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TRUE CRIME PODCAST AND THEIR EFFECT ON THE FEAR OF
CRIME

Dissertation to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a
Master's Degree in Communication Studies: Journalism

By

Johanna Elena Holzemer

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas

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Abstract

True crime podcasts have gained popularity in recent years, with a growing number of people regularly engaging with this content. To better understand the impact of these podcasts on their audience, this study investigates how true crime podcasts influence the fear of crime. Grounded in cultivation theory, which suggests a connection between consuming violent media and heightened fear of crime, the study surveyed 1,000 individuals in a sample representative of the age and gender distribution of the German population through an online questionnaire. The findings suggest that true crime podcasts contribute to increased fear of crime, as true crime listeners reported higher levels of fear compared to non-listeners in several areas. Moreover, the results revealed that the gender distribution among true crime podcast listeners was nearly balanced, which differs from findings from previous studies. While the study confirmed that women are significantly more likely to consume true crime podcasts than men, it also highlighted that men's consumption of true crime podcasts could be higher than assumed by earlier research. Finally, the study could not confirm the assumption from previous research that women consume true crime media to become more aware of potential dangers and to prepare themselves for possible crimes.

Key Words: True crime podcasts, Fear of crime, Cultivation theory, Violent media content, Podcasts, True crime and women, True crime and gender, Modern true crime formats

Resumo

Os podcasts de true crime ganharam popularidade significativa nos últimos anos, com um número crescente de pessoas que consomem regularmente esse conteúdo. Para entender melhor o impacto desses podcasts em seu público, este estudo investiga como os podcasts de true crime influenciam o medo do crime. Fundamentado na teoria da cultura, que sugere uma conexão entre o consumo de mídia violenta e o aumento do medo do crime, o estudo entrevistou 1,000 indivíduos em uma amostra representativa da distribuição etária e de gênero da população alemã, por meio de um questionário online. Os resultados sugerem que os podcasts de true crime contribuem para o aumento do medo do crime, uma vez que os ouvintes de true crime relataram níveis mais altos de medo em comparação com os não ouvintes em várias áreas. Além disso, os resultados revelaram que a distribuição de gênero entre os ouvintes de podcasts de true crime estava quase equilibrada, o que contrasta com as descobertas de estudos anteriores. Embora o estudo tenha confirmado que as mulheres são significativamente mais propensas a consumir podcasts de true crime do que os homens, também destacou que o consumo de podcasts de true crime por homens é maior do que o assumido anteriormente por outras pesquisas. Além disso, o estudo não pôde confirmar a suposição de pesquisas anteriores de que as mulheres consomem mídia de true crime para se tornarem mais conscientes dos potenciais perigos e para se prepararem para possíveis crimes.

Palavras-chave: Podcasts de true crime, Medo do crime, Teoria da cultura, Conteúdo de mídia violenta, Podcasts, True crime e mulheres, True crime e gênero, Formatos modernos de true crime

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1. Introduction

“When Paige Sciarrino saw her neighbor’s car still parked on the street after many days, she spiraled. *Have they been murdered?* ... She grew more agitated, convincing herself that her neighbors were victims of a grisly crime” (Corrigan, 2022). In her 2022 article, “Why longtime fans of true crime are quitting this genre for good,” *Washington Post* writer Hope Corrigan describes this spiraling thought process of Paige Sciarrino, a true crime enthusiast who, after noticing her neighbor’s car parked for days, immediately suspected they had been murdered. In reality, her neighbors were simply out of town. Corrigan’s article details how Paige’s true crime consumption led her to become increasingly anxious, realizing that it was negatively impacting her mental health, to the point where she eventually quit consuming true crime for good. This story is symbolic of a larger trend: the prevalence of true crime content has skyrocketed across multiple platforms, including books, Netflix documentaries, and podcasts (Proulx, 2024). True crime seems omnipresent, with a study by the Pew Research Institute revealing that 34% of US Americans listen to true crime podcasts (Naseer & St. Aubin, 2023).

In Germany as well, several true crime podcast formats regularly rank among the top 10 podcasts (Seven.One Media, 2022). In a representative survey conducted in Germany, Appinio and Podstars (2024) found that 82% of Germans listen to podcasts at least once a month, with 42% of them regularly consuming true crime podcasts. Given a population of approximately 83 million people (*Bevölkerungsstand*, 2024), this translates to an estimated true crime podcast audience of around 29 million Germans. Although true crime podcasts are increasingly popular, research on the topic remains limited, especially in Germany. To date, only one study by Seven.One Media (2022) has been conducted, focusing primarily on the listening habits and demographic characteristics of true crime listeners. However, this study does not delve into the psychological or social impacts of consuming such content. In contrast, US Americans and Australian research has delved deeper into the phenomenon of true crime podcasts. Studies have highlighted that true crime podcasts are particularly appealing to women (Boling & Hull, 2018; Vitis & Ryan, 2021). Vicary and Fraley (2010) also found that women are generally more drawn to true crime content, attributing this to a

desire for preparation against potential victimization. The authors suggest that women consume true crime media to understand what could happen to them and how to prepare in the event of a serious incident. However, the authors also describe how this increased consumption might trigger a spiral of fear, like the experience of Paige Sciarrino mentioned in the beginning – or as Vicary and Fraley call it, “a vicious cycle” (Vicary & Fraley, 2010: 85) might occur. This vicious cycle suggests that, as individuals consume more true crime content for safety information, they encounter more stories of horrific crimes, which in turn can heighten their fear of crime.

One theoretical approach that examines the relationship between the consumption of violent media and perceptions of the world, as well as fear of crime, is the cultivation theory developed by George Gerbner and colleagues (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1977; Gerbner et al., 1979). This theory posits that media content influences how consumers perceive reality, suggesting that the depictions in the media are transferred to consumers’ views of the real world. A cultivation effect in its simplest form is a connection between the consumption of a medium and the perceived reality that the consumer derives from this consumption (Gerbner et al., 1978). Research based on the cultivation theory has found support for this hypothesis, demonstrating that consuming violent media can lead to an exaggerated perception of crime rates and a heightened fear of crime (Jamieson & Romer, 2014; Shah et al., 2020; Smolej & Kivivuori, 2006; Reuband, 1998). However, Reuband (1998) did not find this effect for fictional violence content in Germany, but rather for the consumption of crime magazines (TV programs that reenact real criminal cases to aid in solving them). A linear correlation emerged: the more frequently these real crime formats were consumed, the higher the consumers’ fear of becoming a victim of crime. This finding suggests that depictions of real crimes, in particular, influence fear of crime.

In the past decade, cultivation theory has been applied to other media, such as social media (Hermann, 2020; Morgan et al., 2015; Tang et al., 2021; 2018; Wei et al., 2020). The results of these studies show that the cultivation hypothesis also appears to be applicable to media other than television. What remains to be explored, however, is how the medium of true crime podcasts affects the consumers’ perception of reality. With the high true crime podcast

listener numbers (Appinio & Podstars, 2024), it seems important to take a closer look at how true crime podcasts influence perceptions of reality, especially the fear of crime. Previous research has shown how the consumption of crime media can alter an individual's perception of reality and contribute to heightened levels of fear (Jamieson & Romer, 2014; Shah et al., 2020; Smolej & Kivivuori, 2006; Reuband, 1998). This prolonged state of heightened fear can have a negative impact on mental health, affecting both audiences and content creators of true crime podcasts who often struggle with heightened anxiety and ethical concerns around the portrayal of victims (Corrigan, 2022). For example, German true crime podcast hosts Linn Schütze and Leonie Bartsch often report in their episodes that they have to balance their work by engaging in lighter entertainment media after intense investigations to maintain a sense of peace and prevent the cases from overshadowing their daily lives (Schütze & Bartsch, 2024).

These circumstances highlight that both the production and consumption of true crime podcasts can have substantial, yet unexplored, impacts on individual well-being by fostering heightened levels of fear. Therefore, this study aims to explore this connection in greater detail, focusing on the research question: *How do true crime podcasts influence the fear of crime in Germany?* To address this question, a quantitative online survey based on cultivation theory was conducted on a representative sample of the German population. The study aims to examine whether true crime podcast listeners show higher levels of fear compared to non-listeners and to explore the relationship between women and true crime content more closely. It also seeks to determine whether women consume such content as a means of preparing themselves for potential crimes, as suggested by Vicary and Fraley (2010), and whether the vicious cycle they describe can be substantiated. The study is divided into six sections, with this introduction serving as the first part. The second chapter of this thesis begins by outlining the underlying terminology and the current state of research related to true crime podcasts, the fear of crime, and the cultivation hypothesis. It then provides a detailed description of the methodological approach used to address the underlying research question and hypotheses derived from this. In the fourth chapter, the research findings are presented, while the fifth chapter integrates these results into the existing body of research, discussing limitations and offering implications for future studies. The sixth chapter will provide a comprehensive summary and conclusion of the entire study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Modern True Crime Formats

2.1.1. Evolution Towards Modern True Crime Formats

According to the Social Sciences Space, half of US Americans reported that they like consuming true crime media in 2023, with 35% stating that they consume such content at least once a week (Richards, 2023). However, the genre was not always so popular and has developed over many decades into the mass phenomenon that it is today (Murley, 2008). True crime storytelling first blossomed in the form of pamphlets in the Elizabethan age in the 16th century and has since evolved into today's true crime formats. A definition of true crime formats by Murley (2008) states it is "the story of real events, shaped by the teller and imbued with his or her values and beliefs about such events. Narratives can be textual, visual, aural, or a mixture of the three. In addition, murder narratives are also shaped using their production" (p. 6). The genre attracted researchers' attention more than 25 years ago, as Durham notes in 1995: "The true crime genre is an important, yet unstudied, aspect of popular representations of crime" (Durham et al., 1995, p. 144). The portrayal of reality, as opposed to the made-up world of fiction, seemed interesting at that time and captivated many readers and viewers: "The appeal of the genre is that it purports to be about the real world, not merely the fictional world of the novel" (Durham et al., 1995, p. 144). Modern true crime formats, however, are particularly remarkable for their narrative style, as Seltzer (2007) describes: "True crime is crime fact that looks like crime fiction, it marks or irritates the distinction between real and fictional reality" (p. 2). It is precisely because of this particular narrative that true crime formats seem to hold a unique fascination for consumers. Murley (2008) explored the question of how true crime formats became such a large market and how the content affects modern popular culture. She states that the modern narrative style of true crime content first appeared in the 1940s in *True Detective Magazine*, a magazine devoted to real-life criminal cases and unsolved murders. A new kind of storytelling began to take hold, one that was more concerned with the context, psychological background, and motives of the perpetrators and murders than solely with blunt facts. Murley also describes this new type of true crime narrative as "a poetics of murder narration" (p. 2).

A book that is often handled as the beginning of this new genre is Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, published in 1966 (Murley, 2008; Yardley et al., 2019). In this book, the portrayal of violent crimes differed from previous literature and was characterized by a focus on specific gruesome crimes and examining and describing these cases in depth and detail (Sherrill, 2022; Yardley et al., 2019). Since its release, true crime formats have regularly been on the bestseller lists and two social changes seem to have contributed to the success of the new format (Murley, 2008). On the one hand, in the 1970s, crime rates in the US seemed to explode and inhuman crimes, for example, those of Charles Manson, shook society. The new form of true crime, which provided backgrounds and attempted explanations for cruel acts, found many buyers. During this time, true crime formats began to become a consumer-oriented industry that was able to generate high profits (Murley, 2008). On the other hand, Browder (2010) describes how a different perspective was introduced in which violence and evil were presented as a potential threat within the family and not only from strangers. In the context of the women's rights movement in the 1970s, true crime content also began to focus on the respected men of society as perpetrators, such as fathers of families, doctors, and lawyers. This shift in focus and style is considered the starting point for the true crime genre as it is known today. Due to this development, modern types of true crime books are partly characterized by the fact that the victims are often female, and the murderers are male (Murley, 2008).

2.1.2. Characteristics of Modern True Crime

Media critics have pointed out that true crime writing is stereotyped, telling similar stories over and over again (Walsh, 2023). However, according to Walsh (2023), this overlooks the fact that there are many different writing styles and viewpoints in true crime, especially when considering best sellers. In the past, the idea that true crime was a guilty-pleasure medium prevented the genre from receiving critical attention and popular recognition. Since the 2010s, however, the genre has grown into a new wave of true crime, largely due to its popularity in certain formats like *Serial* and its presentation in docuseries (Walters, 2021). In the 2020s, the hype surrounding true crime formats has developed to such an extent that it is almost impossible to scroll through a streaming platform such as Netflix or Amazon Prime without coming across a series or a film that deals with a true crime case (Gaynor, 2024). From US American serial killer Ted Bundy to fraudster Anna Sorokin, a wide variety

of topics are covered by different media outlets (Burnworth, 2022). In fact, the genre seems to be very adaptable and not just stereotyped, as Franks (2016) states: “[true crime is] incredibly resilient and sophisticated” and “takes the simple structure of crime, investigation, and (usually) punishment, working to continually adapt, modify, and reinvent this formula. In this way, the true crime genre ensures there will always be a market for murder” (p. 251). This ability to evolve is also reflected in the growing popularity of stories about subjects other than murder and manslaughter, as evidenced by the achievements of *Inventing Anna* and the *Tinder Swindler* on Netflix. The movies about Anna Sorokin and Simon Leviv, two people who stole money from numerous victims by using false identities, gained huge prominence (Lokanan, 2023). Even though stories like these are covered more and more frequently, the majority of the true crime audience, however, still prefers stories about serial killers (Walsh, 2023).

Another fact that differentiates true crime from other genres is that they always cover real-life events. Unlike fictional crime books, true crime texts are always identified as such and feature mysteries that seem unsolvable because their origins lie in the psyches of the offenders (Browder, 2010). In this context, true crime also raises important questions about society and the justice system and how it is perceived. According to Bruzzi (2016), broad publicity leads to an “increased jurification” (Bruzzi, 2016, p. 280) of the audience, who learns about the justice system and gains insights through the consumption. Assessing the consumer’s emotional response to the content, however, is more challenging (McCabe, 2021). According to Murley (2008), “we read true crime books... and watch television shows and films because they promise to furnish answers to serious questions about human behavior, because they’re... as addictive and soothing as old-fashioned mystery novels, [and] because of our insatiable human curiosity about the macabre and forbidden” (p. 3). Seltzer highlights that the genre’s devotion to its clichés is what draws readers to true crime in particular (2007). In contrast, Larke-Walsh (2021) asserts that true crime content also serves a significant social purpose and is not only a product of voyeuristic sensationalism, as narratives of injustice cause an emotional response from the viewer.

2.1.3. True Crime and Society

Exploring how true crime stories, as a subset of media and storytelling, reflect on and interact with modern society, Seltzer (2007) examines how media and crime stories influence the consumers' perceptions, beliefs, and actions. He emphasizes that true crime stories are not only a genre of storytelling, but also reflect modernity's engagement with violence and the role of media in shaping our understanding of violence and crime. In their most contemporary form, true crime formats often raise cultural, ethical, and moral questions, for example, why it is so socially acceptable to be entertained by true crime, murder, and the suffering of others. Due to this social mirror, the true crime genre provides an important research subject for social sciences (Larke-Walsh, 2021; McCabe, 2022; Murley, 2008; Seltzer, 2007).

According to recent research, the genre nowadays mostly covers hard crimes such as murder or serial killings and can reproduce misogynistic and racist tendencies by focusing on crimes with white, female victims more often than is the case in reality (Boling, 2022; Vitis & Ryan, 2021). As Durham (1995) describes in the beginning of true crime research, in the mid-1990s, the first studies on true crime showed similar results, however, female perpetrators were disproportionately represented, although empirical evidence showed that the majority of actual crimes were committed by male perpetrators who victimized other men. At the same time, emerging true crime research was already observing a tendency to give greater prominence to cases in which white people were victimized: "although only about half of all actual homicide victims are White, in the true crime world virtually all victims are White" (Durham, 1995, p. 150). One social group in particular seems to be overrepresented by the true crime makers of the time: "In sum, true crime presents cases involving higher status White victims who are often killed by related middle- or upper-class White offenders, including females, using guns and a variety of other methods" (Durham, 1995, p. 150). Durham describes this phenomenon as potentially problematic, as it can create inaccurate perceptions in society about the roles of victims and perpetrators. Such misperceptions can subsequently lead to ineffective or misguided strategies being used to address the underlying social problems (Durham, 1995). In fact, more and more studies are emphasizing the problems and dangers that true crime content poses to society by presenting content and perpetuating stereotypes that lead to misperceptions in society (Gaynor, 2024; Lang &

Alejandro, 2024; Yardley et al., 2019). Additionally, other studies have pointed out the genre's susceptibility to accusations of profiting from the re-traumatization of victims, survivors and their respective families (see Boling, 2023). These critical aspects of the true crime genre will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.3.3 of this work.

However, what is worth mentioning in relation to true crime content, and has been supported by a number of studies, is the fact that women in particular are attracted to this genre (Boling, 2022; Seven.One Media, 2022; Vicary & Fraley, 2010; Vitis & Ryan, 2021). To investigate this further, Vicary and Fraley (2010) conducted several studies and concluded that women seem to be attracted to true crime books because they offer valuable information about survival strategies and defense tactics that could help them avoid becoming victims of a violent crime. Despite the gruesome nature of these books, they seem to provide women with a sense of preparedness and awareness. True crime formats can empower and prepare women in a world where personal safety is a concern. However, the studies also suggest that consuming this violent content can increase women's fear of crime, possibly creating an interdependency of fascination and fear, as the authors describe:

A vicious cycle may be occurring: A woman fears becoming the victim of a crime, so, consciously or unconsciously, she turns to true crime books in a possible effort to learn strategies and techniques to prevent becoming murdered. However, with each true crime book she reads, this woman learns about another murderer and his victims, thereby increasing her awareness and fear of crime (Vicary and Fraley, 2010, p. 85).

Vicarys and Fraley's results suggest that this paradox should be examined more closely to find out whether the frequent consumption of true crime content makes women feel safer or increases their fear of becoming a victim of crime. The present study aims to examine precisely this paradox: is true crime content consumed in order to know what potential dangers lurk, or does the regular consumption of true crime content worsen fear of crime? In order to get to the bottom of this question, the first step will be to further examine the format under investigation, which attracts large numbers of consumers nowadays: true crime podcasts (Edison Research, 2024b; Naseer & St. Aubin, 2023; Seven.One Media, 2022).

2.2. Podcasts

2.2.1. Podcasts – A medium of its own

A New Form of Radio?

In 2004, Hammersley, a *Guardian* journalist, reported on a new form of amateur radio for the internet that was no longer tied to the fixed schedule of radio but was downloadable and inexpensive (Hammersley, 2004). Hammersley referred to this new technology of web-based audio production as *podcasting*, although the creators themselves still referred to their work as a radio. The term itself is a mixture of the words *iPod*, the then-common medium for audio files, and *broadcast*, as in radio broadcasts (Bottomley, 2015).

In the years that followed, developing technology played a crucial role in the spread of podcasts: from audio to RSS feeds – a technical format that serves as a component for newsfeed aggregators and web 2.0 tools such as blogs (Bottomley, 2015, Sterne et al., 2008) – and finally to the iPod (Sherrill, 2022). Between 2005 and 2013, podcasts faced several initial challenges that prevented them from becoming a mass medium. These difficulties were partly due to the rise of the competing platform YouTube, the struggle to establish a viable business model, and the one-sided association with Apple due to the medium's name (Bottomley, 2015). Even though podcasts were a niche medium in the beginning, the number of listeners gradually increased. This initially modest yet consistent growth, together with ongoing technological advancements, gradually led to the increasing popularity of podcasts (Sterne et al., 2008). In 2014, the release of the true crime podcast *Serial* quickly brought the medium into the spotlight and to the wider masses (Sherrill, 2022). Alongside the technological advancements, the release of this podcast is commonly treated as a key factor in the current popularity of podcasts (Bottomley, 2015). The medium finally achieved mainstream status with the release of iTunes update 4.9, which offered a fully integrated podcast app for the first time, making podcasts easily available for all users (Friess, 2015). Ten years after the term podcasting was invented, podcasts were part of the standard interface of every iPhone (Berry, 2016; Sherrill, 2022).

As the medium has undergone several technical evolutions (Bottomley, 2015) and shares many similarities with other media like radio broadcasts or internet blogs, finding one standardized definition faces several challenges (Berry, 2006; Berry, 2016; Euritt, 2022). In

other words, as Bottomley describes it: “After all, what is a podcast? It is a term that is seemingly simple but also quite ambiguous” (Bottomley, 2015, p. 116). The term podcasting itself has undergone different transformations and the boundaries of what constitutes a podcast have become increasingly fluid, leading to many different definitions or attempts thereof (Euritt, 2022). For example, attempting to define the medium of podcasts based on transmission path, audience, sender, or content will yield different results every time (Dubber, 2013). Therefore, to acknowledge the ongoing changes of the medium, the following section will present a sample of definitions and explain the defining characteristics of podcasts without strictly deciding on one specific definition.

What Defines Podcasts

In the beginning, podcasts were examined from two perspectives – the internet and radio – as they combine the push characteristics of broadcast media, like the automatic delivery of content, with the pull characteristics of the internet, where users can actively and independently select content (Euritt, 2022). In addition, since the beginning, podcasts have also shared certain similarities with blogs, particularly due to their often-amateurish nature (Sterne et al., 2008). In order to explain the concept of podcasting, Sterne et al. (2008) start by describing how podcasts are made. According to Sterne, creating and distributing a podcast involves five essential steps: first, the podcaster creates an audio file (digitally or converted from analog). He then compresses the file into a format suitable for web distribution and uploads it to a web server. Next, the podcaster must make the file discoverable online, so he generates an RSS file that contains information, like the file’s location on the server. The RSS feed allows users to subscribe to the podcast and receive updates about new audio files added to the directory. In order to find the podcasts, listeners use RSS aggregators such as iTunes or web-based services. From a technology standpoint, podcasting is sending digital audio files to a computer or portable media device that is linked to the internet via RSS (Bottomley, 2015). According to Bottomley (2015), “it is the RSS feed that distinguishes podcasting from streaming audio and a plethora of other downloadable audio media files online”, as it “implies seriality, since the listener subscribes to a ‘show’ that will repeat over time, providing new ‘episodes’ on a semi-regular schedule” (p. 166). In doing so, podcasts resemble the logic of radio broadcasts (Bottomley, 2015).

This combination of internet and radio leads Berry (2006) to call podcasts a “personalized media” (p. 156) and even though the web distribution techniques show many similarities to the distribution of online blogs (Sterne et al., 2008), most of the early podcast research focused on the similarities of podcasts and radio broadcasts (Berry, 2006, 2006; Madsen, 2009; Sterne et al., 2008). In doing so, both research and popular usage have increasingly treated broadcasts and podcasts as distinct entities (Berry, 2006; Euritt, 2022; Madsen, 2009; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). This differentiation was significantly reinforced by Apple when it introduced the podcast app in 2012, listing podcasts separately from radio (Euritt, 2022; Morris & Patterson, 2015).

While the seriality of podcasts seems to be similar to radio broadcasts (Bottomley, 2015), it can also be seen as a distinguishing feature. Radio broadcasters are bound to the entire program and certain guidelines, podcasters can decide the publication conditions themselves, for example by choosing when and where the podcast should be published (Berry, 2006, 2016; Euritt, 2022). The procedure is similar for consumers: while radio is consumed by many listeners at the same time, podcast listeners can decide for themselves when and where they want to consume the content (Sherrill, 2022). Many experts describe this possibility of “time-shifting” (Bottomley, 2015, p. 166) as one of the fundamental characteristics of podcasts (McElhearn et al., 2006).

To name some more recent definitions of podcasts, Rime, Pike, and Collins (2022) define podcasts as “a piece of episodic, downloadable or streamable, primarily spoken audio content, distributed via the internet, playable anywhere, at any time, produced by anyone who so wishes” (Rime et al., 2022, p. 17). This newer definition is formulated more broadly and more generally, underscoring the importance of not focusing too strictly on technicalities. For example, an earlier definition by Markman (2012) implied that podcasts had to be played on a computer or MP3 player, which is no longer the case. Since then, the medium has evolved and is playable on many more devices than MP3 players and computers (Berry, 2006; Sherrill, 2022). Therefore, Euritt (2022) tries to include the possibility of further (technical) development in her podcast definition: “I am therefore defining podcasting very broadly as a medium that includes a variety of technical, cultural and

material elements that work in sync with each other to form a network widely considered to be podcasting” (p. 8).

Balanuta (2021) compared different studies on the definition of podcast to find a comprehensive approach. He describes the need to include the production, engagement, and distribution of podcasts in the analysis and to extract certain terms that collide with the podcast term. Conflicting media formats from which a podcast should be differentiated are, for example, radio or vlogs, a video monologue format that is often published on YouTube. Taking these aspects together, Balanuta (2021) defines Podcasts as follows: “Thus, *a podcast* may be more granularly defined as *an on-demand listening experience, mediated through audio or video platforms, which involves heterogeneous formats and generous thematic designs that can be authored by producers of multiple backgrounds*” (p. 38f).

In their various definitions, the authors include the production method, the platform on which podcasts are available, and the reception in their analysis, but a standardized, all-inclusive definition of podcasts is difficult to find, as the medium was and still is constantly changing (Berry, 2016; Euritt, 2022; Markman, 2012; Rime et al., 2022; Spinelli & Dann, 2019). Therefore, more recent definitions define podcasts in a rather broad and generalized way (Balanuta, 2021; Euritt, 2022; Rime et al., 2022). In summary, it can be stated that podcasts are a listening medium to which consumers actively and deliberately turn (Berry, 2006). The content is produced by “anyone who so wishes” (Rime et al., 2022, p. 17) and is uploaded to a web server, so users can find it online and subscribe to the podcast (Bottomley, 2015). Listeners are not tied to a specific time and place but can consume podcasts in the way that suits them best (Berry, 2006, 2016).

2.2.2. Podcasts and Listeners

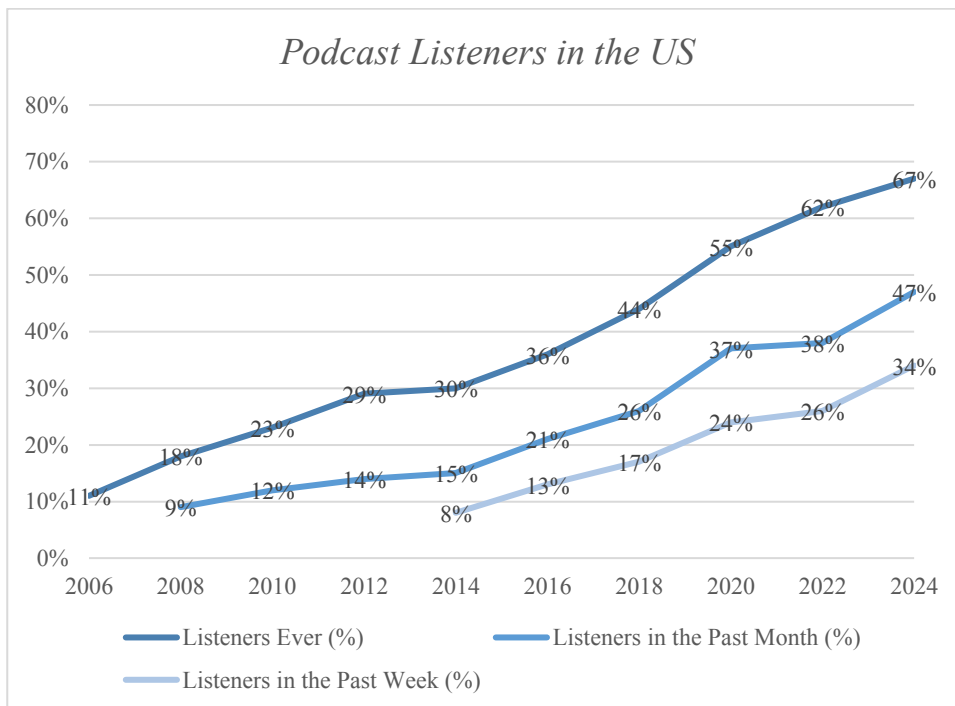
Listener and Podcast Numbers (U.S.)

Since 2005, Edison Research has analyzed thousands of US American podcast listeners annually and therefore provides a solid foundation for exploring the numbers and demographics of podcast users. According to their reports, the percentage of the US population aged 12 and older who are familiar with the concept of podcasting has increased significantly over the past two decades. In 2006, only 22% of US Americans were familiar with the term, but by 2023, that number had risen to 83% (Edison Research, 2023). In 2024,

an estimated 135 million US Americans listened to podcasts monthly (Edison Research, 2024a).

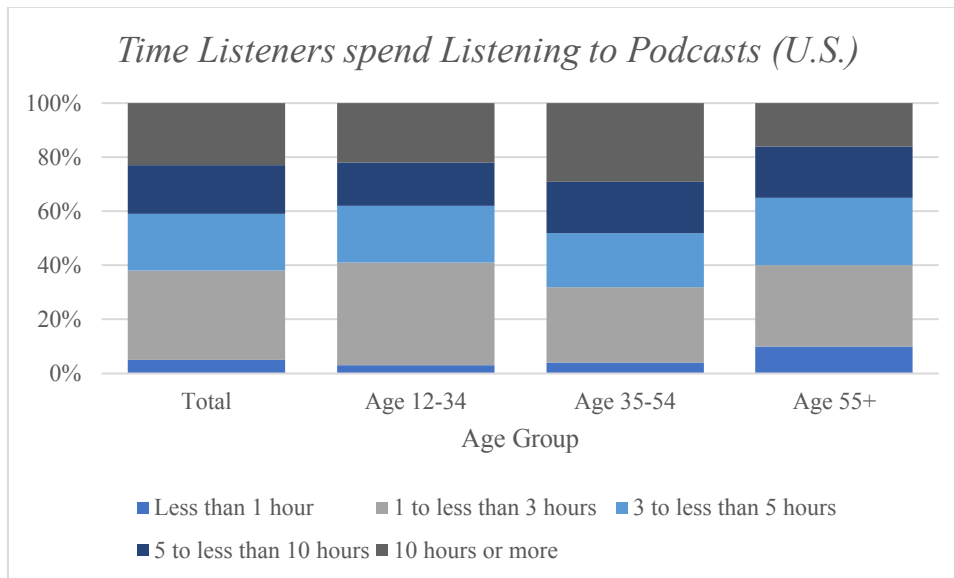
This increased awareness has been accompanied by a significant rise in podcast engagement: monthly podcast usage rose from 11% in 2006 to 47% in 2024; weekly listener numbers rose from 7% in 2006 (Pew Research Center, 2023) to 34% in 2024 (Edison Research, 2024a). It is worth noting that weekly podcast listeners in the US rose 10% between 2020 and 2024 alone (see Figure1).

