



Media Monitor

Volume XIX Number 1: January/February 2005

2004 Year in Review

TV's Leading News Topics, Reporters, and Political Jokes

During 2004 we monitored all 11,567 news stories broadcast on the ABC, CBS and NBC evening news programs. We also logged 5,249 jokes about public affairs and public figures from the monologues of late night television comics Jay Leno, David Letterman and Conan O'Brien. This annual review issue of *Media Monitor* chronicles the leading news topics, most visible reporters and most frequent targets of political humor on TV during

Major Findings:

Leading News Topics

Iraq was the leading news topic for the second year in a row. *Page 2*

The number of stories on terrorism nearly doubled. *Page 2*

Election news airtime increased by one-third over Campaign 2000. *Page 2*

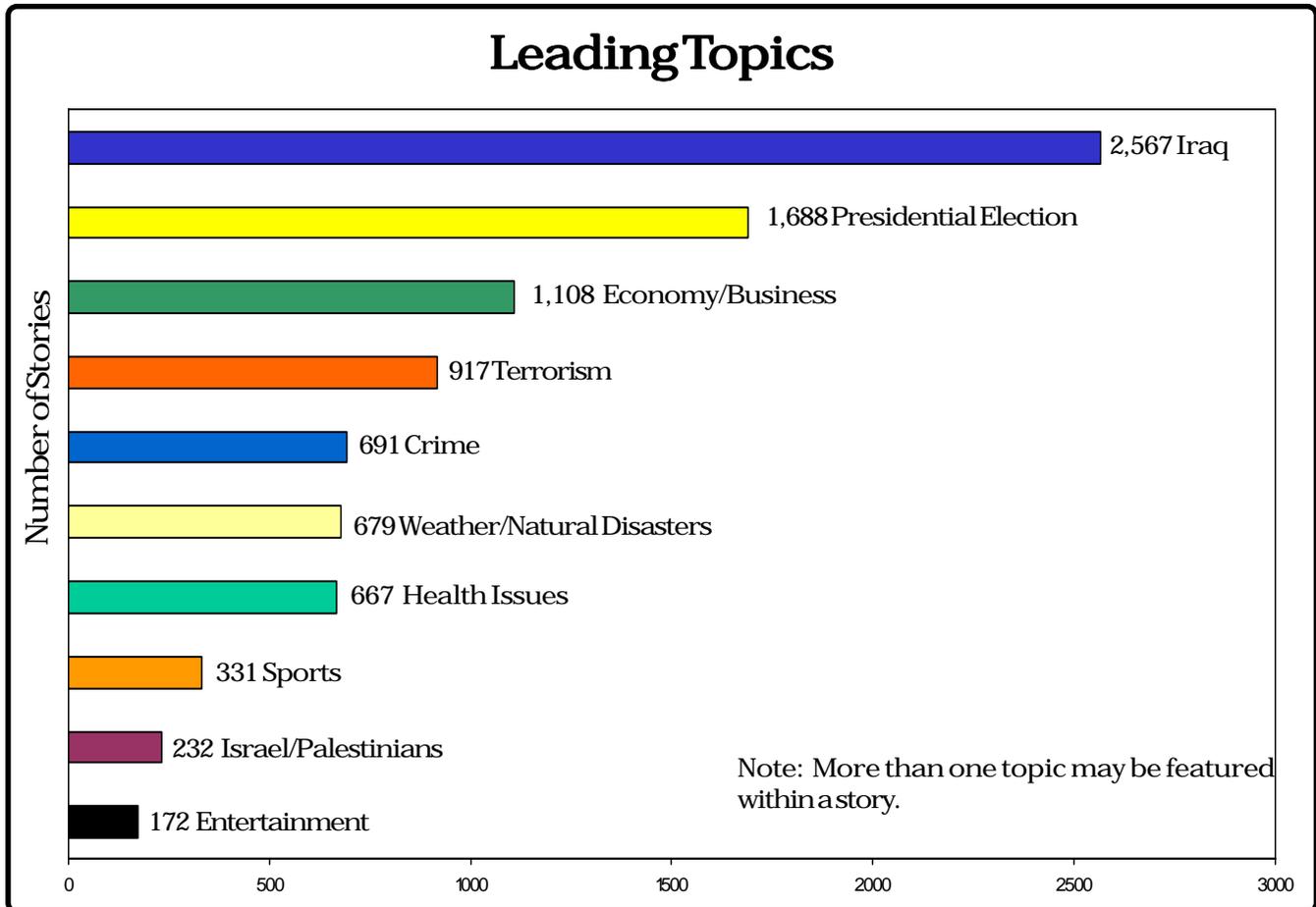
Newsroom Diversity

For the third straight presidential election year, the visibility of minority reporters on network evening news dropped, compared to non-election years. *Page 3*

