

**Watch Out,
Listen Up!
2002 Feminist
Primetime Report**





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Introduction

The National Organization for Women (NOW) created the Watch Out, Listen Up! media activism campaign in 1999 with the mission of promoting positive and diverse portrayals of women and girls in the media. With its unbeatable reach into our homes and its influence on our attitudes, television is a key component of this campaign. This year the NOW Foundation is issuing the third annual Feminist Primetime Report, examining all of the primetime programs on the six broadcast networks: ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, UPN and WB.

These six networks transmit programming over the electromagnetic spectrum (known as "the airwaves"), which is a public asset owned by the people of the United States. The 1934 Communications Act established the practice of granting free broadcast licenses to networks and local TV stations with the requirement that they "serve the public interest, convenience and necessity." The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Congress do not enforce this obligation and broadcasters feel little pressure to live up to their part of the deal. While license-holders pay nothing for the use of this valuable resource, they make billions of dollars selling people's viewing time to advertisers.

On an average night, more than 106 million U.S. women, men, girls and boys sit down to watch television. The NOW Foundation believes that serving the public interest means creating programming that reflects the true diversity of this country. Excessive sexual exploitation and violence create a hostile environment on TV, and the lack of content addressing social issues leaves people uninformed and isolated. With this Feminist Primetime Report, we present a snapshot of mainstream television in the year 2002 and what it is communicating to viewers.

Analysis Process

The NOW Foundation recruited "field analysts" from across the country to monitor television content. Analysts (working alone or in teams) were randomly assigned a night and network to view and instructed to fill out a diary containing specific criteria. A total of 107 regularly scheduled programs are included in the final report. Sports, specials and movies are not included due to their variable nature. Analysts recorded data and subjective comments for their assigned shows in each of four categories:

- 1. Gender Composition and Diversity:** Analysts provided a tally of lead, supporting and guest characters by gender and race, with notation of positive role models and negative stereotypes among women and people of color.
- 2. Violence:** Analysts recorded the number and type of violent, threatening or hostile acts, also noting the gender of the victims and an interpretation of whether the presentation of violence was gratuitous or integral to the story.
- 3. Sexual Exploitation:** Analysts noted how the male and female characters interacted and whether women/girls were respected and valued participants in the storyline, existed primarily as sex objects to seduce/complement the male characters, or were peripheral to the action driving the plot.
- 4. Social Responsibility:** Analysts commented on the relevance of subject matter to everyday people's lives. Shows were examined for attention to issues such as economics, childcare and birth control; the consequences of characters' actions; and the inclusion of characters of varying age, size, sexual orientation, ability, marital status, religion, etc.

The NOW Foundation compiled the results, producing a score for each show in each category above. Each individual show's four scores were averaged for an overall program score. Each network then received a score for the average of all its programming. Numerical scores were translated into letter grades in order to make the results more digestible. **Keep in mind that these programs were scored on a curve—they were each graded in relation to the whole and not according to a "perfect" feminist ideal.**



A Few Words from Our Monitors

The following are comments from the field analysts' diaries on their assigned viewing:

CSI on CBS: "The two female leads were responsible, intelligent characters--decent role models for young women who might be interested in law enforcement."

WWE Smackdown! on UPN: "It's painful to watch . . . They contribute to the 'dumbing down' of America . . . The show is just a background for commercials."

Reba on WB: "Reba deals with [the] financial troubles of a divorced mom and problems with her ex-husband. She also makes strong and effective parenting decisions."

ABC's now-canceled Philly:
"In what part of the business world do women wear these little tiny skirts?
I work for a multi-national corporation and don't see this attire."

Sunday night on WB: "I was appalled by the superficial, often demeaning quality of all of the programs I monitored. The substance was insulting, not only to women and people of color, but to the general public. There were no redeeming values depicted or alluded to."

The Bernie Mac Show on FOX: "This particular episode was about the importance of handling violence with intelligence and cooperative solutions . . . The mother was a positive role model. She wanted to teach her son that violence begets violence."

CBS Thursday night: "It was really clear to me that these shows are aimed at the male viewing audience. I can't imagine their having much appeal for women in general and women my age [58] in particular."

NBC's now-canceled NY Live with Colin Quinn: "No women characters . . . Horrible, racist, sexist, homophobic remarks about everyone."

FOX's America's Most Wanted: "Clips before [the] show and in between cases focus on the victims who are young and attractive and frightened. Emphasis on their beauty and fear seems geared toward attracting male viewers . . . Excuse for program is to identify most wanted criminals--but selection of content is questionable."

Girlfriends on UPN: "I think this is a great show! Very positive in how it shows these women of color, who are successful and often single and generally really happy in their lives. And it shows the importance of women's friendships with other women."

ABC's Primetime Live: "[The] majority of our panel was almost disappointed that we were watching what turned out to be very honest, realistic and truthful reporting on a television channel. This show was unbiased and gave a truthful interpretation and picture of alternative lifestyles for people in the USA today."

NBC's The West Wing: "The female characters are all key parts of the function of the White House. Their presence and participation in debate and discussion is always on equal footing with the males, even sometimes when the males hold superior positions on staff."



Summary: Oh, Grow Up!

What is television's role in our society? Is it simply entertainment, fantasy, an escape? Or should its potential to influence, persuade and inform be taken more seriously? We live with TV in our homes, every day, every night. For good or bad, it is a part of us. But are we a part of it? TV has the power to bring people together, to show viewers a full picture of our society. It also has the power to endorse destructive behavior, to reinforce the inequalities between women and men, and to ignore whole communities and sideline other groups of people.

In the third year of producing the Watch Out, Listen Up! report, our field analysts observed a continued **lack of gender and racial diversity** on TV. Outdated and negative stereotypes were common where diversity did exist. In our official tally, the six broadcast networks employed 134 more men than women in regular primetime roles. Programs told from a male point-of-view outnumbered those with a female point-of-view more than two-to-one.

