

# TRACStats

A guide to frequently used audience measurement terms.

# CARRIAGE:

**Definition:** The number of stations airing a program (United States only).

**How Is Carriage Reported?** Carriage is reported for programs, usually for the whole country, but it also can be reported by day of the week, by timeslot, by geography (markets) or by portions of the population (demographics).

**More about Carriage:** Carriage figures increase as time intervals grow, particularly for single programs, limited series, or syndicated programs (as the time interval increases, the opportunity for additional stations to air these programs increases also).

TRAC's carriage is purchased from TV Guide. Data are reported four weeks into the future and updated daily as time moves closer to the date of broadcast.

Carriage can be accessed by clients in the TRAC Website or by a custom report.

**Formula:** Count the number of different stations airing a program across a specified time interval.

**Example and Use:** Two hundred stations are airing a program in a specified week. A carriage query indicates that in a month the number of stations airing that program will increase to 226.

Producers or producing stations can determine the number of stations airing their programs. This is useful information for potential underwriters to determine the extent of the potential audience and for producers to gauge the appeal of their programs among stations and programmers.

# COVERAGE:

**Definition:** The percentage of the U.S. TV population that can receive a given program.

**How Is Coverage Reported?** Like carriage, coverage is reported for programs. Coverage percentages can include the whole country, but they can also be provided for day of the week, timeslot, geography (markets) or by portions of the population (demographics). Unlike carriage, coverage is reported in population percentage as opposed to sheer number of stations airing a program.

**More about Coverage:** Like carriage, coverage figures grow as the queried time interval grows, especially for non-series programs.

TRAC's coverage is computed using Nielsen-determined coverage percentages for each TV market. (There are 210 Nielsen Designated Market Areas. See DMAs, Other Terms) These figures are updated once a year at the start of each new TV season. TRAC uses TV Guide schedule data to determine markets where programs are aired. Like carriage, coverage figures are reported four weeks in the future and updated as the broadcast date grows closer.

Each market is *counted only once* in the coverage percentage *regardless of the number of times the program airs* at a station or in a market.

Coverage figures are provided on the TRAC Website for TRAC clients.

**Formula:** Nielsen-based TV Household coverage percentages are summed for all markets where a program is broadcast during a specified time period.

**Example and Usage:** WNET (New York), WLIW (New York) and KCET (Los Angeles) were the only stations that carried a program in a specified week. Total coverage equals New York (7% of U.S. households) plus Los Angeles (5% of the households). This means 12% of the households in the country had an opportunity to view the program.

Producers or producing stations can determine the percentage of the U.S. population potentially exposed to a program. Like carriage, coverage is a figure useful for potential underwriters and also for program producers.

# HUTS/PUTS:

**Definition:** The percentage of all households (HUT, HUTs) or persons (PUT, PUTs) using television at a given time. HUTs/PUTs are also known as Total TV Use.

**How Are HUTs/PUTs Reported?** HUTs/PUTs are reported across time periods such as days or weekends. HUTs/PUTs are rarely used for programs.

**More about HUTs/PUTs:** HUTs/PUTs are useful in monitoring the overall ebb and flow of TV audiences.

HUTs/PUTs differ by season, being the highest in the winter months and the lowest in the summer except in very hot climate markets where the pattern may be reversed. HUTs/PUTs also vary by time of day and day of the week.

Nielsen provides HUT/PUT levels in its rating materials. HUT/PUT levels include all viewing to all television programming sources that are located in or spill into the DMA from adjacent areas (Designated Market Area, see Other Terms).

HUT/PUT information is provided on the TRAC Website by station.

**Formula:** Total the ratings for all television programming sources in a market in any time period. This includes viewing of cable services, satellite and adjacent market stations spilling into the market.

**Example and Use:** The TRAC Website shows that 82% of Milwaukee households have their sets turned on at 8 p.m. on an average Monday in February. At 11 p.m. Mondays in February, that number decreases to 18%.

HUT/PUT information provides perspective on TV use in a market. It indicates timeslots with audience attraction potential and helps programmers schedule according to audience availability. HUTs are also used as a base for calculating Share (See Shares).

# CUMES:

**Definition:** Cumes are a measure of the number of different homes or individuals in a market that viewed a station for five minutes or more in a specified time period. Cumes are also known as Circulation, Reach, or Unduplicated Audience.

**How Are Cumes Reported?** Cumes are usually reported for a week, from the time a station signs on the air in the morning to the time it signs off at night. Cumes can be reported for longer time periods (like a month), or for shorter time periods such as prime time (8-11 p.m. Eastern Time Zone, 7-10 p.m. Central Time Zone) or, less likely, for a single program.

Cumes are more often reported by household, but they may be computed for demographic groups (such as women over the age of 18 or men between the ages of 50-64).

