



The Paradoxical Rise in True Crime Media Consumption: A Gendered Psychological Perspective

Maria Gropp & Dr. Noelany Pelc

College of Arts and Sciences, Marian University Indianapolis

3200 Cold Spring Rd, Indianapolis, IN 46222

ABSTRACT

The popularity of true crime in podcast, shows, movies, YouTube channels and books has greatly increased. The audience percentages show that women are twice as likely to be interested in true crime than men. Although there is no straightforward answer to this phenomenon, there are various reasons for why women may be the primary audience.

INTRODUCTION

It is shown that 3 women are killed or attacked everyday by their intimate partner. The CDC points out that over half of women everywhere are victims of sexual violence. Women also make up of 70% of the victims of serial killers. (Sales, 2023).

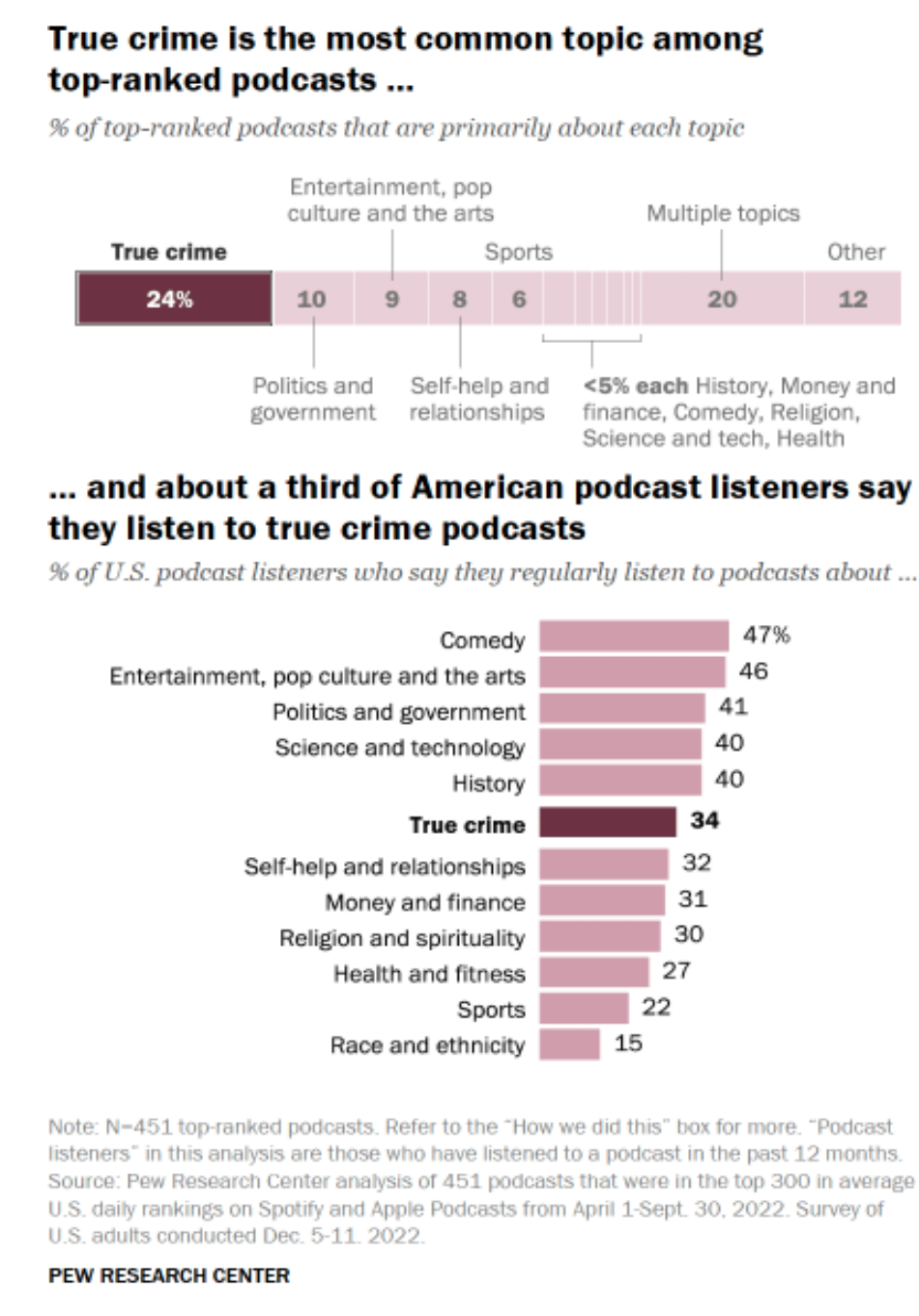


