



MRC INDUSTRY COMMUNICATION

MRC Statement on Nielsen Local Television Viewing Estimates Analysis

New York, NY (June 8, 2021) – The MRC’s Television Committee met today with Nielsen management to review the results of a new set of analyses Nielsen conducted in response to requests from MRC and its members. As noted in an [MRC Industry Communication dated May 10, 2021](#), Nielsen performed these analyses, designed in collaboration with MRC and similar to those it performed last month related to its February 2021 national ratings estimates, to determine any potential impacts to Nielsen’s local metered market television estimates that may have resulted from certain procedural changes made to Nielsen processes because of COVID-related restrictions on its in-person panel-related maintenance and recruitment procedures.¹ This communication presents MRC’s observations on these findings, based on our interpretations of Nielsen’s analyses of the local market data and impacts.

Summary of MRC’s Observations

While the differences in viewing estimates in Nielsen’s 56 local metered markets that were studied in these analyses appear to be more highly variable than those that were observed in the national ratings analyses, they do appear to point to the following general findings:

- The results show an overall understatement of reported viewing estimates, which is of a similar dimension to the understatements that were seen in the earlier set of national analyses conducted by Nielsen.
- The sizes of the differences between the simulated and actual viewing estimates appear to correspond largely to market size, with the smaller metered markets (in particular, those markets with a Set Meter + Return Path Data methodology) evidencing the most pronounced differences, while the larger Local People Meter markets, and, to a lesser extent, the Set Meter + PPM markets, displaying somewhat smaller differences between simulated results and reported viewing.
- While not all markets, or stations, dayparts, or demographics within markets, were shown through the analyses to have understatements of viewing estimates for the February reporting period, the general directionality of the differences was toward understatement, similar to what was seen in the earlier national analyses.
- The range of overall differences seen within market types for Households Using Television (HUT) and Persons 25-54 Using Television (PUT) levels were as follows (a positive figure indicates the analyses showed an understatement in the ratings originally reported in February, while a negative percentage indicates an overstatement):
 - **LPM Markets:** HUTs ranged by market from -1.9% to +3.5%, with an average difference of +0.4%; P25-54 PUTs ranged from -3% to +6.9%, with an average difference of +1.0%.

¹ See the May 10th MRC Industry Communication for a fuller description of these changes, as well as for the methodology employed in Nielsen’s analyses of the impacts to viewing estimates.

- Data comparisons for a series of mutually exclusive dayparts found that 86% of the individual daypart ratings for broadcast affiliates in these markets fell within +/- 0.05 of the rating originally reported, while 97% of the individual daypart ratings for cable sources fell within +/- 0.05 of the rating originally reported.
- Set Meter + PPM Markets: HUTs ranged from -0.2% to +3.7%, with an average difference of +1.3%; P25-54 PUTs ranged from 0% to +4%, with an average difference of +2.2%.
 - Data comparisons for a series of mutually exclusive dayparts found that 78% of the individual daypart ratings for broadcast affiliates in these markets fell within +/- 0.05 of the rating originally reported, while 96% of the individual daypart ratings for cable sources fell within +/- 0.05 of the rating originally reported.
- Set Meter + RPD Markets: HUTs ranged from +1% to +5%, with an average difference of +2.5%; P25-54 PUTs ranged from -1% to +9%, with an average difference of +3.9%.
 - Data comparisons for a series of mutually exclusive dayparts found that 58% of the individual daypart ratings for broadcast affiliates in these markets fell within +/- 0.05 of the rating originally reported, while 86% of the individual daypart ratings for cable sources fell within +/- 0.05 of the rating originally reported.

Notes on the Analyses

For these local market analyses, Nielsen utilized a similar approach as was used for the earlier national viewing analyses, except that panel homes were broken out on a market-by-market basis, both in terms of those homes that were included in the simulated results, and those that were excluded because they were assumed for these purposes to have had metering or other issues that would have been likely to result in their exclusions from reported results if normal panel maintenance procedures had been in place throughout the period. In addition, Nielsen excluded any Broadband-Only (BBO) homes that had been identified and used as part of the national analyses because these BBO homes are not currently included in Nielsen's local metered market panels.

It is important to note that these results should be considered preliminary, and are based on an April 19th visitation cutoff date (the same coverage period that was used for the analyses of national ratings estimates) for the determination of those panel homes to be included or excluded in the simulated results, in order to expedite the delivery of information to MRC and to the marketplace. Similar to the case with national, Nielsen has committed to perform another, final set of analyses for local market estimates that utilize the complete panel maintenance information it has once that information is fully available.

MRC also notes, and users of the data should keep in mind, that the impacts, as well as the originally reported ratings themselves, are estimates with standard errors associated with them. However, we believe the directional impacts noted above are appropriate to consider in assessing the estimates originally reported by Nielsen.

Next Steps

Nielsen will be making the detailed data from these local market analyses available to its local clients through NLTV in the coming days, and we encourage MRC's members and other Nielsen local television clients to review this data as it may apply to your own specific situations, as individual results may differ from the general trends that we observed and note above.

MRC plans to continue to work with Nielsen and its members to further analyze the impact that panel disruptions may have had on the viewing estimates Nielsen reported over the affected period. These efforts continue to include further analyses, using updated panel visitation data that is fully comprehensive of the field work Nielsen has performed subsequent to the April 19th cutoff date that was used for these initial analyses for both local and national reporting. In addition, Nielsen has committed to work with MRC to further explore the effect that certain zero-tuning households may have had on reported viewing estimates.

MRC also plans to continue to resume its work with Nielsen in MRC's ongoing audit and accreditation process for the Metered Market local television services (which have been in an accreditation hiatus status since the beginning of 2021), as Nielsen more fully returns to a pre-COVID, business-as-usual state in regard to its field visitation practices and the systems it uses to detect potential metering and other issues that could negatively affect its ability to collect full and accurate viewing data from its panel homes. We will continue to provide updates on these activities as warranted.

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