STATE OF DIVERSITY ON TV [2025]
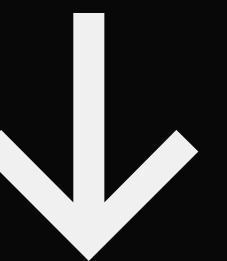
An analysis of representation across America's TV screens in 2025

SAMBA.TV

The 2025 TV landscape reveals a complex and, in some respects, concerning state of diversity. Representation declined significantly over the last year, particularly for actors of Asian descent .

Our annual State of Diversity on TV report offers an analysis of on-screen representation, how it translates to viewership, and how ad campaigns are reaching different audiences, with significant consequences for platforms and advertisers alike.

Key findings show a 5% year-over-year decrease in diversity among top TV cast members. With overall diverse representation falling to 42%, there are fewer authentic touchpoints for advertisers aiming to reflect real-world audiences. Hispanic talent remains critically underrepresented at 7% in top shows, far below their 20% U.S. population share, and Asian representation in top shows alarmingly fell 50% year-over-year to 6%.

Viewing habits show that diverse audiences actively seek out specific networks and programs where they see themselves represented, providing a clear roadmap for where advertisers need to be and the shows that platforms must green-light to better connect with these audiences.

Advertising also shows imbalances: white households are disproportionately reached by ads (63% of ad impressions vs. 58% U.S. pop), while Hispanic and Asian audiences are underserved. This reflects a missed opportunity to connect with Hispanic households with $2.8 trillion in spending power and Asian households with $1.9 trillion spending power.

Serving diverse audiences is smart business. In a crowded content landscape, brands and platforms that reflect the true makeup of their audiences gain a measurable edge. Whether it's through inclusive programming or culturally relevant advertising, investing in representation drives business results. Plain and simple.

Ashwin Navin
Samba TV Co-founder & CEO

-5%

The percentage of diverse cast members on top TV shows dropped by 5% year-over-year

+36%

There was a 36% positive correlation between diverse households watching TV shows with a higher proportion of diverse cast members

-21%

Hispanic households are receiving 21% fewer ad impressions than their share of the population

Contents

METHODOLOGY

Samba TV gathers viewership data via its proprietary Automatic Content Recognition (ACR) technology from tens of millions of opted-in Smart TVs.

METHODOLOGY

Samba TV's ACR is integrated at the chipset level across 24 of the top Smart TVs sold in more than 100 countries globally and captures content that crosses the TV screen, regardless of source. This results in unbiased, comprehensive viewership insights from around the world.

As is standard industry practice, Samba TV analyzes the large proprietary dataset to project household-level TV viewership utilizing its research panel of more than 3 million smart TVs, balanced and weighted to the U.S. Census across age, gender, ethnicity, and household income. Samba TV's panel is nearly 80x larger than the legacy industry model and is aligned to the U.S. census by 0.03%.

This analysis is based on the top 50 highest reaching direct-to-streaming and top 50 highest reaching linear TV shows that were released between 1.1.25–5.1.25. To note, demographic viewership data reflects households that accessed the content via any platform. The program list analyzed excludes docuseries, foreign language, and animated content.

DATA ON CAST MEMBER WAS SOURCED FROM IMDB; ANY ACTOR WHO WAS IN AT
LEAST HALF OF THE EPISODES FROM 2025 WAS INCLUDED WITHIN THE ANALYSIS.

06

[01]

Diversity & Representation on TV

DIVERSITY ON TV: INTRO

With almost $7T in buying power, diverse groups are the mainstream

America's demographic landscape is rapidly diversifying, with the white population at 58% in 2025, while Hispanic, Black, and Asian populations grew to 20%, 14%, and 6% respectively. This shift is matched by immense economic power: $2.1 trillion for Black consumers, $2.8 trillion for Hispanic consumers, and $1.9 trillion for Asian consumers. This "diversity dividend" presents a clear economic incentive for TV to create resonant content for these audiences.

Ethnic diversity of U.S. population over time

*STAT REFERS TO THE NON-HISPANIC WHITE POPULATION; SOURCE IS CENSUS.GOV

☐ WHITE*   ☐ BLACK   ☐ HISPANIC   ☐ ASIAN

2016	2020	2024	2025	2030	2060
5%	6%	6%	6%	7%	9%
18%	19%	19%	20%	21%	28%
13%	13%	14%	14%	14%	15%
61%	60%	59%	58%	56%	44%
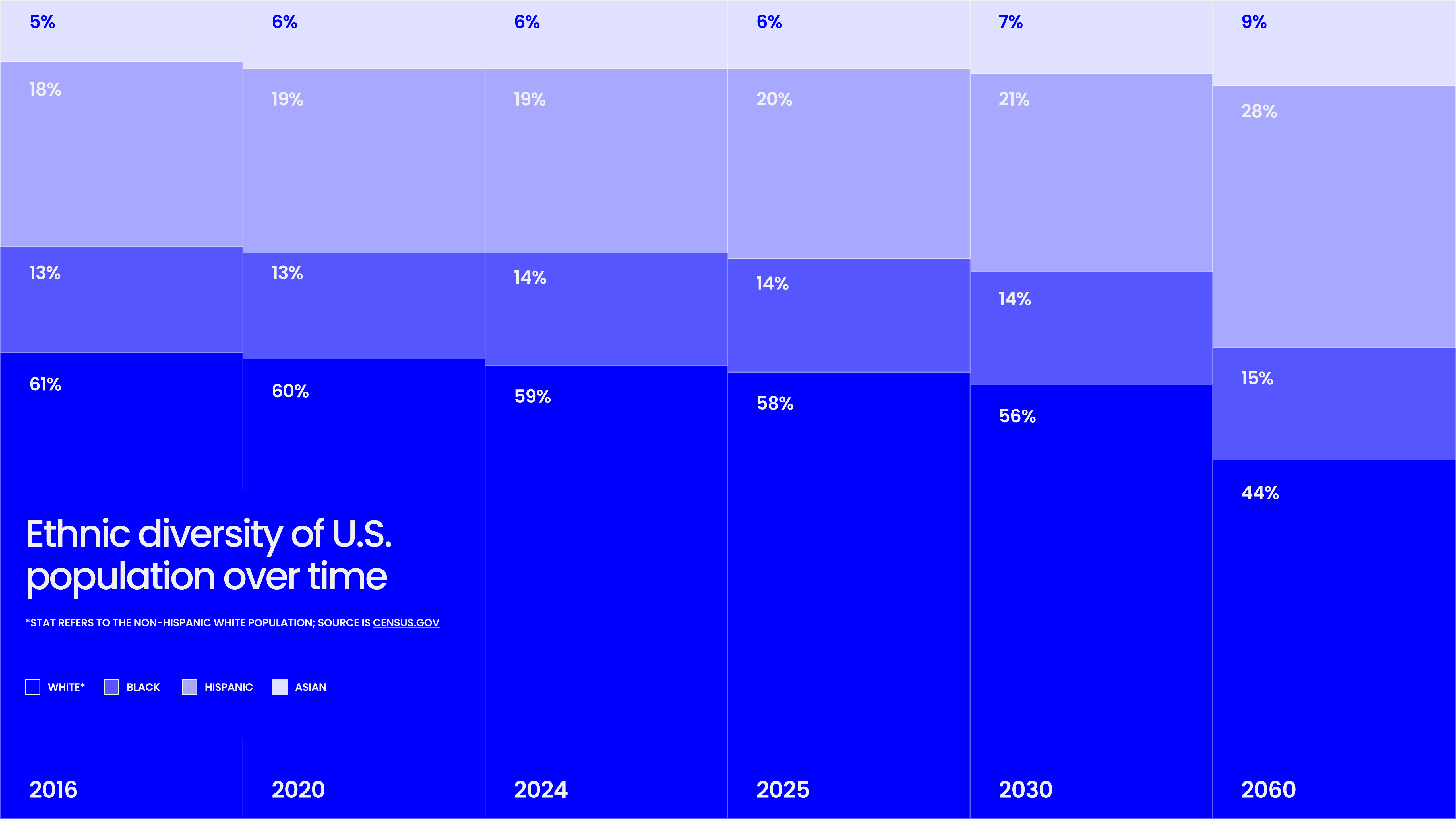
DIVERSITY ON TV: INTRO