According to our monitors, 57% of primetime programs last season depended on **some level of violence or hostile behavior** for entertainment value. Included in this are newsmagazines like Dateline, 20/20 and 48 Hours, which have become increasingly tabloid-ized, relying on salacious murder mysteries for content. And numerous comedies, reality shows and game shows spotlighted anger, back-stabbing and cruel intentions for fun and profit.

The gap between **shows that portray female characters with dignity and respect**, and programs that sexually exploit women appears to have widened. On one end of the spectrum the networks give us Judging Amy, Law & Order and The West Wing where women are smart, resourceful and in charge. Way on the other end of that spectrum, the networks offer Fear Factor, The Bachelor, WWE Smackdown! and The Drew Carey Show where women exist to be ogled, used and demeaned.

We've said it in previous reports, and we'll say it again—the situation comedy is a sorry place for women on TV these days. They must be beautiful, thin and younger than their male counterparts, and willing to use their sexuality for laughs and titillation. In workplace comedies, women characters often shrug off sexually harassing behavior that would be unwelcome in the real world. In family comedies, women frequently play the sensible, hard-working wife/mommy to a lazy, immature husband. **Sadly missing is a strong, high-profile comedic character in the tradition of I Love Lucy, Murphy Brown, Mary Tyler Moore or Roseanne.** Do the characters of Rachel (from Friends), Grace (from Will & Grace) or Reba qualify to fill that role? Will the networks give the women on new shows such as Life with Bonnie or Less Than Perfect the right material to take on the mantle? **Where are the powerful, funny women of color?** Can Girlfriends carry that torch alone?

Field analysts commented on the **low level of maturity in primetime TV** and its overall lack of interest in social issues. Virtually no one on TV cares about what's going on in their communities or the larger world. TV is reluctant to accept older people, fat people, people with disabilities, blue collar workers. There's not much we at home can relate to—very little time is spent on common concerns like paying the rent and bills, job hunting, health problems, birth control, childcare, car trouble, cooking dinner, cleaning, etc. But TV certainly does embrace the kinds of lifestyles and possessions ordinary people are supposed to covet. For fun, we developed the top ten myths—some true, most not—that primetime television promotes (see page 6).

So, if primetime television is a fantasy, whose fantasy is it? Every night viewers are presented with humor that relies on making fun of others; gross-out stunts like eating bugs and drinking blood; plenty of cops & robbers; groups of guys hanging out drinking beer and watching football; young, sexy women everywhere who fancy even the most awkward of men; hardly any older women unless they're somebody's mother; cool clothes, hot cars and huge apartments; hidden cameras catching people acting foolish; renegade "cowboys" who break the rules but come out on top; and an unusual number of superheroes, time travelers and space explorers. Could it be that broadcast television is lost in an adolescent boy's fantasyland?

(continued on next page)



Summary: Oh, Grow Up!

(continued)

The summer of 2002 demonstrates this theory nicely. In a rush to keep more people from wandering to cable during repeat season, the broadcast networks threw together several **cheap, exploitative, empty-headed shows**: American Idol (FOX), Bachelorettes in Alaska (FOX), Dog Eat Dog (NBC) and Meet My Folks (NBC). The one thoughtful program to come out of this summer, Monk (ABC), was borrowed from cable.

The networks clearly feel little responsibility for what they put on the air, as long as it brings in advertising revenue. More and more, advertisers dictate what we see on TV. The corporations who manufacture products favor targeting viewers ages 18-34, so that's the type of content we all get. It doesn't matter that 64% of primetime viewers on an average night are 35 or older. If you are a middle-aged woman, a lesbian, a Latina, a woman with a disability, a woman of size, a low-income mom struggling to get by . . . good luck finding programming that even pretends to reflect your life.

Will the 2002-2003 season be any better? In the new fall season we calculated a slight narrowing of the gap between males and females with central roles in primetime. However, the dominance of male point-of-view shows over female point-of-view or gender balanced shows has grown.

It's difficult to say how this season will shake out. Of all the new shows that premiered during the 2001-2002 season, only 19 programs made it to this year's schedule. A total of 66 shows, both new and old, were canceled by the end of last season. The networks said good-bye to a number of programs that offered well-rounded roles for women and girls, including: The Ellen Show (CBS), Family Law (CBS), Felicity (WB), Maybe It's Me (WB), Once and Again (ABC), Philly (ABC), That's Life (CBS) and The X-Files (FOX).

This fall, 35 new shows are premiering, with many sure to disappear in a flash. A few of our feminist monitors have sampled these new programs and found little to get excited about. For shows that had yet to air, we relied on the networks' promotional material on their web sites. Based on the same criteria we used to evaluate last season, here's our take on what's new:

Looks Promising:

American Dreams (NBC)
CSI: Miami (CBS)
Everwood (WB)
Greetings From Tuscon (WB)
Half and Half (UPN)
Haunted (UPN)
John Doe (FOX)
Less Than Perfect (ABC)
Oliver Beene (FOX)
Presidio Med (CBS)
Without a Trace (CBS)

It All Depends:

Birds of Prey (WB)
Boomtown (NBC)
Dinotopia (ABC)
Do Over (WB)
Firefly (FOX)
Girls Club (FOX)
Good Morning Miami (NBC)
Life with Bonnie (ABC)
Still Standing (CBS)
Twilight Zone (UPN)
What I Like About You (WB)

No Thanks:

8 Simple Rules (ABC)
Bram and Alice (CBS)
Cedric the Entertainer (FOX)
Family Affair (WB)
Hack (CBS)
Hidden Hills (NBC)
Fastlane (FOX)
The Grubbs (FOX)
In-Laws (NBC)
MDs (ABC)
Push, Nevada (ABC)
Robbery Homicide Division (CBS)
That Was Then (ABC)

Unlike in our first Watch Out, Listen Up! report, we chose not to designate a "Network of Shame" or a "Primetime Leader" this year. Each network has its bright spots and its bleak spots in the portrayal of women, people of color and other marginalized groups. All six broadcast networks can do better—much better—in the areas of gender composition and diversity, violence, sexual exploitation and social responsibility. We must hold them accountable to *all* the viewers who ultimately make them rich.



