



WHO  
TALKS?

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**CAWP**  
CENTER FOR  
AMERICAN  
WOMEN  
AND POLITICS

RESEARCH + EDUCATION = CHANGE

WOMEN'S MEDIA CENTER  
**WMC**

# INTRODUCTION

CAWP monitored and analyzed gender balance on top rated cable morning and evening shows:

For three hours each morning



**MORNING JOE**  
**FOX & FRIENDS**  
**NEW DAY**

For an hour each evening



**THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW**  
**THE KELLY FILE**  
**ANDERSON COOPER**



**In our recent Survey Monkey poll of GenderAvenger subscribers, over 60% of the respondents said they had heard of *Who Talks?* By the same token, we learned early on how much harder it would be to gain the attention of the individual shows and the media in general.”**

**GenderAvenger** brought together the **Center for American Women and Politics** at Rutgers University (CAWP) and the **Women’s Media Center** (WMC) to monitor the presence of men and women involved in presidential campaign commentary and to expose imbalanced and reward gender balanced ratios through social media. Dubbed, ***Who Talks?***, the project ran for 8 months starting in March and concluding in mid-November.

The research calculated appearances of women by segment during each hour. By doing so there was no distortion based on raw numbers of women who appeared when their appearances might have been limited to short commentary. For instance a female field reporter might be on screen for less than five minutes during one segment while male panelists appeared throughout the program. Thus, individuals who appeared throughout the hour would count three times while the female network field reporter, who was briefly interviewed during one segment, would count one time. In this way the results reflected the viewers’ exposure to male and female voices.

The resultant data was striking and of genuine interest to the GenderAvenger community, which responded by tweeting and posting the monthly infographics. In our recent Survey Monkey poll of GenderAvenger subscribers, over 60% of the respondents said they had heard of *Who Talks?*

We learned early on how much harder it would be to gain the attention of the individual shows and the media in general:



The effort was partially inspired by the the fact that for the first time in history women ran for President from both parties along with the prospect of one of them becoming the first woman nominee of a major party. Unanticipated was the impact of the candidacy of Donald Trump. The daily dose of multiple story lines left little room for attention to outside research other than election polling. Especially when so much of the “news” was being made on social media creating overwhelming competition for attention. We were simply drowned out.



The media may be doing a lot of self-reflection post election but had no interest or incentive to be critical of itself during the election. Despite some anecdotal evidence that individuals associated with the targeted shows knew about the *Who Talks?* data, we could not engage them.



Desire to – and pressure to – appear on the shows eliminated the possibility of criticism by both male and female potential guests. Ultimately, [Ron Fournier](#) wrote about this while other reporters in private conversations, with some chagrin, gave the same reasons for not bringing up or writing about the gender balance issue. We were able to place an op ed in [USA Today](#) – of course, it was signed by the leaders of the *Who Talks?* partner organizations.

# OVERALL PERFORMANCE



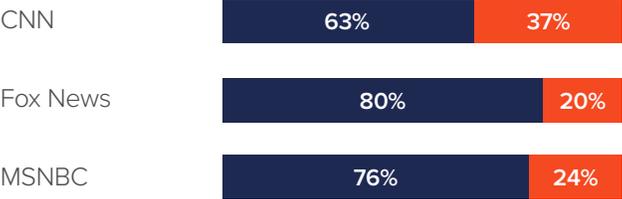
The overall outcomes after 8 months of monitoring showed that there is still an enormous amount of work to be done in remedying the gender imbalance of political television coverage."

