



Networking -  
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# Chapter Two Lesotho

# 2

This section of the report is based on the Lesotho findings of the *Mirror on the Media* radio talk show monitoring in four countries: Zimbabwe, Malawi, South Africa and Lesotho. Media monitored in Lesotho included the socially-oriented talk show *Let's Talk* on the privately-owned People's Choice FM and government-owned Radio Lesotho's *Seboping*. The monitoring covered five shows for each station in June 2005. The research also included interviews with twenty listeners of each station (ten women and ten men). The full research methodology is attached at **Annex 1-3**.

## Key findings

**Lesotho is the only country in the study in which approximately equal numbers of women and men called into radio talk shows:** Overall 49% women called into the shows compared to the overall average in the study of 25% women. This ranged from 52% in *Let's Talk* to 36% in the case of *Seboping*.

**Women are more visible as hosts in Lesotho than in other countries:** Women comprised 66% of the hosts in the programmes monitored in Lesotho, compared to the average of 32% in the study. But this average masks big gaps between the two programmes, with women constituting 82% of the hosts on *Seboping* compared to no female hosts on *Let's Talk*.

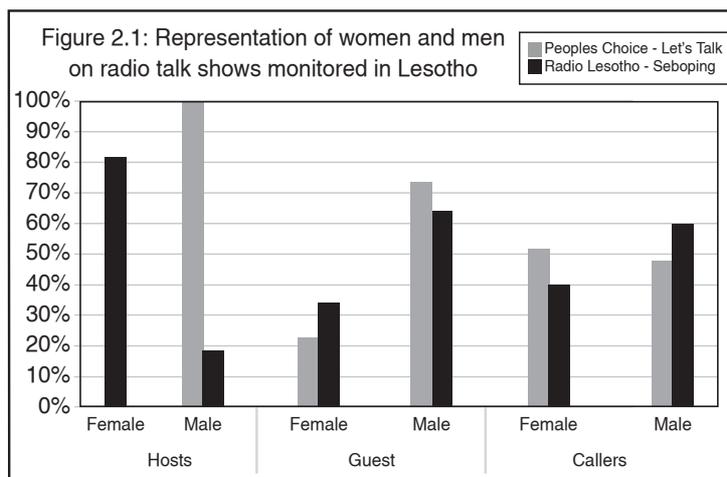
**Men dominate as guests on radio talk shows in Lesotho:** Of the 30 guests on both shows only 10 (33%) were women, lower than the four country average of 36%. *Seboping* had 36% women guests compared to 25% women guests on *Let's talk*.

**Social issues dominate:** Social issues dominated on both shows (40%). This was followed by business and the economy (30%) and current affairs (20%).

**What listeners want to talk about:** The findings of the listeners surveyed indicate that the most preferred topic for the majority of women (43%) and men (30%) are social issues, which is in line with the topics that actually dominated on the talk shows monitored. Contrary to the prevailing view that women are not interested in current affairs, more women (40%) than men (15%) said they wanted to talk about current affairs.

**Mixed views on whether it makes a difference who calls in:** Some 45% women and 60% men said that it makes no difference to talk shows whether it's women or men calling in. However, more women (40%) than men (20%) think that talk shows would be more interesting if more women called in.

**But gender balance makes for more interesting debate:** The monitoring showed that gender balance in participation made for more interesting debate.



**Hosts often reinforce stereotypes:** As in other countries the monitoring yielded examples of hosts using their power to reinforce gender stereotypes. For example, when two business women guests started to discuss their growth and development, the host played a song about a Mosotho man's satisfaction with his wife's delicious cooking.

## Background and Context

The media in Lesotho has a rich history, with the very first publication, *Leselinyana la Lesotho* published in 1863. Lesotho has a high literacy rate, as well as a long history of publications and well-established media.

However, unlike the media renaissance experienced in many other countries in the region, Lesotho is still the only country in Southern Africa without a daily newspaper. The airwaves were only deregulated in 1998.

The media in Lesotho is still largely government owned, with strong competition from the church-owned media, followed by media owned by political parties' and a small independent/private media.

Many of the small publications and private radio stations have not witnessed much growth, because of lack of capacity and access to resources such as affordable and efficient printing and transmitter services.

The regulatory authority imposes heavy transmission tariffs on the electronic media, limiting coverage by the small private broadcasters. The government station, Radio Lesotho (which broadcasts the *Seboping* current affairs show) and television stations are still the only ones with broad coverage of the country, and yet the regulatory tariffs do not apply to them. Radio Lesotho has nationwide coverage and has been in existence since 1964.