Figure 1. Data shows that true crime is one of the most viewed podcasts.

Across education levels, women are more likely to listen to true crime podcasts than men

% of U.S. podcast listeners in each group who regularly listen to podcasts about true crime

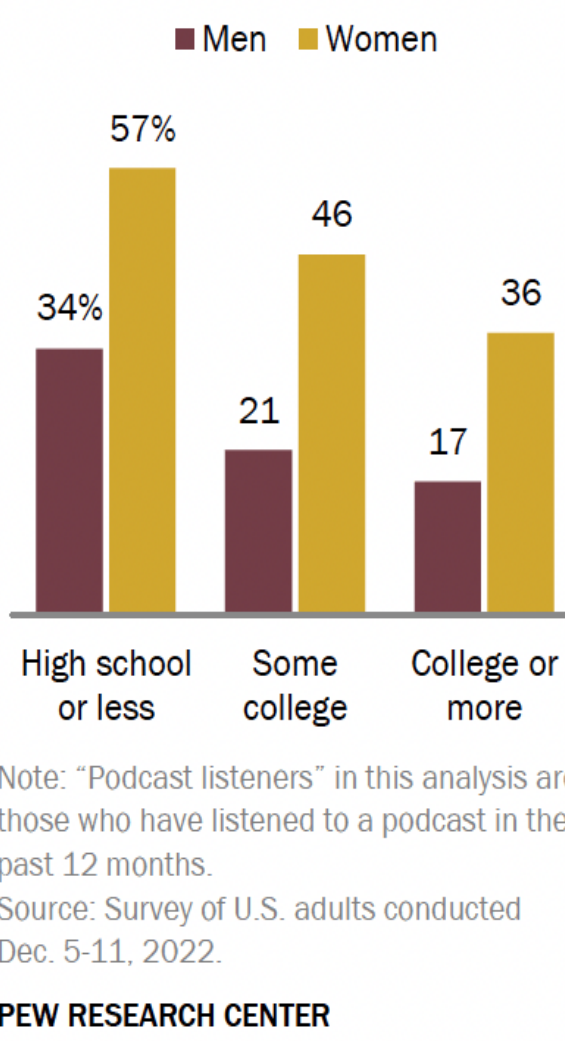


Figure 2. Data shows that women are more likely to view true crime than men.

BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

There is no concrete statistical evidence concluding why women are intrigued by true crime. What we know is many women not only share in this curiosity, but also share their reasoning as to why they enjoy this specific genre. Women from different interview sources have shared similar answers about why they enjoy true crime. Overall, there are multiple conclusions to answer this question, that stem from psychological, sociological, and biological perspectives.

