



## **MRC Releases Update on the MRC-Accredited Nielsen National Big Data + Panel Television Service**

New York, NY (March 3, 2026): Nielsen's National Big Data + Panel Television measurement service (the "Service") has been accredited by the Media Rating Council (MRC) since January 2025 and remains accredited. The Service involves a complex set of measurement processes that rely on several data sources such as Return Path Data from set-top boxes, Automated Content Recognition Data from certain smart television brands, Streaming Data (both from the Nielsen National audience measurement panel for general streaming activity and integrations with 3<sup>rd</sup> party sources for certain live sports events) and Nielsen's National television audience measurement panel distributed across the United States. The Service also relies on certain machine learning algorithms and techniques (i.e., "modeling") to derive audience estimates, including certain procedures to predict demographic information associated with non-panel sourced tuning information.

During the first half of 2025, MRC became aware, through various sources such as our ongoing audit-related work, evaluation of changes to the Service being proposed by Nielsen and member feedback, of seemingly unusual changes in measurement results from the Service; for example, decreases in audiences for certain demographics (e.g., total day impressions for persons 25-54 years old declined by more than 10% on average during the first half of 2025, as compared to the first half of 2024), issues with representation levels in Nielsen's panel (household viewing technology as well as demographic characteristics), as well as changes in the general variability associated with reported audience estimates and between audience estimates originating from Panel only vs. Big Data + Panel measurements. In MRC's audits and in resulting discussions with Nielsen, the MRC identified four priority areas that we believed required Nielsen's actions to help address the issues: 1) Implementation of an independent media-related universe estimate source, 2) Changes to Nielsen's modeling processes to increase demographic assignment accuracy, 3) Changes to Nielsen's weighting process to help simplify the overall process and reduce standard error levels in reporting, and 4) Improving underrepresented demographic segments in Nielsen's panel (e.g., Hispanic, Spanish Dominant). In September 2025, MRC informed Nielsen that improvements on these four matters was necessary to maintain accreditation of the Service.

Since that time, Nielsen has conducted and shared research as well as proposed several solutions to address these areas. In February 2026, Nielsen implemented the ARF DASH study as a source of media-related universe estimates. It should also be noted that the ARF DASH study was granted MRC accreditation in early 2026 after successfully completing a separate MRC audit process. As for the focus on underrepresented demographic segments, Nielsen made notable progress in quarters three and four 2025 and into January 2026, and has expressed a commitment to continue focusing on balancing demographic representation since we believe further work is needed in this area.

Adjustments to Nielsen's modeling and weighting processes are currently planned for implementation in April 2026. At present, MRC members are awaiting impact data for these

changes on a combined basis to better understand the nature of the changes as well as to verify expected reduction in bias and in statistical variability. Impact data is currently being delivered by Nielsen in phases to enable our evaluation and provide notice of impacts to the marketplace.

We understand and we regret that these changes will be disruptive to business processes of the marketplace; we are encouraged that Nielsen is actively working to address the priority areas for improvement that have arisen in their Big Data + Panel measurement. We will continue to evaluate the estimated impacts of these planned methodological changes, with urgency, as they are important to Nielsen's current accreditation of the commerce significant National service, which continues to be under evaluation at this time. Should the expected timing be modified or delayed, MRC will determine next steps on how to proceed.

MRC will provide additional updates on this process as events warrant. Our audits of the Service continue as we work on evaluating Nielsen's actions in addressing these matters.

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### **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).

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