Television's Truth and Lies

How accurately does television reflect real life? Is TV's portrayal of women and girls expansive or narrow? What conclusions might one make about gender, race, sex, violence and social issues in the United States after watching the six major networks? As we put together this report, certain myths emerged from our research and field work. The following are the top ten myths that TV promotes. Are they true or false outside "the box"?

TV Reality #1: Men Run the U.S. and the World. Women may be capable of doing anything, but ultimately they answer to a male authority. **TRUE, SADLY.** On television, as in the real world, men are the heads of government (24, Spin City, The West Wing), the military (JAG), investigative agencies (The Agency, Alias, The X-Files), police departments (The District, The Job, Law & Order: Criminal Intent, Law & Order: Special Victims Unit, NYPD Blue), crime labs (Crossing Jordan, CSI), law offices (Ally McBeal, Girlfriends, The Guardian, The Practice), hospitals (ER, Scrubs), movie studios (Yes, Dear), radio stations (Frasier, Once & Again), magazines (Just Shoot Me), schools (Boston Public, The Simpsons), factories (George Lopez), department stores (The Drew Carey Show) and space exploration (Enterprise). The rare exceptions to this include: The Education of Max Bickford (CBS-canceled), Family Law (CBS-canceled), Judging Amy (CBS) and Law & Order (NBC).

#2 The Jennifer Aniston Rule. The majority of women in the U.S. are young, thin, white and fall within a narrow standard of "beauty." **FALSE.** We all know that women come in many shapes, sizes, ages and colors. In an extremely informal count, however, we found 140 women on TV who were model-thin and conventionally beautiful, versus just 31 women who appeared to wear a size 10 or larger. The actresses who could (and do, sometimes) double as models are everywhere, so we really don't need to list them. The few exceptions include: Lesley Boone (Molly) on Ed, Tyne Daly (Maxine) on Judging Amy, Loretta Devine (Marla) on Boston Public, Camryn Manheim (Ellenor) on The Practice, Melissa McCarthy (Sookie) on Gilmore Girls, Della Reese (Tess) on Touched By an Angel, and Countess Vaughn (Kim) and Mo'Nique (Nikki) on The Parkers.

#3 Opposites attract. Attractive women often couple with less attractive "average Joe" men and older men, placing value on personality over appearance. **MOSTLY FALSE.** While this male fantasy does happen in real life, it sure seems the standard on TV. For instance: Cheryl and Jim on According to Jim, Kate and Drew on The Drew Carey Show, Andrea and Max on The Education of Max Bickford, Claudia and Sean on Grounded for Life, Carrie and Doug on King of Queens, Connie and Andy on NYPD Blue, and even Marge and Homer on The Simpsons! The trend continues on new shows like Still Standing, and with a twist on the creepy Bram & Alice. Meanwhile, finding a handsome man with an older, more average-looking woman on TV is a futile task.

#4 Young and Sexy Saves the Day. Strong, brave, kick-butt women are almost always very young, thin and use their sex appeal to great advantage. Evidence: Alias, Angel, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Charmed, CSI, Dark Angel, Fear Factor, JAG, NYPD Blue, UC: Undercover, WWE Smackdown! **FALSE.** Even on TV, a number of older, "everyday" women on reality shows like Survivor and Amazing Race make our case.

#5 Black and White and Divided. People of color make up a very small part of the U.S. population and rarely interact with white people outside of the workplace. **FALSE.** The number of people of color in the U.S. has grown dramatically over the last ten years, to 30.9% of the population. However, aside from the handful of shows centered around African-American families, racial and ethnic diversity in primetime is minimal. With the introduction of just one show, George Lopez, the Latina/o population on TV increased dramatically. Asian American women may be the most under-represented people on television. Last season only **four** Asian American actresses (out of 277 total female actors) filled substantial roles: Linda Park on Enterprise, Ming-Na on ER, Lauren Thom supplying three characters' voices on Futurama and King of the Hill, and Keiki Agena on Gilmore Girls. No regular characters played by Native American or Middle Eastern women could be found.



Television's Truth and Lies

(continued)

#6 "Feminine" Qualities Are Undesirable. Accusing someone of acting like a woman or acting gay is an automatic insult because women and gay men are such tramps and/or wimps. **FALSE.** In the real world these attitudes are slowly changing as we come to value all people equally. In the world of television comedy, telling a male "you throw like a girl" or calling a sensitive man by a woman's name are real knee-slappers. Calling a woman (or a man) a "bitch," a "slut" or a "whore" is also an acceptable cut-down in primetime TV. Repeat offenders include: The Drew Carey Show, Everybody Loves Raymond, Friends, The Job, Just Shoot Me, Scrubs and Spin City.

#7 A Straight Society. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are virtually non-existent in the U.S. **FALSE.** Last season, only 17 LGBT characters appeared in regular roles, representing 2.5% of the total primetime characters—a paltry number compared with the estimated 10% in real life. The visible lesbian/bisexual women on TV last season were: Tara (killed off) and Willow on Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Original Cindy on Dark Angel (canceled), Ellen on The Ellen Show (canceled), Kerry on ER, Jessie and Katie on Once and Again (canceled), Sophia on That 80s Show (canceled) and Amy on Titus. Only **three** of these characters are returning to TV this season and there are no signs of "out" characters among the new fall programs.