Buying power by ethnic group

Black

$ 2.1 Trillion

Hispanic

$2.8 Trillion

Asian

$1.9 Trillion

Source: eMarketer, 2026 projections from Selig Center for Economic Growth

DIVERSITY ON TV

TV's diversity scorecard: hits and misses

Non-white representation in top 2025 TV shows fell to just 42%, marking a 5% year-over-year decline and signaling a reversal in on-screen diversity from 2024. While Black talent (17%) had higher representation than their U.S. population share (14%), Hispanic representation stagnated at a critically low 7% (vs. 20% U.S. population). Asian representation alarmingly dropped 50% YoY to 6%, impacted by representative shows from last year like Shogun and Avatar: The Last Airbender taking a hiatus without replacements. Meanwhile, the 33% YoY growth in "Other / Mixed Race" roles suggests an increasing acknowledgment of Native American and mixed identities, as in AMC's show Dark Winds.

YEAR-OVER-YEAR

+6%
Black representation

+0%
Hispanic representation

–50%
Asian representation

+33%
Other/mixed representation

■ WHITE ■ BLACK ■ HISPANIC ■ ASIAN ■ OTHER/MIXED

US Census	58%	14%	20%	6%	5%
Cast of Top TV Shows	58%	17%	7%	6%	12%

Ethnic diversity of cast in top 100 TV shows vs. U.S. population

42 %

of cast members were Black, Hispanic, Asian, mixed race, or of another non-white ethnicity.
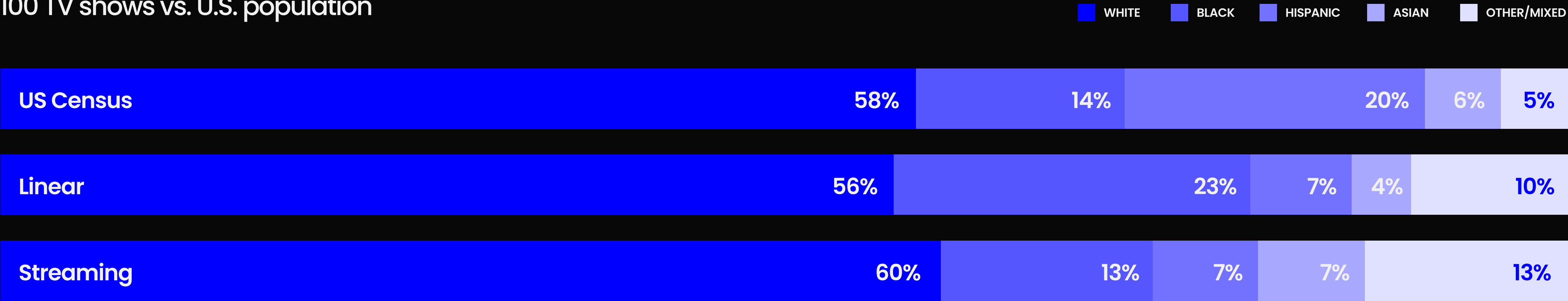
5% YoY ↓

DIVERSITY ON TV: LINEAR V. STREAMING

Linear TV showcases more diversity than streaming

Streaming shows slightly over-represent white actors, at 60% of cast members versus 58% of the population, while linear casting is 56% white. Linear TV features 23% Black talent (vs. 14% U.S. population) but only 4% Asian talent. Streaming shows better represent Asian talent (7%) and "Other/Mixed Race" (13%) representation.

However, both platforms critically underrepresent Hispanic actors at just 7% each, far below their 20% U.S. population share. For advertisers, this disparity means opportunities to align with Black casts are more plentiful on linear TV, while streaming offers more avenues for presenting stories through Asian and mixed-race actors.