The proportion of female reporters on-air has stabilized, at about a quarter of all stories. *Page 3*

Political Humor

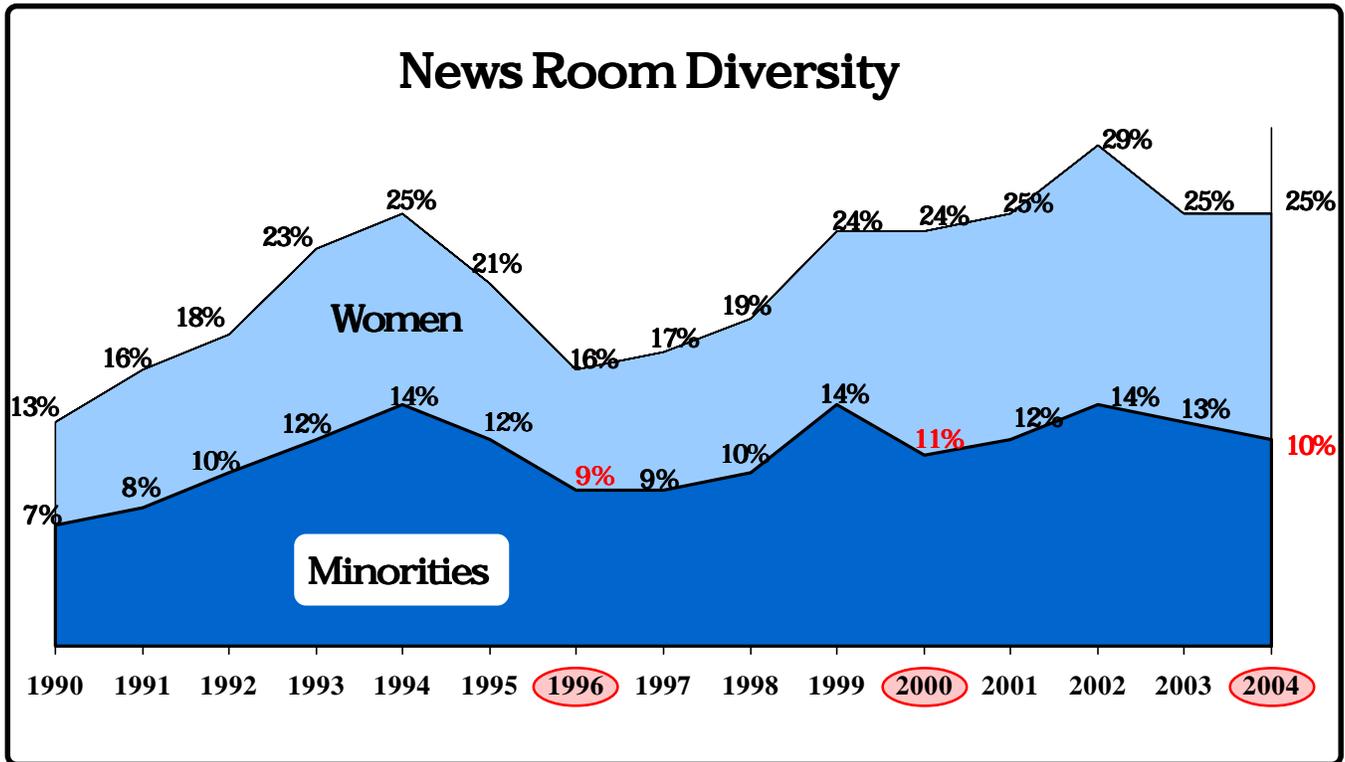
George W. Bush was butt of more than twice as many jokes as John Kerry in monologues by late-night TV comedians. *Page 5*



For the second year in a row, Iraq was the dominant news story with 2,567 stories. While coverage fell 25 percent from 2003 (3,433 stories), the ongoing insurgency, transfer of power to the interim government, and preparations for elections made it the leading news story of 2004. Second place was taken by coverage of the presidential campaign. Coverage of the Democratic primaries, the Democratic and GOP conventions, and the general election accounted for 1,688 stories.

The third most heavily covered story was business and the economy, with 1,108 stories, up 20 percent from 2003. Concerns about the rising price of fuel, the falling value of the dollar, and campaign debates over unemployment helped bring coverage back to the levels of previous years.

The war on terrorism was the fourth most visible story. It generated 917 stories, nearly an 80 percent increase over 2003 (515 stories). Heavy coverage of the 9/11 commission's report, congressional hearings, and debates about an "intelligence czar" pushed coverage to new heights.