#8 A Violent Society. Violent crime and violence against women are prevalent in the U.S. **TRUE.** According to the FBI, one violent crime occurs every 22.1 seconds in the U.S., including one "forcible" rape every 5.8 minutes. Accordingly, primetime television's most-watched list is saturated with violent crimes, particularly those involving the sexual assault, abduction and exploitation of women (especially young, attractive women and girls). Does the prevalence of actual violence in the U.S. fuel media content? Absolutely. Does violence on TV in turn influence reality? How could so many hours of violence not seep into our psyches? Witness the long line of shows premised on violence: The Agency, Alias, America's Most Wanted, Angel, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Charmed, Cops, Crossing Jordan, CSI, Dark Angel, The District, Glory Days, Law & Order, Law & Order: CI, Law & Order: SVU, NYPD Blue, The Practice, Smallville, 24, UC: Undercover, The X-Files, WWE Smackdown! And this list does not include the six TV newsmagazines, which have become increasingly preoccupied with murder mysteries—again, particularly those of murdered and missing women and girls.

#9 Differently-Abled Means Magically-Gifted. In everyday life, you're more likely to encounter a witch, an angel, a superhero or an alien than to see a person with a disability. **FALSE, OBVIOUSLY.** We found **20** women on TV last season who possessed unreal magical/unearthly abilities, but only **four** women living with real disabilities or mental illness. People with physical and mental disabilities are the single largest minority group in the U.S. (an estimated 15-20%), and women are more likely than men to experience disability. The handful of characters on TV representing women with disabilities are: Marla (mental disability) on Boston Public, Kerry (mobility) on ER, Emily (stature) on Family Law, Karen (depression and mobility) on Once and Again, two of whom won't be back due to cancellation. More magical women have arrived with the new season, but at least one also has a disability (on WB's Birds of Prey).

#10 Sorry, Dan Quayle. Single moms, while facing admittedly tough obstacles, are combining work and child-rearing to good effect. And many married moms are also working outside the home (either out of necessity or for personal fulfillment) while maintaining healthy relationships with their children. **TRUE.** Great examples of single moms on TV last season include: Catherine on CSI, Lynn on Family Law, Roz on Frasier, Lorelei on Gilmore Girls, Amy on Judging Amy, Kathleen on Philly, Ellenor on The Practice, Joanie on Providence, Reba on Reba and Scully on The X-Files. Shows with married moms working outside the home include: Malcolm in the Middle, My Wife and Kids, Once and Again, The Practice, That '70s Show and more. And TV moms have even gone back to school on shows like The Parkers and Yes, Dear.

Women and Men by the Numbers

For an official tally of women and men on TV, the NOW Foundation referred to the networks' promotional material and credits listing the central cast members of each program. Our totals represent the number of actors in both lead and supporting roles, excluding recurring or minor roles. For game and reality shows, we counted only the regularly employed hosts and not the rotating contestants. With newsmagazines, we counted the anchors and any contributing reporters listed on the programs' web pages. For animated programs we counted only the actors supplying voices, not the multiple characters they inhabit.

So how do roles for women and girls compare with those for men and boys?

2001-2002 Primetime Season	277 female actors = 40%	411 male actors = 60%	688 total actors
2002 New Fall Shows	96 females = 48%	106 males = 52%	202 total actors
2002-2003 Primetime Season	276 female actors = 41%	401 male actors = 59%	677 total actors

With a relatively strong showing for women among the new fall programs, the 2002-2003 primetime season will see a slight rise in the ratio of women to men. The numbers tell the real story, however, with male actors filling 125 more roles than female actors in the new season, only a slight decrease from 134 more in the 2001-2002 season.

Which networks performed the best and worst in this tally?

The **WB** is a perfect 50% female, 50% male in all of the above categories! **ABC** had slightly fewer female characters, but still more than the network average for 2002-2003, and an improvement over last season. **NBC** is just average, duplicating the above percentages. **FOX** is next with a miniscule improvement over last season, reaching a disappointing 39% female, 61% male break-out. **CBS** fell dismally from 40/60 last season to 36/64 this season, and **UPN** is dead last, holding at last year's 32% female, 68% male.

Programs like ABC's *The Practice* offer a number of roles for diverse (at least by TV standards) female actors.



The WWE Smackdown! (UPN) web page lists 35 male "superstars" and only 6 females.

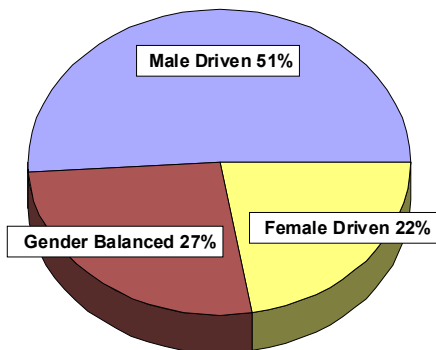
Through Whose Eyes?

Another way of looking at the gender gap on TV is to go beyond mere numbers and consider the concept of each show. Based on our monitors' answers to question one (details on page 9) and NOW Foundation's own analysis, we divided the shows reviewed for this report into three categories: female driven concept, male driven concept, gender balanced concept. We asked the following questions when dividing up the shows:

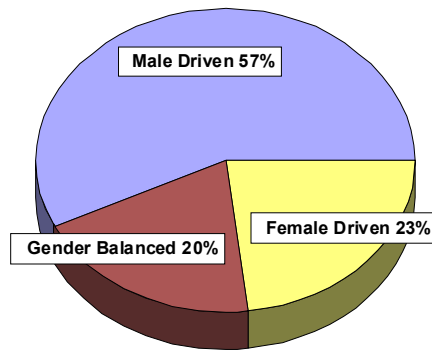
- Is the entire premise of the show built around one female or male lead character whose name is in the title?
- Whose story is being told? Who provides the show's main point-of-view?
- Does the show have an ensemble cast, and if so, is it predominantly female or male?
- In the case of game shows, reality programs and newsmagazines: Is the show largely driven by the personality/reputation of its female or male host(s)?
- Who are the "stars" that the network uses to sell the show—for instance, who stands front and center in the program's promotional photos?

Using these guidelines, we discovered that primetime is even more slanted toward a male point-of-view (POV) than is apparent from the tally of actors on page six.