- Female Analysts
- Male Analysts

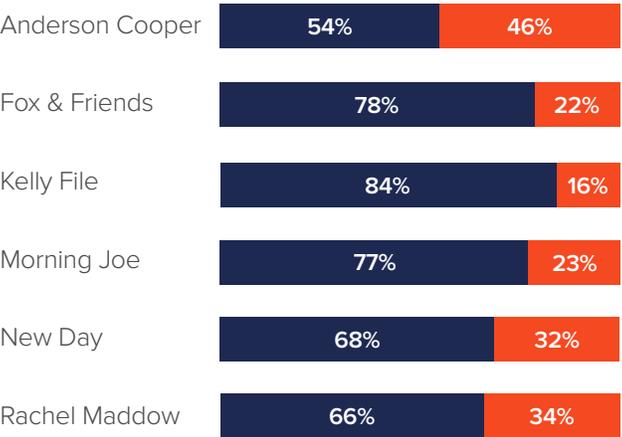
## Male vs. Female Analysts Overall



## Male vs. Female Analysts By Network

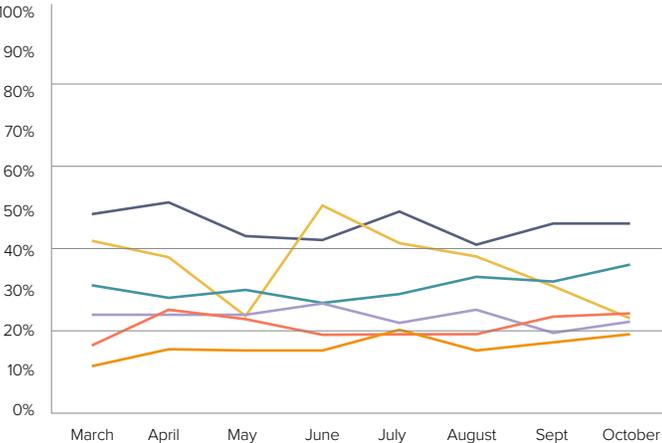


## Male vs. Female Analysts By Show



- Anderson Cooper
- Fox & Friends
- Kelly File
- Morning Joe
- New Day
- Rachel Maddow

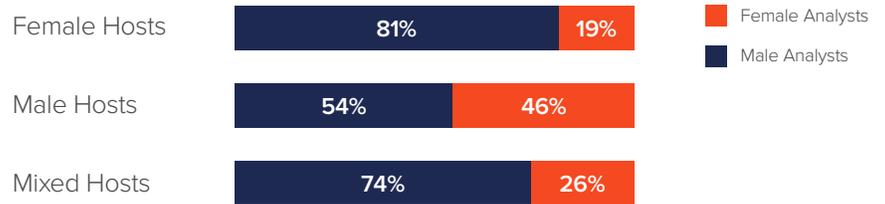
## Percent of Appearances by Women



# DATA OUTCOMES & OBSERVATIONS

## FORMAT COUNTS.

Individual show outcomes were strongly influenced by individual formats. It should be noted that the *Who Talks?* counts did not include hosts and that the presence of female hosts did not seem to affect the composition of the guests.



## MSNBC: Morning Joe and The Rachel Maddow Show

Morning Joe most often featured male analysts on set throughout the program while spending minimal time with female campaign embeds. While men on set or beamed in seemed to be part of the regular rotation, women were only occasionally repeat guests (with the exception of Nicolle Wallace who for a period of time was a pretty regular presence). Morning Joe's *Who Talks?* ratings were consistently under 25%, achieving a project-long average of 23% female representation over the course of 8 months of coverage of the presidential campaign.

While a plethora of analysts appeared on Morning Joe over the course of the presidential campaign, Rachel Maddow often only had one or two guests over the course of her hour. As a consequence the show's numbers swung wildly and were often affected by some of her favorite interviewees. For example, when she interviewed Elizabeth Warren for the bulk of her show, the Senator would account for three appearances by a woman. Or when Bernie Sanders (or his top spokespeople who were all male) appeared for extended interviews, the numbers would go the other way. Results are not without quirks and the fact that TRM featured women much more often on Mondays and Fridays is one of them. Overall, with the least number of analysts TRM ended the project showing a two to one advantage for male voices (34%/66%).