## Gender and Media in Lesotho

The 2002 Gender and Media Baseline study carried out in 12 Southern African countries revealed that women's views and voices are grossly under-represented in the media. However, using the measure of women sources, Lesotho, scored second best with 21% women news sources, 4% higher than the regional average of 17%.

The sequel Gender and Media Audience study (GMAS) found that 15% of women in Lesotho (compared to an average of 12% in the overall regional study) cited news that asks for feedback like letters to the editors and talk shows as amongst their favourite genre. This shows that women in Lesotho are interested in engaging with the media.

GMAS also showed that radio is still the most important source of news in Lesotho with more women (83%) than men (77%) citing radio as their most important source of news. Radio talk shows are therefore potentially a critical way of encouraging citizen participation in Lesotho, and specifically of engaging women in public debates.

## Media Monitored

The two radio stations monitored in Lesotho in June 2005 were the current affairs programme *Seboping* on Radio Lesotho (a government - owned station) and the socially- oriented programme, *Let's Talk*, on the privately-owned Peoples' Choice (PC) FM.

### People’s Choice FM – Let’s Talk

Peoples’ Choice FM went on air on 8 December 1998 and *Let’s Talk* hit the airwaves from then onwards. The programme is administered in Sesotho and runs from Monday to Thursday every week. Even though the radio station tends to appeal more to younger than older people, the show appeals to all age groups who call into the show to discuss a broad range of social issues. Unlike Radio Lesotho, People’s Choice FM, doesn’t have nationwide reach but covers the urban and peri-urban areas of the country. There are no statistics on how many people listen to the show, but the impression from listeners and the management of the radio station is that *Let’s Talk* appeals to a wide audience.

Date / Day	Time	Topic
6 June 2005 (Monday)	18:00-21:00	Open music show
8 June 2005 (Wednesday)	18:00-21:00	What is wrong with my wife?
13 June 2005 (Monday)	18:00-21:00	How can I keep my inheritance from depletion
22 June 2005 (Wednesday)	18:00-21:00	How can I access the remainder of my fathers benefits
29 June 2005 (Wednesday)	18:00-21:00	Accessing traditional health services

### Radio Lesotho – Seboping

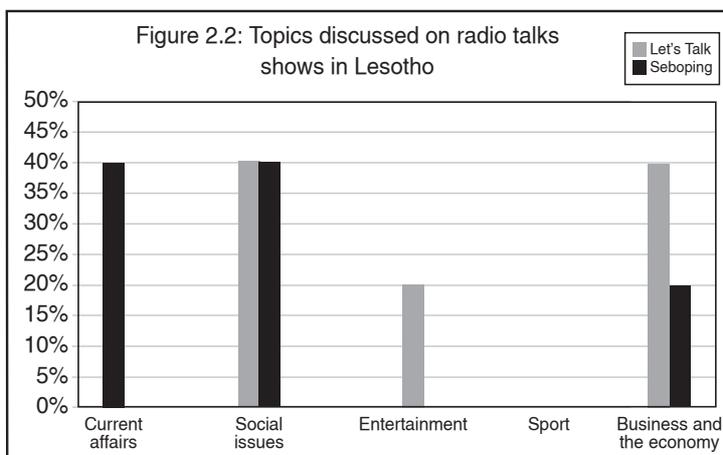
The Seboping programme is also in Sesotho, except where snippets of interviews are included from members of the diplomatic corps and others. The show, which mainly covers political issues, generally attracts an older audience as the younger generation seems largely disinterested in such topics.

Date / Day	Time	Topic
3 June 2005 (Friday)	05:30-07:00	Current affairs
6 June 2005 (Monday)	05:30-07:00	Should metrics students be prosecuted?
14 June 2005 (Tuesday)	05:30-07:00	Which govt ministry deserves an award of excellence
22 June 2005 (Wednesday)	05:30-07:00	What is the responsibility of school boards and that of the parents
30 June 2005 (Thursday)	05:30-07:00	How can we facilitate the attainment of our own development-A case study

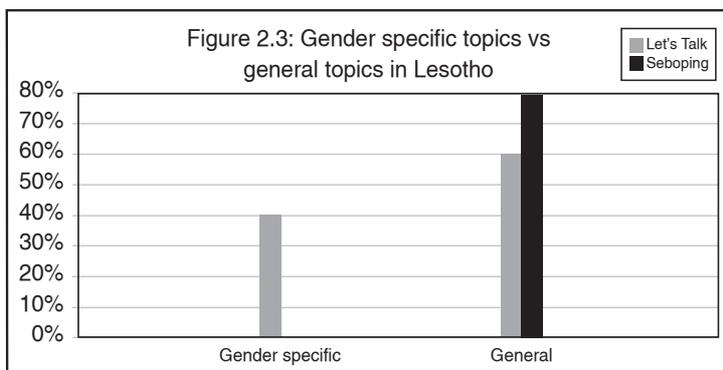
### Findings

#### Topics

Social issues made up a large percentage (40%) of the discussions on both of the shows monitored. *Let’s Talk* held discussions on business and the economy (40%) and entertainment (20%) whereas Seboping’s programmes discussed current issues (40%) and a smaller percentage of business and economic issues (20%). Neither of the shows had any programmes on sport.



