only 32 percent of the population, they made up 57 percent of the guests on prime-time cable during this period. Every prime-time cable news host is white, and all but two -- Greta Van Susteren of Fox News and Campbell Brown of CNN -- are men.

# Gender Representation

The results in the area of gender representation could hardly be clearer: On each of the three cable networks, there was a dramatic imbalance in the gender of guests brought on prime-time programs to offer opinions and analysis. Overall, two-thirds of the guests were men. While the differences between networks were not great, MSNBC was the most male-dominated -- only 30 percent of the guests on that network were women.<sup>1</sup>

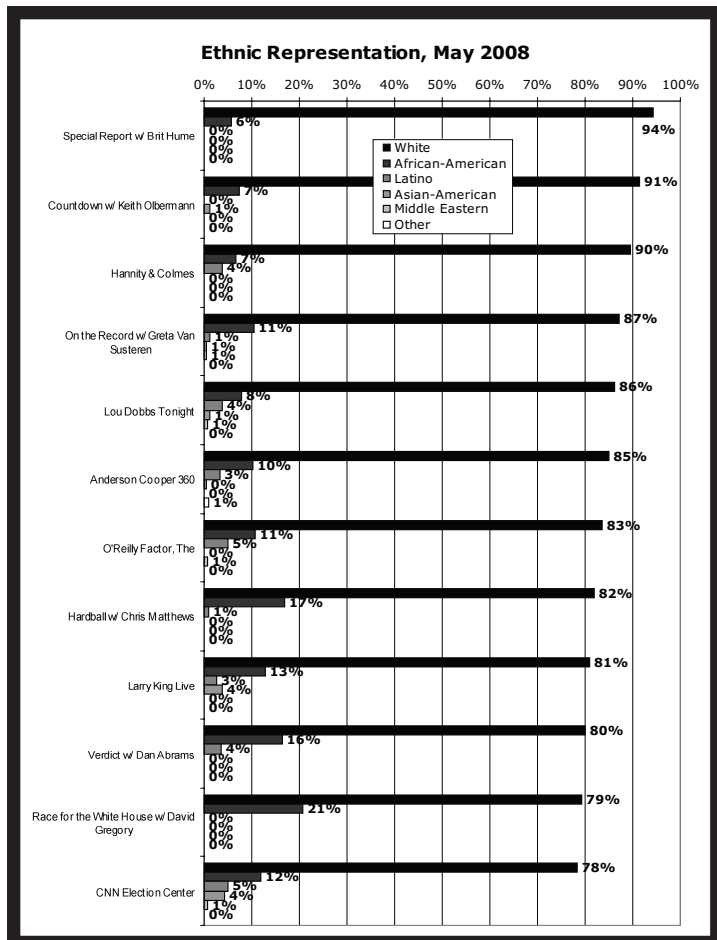
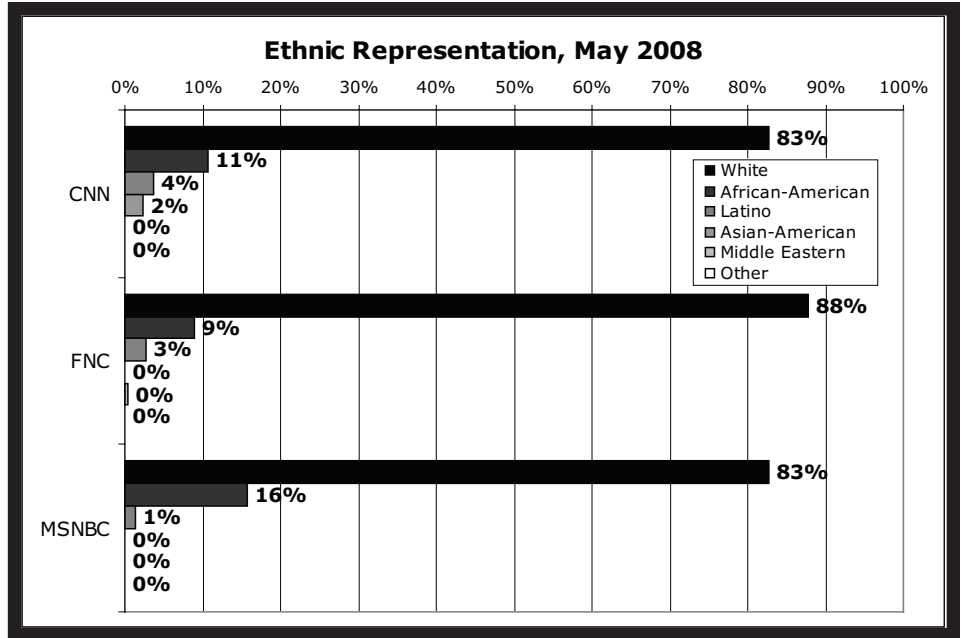


While there may have been only small differences between networks, there were substantial differences between programs. At one end of the scale, MSNBC's *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* (84 percent), Fox News' *Special Report with Brit Hume* (80 percent), and CNN's *Lou Dobbs Tonight* (75 percent) featured the highest proportion of male guests. All but one program had proportions of male guests in the 60s or 70s. The lone exception was Fox News' *The O'Reilly Factor*, which actually featured slightly more female guests: During this month, O'Reilly hosted 70 women and 69 men.