RATIONALE PROVIDED BY WOMEN CONSUMERS

Sociological	Women are socialized to be empathetic	Women are socialized to be vulnerable	Women are socialized to be more easy targets	Women are socialized to be	
Psychological	Empathy toward victim & perpetrator	Play "detective" or solve a puzzle	Want to learn about "red flags"	Learn about new precautions to take for safety	Adrenaline and sense of control in listening to the content

(Onque, 2023; Shrikant, 2023)

Demographic profile and party identification of true crime podcast listeners

% of U.S. podcast listeners in each group who regularly listen to podcasts about true crime

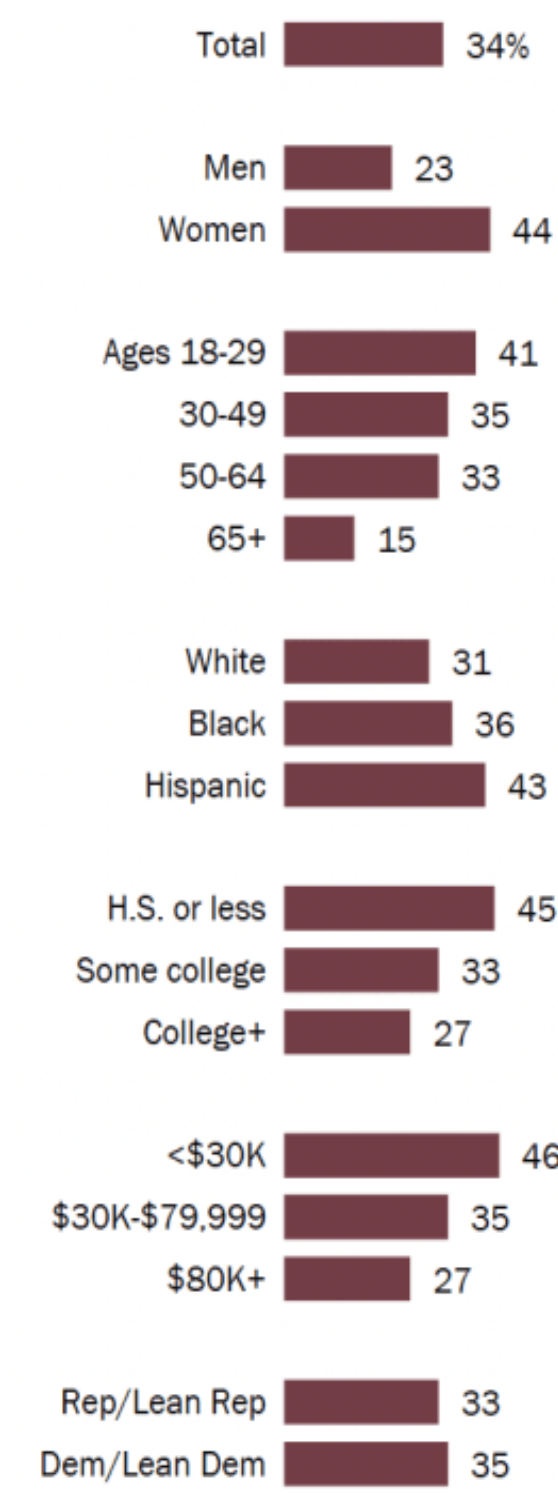


Figure 3. This chart shows the percentage of who regularly listens to true crime podcast.

Consuming True Crime Made Me...