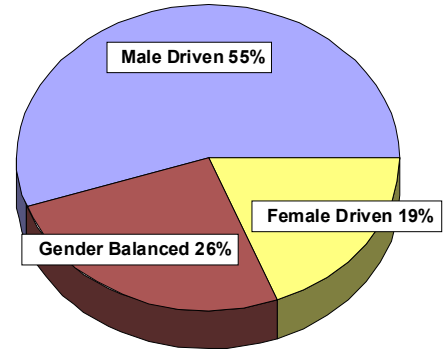
2001-2002 Primetime Season:



2002 New Fall Shows:



2002-2003 Primetime Season:



Why has the disparity grown so large from last season to this season? Of the 24 female-driven programs that were reviewed for this report, half of them were canceled by the end of last season. Less than one third of the male-driven programs were canceled. Gone are ABC's *Once and Again* and *Philly*, CBS's *Family Law* and *The Ellen Show*, FOX's *Ally McBeal* and *Dark Angel*, WB's *Felicity* and more. The loss of these shows, with fewer female point-of-view shows replacing them, meant a drop in shows that look at the world through women's eyes.

How do the individual networks compare to the above graphs for 2002-2003? Although **UPN** performed the worst on the previous page, it's at the top of the list in this category, with 44% of its programs told from a female POV, and **WB** is close behind with 38%. **NBC** has only 14% female POV shows, but a healthy 43% that are gender balanced. **CBS** is slightly more male-dominated than the average, and **ABC** is even more so, but **FOX** is clearly at the bottom with only one show told from a female POV, five gender balanced, and 12 male POVs!

Who you lookin' at?
All eyes are on Bram, the male focus of the show, in CBS's new *Bram and Alice*.





Individual Programs: Overall Scores

(cxd indicates shows that have since been canceled)

The Ellen Show (CBS) A+ cxd
 ER (NBC) A+
 Girlfriends (UPN) A+
 Judging Amy (CBS) A+
 Providence (NBC) A+
 60 Minutes II (CBS) A
 Family Law (CBS) A cxd
 George Lopez (ABC) A
 Gilmore Girls (WB) A
 My Wife and Kids (ABC) A
 Primetime Live (ABC) A
 Amazing Race (CBS) A-
 The Bernie Mac Show (FOX) A-
 Felicity (WB) A- cxd
 The Guardian (CBS) A-
 Once and Again (ABC) A- cxd
 Reba (WB) A-
 Touched by An Angel (CBS) A-
 The West Wing (NBC) A-
 Boston Public (FOX) B+
 For Your Love (WB) B+ cxd
 Law & Order (NBC) B+
 Maybe It's Me (WB) B+ cxd
 Under One Roof (UPN) B+ cxd
 Will & Grace (NBC) B+
 20/20 (ABC) B
 Becker (CBS) B
 One On One (UPN) B
 The Practice (ABC) B
 Sabrina (WB) B
 Third Watch (NBC) B
 Whose Line Is It Anyway? (ABC) B
 Yes, Dear (CBS) B
 Dawson's Creek (WB) B-
 Ed (NBC) B-
 Education of Max Bickford (CBS) B- cxd
 King of Queens (CBS) B-
 King of the Hill (FOX) B-
 The Parkers (UPN) B-
 Raising Dad (WB) B- cxd
 Scrubs (NBC) B-
 That '70s Show (FOX) B-
 The X-Files (FOX) B- cxd
 60 Minutes (CBS) C+
 7th Heaven (WB) C+
 As If (UPN) C+ cxd
 Enterprise (UPN) C+
 Frasier (NBC) C+
 No Boundaries (WB) C+ cxd
 Survivor (CBS) C+
 That '80s Show (FOX) C+ cxd
 Watching Ellie (NBC) C+ cxd
 Crossing Jordan (NBC) C
 Everybody Loves Raymond (CBS) C

Friends (NBC) C
 Futurama (NBC) C
 Malcolm in the Middle (FOX) C
 NYPD Blue (ABC) C
 Philly (ABC) C cxd
 Roswell (UPN) C cxd
 Undeclared (FOX) C cxd
 The Weakest Link (NBC) C cxd
 Who Wants/Millionaire (ABC) C cxd
 According to Jim (ABC) C-
 Ally McBeal (FOX) C- cxd
 Buffy the Vampire Slayer (UPN) C-
 CSI (CBS) C-
 Dateline (NBC) C-
 Dharma and Greg (ABC) C- cxd
 JAG (CBS) C-
 Leap Of Faith (NBC) C- cxd
 My Guide/Rock Star (WB) C- cxd
 The Simpsons (FOX) C-
 24 (FOX) D+
 American Embassy (FOX) D+ cxd
 America's Funniest/Videos (ABC) D+
 Andy Richter/Universe (FOX) D+ hiatus
 Charmed (WB) D+
 The District (CBS) D+
 Grounded for Life (FOX) D+
 The Hughleys (UPN) D+ cxd
 Law & Order: Criminal Intent (NBC) D+
 Off Centre (WB) D+
 48 Hours (CBS) D
 The Agency (CBS) D
 Alias (ABC) D
 America's Most Wanted (FOX) D
 Angel (WB) D
 Dark Angel (FOX) D cxd
 The Drew Carey Show (ABC) D
 Just Shoot Me (NBC) D
 The Random Years (UPN) D cxd
 Spin City (ABC) D cxd
 Baby Bob (CBS) D- hiatus
 Cops (FOX) D-
 The Jamie Kennedy Experiment (WB) D-
 The Job (ABC) D- cxd
 Family Guy (FOX) D- cxd
 Glory Days (WB) D- cxd
 Law & Order: SVU (NBC) D-
 Smallville (WB) D-
 UC: Undercover (NBC) D- cxd
 The Bachelor (ABC) F
 Fear Factor (NBC) F
 NY Live with Colin Quinn (NBC) F cxd
 Titus (FOX) F cxd
 WWE Smackdown! (UPN) F
(All programs aired in Spring 2002)



Gender Composition and Diversity

This score reflects a tally of the sex and race of lead, supporting and guest actors. Bonus points were awarded for positive portrayals of women and people of color and points were subtracted for roles that offered little more than negative stereotypes.