Figure 1: Podcast Listeners in the US (12+)
(Edison Research, 2024a)



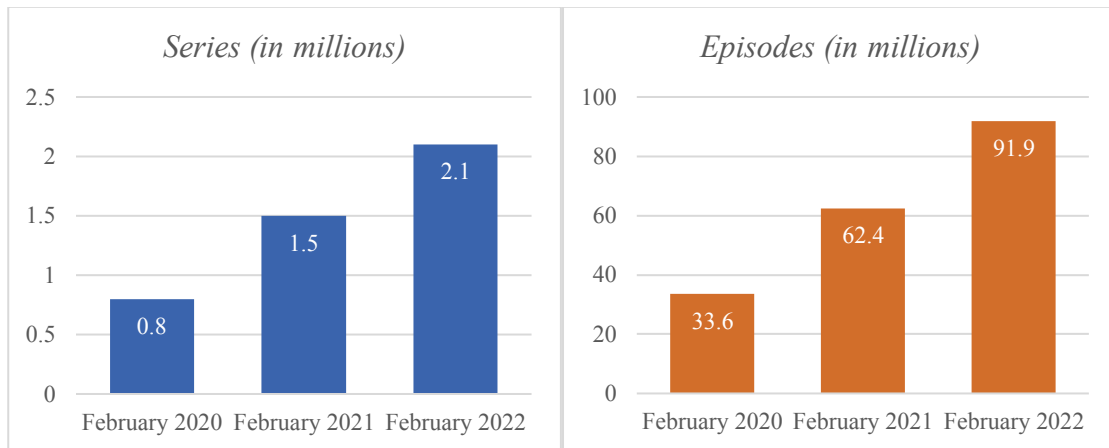
Most weekly podcast listeners in US America spend between one and less than three hours in total on podcasts. The average listening time across all age groups is approximately 7 hours and 45 minutes, with listeners over the age of 55 spending slightly more time, averaging around 8 hours per week (see Figure 2) (Edison Research, 2024a).

Figure 2: Average Time Weekly Podcast Listeners Spend Listening to Podcasts
(Edison Research, 2024a)



These trends are supported by data from the Nielsen Report, a global leader in audience measurement across multiple channels. Nielsen’s “Podcasting today – Insights for advertisers” report focused on listeners during the pandemic and found that the number of podcast listeners in the US increased by 40% between 2020 and 2022. According to Nielsen, 51% of daily listeners stated that they have started listening in the (then) last year, 2021 (The Nielsen Company, 2022). Furthermore, in 2022 US Americans had almost 2.1 million podcast titles to choose from. The numbers of podcast series and episodes rose significantly during the pandemic, with respective increases of 163% and 173% (see Figure 3). In 2024, US American podcast listeners consumed an average of 8.3 episodes in a week, with women listening a bit more (9.5) compared to men (7.2) (Edison Research, 2024a).

*Figure 3: Growth of the Available Podcast Content in the US during the Pandemic
(The Nielsen Company, 2022)*



The most popular podcast categories among US Americans are comedy, followed by society and culture, and news. True crime podcasts rank as the fourth-most popular genre among US American listeners (Edison Research, 2024b).

*Table 1: Top Podcast Genres in the US
(Edison Research, 2024b)*

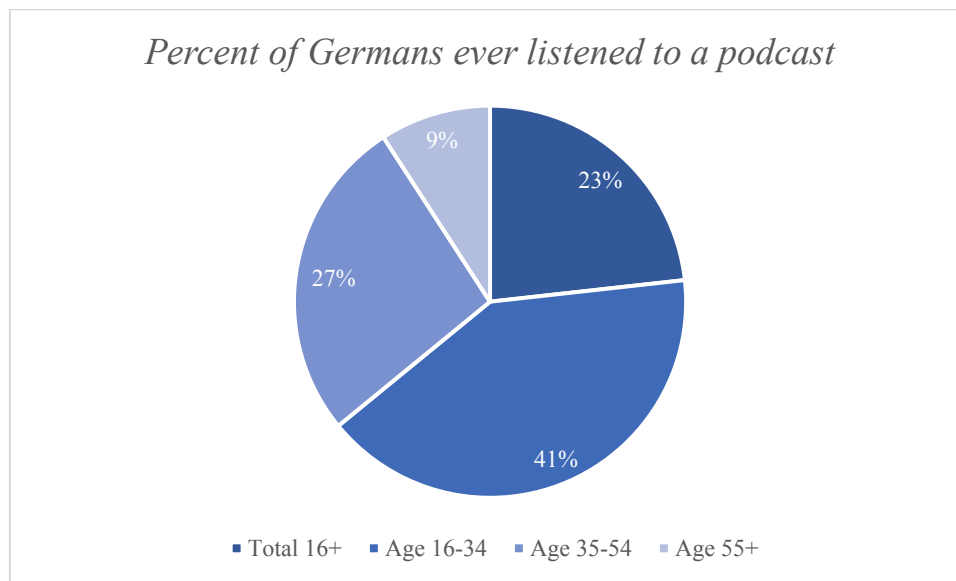
<i>Rank</i>	<i>Genre</i>
1	Comedy
2	Society & Culture
3	News
4	True Crime
5	Sports
6	Education
7	Business
8	Health & Fitness
9	Religion & Spirituality
10	TV & Film

Listener and Podcast Numbers (Germany)

Comparing German and US American listener numbers, the Infinite Dial report Germany (Edison Research, 2019), asked 1000 Germans (16+) via telephone about their podcast consuming behavior. At that time in Germany, 33% of the population was listening to podcasts, with the majority being young adults between the ages of 16 and 34 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Podcast Listeners in Germany (16+)

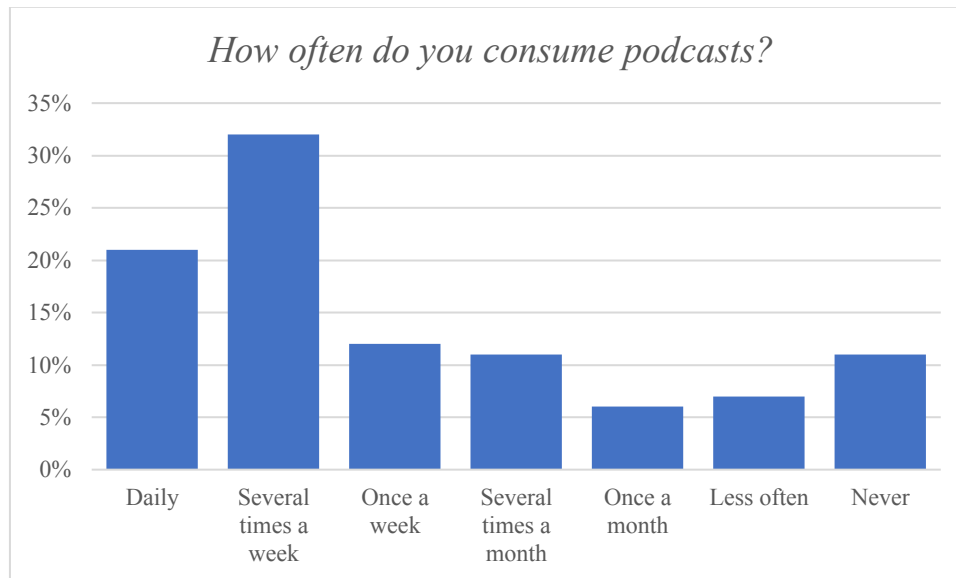
(Edison Research, 2019)



The market research institute Appinio conducted a more recent study on podcast consumption in Germany at the beginning of 2024, via an App. One thousand three hundred people (16+) were surveyed, nationally representative of the German population (Appinio & Podstars, 2024). The data show that 82% of Germans listen to podcasts at least once a month (see Figure 5). However, according to Edison Research (2019), that number was only 17% in 2019.

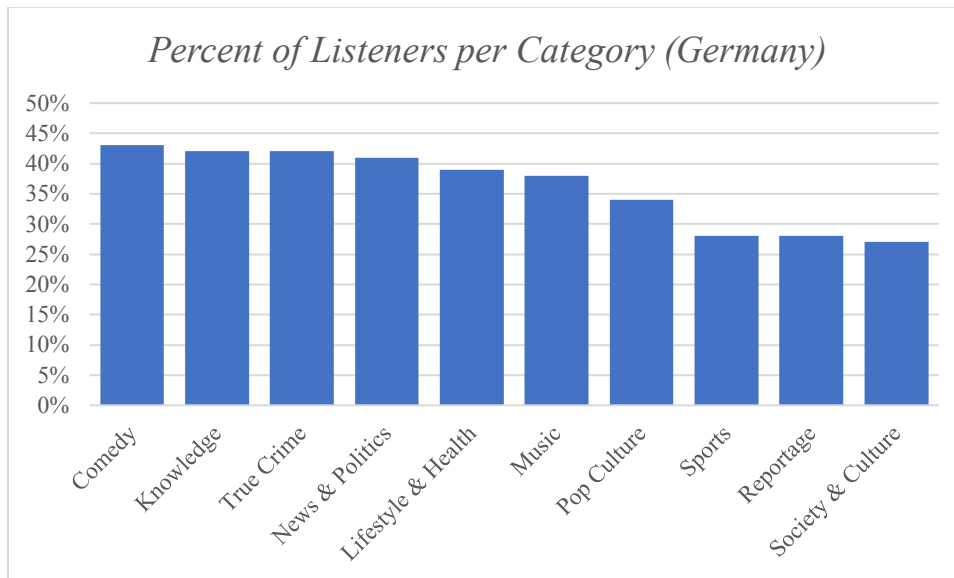
Figure 5: Frequency of Podcast Consumption in Germany

(Appinio & Podstars, 2024)



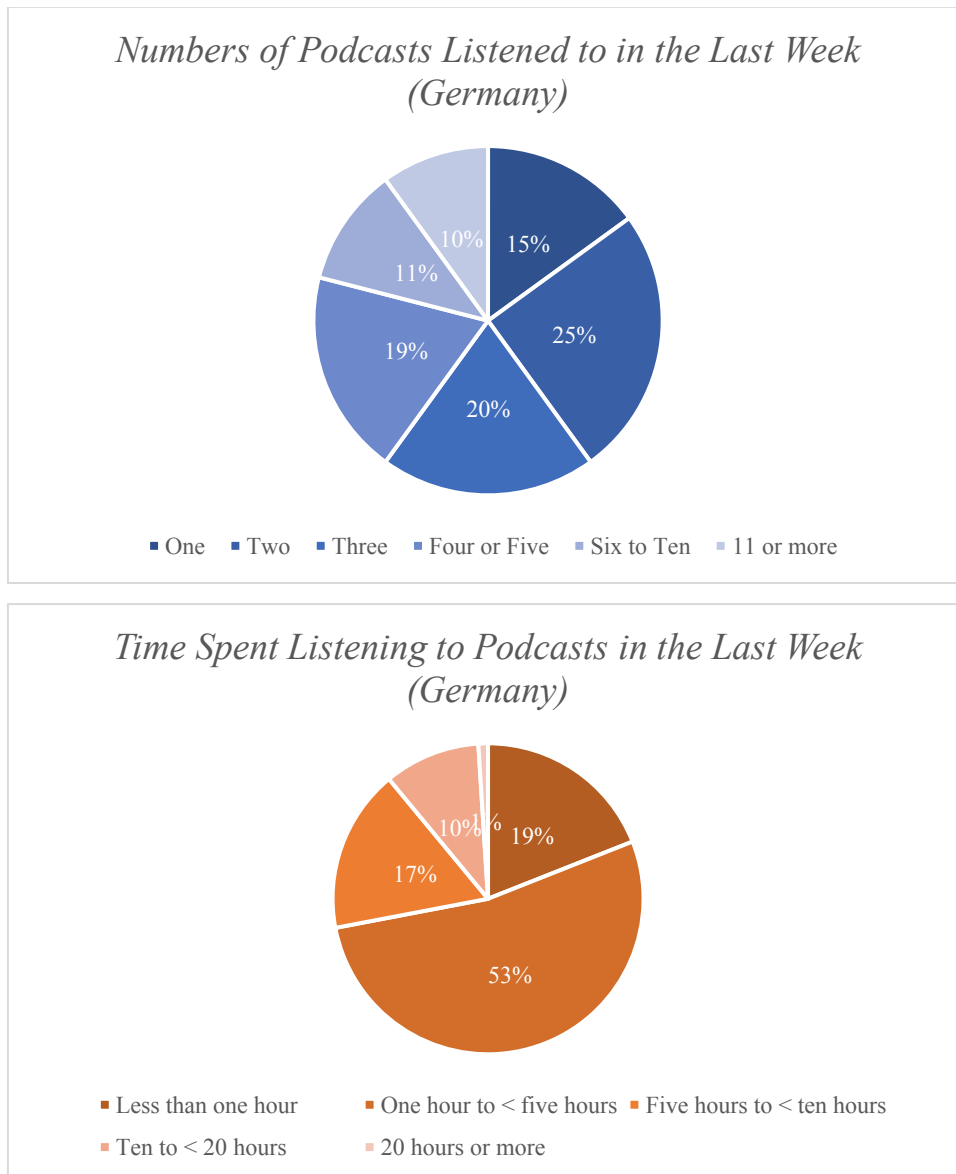
The most popular podcast category among German listeners is comedy (43%), closely followed by knowledge and true crime (42% each). With a population of around 83 million Germans (*Bevölkerungsstand*, 2024), this results in an estimated true crime podcast listener audience of around 29 million Germans. Apart from that, German podcast listeners are particularly interested in topics such as news, lifestyle, and music (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Top Podcast Genres in Germany
(Appinio & Podstars, 2024)



On average, German podcast listeners tune into five podcasts per week, dedicating approximately 3 hours and 45 minutes to this activity weekly (see Figure 7) (Edison Research, 2019). The average in the US is notably higher, at 7 hours and 43 minutes per week. However, it is important to consider that the German data is from 2019, and the average listening time in Germany may have increased since then.

Figure 7: Number of Podcasts and Time Spent Listening in the Last Week (Germany)
 (Edison Research, 2019)

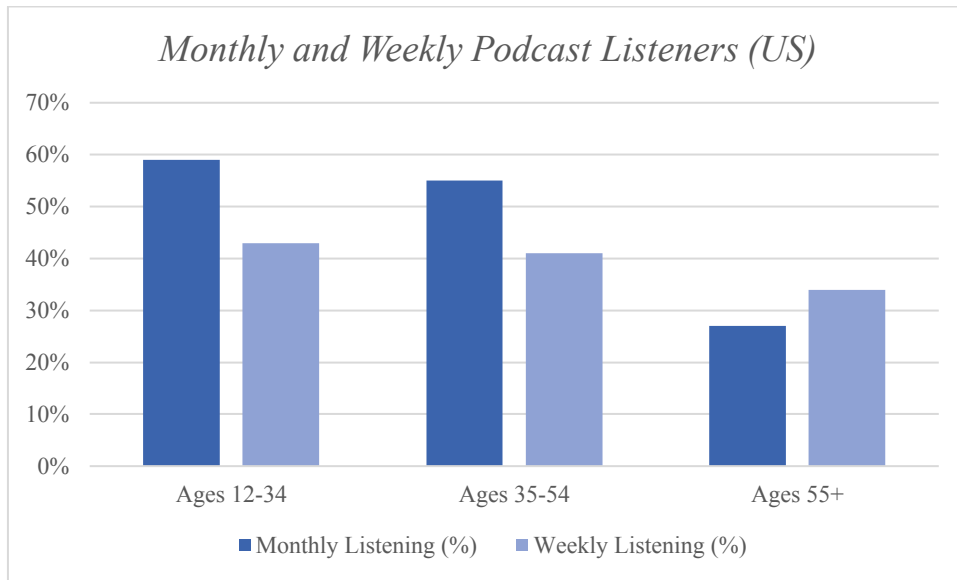


Listener Demographics (US)

An analysis of the demographic data reveals that podcast listeners in the US tend to be younger. Over half of US Americans aged 12 to 54 listens to podcasts on a monthly basis, with the 12 to 34 age group making up the largest portion at 59%. This indicates that podcasts are particularly popular among younger audiences. Interestingly, the number of weekly listeners in the 55+ group is higher than the number of monthly listeners (see Figure 8).

Furthermore, the data from the Podcast Consumer Report 2024 indicates a growing trend in podcast consumption across all age groups (Edison Research, 2024a).

Figure 8: Monthly and Weekly Listeners by Age Group (US)
(Edison Research, 2024a)

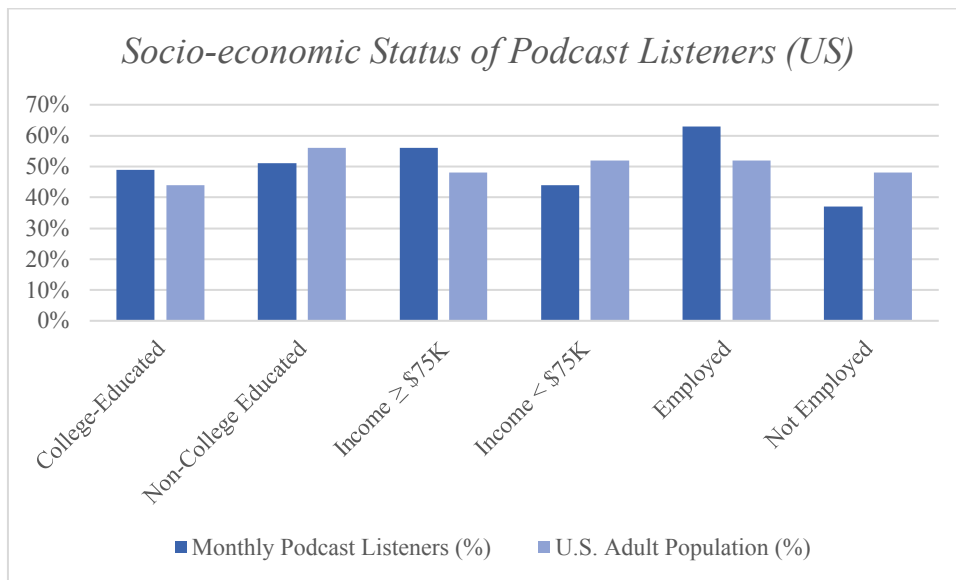


In the early phase of the podcast boom in 2014, podcast consumption was more prevalent among men, who made up the majority of monthly listeners (Edison Research, 2016). However, this gender disparity has gradually diminished over time. In 2014, 55% of monthly listeners were male and 45% were female; by 2024, these figures have nearly equalized, with “only” 51% of listeners being male and 48% female (1% non-binary). The data show a shift in female listenership over the last ten years. In 2024, 32% of US women over the age of 12 listen to podcasts weekly (Edison Research, 2024a).

Looking at the socio-demographic characteristics of podcast listeners, the Edison Research (2024a) report as well as the Nielsen report (2022) show that, compared to the US population, monthly listeners are more employed, more educated, and more affluent. Podcast listeners are more likely to have a college degree compared to the general population, with 49% holding a college education versus 44% in the overall population (Edison Research,

2024a). Furthermore, podcast listeners have a lower unemployment rate and earn more money compared to the whole population.

*Figure 9: Socio-economic Status of Podcast Listeners Compared to the population (US)
(Edison Research, 2024a)*



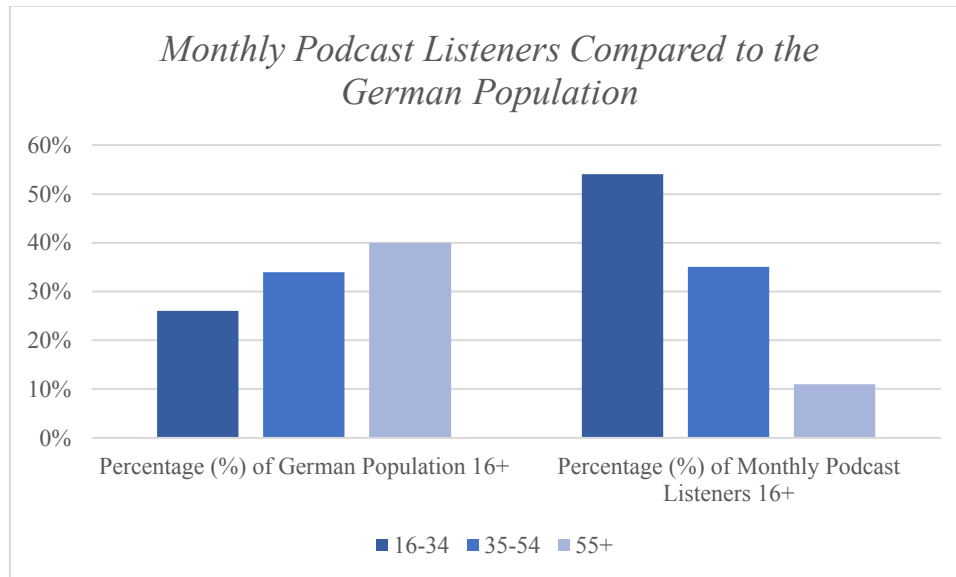
According to the Nielsen report, podcast listeners are also more likely to plan big trips and big expenses. Compared to the overall population, they are more likely to plan a trip by plane, buy a new vehicle, make a major home improvement, or buy financial products. Eleven percent are even considering buying a new home, compared to 8% of the general population (The Nielsen Company, 2022). In summary, the findings suggest that podcast listeners tend to have higher wealth, higher employment rates, and higher levels of education compared to the general US population, making them a highly desirable target audience for advertisers (Edison Research, 2024a, 2024b; The Nielsen Company, 2022).

Listener Demographics (Germany)

As in the US, German podcast listeners tend to be younger than the general population, with over 50% of listeners falling into the 16 to 34 age group (see Figure 10) (Edison Research, 2019). However, it's important to note that, unlike the more recent US data, the available figures from Germany are from 2019, so it's likely that these numbers have shifted somewhat over the past five years.

Figure 10: Monthly Podcast Listeners Compared to the Population by Age Group (Germany)

(Edison Research, 2019)

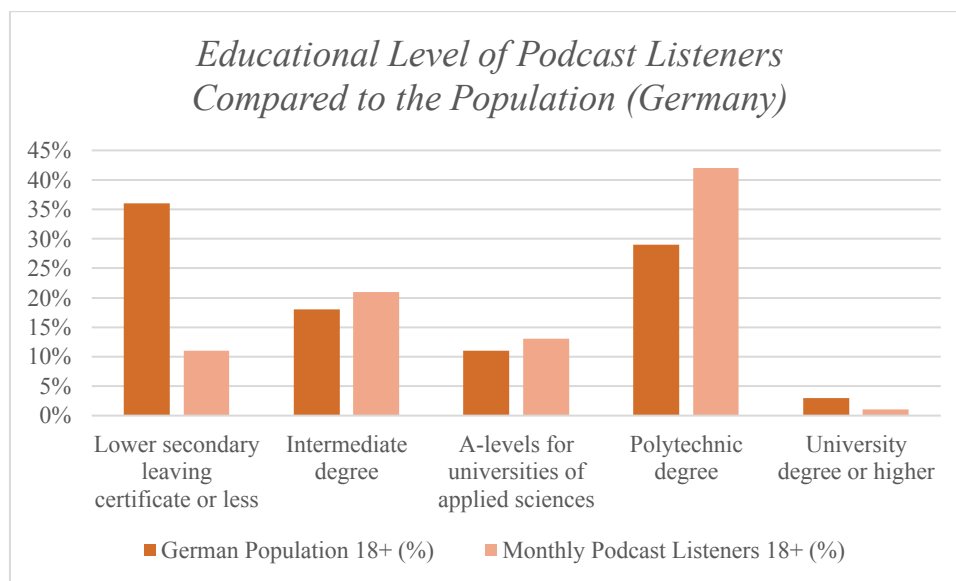
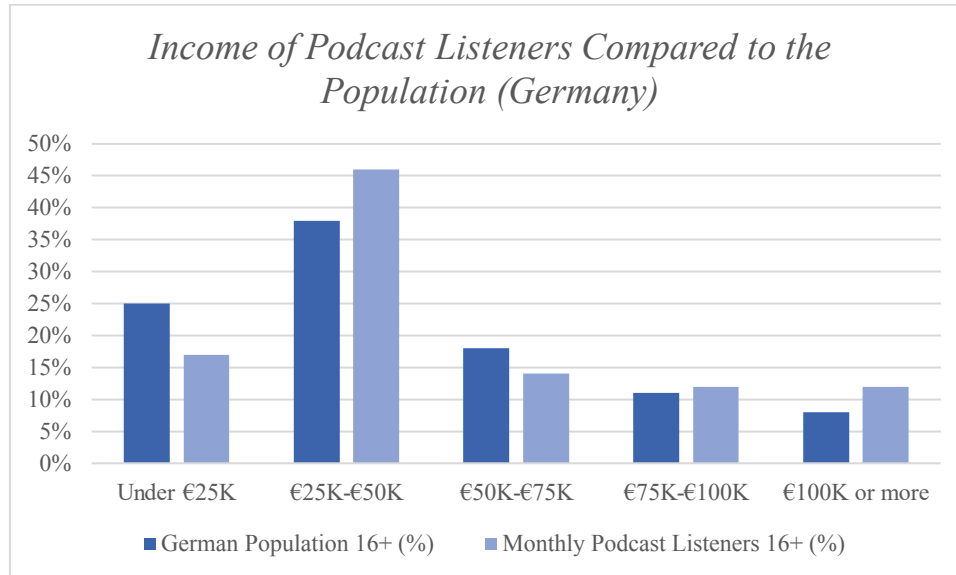


Similar to the US results, German podcast listeners are slightly more likely to be male. Overall, 52% of monthly podcast listeners in Germany are male, compared to 49% in the general population (Edison Research, 2019). However, it should again be noted that these numbers are from 2019, meaning women could account for a larger proportion of podcast listeners today.

German podcast listeners share similarities with their US American counterparts in terms of socio-economic status. While only 8% of the general German population earns €100,000 or more annually, this figure rises to 12% among podcast listeners. Furthermore, podcast listeners tend to be better educated, with only 11% having the lowest level of education (Lower Secondary Leaving Certificate or less), compared to 36% in the overall population (Edison Research, 2019).

Figure 11: Socio-economic Status of Podcast Listeners Compared to the Population (Germany)

(Edison Research, 2019)

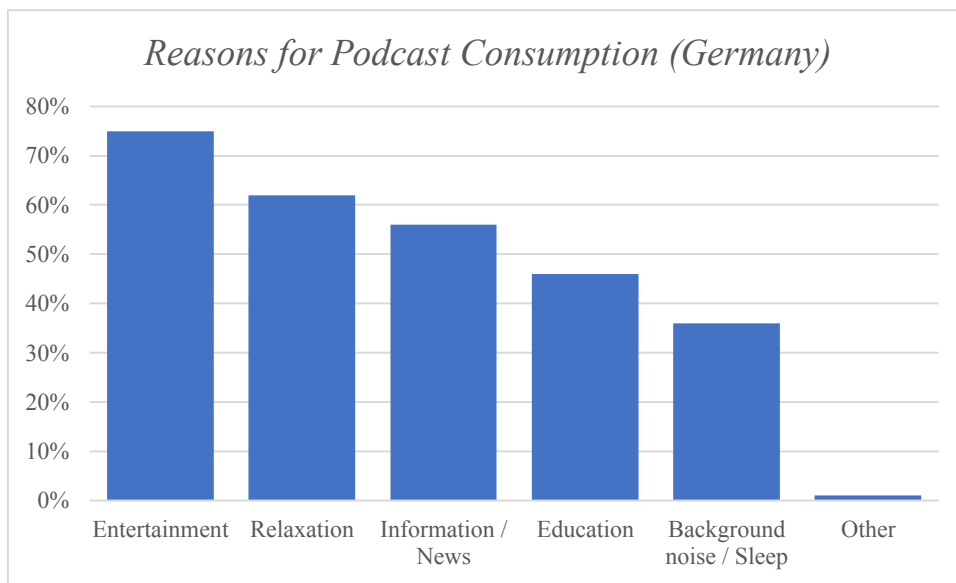


These data show that podcasts have increasingly become a significant part of the German media landscape in recent years, with podcast listeners representing a growing group of the population. However, it should be mentioned that most of the data analyzed are from 2019, meaning the numbers could have changed in the past five years. The market research platform Appinio conducted a more recent study about German podcast listeners in 2024 but

focused on different aspects, like the reasons for consuming podcasts (Appinio & Podstars, 2024).

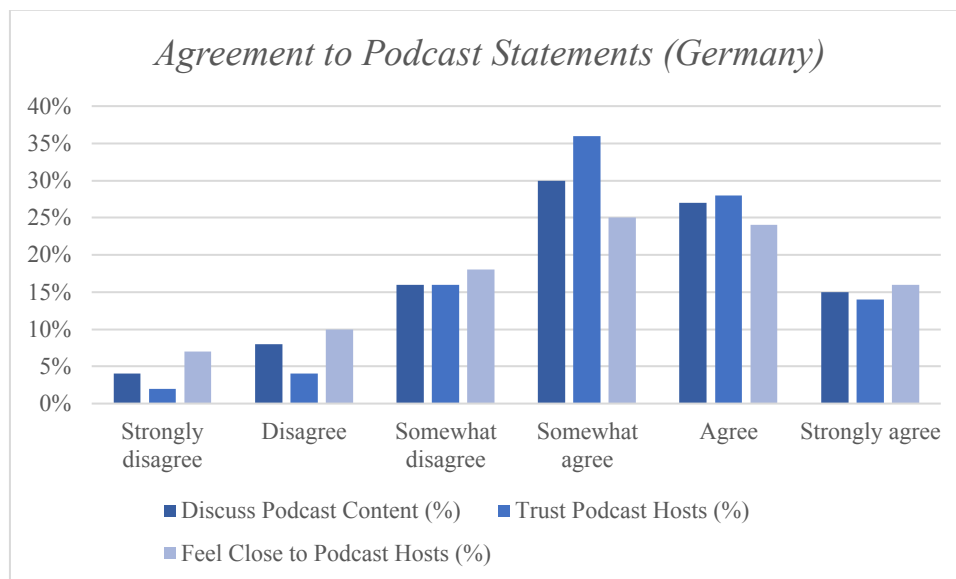
The primary reasons for engaging with podcasts are entertainment, followed by relaxation and news consumption (see Figure 12). Furthermore, Appinio's data suggest that social media plays a central role in podcast consumption: more than half of respondents (53%) who engage with podcasts follow their favorite podcasts on platforms like Instagram. An equally large proportion of listeners discover new podcast formats via social media, which emphasizes its importance as a discovery tool. Recommendations from friends and YouTube are also important sources for finding new podcasts (Appinio & Podstars, 2024).

Figure 12: Reasons for Podcast Consumption (Germany)
(Appinio & Podstars, 2024)



Podcasts appear to have a significant impact on the lives and perspectives of their listeners. A clear majority of podcast listeners report that they regularly discuss the content of their favorite shows, trust the opinions and statements of the hosts and generally feel connected to them. This underscores the significant role that podcasts play in shaping the thoughts and interactions of their listenership (Appinio & Podstars, 2024) (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Level of Agreement to Statements about Podcast Consumption (Germany)
(Appinio & Podstars, 2024)



2.2.3. Recent Studies

Due to their interdisciplinary nature between radio broadcasts, blogs, technical features, and the lack of one standardized definition, challenges arise when researching podcasts as a “cohesive scholarly body” (Sharon, 2023: 325). It was not until 2015 that the first comprehensive look on podcasts “A decade in the life of a ‘new’ audio medium” was published in the *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* (Boling & Hull, 2018) and not until February 2021 that the first interdisciplinary symposium entitled “Emerging Research in Podcast Studies” was held to justify podcasts as an independent field of research (Sharon, 2023). In a meta-approach, Sharon argues that podcasts should be examined from three perspectives: a technological, a socio-cultural, and a formalist perspective (Sharon, 2023). Since the technological characteristics of podcasts have already been discussed in chapter 2.2.1., the following chapter will focus more on the socio-cultural and formalistic approach and recent studies in the respective areas.