Of the shows monitored in the period *Let's Talk* had two shows with gender specific topics compared to none on *Seboping*. However, the way one of these topics is cast ("What is wrong with my wife") suggests gender biases in the way these issues are raised.

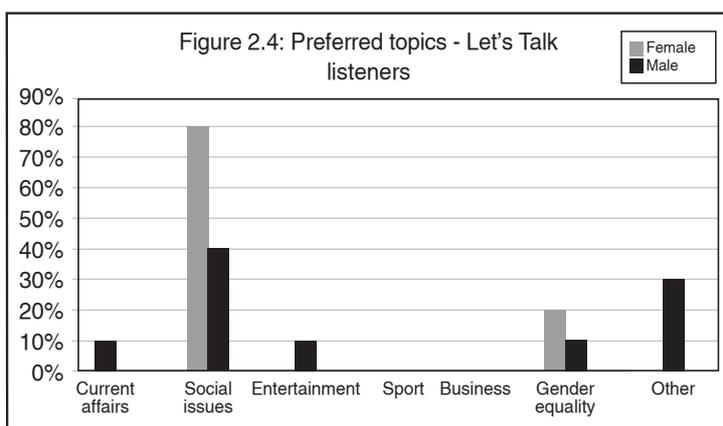


### Who chooses the topics?

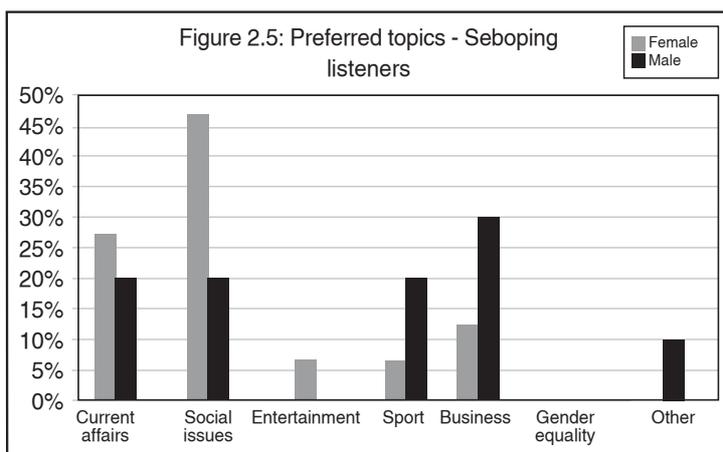
According to a host from Radio Lesotho's *Seboping* show the choice of topic depends on topical issues with the hosts and producers ultimately deciding what the topic will be. There is no direct audience input in the process.

### What listeners want to talk about

As illustrated in figures 2.4 and 2.5, the findings of the listeners surveyed indicate that the most preferred topic for the majority of listeners, both women (43%) and men (30%) on both shows, are social issues, including health, HIV/AIDS and education. Both shows had a large percentage (40%) of social issues discussed.



In the case of *Let's talk* 80% women and 40% men said they wanted to listen to and talk about social issues. The remaining women want to talk about gender equality and women's empowerment (20%); this is higher than the number of men (10%) who want to talk about this topic. Some 30% of the men said that they wanted to talk about other issues such as crime and commercial sex.

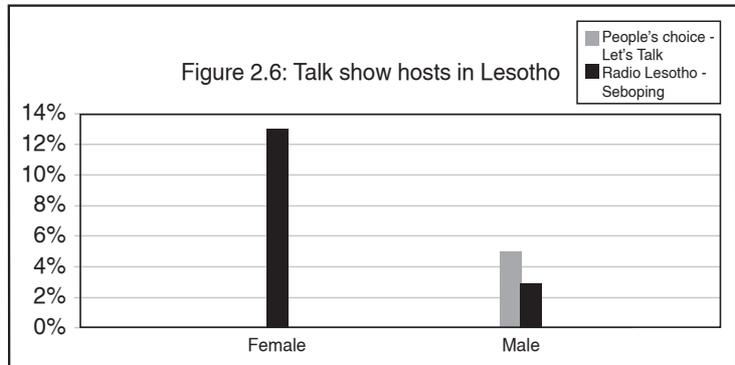


More women listeners of *Seboping* (27%) than men (20%) want to talk about current affairs. Still, 47% women cited social issues as their most preferred topic. 30% men cited business and the economy as their preferred topics. More men (30%) compared to women (7%) prefer discussions on sports. Only women (7%) want to talk about entertainment. Neither women nor men want to discuss issues of gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Hosts**

As illustrated in figure 2.6, Radio Lesotho’s *Seboping* show had 13 female hosts compared with no female hosts on *Let’s Talk*.