Ethnic diversity of cast within top 100 TV shows vs. U.S. population

Legend: ■ WHITE ■ BLACK ■ HISPANIC ■ ASIAN ■ OTHER/MIXED

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	OTHER/MIXED
US Census	58%	14%	20%	6%	5%
Linear	56%	23%	7%	4%	10%
Streaming	60%	13%	7%	7%	13%

Top 50 linear shows vs. top 50 streaming shows

DIVERSITY ON TV: NETWORKS

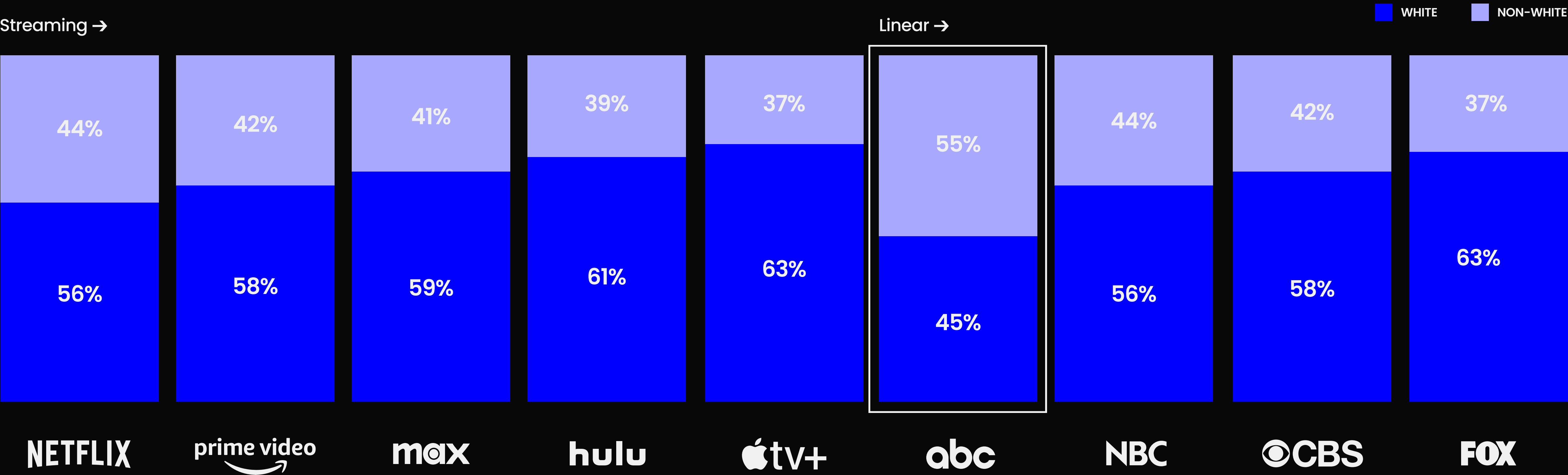# Representation rankings: ABC, Netflix, and NBC set the bar

Streaming may be the future, with 56% growth in viewership year over year, but one linear network is leading the charge when it comes to diversity. Among major platforms, ABC sets the standard for representation with 55% non-white cast members, driven by representative shows such as Abbott Elementary and Will Trent. This presents advertisers with a rich environment for multicultural campaigns on ABC. Netflix and NBC follow at 44% diversity levels each.

DIVERSITY ON TV: NETWORKS

Average percentage of non-white versus white cast members in top shows by service

Among streaming services and networks with
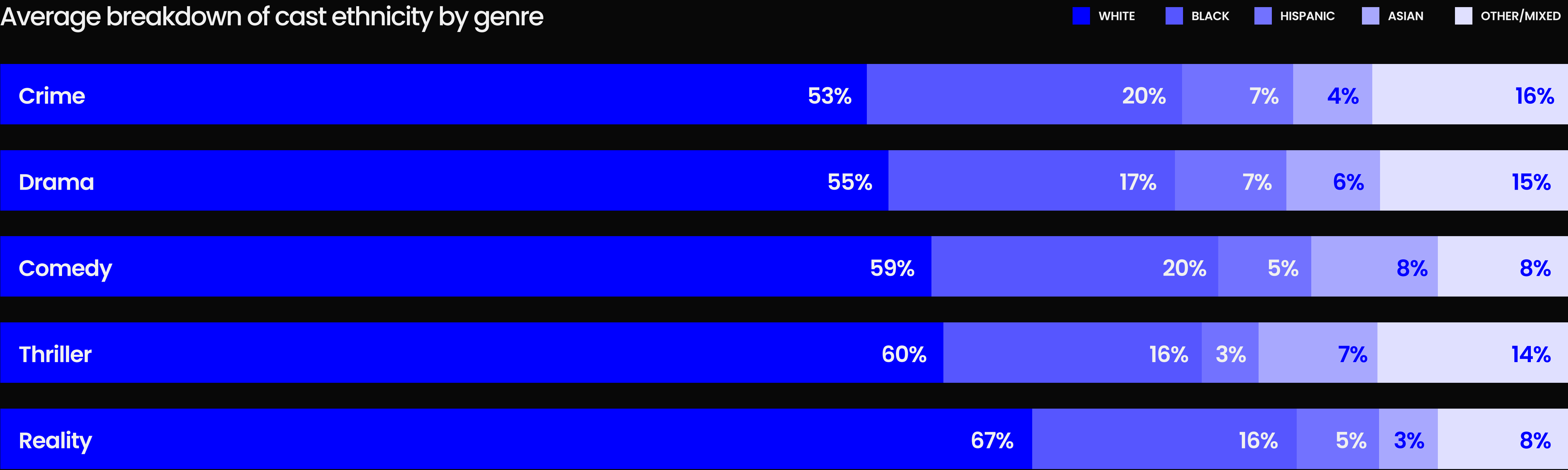3+ shows in the top 50 released 1.1.25–5.1.25

Streaming →

Linear →

■ WHITE ■ NON-WHITE

NETFLIX	44% / 56%	
prime video	42% / 58%	
max	41% / 59%	
hulu	39% / 61%	
tv+	37% / 63%	
abc	55% / 45%	
NBC	44% / 56%	
CBS	42% / 58%	
FOX	37% / 63%	

DIVERSITY ON TV: GENRES

More inclusive on the script than the street: reality TV doesn't reflect diversity

Scripted genres like crime, which featured an average of 47% non-white talent, offer the most diverse casting —signaling that ethnically diverse talent may be pigeonholed into crime-oriented shows, as opposed to roles present within other genres. Meanwhile, reality is the least diverse genre, despite its "real people" premise.