Podcast Consumption and Consumers

In the field of socio-cultural podcast research, many studies on podcasts focus on understanding podcast listeners, including their habits and motivations. This area of research aims to study the factors that drive podcast consumption and the behavioral patterns of

listeners (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022; McClung & Johnson, 2010). By taking the initiative, podcasting is positioned as a “pull” medium in which listeners actively choose and schedule content. This active engagement seems to make the experience more emotionally charged and the listeners more involved in the consumption. In a study similar to the Appinio study in Germany, Chan-Olmsted and Wang (2022) explored the motivations behind podcast consumption and the ways in which podcasts are consumed in the US. The authors identified seven primary reasons for consumption: entertainment, information, audio platform superiority, escapism/pastime, personal identification, social interaction, and connection. Interestingly, motivations for podcast listening differed, depending on where the podcast is consumed. For example, in Chan-Olmsted and Wang’s study, entertainment and personal identification were drivers for listening at home, while escapism/pastime and platform superiority were linked to listening at work or on the go (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022). McClung and Johnson (2010) came to similar results, suggesting that podcasts are mostly consumed for entertainment, timeshifting, library building, social aspects and sometimes even advertising (McClung & Johnson, 2010). According to the study, one major driver for podcast consumption is that users turn to podcasts because they are fun and “make them feel happy” (McClung & Johnson, 2010, p. 91).

Furthermore, the close bonds that listeners develop with podcast hosts foster favorable listener experiences by encouraging parasocial relationships that are marked by personal identification with the hosts (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2020; Perks & Turner, 2019). Examining the relationship between podcast hosts and listeners, Schlütz and Hedder (2021) conducted an exploratory online survey and analyzed persuasive effects, using the theoretical background of parasocial relations. According to the theory of parasocial relations, a media persona (e.g., a podcast host or a newsreader) interacts with the listener or viewer, for example by addressing the audience directly or sharing intimate details about themselves (Hartmann, 2008). This can be seen as an extension of normal social interactions and based on this repeated, one-sided interaction, a parasocial relationship can develop over a longer consumption period (Giles, 2002; Schlütz & Hedder, 2021). Although this relationship is controlled by the media persona, it can still satisfy certain social wants and needs (Hartmann, 2008). Through interactive strategies, including talking to the audience on an informal level, treating listeners like close friends, and using strategic techniques like

call-in sessions, the podcast hosts can encourage and strengthen such relationships. These strategies produce intimacy, closeness, and a feeling of community (Schlütz & Hedder, 2021).

Exploring parasocial interactions and relationships with podcast hosts, Schlütz and Hedder (2021) found that audio media, especially podcasts are very effective in building and sustaining parasocial relationships with potential persuasive effects on the listener. Once the relationship has been established, the bond has the potential to impact the consumers attitudes, behaviors, or even future actions, for example, by providing food for thought or putting certain topics on the agenda (Schlütz & Hedder, 2021). Furthermore, Lindgren (2021) identified a trend of increased personal and subjective journalism when analyzing award winning podcasts in the UK and Australia. According to the results, podcast hosts are increasingly using the first-person perspective, reflecting on their own emotions and the storytelling process and becoming important characters in the stories themselves, making the content even more convincing and approachable. Similar to Appinios (2024) results, podcast listeners' parasocial relationships and identification with hosts were found to be predictive of how much they believed the podcast programs had benefited them mentally and socially (Pavelko & Myrick, 2020). The fact that podcast users often consume the content via headphones, creating a private and intimate listening experience, makes the reception situation even more personalized and vivid (Berry, 2016).

Podcasts as a Learning Tool

These compelling skills of podcasts also make them a constructive learning tool and the parasocial relationships between host and listeners have proven to be a valuable tool for educating and informing audiences (Schlütz & Hedder, 2021). As a result, podcasts have increasingly been adopted in educational contexts, where they have shown a positive impact on pupils as well as university students by supporting their comprehension of learning processes (Botts, 2024; Gras, 2024; Gunderson & Cumming, 2023; Schlütz & Hedder, 2021; Soeselo et al., 2021). Examining a total of 17 studies, Gunderson and Cumming (2023) found that podcasts' influence on academic learning offers unique potential through the way the content is consumed. Soeselo et al. (2021) underscore the effectiveness of podcasts as an alternative teaching method, when analyzing medical students who learned about primary

survey skills. These students benefited academically from the podcasts, especially those who were already interested in the medium (Soeselo et al., 2021). According to Hanks (2022), the role of podcasts in education became even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hanks pointed out that podcasts recorded by educators provided students with genuine English language exposure, facilitating learning beyond the classroom setting.

Botts (2024) used science fiction podcasts as an innovative teaching tool in marketing education to enhance students' creative and critical thinking and prepare them for future marketing challenges. The results of the study show that the use of podcasts not only helped students to better internalize theoretical concepts, but also strengthened their ability to apply these concepts in creative and unconventional contexts. Additionally, the podcasts enhanced the students' ability to consider different perspectives and develop innovative solutions to the problems presented in the stories (Botts, 2024). Gras (2024) takes the concept of podcasts as a learning tool one step further, advocating for podcasts to be formally recognized as a medium for disseminating academic work. Her argument primarily centers on the legal field, emphasizing the potential benefits of using podcasts to make legal discussions more accessible to both practitioners and the public (Gras, 2024). Another form of learning through podcasts includes true crime podcasts, as they offer educational value by providing listeners with knowledge about the justice system, psychological backgrounds of perpetrators, or ways to protect themselves from violence (Boling & Hull, 2018).

2.3. True Crime Podcasts

2.3.1. Definition

Defining True Crime Podcast: Somewhat Subjective

Followed by the enormous success of the podcast *Serial* in 2014—also referred to as the “Serial Effect” (Holcomb, 2016; Sherrill, 2022)—true crime podcasts quickly captured widespread public attention. Capote's book *In Cold Blood*, as discussed in chapter 2.1, marked a shift in the true crime journalistic subgenre's narrative structure. This new form of true crime narrative was characterized by a long and embellished narrative of the crimes (Browder, 2010). In a similar manner, a true crime podcast usually tells the cases as a plot-driven, detailed, and embellished story. This incorporation of real facts into a narrative style

similar to that of fictional stories results in a compelling blend of news and entertainment (Boling, 2022; Boling & Hull, 2018; Sherrill, 2022). However, as with podcasts, it is difficult to find a uniform definition of true crime podcasts, as the individual podcasts differ greatly in terms of content and style (Boling, 2019). For example, in the case of *Serial*, the makers claimed that their format was investigative journalism rather than true crime. However, the podcast is now known as THE true crime podcast and met certain classification standards of the true crime genre (Boling, 2022). These classification standards came from Ian Punnett (2018), who developed a theory for classifying true crime narratives based on seven key components. He first analyzed whether the narrative is based on truth or fiction, and then examined whether it contained certain elements such as the pursuit of justice, subversive approaches to examining evidence, calls for social change, an emphasis on geographical location, forensic detail, an advocacy stance, and a folkloric narrative style (Boling, 2019; Punnett, 2018). According to Punnett, a narrative is classified as true crime if it has most of these components, as was the case for *Serial*. Due to these discrepancies in defining *Serial's* format, and lack of a general, all-encompassing true crime podcast definition, Boling (2019) argues that “defining true crime can still be somewhat subjective” (p. 164).

Key Characteristics of True Crime Podcasts

Similar to the discussion in Chapter 2.2.1, when attempting to define podcasts, it becomes evident that no uniform definition of true crime podcasts exists. Instead, the emphasis is placed on identifying key characteristics of true crime podcasts. Vitis and Ryan's (2021) explanation of true crime podcasts offers the closest approach to a standardized definition and includes many important characteristics of the medium:

In a TCP [true crime podcast], the host will usually narrate the ‘story’ by drawing from publicly available information, independent research (in some cases) and interviews with victims, friends and family of victims, police and legal actors. While the ‘story of real events’ format is commonplace, TCPs also interview key actors about their experiences of crime, victimization, harm, policing and criminal justice. These narrations are then distributed on platforms like Apple podcasts, Google podcasts, Spotify, Castbox and Stitcher. (Vitis & Ryan, 2021: 3)

In terms of format and narrative style, true crime podcasts show some variation (Boling, 2019). They can be broadly categorized into deep-dive and short-form podcasts. Deep-dive

podcasts, often produced by investigative journalists, explore a single case over multiple episodes and frequently include stylistic elements such as detailed descriptions of forensic evidence or interviews with relatives and individuals involved in the legal process. In contrast, short-form podcasts cover a different case in each episode, typically relying on publicly available information (Vitis & Ryan, 2021).

Thematically, true crime podcasts can focus on a range of topics such as unsolved cases, serial killers, organized crime, state crimes, domestic violence, sexual violence, or wrongful convictions (Vitis & Ryan, 2021). Consequently, the topics covered by true crime hosts are almost limitless, as long as they relate to crime in some form (Boling, 2019). For example, in the summer of 2024, a German podcast even addressed the issue of violence against elephants (Krasa & Wohlers, 2024). However, as common in many crime genres but contrary to crime statistics, violence against women is a dominant topic of true crime podcasts (Slakoff & Duran, 2023; Vicary & Fraley, 2010; Vitis, 2022; Vitis & Ryan, 2021).

Looking at production and distribution processes, there are no certain guidelines defining true crime podcasts. Many of the top podcasts are produced by experienced (investigative) journalists, however, due to the low barriers to entry, podcasts also enable independent actors and amateurs to produce professional-quality programs at relatively low cost, making the genre accessible to everyone (Vitis & Ryan, 2021). For instance, one of Germany's top ten true crime podcasts – *Weird Crimes* – is hosted by a comedienne and a music reporter.

In addition to these key characteristics (or lack thereof), some authors argue that true crime podcasts can fulfill important cultural and social functions (Boling, 2022; Stratton, 2019; Vicary & Fraley, 2010). By investigating unsolved cases, questioning wrongful convictions or highlighting victims' stories, true crime podcasts can function as tools for seeking justice. Additionally, they offer listeners the opportunity to actively participate in these processes, or to use the podcasts as a learning device for safety work (Stratton, 2019; Vicary & Fraley, 2010). However, it should be mentioned in this context that other authors argue that true crime podcasts can lead to re-traumatization of victims or their relatives, promote voyeurism and take advantage of the victims (Vitis & Ryan, 2021). Recent Studies about true crime podcasts are further discussed in chapter 2.3.3.

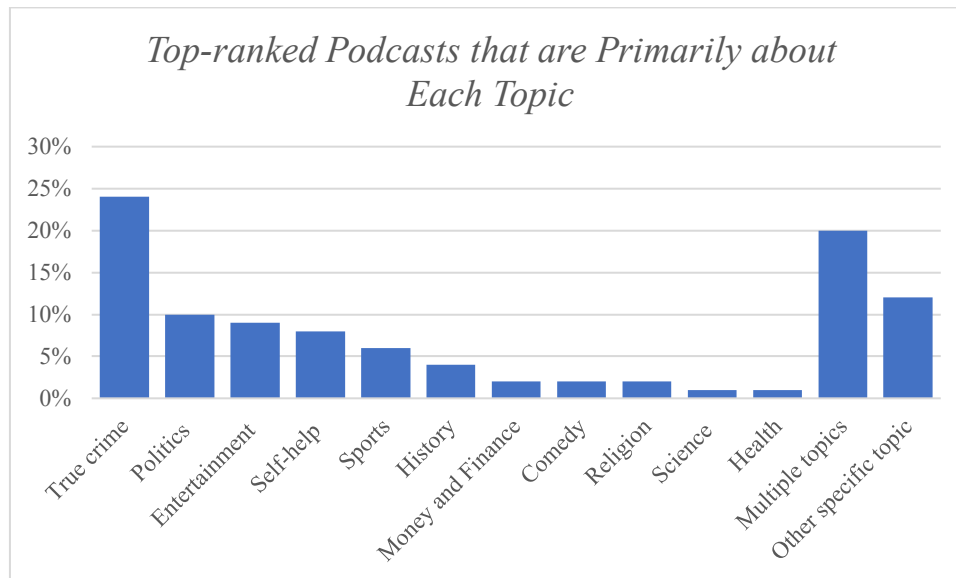
2.3.2. True Crime Podcasts and Listeners

True Crime Podcasts (US)

As the results of Edison Research (2024b) and Appinio (2024) demonstrate, true crime podcasts rank among the top podcast categories in the US and Germany. In the survey of podcast consumers, however, they were not at the top of the podcast charts. In contrast, the Pew Research Center's 2023 study presents a different perspective: analyzing a total of 451 podcasts from the top 300 lists on Spotify and Apple Podcasts, they found that true crime podcasts dominated, making up 24% of the total and clearly leading the rankings (see Figure 14, Stocking, Matsa, Naseer, St. Aubin, Shearer, et al., 2023).

Figure 14: Percent of Top-ranked Podcasts per Topic

(Stocking, et al., 2023)



A formal analysis of true crime podcasts reveals that many US true crime podcasts predominantly follow a deep-reporting format and are typically hosted by a single individual. Other narrative formats, as interviews, commentary or news summary are not very likely. This characteristic structure highlights the genre's focus on in-depth exploration of cases, often driven by the singular perspective of the host (Stocking et al., 2023).

Additionally, US American true crime podcasts generally show little variation in their publication frequency and episode length. Most are released approximately once a week, with episodes typically running between 20 and 49 minutes.

True Crime Podcast Listener Demographics (US)

As already seen in chapter 2.2.2., true crime podcasts rank among the most popular podcast categories in the US and Germany. According to a representative Pew Research Center Study, one in three US American podcast listeners (34%) report that they regularly listen to true crime podcasts. Of these 34%, almost twice as many are female compared to male listeners. In addition, the majority of listeners (41%) is between the ages of 18 and 29 (Naseer & St. Aubin, 2023). According to the Pew Research study, podcast listeners with less formal education are more likely to consume true crime podcasts than those with a higher level of education. In addition, true crime podcast listeners tend to be in the lower salary bracket, with the majority (46%) in the lowest bracket surveyed. Some of these tendencies are in line with Boling and Hull's (2018) non-representative results. The authors conducted an online survey to further investigate the true crime podcast audience and compared their findings to the 2016 Edison research study by Webster (2016). Like Naseer and St. Aubin's (2023) results, Boling and Hull's findings suggest that true crime podcast listeners are mostly female (73%). Age distribution also varied, with a higher percentage of respondents in the 18–34 age range (62%) compared to the overall podcasting audience. Interestingly, the true crime podcast listeners in Boling and Hull's study were more educated than non-listeners, as 66% reported having a college degree or more.

True Crime Podcasts and Listeners (Germany)

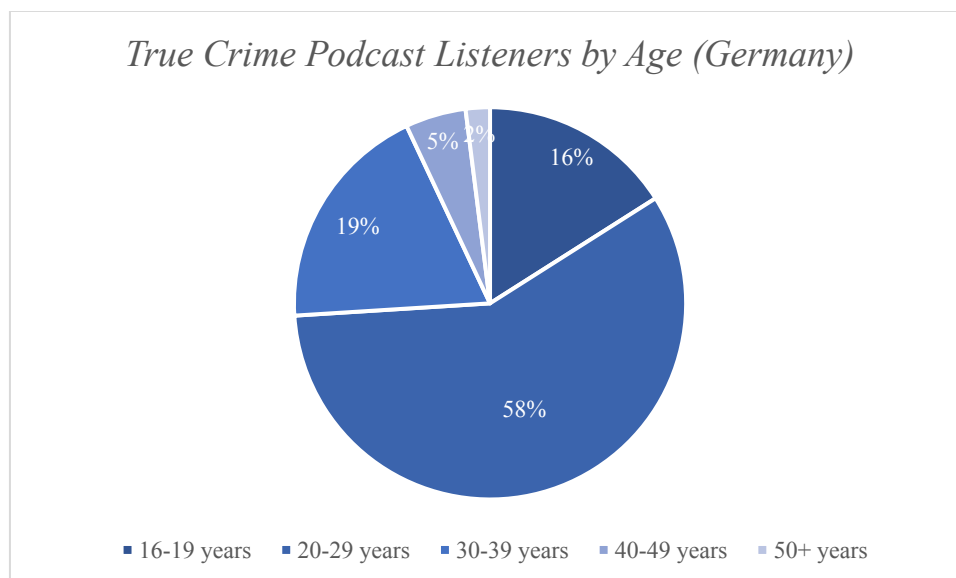
While there is already substantial data on podcasts and true crime podcasts in the US, the field is still relatively underdeveloped in Germany. Aside from the previously mentioned study by Appinio and Podstars (2024), only one other study has gathered data on true crime podcast consumption in Germany, indicating that research in this area is still in its early stages. The data however show that in Germany, as well as in the US, true crime podcasts are among the most popular genres (Appinio & Podstars, 2024). According to a study by Seven.One Audio, 4 of the top 10 podcasts with the highest reach were in the true crime

genre in June 2022. The study, which surveyed nearly 4,000 German true crime podcast listeners, primarily focused on audience demographics, revealing that, similar to the hosts of true crime podcasts, the majority of listeners are female (Seven.One Media, 2022). However, it should be mentioned in this context that the participants in the study were not representative of the German population.

In terms of age, the majority of true crime podcast listeners were between 20 and 29 years old, similar to listeners in the US. Only a very small proportion of listeners were over 50 years old (see Figure 15).

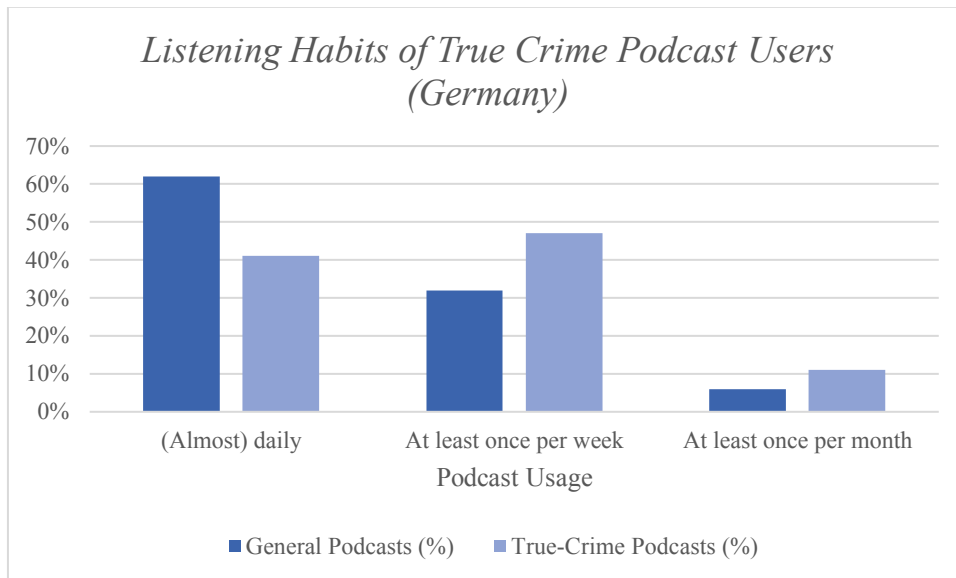
Figure 15: German True Crime Podcast Listeners by Age

(Seven.One Media, 2022)



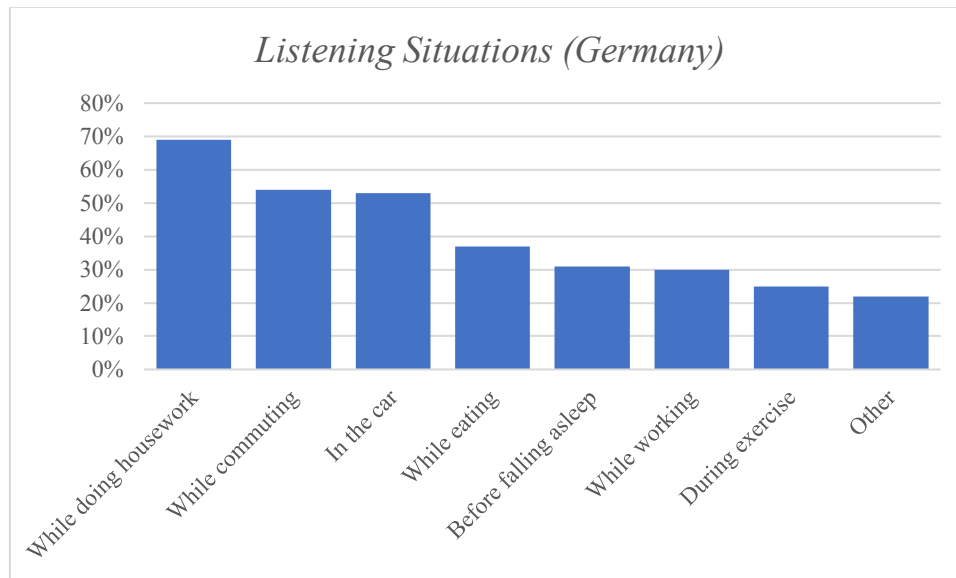
When examining podcast listening habits, it's evident that true crime podcast consumers tend to be heavy podcast listeners in general (see Figure 16). Overall, 62% of true crime podcast listeners reported listening to podcasts almost every day, compared to just 24% for listeners of other genres. This indicates that true crime podcast fans are generally heavy listeners, who regularly follow an average of three true crime series. Additionally, 88% of respondents indicated that they listen to every single episode of their favorite podcast.

Figure 16: General Podcast Listening Habits of True Crime Podcast Listeners
(Seven.One Media, 2022)



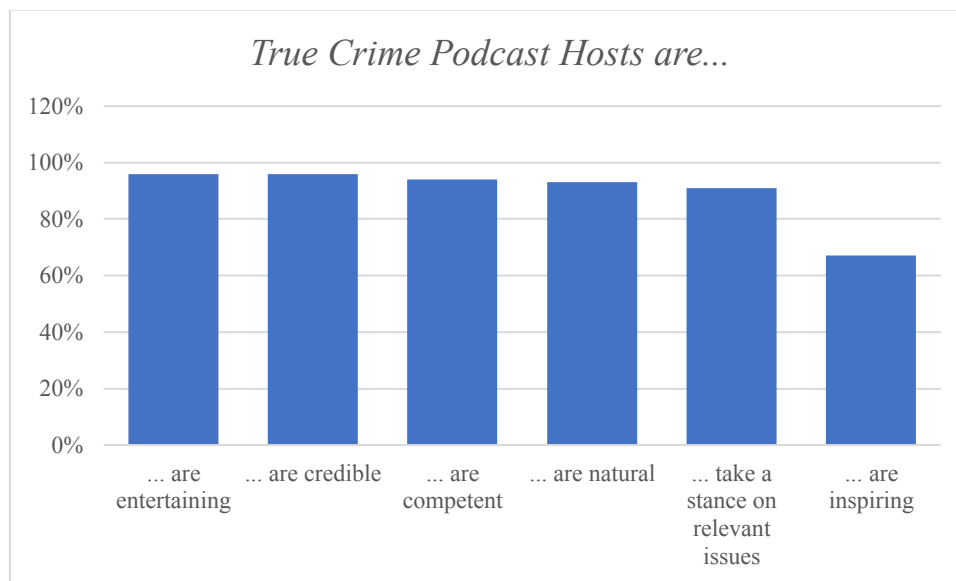
True crime podcasts, like other formats, are primarily listened to while doing household activities (see Figure 17). Interestingly, the younger audience reported many other listening situations, such as “while eating” (over 40%) and even “while falling asleep” (31%). Notably, true crime podcasts are not considered a “second screen medium,” like Instagram or TikTok; they command the full attention of their listeners and accompany them throughout the day (Seven.One Media, 2022).

Figure 17: True Crime Podcast Listening Situations
(Seven.One Media, 2022)



Similar to the findings of the Appinio and Podstars (2024) study, the results of Seven.One Media reveal that true crime podcast listeners feel a strong connection to their hosts. These (predominantly female) hosts are perceived as particularly entertaining, credible, competent, and authentic (see Figure 18). This is further reflected by the enormous success of true crime live tours, where tickets and merchandise typically sell out quickly. Fans are eager to experience their favorite hosts in person and express their love for the podcasts. Additionally, they engage with hosts on Instagram, purchase merchandise, share photos from tour visits or recommend podcasts to others. Because of this strong connection to the hosts, the authors see true crime hosts as pertinent brand advocates and advertising partners who easily gain the trust and credibility of their audience (Seven.One Media, 2022).

*Figure 18: Level of Agreement to Statements about True Crime Podcast Hosts
(Seven.One Media, 2022)*



2.3.3. Recent Studies

Listener Perceptions and Motivations

Much of the current research on true crime podcasts focuses on analyzing listener motivations and perceptions, with the largest studies in this area coming from the US (Boling, 2019, 2022; Boling & Hull, 2018) and Australia (Vitis, 2022; Vitis & Ryan, 2021). Examining user motivations, Boling and Hull (2018) found that true crime podcasts satisfy certain needs and wants. Like the consumption of other podcasts, true crime content is self-selected and active and listeners use the medium according to their own needs (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022). Several studies have already shown that true crime podcast listeners tend to be heavy and frequent consumers of podcasts in general (Boling & Hull, 2018; Seven.One Media, 2022). Most true crime podcast listeners (60%) spend five or more hours per week listening to podcasts, whereas the “average podcast listener” typically spends only one to three hours per week (Boling & Hull, 2018).

Asking 308 US American true crime podcast users, Boling and Hull (2018) found entertainment, convenience, voyeurism, and boredom as the strongest usage motivators. In this regard, German and US American true crime listeners share similar motivations (Seven.One Media, 2022). Vitis and Ryan (2021) used a comparable study design in

Australia and arrived at similar results, also indicating that entertainment is a strong motivator. Contrary to the findings of Boling and Hull, gathering information about how crimes are solved emerged as another significant motivation for consuming true crime podcasts, suggesting that information seeking plays a crucial role as well (Vitis & Ryan, 2021). According to the authors, listeners' preference for objective and good research in true crime podcasts indicates that the public increasingly views true crime podcasts as a solid source of information about crime. The most common listening situations identified in the studies were while driving, relaxing, cleaning, or cooking (Vitis & Ryan, 2021). Almost half of the respondents in Boling and Hulls study preferred listening in the car (44%) over listening at home (30%) (Boling & Hull, 2018). Thematically, listeners favored podcasts about serial killers, followed by missing persons and homicide, whether by strangers or partners (Vitis & Ryan, 2021).

Additionally, Vitis and Ryan (2021) found that consumers liked “speculating on who was involved, putting together pieces of evidence and trying to solve the case” (p. 17), emphasizing the role of listener agency in true crime podcasts. The creators of these podcasts actively encourage listeners to speculate by employing serial narrative structures and cliffhangers. This approach fosters a sense of intimacy, making the podcasts particularly engaging and compelling, and motivating listeners to continue tuning in (Haugtvedt, 2017). Additionally, this feeling of closeness and intimacy is enhanced in true crime podcasts by speaking directly to listeners, often through whispers in earbuds (McCracken, 2017). Hearing directly from victims, offenders, and legal actors provides listeners with a sense of genuine knowledge and helps them better understand the realities of crime and violence (Boling, 2019; Vitis, 2022). Including interviews with individuals directly involved or experts from the justice sector provides listeners with a sense of authentic and real insight into worlds typically inaccessible to them in their everyday lives (Yardley et al., 2019). This glimpse into the world of crime and justice enhances the emotional impact of the listening experience and makes the narrative more relatable and engaging (Boling, 2019). This vigilance is reinforced by the listeners taking on the role of co-investigators by listening to the story and participating attentively in solving the case and making speculations (Haugtvedt, 2017). The lack of visual impressions also contributes to the intimacy of the listening experience: by allowing listeners to imagine the characters and situations in their

mind's eye, the experience becomes more immersive and intense, helping them to stay focused on the content (Boling, 2019). These findings are consistent with earlier literature on true crime narratives, which described how the content deliberately seeks to evoke strong emotions such as anger or disgust, but also pleasure (Punnett, 2018). In summary, these results suggest that listeners value true crime podcasts as both, a source of information and pleasure with the combination of information, entertainment, intimacy and emotion seeming to be particularly compelling and attention-captivating (Boling & Hull, 2018; Vitis & Ryan, 2021).

True Crime Podcasts and Women

As in many other studies about true crime content (Murley, 2008; Naseer & St. Aubin, 2023; Seven.One Media, 2022; Vicary & Fraley, 2010), the listeners in Boling and Hull's (2018) study, as well as Vitis and Ryan's study were predominantly female. Additionally, Boling and Hull's (2018) findings suggest that listener motivation differed between the genders: "females are significantly more likely than males to listen to podcasts for social interaction, to escape their daily lives, and because they have stronger voyeuristic tendencies" (p. 101). Furthermore, female respondents were more likely to be involved in the online podcast community and more likely to agree to statements such as "I listen to true crime podcasts so I can learn about what could happen to me" (Boling & Hull, 2018, p. 103), indicating that they might consume the content to be able to use the information in dangerous situations (Boling & Hull, 2018; Vicary & Fraley, 2010). These findings are consistent with previous research that women have a special relationship with true crime media (Murley, 2008; Vicary & Fraley, 2010). Boling and Hull (2018) therefore argue that future research should investigate why women are more attracted to this genre than men and explore this phenomenon further.

Vitis and Ryan (2021) incorporated this aspect in their study but based on their results, they were unable to support the hypothesis that women use true crime content to be informed about potential threats. However, four years later, Boling (2022) herself explored the compelling relationship between female listeners and true crime podcasts in more detail. In her study, survivors of domestic violence were interviewed about their podcast usage and the results indicated that victims benefit from true crime podcast consumption in the

following way: “[t]his study has shown that the appeal of audio media, the power of a good story, the educational value of the content, and the therapeutic need for understanding and camaraderie are the main reasons these women who identify as domestic violence survivors listen to true crime podcasts” (Boling, 2022, p. 17). Boling explains that the podcasts enabled victims to understand the background of the criminal offenses, which helped them to process their own traumatic experiences. By actively choosing and controlling when, where, and what content they want to consume, they were given back some agency and self-control in the narrative. The fact that podcasts are an active medium in which listeners decide for themselves how they consume the content and to what extent they compare themselves with it also seems to be a contributing factor: “[g]iving domestic violence survivors a way to engage with media that could help them heal from past traumas and granting them complete control over that engagement is empowering” (Boling, 2022, p. 18). The victims interviewed in the study stated that this active consumption gave them back a sense of self-determination and control over their story, something that was previously denied to them in their domestic situation. Additionally, it enabled them to normalize their experiences when they heard about similar stories, making them feel less alone and part of a community:

By listening to true crime podcasts, these participants can hear stories similar to their own, normalizing their experiences. They also see depictions of different types of survivors—business owners, college professors, and single moms—underscoring a powerful narrative that they are not alone. Their experiences are shared across socio-economic class and occupation, and their trauma is not their fault (Boling, 2022, p. 18).