The majority (55%) of *Let’s talk* listeners, (70% women and 40% men) feel that the host encourages callers to speak their mind. 20% of the female listeners feel that the host tries to influence what callers say compared with 10% of men. A high percentage of men (40%) compared to women (10%) believe that the host makes no difference to what callers say. A small number of men (10%) feel that the host discourages callers from speaking their mind.

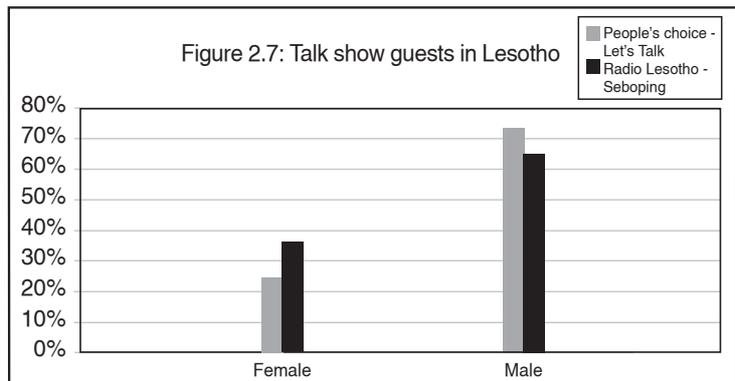


The picture is slightly different with *Seboping* listeners with the majority of men and only 20% women of the opinion that the host makes no difference to what the callers say. More women (50%) compared to men (18%) feel that the host encourages callers to speak their mind. 10% of the listeners interviewed feel that the host discourages callers from speaking their mind and 14% believe that the host tries to influence what people say.

**Guests**

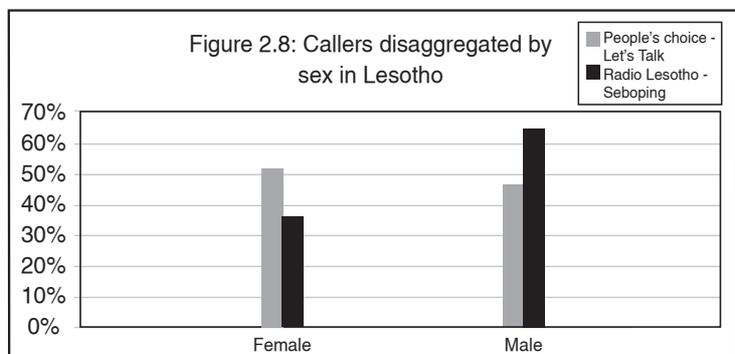
Men constituted 67% of the guests on the show compared to 33% women in the period under review. This varied from 36% women on *Seboking* to 25% on *Let’s Talk*.

Both shows are open to guests from all walks of life. But Radio Lesotho’s *Seboping* tends to feature government officials, ministers, members of parliament, police spokespeople etc. According to one host guests often request to be on the show. He said that it is more difficult to get female guests adding: “Women fail to come out of the closet and address issues that affect them directly.” The host went on to say that women also “fail to air their views accordingly and tend to resort to speculating.”



**Callers**

Overall women constituted 49% of callers in Lesotho; the highest such proportion in the study. This ranged from 52% women in the case of *Lets Talk* to 36% in the case of *Seboping*.



More male (60%) than female listeners (30%) believed that more women called into *Lets Talk*. A high of women (40%) weren't sure, while 30% thought more men called in compared to 20% of the men who had a similar belief.

Equal numbers of women and men (40%) thought that more women called into *Seboping*. 30% of the listeners, male and female, believe that more men call in and the remaining 30% were unsure.

A *Seboping* host said she thought that more women listened to the show but that more men called in, and bemoaned the fact that women fail to come out and discuss issues on the programme. Significantly, the number of female callers increased in two shows focusing on health and education indicating that there are certain topics on which women feel more confident and are more likely to come out and talk about.