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that since we conducted this study, Contessa Brewer has begun a regular spot on *Verdict with Dan Abrams*, which would bump up the MSNBC numbers somewhat.

# Ethnic Representation

The data on ethnic representation is no more encouraging. Overall, 84 percent of the prime-time guests on the three cable networks were white. Fox News was the whitest network, with 88 percent white guests. Both CNN and MSNBC came in at 83 percent. And while African-Americans appeared on the networks at rates roughly proportional to their percentage of the population (12 percent), Latinos were dramatically underrepresented. Latinos make up 15 percent of the American population, but less than 3 percent of the guests on cable news, and only 1 percent of MSNBC's guests, were Latino.

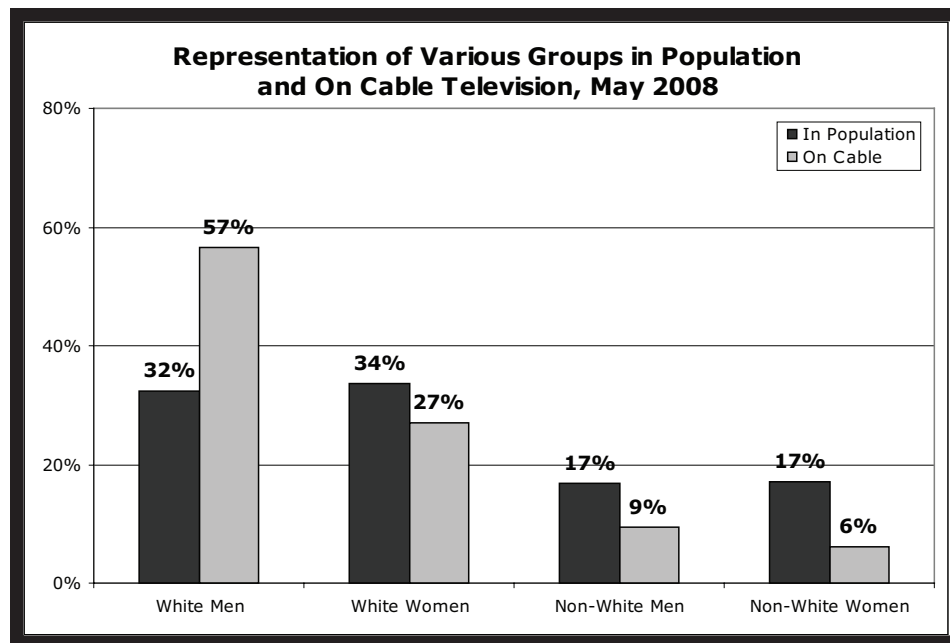
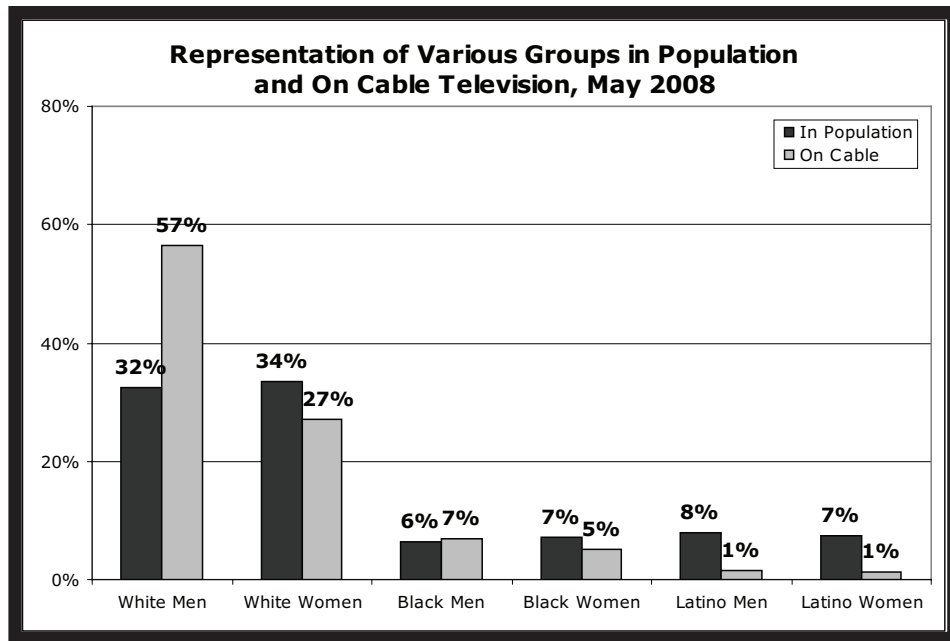