**Watching FOX coverage on its top rated morning and evening shows meant pretty much viewing the election through male eyes."**

## FOX: Fox & Friends and The Kelly File

Watching FOX coverage on its top rated morning and evening shows meant pretty much viewing the election through male eyes. The network featured the fewest appearances by analysts over the 8-month period and the lowest percentage of women (19.75%).

Fox & Friends' three hosts often just talked amongst themselves. When they did have guests, less than 25% of the segments (23% to be exact) included women over the course of the election coverage. In one notable case, during a two day period when coverage of the use of the term "woman card" was in the news, the show had only one segment about it and it was with a male guest.



**Anderson Cooper 360 dramatically outperformed the other shows that were followed.”**

The Kelly File had the second lowest number of analysts and the worst record among all the shows followed. She did not exceed 20% during any month and over the course of the project only 16% of segments featured women.

### New Day and Anderson Cooper 360

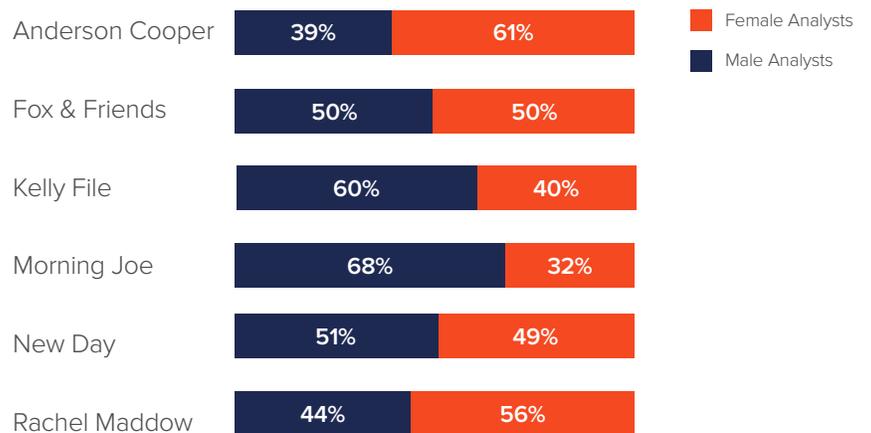
New Day’s numbers hovered around 30% throughout the 8-month period. Notably, however, the highest rate of appearances occurred as the general election heated up in August, September and culminating in October at 36% for the month.

Anderson Cooper 360 dramatically outperformed the other shows that were followed. The nightly format featuring 8 to 12 panelists provided ample opportunity to create gender balance and the producers appear to have had a clear commitment to doing so. Over the course of the 8 months, viewers consistently saw women in conversation about the election during more than 40% of the show’s airtime.

### TOPICS OF CONVERSATION COUNT.

Every show increased the appearances of women when gender was at the center of the conversation. Most dramatically Fox & Friends and the Kelly File more than doubled their overall averages. New Day and The Rachel Maddow Show had significant increases from 32% to 49% and from 34% to 55% respectively. On either end of the spectrum, Anderson Cooper 360, already with good representation, increased by 15% to a whopping 61% the number of times women appeared to discuss gender issues while Morning Joe at the low end overall (23%) had only a marginal increase to 32% when gender issues arose.

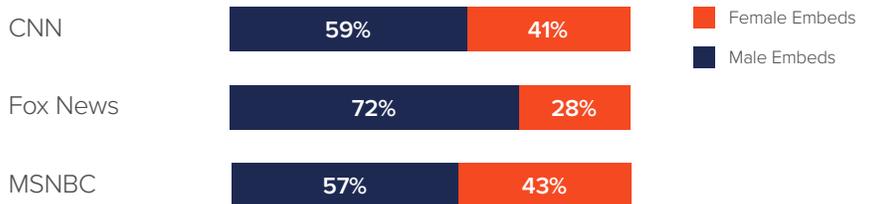
### Segments Discussing Gender Topics



## WHO REPORTS FROM THE FIELD COUNTS.

The number of women “on the bus” during the campaign was striking. Both CNN and MSNBC had 40%+ individual women reporting live from campaign events or out and about interviewing voters. On Morning Joe, 99% of the appearances by embeds were by women. Without this advantage, given that Morning Joe often opened its show with short commentary from campaign appearances, their overall numbers by appearance would have been even worse.