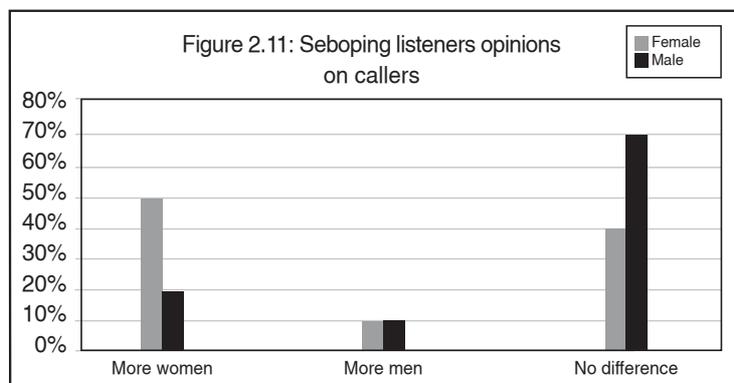
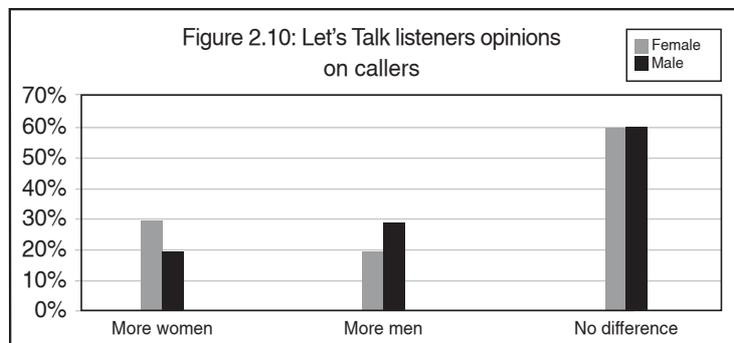
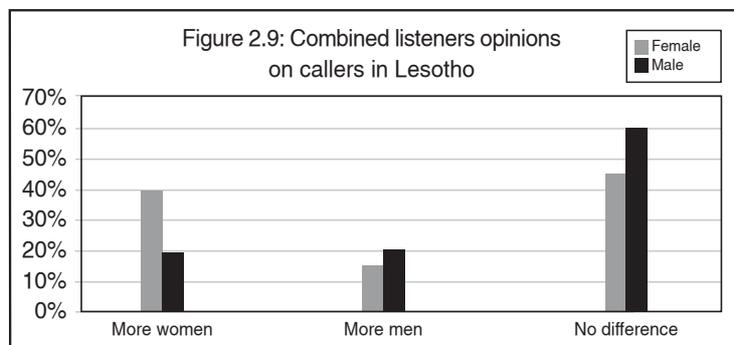
Listeners of the two talk shows were asked the question – *Would talk shows be more interesting if more women called in, more men called in or it makes no difference?*

More men (60%) than women (45%) said that it makes no difference to radio talk shows whether more women or men call in. More women (40%) than men (20%) think that radio talk shows would be more interesting if more women called in.

Equal numbers (50%) of women and men who listen to *Let's Talk* think that it makes no difference to talk shows whether it's women or men calling in. 30% of women think more women should call in and 30% of men think that more men should call in.

Some 50% women compared to 20% of the men who listen to *Seboping* think that talk shows would be more interesting if more women called in. 70% men compared to 40% women think that it makes no difference to talk shows whether it's women or men calling in. 10% women and men think that more men should call in.

The Lesotho Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS) also found that a higher proportion of women (74%) compared to 51% men said that they would find the news more interesting if women had more say.



### What was said in the programmes

Despite the high proportion of female hosts and callers in Lesotho, gender stereotypes surfaced frequently in both shows, often without being challenged by either male or female hosts.

*Let's Talk* deals with every day issues including unique problems put forward by listeners. A show about a man seeking advice on his wife sparked a flurry of advice on "how women should behave." Some callers challenged the more traditional views put forward, noting that it takes two people to make a marriage work.

The host did not challenge any of the callers on their opinions no matter how unfounded they were and made no attempt to sensitise callers to their language. Comments included speculation as to whether the wife had HIV/AIDS, and if she had gone for testing. Language used reflected the prevailing stigma, with some callers referring to the pandemic as "the tsunami". The host did little to challenge this terminology or interrogate the issue of stigma and HIV/AIDS.

*Seboping* on Radio Lesotho is predominantly a current affairs show. The issue of women's participation in decision-making arose peripherally in a programme on a competition for government ministries who had done well in service delivery, without any in-depth discussion on the issue.

One programme, anchored by two female and one male presenter, included a case study on the Caterers Association of Lesotho with two business women as guests. But the show did not take up the issue of women's empowerment more broadly and included a song about the satisfaction that a Mosotho man feels when his wife cooks a delicious meal.