Many interviewees stated that they feel like they are living in a world where their voices are silenced, and they are ashamed of their own experiences and often keep them secret because they are ashamed of what happened to them. Boling (2022) therefore argues that the podcasts narratives and stories contribute to putting domestic violence on the cultural agenda and raising awareness for the issue. In summary, the study shows that true crime podcasts can help the healing process of women who have been victims of domestic violence, encouraging them to break through the oppression.

Another important factor in the relationship between true crime media and women is the way female victims are presented in the media (Vitis, 2022, 2024; Vitis & Ryan, 2021). Vitis and Ryan (2021) emphasize how media representations distort people’s perceptions of crime

rates and shape public understanding of violence against women, and how the potential of true crime podcasts to serve as modern places for information and disinformation regarding crime in Australia grows with their quantity (Vitis, 2023). Researchers argue that public perceptions of violence against women are closely linked to how such violence is portrayed in the media, and careless reporting can contribute to the reinforcement and perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes, for example victim-blaming (Lang & Alejandro, 2024; Slakoff & Fradella, 2019; Vitis, 2023). Consequently, Vitis and Ryan (2021) suggest that this aspect of the relationship between gender and crime should be further explored.

Vitis (2023) demonstrates that Australian true crime podcasts are increasingly influential in shaping portrayals of violence against women, offering content and styles that differ from traditional media. She therefore argues that established prevention strategies against violence against women, which aim to change the influence of the media through quality standards in reporting, need to be reconsidered, and conducted a case study of Australian true crime podcasts. On one hand, the results suggest that detailed storytelling in podcasts could counter problematic narratives; however, on the other hand, sensationalist depictions of violence did also reinforce harmful stereotypes:

Observations within this article demonstrate that the dynamics of contemporary mediums, like TCPs [true crime podcasts], can both align with and depart from the current assumptions, standards and strategies embedded within Australia's approach to primary prevention. Their intimate, informal and affective styles can subvert best practice guidelines on sensationalising violence; however, their longer formats can also provide opportunities to better contextualise stories of VAW [violence against women] (Vitis, 2023, p. 295).

The results show that the influence of true crime podcasts can go both directions: on the one hand, they can offer the opportunity to improve established narratives and counteract gendered stereotypes, but on the other hand, they also run the risk of reinforcing problematic narratives of violence against women through unprofessional reporting (Vitis, 2023). Since many people learn about criminal justice and victimization through the media and podcasts, it is crucial to look at how these topics are portrayed (Davies et al., 2008). Therefore, a close and critical examination of the stories and discourses circulating in true crime podcasts is valuable (Slakoff & Duran, 2023). The following studies support Vitis's (2024) findings, demonstrating how true crime podcasts, on one hand, offer a platform for counter-narratives

by giving a voice to women who have been victims of crime (Boling, 2022, 2023; Rodgers, 2023), while on the other hand, they reveal how victim-blaming and dehumanizing language continue to shape traditional narratives (Lang & Alejandro, 2024; Slakoff & Duran, 2023; Slakoff & Fradella, 2019).

Recognizing the media's role in shaping public opinion and perpetuating gendered stereotypes, Lang and Alejandro (2024) analyzed 14 US American true crime podcasts to explore how women who have become victims of crime are represented. The results indicate that the portrayal of women in true crime podcasts mirrors traditional news media, often dehumanizing the victims and (subtly) suggesting that they are complicit in their victimization, as the authors state: "we found that the true crime podcasts we analyzed... also run the risk of reinforcing harmful victim-blaming beliefs by systematically positioning the women as complicit in their deaths through blame reassignment, negative descriptors, and tropes" (Lang & Alejandro, 2024, p. 2074). In addition, the US American podcast hosts sometimes referred to the bodies of the women killed as "it" (Lang & Alejandro, 2024, p. 2073) and condemned their sexual behavior by foregrounding it. The descriptions of the murdered women provided by the podcast hosts paint a picture that can be summarized as follows:

The podcasts unsympathetically represent murdered women as nonideal victims – e.g., victims who are not viewed as blameless... These representations connote that rather than complete people to empathize with, women are often reduced to body parts or choices that can be held as emblems of what not to do (Lang & Alejandro, 2024, p. 2079).

These descriptions are consistent with Slakoff's (2023) results, who analyzed four true crime podcasts regarding victim blaming in domestic violence cases. Slakoff (2023) writes:

As is the case in other media forms, true crime podcasts focused on IPV [intimate partner violence] contained perpetrator justification and victim-blaming narratives... Common perpetrator justification and victim-blaming narratives were found within podcasts (e.g., he had mental health issues; she was flirtatious)" (p. 4359).

In addition to these portrayals, Slakoff (2023) identified two other distinct narratives surrounding the victims and perpetrators. Perpetrators were often depicted as individuals

suffering from psychological issues, stemming from abusive and violent childhood environments. This framing, in part, takes full responsibility for their crimes from them, as their traumatic pasts are portrayed as having caused a loss of control over their actions: “by insinuating that men cannot help themselves due to the environment they grew up in, these men’s power over their own actions is obscured” (Slakoff, 2023, p. 4385). In contrast, female victims were characterized as naïve and overly trusting in the context of their violent relationships, implying that the women could have avoided the abuse by behaving differently (Slakoff, 2023). Due to these presentations and narratives, Lang and Alejandro (2024) conclude that the immersive and approachable way in which podcasts are narrated (Boling, 2019) does not automatically lead to the elimination of dominant representations of stigmatized victims. However, Lang and Alejandro also highlight that the hosts’ personal comments have the potential to contribute to a more positive portrayal of the victims. For this reason, they urge both producers and audiences to exercise greater sensitivity in their language when discussing the murder of women (Lang & Alejandro, 2024).

A lot of crime reporting as well as true crime narratives focus on female victims, especially white female victims (Slakoff & Fradella, 2019). This phenomenon, known as the *Missing White Woman Syndrome* (MWWS), refers to the media’s tendency to disproportionately report cases where white women or girls have become victims of violence. The existence of the MWWS has been identified in several studies on crime reporting (Liebler, 2010; Slakoff & Duran, 2023; Slakoff & Fradella, 2019). Slakoff and Duran (2023) investigated whether this phenomenon also appears in true crime podcasts, analyzing emerging themes in the episode titles and descriptions of popular US true crime podcasts. The data shows that white women and girls who have been reported missing or harmed are disproportionately represented in the top true crime podcasts:

Across the 93 episodes in the sample apparently about one or more missing/harmed women or girls, well over 80% of them included at least one missing/harmed White woman or girl. Moreover, among the 34 episodes that focused on a single missing woman/girl without other missing people or cases discussed, 27 (79.4%) of them focused on a missing White woman/girl, one was about a Black missing woman/girl, four were about a missing Latina, and two were about a missing Asian woman/girl (Slakoff & Duran, 2023, p. 13).

White women and girls were featured more frequently than women of color in multiple case episodes, series episodes, stand-alone case episodes, and overall episodes. In crime statistics, Black, Asian, and Indigenous women and girls disappear at significantly higher rates than other groups, but they receive far less attention in podcasts, creating a distorted picture of reality (Jeanis & Powers, 2017; Slakoff & Duran, 2023).

On the other hand, changes in the way victims are portrayed can be seen in Boling's (2023) study. Boling (2023) conducted qualitative interviews with journalists who produce podcasts on domestic violence. She investigated how counter-narratives to the dominant media representations can be presented and how social change could be initiated through interaction with the audience. Boling's evaluation shows that, in fact, there are also true crime podcast formats that attach importance to the representation of victimized women and consciously counteract the dehumanization found in other podcasts:

Many of these episodes were well over one hour long, allowing the podcasters to tell the counter-narrative on their terms, not in a two-minute segment. Moon [host of the podcast *Bear Brook*] spent most of Episode 4 describing Eunsoon Jun, the final woman killed by Terry Rasmussen [an American serial killer]. Her cousin... described how she met Eunsoon's boyfriend... and provided details to help humanize her to listeners" (Boling, 2023, p. 372)

Boling (2023) further explains: "the journalist-podcasters I interviewed saw their role as the storytellers of true crime to be a very empowering, rewarding, and privileged position" (p. 376). According to the author, this approach to true crime podcasts, coupled with the desire to serve a greater purpose, offers the potential to shift societal perspectives on victims and even have an influence on the justice system (Boling, 2023).

Another way women can benefit from true crime podcasts is through the formation of online communities. Rodgers (2023) used the US American true crime podcast *My Favorite Murder* (MFM) to examine how such an online community is formed and how it drives feminist discourses, for example how women deal with the fear of crime and victimization. The results show that, on the one hand, the online community gives women the opportunity to criticize traditional narratives—such as the MWWS or dehumanizing expressions—in the podcast through feedback and thus change the hosts perspectives on the topics. On the other hand, the exchange with the similarly feeling community helps the women to overcome their

fear of crime and find a better way of dealing with it: “the evolving true crime discourses that have emerged within MFM are powerful and enduring because they disrupt fear—rather than encountering each interaction with fear, listeners of MFM are equipped with a sense of agency supported by community” (Rodgers, 2023, p. 3060).

True Crime Podcasts, Society and the Justice System

The discussed studies on the portrayal of women in true crime podcasts indicate that these podcasts impact not only women but society as a whole. Yardley et al. (2019) examined the role true crime podcasts play in shaping public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system by analyzing six popular true crime podcasts. Additionally, they explored how the portrayals in true crime podcasts differ from those in earlier forms of true crime media. Their results indicate that true crime podcasts both reproduce and critically question existing narratives about crime and justice, as is in line with Vitis (2024) findings. In the podcasts analyzed, victims were often portrayed as innocent and in need of protection, but some of the podcasts criticized the police and media’s treatment of ethnic minorities. Many cases remained unsolved or incomplete, which, according to the authors, raises doubts about the efficiency of the justice system. In line with other researchers (Boling & Hull, 2018) emotions played a central role in the podcasts, strongly engaging the audience and stimulating moral reflections on perpetrators, victims and investigators. Yardley et al. (2019) criticized the commercialization of the genre, as traumatic stories are often marketed for entertainment purposes:

[The podcasts] offer glimpses of traumatic and distressing social realities – symptoms of the Real – through exposing us to the misery of others and encouraging us to feel their pain through a stylized Imaginary. However, this soon disappears in the rear-view mirror as the podcast ends without resolution, unfinished and incomplete. Producers and presenters move on to Series Two, securing lucrative sponsorship deals as the marketing industry of the Imaginary seizes this opportunity to access listeners, encouraging audiences to consume a range of products from mattresses to meal delivery services. The same presenters who drew our attention to trauma, injustice and suffering – symptoms of the Real – become the unwitting workhorses of the Imaginary as they tell us how these products and services have enriched their lives (Yardley et al., 2019, p. 517).

While reading the study, it becomes clear that the researchers view true crime podcasts with significant skepticism in terms of their societal impact. The authors even go so far as to state: “This is our wake-up call” (Yardley et al., 2019, p. 518). Yardley and colleagues argue that criminologists and podcasters should go beyond traditional approaches and engage more actively with the societal issues that these podcasts raise. Instead of just falling back on old theories and narratives, they should create new, accessible content that could engage audiences and effect real change: “this may include producing our own popular criminological output that engages and stimulates the audiences currently searching for meaning in the virtual spaces of wound culture’s Symbolic Order” (Yardley et al., 2019, p. 518). The term *Wound Culture* refers to a concept defined by Seltzer (1998) to describe the public’s fascination with scenes of violence, accidents, and trauma, where people gather around places where these events have occurred. The term refers to the collective interest in open wounds and destroyed bodies or personalities (Gaynor, 2024; Seltzer, 1998).

This *Wound Culture* sensationalism is now increasingly shifting into the virtual space, as true crime podcast listeners are becoming increasingly active on social media platforms (Rodgers, 2023). Through a content analysis of the US American *Cult Liter* true crime podcast and its associated Instagram account’s comment section, Gaynor (2024) examined the online podcast community. She discovered that Instagram users are not only seeking to connect with like-minded individuals or search for additional information about the podcast: “though listeners are there to engage with the podcast, Instagram drives users to self-promote and to seek likes, which results in commenters pulling focus away from the crime and onto themselves” (Gaynor, 2024, p. 14). By creating their own superficial links to the case in question, users try to draw attention to themselves and away from the crime to gain likes and followers. In addition, the user’s express enthusiasm about having a well-known case revisited by “their” podcast host. Gaynor (2024) describes how, in the social, “protected” space—the comment section of their favorite podcast—listeners discuss the crimes and express their love for the genre in a way that would probably seem very unacceptable in a different setting. With a host who also adopts a more casual tone when discussing the crimes, Gaynor uses her findings to highlight the strength of the parasocial relationships that true crime podcast hosts are able to cultivate with their listeners:

This case study reveals to us the parasocial relationships being built in the true-crime podcasting space. Cult Liter encourages continued listener interaction over on Instagram, yet the conversation between host and listener is not actually there. The listeners/users comment between themselves, seeking likes and validation from others in the fan group. The listener community, together with the Instagram post, call back crime scenes from the past into the present, gathering around the Instagram post as people might rush to an actual crime scene, in a digital version of wound culture (Gaynor, 2024, p. 14).

Vitis (2023) investigated how the public in Australia perceives true crime podcasts and found both a stagnating and a changing relationship between crime media and society:

Although responses certainly showed a desire for podcasts featuring police misconduct, domestic violence and justice for women, they were primarily interleaved with preferences for topics that aligned with entrenched law-and-order discourses, including psychological explanations, murder, violence and serial killings. The responses indicated that although critical podcasts can emerge, these listeners continue to seek popularized true crime narratives in TCPs [true crime podcasts] (Vitis, 2023, p. 106).

The responses suggest that, although critical podcasts as described by Boling (2023) are becoming more common, listeners still tend to favor traditional, dominant narratives. In this sense, true crime podcasts are particularly valued for their ability to evoke emotions through gruesome stories: “[c]ontinuity was also evident in the desire for podcasts as resources for affective experiences, particularly mystery and gore” (Boling, 2023, p. 106). Therefore, the author concludes that podcasts aiming to create affective and thrilling experiences for listeners can serve as effective sources of information and transformation. On the other hand, the findings revealed that participants also valued the justice-seeking aspects of these podcasts, perceiving them as a means to advocate for justice. In summary, this focus on justice outcomes shows that the importance of Australian true crime podcasts lies not only in their compelling narratives, but also in the fact that they allow listeners to take on different roles and actively participate in justice processes (Vitis, 2023).

As in the case of *Serial*, true crime podcasts can also have a reverse effect on the outcome of criminal investigations. The case of Adnan Syed, who was accused of killing his girlfriend, was reopened because of the podcasts by investigative journalist Sarah Koenig (Daniels & Davies, 2022). For some families of victims or innocent suspects, the increased

attention that certain cases receive when they are the subject of a true crime podcast can therefore be a means of obtaining justice (Boling, 2022). Boling (2019) investigated the effects of true crime podcasts on the true crime genre, public perception, and the criminal justice system with a critical cultural lens. To achieve this, producers of true crime podcasts were interviewed qualitatively and in-depth, providing valuable insights into the political economy of podcasts and successful audience interaction. The results indicate that true crime podcasts have an unprecedented effect on the criminal justice system and that media reform and criminal justice may be threatened by the growth of the medium. Respondents in the study by Vitis and Ryan (2021) expressed similar feelings. Most respondents concurred that true crime podcasts can contribute to a conviction and are seen as a tool for pursuing justice as well. Nonetheless, respondents also expressed uncertainty over whether true crime podcasts honored crime victims or instead took advantage of them.

2.4. Fear of Crime

Over the past 30 years, research on the fear of crime has grown in importance and popularity. Before the 1970s, only a few researchers had focused on that issue (Furstenberg, 1971). During the middle and later years of the decade, this began to change, and many studies have been published, most likely due to the availability of pertinent data from national samples in the United States. Since its 1972 launch, the General Social Survey (GSS) and the National Crime Survey (NCS) have included questions designed to gauge respondents' fear of crime (Ferraro, 1996). In the beginning, the GSS and NCS contained hypothetical, general questions that frequently alluded to walking alone at night. However, researchers like Warr and Stafford (1983) made advances by focusing on particular victimizations and distinguishing between perceived risk of crime and fear of crime. Therefore, the authors argue that the cognitive perception of risk and the emotive feeling of fear should be treated as two different ideas. They emphasized that an individual's estimation of the likelihood of becoming a victim has a significant impact on fear and that fear is a different emotional reaction from assessments of victimization risk (Warr & Stafford, 1983). Initial research in this area therefore already recognized the importance of differentiating between these constructs and measuring fear as an emotive feeling (Dubow et al., 1979; Ferraro, 1996; Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987). A third construct that is frequently covered in the literature is

the behavioral measures people take because of their fear of crime and perceived risk of victimization. Therefore, when examining the fear of crime, all these constructs should be taken into account (Rader et al., 2007).

2.4.1. Feeling of Fear, Perception of Risk, and Behavioral Measures

According to Ferraro (1996), cognitive judgment is involved when the perceived risk of victimization is evaluated. Therefore, studies describe the perceived risk of becoming a victim of crime as a rational component that is strongly related to the fear of crime. Even though the two constructs should be considered separately, it is still important to include their relationship in research exploring the phenomena. According to studies, women often believe they are more likely to be victims of crime, especially sexual assault, and they also believe they are more likely to be arrested (Blackwell et al., 2002; Hagan, 1990; Richards & Tittle, 1981). The cultural norm that women should be cautious, which was formed by parental socialization and increased supervision in patriarchal households, may have an impact on this impression. The relationship between gender and perceived risk differs depending on the type of infraction, while it is debatable whether men or women perceive more risk (Rader et al., 2007). According to the findings of Warr and Stafford (1983), fear of crime develops through a combination of the likelihood of becoming a victim of the crime and the severity of the crime. Their results also showed that fear was reduced more when the risk of “minor” crimes (like burglary) was lower compared to a reduction of more severe crimes, like murder. In addition to the severity of a crime, socio-demographic factors also influence the perceived risk of becoming a victim of crime. As discussed, many studies have found that women are more afraid of being victimized, although they are less likely to become victims. However, it must also be mentioned that the type of crime can have a decisive effect. For example, women were more likely to be afraid of being sexually assaulted, while men thought they were more likely to be robbed (Reid & Konrad, 2004). The relationship between gender and the perceived risk of victimization is therefore still complex and not yet clearly defined by researchers, as is the relationship with age, income, and ethnicity (Rader et al., 2007).

The behavioral measures individuals take to protect themselves from crime represent a third construct commonly examined in the literature on fear of crime. Behavioral measures can

broadly be categorized into rather passive actions (avoidance behaviors), such as staying home after dark, and rather active behaviors (defensive behavior), such as purchasing a firearm (Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987). While crime rates and the fear of crime are now frequently the subject of research, comparatively less is known about defense and protection strategies (Rader et al., 2007). According to Ferraro (1995), there are two kinds of measures people can take to protect themselves from crimes: defensive behaviors and avoidance behaviors. Examples of avoidance behaviors include avoiding dark and dangerous places at night or limiting activities that could be threatening, like walking home at night. Owning a dog for protection, buying a gun, or installing a security system count as defensive behavior. Ferraro (1996) suggests that the decision to behave according to crime is heavily influenced by perceptions of risk as well as fear of becoming a criminal victim. Numerous studies examining the relationship between behavior and fear of crime have found that fear positively impacts both avoidance and defensive behaviors. Allen et al. (1988) identified a form of self-fulfilling prophecy between fear of crime and avoidant behavior. Their findings suggest that individuals who fear becoming victims of crime may modify their daily behaviors, such as avoiding certain places or situations, which in turn reinforces their perception of danger and perpetuates their fear. Therefore, fear restricts social activity by making people avoid situations that appear harmful; additionally, this avoidance tends to make people feel more afraid (Allen et al., 1988).

In the past, it was believed that constrained behaviors and perceived risk led to fear of crime. However, Rader (2007) and other researchers have reexamined this relationship, suggesting that victimization experience, constrained behaviors, perceived risk, and fear of crime may together constitute a complex construct called the “threat of victimization” (p. 482). They found partial support for their hypothesis, revealing reciprocal relationships between fear of crime and perceived risk, fear of crime and avoidance behaviors, as well as fear of crime and defensive behaviors. These findings point to a feedback loop that contradicts prior assumptions that fear is only an effect of crime and suggest that it is useful to take those three constructs into account when analyzing the fear of crime (Rader et al., 2007).

2.4.2. Individual Level Factors Influencing Fear of Crime

Taking the constructs into account, the majority of early research indicates that women experience higher levels of fear. This holds for studies that use data from the GSS and NCS, as well as studies that look at fear related to particular victimizations and at fear in its entirety (Bankston & Thompson, 1989; LaGrange & Ferraro, 1989). The fear of rape that may result from another face-to-face victimization, like robbery, was explored by many researchers investigating women's higher levels of fear (Ferraro, 1996; Hindelang et al., 1978). The research concluded that women are more afraid of crime in general because certain offenses, like rape, primarily affect them rather than men (Day, 1994; McDonald et al., 2021). These increased levels of fear may lead to women's higher perceptions of risk as well as a tendency to adapt their behaviors, such as a reliance on male protectors (Chan & Rigakos, 2002). The phenomenon where women perceive themselves as being at a higher risk of becoming victims of crime, despite statistical evidence showing that they are less likely to be victims of most crimes, is commonly referred to as the "fear-victimization paradox" (McDonald et al., 2021, p. 2086) or "gender-fear paradox" (May et al., 2010, p. 160). Women are more likely to believe that crimes such as assaults and burglary will accompany the threat of rape, which could be an explanation for this paradox. Researchers therefore argue that women's fear of crime could reflect their fear of rape. Warr (1984) even goes further as he says that for most women "fear of crime *is* fear of rape" (p. 700).

Using a nationally representative sample of over 1,000 participants, Ferraro (1996) explored whether sexual assaults can be seen as kind of "master offense" (p. 669) among women and found support for this hypothesis. His findings suggested that victimization fears generally stem from a fear of rape, as he states: "These and other findings give substantial support to the shadow thesis: fear of rape influences other victimization fears, and the degree of the effect is associated with personal contact and seriousness of the offense" (Ferraro, 1996, p. 686). Consequently, fear related to rape influences the general fear of crime. Most women fear the possibility of rape during any face-to-face confrontation, which significantly contributes to their heightened fear of various crimes, even those they are statistically less likely to experience as victims. These findings support the "shadow thesis" (Ferraro, 1996, p. 686), arguing that women's fear of crime is actually the "shadow of sexual assault" (McDonald et al., 2021, p. 2086) that heightens the fear of other offenses. The investigation's

findings also demonstrate that younger women have a higher level of fear of rape. During changes in their education, careers, or families, young women tend to move to unfamiliar places. This can make them feel less secure and more fearful of rape, which in turn can influence their daily lives as they attempt to avoid becoming a victim (Ferraro, 1996). An example of this is that women are more likely to engage in avoidance behaviors, such as staying away from specific locations or events; this is especially true when it comes to avoiding places at night, which restricts women's freedom of movement (Gardner, 1989; Keane, 1998; Stanko, 2001). In this context, age may impact the association between avoidance behaviors and gender (May, 1999).

On the other hand, research has shown that men are more likely to adopt defensive measures, such as purchasing and carrying guns, to protect themselves against potential threats (May, 1999; McKeganey, 2000; Wilcox et al., 2006). This is in line with Umberson's (2003) explanations that in dangerous or stressful situations, men tend to respond with outward actions, such as taking physical measures, while women are more likely to have inward reactions, such as experiencing feelings or engaging in reflective thoughts. Therefore, it is assumed that women's actions are rather categorized as avoidant behavior, while men's actions are more of a defensive kind (May et al., 2010). To better understand avoidance and defensive behaviors and how they relate to gender, May's findings highlight the importance of treating them as distinct constructs.

Another strategy women often use to protect themselves from potential assault is to stay informed about possible crimes they might encounter and to learn effective escape or self-defense methods (Vicary & Fraley, 2010). Building on the notion that women may be drawn to true crime media to prepare for potential threats, McDonald et al. (2021) investigated this relationship in greater depth. Their findings indicate that women's fear of rape motivates them to consume true crime content specifically to learn strategies for defensive vigilance, escape or self-defense. The study also found that women with a history of sexual assault are more likely to experience heightened fear of future assaults, which in turn drives them to seek information on ways to reduce their risk of revictimization. An increased, explicit fear of rape was found to have a significant indirect effect, supporting the hypothesis that past

experiences of sexual assault are linked to true crime consumption as a form of defensive vigilance and safety work (McDonald et al., 2021).

Though the correlation with gender seems to be strong, it is not the only individual-level factor influencing fear of crime. Although it is widely perceived that elderly people experience higher levels of fear, LaGrange and Ferraro (1989) contend that this correlation may have been overstated and stress the value of employing vignettes in research on fearfulness. Warr's (1990) study revealed that female and older participants tend to experience higher levels of fear compared to their male and younger counterparts. Similarly, individuals with lower incomes reported greater fear of crime, however, little analysis has been conducted to investigate this variable in depth (Hale, 1996). The relationship between ethnicity and fear of crime remains inconclusive; while some research suggests that white individuals report higher fear levels than non-white individuals, others argue that the ethnic composition of one's neighborhood may have a stronger influence on fear levels than personal ethnicity (Rader et al., 2007). The connection between direct and indirect victimization experiences and fear of crime is also ambiguous. Some studies indicate that crime victims have a heightened fear of revictimization, whereas others suggest no such relationship (Schafer et al., 2006; Wilcox et al., 2006). Indirect victimization, such as hearing about crimes experienced by friends or family, can also elevate fear levels, and can be triggered by environmental factors like darkness or being in an unfamiliar place. The extent of fear, however, varies depending on both individual traits and contextual factors (Rader et al., 2007).

2.5. Cultivation Theory as a Theoretical Framework

2.5.1. Fundamental Assumptions of Cultivation Theory

The cultivation hypothesis, first formulated in the 1960s by George Gerbner and colleagues, represents a macro-level theoretical construct that assumes that prolonged exposure to the symbolic content of television can influence viewers' perceptions and attitudes towards reality (Gerbner, 1969). Gerbner and his team created the theory at the end of the 1960s when the study of Fear of Crime became increasingly important and focused (Potter, 2011). The framework has since been used and empirically tested in numerous studies and ranks

among the three highest-referenced theories in communication studies (Bryant & Miron, 2004; Busselle & Van den Bulck, 2019). By the 1970s, the theory had gained considerable traction, and over four decades, the corpus of cultivation research grew considerably to include more than 500 scientific publications, as documented by researchers such as Morgan and Shanahan (2010). Gerbner did not focus on the impact of individual news items, but on the collective meanings that pervade the entire media ecosystem; on the cumulative effect of a variety of news on public consciousness as people come into contact with media reports in their everyday experiences (Gerbner, 1969). This perspective emphasizes an interest in the broader, gradual process by which media messages shape social perceptions and norms (Potter, 2014).

The cultivation theory's core premise is that mass media, particularly television at that time, significantly influence viewers' behavior and opinions. In doing so, Gerbner contends that television fosters a common set of worldviews and attitudes (Busselle & Van den Bulck, 2019; Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner et al., 1978; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Hammermeister et al., 2005). As stated by Gerbner, television paints a homogeneous picture of the world, conveying a single, overarching message about right and wrong as well as what matters and what doesn't (Busselle & Van den Bulck, 2019). As a result, most people are continuously exposed to similar stories, which unite diverse communities and large groups in a "public experience of a common symbolic environment" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 173). Based on this symbolic environment, further studies were conducted analyzing the content of the television world and its programs with a quantitative methodology (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1977; Gerbner et al., 1979). These analyses revealed the portrayal of various social groups and the roles they were assigned, such as perpetrators or victims, aiming to understand television's representation of reality. Building on these findings, the researchers aimed to explore how television consumption shapes and cultivates individuals' perceptions of reality (Busselle & Van den Bulck, 2019). A cultivation effect, in its most fundamental sense, is a correlation between the amount of time a viewer spends watching television and the beliefs that viewer has about the world: "Those who spend more time in the world of TV have been found to be more likely to perceive the real world in terms of television's lessons, even though no member of society remains unaffected by an influence so persuasive as television" (Gerbner et al., 1978, p. 3).

Gerbner suggested that prolonged exposure to dramatic and fictional television significantly shapes individuals' perceptions of social reality, with the depiction of violence playing a pivotal role. He views violence as a crucial element of TV content, acting as a powerful vehicle for conveying social norms, power dynamics, goals, means, and the consequences of defying societal rules. This portrayal, according to Gerbner and Gross (1976), is a "dramatic demonstration of power which communicates much about social norms and relationships, about goals and means, about winners and losers, about the risks of life and the price for transgressions of society's rules" (p. 178).

While there was already substantial evidence supporting the cultivation hypothesis, critiques have emerged, for example regarding its methodology, such as the operationalization of the variables, or the statistical controls applied in the foundational studies (Shrum, 2017). In response to the critics, Gerbner and his team (1980) refined the theory by introducing two novel concepts: *mainstreaming* and *resonance*. Mainstreaming describes the process by which the worldviews of viewers from diverse social backgrounds begin to align, particularly through heavy television consumption, potentially leading to more homogenized perspectives across socioeconomic divides (Gerbner et al., 1980; Shrum, 2017). Resonance, on the other hand, suggests that individuals whose real-life experiences mirror those depicted on television are more profoundly affected by its content. For instance, those who have personally encountered crime and violence might find television portrayals of a malevolent and violent world more impactful (Gerbner et al., 1980). This phenomenon of resonance has, among others, been supported by research conducted by Gerbner (1980) and further explored in studies by Shrum and Bischak (2001).

2.5.2. The Mean World Syndrome

A decade after their initial studies, Gerbner and his team identified a phenomenon they called the *mean world syndrome*. This phenomenon is characterized by an increased level of fear and a pessimistic view of reality in people who are frequently exposed to violent media content (Potter, 2014). Gerbner's basic assumption was that people who watch a lot of television, especially shows that focus on crime and violence, tend to believe that there is

more violence and risk in the world than there is, and consequently their attitudes and actions may be influenced by this view (Gerbner et al., 1980). Analyses of violence profiles and television content (Gerbner et al., 1976; Gerbner & Gross, 1976) show that a predominant image of crime prevails in the fictional universe of television. In particular, the frequency of police appearances in television series clearly exceeds their presence in the real world, even in areas with high crime rates (Gerbner et al., 1977). In addition, the risk of becoming a victim of crime is significantly higher for those portrayed on television than for real people, with the criminals portrayed on television more likely to target unknown victims, which differs from the pattern of criminal behavior observed in real life (Gerbner et al., 1977; Gerbner et al., 1980). As part of the Cultural Indicators Project, Gerbner and colleagues conducted a detailed study of television programs and found evidence of increased depictions of violence (Morgan et al., 2008). Based on these observations, they proposed that prolonged exposure to such television content cultivates an exaggerated fear of crime and a deep-seated mistrust of others—a hypothesis that has found empirical support in several studies (Gerbner et al., 1979; Jamieson & Romer, 2014).