The grade A shows contain a multitude of strong female characters and an impressive display of diversity: Latinas/os, African Americans, Asian Americans, lesbians, women with disabilities, women in charge in the workplace, women crime/firefighters, single moms, married moms, women of size, older women, intelligent girls—in other words, the real world. The lowest scoring shows presented casts that were almost exclusively white and male. Roles for women in these shows were often insulting and marginal. Even respected shows like 60 Minutes ended up on bottom due to their "old boys club" composition.

By averaging every show's score in this category (including those not shown below) by network, we were able to determine who performed best and worst overall. The networks with the best averages in gender composition and diversity were **UPN** and **CBS**. The networks with the worst averages were **ABC** and **FOX**.

The Best

A+:

The Ellen Show (CBS) cxld
ER (NBC)
Family Law (CBS) cxld
George Lopez (ABC)
Girlfriends (UPN)
My Wife and Kids (ABC)
The Parkers (UPN)

A:

The Bernie Mac Show (FOX)
Boston Public (FOX)
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (UPN)
Dark Angel (FOX) cxld
Felicity (WB) cxld
For Your Love (WB) cxld
The Gilmore Girls (WB)
The Hughleys (UPN) cxld
Judging Amy (CBS)
Law & Order (NBC)
Leap of Faith (NBC) cxld
One on One (UPN)
The Practice (ABC)
Touched by an Angel (CBS)
Under One Roof (UPN) cxld

A-:

Alias (ABC)
Maybe It's Me (WB) cxld
No Boundaries (WB) cxld
Once and Again (ABC) cxld
Providence (NBC)
Survivor (CBS)
Third Watch (NBC)
The X Files (FOX) cxld

The Worst

D+:

America's Most Wanted (FOX)
Andy Richter/Universe (FOX) hiatus
Baby Bob (CBS) hiatus
Grounded for Life (FOX)
JAG (CBS)
The Job (ABC) cxld
Just Shoot Me (NBC)
My Guide to Becoming a Rock Star (WB) cxld
UC: Undercover (NBC) cxld
Undeclared (FOX) cxld
Who Wants to be a Millionaire (ABC) cxld

D:

60 Minutes (CBS)
The Drew Carey Show (ABC)
Off Centre (WB)
The Random Years (UPN) cxld

D-:

The Bachelor (ABC)
Cops (FOX)
The Jamie Kennedy Experiment (WB)
WWE Smackdown! (UPN)

F:

Titus (FOX) cxld
NY Live with Colin Quinn (NBC) cxld

A disappointing 40% of the top scoring shows were canceled, taking away many excellent roles for women and people of color. Fortunately, 38% of the worst shows were also canceled and another two are on hiatus.



Violent Content

A large number of shows, mainly sitcoms, contained no violence. However, a full 36% of the shows surveyed relied on violence as a driving force in their plots. The worst offenders were usually crime and science fiction shows. The fact that many of the violent programs also contained strong female characters might be considered both progress *and* a depressing development. The networks with the least amount of violence overall (an average of every show's violence score by network) were **CBS** and **WB**.

Monitors noted that newsmagazine shows, like 48 Hours and Dateline, have become obsessed with real-life crime stories, particularly cases involving women, girls and elements of sexual abuse. Several comedies reside at the bottom of the list for their inclusion of violence as well as high levels of anger, hostility and demeaning behavior. The networks with the most violent content overall were **FOX** and **NBC**.

The Worst

D+:

48 Hours (CBS)
The Agency (CBS)
Crossing Jordan (NBC)
CSI (CBS)
Dateline (NBC)
The District (CBS)
Fear Factor (NBC)
Law & Order (NBC)
Malcolm in the Middle (FOX)
Philly (ABC) cxld
The Simpsons (FOX)
Third Watch (NBC)
Titus (FOX) cxld
NY Live with Colin Quinn (NBC) cxld

D:

America's Most Wanted (FOX)
Charmed (WB)
Cops (FOX)
Law & Order: Criminal Intent (NBC)
The Practice (ABC)
The X Files (FOX) cxld

D-:

24 (FOX)
Angel (WB)
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (UPN)
Glory Days (WB) cxld
NYPD Blue (ABC)
Smallville (WB)

F:

Alias (ABC)
Dark Angel (FOX) cxld
Law & Order: SVU (NBC)
UC: Undercover (NBC) cxld
WWE Smackdown! (UPN)

Seven of the most violent shows have been canceled; however, the six networks have added even more new fall shows spotlighting violent activity.



FOX's Cops features violent arrests, often involving men and women of color and lower-income people.



This publicity photo from NBC's Crossing Jordan illustrates TV's frequent combination of sex and death.

Sexual Exploitation

At the top of our list are shows that presented women as active participants in the plot, as intelligent and skilled human beings in charge of their own lives. The majority of male characters in these programs treated women with respect, and when they didn't, it was addressed as a problematic issue. **CBS** and **NBC** averaged the least amount of sexual exploitation overall.

Programs with the worst grades were those that limited female roles to seductresses, victims, girlfriends and nags. In situation comedies, the humiliation of women was often used to generate laughs. In dramas, sexual crimes against women, from harassment to rape, were common. Either way, writers and directors often rely on the female face and body as a tool to entice, shock and amuse viewers. **UPN** and **WB** averaged the worst here.