Minority correspondents on the broadcast network news shows were 23 percent less visible last year than in 2003, the third straight presidential election year that minority visibility declined. In 2000, the rate dropped from 14 percent to 11 percent, and in 1996 it fell from 12 percent to 9 percent

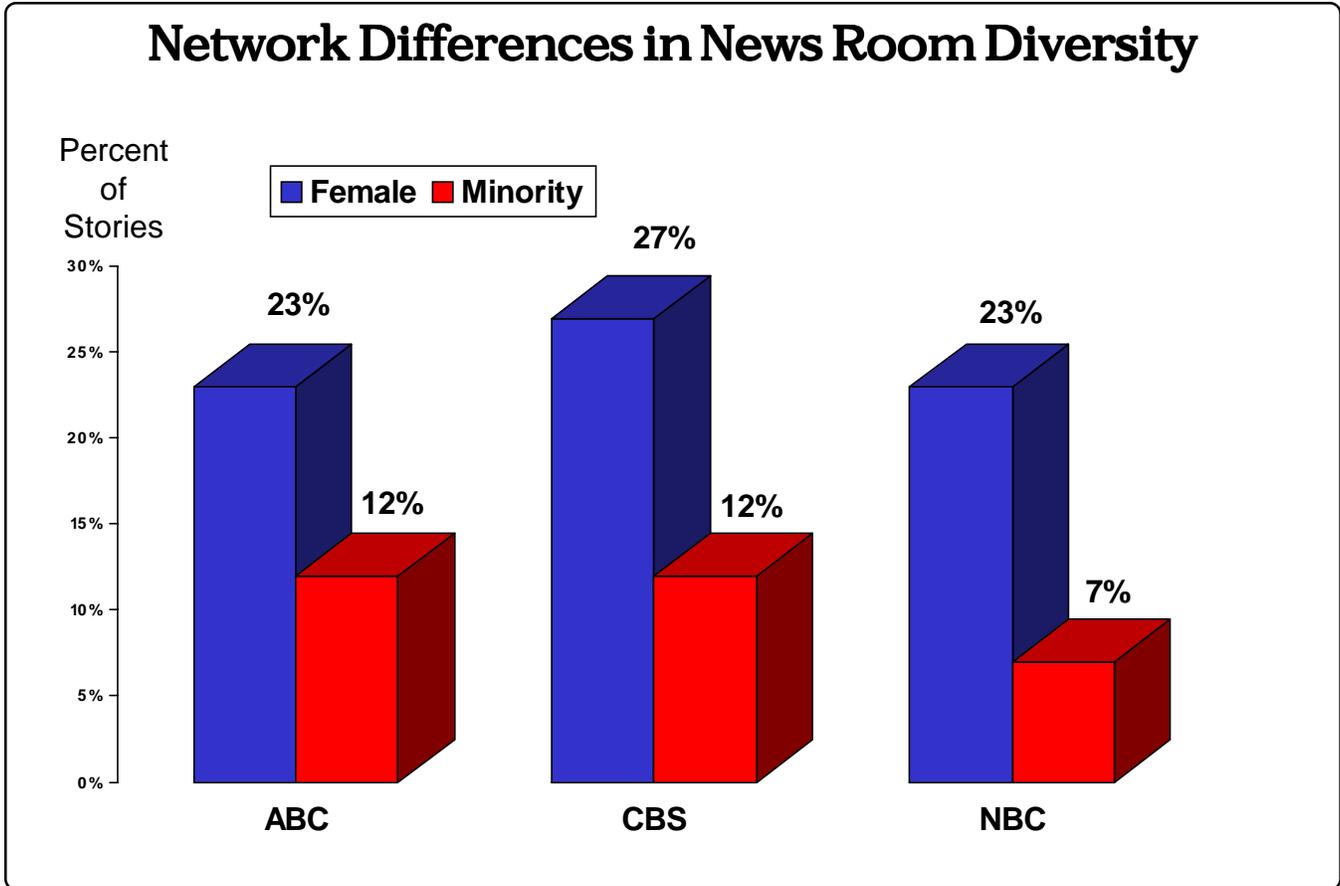
Minorities covered 10 percent of all nightly network news stories in 2004, compared to 13 percent in 2003. CBS correspondent Byron Pitts was the most prominent minority journalist in 2004, ranking 13th with 96 stories reported.

The proportion of stories reported by women remained steady at 25 percent, and three women finished among the ten most visible reporters for the first time in a decade. All three networks placed a woman among the top ten reporters of 2004. Martha Raddatz (ABC), Kimberly Dozier (CBS) and Andrea Mitchell (NBC) all finished among the ten most visible reporters, the first time three women have been so prominent since 1994.