Although the hypothesis represents a convincing argument, its application in empirical research also encounters problems. These problems mainly arise from the numerous demographic variables that are intertwined with television consumption. In particular, certain demographic groups, such as women, older people, people with lower levels of education, and people from lower income groups are disproportionately likely to consume television (Comstock et al., 1978). These demographic factors make cultivation studies more complex because they can independently influence perceptions of and fear of crime. Studies by Hirsch (1980) and Hughes (1980) have shown that the cultivation effect dissolves when demographic variables are considered in the data analysis. This shows that a differentiated approach is required when assessing the relationship between media consumption and fear of crime, ensuring that demographic influences are adequately taken into account. Doob and McDonald (1979) argue that high television consumption correlates with an increased fear of crime, attributing this phenomenon in part to socioeconomic factors. They posit that people who watch a lot of television often belong to less affluent groups of society who, in turn, are more likely to live in neighborhoods with higher crime rates. A detailed analysis of their findings indicated a significant correlation between television viewing and heightened

fear of crime among individuals residing in urban neighborhoods with higher crime rates, supporting their hypothesis (Jamieson & Romer, 2014). However, these effects were only found for certain demographic subgroups, while the general results showed support for the cultivation theory. Consequently, they assert that the empirical evidence for the cultivation hypothesis remains inconclusive.

To further explore the effects of television consumption on fear of crime and thus assess the robustness of the cultivation hypothesis, Heath and Petraitis (1987) conducted two studies, which aimed to explore the influence of television viewing on perceptions of crime in the immediate neighborhood and in more distant urban contexts. They found that the *mean world syndrome* is dependent on the geographical specification, the amount of television consumption, the actual crime rate in the respondent's neighborhood, and the gender of the respondent. With regard to the place of residence of the respondents, the results suggest that television consumption influences the perception of crime in their own city and in cities further away, but not on the perception of crime in the immediate neighborhood. Heath and Petraitis (1987) state: "Although frequent TV viewers come to believe in the 'mean' world, most of them do not live in it. Rather, frequent viewers tend to see their own worlds as havens in the midst of the violence 'out there'" (p. 122).

Moreover, according to the authors, the definition of the variable "television consumption" also has an influence on the results and the applicability of the cultivation hypothesis and the mean world syndrome. They suggest that instead of measuring total television consumption, the focus should be on criminal content. The authors recommend a more precise operationalization by measuring the consumption of crime series rather than using the broader term "television consumption." They assume that the observed relationship between television consumption and fear of crime is likely driven by the high prevalence of crime series on television (Heath & Petraitis, 1987). In addition, researchers such as Romer et al. (2003) and Dowler (2003) have found a correlation between exposure to media content centered on criminal topics and an increased fear of crime. These results support the assumption that the cultivation effect can vary with the genre of the program consumed. Using an annual time series model, Jamieson and Romer (2014) explored how changes in the portrayal of violence in US television programs influenced public perceptions of crime

rates between 1972 and 2010. Their analysis revealed a significant correlation between the level of televised violence and perceptions of crime rates and fear of crime. The analysis controlled for violent crime rates and perceptions of crime prevalence, ensuring that the observed effect was specifically tied to media influence, again supporting cultivation theory.

In a study conducted in three German cities, Reuband (1998) found that watching crime magazines (TV programs that reenact real criminal cases to aid in solving them) significantly influences the fear of crime, supporting cultivation theory. The study results showed that the higher the frequency of watching these programs, the greater the individuals' fear of crime. Interestingly, Reuband found in his study that this effect only occurred in combination with crime magazines, but not in fictional crime films and television series. Reuband (1998) suggests that this could be due to the over-representation of violent offences in crime magazines compared to police crime statistics, which can lead to an exaggerated perception of the prevalence of violence. Another notable feature of crime magazines is the depiction of crime in everyday situations, showing people in their normal routines and emphasizing how quickly this normality can turn into a threat. According to Reuband, this embedding of the threat in everyday life is the key factor influencing crime risk perceptions.

Based on cultivation theory, Shah and colleagues (2020) conducted a quantitative analysis of the effects of information about disasters on fear of violence. Their results suggest a direct link between increased consumption of disaster news in newspapers and increased fear of victimization. In a similar study, Smolej and Kivivuori (2006) examined the relationship between consumption of crime news and fear of violence and found that exposure to tabloid newspapers was associated with both avoidance behavior and increased fear of victimization. In addition, it was found that people who are frequently exposed to news sources with criminal content have a greater tendency towards violence-related fears.

2.5.3. Other Fields of Application and Recent Studies

Gerbner's and his colleagues (1977) analysis of the unique characteristics of television included several important points. Initially, he noted that television requires a higher level of viewer attention and time compared to other media, which he attributed to its constant availability and the lack of need for prior planning or waiting time. Furthermore, television

was accessible to a wide audience, which was emphasized by its simplicity and the fact that no literacy skills were required to understand it. Consequently, television became a universally accessible medium (Gerbner et al., 1977). Since Gerbner's theory was formulated, however, the media landscape has changed considerably. The traditional forms of media consumption that prevailed in the 1950s and '60s have changed dramatically, moving from broadcast and print formats to a digital and electronic media paradigm that encompasses a wide range of platforms and devices (Morgan et al., 2015). This evolution reflects the dynamic nature of media consumption and the ever-expanding range of content delivery mechanisms available to audiences today. In anticipation of significant changes within the media ecosystem, many scholars assumed that cultivation theory could become obsolete (Morgan et al., 2015). However, the emergence of technological innovations such as VCRs and cable television has underpinned the persistence of cultivation effects, as shown by the research of Dobrow (1990) and Perse et al. (1994).

In the 21st century, the scope of research on cultivation theory has further expanded to the digital sphere, particularly virtual communities, and social media platforms (Tang et al., 2021). Parallel to the historical influence of television, social media have shown a similar ability to shape public perceptions and attitudes toward reality. In relation to the all-encompassing information stream of digital media, Morgan et al. (2015) hypothesize that television is in some ways comparable to today's social media feed. They suggest that the new technologies serve primarily as modern delivery vehicles for the dissemination of media content, particularly for those who engage with media frequently. Both media act as shared symbolic spaces that disseminate consistent narratives and values across a wide audience (Tsay-Vogel et al., 2018). However, it is important to note that social media presents information in a way that is more fragmented, individualized, and socially closed, as opposed to the broader approach of television (Wei et al., 2020). Despite these differences, the concept of cultivation theory has been increasingly used in recent years to understand the impact of social media (Tsay-Vogel et al., 2018; Williams, 2006).

Wei and colleagues (2020) also assume that social media act as a centralized system for the production of mass content, shaping a specific reality for their users and reinforcing the relevance of cultivation effects. Their study of the effects of tweets concerning a specific

brand showed that such brand-related messages can strongly influence users' perceptions of the brand, providing empirical support for cultivation theory (Wei et al., 2020). Accordingly, Hermann and colleagues' (2020) study of more than 400 German Facebook users found that active engagement on Facebook plays a role in cultivating both perceptions of and attitudes towards ethnic diversity, further demonstrating the applicability of the theory in the context of social media (Hermann et al., 2020).

Tsay-Vogel and colleagues (2018) investigated how social media use influences attitudes towards privacy and self-presentation behavior. Their research found that Facebook promotes a socialization and cultivation process that leads to a more relaxed approach to security risks while promoting self-expression both online and offline. Through the longitudinal study design over five years, the study underscores the long-term ability of social media to influence individual attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, Williams and Fedorowicz (2019) discovered a correlation between frequent use of police departments' social media accounts and increased trust in local law enforcement, which in turn indicates cultivation effects.

Tang and colleagues (2020) examined the impact of social media on information security behavior amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the cultivation hypothesis, they investigated how government-related social media platforms could incentivize users to take protective measures against COVID-19-related scams and discovered a positive correlation between social media use and willingness to take security measures against such scams. Stefanone and colleagues (2010) analyzed the interaction between reality TV consumption and individuals' actions on Facebook. Their findings illuminate a shift in which behaviors observed on reality TV are mirrored and enacted on social networks, effectively turning viewers into content creators themselves. This phenomenon underscores the broader influence of media consumption patterns on user behavior on digital platforms. Consequently, several studies show that contrary to initial expectations, the cultivation hypothesis has demonstrated resilience within the evolving media landscape, affirming its relevance and adaptability amidst the advent of modern technologies and mass media platforms.

2.5.4. Implications for the Research Question

The following section is a brief summary of the literature research on the central concepts and illustrates why it is important to investigate the medium of true crime podcasts further and how the research question was derived from the literature. Among US American adults who have listened to podcasts in the past year, one in three say they regularly listen to true crime podcasts (Naseer & St. Aubin, 2023). The rise of true crime podcasts can partly be attributed to the remarkable success of the podcast "Serial" in 2014, which focused on a murder case and the subsequent trial. With five million downloads, "Serial" quickly became the most downloaded podcast and gained widespread attention (Sherrill, 2022). This phenomenon, often referred to as the "Serial effect" (Boling and Bull, 2018, p. 93), not only led to an increase in podcast consumption in general, but also sparked a growing fascination with alternative true crime stories (Vitis, 2022). Other factors that may have contributed to the rapid rise of true crime podcasts include technological advances in the transmission of audio files, greater accessibility of podcasts via platforms such as Apple Podcasts, and greater general awareness of the medium (Bottomley, 2015). These technological improvements and greater accessibility made it easier for a wider audience to engage with podcast content, fueling the growth of the medium (Berry, 2016). Whether it was the massive success of "Serial" or the technological advances, it is evident that the true crime podcast genre has transitioned from a niche sub-genre to mainstream in recent years (Sherrill, 2022). Following the huge success of "Serial," the way communication researchers discuss the podcast medium changed (Bottomley, 2015). While early academic research primarily focused on the pedagogical benefits of podcasts (Drew, 2017), recent studies have expanded to explore various aspects of (true crime) podcasts, including their psychological impact on users (Boling, 2022) or listening patterns and listener perceptions (Vitis & Ryan, 2021).

As the number of true crime podcasts grows, so does their potential to act as modern sites of meaning-making, information and misinformation, and perceptions about the prevalence of crime (Sherrill, 2022). As Gerbner and his colleagues (1980), as well as other studies, have discovered, the consumption of criminal media content can have an influence on the perception and fear of crime. Gerbner and his team identified the "Mean World Syndrome", a phenomenon in which frequent exposure to violent media content leads to increased anxiety and a pessimistic view of the world (Potter, 2014). According to Gerbner, frequent

viewers, especially of crime-focused programs, overestimate the frequency of violence and risk in the world, which influences their attitudes and actions (Gerbner et al., 1980). Although cultivation theory has been challenged by demographic variables that independently influence fear of crime (Hirsch, 1980; Hughes, 1980), it has also been supported in many studies. For example, studies by Shah et al. (2020) and Smolej and Kivivuori (2006) found support for the cultivation theory by showing that increased consumption of disaster and crime news correlates with increased fear of victimization and avoidance behavior. Reuband (1998) found that watching crime magazines depicting real crimes significantly increased fear of crime.

Especially regarding Reuband's (1998) findings, it seems relevant to investigate the influence of true crime podcasts on fear of crime. In a study in three German cities, Reuband found that the viewing of crime magazines (i.e., those that deal with true crime) leads to an increased fear of crime, but not the consumption of fictional criminal content. It is precisely because of this similarity with true crime podcasts (both formats deal with real crimes) that it seems important to investigate the connection between true crime podcast consumption and fear of crime. These results emphasize the influence that the consumption of criminal media content can have on the perception of crime and the fear of violence.

3. Methodology

3.1. Choice of Research Design

3.1.1. Choice of the Postpositivist Worldview

In the area of research methodology, the selection of an appropriate scientific worldview is a fundamental step that influences the entire research process. Creswell (2009) refers to research design as “a plan or proposal to conduct research” (p. 5) and emphasizes that research designs involve a synthesis of a basic philosophical worldview, certain research strategies and specific methods (Creswell, 2009). As Slife and Williams (1995) emphasize, these philosophical worldviews are often not immediately visible in the practical aspects of research, but fundamentally guide and shape research practice. Therefore, it is essential for researchers to identify and explicitly state their guiding philosophical assumptions to ensure clarity and coherence in their work. Creswell describes these worldviews as “a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that the researcher holds” (p. 6). Social researchers may base their work on one of four primary worldviews: Postpositivism, Constructivism, Advocacy/Participation, and Pragmatism. Each of these worldviews provides a unique lens through which researchers interpret social phenomena and approach their investigations.

Social constructivists are generally aligned with qualitative research methodologies, operating under the assumption that individuals seek to interpret the world around them by forming subjective meanings tied to particular objects or phenomena. These interpretations are shaped by personal experiences and are often unique to each individual, reflecting their efforts to make sense of their environment. In contrast to postpositivist, in which research begins with a theory, constructivist researchers generate or develop theories or patterns of meaning inductively based on the data collected. Advocacy/participatory worldview proponents, often known as “action research” (Neuman, 2014), contend that postpositivist assumptions impose inflexible structural rules and theories that fail to address social justice issues, for example the needs of oppressed people. Therefore, researchers of the advocacy/participatory worldview focus on the needs of marginalized or disempowered groups and individuals in society (Creswell, 2009). Research conducted in a pragmatic

tradition aims to clarify meanings by examining the consequences of actions and situations. For pragmatists, values and ideas about human behavior and interaction take precedence over the mere search for theories and description and thereby contradicts postpositivism (Cherryholmes, 1992).

The Postpositivist Worldview or Empirical Research

For this research, a postpositivist worldview was adopted. The postpositivist or empiricist worldview is closely related to traditional research methods, which are predominantly quantitative (Creswell, 2009). Postpositivists hold a deterministic philosophy that assumes that causes are likely to determine effects or outcomes. Consequently, the problems investigated in this context often involve identifying and analyzing the causes of influences on results. To achieve this, usually experimental methods are used. The postpositivist approach is reductionist and aims to distill ideas into a small, discrete set of variables that can be tested and form the basis for hypotheses and research questions (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Therefore this approach involves testing, verifying and refining theories and laws that determine reality. Thus, the acquisition of knowledge is deductive: a theory or assumption stands at the beginning and is confirmed or refuted by the data collected. The methods used for this are mostly quantitative (Creswell, 2009).

In line with the postpositivist worldview, the study aims to apply a scientific theory to a new medium and test its validity: this investigation begins with cultivation theory, which was deductively derived from the existing literature and tested for its applicability to true crime podcasts. Specifically, cultivation theory is applied to true crime podcasts and the extent to which the consumption of these podcasts influences the fear of crime is investigated. Gerbner and his colleagues also call this the “mean world syndrome” (Gerbner et al., 1980). To facilitate this test, the phenomena under investigation—the consumption of true crime podcasts and the fear of crime—were divided into specific variables and hypotheses, which are explained in more detail below.

3.1.2. Choice of Research Strategy and Method

Once a fundamental worldview has been chosen for the research, it is necessary to further specify the research strategy and method. These so-called “strategies of enquiry” (Creswell,

2009, p. 11) can be of a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed nature. Quantitative research strategies tend to be associated with the postpositivist world view. These include experiments, quasi-experiments, or correlation studies (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018; Campbell & Stanley, 1963). For the present research, a quantitative strategy was chosen in line with the postpositivist worldview model and the deductive, theory-testing approach.

Having chosen a quantitative strategy, the final decisions to be made concern the selection of a specific research method, based on three interrelated elements: the form of data collection, the analysis and the interpretation (Creswell, 2009). Common methods of quantitative research include survey research and experimental research. Surveys are frequently utilized to analyze attitudes, opinions, and trends within a group (Brosius et al., 2012; Creswell, 2009). In the present study, I decided to use a survey design as the specific research method for data collection, as attitudes and opinions towards crime are a useful measurement to test whether true crime podcasts have an influence on the fear of crime or not. A survey design provides quantitative or numerical descriptions of attitudes, opinions, or trends of a population by examining and interviewing a sample (Creswell, 2009) and consequently draw conclusions about a population (Babbie, 1990). As typical in quantitative research designs, I used a survey questionnaire with closed questions as the instrument. Surveys can be conducted as cross-sectional or longitudinal studies, meaning they are performed either at a specific point in time or over an extended period (Brosius et al., 2012; Creswell, 2009). In this study, for reasons of simpler implementation and limited time, I decided to opt for a cross-sectional data collection, meaning data collection at one point in time.

3.2. Research Question and Hypotheses

Due to their rapidly growing popularity, which is increasingly making true crime podcasts a mass medium (Sherrill, 2022), I considered it important to analyze true crime podcasts for their influence on the perception and fear of crime. A suitable approach for this investigation seems to be Gerbner's cultivation hypothesis. Gerbner's cultivation theory has not only been proven for the mass medium of television, but increasingly also in the context of other mass media, such as social media (Hermann et al., 2020; Tsay-Vogel et al., 2018). This finding

serves as the basis for the assumption that cultivation theory could also be applicable to podcasts. As far as it was possible to ascertain, cultivation theory has not yet been tested in connection with true crime podcasts. These considerations lead to the formulation of the study's research question: *How does the consumption of true crime podcasts affect the fear of crime?*

To investigate the complex phenomenon of “cultivation through true crime podcasts” and to assess the influence of true crime podcasts on the fear of crime, I further divided the research question into specific hypotheses. This approach allows for breaking down a complex problem into concrete, verifiable research steps and aims to establish a causal relationship between two or more variables, assuming a dependency between them to contribute to an explanation of reality (Brosius et al., 2012). Therefore, the complex constructs of increased true crime consumption and fear of crime need to be made measurable.

Hypotheses, in turn, contain variables that are described and related to one another. Forms of variables are among others: independent, dependent, intervening, controlling and confounding variables. Independent variables are “those that (probably) cause, influence, or affect outcomes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 50). In the case of this study, the independent variable is the regular consumption of true crime podcasts, that may or may not have an influence on a person's fear of crime. Dependent variables, on the other hand, are “those that depend on the independent variable; they are the outcomes or results of the independent variables” (Creswell, 2009, p. 50). In this case: the fear of crime. By putting themselves in the middle of the two, intervening or control variables are a different class of variables that may moderate the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, they also must be considered when analyzing the relationship between true crime podcast consumption and fear of crime. In this case, gender, age and previous victimization experience will be considered. Based on these variables and the underlying research question, I formulated the following hypotheses, which are to be tested in the study. Based on the cultivation theory, which postulates a positive correlation between the consumption of criminal media content and the perception of the world as dangerous or mean (Gerbner & Gross, 1976), it is initially assumed in this study that the regular consumption of true crime podcasts leads to an individual having an increased fear of crime:

H1: True crime podcast listeners experience a higher level of fear of crime compared to non-listeners.

Drawing on Gerbner's (1979) assumption that prolonged exposure to criminal media content leads to increased fear of crime, the consumption of true crime podcasts is assessed in two ways: frequency and duration of consumption (in terms of how long a person has been consuming true crime podcasts). An individual who has been listening to true crime podcasts frequently and over an extended period is referred to as a "heavy listener." The fear of crime will be analyzed based on Rader et al.'s (2007) "threat of victimization" framework. This approach examines the fear of crime in three dimensions: perceived risk of becoming a victim, emotive fear of crime, behavioral measures. Taken together, these three aspects constitute the variable "fear of crime." Control variables, such as age and gender, along with the intervening variable "previous victimization experience," are always considered when formulating the hypotheses but are not explicitly stated for the sake of readability. These considerations lead to the following second hypothesis:

H2: Heavier levels of true crime podcast consumption predict higher levels of fear of crime.

One of the assumptions of Gerbner's cultivation hypothesis is that individuals who consume a substantial amount of media content, particularly television, tend to perceive crime rates as higher compared to those who do not engage with media as frequently (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner et al., 1977). To test whether true crime podcast listeners also perceive the world as a more dangerous place overall (in relation to Gerbner's mean world syndrome), the next hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H3: True crime podcast listeners tend to perceive the risk of becoming a victim of crime higher than non-listeners.

and to further test this hypothesis:

H4: True crime podcast listeners tend to perceive the world as more dangerous compared to non-listeners.

According to previous research (Ferraro, 1996; Rader et al., 2007), women experience a greater fear of becoming victims of crime compared to men. Vicary and Fraley (2010) suggest that it is precisely this heightened fear that drives women to engage with true crime content, allowing them to become more informed about potential dangers. Given research indicating that women indeed seem to have a particular relationship with true crime content (Boling, 2022; Boling & Hull, 2018; Sherrill, 2022), this study seeks to explore this connection in greater depth. Therefore, the following hypotheses are formulated in order to find out whether women in the sample experience a higher fear of crime compared to men and whether they significantly consume more true crime podcasts than men. Therefore, H5 and H6 are formulated as follows:

H5: Women experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to men.

and

H6: Women are more likely to consume true crime podcasts compared to men.

In order to find out whether the content is consumed for safety reasons and information about potential dangers, as Vicary and Fraley (2010) suggest, H7 is formulated in the following way:

H7: Women are more likely than men to consume true crime podcasts as a means of engaging in safety work and practicing defensive vigilance.

In order to test these hypotheses in detail and to find out what role the fear of crime plays for true crime podcast consumption and vice versa, a questionnaire with the corresponding variables was created from the literature. The precise measurement of the individual hypotheses and variables is detailed in section 3.4.1.

3.3. Instrument: Questionnaire and Appinio Panel

3.3.1. Creation of the Questionnaire

A survey instrument was developed for data collection, incorporating both modified components from existing literature and newly created elements. The main objective of this instrument was to measure and analyze the impact of *true crime podcast consumption* on *fear of crime*. To achieve this, a comprehensive questionnaire was designed to assess various variables. The variables and specific items for the questionnaire were largely derived from existing literature, with some modifications made to suit the research context. For example, in Rader's et al. (2007) *perceived risk of crime* scale, the items "Someone beating you or attacking you with a club, knife, gun or other weapon" and "Someone threatening you with their fists, feet, or other bodily attack" were merged into one item: "Someone beating you or attacking you with their fists, knife, gun or other weapon." Additionally, efforts were made to combine similar questions and shorten lengthy ones to minimize participant drop-out rates caused by an excessive number of questions and extended response times. A pretest of the initial draft questionnaire was conducted on the Qualtrics platform from April 6 to 13, 2024. Ten friends and acquaintances participated in this pretest, providing detailed feedback, which was then incorporated into the final version. A comprehensive overview of the final version of the questionnaire is presented in Table 2.

I subdivided the two main variables, *true crime podcast consumption* and *fear of crime* into a total of eight secondary variables. Those secondary variables for examining the true crime podcast consumption are *podcast listening habits* and *true crime podcast listening habits*. To investigate fear of crime in depth, this variable was subdivided into the secondary variables: *safety work and defensive vigilance*, *perceived risk of crime*, *fear of criminal victimization index (emotive feeling of fear)*, *avoidance behavior*, *defensive behavior*, *victimization experience* and *fear of rape*.

All secondary variables were further analyzed using a total of 15 questions. The instrument includes a combination of open and closed questions, with the majority being closed questions, as is typical in quantitative research. Closed questions are typically provided with response categories, each of which represents one of the three scale levels: A nominal scale allows dichotomous or polytomous answers to be given, the ordinal scale allows a rank to

be assigned, and the interval scale allows a metric value to be attributed (Brosius & Haas, 2012). For this survey, nominal and ordinal scale levels were predominantly used as response options. As the survey was conducted with a German panel, the questions were translated into German. As some questions concerned intimate and personal topics, such as previous experiences of violence, respondents were presented with a legal disclaimer before answering the questionnaire, which they had to agree to. The selection and adaptation of the individual questions is explained in detail within the respective variable categories:

Podcast Listening Habits (True Crime Podcast Consumption)

This section aimed to determine respondents' engagement with podcasts, especially true crime podcasts. To avoid response bias and prevent participants from providing certain answers just to continue in the study, the survey initially asked whether they generally listen to podcasts, rather than directly inquiring about their consumption of true crime podcasts, with options ranging from "never" to "daily." To filter out those participants who listen to true crime podcasts, a follow-up question asked about the types of podcasts they listen to. The second question offered several categories, including political podcasts, entertainment podcasts and true crime podcasts, so that respondents could specify their listening preferences. Participants who answered "never" to the first question were excluded from this part of the analysis.

True Crime Podcast Listening Habits (True Crime Podcast Consumption)

The subsequent questions were directed only at participants who indicated they listen to true crime podcasts, aiming to gather more detailed information about their consumption habits. These questions covered the amount of time spent listening to true crime podcasts, with options ranging from "less than 1 hour per week" to "more than 4 hours per week"; the duration of listening to true crime podcasts, with choices from "less than 6 months" to "more than 2 years"; the true crime podcast they mostly listen to, as an open question; the main places where true crime podcasts are listened to, such as while relaxing, driving, or working; and the engagement level when listening to true crime podcasts, with options ranging from "very engaged" to "not at all engaged."

Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance

In this section, the motivations for listening to true crime podcasts and the perceived safety benefits were assessed. The questions were adapted from Vitis and Ryan (2021) and McDonald et al. (2021) and included statements that were rated on a Likert scale (from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”). These statements explored various motivations, such as participants’ interest in understanding victimization, their desire to learn about dangerous situations and self-defense, and their feeling of being better prepared for possible crimes by listening to true crime podcasts.

Perceived Risk of Crime

Based on the questions posed by Rader et al. (2007) and Ferraro (1996), respondents were asked to rate the likelihood of various crimes that could happen to them in the next year on a five-point Likert scale (from “very unlikely” to “very likely”). These events included home invasion while away or present, forced sexual intercourse, theft with violence, and physical assault with a weapon. These questions aimed to measure how respondents assessed their risk to experience different types of crime.

Fear of Criminal Victimization Index (Emotive Feeling)

This section, which was also adopted from Rader et al. (2007) and Ferraro (1996), focused on the emotional aspect of fear of crime. Respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with statements about their fear of becoming a victim of crime. These statements included fear of having their home broken into, fear of being sexually assaulted, and fear of being mugged on the street. This approach provided insights into the emotional dimensions of respondents’ fear of crime.

Behavioral Measures (Avoidant and Defendant)

Questions in this section were also based on Rader et al. (2007) and Ferraro’s (1996) research. These questions included statements rated on a Likert scale regarding avoidance behavior due to fear of crime. The statements addressed, for example, avoidance of unsafe areas during both day and night and changing activities due to fear of victimization. Defensive measures, such as carrying pepper spray or attending self-defense classes, were measured with an open-ended question.

Victimization Experience

In this section, following Rader et al. (2007), respondents were asked to indicate whether they had experienced certain types of victimization, e.g., home invasion, forced sexual activity, theft using violence, and physical assault. The response options were “yes,” “no,” or “I’m not sure/would rather not answer.”

Fear of Rape

Adapted questions from Senn and Dzinis (1996) evaluated the frequency of various safety measures taken due to fear of sexual assault. Respondents rated these measures on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “Never” to “Very often.” The measures assessed included securing doors before going to bed, fear of riding the subway or bus alone at night, taking precautions when going out at night, and carrying objects for self-defense.

Perception of the World as Mean

Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statement: “The world is a dangerous place”.

An overview of the variables, sub-variables, questions and items can be found in table 2.

Table 2: Comprehensive Overview of the Final Questionnaire

<i>Main Variable</i>	<i>Secondary Variable (and Source)</i>	<i>Number of Questions (and Items)</i>	<i>Example</i>
True Crime Podcast Consumption	Podcast Listening Habits	2	“What types of podcasts do you listen to?” (<i>Politics Podcasts, True Crime Podcasts, Entertainment Podcasts, Self-Help and Relationship Podcasts, Sports Podcasts, Other ...</i>)
	True Crime Podcast Listening Habits	5	“How much time do you spend listening to true crime podcasts?” (<i>Less than 1 hour per week, 1-2 hours per week, 3-4 hours per week, More than 4 hours per week</i>)
Fear of Crime	Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance, adapted (Vitis and Ryan, 2021; McDonald et al., 2021)	1 (6 Items)	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (“ <i>I strongly disagree</i> ” to “ <i>I strongly agree</i> ”): <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Listening to true crime podcasts has taught me things that have saved me from dangerous situations before.b. Listening to true crime makes me feel more safe because I feel prepared for potential crimes that could happen to me.
	Perceived Risk of Crime, adapted	1 (5 Items)	Please indicate the likelihood of the following events (“ <i>very unlikely</i> ” to “ <i>very likely</i> ”).

(Rader et al., 2007; Ferraro, 1996)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Someone breaking into your home while you are away. b. Someone breaking into your home while you are there.
Fear of Criminal Victimization Index (Emotive Feeling) , adapted (Rader et al., 2007; Ferraro, 1996)	1 (4 Items)	<p>Please think about your emotive feeling of fear and indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (“I <i>strongly disagree</i>” to “I <i>strongly agree</i>”):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. I am afraid someone will break into my house while I am away. b. I am afraid someone will break into my house while I am there.
Behavioral Measures (Avoidance) , adapted (Rader et al., 2007; Ferraro, 1996)	1 (4 Items)	<p>Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (“I <i>strongly disagree</i>” to “I <i>strongly agree</i>”):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. I generally avoid unsafe areas during the day because of crime. b. I avoid unsafe areas during the night because of crime.
Behavioral Measures (Defensive) , adapted (Ferraro, 1996)	1	<p>Have you acquired anything lately to defend or protect your-self (e.g. bought pepper spray, added outside lightning to your home, learned about self-defense, ...)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. No b. I can't remember/ I prefer not to say c. Yes, namely...
Victimization Experience , adapted (Rader et al., 2007)	1 (5 Items)	<p>Please indicate whether any of the following events have already happened to you (“Yes”, “No”, “I am not sure or prefer not to answer”):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Has anyone broken into your house when you were there or away? b. Has anyone made or tried to make you have sex by using force?
Fear of Rape , adapted (Senn & Dzinas, 1996)	1 (6 Items)	<p>Please indicate how often the following statements apply to you (“Never” to “Very Often”).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Before going to bed at night, I make sure the doors are securely locked. b. When I have to travel alone by subway/bus at night, I feel anxious.
Perception of the World as Mean	1	How much do you agree with the statement "The world is a dangerous place"?

3.3.2. Population and Sample

Inspired by Gerbner and his colleagues and given the opportunity to survey a representative sample of the German population with the support of my employer (the international market research platform *Appinio*), I chose to use the German population as the basis for my study, similar to Gerbner’s approach in the US. According to the Federal Statistical Office in Germany, the official population figure comprises the number of inhabitants living in a

designated area, for example a country or a municipality, at a specific point in time. This includes all persons, regardless of their citizenship or nationality, who are registered in accordance with the provisions of the registration law. A census is usually carried out every 10 years to take stock of the population and determine the number of inhabitants. This inventory last took place in the course of the 2011 census (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2024). As the data for the new census is still being collected in 2024, the sample in this study is based on the 2011 census. According to the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2020), 50.7% of Germany's 83 million inhabitants in 2018 were female and 49.3% male. Sixty-three% of the population is between the ages of 18 and 64. Based on this 2011 census, Appinio created a representative sample of 503 women and 497 men aged between 16 and 65.