### Embeds/Field Reporters by Individual

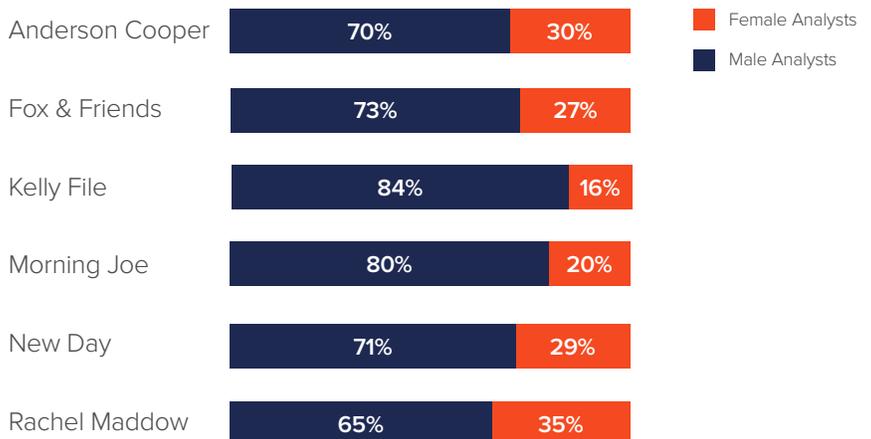


**The paid “regulars” and the network-identified “analysts” dominated the conversations ... However, when extra chairs were added – by choice – apparently little, if any, consideration was made to improve gender balance.”**

## APPEARANCES BY SPECIAL GUESTS COUNT.

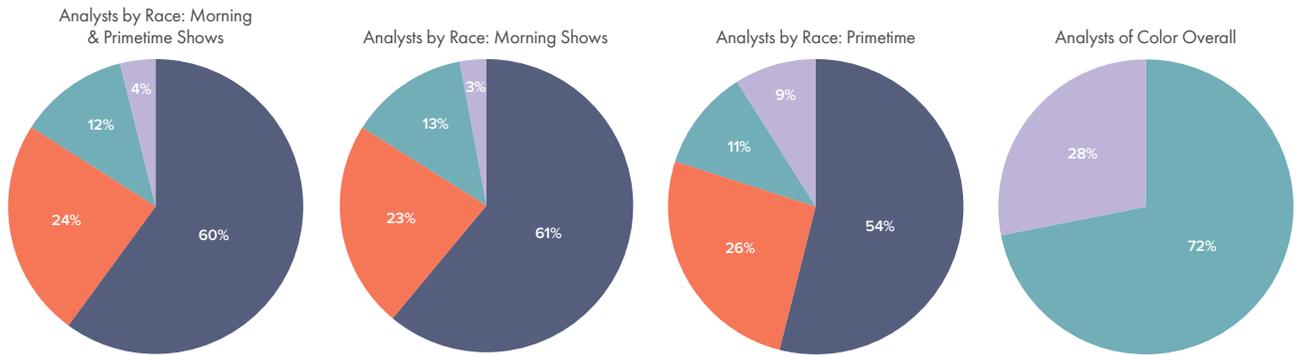
The choice networks made at the beginning of the election season made their climb out of a failure to include women particularly tough. The paid “regulars” and the network-identified “analysts” dominated the conversations. So, the table was set. However, when extra chairs were added – by choice – apparently little, if any, consideration was made to improve gender balance. These outside analysts are most often “experts” in their field. The numbers tell the tale. The Rachel Maddow Show and New Day top the list with 28 individual women out of 81 (35%) and 79 out of 276 (29%) respectively, and it goes down from there. Despite overall strong numbers by appearance, Anderson Cooper 360 falls to just under 30% when it comes to individual outside analysts. Morning Joe comes in at 20% and The Kelly File lags the field at 16%.

