

Cable News: A White Man's World - White Male Guests Dominate Across CNN, Fox, MSNBC

By [FAIR](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

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All In With Chris Hayes had the most ethnically diverse guestlist we found on cable news.

A survey of major cable news discussion programs shows a stunning lack of diversity among the guests.

FAIR surveyed five weeks of broadcasts of the interview/discussion segments on several leading one-hour cable shows: CNN's Anderson Cooper 360° and OutFront With Erin Burnett, All In With Chris Hayes and the Rachel Maddow Show on MSNBC, and Fox News Channel's O'Reilly Factor and Hannity.

Guests were coded by gender, race/ethnicity and occupation, as well as the affiliations of partisan guests—those who are identified with a party as current or former government officials or campaign professionals.

Data was collected during the first two weeks of February, the first week of March and the first two weeks of April. (Fewer weeks were monitored in March to limit the distorting effects of the singular focus on the missing Malaysian plane story.) Guests who appeared in interview or roundtable segments were the only appearances that were included; taped segments, which normally include a correspondent and soundbites from various guests, were excluded.

In total, there were 1,015 guests in the five-week period. Maddow was an outlier with only 49 guests during the study period; the other shows ranged from All In with 164 to AC360 and OutFront, both with 212.

Among guests with a partisan affiliation, Democrats outnumbered Republicans, 104 to 84. That is almost entirely due to the lopsided nature of partisan-identified guests on MSNBC. All In With Chris Hayes had a 35-7 advantage for Democrats, while Rachel Maddow had 12 Democrats to two Republicans.

Fox News Channel, as you might expect, featured more Republicans than Democrats, but the GOP enjoyed a more modest advantage: 24-15 on the O'Reilly Factor and 29-21 on Hannity. Many of the Democrats appearing on Fox News are what one might call "Fox News Democrats" (Extra!, [3/12](#)), people like Kirsten Powers, Bob Beckel and Lanny Davis, who often represent a center-right faction of the party and are called on to bash more progressive Democrats.

The largest category of guests were other members of the media: 55 percent of the guests were either journalists (400) or pundits (159). Current and former government officials were

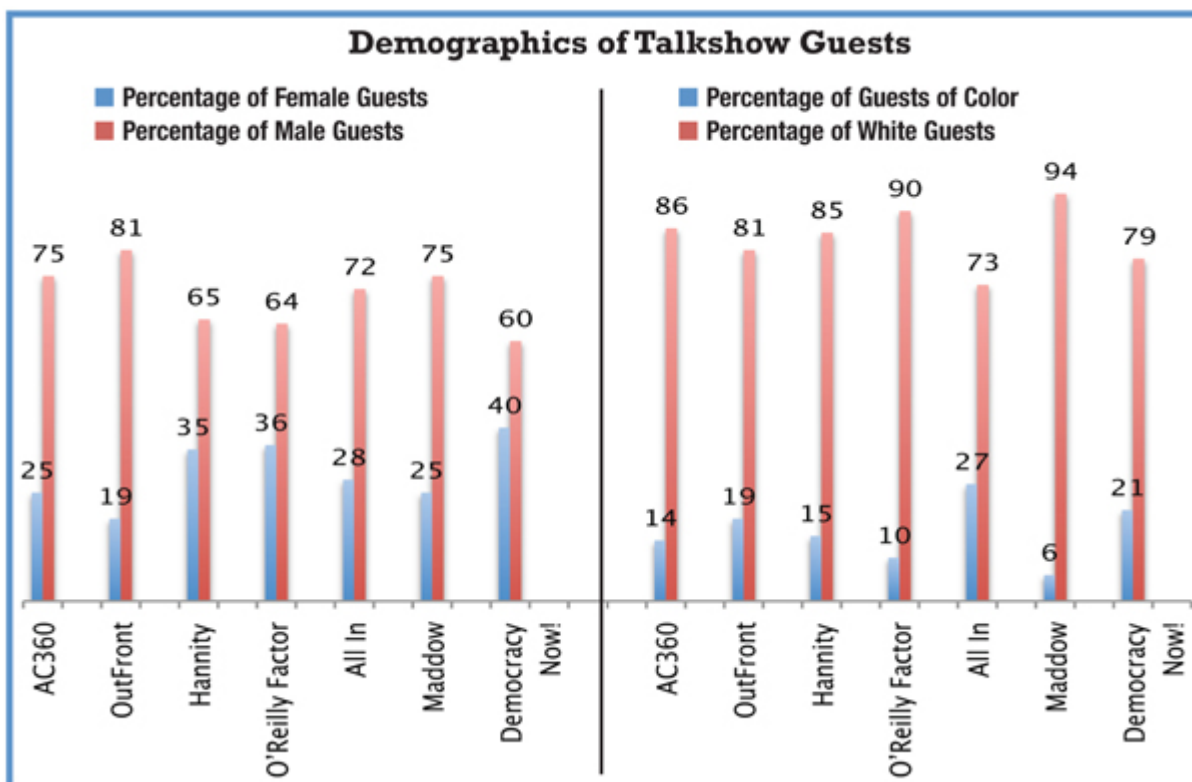
the next largest category, accounting for almost 10 percent of guests (107). There were 37 military guests (current and former), 35 representatives of think tanks and 32 academics. Other prominent guest categories were lawyers (21) and business representatives (17).

Some patterns were a function of the study period. Fifteen guests were affiliated with the Bundy ranch standoff, when a conservative rancher decided to protest having to pay to graze his cattle on federal land. All of those guests appeared on the Hannity show. CNN's obsessive coverage of the disappeared Malaysian airplane was evident in their programming in March, which featured pilots, aviation experts and scientists who would normally not appear on cable chat shows.