Average breakdown of cast ethnicity by genre

■ WHITE   ■ BLACK   ■ HISPANIC   ■ ASIAN   ■ OTHER/MIXED

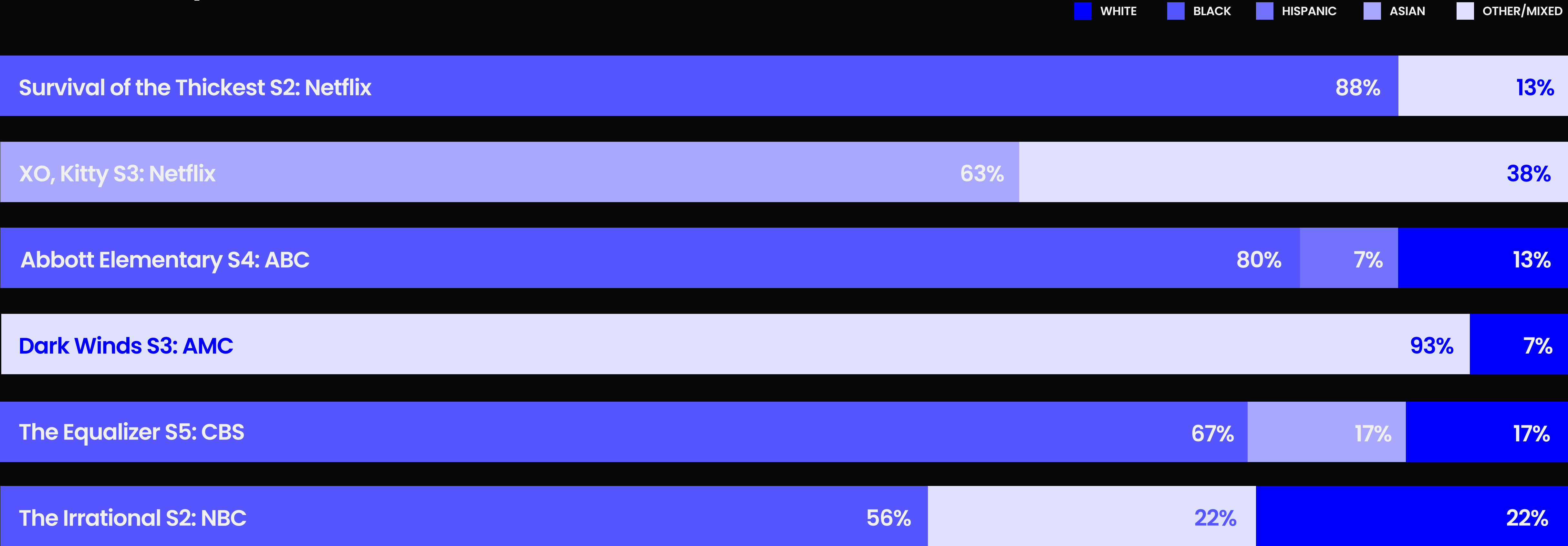| Genre	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other/Mixed
Crime	53%	20%	7%	4%	16%
Drama	55%	17%	7%	6%	15%
Comedy	59%	20%	5%	8%	8%
Thriller	60%	16%	3%	7%	14%
Reality	67%	16%	5%	3%	8%

Among top 50 linear and top 50 streaming shows

Renewed for representation: streaming doubles down as broadcast backs away

Shows like Netflix's Survival of the Thickest and XO, Kitty, as well as ABC's Abbott Elementary, and AMC's Dark Winds showcase diverse casting. Of these, the two most representative Netflix shows have been renewed for new seasons. However, the most diverse CBS and NBC shows (The Equalizer and The Irrational) were cancelled, an indication that diverse casting may be connecting more with streaming viewers, or platform strategies are performing better there than on linear.

DIVERSITY ON TV: SHOWS

Shows with high levels of diverse representation

■ WHITE ■ BLACK ■ HISPANIC ■ ASIAN ■ OTHER/MIXED

Show		
Survival of the Thickest S2: Netflix	88%	13%
XO, Kitty S3: Netflix	63%	38%
Abbott Elementary S4: ABC	80%	7%	13%
Dark Winds S3: AMC	93%	7%
The Equalizer S5: CBS	67%	17%	17%
The Irrational S2: NBC	56%	22%	22%

[02]

Does representative content drive diverse viewership?

[01] CORREL   [02] CORREL BY ETHNICITY

CORREL

+36%

There was a positive correlation between diverse households watching TV shows featuring a higher proportion of diverse cast members.

CORREL

Diverse storytelling drives viewership from Black and Hispanic audiences

There's a 36% positive correlation between diverse households watching shows with diverse casting, confirming that representation drives viewership. Black households saw the strongest correlation for watching shows with higher levels of diversity. With the streaming wars waging, platforms looking to boost viewership can increase cast diversity to gain attention from diverse audiences.

Correlation between shows starring a higher proportion of ethnically diverse cast and diverse viewership:

+34%
Black viewership

+21%
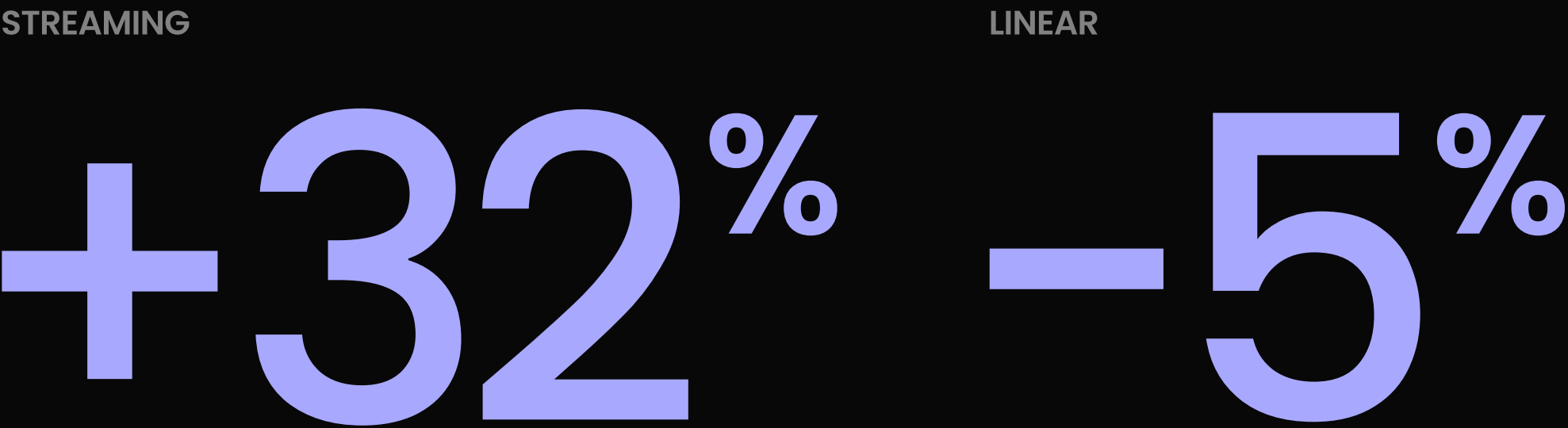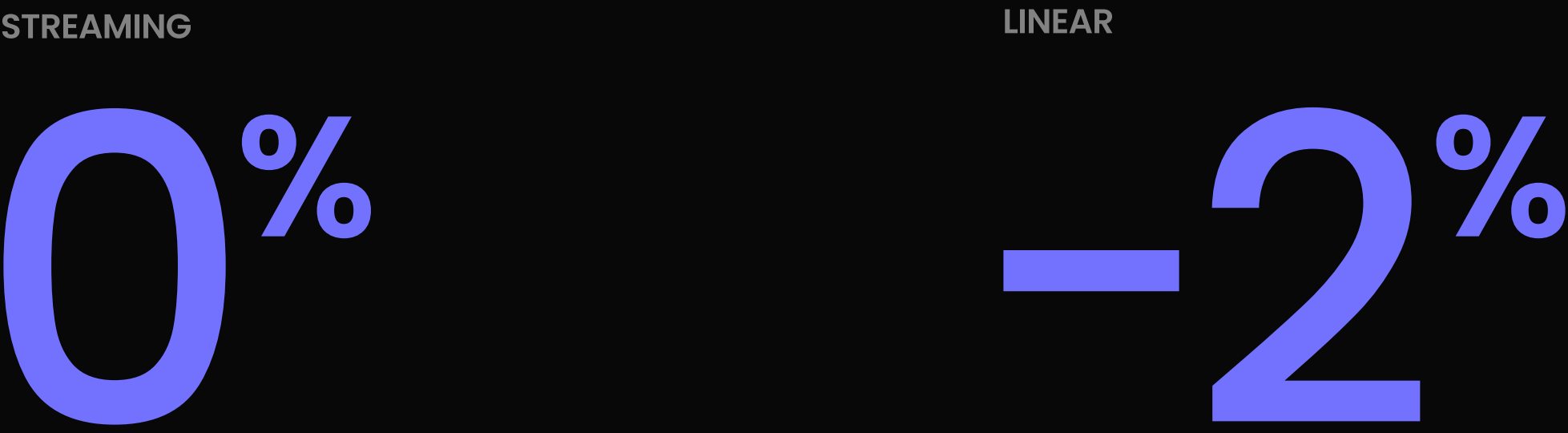Hispanic viewership

+6%
Asian viewership

Were people of certain ethnic groups more likely to watch shows where they saw themselves represented?

Correlation between households watching shows starring a higher percentage of members of their own ethnicity.
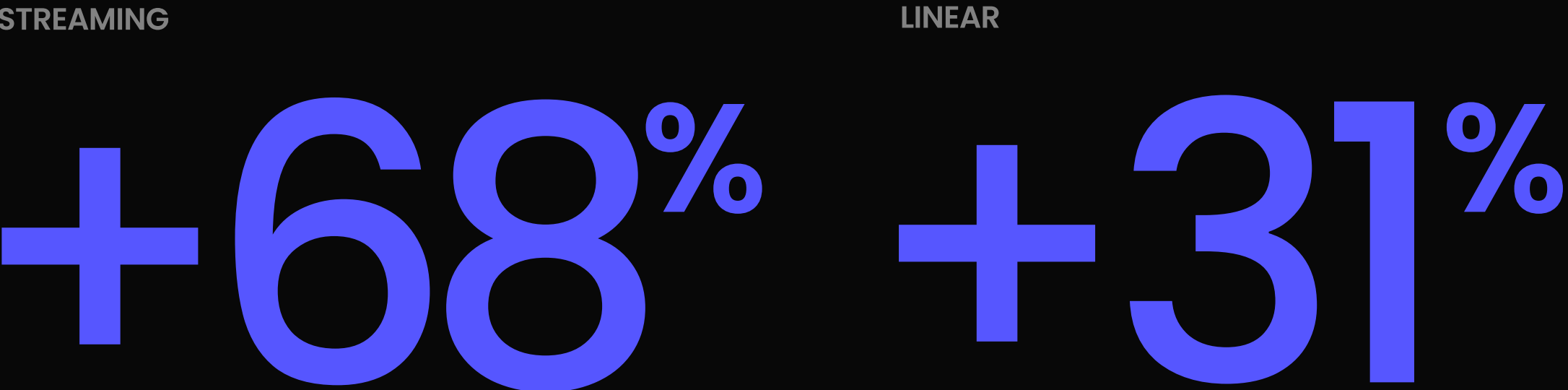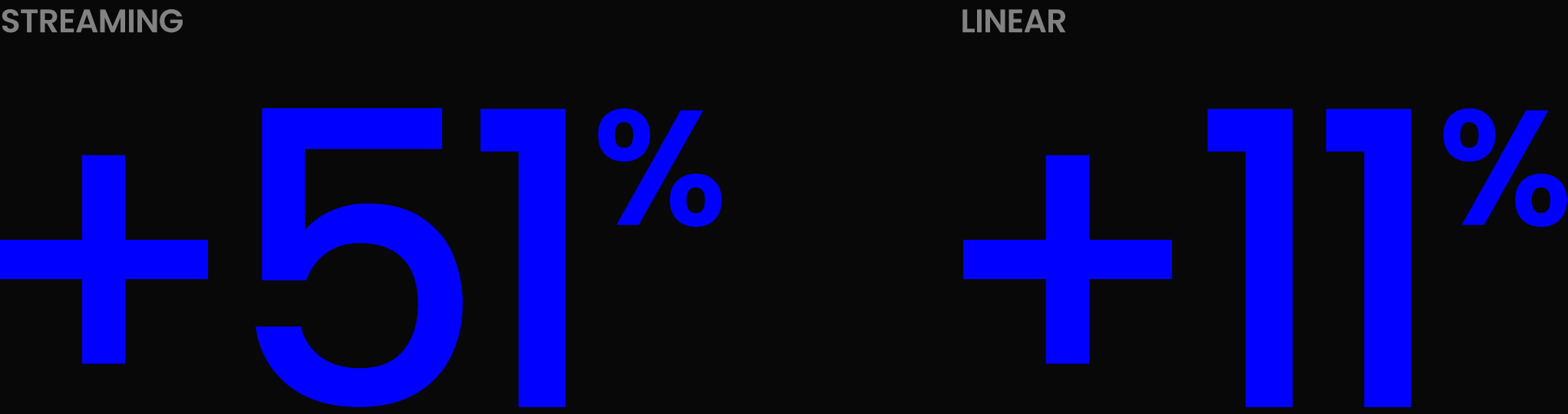
Asian Talent

