

## Is 2024 The Podcast Election?

By Joel Mathis, *The Week*, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Technology has always transformed presidential elections. John F. Kennedy benefitted from the rise of television. Donald Trump won his first race with the help of Twitter. This year, podcasting may be the breakthrough medium.

Kamala Harris could soon sit down with popular podcaster Joe Rogan as she "works to shore up support with male voters," *Reuters* said. It's potentially a huge audience for Harris: Spotify says Rogan has 14.5 million followers on the platform, in addition to millions more who see podcast clips on Instagram and YouTube. If the interview happens, it will be the latest salvo in the "all-important Bro-Podcast War of 2024," Matt Stieb said at *New York* magazine.

Podcasts are "transforming the presidential election," Brady Brickner-Wood said at *The New Yorker*. Harris has already appeared on the "Call Her Daddy" podcast to discuss women's issues, while Trump has appeared on just about every male-oriented podcast imaginable, including those hosted by Theo Von and Lex Fridman. Why the newfound podcast popularity? Traditional interviews — like Harris' visit to "60 Minutes" — can feel "especially rigid." Podcasts offer candidates an "affable, jovial hang." And they reach voters.

Some mainstream reporters are dismayed that Harris has "dispensed with legacy media as gatekeepers," Jennifer Rubin said at *The Washington Post*. In addition to the "Call Her Daddy" podcast, the vice president has also appeared on the NBA-oriented "All The Smoke" podcast and shows with radio hosts Howard Stern and Charlamagne Tha God. That's because "traditional news audiences are shrinking" while podcasts and other alternative formats offer "vastly more voters and potential voters" to candidates. Harris' media strategy is "exactly the right thing."

Harris' "Call Her Daddy" appearance "wasn't a hard-hitting accountability interview," Helen Lewis said at *The Atlantic*. But it did contain a "substantive policy discussion" about abortion rights, housing costs and other issues. Most Americans who do follow "hard news" have already decided how they'll vote. "Nailing down undecided voters — including those who don't currently plan to cast a ballot — is vital." Trump has already been on the podcast trail for months. Harris' decision to do the same is a "smart tactic."

The podcast presidential campaign reflects the Internet-era "scattering of audiences" that has left legacy outlets less powerful than they once were, Axios said. Hit podcasts, meanwhile, "over-index with audiences public figures want to reach." They also offer a different look at the candidates — Trump, for example, "showed a rarely seen softer side" while discussing his late brother's alcoholism during one podcast interview.

"The campaigns are still holding to some traditional tactics," said *The Boston Globe*. Together, Harris and Trump are expected to spend \$2.1 billion on TV, radio, digital, and other media advertising during 2024, making this year's race the "most expensive election cycle in history." But podcasts are steering the conversation as never before, said media columnist Margaret Sullivan. "As journalists," she said, "we have to realize we are not the gatekeepers of information as we once were."