3.3.3. Data Collection: Appinio Panel

Due to my position as a working student at the German market research platform Appinio, I had the opportunity to distribute the questionnaire through a large panel and reach 1,000 people, representative for the German population. Appinio is a globally operating market research platform that, according to the company, stands for innovative and uncomplicated market research. The company was founded in 2014 by Jonathan Kurfess, Max Honig and Kai Granaß and is headquartered in Hamburg. The platform enables companies to quickly and efficiently survey specific target groups and obtain representative results in real time. Every day, Appinio delivers millions of opinions from over 190 markets for over 2,600 clients across many different industries, including consumer goods, mobility, technology, agencies and consultancies (*Appinio*, n.d.). Appinio uses a mobile-first approach that allows users to participate in surveys anytime, anywhere. The Appinio panel has been built up over years and consists of several thousand users. The participants are recruited through targeted online marketing strategies and partnerships as well as a simple registration process. First, the Appinio app is downloaded, and after registration, user demographic and interest data are collected to enable targeted surveys to be conducted. Subsequently, participants receive notifications of new surveys that match their profile and are motivated to participate regularly through a rewards system and gamified elements (such as points, badges, leaderboards, etc.) (*Mobile Market Research*, n.d.).

After approval by Appinio research consultants, my questionnaire was posted online on the platform and presented to the panel between June 2 and 3, 2024. After approximately 1010 people had taken part in the survey, the study was cleaned for the first time. A total of around 50 people who had answered the control question incorrectly, whose response behavior was inconclusive or who had completed the study in an extremely short time were eliminated. The study was then put online again until approximately 1010 participants were reached. The study was then cleaned again and resampled until finally 1004 participants had answered the study conscientiously. Oversampled participants were deleted and finally a sample of 1,000 participants was used to analyze the data. The data collection was finished on June 20, 2024.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis was carried out from July to August 2024 using SPSS (Statistical Platform for Social Sciences) software. The data was first structured and summarized (more detailed explanations in chapter 4.1). The descriptive frequencies of the most important variables were then output, and the hypotheses were tested using independent t-tests and regression analyses. More detailed information on this can be found in the results section.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Statistical analysis identifies and determines values such as frequencies, the mean values (M), the standard deviation (SD) and the range within which the values can occur (minimum and maximum values) (Creswell, 2009). These statistical measures provide a comprehensive understanding of data distribution and variability, which is crucial for the accurate interpretation of results (Wolf & Best, 2010). The most used measure to characterize the central position of a distribution is the arithmetic mean (Brosius et al., 2012). However, it is important to note that calculating a mean is not useful for all kinds of variables. For example, for nominal variables, such as “gender,” which in this sample is coded as female=1 and male=2, the mean would be 1.5. This value is difficult to interpret in the analysis, as it falls “between” the genders and does not really provide useful information. Therefore, the arithmetic mean assumes that the data is at least interval scaled (i.e., metric), as is, for example, the age distribution (Wolf & Best, 2010). As mean values are blind to the distribution of the data, it is necessary to specify the standard deviation in addition to the mean values of the metric variables (Wolf & Best, 2010). The standard deviation describes the average spread of the measured values around the mean value. This metric provides information about the variability or spread of the data and shows how much the individual measurements deviate from the mean value (Uhlemann, 2015). The following section provides the frequencies and key figures for the variables in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the sample.

4.1.1 Independent Variables: Frequencies, Mean and Standard Deviation

Demographics

The sample consists of 1,000 participants, with a near-equal gender distribution of 49.9% female and 50.1% male. This composition is representative of the German population, proportionate to age and gender. The age of the participants has a minimum value of 16 and a maximum value of 65, with a mean of 41.2 years ($SD = 13.3$). The average age of the respondents is therefore 41 years, which corresponds to the average age of the German population (see Table 3). The majority of respondents had a rather low level of education, followed by a medium level of education. Those with a high level of education made up the

smallest group in the survey, with only 18.5% holding a bachelor's degree or higher (see Table 3).

Table 3: Demographics of the Sample

(N=1000)

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	
Gender	Woman	499	49.9%
	Man	501	50.1%
Age Group	1: 16-24 years	153	15.3%
	2: 25-34 years	182	18.2%
	3: 35-44 years	209	20.9%
	4: 45-54 years	250	25%
	5: 55-65 years	206	20.6%
Education	No formal education	19	1.9%
	Primary School	25	2.5%
	Lower Secondary School	231	23.1%
	Secondary Modern School	178	17.8%
	Vocational training or technical college qualification	338	33.8%
	Entrance qualification for universities of applied sciences or vocational college qualification	24	2.4%
	Bachelor's degree or comparable	112	11.2%
	Master's degree or comparable	68	6.8%
	Doctoral degree or comparable	5	0.5%

For reasons of clarity and simplicity, the educational qualifications are grouped into low educational level, medium educational level and high educational level. Low education level includes no formal education up to lower secondary school, medium education level includes secondary modern school up to entrance qualification for universities, and high education level includes a bachelor, master's, or doctorate degree.

Podcast Consumption

Of the respondents, 28.8% reported that they never listen to podcasts, and 71.2% of respondents listen to podcasts at least once a month. The podcast listeners (at least monthly consumption) were almost evenly distributed in gender and age, with slightly more listeners between the ages of 35 and 44 compared to the overall sample and the German population.

Among those who reported listening, the majority indicated that they listen several times a week (see Table 4). The podcast listening frequency has a minimum value of 1 and a maximum value of 6 with a mean value of 3.1 and a standard deviation of 1.75. This means that most respondents listen to podcasts several times a month.

Respondents who did not answer “never” to the first question were subsequently asked which types of podcasts they listen to. Multiple responses were allowed. The following data pertains to the subset of respondents who listen to podcasts at least once a month (n=712). Among those who listened to podcasts, comedy, true crime and news podcasts were the most popular (see Table 4).

Table 4: Podcast Consumption
(N=1000)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	
<i>Podcast Consumption</i>	Never	288	28.8%
	Once a month	147	14.7%
	Several times a month	168	16.8%
	Once a week	104	10.4%
	Several times a week	196	19.6%
	Daily	97	9.7%
<i>Gender of (at least monthly) Listeners</i> (N=712)	Female	345	48.5%
	Male	367	51.5%
<i>Age Groups of (at least monthly) Listeners</i> (N=712)	1: 16-24 years	126	17.7%
	2: 25-34 years	152	21.3%
	3: 35-44 years	158	22.2%
	4: 45-54 years	156	21.9%
	5: 55-65 years	120	16.9%
<i>Educational Level</i> (N=712)	Low Education	171	24%
	Medium Education	381	53.5%
	High Education	160	22.5%
<i>Type of Podcast</i> (N=712, <i>Multiple Answers</i>)	True Crime Podcasts	344	48.3%

Politics/News	319	44.8%
Comedy/Entertainment	444	62.4%
Psychology/Relationship	298	41.9%
Sports	228	32%
Other	27	2.7%

True Crime Podcast Consumption

Subsequently, the 344 participants who indicated that they listen to true crime podcasts were asked about the amount of time they spend listening to these podcasts. Of the 1,000 respondents, one third (34.4%) reported listening to true crime podcasts. The following tables exclusively pertain to this subset of participants, providing detailed insights into their true crime podcast listening habits. The majority of true crime listeners listen to true crime podcasts at least once a week (84%), with the largest group listening one or two hours per week. When asked about the duration of their engagement with true crime podcasts, more than half (53.2%) reported listening for a year or more (see Table 5).

The true crime podcast listeners were then asked in which situations they primarily consume true crime podcasts, with multiple responses allowed. The results showed that the most frequent listening situation were while relaxing (e.g., on the couch), before going to bed, or while commuting (see Table 5).

Table 5: True Crime Podcast Consumption

(N=344)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>True Crime Podcast Consumption</i>	Less than once a week	55 16% ⁰
	1- 2 Hours per week	120 34.9%
	3-4 Hours per week	108 31.4%
	More than 4 hours per week	161 17.7%
<i>Duration of Consumption</i>	Less than 6 months	46 13.4%
	6 – 12 Months	115 33.4%
	1 – 2 Years	95 27.6%
	More than 2 years	88 25.6%

Listening Situation (Multiple Answers)	While relaxing	215	62.2%
	On the way	152	44.2%
	While working	86	25%
	During sports	76	22.1%
	While cooking	144	41.9%
	While cleaning	143	41.6%
	Before going to bed	176	51.2%

To get an overview of how the true crime podcast listeners are distributed in the sample, the respective frequencies, divided by age and gender, were displayed in a cross table. In the sample, slightly more than half of the respondents who reported listening to true crime podcasts were female and almost a quarter between 25 and 34 years old, with this age group being the largest (see Table 6).

Table 6: True Crime Podcast Listeners

(N=344)

		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender	Female	185	53.7%
	Male	159	46.3%
Age Group	1: 16-24 years	61	17.7%
	2: 25-34 years	80	23.3%
	3: 35-44 years	59	17.2%
	4: 45-54 years	59	17.2%
	5: 55-65 years	53	15.4%
Educational Level	Low Education	77	22.4%
	Medium Education	184	53.5%
	High Education	83	24.1%

Heavy Listeners

To facilitate subsequent analyses and calculations with the variables, the variables *True Crime Podcast Consumption* and *Duration of Consumption* were then combined to create a new variable: *Heavy Listener*. This variable defines heavy listeners as individuals who have been consuming true crime podcasts regularly for a longer time. The variable was then recoded to have values ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “light listener” and 5 indicates

“very heavy listener.” For instance, someone who has been consuming true crime podcasts for more than two years and listens for several hours a week would score a 5 on the heavy listener scale. Among the true crime podcast listeners, the majority (66.2%) qualifies at least as a frequent listener, with 41.2% scoring (very) heavy listener values. The mean value is 3.2 and the standard deviation is 1.4. This mean value also indicates that the average true crime podcast listener in the sample tends to be a rather heavy listener.

Table 7: Heavy Listener Values and Descriptions

(N=344)

<i>Value</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Light Listener	56	16.3%
2	Moderate Listener	60	17.4%
3	Frequent Listener	86	25%
4	Heavy Listener	72	20.9%
5	Very heavy Listener	70	20.3%

Victimization Experience

As the experience of victimization can also have an influence on a person’s fear of crime, it is treated as an independent variable in this study. Among all respondents (N=1000), the majority have had no experience with victimization. Among those who did, Attacks (with a knife, other weapon or hand) were the most mentioned victimization experiences, followed by robbery (see Table 8).

To be able to calculate the victimization experience more easily in the later analysis, the individual victimization types were added together to form one variable and coded in such a way that 0=no experience with crime and 1=experience with crime (at least one of the experiences with crime). The minimum and maximum values of this variable are 1 and 5, with a mean value of 1.7 and a standard deviation of 1.0. The sample tends to show a lower value in terms of experience with crime, but the standard deviation also indicates a certain range in this data.

Table 8: Victimization Experience

(N=1000)

Type of Victimization		n	%
Burglary	Yes	145	15.5%
	No	834	83.4%
	Unsure/Prefer not to say	21	2.1%
Sexual Assault	Yes	154	15.4%
	No	805	80.5%
	Unsure/Prefer not to say	41	4.1%
Robbery	Yes	177	17.7%
	No	797	79.7%
	Unsure/Prefer not to say	26	2.6%
Attack (with knife, other weapon or hands)	Yes	189	18.9%
	No	788	78.8%
	Unsure/Prefer not to say	23	2.3%

4.1.2. Dependent Variables: Frequencies, Means and Standard Deviation

Reliability Tests

Before outputting the values for all variables, the internal consistency of the variables consisting of more than one item had to be tested, using a reliability test. In this case, the variables *Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance*, *Perceived Risk of Crime*, *Fear of Crime (Emotive Feeling)*, *Behavioral Measures (Avoidance)*, and *Fear of Rape* consisted of more than one item. A reliability test is useful to check the extent to which the individual items of the questions describe the variable. Therefore, the reliability of a scale is defined as the accuracy with which the items measure a characteristic (Wolf & Best, 2010). One of the most common formulas for determining internal consistency of a measurement is the alpha coefficient (α) according to Cronbach (Cronbach, 1951), which is also offered in the SPSS statistics program as a standard method for determining reliability. A Cronbach's α value of ≥ 0.7 is considered an acceptable value for internal consistency (Wolf & Best 2010).

To determine the internal consistency of the variables, the α values for the items used to measure each variable were calculated. For the *Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance* variable, which included a total of seven items, the combined alpha was 0.698. Since this value is below the acceptable threshold of 0.7, the “Item-Total Statistics” was examined to determine the alpha values if one of the individual items were deleted. The α value for *Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance* increased to $\alpha=0.85$ when the last item (“When I hear true crimes, I feel safer because I feel prepared for potential crimes that could happen to me”) was excluded. Therefore, it was decided to remove this item from the scale, resulting in a revised variable consisting of six items with improved internal consistency.

Finally, the minimum value of this variable was 6 and the maximum value was 30. Since the individual variables in the questionnaire have different numbers of items (sometimes there are six items, sometimes only four), this also results in very different maximum values (sometimes there are 30, sometimes only 20). Consequently, to enable easier calculation and comparison between the variables (so that all variables have similar minimum and maximum values), the values of the variable were redefined in a range from 1 to 5 (see Table 9).

Table 9: Old and new values for the variable "Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance"

Old Values	New Value
6 to 10	1
11 to 15	2
16 to 20	3
21 to 25	4
26 to 30	5

Subsequently, all Cronbach’s alpha values for the variables measured by multiple items were calculated (*Perceived Risk of Crime, Fear of Crime, Fear of Rape, and Avoidance Behavior*) to assess their internal consistency. In this way, combined variables could be created to ensure the reliability of the measurement of these constructs (see Table 10).

Table 10: Cronbach's Values for variables consisting of several items

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Number of Items</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>
-----------------	------------------------	---------------------------------------

<i>Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance</i>	6	0.85
<i>Perceived Risk of Crime</i>	5	0.89
<i>Fear of Crime (Emotive Feeling)</i>	4	0.85
<i>Fear of Rape</i>	6	0.85
<i>Avoidance Behavior</i>	4	0.87

Subsequently, all variables were then recoded in the same way as the variable *Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance* so that in the end, all variables had minimum and maximum values in the range from 1 to 5.

The above variables were surveyed using 5-point Likert scales. A Likert scale consists of several items of at least five levels, which are combined to form an index by addition (Brosius et al., 2012). Variables that are collected in this way are also referred to as metric or interval scaled. Values that are measured on a metric scale can have any numerical value (Brosius et al., 2012). The scale level of the variables is important for testing the hypotheses, as certain procedures (such as regression analysis) can only be carried out if the dependent variable is metric (Wolf & Best, 2010).

Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance

Respondents who indicated that they listen to true crime podcasts (N=344) were subsequently asked if they do so for reasons related to safety work and defensive vigilance. The minimum value here is 1, the maximum 5, the mean value is 3.5 and the standard deviation 1.0. The results revealed that more than half (51.4%) score high or very high on the respective scale. Only 14.8% score lower levels, indicating that true crime podcasts indeed are a source of information about crime and safety work (see Table 11).

Table 11: Safety Work (SW) and Defensive Vigilance (DV)

(N=344)

<i>Value</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Very low SW and DV	12	3.5%
2	Low SW and DV	39	11.3%
3	Moderate SW and DV	116	33.7%
4	High SW and DV	128	37.2%
5	Very high SW and DV	49	14.2%

Perceived Risk of Crime

The respondents in the sample tend to perceive the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime as not to threatening; 65.5% perceive the risk of becoming a victim of crime as (very) low (see Table 12). The minimum value is 1, the maximum value 5, the mean value 2.1 and the standard deviation 1.0.

Table 12: Perceived Risk of Crime

(*N=1000*)

<i>Value</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Very low risk	299	29.9%
2	Low risk	356	35.6%
3	Moderate risk	272	27.2%
4	High risk	60	6.0%
5	Very high risk	13	1.3%

Fear of Crime (Emotive Feeling)

The participants were then asked about their emotive feelings of fear in different situations. The results suggest that the sample is less to moderately anxious overall. A total of 41.3% scored (very) low on the fear of crime scale, while only 23.2% scored high values (see Table 13). The minimum and maximum values are 1 and 5, the mean value is 2.7 and the standard deviation is 1.1.

Table 13: Fear of Crime

(*N=1000*)

<i>Value</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Very low fear	155	15.5%
2	Low fear	258	25.8%
3	Moderate fear	355	35.5%
4	High fear	160	16%
5	Very high fear	72	7.2%

Fear of Rape

Overall, the fear of rape seems to score similar values as the fear of crime, with 40.6% scoring (very) low values (see Table 14). The minimum value is 1, the maximum value is 5, the mean value is 2.7 and the standard deviation is 1.1.

Table 14: Fear of Rape

(N=1000)

<i>Value</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Very low fear	144	14.4%
2	Low fear	262	26.2%
3	Moderate fear	381	38.1%
4	High fear	167	16.7%
5	Very high fear	46	4.6%

Avoidance Behavior

The participants were then asked about their avoidance behavior in certain situations. The sample showed rather low (34.6%) to moderate avoidance behavior (35.9%) (see Table 15). The minimum and maximum values are 1 and 5, the mean is 2.9 and the standard deviation is 1.1.

Table 15: Avoidance Behavior

(N=1000)

<i>Value</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Very low avoidance behavior	113	11.3%
2	Low avoidance behavior	233	23.3%
3	Moderate avoidance behavior	359	35.9%
4	High avoidance behavior	216	21.6%
5	Very high avoidance behavior	79	7.9%

Defensive Behavior

Defensive behavior was assessed using a dichotomous and open-ended question: “Have you recently purchased anything to defend or protect yourself?” Participants could answer “No” or “Yes, and namely...” The answers were then coded into a variable, with 0 indicating that nothing was purchased for defense and 1 indicating that something was purchased for

defense. Most respondents stated that they had not purchased anything for self-defense. Conversely, every tenth respondent stated that they had purchased a product for self-defense, with pepper spray being the most cited product (n=59) (see Table 16).

Table 16: Defensive Behavior

(N=1000)

<i>Value</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
0	Has not acquired anything	892	89.2%
1	Has acquired something	108	10.8%

Mean World Syndrome

The final question asked respondents to indicate their agreement with the statement, “The world is a dangerous place.” The response distribution suggests that the sample tends to perceive the world as dangerous place, with 70.7% (strongly) agreeing to the statement. Only 4.2% (strongly) disagreed (see Table 17). It should be noted that this scale only consisted of one item with a minimum value of 1 and a maximum value of 5. The mean value is 3.92 and the standard deviation is 0.9.

Table 17: Mean World Syndrome

(N=1000)

<i>Value</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Strongly disagree	12	1.2%
2	Disagree	30	3.0%
3	Neither disagree nor agree	251	25.1%
4	Agree	437	43.7%
5	Strongly Agree	270	27.0%

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

4.2.1. Testing of H1

True crime podcast listeners experience a higher level of fear of crime compared to non-listeners.

To test the first hypothesis, an independent t-test was conducted to test whether there were significant differences between the true crime podcast listeners and non-listeners in terms of fear of crime. To do this, the variable "Listener_NonListener" was created, where 1= true crime podcast listener (N=344) and 0= non-listener (N=368).

The independent t-test was then performed for the variables that measure fear of crime (emotive fear of crime, fear of rape, perceived risk of crime and avoidance behavior). It was previously determined that the variables are approximately normally distributed, which is a crucial prerequisite for many statistical tests (Wolf & Best, 2010). The significance values of the t-test show that the mean values were significantly higher for the listeners (N=344) than for the non-listeners (N=368) (see Table 18). The effect sizes (Cohen's d) are between 0.277 and 0.371, which indicates small to medium effects (see Table 18). This means that although the differences between the groups are significant, the practical significance is moderate (see Table 18).

Table 18: Results of the Independent t-test for Listeners and Non-listeners (Fear of Crime)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Listener Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Non-Listener Mean (SD)</i>	<i>t-value (df)</i>	<i>p-value (Sig.)</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
<i>Fear of Crime</i>	2.98 (1.07)	2.68 (1.08)	3.687 (710)	<.001	0.277
<i>Fear of Rape</i>	3.00 (0.99)	2.66 (0.98)	4.586 (710)	<.001	0.344
<i>Perceived Risk</i>	2.47 (0.97)	2.12 (0.92)	4.939 (699)	<.001	0.371
<i>Avoidance Behavior</i>	3.17 (1.02)	2.80 (1.07)	4.705 (710)	<.001	0.353

The data provide support for H1, as the results show significant differences in fear levels (Fear of Crime, Fear of Rape, Perceived Risk of Crime and Avoidance Behavior) between true crime podcast listeners and non-listeners. Therefore, it can be assumed that true crime podcast listeners experience higher levels of fear of crime than non-listeners. This is underpinned by significant differences in the various fear variables. The moderate effect sizes indicate that the differences are not only statistically significant, but also practically relevant.

4.2.2. Testing of H2

Heavier levels of true crime podcast consumption predict higher levels of fear of crime.

A linear regression was carried out to test whether there is a correlation between true crime podcast consumption and fear of crime. For this purpose, the variable *FearOfCrime_Combined* was created. This is a summary of the variables perceived risk of crime emotive feeling of crime, fear of rape and avoidance behavior and was recoded so that, like the other variables, its values range between 1 and 5. As a prerequisite for performing a linear regression is the metric scaling of the independent variables, a dummy variable was created for the nominally scaled variable gender.

The multiple linear regression analysis was then conducted, considering control variables such as age, gender and previous experience of crime, to determine whether heavier true crime podcast consumption has a greater impact on fear of crime. This approach allows for an understanding of the relationship between podcast consumption and fear of crime, taking important demographic factors into account. The results, with an R^2 value of 0.171, indicate that the model explains 17.1% of the variance in the combined fear of crime, with the whole model being significant ($F < 0.001$) (see Table 19).

Table 19: Model Summary of the Linear Regression

	R^2	F	df ($df2$)	p -value ($Sig.$)
<i>Model Summary</i>	0.171	17.478	4 (339)	<.001

The analysis of the coefficients shows that there is a significant moderate positive effect between the consumption of true crime podcasts and fear of crime ($B=0.2$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, the model shows a significant moderate positive correlation between past victimization experiences and fear of crime ($B=0.23$, $p<0.001$). The effect of gender on fear of crime is just barely significant at $p=0.06$ but suggests a tendency for women to be more afraid of becoming a victim of crime. The age of the respondent has no significant influence in this model ($p=0.7$) (see Table 20).

Table 20: Coefficients of the Linear Regression

Variable	B	p-value (Sig.)
(Constant)	1.405	
Heavy Listener	0.197	<.001
Victimization Experience	0.233	<.001
Age	0.001	0.019
Gender (f)	0.184	0.095

The results of the linear regression thereby support H2. In this model, the consumption of true crime podcasts and past victimization experiences are the strongest predictors of fear of crime. Gender has a marginal, barely significant influence on fear of crime, while age has no significant influence. Overall, the model can explain 17.1% of the variance in fear of crime, which means that other factors should also be considered in subsequent analyses. However, it is important to note that while the regression is significant, the output of a scatter plot shows that the relationship of the variables is not perfectly linear, which could violate one of the conditions for linear regression. This could mean that there are other factors or non-linear relationships that influence the fear of crime, again indicating that there are other factors or non-linear relationships that influence fear of crime.

4.2.3. Testing of H3

True crime podcast listeners tend to perceive the risk of becoming a victim of crime higher than non-listeners

To test this hypothesis, an independent t-test was carried out comparing the perceived risk of the crimes analyzed for listeners (N=344) and non-listeners (N=368). The results show a significant difference in the mean values of all perceived risks (see Table 21). The analysis of the effect sizes shows moderate, but significant differences between listeners and non-listeners.

Table 21: Results of the Independent t-test for Listeners and Non-listeners (Perceived Risk of Crime)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Listener Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Non-Listener Mean (SD)</i>	<i>t-value (df)</i>	<i>p-value (Sig.)</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
<i>Risk of Burglary when at Home</i>	2.70 (1.149)	2.31 (1.111)	-4.548 (710)	<.001	-0.341
<i>Risk of Burglary when away from Home</i>	2.85 (1.118)	2.59 (1.111)	-3.034 (710)	0.003	-0.228
<i>Risk of Sexual Assault</i>	2.55 (1.162)	2.14 (1.152)	-4.732 (710)	<.001	-0.355
<i>Risk of Attack with Knife or another Weapon</i>	2.90 (1.123)	2.52 (1.129)	-4.393 (710)	<.001	-0.329
<i>Risk of something being stolen by force</i>	2.90 (1.073)	2.55 (1.096)	-4.299 (710)	<.001	-0.322

The results of the independent t-test support H3, indicating that true crime podcast listeners perceive the risk of becoming a victim of crime as higher compared to non-listeners.

4.2.4. Testing of H4

True crime podcast listeners tend to perceive the world as more dangerous compared to non-listeners.

Another independent t-test was conducted to compare listeners (N=344) and non-listeners (N=368) regarding their level of agreement to the statement “the world is a dangerous place”. The results show a significant difference in the mean values between listeners and non-listeners (p=0.002), indicating that listeners score significantly higher on the scale than non-

listeners (see Table 22). The analysis of the effect sizes shows a moderate difference in the perception of the world as more dangerous between listeners and non-listeners

Table 22: Results of the Independent t-test for Listeners and Non-listeners (Mean World Perception)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Listener Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Non-Listener Mean (SD)</i>	<i>t-value (df)</i>	<i>p-value (Sig.)</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
<i>Mean World Perception</i>	4.02 (0.746)	3.82 (0.909)	3.168 (698)	0.02	0.236

The results support H4, indicating that true crime podcast listeners perceive the world as more dangerous than non-listeners. The difference is statistically significant, and the effect size indicates a moderate difference.

4.2.5. Testing of H5

Women experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to men.

To test whether women have significantly higher levels of fear of crime, an independent t-test was conducted between men (N=501) and women (N=499) on the variable fear of crime combined. The results show a significant difference in the mean values between men and women ($p < 0.001$), indicating that women score significantly higher on the scale than men. The analysis of the effect sizes shows a moderate difference in the fear levels (see Table 23).

Table 23: Results of the Independent t-test for Women and Men (Fear of Crime Combined)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Women Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Men Mean (SD)</i>	<i>t-value (df)</i>	<i>p-value (Sig.)</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
<i>Fear of Crime Combined</i>	2.47 (0.930)	2.18 (0.932)	4.948 (998)	<.001	0.313

The results support H5, indicating that women score significantly higher on the fear of crime scale than men. Therefore, it can be assumed that, in general, that women are more afraid of crime compared to men.

4.2.6. Testing of H6

Women are significantly more likely to consume true crime podcasts than men.

Although the results of the descriptive statistics already suggest that there are no major differences in terms of general true crime podcast consumption, it is still worth testing whether the small differences are significant or just coincidental. A chi-square test was carried out to compare two nominally scaled variables. The cross table shows that slightly more women stated that they listen to true crime podcasts than men (see Table 24).

Table 24: Crosstabulation Gender X True Crime Podcast Consumption

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Not Selected</i>	<i>Selected</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Female</i>	160	185	345
<i>Male</i>	208	159	367
<i>Total</i>	368	344	712

The results of the Chi-Square test show that there are significant differences between the genders ($\chi^2= 7.55$, $p=0.006$, see Table 25)

Table 25: Chi-Square Test Gender X True Crime Podcast Consumption

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Chi-Square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p-value (Sig.)</i>
<i>True Crime Podcast Consumption X Gender</i>	712	7.553	1	0.006

The results show support for H6, indicating that significantly more women listen to true crime podcasts than men, despite the frequencies showing only minor differences. Therefore, it can be assumed that, in general, women are more likely to consume true crime podcasts than men.

4.2.7. Testing of H7

Women are more likely than men to consume true crime podcasts as a means of engaging in safety work and practicing defensive vigilance.

To test this hypothesis, another independent t-test was carried out comparing the mean values of men and women regarding their agreement with the statements of the safety work and defensive vigilance variable. Within the group of true crime podcast listeners (n=344), men (n=159) were compared with women (n=185). The results of the t-test show a significant difference in the mean values between the genders ($p < 0.001$), indicating that men scored significantly higher on the scale than women. When looking at the effect sizes, the mean value of the female-coded group is lower by $d = -0.38$. Although this is a small to moderate effect, it is significant (see Table 26).

Table 26: Results of the Independent t-test for Females and Males (Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Female Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Male Mean (SD)</i>	<i>t-value (df)</i>	<i>p-value (Sig.)</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
<i>Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance</i>	3.30 (0.936)	3.67 (1.009)	-3.528 (342)	<.001	-0.382

The results of the independent t-test do not support H7; instead, they suggest the opposite. The findings indicate that men are more likely to consume true crime podcasts to understand potential risks and learn how to prepare for them.

5. Discussion

5.1. Summary of the Results

5.1.1. Sample

Before the results of this study are placed in the context of existing research, they are briefly summarized below. The study sample consisted of 1,000 participants, with an almost equal

gender distribution (49.9% women, 50.1% men) and an average age of 41.2 years (SD = 13.3), ranging from 16 to 65 years. The age group of 45 to 54-year-olds was the largest group at 25%. This distribution corresponds to the distribution of the German population according to the 2012 census. In terms of educational level, most participants had a low to intermediate degree, with only 18.5% having an academic degree.

Podcast consumption was strongly represented in the sample: 71.2% regularly listened to podcasts, and almost half (48.3%) of regular listeners consumed true crime podcasts. The subgroup of true crime podcast listeners comprised 344 people, which corresponded to 34.4% of the total sample. Among these true crime podcast listeners, 53.7% were female and 46.3% male, indicating a slight predominance of women in this group. The largest age group among true crime listeners were the 25 to 34-year-olds, who made up 23.3% of listeners. Consequently, the true crime podcast listeners in this sample were slightly more female and mostly between 25 to 34 years old. In terms of consumption, most true crime listeners consumed the podcasts regularly: 84% stated they listened to true crime podcasts at least once a week, and the average listener spent 1 to 2 hours a week listening to true crime podcasts. A smaller but relevant proportion (17.7%) even listened for more than 4 hours a week. Additionally, over 53% of respondents had been listening to true crime podcasts for a year or longer. When looking at the consumption situations, it became apparent that true crime podcasts were frequently consumed in comfortable situations, such as when relaxing (62.2%) or before going to bed (51.2%), but also while commuting (44.2%) or carrying out routine tasks, like cooking or cleaning. Heavy listeners in the sample of true crime podcast listeners were defined as those who consumed true crime podcasts both regularly over longer periods of time and for several hours per week. This group was categorized on a scale of 1 (light listeners) to 5 (very heavy listeners). In the sample, 41.2% of true crime listeners were heavy or very heavy listeners (values 4 and 5). Light listeners (value 1) only made up 16.3% of listeners, indicating that true crime podcast are heavy podcast listeners in general.