Eighty-four percent of guests were white (848). The most and least diverse shows in terms of ethnicity were both on MSNBC: People of color were 27 percent of guests on All In and only 6 percent on Maddow. Just three of Maddow's guests were people of color; none of these were women.

Hayes' previous show, the weekend Up With Chris Hayes, had been credited for presenting more diverse discussions than other programs, particularly the Sunday morning chat shows (Media Matters, [3/14/13](#)). Hayes explained (CJR.org, [3/28/13](#)) that it was simply a matter of monitoring the show's guest list: "A general rule is if there are four people sitting at table, only two of them can be white men."

The Fox News shows were also mostly white, with people of color constituting 10 percent of the guests on O'Reilly and 15 percent on Hannity. On CNN, AC360's guest list was 14 percent people of color, and OutFront (19 percent) was slightly better.



People of color constitute about 36 percent of the US population. On All In, the show that came closest to parity, there were 76 percent as many people of color as there would have been if the sources had matched the nation's demographics. By comparison, people of color appeared 53 percent as much as their demographic proportion on OutFront, 39 percent

on AC360, 42 percent on Hannity and 29 percent on O'Reilly. On Maddow, people of color were represented just 17 percent as often as they occur in the general public.

Latinos—who make up 16 percent of the US population—were particularly underrepresented on cable, with only 31 appearances (3 percent of sources) in the study. Eight of these appearances, more than a quarter of the total, were by CNN contributor Sunny Hostin on AC360; only four other Latino women appeared across all six shows. The diversity of Latino voices was even further diminished on Fox, where five of the seven Latino guest appearances were made by Fox personality Geraldo Rivera.

Male guests widely outnumbered women on every show (730 to 285), making up 72 percent of the guest lists. Just 5 percent (46) of cable news guests were women of color.

The show closest to gender parity was the O'Reilly Factor, where women were 36 percent of guests, followed by Hannity, also on Fox, with 35 percent women. However, all but one of O'Reilly's female guests were white; Hannity had only four women of color on his show. This pattern is related to the phenomenon of the "Fox News blonde," the young, attractive female guests who are regulars on both shows; they're not actually all blonde, but they are almost uniformly white (SteveDennie.com, [1/26/12](#)).

CNN's Erin Burnett had the most male-dominated guest list, with only 19 percent female guests. All In was 28 percent female, while Maddow and AC360's guests were both 25 percent women.

With women making up about 51 percent of the US population, they got 72 percent of their demographic share on the O'Reilly Factor, 69 percent on Hannity, 55 percent on All In, 48 percent on both Maddow and AC360, and only 37 percent on OutFront.

Women of color (about 18 percent of the US public) were strikingly underrepresented on most shows, getting 34 percent of their demographic share on AC360, 26 percent on OutFront, 11 percent on Hannity and 3 percent on the O'Reilly Factor. Maddow, again, had no women of color as guests during the study period. All In came closest to parity, with women of color at 60 percent of their demographic share.

Non-Latino white men, on the other hand, were overrepresented on every show. The Fox News shows had the least overrepresentation, with white men appearing 162 percent as much as they do in the general public on Hannity, and 167 percent on the O'Reilly Factor. Next came All In, where white men had 175 percent of their proportion of the public. White men appeared a little more than twice as often as their demographic share on OutFront (209 percent), AC360 (210 percent) and Maddow (213 percent).

Research assistance by Sara Qureshi and Aldo Guerrero.

Demographic Representation on Cable News Shows

Sources by gender and ethnicity as a percentage of their group's proportion of the general public*

	Women	People of Color	Women of Color	White Men
AC360	48%	39%	34%	210%
OutFront	37	53	26	209
Hannity	69	42	11	162
O'Reilly Factor	72	29	3	167
All In	55	76	60	175
Maddow	48	17	0	213
Democracy Now!	79	67	53	148

*For example, **AC360** had 48 percent as many female guests as it would have had if its guestlist had the same demographics as the general public

SIDEBAR:

Alternative Media: How Alternative Is It?

FAIR thought it would be interesting to contrast the elite dominance of these cable shows with an independent outlet: Democracy Now!, the daily TV/radio broadcast heard on hundreds of affiliate stations. The structure of the show is in some respects very similar to cable news programming, with long-form interviews, debates and panel discussions. But the show is perhaps best known for featuring experts and analysis that are rarely heard in the corporate media.



So how did Democracy Now! stack up against corporate-owned cable news? The show interviewed only two former or current government officials, and featured far more guests who were activists—27 percent. The most common category of guests, as on cable, was journalists, but many of these were drawn from independent/alternative media, a type of reporter seldom seen on cable news.

The guest list during the study period was 79 percent white—66 of the 84 guests—better than the cable average, but still bested by All In. Latinos were 8 percent of the guests (seven appearances), African-Americans 6 percent (five guests). Overall, people of color were represented 67 percent as much as they appear in the general public.

Women were 40 percent of the show's guests, making DN! closer to parity than any of the cable shows studied. This was 79 percent of their proportion of the public.

White men were overrepresented on Democracy Now!, but at a lower rate—148 percent of their demographic share—than on any of the cable news shows we looked at. Women of color were underrepresented, appearing 53 percent as often as their proportion of the

public—more than most of the cable shows, but behind All In.

We also looked at the diversity of the guestlist on FAIR's CounterSpin radio program. Because it's a weekly show with usually only two guests per episode, we looked at a longer time frame: the first five months of 2014, during which the show featured 41 guests.

CounterSpin's 20 female guests gave it 95 percent parity with women in the general public, and the 14 people of color interviewed represented 93 percent of their demographic share. Women of color, with six guests, were 86 percent of demographic parity. The 13 white men the show featured exactly matched the white male proportion of the population. -P.H.

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