STREAMING	LINEAR
+32%	−5%

Black Talent

STREAMING	LINEAR
+68%	+31%

Hispanic Talent

STREAMING	LINEAR
0%	−2%

White Talent

STREAMING	LINEAR
+51%	+11%

22

Black and Asian casts drive viewership among respective audiences, while Hispanic casts don't

Black and Asian casts on streaming shows strongly attract Black and Asian viewers, respectively, presenting a major opportunity for advertisers looking to connect with these audiences. However, Hispanic-led shows don't drive higher viewership among Hispanic audiences, which could stem from content that doesn't resonate, poor marketing, discoverability issues, or simply a scarcity of such content, with Hispanic casting 64% less than the Hispanic share of the U.S. population. This suggests that current Hispanic-led shows aren't a reliable vehicle for ad engagement with Hispanic audiences, demanding a re-evaluation of content strategy and promotion by the industry.

[03]

Ad Viewership
by Ethnicity

[01] ADS   [02] VERTICALS   [03] ADVERTISERS

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ADS

Hispanic audiences severely under-reached by advertisers

White households are continually served a disproportionate amount of TV ad impressions, while advertisers are missing diverse audiences. In particular, despite their massive spending power of $2.8T and growth to 20% of the U.S. population, Hispanic households are served just 15% of ad impressions (the same underrepresentation this group saw in 2024), highlighting the lack of progress in reaching this key audience.

Advertisers chasing diverse audiences can't rely on traditional TV alone. It's imperative to tap into streaming and digital signals to leverage precision targeting. If your message doesn't reach the right viewers, it's wasted spend.
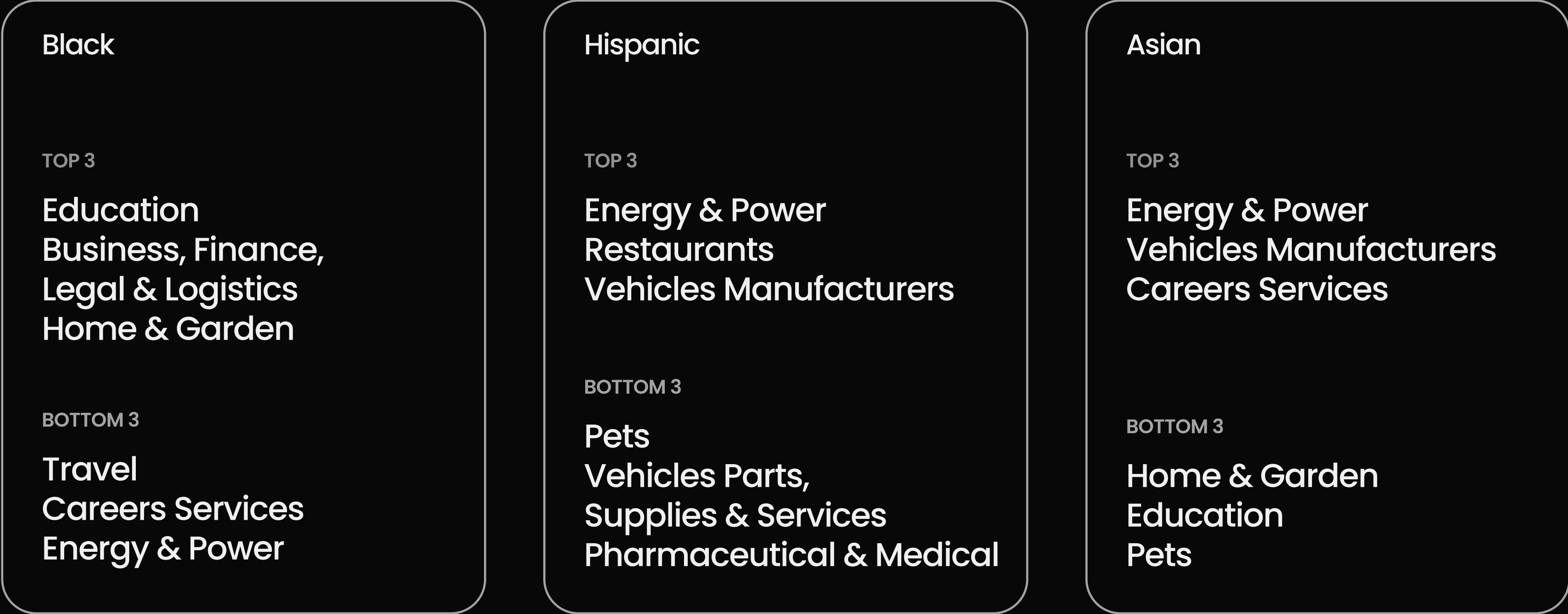
■ WHITE ■ BLACK ■ HISPANIC ■ ASIAN ■ OTHER/MIXED