The descriptive results on fear of crime showed that the majority of respondents perceived the risk of crime as rather low: 65.5% rated the risk of becoming a victim of crime as (very) low. In terms of the emotive feeling of fear of crime, 41.3% of participants showed (very) low fear, while only 23.2% were (very) afraid. A similar picture emerged for fear of rape,

where 40.6% of respondents had a (very) low fear. Avoidance behavior was also rather moderate: 35.9% exhibited moderate avoidance behavior, while 34.6% exhibited little or no avoidance behavior. Defensive behavior, such as the purchase of self-defense devices, was observed in 10.8% of cases, with pepper spray being the most frequently mentioned device. However, the examination of the mean world syndrome showed that a large proportion, 70.7% of participants, perceived the world as a dangerous place, contradicting the fact that, in general, they didn't seem to be afraid of becoming a victim of crime. This might indicate that fear of crime was rather perceived as an abstract construct, not affecting the individual much, even though they lived in a world that was generally perceived as dangerous.

5.1.2. Research question and Hypotheses

Hypotheses

Overall, the results of the hypothesis tests showed that the consumption of true crime podcasts had a significant influence on the fear of crime and the perception of the world as a dangerous place (see Table 26). The first hypothesis (H1), that true crime podcast listeners have a higher fear of crime than non-listeners, was supported by an independent t-test. The results showed that true crime podcast listeners had significantly higher scores on emotive fear of crime, fear of rape, perceived risk of crime, and avoidance behavior. However, it should be noted that although the differences between listeners and non-listeners were statistically significant, the practical relevance of the results remained moderate, with small to medium effect sizes (all Cohen's d between 0.277 and 0.371).

The second hypothesis (H2) tested whether heavier consumption of true crime podcasts predicted a higher fear of crime. This hypothesis was confirmed by a multiple linear regression, taking several control variables into account. The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between the consumption of true crime podcasts and a combined fear of crime variable (consisting of the variables emotive fear of crime, perceived risk of crime, fear of rape and avoidance behavior). In addition, previous victimizing experiences were also found to correlate significantly with increased fear, while gender had a weak, almost significant influence. In summary, the model explained 17.1% of the variance in fear of crime, indicating a moderate influence of true crime podcast consumption on fear of crime. This finding indicates that while true crime podcasts appear to have an impact on fear of

crime, there are other, more important factors that should be considered when analyzing fear of crime.

In relation to cultivation theory, the next hypotheses tested the mean world syndrome using two independent t-tests. The third Hypothesis (H3) tested whether true crime podcast listeners perceive the risk of becoming a victim of crime higher than non-listeners. The results show that listeners rate the risk of burglary, sexual assault, assault with a weapon and the risk of robbery as significantly higher than non-listeners. The fourth hypothesis (H4), that true crime podcast listeners perceive the world as more dangerous than non-listeners, was also supported by a t-test. The results showed that listeners of true crime podcasts agreed significantly more strongly with the statement that the world is a dangerous place than non-listeners. Again, the differences were statistically significant, with a moderate effect size, suggesting that true crime podcasts had an impact on the mean world syndrome with moderate practical relevance of the results.

The following hypotheses focused on the relationship between women and true crime content. To test whether women turn to true crime podcasts because they are more afraid of becoming a victim of crime, the fifth hypothesis analyzed whether women experience higher levels of fear of crime than men to begin with. The results of the independent t-test showed that women scored significantly higher on the fear of crime combined scale than men, with a moderate effect size. The sixth hypothesis (H6) that women are more likely to consume true crime podcasts in general, was confirmed by a chi-square test. Although the percentage difference between men and women was relatively small, the test showed that women listened to true crime podcasts significantly more often. This difference was statistically significant, even if the practical significance was rather low due to the small percentage differences. The seventh hypothesis (H7), that women use true crime podcasts more frequently to engage in safety work and defensive vigilance, was not confirmed, but refuted. In fact, the results of the independent t-test showed that men had significantly higher scores on security work and defensive vigilance scale than women. This contradicted the initial assumption that women were more likely to engage in such measures and suggested that men might be more inclined to use true crime podcasts to prepare for potential dangers.

Table 27: Confirmation and Rejection of the Hypotheses

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Confirmed</i>	<i>Rejected</i>
<i>H1</i> : True crime podcast listeners experience a higher level of fear of crime compared to non-listeners.	X	
<i>H2</i> : Heavier levels of true crime podcast consumption predict higher levels of fear of crime.	X	
<i>H3</i> : True crime podcast listeners tend to perceive the risk of becoming a victim of crime higher than non-listeners.	X	
<i>H4</i> : True crime podcast listeners tend to perceive the world as more dangerous compared to non-listeners.	X	
<i>H5</i> : Women experience higher levels of fear of crime compared to men.	X	
<i>H6</i> : Women are significantly more likely to consume true crime podcasts than men.	X	
<i>H7</i> : Women are more likely than men to consume true crime podcasts as a means of engaging in safety work and practicing defensive vigilance.		X

Implications for the Research Question

The results of this study provide important findings with regard to the research question of how true crime podcasts influence the fear of crime. It shows that the consumption of true crime podcasts is associated with a significantly higher fear of crime. Both the comparison between listeners and non-listeners and the analysis of consumption intensity show that listeners of these podcasts seem to experience a greater fear of crime. This fear relates to various dimensions, such as the emotional fear of crime, the fear of rape, avoidance behavior and the perceived danger of becoming a victim of crime. It can therefore be concluded that true crime podcasts increase their listeners' fear of crime. One particularly important aspect is that more intensive consumption, as is the case with so-called “heavy listeners”, is associated with an even greater fear of crime. This indicates that regular and long-term consumption of true crime podcasts has a reinforcing effect on the fear of crime, which points to a confirmation of the cultivation theory. The significant differences between listeners and non-listeners confirm this tendency, even if the practical significance of the results is moderate with small to medium effect sizes. Furthermore, true crime podcast listeners perceive the world as more dangerous than non-listeners, which points to Gerbner’s

mean world syndrome. This distorted perception could increase the general feeling of insecurity and thus further increase the subjective fear of crime. This suggests that true crime podcasts not only fuel specific fears of certain crimes, but also negatively influence the general feeling of safety. They thus contribute to a heightened perception of a dangerous world.

In summary, the results of this study show a clear link between the consumption of true crime podcasts and an increased fear of crime. True crime podcasts increase their listeners' fear of crime and influence their perception of the world as a dangerous place. This answers the research question to the effect that true crime podcasts have a demonstrable influence on fear of crime, even if the practical relevance of this effect is moderate. In the following chapter, the findings of the present study are integrated into the existing body of research. By comparing the outcomes with prior studies, key patterns and divergences are identified, offering a broader understanding of true crime podcast consumption and its implications. Furthermore, this section addresses the gaps and limitations of previous research and highlights how the present study contributes to refining current theories and suggesting new insights for future research.

5.2. Integration of the Results in the Body of Research

5.2.1. Podcast Consumption

In terms of podcast consumption, the results of this study align with findings from Edison (2019, 2024b) and Appinio and Podstars (2024), revealing that a large proportion of respondents are podcast listeners. In this study, 86% reported listening to podcasts at least once a month, which is comparable to the Appinio study from January, where 81% of respondents indicated monthly podcast use. In contrast, the US American study from 2024 found that 47% of US Americans were monthly podcast listeners. The results are also in line with the general trend that the podcast market in Germany appears to have grown significantly in recent years, especially compared to the 17% of monthly podcast listeners reported by the Edison Germany study in 2019. In terms of weekly podcast consumption, the results show that 34% of respondents listened to podcasts at least once a week. This figure is exactly the same as the data from Edison Research (2024a) for the US, where 34%

of respondents listen to podcasts on a weekly basis. Furthermore, German and US American podcast listeners share similar preferences, with comedy being the most popular genre, closely followed by true crime and news/politics podcasts. The Appinio study from January reported similar findings, with a notable increase in true crime podcast listeners on the same panel by six percentage points (from 41% to 48%) since then. However, there is an interesting difference in the other genres. Society and culture are more prominent in the US, while these categories are less emphasized in this study, as well as the Appinio and Podstar's (2024) study. In Germany, on the other hand, the knowledge genre seems to play a central role, which does not appear among the top genres in the US. These differences in the most popular genres may reflect cultural preferences and the respective media markets of the two countries. However, both countries share a strong preference for true crime, which underlines the universal appeal of this genre.

Gender distribution among listeners was almost even, reflecting the trend in Edison Research's 2024 study, which shows that gender inequalities in podcast listenership has steadily balanced since 2014. While significantly more men were podcast listeners in 2014, this gap has closed considerably by 2024 (Edison Research, 2016, 2024b). Additionally, a higher proportion of listeners fell within the 35 to 44 age group compared to the overall sample and the general German population, suggesting that this demographic represents a substantial group of German podcast listeners. There was also a slight increase in listeners aged 25 to 34, while those over 55 were underrepresented compared to the overall sample. This is also in line with Appinio and Podstar's (2024) and Edison's (2024b) results, where most monthly listeners were in younger age groups.

Additionally, the podcast listeners in this sample showed similarities with those in the other studies regarding their educational level. Like findings from Edison (2019, 2024b) and Nielsen (2022), a higher proportion of listeners had a higher education compared to the general German population. Notably, all five individuals in the sample with a doctoral degree reported listening to podcasts at least once a month. These findings align with other studies on podcast consumption, indicating that podcast listeners tend to be younger, with a nearly equal gender distribution and a comparatively high level of education.

5.2.2. True Crime Podcast Consumption

Previous research on true crime podcast listeners has consistently shown that the majority tends to be young and predominantly female (Seven.One Media, 2022). These demographic characteristics were particularly evident in the only German study conducted on true crime listeners so far (by Seven.One Media), where 93% of true crime podcast listeners were female and 74% were between 16 and 29 years old. Similar results appeared in the US, where 66% of true crime podcast listeners were women (Naseer & St. Aubin, 2023). However, this distribution was only partially mirrored in the current study: while as in the other studies, a significant portion of true crime listeners were young (41% aged between 16 and 34), there was also a greater representation of older listeners compared to the Seven.One Media study. Notably, gender differences were even greater, with this study showing a nearly balanced ratio of 53.7% female to 46.3% male true crime listeners. Although these results are representative of the general German population rather than specifically true crime listeners, they nonetheless present significant findings that suggest the gender distribution among German true crime listeners may be more balanced than previously assumed. However, in this context, it is important to note that the t-test analysis from H4 (women consume significantly more true crime podcasts than men) supports the finding that women do, in fact, consume more true crime podcasts. However, this aspect should be further investigated in future research, analyzing the role that true crime podcasts play for men as well as for women.

In contrast to Naseer and St. Aubin's (2023) findings from the US, which suggest that less educated individuals are more likely to consume true crime podcasts, this study found that true crime podcast consumers were more highly educated, with 24.1% holding at least a bachelor's degree (compared to 18.5% in the overall sample). This aligns with Boling and Hull's (2018) results, where true crime podcast listeners also had a higher level of education. Notably, four out of five respondents with a doctorate—the highest degree surveyed—consume true crime podcasts. While this figure is not representative of all true crime podcast listeners, it does highlight an interesting trend.

In this study, 84% of respondents reported listening to true crime podcasts at least once a week for 1-2 hours, which was similar to the findings of the Seven.One (2022) study, where

88% of true crime listeners listened at least once a week. While in the present study, true crime podcasts were mainly listened to in relaxed situations, such as while relaxing or before going to bed, the Seven.One Media (2022) study found that listeners consumed true crime podcasts more frequently during active activities like doing household chores, commuting, or in the car. Notably, 51.2% of respondents in this study mentioned listening before going to bed, making it the second most frequently mentioned situation, compared to only 31% in the Seven.One Media study. Previous research, such as the studies by Seven.One Media (2022) and Boling and Hull (2018), found that true crime podcast listeners were generally considered heavy podcast listeners, not only with true crime but also other podcast genres. Although the consumption of other podcast genres by true crime listeners was not explicitly surveyed in this study, the high scores on the heavy listener scale for true crime podcasts indicate that the true crime listeners in this study also consumed podcasts frequently and extensively.

5.2.3. True Crime Podcasts, Fear of Crime and Cultivation Theory

As previously discussed, in almost all studies on the topic of true crime, such as those by Boling & Hull (2018), Vicary & Fraley (2010), and the Seven.One Media study (2022), the majority of true crime listeners were female. However, the way these studies recruited their participants could be an important factor in this context. Boling and Hull (2018) found that female true crime podcast listeners were more likely than their male counterparts to be active in online podcast communities and engage in discussions about content with other users. Many of the studies investigating the relationship between gender and true crime have recruited respondents from these online communities on social media. For instance, Vicary and Fraley (2010) examined published reader reviews on online platforms, Boling and Hull (2018) recruited participants via true crime discussion forums on Reddit, and the Seven.One Media (2022) study invited true crime podcast listeners to participate in the study via Instagram and Facebook. Given that women are more inclined to discuss true crime content online, it's essential to consider that this recruitment method might have introduced a selection bias. This is further supported by the findings of this study, where the gender ratio among true crime listeners was more balanced. This again underscores the need for future research to take a closer look at the gender distribution of true crime podcast listeners.

Boling and Hull (2018) also found that women who consume true crime podcasts were more likely to agree with statements like “I listen to true crime so I can learn about what could happen to me.” Vitis and Ryan (2021) explored this approach further but found no evidence that women consume true crime podcasts for the purpose of learning about potential dangers. This aligns with the findings of the present study: the results of the t-test comparing men and women on their average scores for the defensive vigilance and safety work scale did not indicate higher agreement among women. In fact, men were significantly more likely to agree with statements like “I listen to true crime because I like to know what situations to be wary of.” This could suggest that women are more inclined to consume true crime podcasts to satisfy voyeuristic tendencies, engage in social interaction, or escape from their everyday lives, as was also observed in Boling and Hull’s (2018) study. Additionally, Boling (2022) described how true crime podcasts have served as a means for victims of domestic violence to process their traumatic experiences. This therapeutic aspect of true crime podcast consumption was not examined in the present study but could represent an interesting area for future research.

Research by Vitis and Ryan (2021) highlights the significant role that true crime podcasts, and media in general, play in shaping consumers’ perceptions of reality. Vitis and Ryan, along with other authors (Boling & Hull, 2018; Lang & Alejandro, 2024; Slakoff, 2023; Vitis, 2023), particularly emphasize that the portrayal of women as victims in true crime podcasts often perpetuates and reinforces traditional stereotypes and narratives. The authors argue that the depiction of women as being at fault for their victimization and the overrepresentation of white female victims are problematic portrayals that can become more and more established in the consumers’ minds through repetitive storytelling (Lang & Alejandro, 2024; Slakoff, 2023; Vitis, 2023). This kind of storytelling perpetuates harmful stereotypes and narratives, such as victim-blaming or the missing white women syndrome. Another consequence of violent media portrayals that lead to misinformation is that consumers who often consume violent media tend to overestimate crime rates (Vitis, 2021). This can result in consumers perceiving their own risk of becoming a crime victim as higher than non-consumers, as was also the case in the present study: true crime podcast listeners rated the risk of becoming a victim of burglary, sexual assault, an attack with a weapon, or robbery as significantly higher than those who do not listen to true crime podcasts.

As a cognitive process is involved in assessing the risk of crime, Ferraro (1996) suggests that this component is closely linked to the fear of crime and a solid indicator for measuring an individual's fear of crime. Research indicates that, in addition to perceived risk, the severity of the crime and socio-demographic factors also contribute to fear levels (Warr & Stafford, 1983; Rader, 2007). This includes that, in general, women tend to experience a higher fear of crime, even though crime statistics suggest that they are less likely to be victimized (McDonald et al., 2021). This phenomenon is also called the “fear-victimization paradox” (McDonald et al., 2021, p. 2086) or “gender-fear paradox” (May et al., 2010, p. 160). An explanation for women's higher fear levels is the so-called “shadow thesis” (Ferraro, 1996, p. 686), which postulates that women's fear of crimes like robbery actually stems from a fear of rape. Therefore, according to this thesis, women are not actually more afraid being robbed than men, but fear being raped whenever a face-to-face confrontation is likely (Ferraro, 1996; McDonald et al., 2021). These findings were also supported by the present study: women scored significantly higher on the fear of crime scale compared to men, suggesting that they generally experience a greater fear of becoming victims of crime than men. In this context, some authors, such as Vicary and Fraley (2010), suggest that women are inclined to consume true crime content precisely because of this heightened fear of crime. One factor that may support this idea is that true crime podcasts are especially popular among young people. Ferraro's (1996) findings also suggest that young women experience a heightened fear of crime, as they often face life changes such as starting a new phase of education, which require them to adapt to unfamiliar environments. This can lead to feelings of insecurity and an increased likelihood of engaging in crime-avoidance behaviors, which in turn serve as indicators for heightened fear of crime. Since both this study and previous research have shown that especially young people (and women) frequently consume true crime podcasts, this could suggest that they engage with this content to prepare themselves for potential dangers and to feel more secure. McDonald and his colleagues (2021) investigated this further and found that women indeed turned to true crime content to learn about defense strategies and practice defensive vigilance. Especially women who already experienced sexual assaults were more fearful of being victimized again, which in turn drove them to look for more information about crime. As these results could not be supported in the present study (in the present results, men scored significantly higher on the

defensive vigilance and safety work scales), more research should be conducted to explore this phenomenon further.

However, as Vicary and Fraley (2010) describe it, an increased true crime consumption for reasons of safety work and defensive vigilance could also lead to the opposite outcome:

A vicious cycle may be occurring: A woman fears becoming the victim of a crime, so, consciously or unconsciously, she turns to true crime [...] in a possible effort to learn strategies and techniques to prevent becoming murdered. However, with each true crime book she reads, this woman learns about another murderer and his victims, thereby increasing her awareness and fear of crime (p. 85).

The findings of present study show support for this theory. Hypotheses H1 to H4 were formulated to test whether increased true crime podcast consumption leads to increased fear of crime, and the results confirmed this assumption, supporting Gerbner's cultivation theory. In summary, the study's results demonstrated that true crime podcast listeners scored significantly higher on the fear of crime scale compared to non-listeners. Moreover, there is indication of a linear, directional relationship between true crime consumption and fear of crime: the more frequently and longer someone consumed true crime podcasts, the higher their level of fear. Gerbner's (1969) cultivation theory suggests that mass media (primarily television at the time) significantly influence how consumers perceive reality. In its simplest form, a cultivation effect refers to the relationship between the amount of media consumption and the perception of reality that consumers derive from it (Gerbner et al., 1978). Within this theory, the depiction of violence in the media plays a particularly crucial role. Gerbner's concept of the *mean world syndrome* assumes that consumers who frequently consume violent media content develop a more pessimistic view of the world, often believing it to be a dangerous place (Potter, 2014). This perception is also related to an increased fear of crime and an overestimation of their own risk of becoming a victim of crime (Gerbner et al., 1979; Jamieson & Romer, 2014). Although the research results in this regard are ambivalent and there are also critical voices, many studies found support for the cultivation theory and the mean world syndrome. For example, Reuband (1998) found that viewing crime magazines led to increased fear with a linear effect: the more such magazines were consumed, the greater the fear of crime. This mirrors the mechanism observed in the present study regarding true crime podcast consumption, supporting the theory that the

cultivation hypothesis is also applicable to the medium of true crime podcasts. Interestingly, Reuband (1998) only found this correlation in relation to crime magazines, but not in relation to fictional crime series or films. Reuband attributes this phenomenon to the nature of true crime content, which shows consumers how the victims initially go about their normal routines until their lives change fundamentally from one second to the next. According to Reuband, this embedding in the everyday lives of normal people illustrates very well to consumers how quickly they too could become victims of a crime, which in turn increases the risk perception of crime. This effect was also evident among the respondents in this study: the true crime podcast listeners rated the risk of becoming a victim of a burglary, a sexual assault, an assault with a weapon and a robbery as significantly higher than non-listeners. They also showed significantly higher agreement with the statement “The world is a dangerous place”.

5.3. Limitations

As with any scientific study, there are limitations to consider. Since the sample represents the general German population and not exclusively true crime podcast listeners, the results cannot be generalized to the entire group of podcast listeners without further analysis. A more targeted selection of true crime listeners in future studies would contribute to a more precise accounting of the effects of podcast consumption. For example, while it’s not possible to determine with certainty the exact proportion of male true crime podcast listeners in Germany, the results suggest that the overall gender distribution may be more balanced than was initially suggested by the Seven.One Media study (2022) results.

Additionally, to prevent high drop-out rates due to the length of the survey, only short scales (fewer than ten items) were used. Although each variable was measured using multiple items (between four and seven), the use of longer, more reliable scales might have contributed to increased measurement accuracy, which would have strengthened the validity of the results and better captured subtle differences in consumption behavior. For example, true crime podcast consumption could have been measured more precisely by asking how often per week, how many episodes, and how many different podcasts etc. were listened to. No additional control variables were considered for the tests of H1, H3, H4 and H5, which

carries the risk that other influencing factors such as socioeconomic status or personality traits could have distorted the results. Future studies should therefore integrate these variables in order to make the results more robust and meaningful. Additionally, the small to moderate effect sizes indicate that the influence of true crime podcasts on fear of crime may be less relevant in practice than assumed. Therefore, these results should be interpreted with caution and verified by further studies. This could indicate that the influence of true crime podcasts on fear of crime is smaller than initially assumed.

Regarding the linear regression conducted to test whether higher true crime podcast consumption is associated with increased fear levels, a scatter plot was used to verify the linearity of the variables. This revealed an ambiguous linear relationship, which may have influenced the results, violating a condition for linear regressions. This may affect the validity and accuracy of the results. Future research should consider alternative statistical approaches such as non-linear analyses or logistic regression in order to map the relationships more precisely. Furthermore, the linear regression model only explained 17.1% of the variance in fear of crime, leaving over 80% of the influence on fear of crime unexplained. Due to the limited scope of a master's thesis, the focus here was only on the factors of gender, age, past victimization experience and true crime consumption. However, the low variance explanation indicates that there are numerous other factors that should be taken into account in future research. For example, the results of Rader et al. (2007) suggest that the fear of crime correlates with many other factors, such as housing situation, neighborhood, victimization of friends and relatives, or income.

As this is a cross-sectional study, only snapshots of the relationship between true crime consumption and fear of crime can be shown. However, in order to better understand the causality, a longitudinal design that examines the influence of podcast consumption on the development of fear over a longer period of time would be necessary. Thus, only a correlation between the two variables can be established, but it cannot be said with certainty which variable influences which. Ultimately, it remains unclear whether the consumption of true crime podcasts leads to a greater fear of crime, or whether people who are already more fearful tend to consume true crime podcasts. To find out with greater certainty what influence true crime podcasts really have on fear of crime and in which direction the causal

relationships run, it would make sense to conduct a longitudinal study over a longer period of time.

In this study, a quantitative approach was chosen to investigate whether true crime podcasts have an influence on fear of crime. However, to investigate the underlying mechanisms in more detail, a mixed methods approach or a purely qualitative study would certainly yield insightful results. A mixed methods approach would allow quantitative results to be complemented by qualitative data, which could provide a deeper understanding of individual experiences and subjective perceptions related to true crime podcasts and their influence on fear of crime. Especially since fear is a very subjective, complex construct that can vary greatly depending on the person and the content consumed, a qualitative approach could have provided even more in-depth results. In particular, the connection between women, true crime podcasts and the reasons for consumption (with regard to safety work and defensive vigilance) have already been discussed frequently in research, but have not yet been investigated in detail (Vicary & Fraley, 2010; Vitis & Ryan, 2021). A qualitative analysis of the podcast content would allow for a closer examination of how narrative elements and representations of crime contribute to the cultivation of fear, which would deepen the assumptions of the cultivation hypothesis and better understand the mechanisms behind the influence of media on the fear of crime. Despite this limitation, all results nevertheless provide valuable indications of possible trends.

5.4. Recommendations for further research

The findings of the present study offer numerous starting points for further research to better understand the influence of true crime podcasts on the fear of crime and to explore the mechanisms behind it. A key recommendation is to conduct longitudinal studies to investigate the causal relationships between the consumption of true crime podcasts and the development of fear of crime in more detail. As the present study used a cross-sectional design, only correlations, but no causal conclusions can be drawn. However, longitudinal studies could observe over a longer period of time whether the regular consumption of such podcasts leads to increased fear or whether people who are already more afraid of crime are more likely to turn to this media format. Furthermore, a mixed-methods approach would

provide valuable additional insights as it combines quantitative and qualitative data and would make it possible to better understand the individual experiences and subjective perceptions of podcast listeners. While quantitative data would provide insight into general trends and correlations, qualitative interviews or focus groups could reveal the personal reasons and motivations for true crime podcast consumption and how it influences subjective feelings of safety. This would be particularly relevant when investigating the connections between women, true crime podcasts and their use in connection with safety work and defensive vigilance.

The inclusion of additional control variables such as socioeconomic status, personality traits or media literacy would also make the results of future studies more robust. This would help to clarify the influence of these potential confounding factors on the relationship between true crime consumption and fear of crime and enable a more precise analysis of the correlations. Furthermore, a qualitative content analysis of the podcast episodes could help to identify narrative structures, representations of crime and safety, and the specific content that triggers fear. In this context, it could also be valuable to explore the portrayal of women as victims in greater depth and examine whether this depiction has a specific impact on the fear of crime, particularly among women.

Additionally, it would be useful to incorporate other theoretical models, such as the *Uses and Gratifications* theory, into future research. This theory could help to better understand what needs and motivations drive listeners to consume true crime podcasts and how these motivations relate to feelings of fear and safety. To improve the generalizability of the results, future studies should examine a more specific and diverse sample of true crime podcast listeners. This would make it possible to analyze differences between different demographic groups (e.g. age groups, education level, place of residence) and to better understand how different population groups react to the consumption of true crime podcasts. It would also be interesting to conduct international comparative studies to analyze cultural differences related to true crime podcast consumption and fear of crime. As media consumption and perceptions of crime may differ in different countries, such studies could provide valuable insights into the role of cultural factors. Another research focus should be on investigating fear management strategies of true crime podcast listeners. It would be

interesting to investigate whether the consumption of podcasts serves as a kind of coping strategy to better prepare for possible dangers, or whether it rather reinforces the fear.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the effects of true crime podcasts on the fear of crime. The findings reveal that true crime podcasts have a significant influence on fear levels, with listeners exhibiting significantly higher levels of fear compared to non-listeners. In the analysis, various variables were used to measure fear; based on the concept of the threat of victimization (May et al., 2010), fear was assessed through the emotional feeling of fear, perceived likelihood of becoming a victim of crime, and avoidant behavior. Additionally, fear of rape was measured, reflecting the shadow hypothesis (Ferraro, 1996; McDonald et al., 2021), which posits that women's fear of face-to-face victimization is actually overshadowed by fear of rape. In all these fear variables, true crime podcast listeners scored higher fear levels than non-listeners. Moreover, a linear relationship was found: the more frequent and intense the true crime podcast consumption (heavy listeners were identified as those who had been consuming true crime podcasts for a longer period and multiple hours per week), the higher the levels of fear.

In line with cultivation theory, it was also examined whether true crime podcast listeners perceive the world as a more dangerous place in general and whether they estimate the likelihood of becoming a victim of a crime as higher compared to non-listeners. This assumption was also supported by the results. Previous research has indicated that true crime podcast listeners are predominantly female and tend to belong to younger demographics (Seven.One Media, 2022; Boling & Hull, 2018). However, these findings were only partially confirmed in the present study: while the majority of listeners were aged between 25 and 34, the gender distribution was almost balanced, with 53.7% female and 46.3% male listeners. Despite this, the data still demonstrated that women are significantly more likely to consume true crime podcasts than men. Earlier research, such as by Vicary and Fraley (2010), suggest that women especially enjoy consuming true crime media because they use them as an information tool to find out what could happen to them and feel better prepared for potential dangers. However, the hypothesis that women consume true crime podcasts to inform and prepare themselves for potential crimes could not be confirmed by the results. In contrast, the findings suggest that men consume true crime podcasts for those reasons. In this context it should be noted that the results also have certain limitations, for example, the study sample

is based on the German population as a whole and not on the population of German true crime podcast listeners, which can influence the results.

Nevertheless, the findings contribute important insights to the existing body of research and provide implications for future studies on true crime podcasts. The results suggest that there is indeed a connection between the fear of crime and true crime podcasts, which should be further explored in greater depth to identify potential psychological effects on an individual level, as well as societal consequences. As highlighted in the beginning of this thesis, increased fear of crime and an overestimated perception of becoming a crime victim can negatively impact the individual mental health (Corrigan, 2022). An illustrative example is Paige Sciarrino whose intense consumption of true crime podcasts led her to irrationally fear the worst when she noticed her neighbor's car parked for an unusually long time. Such heightened vigilance and anxiety can adversely affect not only listeners but also podcast hosts, who often need to engage in light entertainment to counterbalance the psychological stress of investigating gruesome cases (Schütze & Bartsch, 2024). The psychological impact of these negative consequences needs to be thoroughly investigated in order to uncover possible long-term effects. Such research could help to identify early indicators of psychological harm and pave the way for the implementation of preventive measures, such as targeted warnings or intervention strategies to minimize their effects.

Additionally, true crime podcasts appear to possess an addictive quality, as shown by this study and prior research, with listeners frequently and consistently engaging with this content for extended periods, making them heavy listeners (Seven.One Media, 2022). Researchers assume that this enormous consumption of true crime content is also used as a kind of protective strategy in order to be aware of potential dangers. However, this excessive consumption could in turn have negative consequences for the psyche (Vicary & Fraley, 2010).

This study has attempted to investigate this hypothesis in more detail. The results, however, could not confirm whether women specifically consume true crime podcasts to become more aware of potential dangers and prepare for them. Future research should explore this aspect to determine whether the hypothesis of a "vicious cycle," as proposed by Vicary and Fraley (2010), holds true. Such an inquiry would assess whether consuming true crime for

informational purposes leads to increased fear, subsequently fueling further consumption. These potential negative consequences of true crime consumption should not be overlooked, and it is crucial to investigate these impacts in greater depth to uncover the underlying mechanisms at play. Moreover, the need for further research into true crime podcasts extends beyond their potential negative impacts on mental health. Existing studies, such as those by Lang and Alejandro (2024), reveal that true crime podcasts often perpetuate problematic narratives and reinforce harmful stereotypes. These include examples where victims, particularly women, are blamed for their own victimization, spoken about in disrespectful language, or where cases involving white female victims are overrepresented, leading to false perceptions of crime rates (Slakoff & Duran, 2023). Moreover, true crime narratives sometimes employ strategies like victim blaming or invoking sympathy for the perpetrator. For instance, when a perpetrator's background is highlighted—such as a traumatic upbringing in a violent household—the narrative may shift some of the responsibility away from the individual. This framing can create a perception that the crime was an inevitable outcome of their circumstances, thereby partially absolving the perpetrator of guilt. Such storytelling techniques risk normalizing or even justifying criminal behavior, potentially diminishing the perceived severity of the crime and its impact on victims (Lang & Alejandro, 2024). In summary, certain narratives of true crime podcasts risk perpetuating and deepening misogynistic and racist tendencies within societies, allowing them to become further ingrained and continuously reinforced over time. By doing so, they partially justify gruesome crimes, which can have dangerous consequences. As media and the messages that are portrayed in them play a crucial role in shaping public opinion, the content of true crime podcasts should also be the subject of further investigation. In this context, it could be valuable to consider establishing guidelines or a code of conduct for the production of true crime podcasts and true crime content more broadly. Such frameworks could help ensure that the narratives presented are responsible and ethical, avoiding harmful practices like victim blaming, sensationalism, or the perpetuation of stereotypes. These guidelines might also encourage creators to provide context-sensitive storytelling, respect for victims and their families, and a balanced portrayal of criminal cases to prevent the normalization or justification of criminal behavior.