The Best

A+:

60 Minutes II (CBS)
 The Amazing Race (CBS)
 The Ellen Show (CBS) cxld
 ER (NBC)
 Judging Amy (CBS)
 Law & Order (NBC)
 Primetime Live (ABC)
 Providence (NBC)
 Touched by an Angel (CBS)
 The X Files (FOX) cxl

A:

20/20 (ABC)
 Law & Order: Criminal Intent (NBC)
 Whose Line Is It Anyway? (ABC)

A-:

The Bernie Mac Show (FOX)
 Futurama (FOX)
 The Gilmore Girls (WB)
 Girlfriends (UPN)
 The Guardian (CBS)
 Malcolm in the Middle (FOX)
 NYPD Blue (ABC)
 The Practice (ABC)
 Third Watch (NBC)
 UC: Undercover (NBC) cxld
 The Weakest Link (NBC) cxld
 The West Wing (NBC)
 Yes, Dear (CBS)



**On ABC's
 The Drew
 Carey Show,
 Mimi is a
 source
 of ridicule.**

The Worst

D+:

The Agency (CBS)
 Andy Richter/Universe (FOX) hiatus
 The Drew Carey Show (ABC)
 Grounded for Life (FOX)
 The Jamie Kennedy Experiment (WB)
 Law & Order: SVU (NBC)
 The Random Years (UPN) cxld
 Smallville (WB)
 Spin City (ABC) cxld

D:

The Family Guy (FOX) cxld
 Fear Factor (NBC)
 The Hughleys (UPN) cxld
 The Job (ABC) cxld
 Just Shoot Me (NBC)
 Leap of Faith (NBC) cxld
 Titus (FOX) cxld

D-:

Baby Bob (CBS) hiatus
 Glory Days (WB) cxld
 WWE Smackdown! (UPN)

F:

The Bachelor (ABC)
 NY Live with Colin Quinn (NBC) cxld

**NBC's Fear
 Factor often
 features women
 contestants
 valued mainly
 for their physical
 attributes, not
 their skills.**





Social Responsibility

Broadcast TV fared miserably in this category. The median program score in "social responsibility" was the worst of the four categories and five out of the six networks achieved their lowest average here. Many analysts noted that the programs they monitored had no relation to real people's lives and little substantive content. Fortunately, more than half of the lowest scoring shows have been canceled or put on hiatus. However, we suspect that this is what mainstream TV is best at—churning out meaningless programs that are entirely disposable.

The short list of socially responsible shows demonstrate that mainstream TV can cover important issues—sexism, racism, poverty, sexual orientation, mental illness, education, reproductive rights, sex trafficking, even domestic and foreign policy—and draw large audiences. These programs consistently include realistic consequences to their characters' actions. CBS scored best in this category overall, with the other five networks far behind.

The Best

A+:

60 Minutes
Boston Public (FOX)
ER (NBC)
Family Law (CBS) cxld
Girlfriends (UPN)
The Guardian (CBS)
Judging Amy (CBS)
Primetime Live (ABC)
The West Wing (NBC)

A:

60 Minutes II (CBS)
Dateline (NBC)
The Gilmore Girls (WB)
The Practice (ABC)
Providence (NBC)
Reba (WB)

A-:

20/20 (ABC)
America's Most Wanted (FOX)
The Bernie Mac Show (FOX)
The Ellen Show (CBS) cxld
Once and Again (ABC) cxld
Third Watch (NBC)
Will & Grace (NBC)



Fox's Boston Public tackles challenging issues, such as homelessness, racist language, mental illness and aging.

The Worst

D+:

The Agency (CBS)
Angel (WB)
Glory Days (WB) cxld
The Hughleys (UPN) cxld
Leap of Faith (NBC) cxld
My Guide to Becoming a Rock Star (WB) cxld
No Boundaries (WB) cxld
Roswell (WB) cxld
Spin City (ABC) cxld
Survivor (CBS)
UC: Undercover (NBC) cxld
Watching Ellie (NBC) cxld

D:

Alias (ABC)
Ally McBeal (FOX) cxld
America's Funniest Home Videos (ABC)
The Drew Carey Show (ABC)
The Jamie Kennedy Experiment (WB)
The Job (ABC) cxld
Just Shoot Me (NBC)
Law & Order: SVU (NBC)
Smallville (WB)
Titus (FOX) cxld
The Weakest Link (NBC) cxld

D-:

Baby Bob (CBS) hiatus
The Family Guy (FOX) cxld

F:

The Bachelor (ABC)
Fear Factor (NBC)
NY Live with Colin Quinn (NBC) cxld
WWE Smackdown! (UPN)



Audience Participation: Use Your Power

After compiling and releasing NOW Foundation's analysis of primetime programming, the next step in the Watch Out, Listen Up! campaign is to inspire television viewers to call for positive and diverse portrayals of women and people of color as well as socially responsible content and reduced violence.

Believe it or not, people do have power to shape what they see on TV—after all, it is our viewing habits that the networks use to make money. The true customer of broadcast television is not the viewer, it is the corporate advertiser. We are the product, sold to advertisers by the networks and local TV stations in the form of Nielsen ratings. So, not only are the networks supposed to act in the public interest, they *need* the public to turn a profit.

Not that it's easy to battle the networks when they're owned by five giant conglomerates that care most about the bottom line. But the more we acknowledge that the airwaves belong to us and that we have a right—even a responsibility—to talk back to the networks, the more the broadcasters will have to listen and respond.

Watch Out, Listen Up! wants everyone who has ever turned on a TV to think of themselves as media activists. The NOW Foundation can call for better programming from the networks and stronger regulations from the FCC and Congress, but our strength lies in the number of viewers who make their voices heard. People can do a lot to make a difference, whether it's a simple action that takes only five minutes or an organized protest that really stirs things up. Read on for a variety of ideas suited to every type of activist.