Linear & OTT ad impressions served by ethnic group vs. census breakdown

US Census
- 2%
- 6%
- 20%
- 14%
- 58%

Ads
- 4%
- 4%
- 15%
- 13%
- 63%
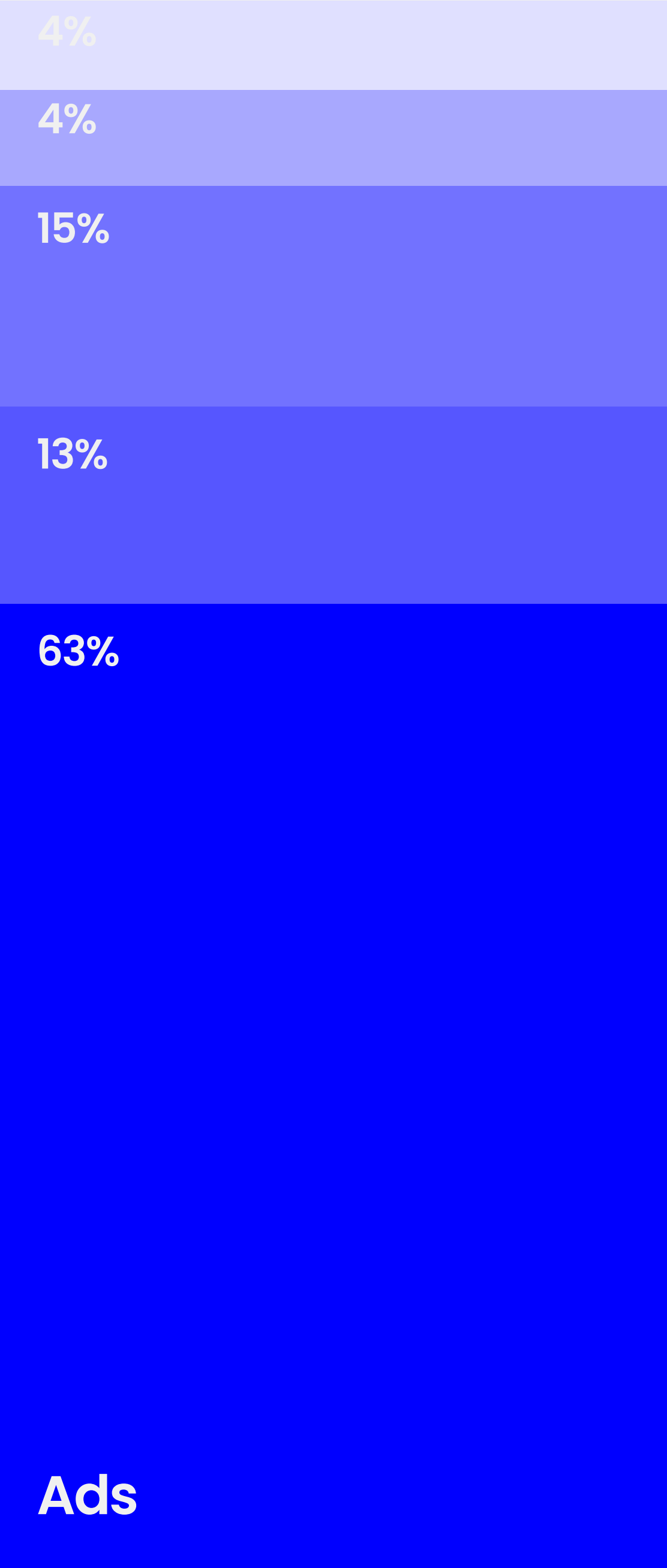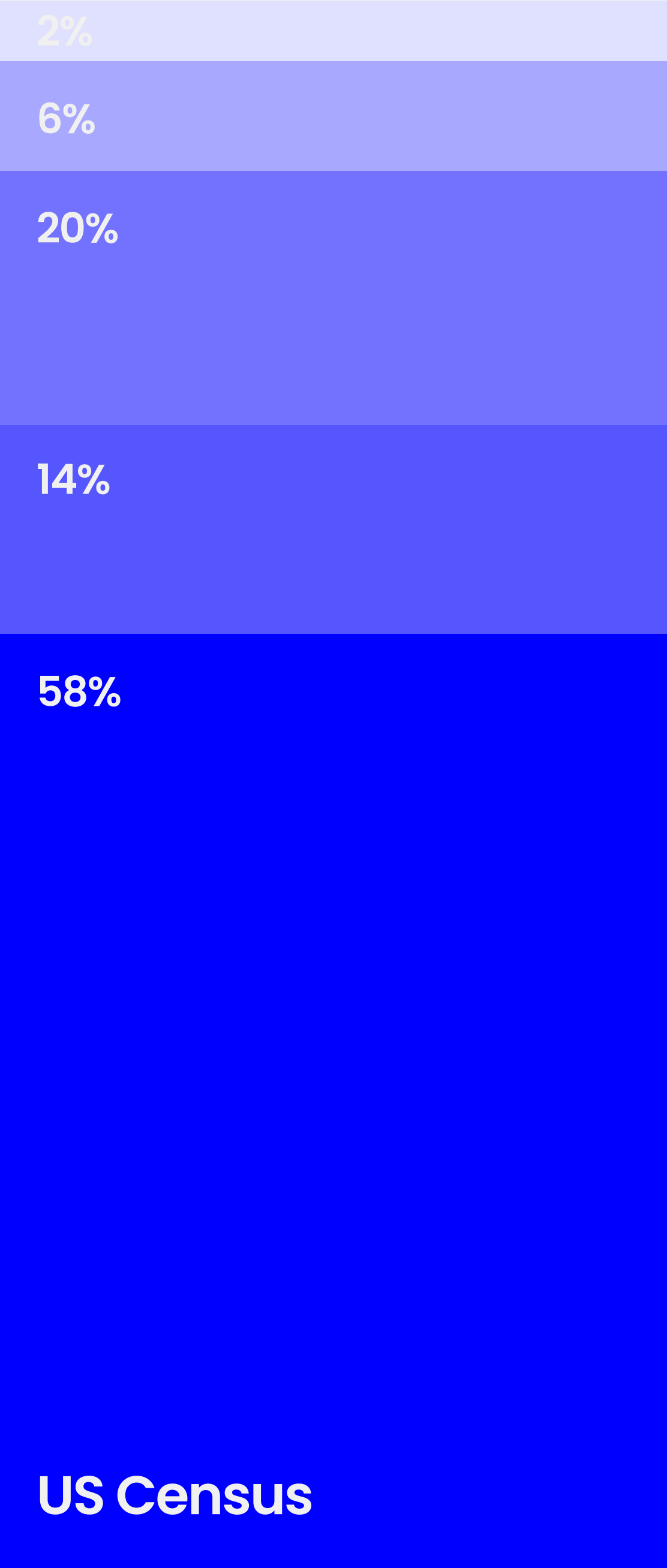
Diverse audiences left off the map in travel, pet, and home ads

Reaching diverse audiences varies sharply by ad vertical. Black viewers are reached more by Education and Business / Finance ads, while Travel and Energy fall short—missing a massive $2.1T opportunity. For Hispanic audiences, Energy & Power ads and Restaurant ads have the most reach, while Pets and Pharma underdeliver. Some industries are adapting, but still others are leaving large audiences untapped.

Black

TOP 3

Education
Business, Finance, Legal & Logistics
Home & Garden

BOTTOM 3

Travel
Careers Services
Energy & Power

Hispanic

TOP 3

Energy & Power
Restaurants
Vehicles Manufacturers

BOTTOM 3

Pets
Vehicles Parts, Supplies & Services
Pharmaceutical & Medical

Asian

TOP 3

Energy & Power
Vehicles Manufacturers
Careers Services

BOTTOM 3

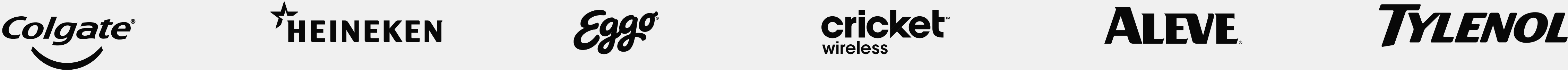Home & Garden
Education
Pets

ADVERTISERS

Which advertisers are getting it right with diverse audiences?