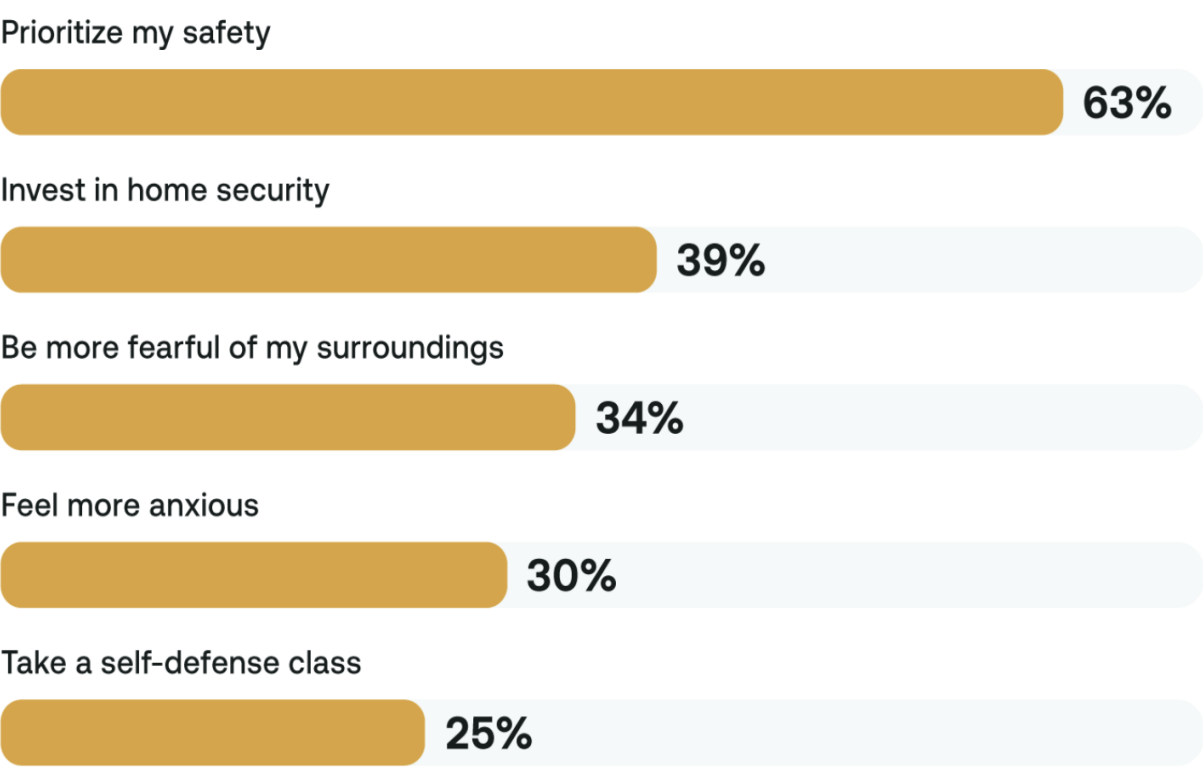


Figure 4. Indicates percentages of how women endorsed feeling after viewing true crime.