In the area of gender, we saw small differences between networks but a few more substantial differences between programs. In the area of ethnicity, however, the differences between programs are much smaller. The *least* white shows were *CNN Election Center*, *Race for the White House with David Gregory* on MSNBC, and *The Verdict with Dan Abrams* on MSNBC. The proportion of white guests on these shows was 78 percent, 79 percent, and 80 percent, respectively.

At the other end of the scale were *Special Report with Brit Hume* on Fox News, *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* on MSNBC, and *Hannity & Colmes* on Fox News, which respectively featured 94 percent, 91 percent, and 90 percent white guests.

In addition, two programs -- *Race for the White House with David Gregory* and *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*, both on MSNBC -- did not feature a single Latino guest for the entire month we examined.

To view these results another way, we can compare the representation of ethnic groups, divided by sex, to their actual proportions in the U.S. population.<sup>2</sup> This vividly demonstrates how white men are disproportionately represented on cable news.



<sup>2</sup> Figures on population come from the U.S. Census population estimates, the latest of which is July 2007. The data are available here: <http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2007-srh.html>.

## Comparing the Networks

Men represented 65 percent of all guests on CNN, while women were only 35 percent. Eighty-three percent of CNN guests were white, while African-Americans came in a distant second at 11 percent. Only 4 percent of the guests were Latino, and only 2 percent were Asian-American. Overall, 55 percent of the guests were white men.

The results for Fox News were similar: 65 percent of that network's guests were men. Fox News was the worst offender regarding ethnic diversity -- 88 percent of guests during the month of May were white, while African-Americans made up 9 percent. Latinos represented only 3 percent of guests. Only one Fox News guest for the entire month was Asian-American. Similar to CNN, 56 percent of the guests on Fox News were white men.

MSNBC was the most male-dominated of the three cable news networks. Men made up 70 percent of its guests, while women were only 30 percent. As on CNN, 83 percent of MSNBC's guests were white. MSNBC outpaced the other networks for African-American guests, at 16 percent. On the other hand, only one percent of the guests on MSNBC were Latino, and as with Fox News, there was just a single Asian-American guest. Overall, 61 percent of MSNBC's guests were white men, the worst of the three networks.

## Conclusion

No one could argue that there is any shortage of highly qualified women, African-Americans, or Latinos who would be ready, willing, and able to appear on cable television news programs. If the networks wanted, they could offer their viewers a lineup of guests that reflects the diversity of the country – not just when there is an issue having to do with race or gender at hand, but also when the topic is the presidential campaign, foreign policy, economics, or any of the other issues that are regularly discussed on these programs.

Unfortunately, during the times when the most viewers are tuning in, the three major cable news networks are dominated by white, male voices, while women and non-whites are dramatically underrepresented.

## Methodology

To assemble this report, we recorded the gender and ethnicity of every guest appearing on 12 prime-time cable programs, four on each of the three cable news networks, during the month of May 2008. The programs were as follows:

- CNN's *Lou Dobbs Tonight*
- CNN's *CNN Election Center*
- CNN's *Larry King Live*
- CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360*
- Fox News' *Special Report w/ Brit Hume*
- Fox News' *The O'Reilly Factor*
- Fox News' *Hannity & Colmes*
- Fox News' *On the Record w/ Greta Van Susteren*
- MSNBC's *Race for the White House w/ David Gregory*
- MSNBC's *Hardball w/ Chris Matthews*
- MSNBC's *Countdown w/ Keith Olbermann*
- MSNBC's *Verdict w/ Dan Abrams*

### Raw Numbers on Gender and Ethnicity of Guests

	<b>CNN</b>	<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>FNC</b>	<b>Total</b>
White men	389	283	288	960
White women	196	100	164	460
Black men	46	39	34	119
Black women	30	34	12	76
Latino men	14	3	8	25
Latino women	12	3	6	21
Asian men	11	1	1	13
Asian women	6	0	0	6
Middle eastern men	1	0	2	3
Middle eastern women	1	0	0	1
Other	2	0	0	2
Unidentifiable	2	0	11	13
<i>Total</i>	<i>710</i>	<i>463</i>	<i>526</i>	<i>1699</i>