Some advertisers are breaking through when it comes to reaching diverse audiences. Rooms To Go and Morgan & Morgan lead impressions among Black viewers, while Colgate and Heineken resonate with Hispanic households. AAA and Honda are standouts for Asian consumers. What sets these brands apart? Cultural relevance, consistency, and campaigns that go beyond the generic. The takeaway for the industry: meaningful reach starts with tailored strategies, not blanket approaches.

Black:

ROOMS TO GO   MORGAN & MORGAN   Wawa   WEST SHORE HOME   CARMAX   FANDUEL

Hispanic:

Colgate   HEINEKEN   Eggo   cricket wireless   ALEVE   TYLENOL

Asian:

AAA   1-800-GOT-JUNK?   HONDA   SHEN YUN PERFORMING ARTS   the Jewelry Exchange Factory Direct!   BMW

*includes advertisers within top 500; excludes TV networks

[04]

TV Viewership by Ethnicity

[01] TOP PROGRAMS & NETWORKS

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TOP PROGRAMS & NETWORKS

Top TV: what diverse audiences are watching

Understanding where diverse audiences choose to spend their TV time is crucial for any effective engagement strategy. Analysis of top-indexing linear networks and streaming programs reveals clear patterns of media consumption driven by representation and cultural relevance. Black, Hispanic, and Asian audiences tended to watch culturally specific linear networks and streaming programs where they were most represented (ex. Harlem for Black viewers, Lucca's World for Hispanic viewers, and Squid Game for Asian viewers). For advertisers, this data provides an unambiguous roadmap: to connect with these valuable consumer groups, investment must follow viewership into these specific, highly-indexed media environments.

Top indexing streaming programs

Black:

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

HARLEM

TYLER PERRY'S
BEAUTY IN BLACK

THE UPSHAWS

POWER BOOK III:
RAISING KANAN

Hispanic:

UNTIL YOU BURN

Lucca's WORLD

COUNTERATTACK

FAKE PROFILE

MEDUSA
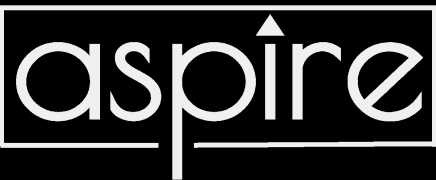
Asian:

AD VITAM

SQUID GAME 3

THE GORGE

COBRA KAI

THE WHITE LOTUS

Top indexing linear networks

Black:

Hispanic:

Asian:

[04]

Key Takeaways

−64%

The Lack of Hispanic Representation Is an Industry-Wide Problem and Opportunity

The severe 64% underrepresentation of Hispanic talent in shows signals a massive market failure and opportunity for creators to develop authentic stories.

+36%

Representation Is a Proven Viewership Driver, Especially on Streaming

The 36% correlation between diverse content and diverse viewership confirms that authentic representation builds loyal audiences.

−25%

Advertisers Are Missing Diverse Audiences With Significant Buying Power

With Hispanic and Asian consumers underserved ads by 25%, advertisers must solve for strategic media placement to reach these buyers.

+68%

Audiences Seek Content Where They See Themselves Represented

Audiences gravitate towards culturally resonant content. The strong 68% correlation between Black audiences watching streaming shows with Black talent demonstrates the value in telling relevant stories, and advertisers reaching these audiences.

−50%

Asian Representation Is Decreasing and Needs Sustained Investment

The alarming 50% year-over-year drop in Asian representation on TV casts highlights that consistent content pipelines are required to maintain reach and provide ample advertising opportunities.

[05]

How Samba can help

Connect TV Attention and Online Attention With Behavioral Targeting

By understanding what diverse audiences are watching on TV and where they are spending time online, Samba TV can activate campaigns that help brands nurture users at precise moments of the marketing funnel.

Use TV Data to Target Multicultural Audiences Where They Spend Time

Samba TV's first-party data identifies the specific networks and programs that over-index on diverse audiences. This allows advertisers to place their campaigns in the most relevant environments where attention is highest.

Uncover the Hispanic Opportunity with Granular Targeting

Samba TV's granular viewership data reveals precisely which content is connecting with Hispanic households, even amid a broader industry miss. For advertisers, it's a chance to stop wasting impressions and start unlocking the full potential of a $2.8 trillion market with precision and cultural relevance.

Want to Grow and Retain Subscribers? Start With the Right Audience

Samba TV arms platforms with the data they need to understand what's really working in their diverse programming strategies. Our outcome-based insights reveal what drives viewership — and what doesn't — so studios can double down on what resonates and course-correct where it counts.

Optimize Campaigns with Real-Time Audience Insights

With real-time viewership data, advertisers can monitor campaign performance across different audience segments as it happens. This allows for in-flight optimization, shifting budget toward the platforms and programs that are delivering the highest reach and engagement with target demographics.

Learn More

Samba TV's Diverse Audiences Advantage

Samba TV Has the Most Representative Audience Data

Samba's first-party TV viewership data is benchmarked to within 0.007% of the U.S. Census across key race and ethnicity segments—ensuring accurate reach and true representation of multicultural audiences.

Cultural Viewership Insights

We track the shows, platforms, and genres that resonate most with diverse audiences—whether driven by cast representation, storyline, or community relevance—providing brands with the ability to target against the content most relevant to target audiences.

Privacy-Safe Identity Spine for Seamless Data Collaboration

Through data integrations with Snowflake, Databricks, Google, Amazon, Acxiom, InfoSum, Epsilon, and others, Samba enables brands to match first-party customer data with multicultural viewership, streaming, and web behavior in secure, privacy-compliant clean rooms.

Precision Audience Targeting by Race, Ethnicity, and Geography

Our proprietary identity graph enables brands to reach diverse audiences based on verified ethnicity, language preference, and regional behaviors—powered by first-party TV viewership data, as well as web browsing behaviors.

Competitive Ad Exposure Intelligence

Samba provides detailed insights into who is advertising, where, and how often—helping you understand how your competitors are reaching multicultural consumes, refine spend strategies and win underserved market share.