In conclusion, the aim of this study was to delve deeper into the influence of true crime podcasts on individuals. The findings indicate that while research in this field is still in its early stages, it is crucial to pursue further studies, especially given the continuously growing number of true crime podcast listeners.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Questionnaire published on Appinio (Translated to English)

Appendix B: SPSS Output in PDF Format

Appendix A: Questionnaire published on Appinio (Translated to English)

Questionnaire

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Source</i>
1. <i>Podcast Listening Habits</i>	How often do you listen to podcasts?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Never b. Once a month c. Several times a month d. Once a week e. Several times a week f. Daily 	
	What types of podcasts do you listen to?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. True Crime Podcasts (e.g., about real murder cases) b. Politics Podcasts (e.g., news) c. Entertainment Podcasts (e.g., comedy, talk shows, etc.) d. Self-Help and Relationship Podcasts (e.g., psychology, health, etc.) e. Sports Podcasts (e.g., about football) f. Other 	
2. <i>True Crime Podcast Listening Habits</i>	How much time do you spend listening to true crime podcasts?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Less than 1 hour per week b. 1-2 hours per week c. 3-4 hours per week d. More than 4 hours per week 	
	How long have you been listening to true crime podcasts?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Less than 6 months b. 6 to 12 months c. 1 to 2 years d. More than 2 years 	
	Which true crime podcasts do you listen to most frequently?	
	→ Open ended	

- Where do you primarily listen to true crime podcasts? **Vitis and Ryan, 2021 (adapted)**
- a. While relaxing (in bed, on the sofa)
 - b. While driving/getting somewhere (in the car, metro, bus, ...)
 - c. While working
 - d. While exercising
 - e. While cooking
 - f. While cleaning
 - g. Before bed
 - h. Somewhere else...

How engaged are you while listening to true crime podcasts?

- a. Very engaged
- b. Engaged
- c. Neutral
- d. Not engaged
- e. Not engaged at all

2. *Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance*

- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: **Vitis and Ryan, 2021 (adapted); McDonald et al., 2021**
- a. I listen to true crime podcasts because I'm interested in how people become victims of crime.
 - b. I listen to true crime podcasts because I like to know what situations to be wary of.
 - c. I listen to true crime podcasts so I can learn what could happen to me as a victim.
 - d. Listening to true crime podcasts has taught me things that have saved me from dangerous situations before.
 - e. I listen to true crime so I can learn about how to defend myself.
 - a. Listening to true crime makes me feel more safe because I feel prepared for potential crimes that could happen to me.

<p>3. <i>Perceived Risk of Crime</i></p>	<p>In this question, please rate <u>the chance that a specific event will happen to you during the coming year</u>. Please indicate the likelihood of the following events (5-Point Likert-Scale; very unlikely to very likely).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Someone breaking into your home while you are away. b. Someone breaking into your home while you are there. c. Someone forcing you to have sexual intercourse with them against your will. d. Someone stealing something from you by force. e. Someone beating you or attacking you with a their fists, knife, gun or other weapon. 	<p>Rader et al., 2007; Ferraro, 1996 (adapted)</p>
<p>4. <i>Fear of Criminal Victimization Index (Emotive Feeling)</i></p>	<p>In the last questions, you were asked about the likelihood of you being victimized. Now, please think about your <u>emotive feeling of fear</u>. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (5-Point Likert-Scale; strongly disagree to strongly agree).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. I am afraid someone will break into my house while I am away. b. I am afraid someone will break into my house while I am there. c. I am afraid of being raped or sexually assaulted. d. I am afraid of being attacked by someone on the street with a weapon (e.g. a knife,...). 	<p>Rader et al., 2007; Ferraro, 1996 (adapted)</p>
<p>5. <i>Behavioral Measures (Avoidance)</i></p>	<p>Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (5-Point Likert-Scale; strongly disagree to strongly agree).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. I generally avoid unsafe areas during the day because of crime. b. I avoid unsafe areas during the night because of crime. c. Within the past year, I have limited or changed some activities because I feared being victimized. 	<p>Rader et al., 2007; Ferraro, 1996 (adapted)</p>

	d. I am afraid to go out at night because I might become a victim of crime.	
	Are there any activities that fear of crime has prevented you from doing in the past 12 months?	Ferraro, 1996
	a. No b. Yes, namely...	
6. <i>Behavioral Measures (Defensive)</i>	Have you acquired anything lately to defend or protect yourself (e.g. bought pepper spray, added outside lightning to your home, learned about self-defense, ...)?	Ferraro, 1996 (adapted)
	a. No b. Yes, namely..	
7. <i>Victimization Experience</i>	Please indicate whether any of the following events have already happened to you (Yes/ No/ I am not sure or prefer not to answer) .	Rader et al., 2007 (adapted)
	a. Has anyone broken into your house when you were there or away? b. Has anyone made or tried to make you have sex by using force? c. Did anyone take or attempt to take something directly from you by using force? d. Did anyone attack you with a knife, their hands, or another weapon? e. Have you experienced anything else criminal that is not listed here?	
8. <i>Fear of Rape</i>	Please indicate how often you take the following safety measures due to fear of sexual assault (5-Point Likert-Scale; Never to Very Often).	Senn and Dzinis, 1996 (adapted)
	a. Before going to bed at night, I make sure the doors are securely locked. b. When I have to travel alone by subway/bus at night, I feel anxious. c. I pay special attention to wearing the "right" clothes.	

- d. When I have to go out late at night, I take precautions.
- e. When I choose a seat on the bus or subway, I pay attention to who is sitting nearby.
- f. I carry items with me (keys, knife, something sharp) when I am out alone at night.

*Perception
of the World
as Mean*

How much do you agree with the statement "The world is a dangerous place"? (5-Point Likert-Scale; I Don't agree at all to I fully agree).

Appendix B: SPSS Output in PDF Format

Frequencies

Notes

Output Created		18-JUL-2024 13:47:49
Comments		
Input	Data	/Users/johannaelenaholzemer/Downloads/DataSet_TrueCrime.sav
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	N of Rows in Working Data File	1000
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data.
Syntax		<p>FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=Age_Groups gender HeavyListener_Recoded PastVictimization_Recoded</p> <p>PerceivedRisk_Recoded EmotiveFeeling_Recoded Fear_of_Rape_Recode AvoidantBehavior_Recoded</p> <p>DefensiveBehavior_Recoded Defensive_Vigilance_and_Safety_Work_recode /ORDER=ANALYSIS.</p>
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,02
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,00

Statistics

N	Age in Groups: 1=16-24, 2=25-34, 3=35-44, 4=45-54, 5=55-65		gender	Heavy Listener Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Past Victimization Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)
	Valid	Missing				
	1000	0	1000	344	1000	1000
	0	0	0	656	0	0

Statistics

		Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)	Fear of Rape Recorded (new min=1, new max=5)	Avoidance Behavior Recorded (new min=1, new max=5)	Defensive Behavior Recorded (0= Has not bought anything, 1= Bought something to defend)	Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance (new min=1, new max=5)
N	Valid	1000	1000	1000	1000	344
	Missing	0	0	0	0	656

Frequency Table

Age in Groups: 1=16-24, 2=25-34, 3=35-44, 4=45-54,
5=55-65

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	153	15,3	15,3	15,3
	2,00	182	18,2	18,2	33,5
	3,00	209	20,9	20,9	54,4
	4,00	250	25,0	25,0	79,4
	5,00	206	20,6	20,6	100,0
	Total	1000	100,0	100,0	

gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	f	499	49,9	49,9	49,9
	m	501	50,1	50,1	100,0
	Total	1000	100,0	100,0	

Heavy Listener Recorded (new min=1, new max=5)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	56	5,6	16,3	16,3
	2,00	60	6,0	17,4	33,7
	3,00	86	8,6	25,0	58,7
	4,00	72	7,2	20,9	79,7
	5,00	70	7,0	20,3	100,0
	Total	344	34,4	100,0	
Missing	System	656	65,6		
Total		1000	100,0		

Past Victimization Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	616	61,6	61,6	61,6
	2,00	190	19,0	19,0	80,6
	3,00	123	12,3	12,3	92,9
	4,00	55	5,5	5,5	98,4
	5,00	16	1,6	1,6	100,0
	Total	1000	100,0	100,0	

Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	299	29,9	29,9	29,9
	2,00	356	35,6	35,6	65,5
	3,00	272	27,2	27,2	92,7
	4,00	60	6,0	6,0	98,7
	5,00	13	1,3	1,3	100,0
	Total	1000	100,0	100,0	

Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	155	15,5	15,5	15,5
	2,00	258	25,8	25,8	41,3
	3,00	355	35,5	35,5	76,8
	4,00	160	16,0	16,0	92,8
	5,00	72	7,2	7,2	100,0
	Total	1000	100,0	100,0	

Fear of Rape Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	144	14,4	14,4	14,4
	2,00	262	26,2	26,2	40,6
	3,00	381	38,1	38,1	78,7
	4,00	167	16,7	16,7	95,4
	5,00	46	4,6	4,6	100,0
	Total	1000	100,0	100,0	

Avoidance Behavior Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	113	11,3	11,3	11,3
	2,00	233	23,3	23,3	34,6
	3,00	359	35,9	35,9	70,5
	4,00	216	21,6	21,6	92,1
	5,00	79	7,9	7,9	100,0
	Total		1000	100,0	100,0

Defensive Behavior Recoded (0= Has not bought anything, 1= Bought something to defend)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	,00	892	89,2	89,2	89,2
	1,00	108	10,8	10,8	100,0
	Total	1000	100,0	100,0	

Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance (new min=1, new max=5)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1,00	12	1,2	3,5	3,5
	2,00	39	3,9	11,3	14,8
	3,00	116	11,6	33,7	48,5
	4,00	128	12,8	37,2	85,8
	5,00	49	4,9	14,2	100,0
	Total		344	34,4	100,0
Missing System		656	65,6		
Total		1000	100,0		

Descriptives

Notes

Output Created		18-JUL-2024 13:50:16
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	N of Rows in Working Data File	1000
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	All non-missing data are used.
Syntax	DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=gender Age_Groups HeavyListener_Recoded PastVictimization_Recoded PerceivedRisk_Recoded EmotiveFeeling_Recoded Fear_of_Rape_Recode AvoidantBehavior_Recoded DefensiveBehavior_Recoded Defensive_Vigilance_and_Safety_Work_recode /STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX.	
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,01
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,00

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
gender	1000	1	2	1,50	,500
Age in Groups: 1=16-24, 2=25-34, 3=35-44, 4=45-54, 5=55-65	1000	1,00	5,00	3,1740	1,35631
Heavy Listener Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	344	1,00	5,00	3,1163	1,35671
Past Victimization Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	1000	1,00	5,00	1,6650	,99587
Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)	1000	1,00	5,00	2,1320	,95472
Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)	1000	1,00	5,00	2,7360	1,12141
Fear of Rape Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	1000	1,00	5,00	2,7090	1,05139
Avoidance Behavior Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	1000	1,00	5,00	2,9150	1,10045
Defensive Behavior Recoded (0= Has not bought anything, 1= Bought something to defend)	1000	,00	1,00	,1080	,31054
Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance (new min=1, new max=5)	344	1,00	5,00	3,4738	,98645
Valid N (listwise)	344				

T-Test

Notes

Output Created		25-OCT-2024 14:40:56
Comments		
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	N of Rows in Working Data File	1000
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each analysis are based on the cases with no missing or out-of-range data for any variable in the analysis.
Syntax		T-TEST GROUPS=Q_3TrueCrime Consumption(0 1) /MISSING=ANALYSIS /VARIABLES=Fear_of_Rape_Recode EmotiveFeeling_Recoded PerceivedRisk_Recoded AvoidantBehavior_Recoded /ES DISPLAY(TRUE) /CRITERIA=CI(.95).
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,03
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,00

[DataSet1] /Users/johannaelenaholzemer/Downloads/DataSet_TrueCrime.sav

Group Statistics

	True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fear of Rape Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Not selected	368	2,6630	,98243
	Selected	344	3,0029	,99415
Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)	Not selected	368	2,6848	1,07920
	Selected	344	2,9826	1,07434
Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)	Not selected	368	2,1168	,91903
	Selected	344	2,4680	,97438
Avoidance Behavior Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Not selected	368	2,7989	1,07374
	Selected	344	3,1686	1,01909

Group Statistics

	True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected)	Std. Error Mean
Fear of Rape Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Not selected	,05121
	Selected	,05360
Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)	Not selected	,05626
	Selected	,05792
Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)	Not selected	,04791
	Selected	,05253
Avoidance Behavior Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Not selected	,05597
	Selected	,05495

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of
		F	Sig.	t
Fear of Rape Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	3,668	,056	-4,586
	Equal variances not assumed			-4,584
Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	2,133	,145	-3,687
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,688
Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	7,227	,007	-4,949
	Equal variances not assumed			-4,939
Avoidance Behavior Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	2,408	,121	-4,705
	Equal variances not assumed			-4,713

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		df	Significance	
			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Fear of Rape Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	710	<,001	<,001
	Equal variances not assumed	705,553	<,001	<,001
Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	710	<,001	<,001
	Equal variances not assumed	707,190	<,001	<,001
Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	710	<,001	<,001
	Equal variances not assumed	698,937	<,001	<,001
Avoidance Behavior Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	710	<,001	<,001
	Equal variances not assumed	709,834	<,001	<,001

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Fear of Rape Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	-,33986	,07410
	Equal variances not assumed	-,33986	,07413
Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	-,29778	,08076
	Equal variances not assumed	-,29778	,08075
Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	-,35118	,07096
	Equal variances not assumed	-,35118	,07110
Avoidance Behavior Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	-,36969	,07857
	Equal variances not assumed	-,36969	,07843

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
Fear of Rape Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	-,48535	-,19437
	Equal variances not assumed	-,48541	-,19431
Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	-,45633	-,13922
	Equal variances not assumed	-,45631	-,13924
Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	-,49049	-,21186
	Equal variances not assumed	-,49077	-,21158
Avoidance Behavior Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	-,52395	-,21543
	Equal variances not assumed	-,52368	-,21570

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% ... Lower
Fear of Rape Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Cohen's d	,98811	-,344	-,492
	Hedges' correction	,98915	-,344	-,491
	Glass's delta	,99415	-,342	-,491
Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)	Cohen's d	1,07686	-,277	-,424
	Hedges' correction	1,07800	-,276	-,424
	Glass's delta	1,07434	-,277	-,425
Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)	Cohen's d	,94617	-,371	-,519
	Hedges' correction	,94717	-,371	-,519
	Glass's delta	,97438	-,360	-,510
Avoidance Behavior Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Cohen's d	1,04769	-,353	-,501
	Hedges' correction	1,04880	-,352	-,500
	Glass's delta	1,01909	-,363	-,512

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		95% ... Upper
Fear of Rape Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Cohen's d	-,196
	Hedges' correction	-,196
	Glass's delta	-,192
Fear of Crime (new min=1, new max=5)	Cohen's d	-,129
	Hedges' correction	-,129
	Glass's delta	-,129
Likelihood of becoming a victim (new min=1, new max=5)	Cohen's d	-,223
	Hedges' correction	-,223
	Glass's delta	-,211
Avoidance Behavior Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	Cohen's d	-,205
	Hedges' correction	-,204
	Glass's delta	-,213

- a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
 Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
 Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
 Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

Regression

Notes

Output Created		25-OCT-2024 14:53:03
Comments		
Input	Data	/Users/johannaelenaholzemer/Downloads/DataSet_TrueCrime.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	1000
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics are based on cases with no missing values for any variable used.

Notes

Syntax		REGRESSION /MISSING LISTWISE /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS R ANOVA /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) TOLERANCE(. 0001) /NOORIGIN /DEPENDENT FearOfCrime_Combined /METHOD=ENTER age Gender_Dummy_1 HeavyListener_Recoded PastVictimization_Recod ed.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,03
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,00
	Memory Required	8640 bytes
	Additional Memory Required for Residual Plots	0 bytes

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Past Victimization Recoded (new min=1, new max=5), age, Heavy Listener Recoded (new min=1, new max=5), gender=f ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: FearOfCrime_Combined

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,413 ^a	,171	,161	,86509

a. Predictors: (Constant), Past Victimization Recoded (new min=1, new max=5), age, Heavy Listener Recoded (new min=1, new max=5), gender=f

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	52,321	4	13,080	17,478	<,001 ^b
	Residual	253,700	339	,748		
	Total	306,020	343			

a. Dependent Variable: FearOfCrime_Combined

b. Predictors: (Constant), Past Victimization Recoded (new min=1, new max=5), age, Heavy Listener Recoded (new min=1, new max=5), gender=f

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	1,405	,210		6,703
	age	,001	,004	,019	,383
	gender=f	,184	,095	,097	1,928
	Heavy Listener Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	,197	,035	,283	5,631
	Past Victimization Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	,233	,042	,278	5,606

Coefficients^a

Model		Sig.
1	(Constant)	<,001
	age	,702
	gender=f	,055
	Heavy Listener Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	<,001
	Past Victimization Recoded (new min=1, new max=5)	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: FearOfCrime_Combined

T-Test

Notes

Output Created		25-OCT-2024 14:56:28
Comments		
Input	Data	/Users/johannaelenaholzer/Downloads/Dataset_TrueCrime.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	1000
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each analysis are based on the cases with no missing or out-of-range data for any variable in the analysis.
Syntax	<p>T-TEST GROUPS=Q_3TrueCrime Consumption(0 1) /MISSING=ANALYSIS</p> <p>/VARIABLES=Q_9_Jemandbrichtbeimireinwennich außerHausbin</p> <p>Q_9_JemandbrichtbeimireinwennichzuHausebin</p> <p>Q_9_Jemandzwingtmich gegenmeinenWillenzusexuellenHandlungenoder Q_9_Jemandstiehltmiret wasmitGewalt</p> <p>Q_9_Jemandschlägtmich odergreiftmichmiteinerWaffe an /ES DISPLAY(TRUE) /CRITERIA=CI(.95).</p>	
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,03
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,00

Group Statistics

	True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichaußerHausbin	Not selected	368	2,59	1,111
	Selected	344	2,85	1,118
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichzuHausebin	Not selected	368	2,31	1,111
	Selected	344	2,70	1,149
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandzwingtmich gegenmeinenWillenzusexuellenHandlungenodervergheitsichsexuellanmir	Not selected	368	2,14	1,152
	Selected	344	2,55	1,162
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandstiehltmiret wasmitGewalt	Not selected	368	2,55	1,096
	Selected	344	2,90	1,073
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandschlägtmich odergreiftmichmiteinerWaffe	Not selected	368	2,52	1,129
	Selected	344	2,90	1,123

Group Statistics

	True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected)	Std. Error Mean
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichaußerHausbin	Not selected	,058
	Selected	,060
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichzuHausebin	Not selected	,058
	Selected	,062
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandzwingtmich gegenmeinenWillenzusexuellenHandlungenodervergheitsichsexuellanmir	Not selected	,060
	Selected	,063
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandstiehltmiret wasmitGewalt	Not selected	,057
	Selected	,058
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandschlägtmich odergreiftmichmiteinerWaffen	Not selected	,059
	Selected	,061

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of
		F	Sig.	t
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichaußerHausbin	Equal variances assumed	,594	,441	-3,034
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,033
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichzuHausebin	Equal variances assumed	,275	,600	-4,548
	Equal variances not assumed			-4,542
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandzwingtmich gegenmeinenWillenzusexuellenHandlungenodervergheitsichsexuellanmir	Equal variances assumed	,643	,423	-4,732
	Equal variances not assumed			-4,731
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_JemandstiehltmiretwasmitGewalt	Equal variances assumed	4,725	,030	-4,296
	Equal variances not assumed			-4,299
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandschlägtmich odergreiftmichmiteinerWaffe an	Equal variances assumed	2,798	,095	-4,393
	Equal variances not assumed			-4,393

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		df	Significance	
			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p> Jemand bricht bei mir ein wenn ich außer Haus bin	Equal variances assumed	710	,001	,003
	Equal variances not assumed	706,122	,001	,003
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p> Jemand bricht bei mir ein wenn ich zu Hause bin	Equal variances assumed	710	<,001	<,001
	Equal variances not assumed	702,867	<,001	<,001
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p> Jemand zwingt mich gegen meinen Willen zu sexuellen Handlungen oder vergewaltigt mich sexuell an mir	Equal variances assumed	710	<,001	<,001
	Equal variances not assumed	705,906	<,001	<,001
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p> Jemand stiehlt mir etwas mit Gewalt	Equal variances assumed	710	<,001	<,001
	Equal variances not assumed	708,513	<,001	<,001
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p> Jemand schlägt mich oder greift mich mit einer Waffe an	Equal variances assumed	710	<,001	<,001
	Equal variances not assumed	707,294	<,001	<,001

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichaußerHausbin	Equal variances assumed	-,254	,084
	Equal variances not assumed	-,254	,084
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichzuHausebin	Equal variances assumed	-,385	,085
	Equal variances not assumed	-,385	,085
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandzwingtmich gegenmeinenWillenzusexuellenHandlungenodervergheitsichsexuellanmir	Equal variances assumed	-,411	,087
	Equal variances not assumed	-,411	,087
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_JemandstiehltmiretwasmitGewalt	Equal variances assumed	-,350	,081
	Equal variances not assumed	-,350	,081
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandschlägtmich odergreiftmichmiteinerWaffe	Equal variances assumed	-,371	,084
	Equal variances not assumed	-,371	,084

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichaußerHausbin	Equal variances assumed	-,418	-,089
	Equal variances not assumed	-,418	-,089
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichzuHausebin	Equal variances assumed	-,551	-,219
	Equal variances not assumed	-,552	-,219
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandzwingtmich gegenmeinenWillenzusexuellenHandlungenoderverg ehtsichsexuellanmir	Equal variances assumed	-,581	-,240
	Equal variances not assumed	-,581	-,240
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandstiehltmiret wasmitGewalt	Equal variances assumed	-,509	-,190
	Equal variances not assumed	-,509	-,190
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandschlägtmich odergreiftmichmiteinerWaffe an	Equal variances assumed	-,537	-,205
	Equal variances not assumed	-,537	-,205

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% ... Lower
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt?</p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichaußerHausbin	Cohen's d	1,114	-,228	-,375
	Hedges' correction	1,116	-,227	-,375
	Glass's delta	1,118	-,227	-,375
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt?</p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichzuHausebin	Cohen's d	1,129	-,341	-,489
	Hedges' correction	1,131	-,341	-,488
	Glass's delta	1,149	-,335	-,484
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt?</p>_Jemandzwingtmich gegenmeinenWillenzusexuellenHandlungenodervergheitsichsexuellanmir	Cohen's d	1,157	-,355	-,503
	Hedges' correction	1,158	-,355	-,502
	Glass's delta	1,162	-,353	-,502
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt?</p>_Jemandstiehltmiret wasmitGewalt	Cohen's d	1,085	-,322	-,470
	Hedges' correction	1,086	-,322	-,470
	Glass's delta	1,073	-,326	-,475
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt?</p>_Jemandschlägtmich odergreiftmichmiteinerWaffe an	Cohen's d	1,126	-,329	-,477
	Hedges' correction	1,127	-,329	-,477
	Glass's delta	1,123	-,330	-,479

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		95% ... Upper
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichaußerHausbin	Cohen's d	-,080
	Hedges' correction	-,080
	Glass's delta	-,079
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandbrichtbeimir einwennichzuHausebin	Cohen's d	-,193
	Hedges' correction	-,193
	Glass's delta	-,186
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandzwingtmich gegenmeinenWillenzusexuellenHandlungenodervergheitsichsexuellanmir	Cohen's d	-,207
	Hedges' correction	-,206
	Glass's delta	-,204
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandstiehltmiret wasmitGewalt	Cohen's d	-,174
	Hedges' correction	-,174
	Glass's delta	-,177
9. <p>Wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass dir im kommenden Jahr eines der folgenden Ereignisse widerfährt? </p>_Jemandschlägtmich odergreiftmichmiteinerWaffe an	Cohen's d	-,181
	Hedges' correction	-,181
	Glass's delta	-,181

- a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
 Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
 Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
 Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

T-Test

Notes

Output Created		25-OCT-2024 14:57:29
Comments		
Input	Data	/Users/johannaelenaholzemmer/Downloads/DataSet_TrueCrime.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	1000
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each analysis are based on the cases with no missing or out-of-range data for any variable in the analysis.
Syntax	<pre>T-TEST GROUPS=Q_3TrueCrime Consumption(0 1) /MISSING=ANALYSIS /VARIABLES=MeanWorld Perception /ES DISPLAY(TRUE) /CRITERIA=CI(.95).</pre>	
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,01
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,00

Group Statistics

		True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected)		
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean World Perception	Not selected	368	3,82	,909
	Selected	344	4,02	,746

Group Statistics

		Std. Error Mean
Mean World Perception	Not selected	,047
	Selected	,040

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means
		F	Sig.	t
Mean World Perception	Equal variances assumed	23,832	<,001	-3,148
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,168

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Mean World Perception	Equal variances assumed	710	<,001	,002
	Equal variances not assumed	698,338	<,001	,002

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Mean World Perception	Equal variances assumed	-,197	,063
	Equal variances not assumed	-,197	,062

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
Mean World Perception	Equal variances assumed	-,320	-,074
	Equal variances not assumed	-,319	-,075

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% ... Lower
Mean World Perception	Cohen's d	,834	-,236	-,383
	Hedges' correction	,835	-,236	-,383
	Glass's delta	,746	-,264	-,412

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		95% ... Upper
Mean World Perception	Cohen's d	-,088
	Hedges' correction	-,088
	Glass's delta	-,116

- a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
 Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
 Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
 Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

T-Test

Notes

Output Created		25-OCT-2024 14:58:36
Comments		
Input	Data	/Users/johannaelenaholzemer/Downloads/DataSet_TrueCrime.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	1000
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each analysis are based on the cases with no missing or out-of-range data for any variable in the analysis.
Syntax		T-TEST GROUPS=gender (1 2) /MISSING=ANALYSIS /VARIABLES=FearOfCrime_Combined /ES DISPLAY(TRUE) /CRITERIA=CI(.95).
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,01
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,00

Group Statistics

		gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
FearOfCrime_Combined	f		499	2,4669	,92944	,04161
	m		501	2,1756	,93225	,04165

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of
		F	Sig.	t
FearOfCrime_Combined	Equal variances assumed	2,089	,149	4,948
	Equal variances not assumed			4,948

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
FearOfCrime_Combined	Equal variances assumed	998	<,001	<,001
	Equal variances not assumed	997,999	<,001	<,001

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
FearOfCrime_Combined	Equal variances assumed	,29129	,05887
	Equal variances not assumed	,29129	,05887

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
FearOfCrime_Combined	Equal variances assumed	,17576	,40681
	Equal variances not assumed	,17576	,40681

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% ... Lower
FearOfCrime_Combined	Cohen's d	,93085	,313	,188
	Hedges' correction	,93155	,313	,188
	Glass's delta	,93225	,312	,187

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		95% ... Upper
FearOfCrime_Combined	Cohen's d	,438
	Hedges' correction	,437
	Glass's delta	,438

- a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
 Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
 Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
 Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.

Crosstabs

Notes

Output Created		25-OCT-2024 15:01:20
Comments		
Input	Data	/Users/johannaelenaholzemmer/Downloads/DataSet_TrueCrime.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	1000
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each table are based on all the cases with valid data in the specified range(s) for all variables in each table.
Syntax		CROSSTABS /TABLES=gender BY Q_3TrueCrimeConsumption /FORMAT=AVALUE TABLES /CELLS=COUNT /COUNT ROUND CELL.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,02
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,00
	Dimensions Requested	2
	Cells Available	524245

Case Processing Summary

	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
gender * True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected)	712	71,2%	288	28,8%	1000	100,0%

gender * True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected) Crosstabulation

Count

		True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected)		Total
		Not selected	Selected	
gender	f	160	185	345
	m	208	159	367
Total		368	344	712

Crosstabs

Notes

Output Created	25-OCT-2024 15:01:43	
Comments		
Input	Data	/Users/johannaelenaholzemer/Downloads/DataSet_TrueCrime.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	1000
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each table are based on all the cases with valid data in the specified range(s) for all variables in each table.
Syntax	CROSSTABS /TABLES=gender BY Q_3TrueCrimeConsumption /FORMAT=AVALUE TABLES /STATISTICS=CHISQ /CELLS=COUNT /COUNT ROUND CELL.	
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,01
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,00

Notes

Dimensions Requested	2
Cells Available	524245

Case Processing Summary

	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
gender * True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected)	712	71,2%	288	28,8%	1000	100,0%

gender * True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected) Crosstabulation

Count

		True Crime Podcast Consumption (selected/not selected)		Total
		Not selected	Selected	
gender	f	160	185	345
	m	208	159	367
Total		368	344	712

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7,553 ^a	1	,006		
Continuity Correction ^b	7,147	1	,008		
Likelihood Ratio	7,566	1	,006		
Fisher's Exact Test				,007	,004
Linear-by-Linear Association	7,543	1	,006		
N of Valid Cases	712				

a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 166,69.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

T-Test

Notes

Output Created		25-OCT-2024 15:02:45
Comments		
Input	Data	/Users/johannaelenaholzemmer/Downloads/DataSet_TrueCrime.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	1000
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each analysis are based on the cases with no missing or out-of-range data for any variable in the analysis.
Syntax		T-TEST GROUPS=gender (1 2) /MISSING=ANALYSIS /VARIABLES=Defensive_Vigilance_and_Safety_Work_recode /ES DISPLAY(TRUE) /CRITERIA=CI(.95).
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00,01
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00,00

Group Statistics

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance (new min=1, new max=5)	f	185	3,3027	,93556	,06878
	m	159	3,6730	1,00943	,08005

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of
		F	Sig.	t
Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	,414	,520	-3,528
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,508

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		df	Significance	
			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	342	<,001	<,001
	Equal variances not assumed	325,205	<,001	<,001

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	-,37025	,10494
	Equal variances not assumed	-,37025	,10554

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance (new min=1, new max=5)	Equal variances assumed	-,57666	-,16385
	Equal variances not assumed	-,57789	-,16262

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% ... Lower
Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance (new min=1, new max=5)	Cohen's d	,97038	-,382	-,595
	Hedges' correction	,97252	-,381	-,594
	Glass's delta	1,00943	-,367	-,582

Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		95% ... Upper
Safety Work and Defensive Vigilance (new min=1, new max=5)	Cohen's d	-,167
	Hedges' correction	-,167
	Glass's delta	-,150

- a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
 Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
 Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
 Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control (i.e., the second) group.