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## **Media Rating Council Issues Notice On Measurement Quality In Light of the Coronavirus Crisis**

**New York, NY March 30, 2020** – The Media Rating Council (MRC) today issued a notice regarding matters related to measurement data quality in the face of unprecedented challenges presented by the current Coronavirus crisis.

The MRC is reminding measurement services of the importance of having objective criteria in place to guide their determinations concerning the quality of data that is collected and reported under unusual circumstances that potentially could impair data quality. These criteria preferably would be the service’s pre-established criteria, but MRC recognizes these are unprecedented challenging times; the key concept is to have clearly defined, objective criteria. To supplement the criteria, the service should have formal procedures established and in place to guide the evaluation of data quality, which typically should include pre-determined, quantified data quality thresholds that will trigger the release or the withholding of reported data. Such data quality evaluations should be based on methodological soundness, rather than audience behavior changes, which are to be expected during these disruptive circumstances. These procedures also should rely on established transparency and disclosure policies concerning the quality of the reported data, and any notable limitations the service observes in that regard. There are accredited measurement services that are already working proactively with the MRC on the implications of the current crisis, taking certain actions as necessary in response, and ensuring appropriate disclosures are made.

The MRC is issuing this notice to help ensure media practitioners and related users can continue to access, understand, interpret, and rely on measurement data that reflects the potentially significant changes in media consumption behavior taking place in situations such as in the current measurement environment, where standard measurement practices can be disrupted. Despite the challenges to current measurements, the MRC believes that when measurement companies can verify data quality, as the aforementioned formal processes can enable, they should strive (to the extent they can within existing workplace restrictions) to report measurements, allowing for appropriate disclaimers as deemed necessary. It is also critical that measurement data users are notified of and consider the unusual nature of the behavior being observed, and that much of the observed data on which the measurements may be based are reflective of the unusual conditions caused by the crisis.

“It is understandable that in the current environment measurement services may want to adjust controls to maintain operations,” says George W. Ivie, Executive Director and CEO, of the MRC. “Additionally, we recognize the unprecedented challenges these companies are facing, which may include workforce reductions, as well as forced transitions to remote workforce arrangements; the curtailment of field activity related to in-person research and panels; and the

need to place greater reliance on automation for certain processes that might otherwise be done with enhanced manual oversight. However, now more than ever, the industry needs transparent and reliable data with which to make critical decisions.”

To help assist maintenance of data quality, the MRC is undertaking and asking for cooperation with the following:

- For measurement services that fall under the purview of the MRC and its accreditation processes, MRC’s independent auditors have been instructed to reach out with questions about how such businesses are adapting to this current environment. The MRC asks full cooperation with those queries, which will be ongoing during the current crisis;
- MRC members-only meetings are planned over the course of the crisis to directly address these issues as they concern a number of prominent MRC-accredited and in-process measurement services, and MRC encourages participation in these meetings from all interested MRC members;
- The broader marketplace is encouraged to contact the MRC with any questions or to call attention to any unusual issues that they are experiencing or observing relative to measurement data quality among MRC-accredited services.

“The need for accurate understanding of shifting media use patterns is at its peak now, with so much uncertainty and the lack of precedence for what the media and advertising industries are currently facing,” says Ivie. “As measurement companies also struggle with these unprecedented challenges, we ask that they work with the MRC, their partners and customers to ensure that the quality of their data is vetted more closely than ever, and the data that is reported is determined to be of sufficient quality and is presented in a fully transparent fashion to users.”

### **About MRC**

The Media Rating Council is a non-profit industry association established in 1963 comprised of leading television, radio, print and digital media companies, as well as advertisers, advertising agencies and trade associations, whose goal is to ensure measurement services that are valid, reliable and effective. Measurement services desiring MRC accreditation are required to disclose to their customers all methodological aspects of their service; comply with the MRC Minimum Standards for Media Rating Research as well as other applicable industry measurement guidelines; and submit to MRC-designed audits to authenticate and illuminate their procedures. In addition, the MRC membership actively pursues research issues they consider priorities in an effort to improve the quality of research in the marketplace. Currently approximately 110 research products are audited by the MRC. Additional information about MRC can be found at [www.mediaratingcouncil.org](http://www.mediaratingcouncil.org).