



# **BARB 2010 Service**

## **BARB Reference Manual**

### **6. Quality Control**

**VERSION 1.6**

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## 6.1 Introduction

The BARB Audience Measurement System is dependent upon a consistent and accurate measurement of the viewing within those homes which make up the panel.

Quality Control (QC) procedures are the tool by which continuous provision of reliable data is maintained.

The QC process can be divided into two distinct operations - Input and Output Quality Control. Input QC is concerned with the prevention of errors and problems occurring in the viewing data before the data are processed into published reports, while Output QC is concerned with identifying and eliminating errors in the actual reports.

## 6.2 Input Quality Control

This covers the routines and practices which are employed to detect, and deal with, potential errors in the basic Panel Member data.

### 6.2.1 Editing

#### Uncovered Set Viewing

The current audience measurement system generates inevitable periods of time when a set may be on but without any recorded viewing by individuals in the home. These are known as 'gaps' and can arise in a variety of ways. Each is described below, together with the current protocol for dealing with them:

**Leading Gap** A period of uncovered set viewing where no individuals claim to view until some time has elapsed after the set has been switched on.

The last period of uncovered set viewing in a leading gap, up to a maximum of two minutes is covered with imputed individuals' data. All individuals who commence viewing within the first minute of covered viewing following a leading gap are imputed to cover this two minute period. Should a channel change occur within the two minute period, then the data imputations cover only the period from the channel change to the commencement of recorded individuals' data.

**Trailing Gap** A period of uncovered set viewing where any individuals previously registered as viewing have stopped viewing some time before the set is switched off.

All individuals viewing within the last 60 seconds of covered viewing prior to a trailing gap are imputed to cover the first two minutes (maximum) of the trailing gap. Any channel changes occurring within this two minute period do not affect this imputation rule.

**Embedded Gap** A period of uncovered set viewing interrupting a period of continuous viewing.

Data are not imputed in embedded gaps except where a channel change occurs within the last two minutes before viewing commences. In this situation, data imputation only covers the period from the channel change to the commencement of recorded individuals' data. All individuals who commence viewing within the first minute of covered viewing are imputed back to the channel change.

**Whole Gap** A period of uncovered viewing where no individual was registered as viewing during the entire viewing session.

Individuals' viewing is not imputed to cover this gap.

### **Other Uncovered Data**

After imputing individuals' data in accordance with the rules outlined above, all remaining uncovered set viewing data are removed from the published viewing records.

### **Concurrent Viewing**

Concurrent viewing occurs when a panel member is simultaneously registered to more than one set. Given below is a description of how this behaviour is currently corrected.

If a person is viewing TV sets concurrently, then their viewing is retained for the last set (i.e. most recent registration) and removed from the others.

Any created uncovered viewing gaps will then be treated as detailed above, i.e. imputed where relevant with subsequent viewing removed.

## **6.2.2 Design & Operation of Input Quality Controls**

A viewing statement is the duration of one individual or group of individuals' viewing to one particular channel for one period of time. When they change channels, or stop viewing, or another person joins or leaves them, this constitutes a different viewing statement. Given that in a typical week, the average person watches 25 hours of television, it follows that hundreds of viewing statements can be generated by a home over this period, these need to be carefully examined for accuracy and reliability.

The task required of panel members is that whenever they are in a room with a television set switched on, they must register their presence, and immediately before they leave the room, they de-register.

- (i) **Nil Viewing (Set, Household, Person).** This is potentially the most serious of the four types of problem since it is frequently associated with meter problems. Nil Viewing can occur at several levels :

Household Nil Viewing means that the household is not producing any viewing data over a period of time (currently set at 2 weeks).

Set Nil Viewing happens when a particular TV set appears not to have been used for 3 weeks.

Individual Nil Viewing is the term applied to a particular person in a household who has not registered any viewing whatsoever, also over a 3-week period. Individual nil viewing is also checked at the six month mark allowing a supplementary review of the panel membership definition.

- (ii) **Extreme and Long-Session Viewing.** Long-session viewing is the term used to describe the situation where a panel member is apparently watching TV for an extended period of time without taking a break (i.e. de-registering).

In most cases long viewing sessions are indicative of forgetfulness - i.e. the panel member has left the room but has neglected to de-register themselves. Where the Panel Member is guilty of forgetfulness, a Panel Liaison Officer will re-educate them in the correct use of the handset. Any suspected meter or handset problems will be referred to the meter contractor.

Extreme viewing checks are also conducted for individuals viewing 120 hours or more in the last week.

Extreme guest viewing and registration is also monitored.

- (iii) **Uncovered Set-Viewing (Set, Household, Computer).** Uncovered set-viewing occurs when a TV set or computer is switched on but no individual has registered their presence. In many cases this is genuine behaviour - someone in the household has switched the TV on, then gone off to do something else in the home. It can also occur when a person de-registers their presence but leaves the TV set switched on. However, it can also be a sign of sloppy practice where the individual simply has not bothered to register their presence. Once again, a Panel Liaison Officer will speak to the home or individual concerned and remind them of the correct procedure. Homes where levels of USV are found to be excessively high and are confirmed to be due to non-compliance will be withheld from the panel until button pushing has returned to an acceptable level.
- (iv) **Non-Solus Viewing.** Non-solus viewing is individuals who have little or no recorded viewing alone. In many cases this is genuine behaviour, but occasionally it can be due to one household member taking on the responsibility of registering all other household members and in such cases re-education is required.
- (v) **Concurrent Viewing (TV and PC)** Concurrent registration is where an individual in the household is registered on two different sets, or two different PCs at the same time. Although an editing rule is in place to ensure such

viewing doesn't enter the data, a Panel Liaison Officer will speak to the home and re-educate the behaviour where necessary.