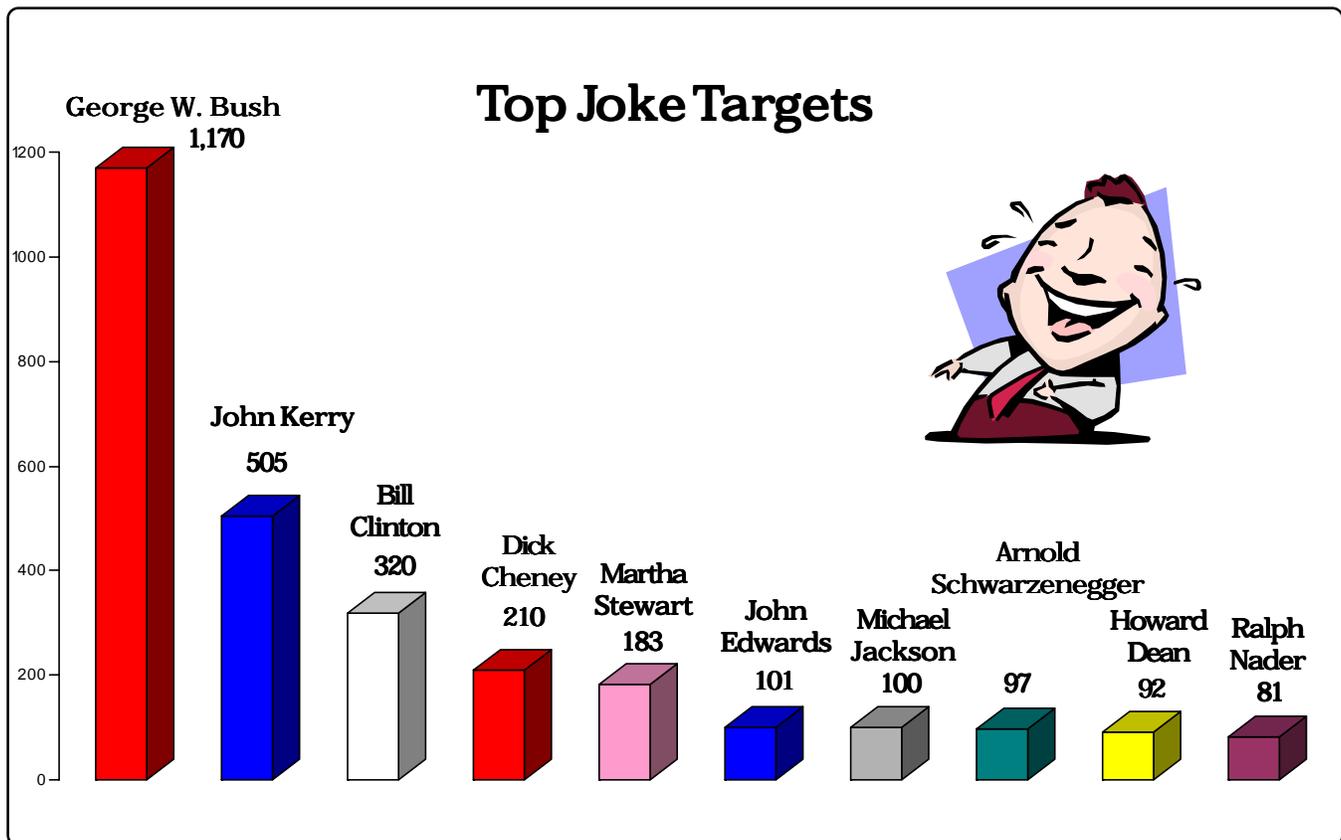
TOP REPORTERS 2004

		Number of Stories	Race	Gender	Network
1	Brokaw, Tom*	200	W	M	NBC
2	Jennings, Peter*	186	W	M	ABC
3	Roberts, John*	159	W	M	CBS
4	Gregory, David	151	W	M	NBC
5	Moran, Terry	147	W	M	ABC
6	Williams, Brian	126	W	M	NBC
7	<i>Raddatz, Martha</i>	122	W	W	ABC
8	Rather, Dan	119	W	M	CBS
9	<i>Dozier, Kimberly</i>	114	W	W	CBS
10	<i>Mitchell, Andrea</i>	113	W	W	NBC
11	Miklaszewski, Jim	111	W	M	NBC
12	Axelrod, Jim	99	W	M	CBS
13	Pitts, Byron	96	B	M	CBS
14	Martin, David	95	W	M	CBS
	Williams, Pete	95	W	M	NBC
16	Bazell, Robert	87	W	M	NBC
	<i>Thompson, Anne</i>	87	W	W	NBC
	Engel, Richard	87	W	M	ABC
19	Reynolds, Dean	86	W	M	ABC
20	Woodruff, Bob	83	W	M	ABC
	Quintanilla, Karl	83	H	M	NBC
22	Harris, Dan	82	W	M	ABC
	<i>Myers, Lisa</i>	82	W	W	NBC
24	<i>O'Donnell, Kelly</i>	76	W	W	NBC
25	Cowan, Lee	74	W	M	CBS
26	Hager, Robert	73	W	M	NBC
27	McKenzie, John	72	W	M	ABC
28	<i>Vargas, Elizabeth</i>	71	H	W	ABC
	Andrews, Wyatt	71	W	M	CBS
30	<i>Stark, Betsy</i>	69	W	W	ABC
31	Strassman, Mark	67	W	M	CBS
32	Sciutto, Jim	66	W	M	ABC
33	Mason, Anthony	65	W	M	CBS
34	Ross, Brian	63	W	M	ABC
	<i>Kaledin, Elizabeth</i>	63	W	W	CBS
	Reid, Chip	63	W	M	NBC
37	Potter, Ned	62	W	M	ABC
38	Thomas, Pierre	61	B	M	ABC
39	<i>Douglass, Linda</i>	60	W	W	ABC
	Orr, Bob	60	W	M	CBS
	<i>Jordan, Rosiland</i>	60	B	W	NBC
42	Stewart, Jim	57	W	M	CBS
43	Cochran, John	56	W	M	ABC
44	<i>Bowers, Cynthia</i>	54	W	W	CBS
45	Plante, Bill	53	W	M	CBS
	Acosta, Jim	53	H	M	CBS
	Maceda, Jim	53	H	M	NBC
48	Jamieson, Bob	51	W	M	ABC
49	Berman, John	50	W	M	ABC
	Stephanopoulos, George	50	W	M	ABC
	Wright, David	50	W	M	ABC
	Lewis, George	50	W	M	NBC

*Does not include "headline" anchor-read stories.



There were differences among the three evening news shows in the representation of women and minority reporters. At NBC, minority correspondents covered only seven percent of all stories and women covered 23 percent. In contrast, 12 percent of stories airing on CBS were reported by minorities, and 27 percent by women. ABC's 12 percent of minority reported stories matches CBS, while 23 percent of stories were reported by women, in line with NBC.



Political Punchlines