### Analysts by Individual Show

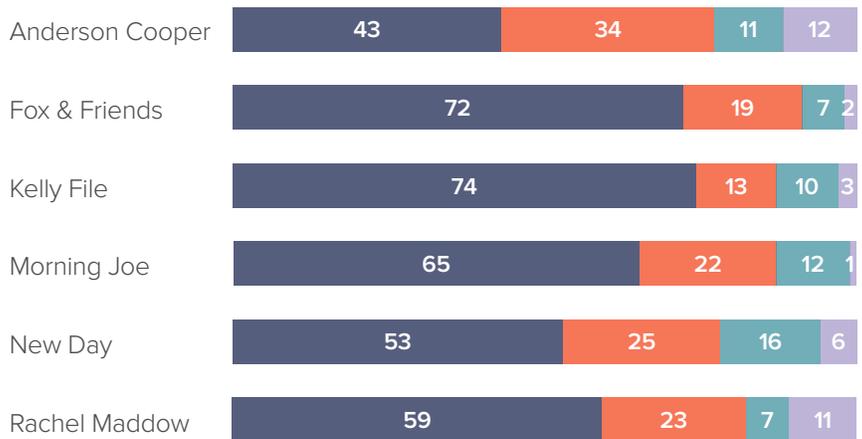


## LOOKING AT ANALYSTS OF COLOR.

*Who Talks?* focused exclusively on the binary choices made on these shows. However, we also kept track of the attention paid and resulting appearances of people of color. Sadly, not only are the overall numbers small, the male/female differentials are often even more dramatic than the numbers overall. The project-long numbers were 28% women; 72% men. While people of color represented 16% of the total analysts, there were three times as many males of color than females of color. Prime time shows did considerably better than the morning hours with the former achieving near gender parity among analysts of color, while the morning shows featured more than four times as many men of color than women of color. Not unlike the overall gender balance results, Anderson Cooper 360 scored the highest with 12% women of color. Morning Joe had the smallest proportion, with 1% overall.



### Percentage of Analysts by Race



# CONCLUSION

Over the 8-month study, even with a few upticks in representation, the gender balance numbers on the individual shows stayed pretty constant. Nevertheless, what was learned from the research can be a valuable tool to inform the cable networks about their standings and about what our analysis shows the challenges and opportunities going forward:

1

The line-up of analysts at the beginning of the election season will dominate the coverage throughout the story line – in other words, it is hard to play catch up if most or all of the starting players are men

2

Who sits “at the table” vs. who is beamed in from the campaign trail determines the overall viewer experience. Just counting how many women and how many men appear throughout a broadcast is not reflective of true gender balance

3

Seeking women “experts” as drop in analysts should be the standard and helps with balance. It is not a substitute for overall balance but can help to improve the viewing experience in terms of gender impressions

4

Special attention should be paid and efforts must be made to ensure that women of color are fairly represented.

In summary, *Who Talks?* provided an important opportunity to engage the GA community and, ultimately, can be used to inform future attention to the issue of gender balance on cable coverage of elections.



**Change may not have happened over the course of the campaign, however, the data collected for eight months by the *Who Talks?* Project positions GenderAvenger to influence the future. Nevertheless, what was learned from the research can be a valuable tool to inform the cable networks about their standings and about what our analysis shows the challenges and opportunities are going forward.”**

# BECAUSE WOMEN'S VOICES COUNT.

**GenderAvenger is building an activist community dedicated to ensuring women are always part of the public dialog... because women's voices count.**

GenderAvenger focuses on the presence of women on conference stages, on significant lists, in publications, on-screen, wherever gender balance is an issue. Attention is given across broad categories, including finance, higher education, tech, politics, arts and culture in the belief that any dialog missing the perspective and expertise of half of the world's population is simply incomplete. GA encourages individuals to make their appreciation known when there is strong gender balance and their disapproval heard when there is not.

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