What Media Activists Can Do

- Whenever you see an offensive program, write to or call both the network and your local station. Do it as soon as possible after the program airs and tell them exactly what you think. The NOW Foundation web site can help you find the contact information for the big networks and all the local stations at www.nowfoundation.org/media. Calls are more effective than emails—you would be surprised how few calls TV stations actually get from concerned viewers. Personal letters can work wonders, too!
- The next step is contacting the producer of the program—the network that runs the show is not usually the maker of the show. You can find that information on the Internet or by calling the local TV station or the network on which you saw the show. Ask for someone in the programming department—they'll know who produces the show. Tell the producer that you have already contacted your local station and the network to express your outrage.
- If you're offended by an advertisement, write to the network, the local station and the maker of the product. This can work: NBC ran an ad during the 2000 Olympics that depicted a woman jogger being pursued by a chainsaw-wielding psycho. After receiving hundreds of complaints, NBC pulled the ad off the air.
- Write letters to the editor and submit opinion pieces to your local newspapers about specific programs or advertisements or the state of television and the media in general. Inform your local news sources that people in your community are taking action to improve media content and responsibility.
- Do all of the above for positive programs and advertisements as well. Let the networks and the manufacturers of products know that you appreciate strong and diverse portrayals of women and girls. Many shows have been saved from going off the air because enough fans wrote to the networks with their support.

(continued on next page)



What Media Activists Can Do

(continued from previous page)

- Spread the word any way you can. Make copies of this report (or at least these two pages!) and give it to your friends and family. You can download this entire report at www.nowfoundation.org/watchout3/. Send emails to everyone you know urging them to become media activists. If you have a zine or a web site, create a section devoted to media activism and direct readers to organizations and web sites that have information about the media.
- Form a media task force in your area. You can do this in your neighborhood, on your campus, within your local NOW chapter, or simply with a group of friends. Get together to review a night of television, critique a movie, analyze magazines or evaluate any other medium and then write letters together. Get others in your community to sign a petition and then send it in to everyone associated, including the FCC and your Congress members, and especially the NOW Foundation. Check out www.nowfoundation.org/media for organizing ideas.
- Analyze other programming on television. For instance, evaluate your local stations' newscasts. How well do they cover issues of concern to you and your community? Are women experts included or are most of the talking heads male? Take a look at children's shows, sports coverage or late night programming. Have your task force write its own report and deliver it together to your local stations along with suggestions for improvement. Do the same with your local newspapers.
- If something really outrages you and you get no response to your complaints, hold a protest. You can do this outside a local TV or radio station, outside a music store or newsstand, anywhere relevant to your demonstration. Make signs and create chants. Be sure to bring flyers that will explain to people on the street why you're there and how they can join your group. And before you have your protest, send out a news release to your local newspapers, TV and radio stations.
- Learn more about the broadcasters' requirement to serve the public interest and then set up a meeting with your Senator to lobby for tighter regulations. You can find more information at www.nowfoundation.org/issues/media/ or by contacting us at the below address and phone.
- Make your own programming! Contact your local cable provider and find out what provisions they have for assisting community members in creating their own cable access shows. To learn more about community radio, visit www.prometheusradio.org. Beginning in December, more than 1,000 new low power radio stations will become available for independent use—call the Low Power Radio Coalition for more information (202-429-8855). And there are web sites (like www.live365.com) that allow you to broadcast your own online radio show.

The NOW Foundation Needs You!

If you are interested in participating in the next Watch Out, Listen Up! television analysis, contact us now! We can send you all the information you need to become an official "field analyst."

NOW Foundation

Watch Out, Listen Up!

733 15th St., NW, 2nd Floor

Washington, D.C. 20005

phone: 202-628-8669, ext. 123

email: communications@nowfoundation.org



Talking Back: Contact Information

Contact the FCC and Congress to demand stronger regulations for the broadcast industry. Write to and call the national networks and your local stations to comment on programming and advertisements—both good and bad. Visit your local TV stations and ask how they're serving the public interest.

Federal Communications Commission

Michael Powell, Chair
445 12th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20554
888-CALL-FCC (225-5322)

Members of Congress

Your congressional representatives' names and addresses can be found on NOW's web site at www.now.org/congress or by calling the congressional switchboard at 202-224-3121.

Broadcast Networks

ABC (owned by The Walt Disney Company)
Susan Lyne, President, ABC Entertainment
ABC Television Network
500 S. Buena Vista Street
Burbank, CA 91521-4551
818-460-7477

CBS (owned by Viacom, Inc.)
Nancy Tellem, President
CBS Entertainment
7800 Beverly Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90036
212-975-3247

FOX (owned by News Corporation)
Gail Berman, Entertainment President
FOX Broadcasting Company
10201 W. Pico Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90035
310-369-1000

NBC (owned by General Electric)
Jeffrey Zucker, President, NBC Entertainment
NBC Broadcasting
3000 W Alameda Ave
Burbank, CA 91523-000
818-840-4444

UPN (owned by Viacom, Inc.)
Dawn Ostroff, Entertainment President, United
Paramount Network
11800 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90025
310-575-7000

WB (owned by AOL Time Warner)
Jordan Levin, President WB Entertainment
The WB Network
4000 Warner Blvd, Building 34R
Burbank, CA 91522
818-977-5000

Local TV Stations

To find the addresses and phone numbers for your local TV stations, you can search online by connecting to www.now.org/media or check your phone book under the station's call letters.



Bring it On: Some Quick Requests . . .

Television needs more:

Strong, talented, independent women and girls
Racial and ethnic diversity
Equal partnerships between women and men
Women in leadership roles in the workplace
Dignified, respectful treatment of female characters
People of different sexual orientations
Older women, and not just in "mom" roles
Women of different shapes and sizes
People living with disabilities
Shows told from a female point of view
Content dealing with social issues
Plots and characters relating to real life
People of color in predominantly "white" shows

Keep creating characters like:

Kerry on ER
Ellenor on The Practice
Molly on Ed
Lisa on The Simpsons
Willow on Buffy the Vampire Slayer
Kim and Nikki on The Parkers
CJ on The West Wing
Joan on Girlfriends
Carla on Scrubs
Lane on Gilmore Girls
Maxine on Judging Amy
Roz on Frasier
Catherine on CSI
Lt. Van Buren on Law & Order
Donna on That '70s Show
Sydney on Alias
Lois on Malcolm in the Middle
Christine on Yes, Dear
Faith on Third Watch

Watch Out, Listen Up!

Media Activism Campaign



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