Five of the top ten joke targets of 2004 were presidential candidates. President Bush led the field with 1,170 jokes, more than twice the 505 directed at his Democratic opponent John Kerry, but well behind the record of 1,341 aimed at Bill Clinton during 1998. Former president Clinton took third place with 320 punchlines, followed by Vice-President Dick Cheney (210), and Martha Stewart (183), whose prison sentence made her a prime target.

John Edwards placed sixth with 101 jokes. Michael Jackson's antics while under arrest and outside the courtroom were the butt of 100 jokes. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger remained a favorite, in eighth place with 97 jokes. The top 10 was rounded out by Howard Dean and Ralph Nader, who garnered 92 and 81 jokes respectively.

Examples of Late Night Political Humor

According to the latest poll, if the election were held today, the Supreme Court would re-elect Bush 7-2. *Jay Leno, 9/06/04*

No Republican has ever won the White House without winning Ohio. Of course, before Bush, no Republican ever won the White House without winning the election. *Jay Leno, 9/06/04*

In an interview, former First Lady Barbara Bush says she tries to avoid news coverage of world events. So apparently, it's hereditary. *Jay Leno, 9/06/04*

A woman that was caught trying to pass a counterfeit \$200 bill that had a picture of George Bush on it. Turns out there's also a John Kerry bill. Pretty realistic. He's on both sides. *Jay Leno, 9/06/04*

Today, John Kerry vowed to tell the truth if he's elected president. ... That's when you know a candidate is really desperate. *Jay Leno, 9/06/04*

The anesthesiologist said they had a little problem using the gas on Bill Clinton. They couldn't get him to inhale. Luckily, John Kerry called, spoke to him for ten minutes, he was out like a light. *Jay Leno, 9/06/04*

Today, Kerry campaigned in three states — anger, denial, and brooding indecision. *Jay Leno, 9/06/04*

At the debate, Bush appeared confident, he appeared relaxed, he appeared calm. That's right, he's drinking again. *David Letterman, 9/30/04*

Note: Joke texts may be altered slightly for brevity.

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