### Optimisation and Prioritisation of Quality Control Queries

The above quality control checks can generate thousands of queries. Because of this, care is required on what constitutes a query and which parameters are set for it. In particular it is important not to bombard the panel members with calls.

RSMB uses a ranking system which ensures that homes suspected of bad practice (or with potential meter problems) are singled out for special attention. This is done through a scoring process whereby each QC event is awarded a points score based on its relative level of seriousness. When all events have been considered, the points per home are added up and those with the highest "scores" are flagged for QC contact. These are then passed on to the Panel Liaison Office.

### Following-Up of Quality Control Queries

It is important to track the progress on homes where QC queries are passed onto the meter contractor for investigation. Codes are used to flag homes which are under investigation. This facilitates the monitoring of how many homes fall into this category at any particular time and if and how long they were removed from the reporting sample.

Homes that are deemed to be persistent poor compliers, not responding to re-education attempts are removed from the panel.

Homes that RSMB have been unable to contact are passed to the meter contractor and withheld until contact with the home has been made.

### Quality Control Outcomes File

Each time that a home is contacted to resolve QC queries, a log is made of the day/time, query type and outcome. Thus, a database is built up which presents a complete record of each home's QC history. This can then be interrogated to highlight persistent offenders who may be put forward for discardment, as well as allowing more general analysis of how effective re-education is in correcting a home's or individual's behaviour. It also has the potential to expose weaknesses in the training, motivational and QC processes by highlighting trends in misbehaviour. QC is extended and re-education letters are sent to persistent offenders and those who admit non-compliance during a contact call from panel liaison. The meter contractor also contributes to this file by recording any occurrences of panel members failing to comply which they become aware of, and by registering the outcome of any queries which had been passed on to them as potential technical problems.

### 6.2.3 Input Quality Control Reporting

RSMB's input quality control reporting consists of internal monitoring reports to check the functioning of all relevant aspects of the measurement service and trigger investigations, currently these are as follows:

|                                         |           |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------|
| Establishment Survey Response Rates     | Quarterly |
| Panel Recruitment Rates                 | Monthly   |
| Panel Installation Rates                | Monthly   |
| Panel Conversion Rates                  | Monthly   |
| Panel Drop-Out Rates                    | Weekly    |
| Panel Continuity Rates                  | Quarterly |
| Panel Balance                           | Weekly    |
| Reporting Samples                       | Weekly    |
| Weighting Performance                   | Weekly    |
| Key Viewing Indicators - Nil Viewing    | Weekly    |
| - Uncovered Set Viewing                 | Weekly    |
| - "Per Set" Factors                     | Weekly    |
| - Extreme Viewing                       | Weekly    |
| Number by Type of QC Telephone Contacts | Quarterly |
| Outcomes of QC Telephone Contacts       | Quarterly |

### 6.2.4 Running-In

When a home has been installed with the appropriate metering equipment, the installation engineer will explain the functioning of the equipment to the panel member. This is backed up by supporting documentation on the correct usage of the handset. There follows, a period during which the panel member(s) may experiment with the handset and gradually get used to integrating the practice into their normal behaviour. This typically takes between a few days and a couple of weeks. During this time the viewing data for the household are collected and monitored. Once a home has provided a week's worth of data, the data are evaluated to determine whether the home has progressed satisfactorily. The evaluation process itself follows the lines of standard QC checks.

If the viewing data have demonstrated that the home is performing properly, the Panel Liaison officer will check with the household that they are comfortable with the use of the equipment, how to register guests and how and when they should contact the Panel Liaison team or the metering contractor. Provided the outcome of this conversation is satisfactory, the home will then be released on to the live panel to begin contributing viewing data.

If, however, the initial data set shows that the home is experiencing problems, or is erratic in its viewing behaviour, the running process continues. No home will be released on to the panel until the Panel Liaison officer is satisfied that it has a firm grasp of the fundamental task.

### **6.2.5 Coincidental Study**

A coincidental study is conducted in order to provide some cross check on people meter viewing claims and instructed to cover all panel homes in the course of a 12 month period. This is carried out by telephone by RSMB panel liaison staff. The person contacted is asked to report on the status of each monitored television set within the home and of each panel member (including 'regular guests') and guests.

For set status is 'on' or 'off' and for individuals whether they were present in the room when the TV set/one of the TV sets was 'on'. (Where a set is identified as being 'on' its specific use is also determined – watching television, viewing DVDs, listening to the radio in digital homes, etc.).

Analyses are produced monthly, quarterly and annually. These give comparisons between the viewing claims generated by the people meter system and those derived from the coincidental study. Results are produced separately for 'Contacts' (those interviewed) and 'All Individuals' (including other panel members/guests based on the information provided by the contact).

## **6.3 Output Quality Control**

Output quality control – or monitoring – is concerned with the stability of calculated results.

RSMB maintains an up to date historical database which stores individuals' average hours of viewing by time segments, by channel and by a range of demographic groups. From this database weekly tables and graphs are constructed from which trends in viewing are monitored. In addition to these charts, RSMB produce a monthly exceptions report which takes the time-series data and using a statistical test, identifies those series where the latest values (i.e. the most recent week or month) exhibit the largest year-on-year change.