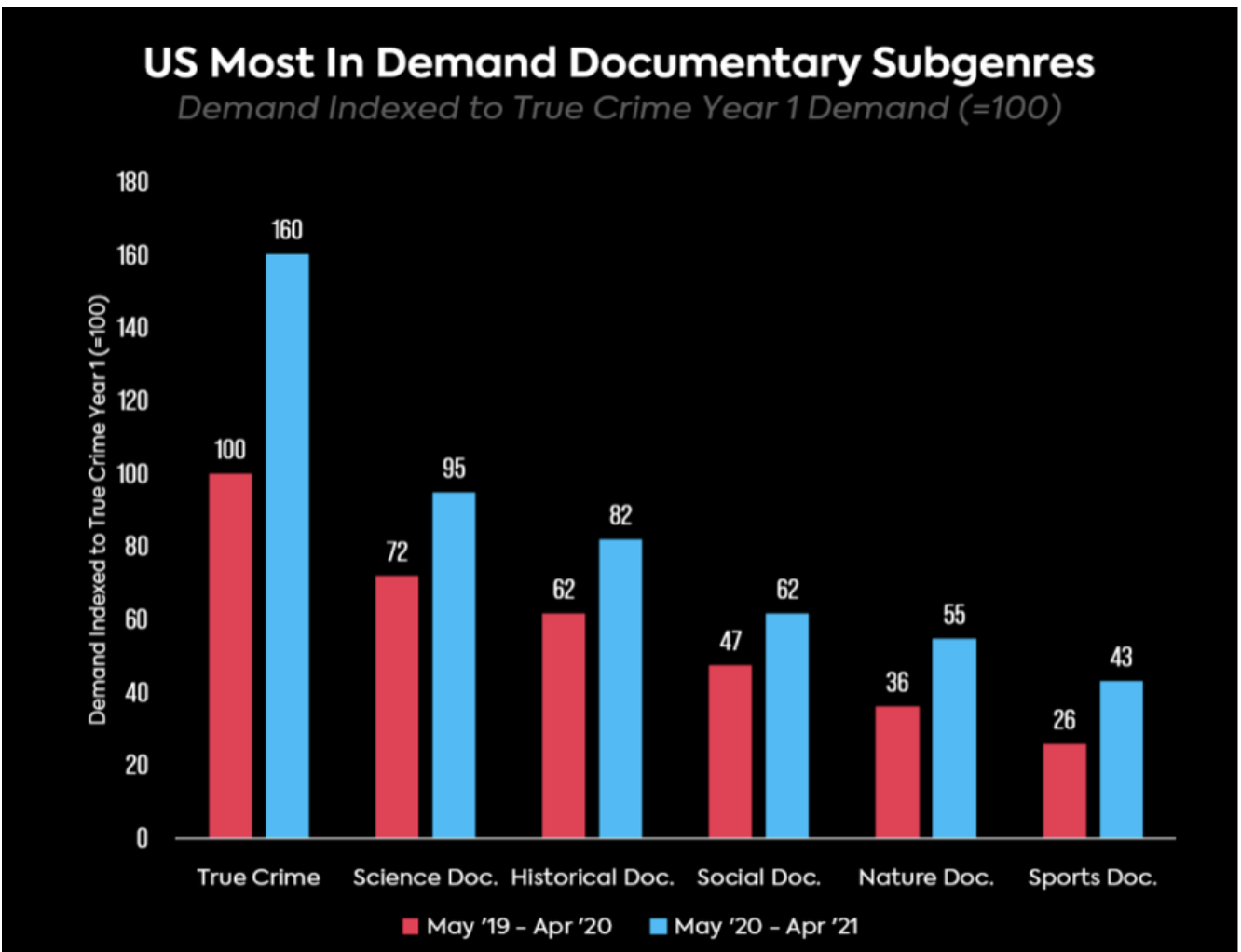


Figure 5. This table shows the rapid rise in demand for true crime content.

SAMPLE QUOTES FROM VIEWERS

- "I've definitely picked up a few habits like locking my doors right when I get in the car and checking for tags on my things when I'm out by myself." (Perrett, 2022)
- "(...) part of the reason women might be more drawn to true crime than men is that women experience a different level of fear in their daily life than men do." (Hale, 2022)
- "(...)women like true crime because they can learn something from it." (Vicary, 2023)
- "Be learning how people end up a victim, they can keep it from happening themselves." (Vicary, 2023)

POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on current data available, a number of possible implications include:

Cons: Overrepresentation of violent experiences, perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and narratives around responsibility and victim-blaming.

This culture us perpetuated through the use of misogynistic language and objectification of women. This disregards women's rights and safety (Southern Connecticut State University, 2022). Examples include: "She asked for it!", "Boys will be boys!", assuming only promiscuous women get raped or hurt, refusing to take sexual and violent crimes seriously.

Pros: Media can also shift awareness round violence against women, reduce stigma, increase representation of justice and accountability, and catalyze empowerment to work within the legal system or to make oneself safe in spaces

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Possible points of future exploration include additional polling data across representative samples. One point of study can include comparison data around how women feel before and after they consume true crime.

Additionally, measures of internalized sexism, fear responses, traditional values, and locus of control may also provide greater insights into how motivations, beliefs, and values may be related to consumption patterns.

Collecting data from women in higher crime rate areas could also be a meaningful comparison versus women who do not live in high crime areas.

Given how true crime is can be portrayed in Hollywood depictions, studies could further examine this to see if this a potential reason for the increase in true crime viewership. Similar trends in the production and consumption of Hollywood biopics, documentaries and glamorized versions of true crime stories should be studied.

LITERATURE CITED

References available on supplementary handout.