

Audible reckoning: How top political podcasters spread unsubstantiated and false claims | Brookings

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On February 2021, Texas Senator Ted Cruz and his co-host Michael Knowles, a *Daily Wire* commentator, recorded a live episode of the Verdict With Ted Cruz podcast. In conversation about his former Senate race opponent Beto O'Rourke, the Texas Republican described his rival's support base as primarily reporters who act like "groupies at a Rolling Stones concert throwing their underwear." Offhandedly, he added, "If they wore underwear, yes." With a smirk, he leaned into the microphone and asked Knowles, "Too edgy?" Knowles replied, "It's a podcast: you can say whatever you want!"

Since the advent of the medium, podcasts have generally offered a space where, in the words of Knowles, 'you can say whatever you want.' Once written off as a dying medium, podcasting has undergone rapid growth and monetization, while largely avoiding content moderation and regulatory debates. Today, nearly 41% of Americans listen to podcasts monthly, and almost one in four Americans look to podcasts for their news. Globally, the medium is projected to reach an audience of 504.9 million by 2024, while ad revenue in the United States is expected to double between 2022 and 2024, jumping from \$2 billion to \$4 billion.

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