**More about Cumes:** Households (or persons) can be counted only once in a station's cume no matter how many times they view.

Cumes and other audience estimates can be based on different geographical areas much as a market's metro or DMA areas (see Other Terms).

Cumes are sensitive to the length of the time period being measured. As the time period grows, so does the cume (a station's monthly cume is bigger than a weekly or daily cume). Cumes from dayparts or time periods of different lengths should never be compared.

Station cumes are available on the TRAC Website

**Formula:** The number of different homes or individuals that viewed a station for five or more minutes divided by the total number of homes or individuals in a market. The result is multiplied by 100 to express the cume as a percentage.

**Example and Use:** There were 500,000 homes that viewed WPBS in a market of 1,200,000 homes during a seven-day period. The cume is  $500,000/1,200,000$  or .4157. Multiply by 100 and round the results to 42. That means 42 percent of all the households in the market viewed WPBS during the week.

Cume measures viewer exposure to a station. A growing cume means that more homes are sampling the station's programs. Comparing trends over several years for the same dayparts provides a rough indicator of station performance over time.

# RATINGS:

**Definition:** The percentage of viewing households based on the total number of homes in a market. Ratings are traditionally generated by quarter-hours and averaged to obtain either a program or a daypart rating. Ratings are also known as Program Popularity, Minute-By-Minute Ratings, or Viewing Frequency.

**How Are Ratings Reported?** Ratings are reported for all programs and all dayparts. They can be reported by percentage of households or persons.

While the traditional broadcast measure is the household rating, other applications use demographics (such as ratings for children 2 to 5 years or men 18 to 49 years of age) to determine whether a program reached its target audience.

**More about Ratings:** While cumes measure unique viewing, ratings measure frequency of viewing. If a household (or person) visits a station for five minutes three times during a given week, it is counted once in a cume, but it is counted all three times in ratings.

Since ratings are averaged across quarter hours, they are not affected by the length of a program or time period. A two-hour movie and a 30-minute news show may have the same ratings even though the programs' cumes and GRPs differ. (See Cumes and GRPs.)

**Formula:** The number of homes (or persons) viewing a station's program or daypart divided by the total number of television homes (or persons) in the market. The quotient is multiplied by 100 and rounded. The denominator includes all homes (or all persons in the demographic group being measured) whether or not they are viewing at the time.

Ratings are available on the TRAC Website.

**Example and Use:** The smallest unit Nielsen measures is the quarter-hour. The rating for a 30-minute program is the average of the two quarter-hour ratings: 10,000 homes viewed **Washington Week** between 8:00 p.m. and 8:15 p.m. and 20,000 homes viewed between 8:15 and 8:30 p.m. Each quarter-hour viewing is divided by the total number of television homes in the market (metro or DMA households), in this case, 1,200,000. The rating for the first quarter-hour is 0.83 ( $10,000/1,200,000 \times 100$ ); the second quarter-hour is 1.67 ( $20,000/1,200,000 \times 100$ ). The program average rating is 1.25.

Ratings level the playing field among programs, markets, and demographics. Ratings for different programs and different markets can be compared: a 2.0 rating for **NOVA** in Sacramento is comparable to a 2.0 **NOVA** in Boise, or a 2.0 **Nature** in Austin.

# GRPS:

**Definition:** Gross Rating Points (GRPs) are simply added ratings. They are also known as Total Viewing or Viewing Tonnage.

**How GRPs Are Reported:** GRPs are reported for dayparts or time periods (a day, week or month), although GRPs can also be computed for programs. GRPs measure household and person viewing.

**More about GRPs:** Gross Rating Points (GRPs) are quarter-hour or half-hour ratings summed across a given program or daypart.

GRPs are sensitive to length of the time period being measured. As the time period grows, so do total GRPs. When comparing GRPs for different time periods, length of the time periods should be taken into consideration.

GRPs are provided on the TRAC Website

**Formula:** Household or person quarter or half-hour ratings are added together for the program or daypart being examined. For sweep reports, TRAC provides Nielsen half-hour GRPs. For TRAC's overnight service, GRPs are based on quarter-hours.

If one station has 210 GRPs and another station has 105 GRPs, the first station has twice as much viewing as the second.

**Example and Use:** The ratings by quarter-hour for a **Masterpiece Classic** episode are 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, and 1.8. The GRPs are 7.6. The ratings for **Washington Week** are 0.8 and 1.7 for its two quarter-hours, and the GRPs are 2.5.

To get daypart GRPs, multiply the average quarter-hour rating by the number of quarter hours. If WPBS has a prime time quarter-hour average rating of 2.5, WPBS' GRPs equal  $2.5 \times 84$  (the number of quarter hours in prime time in a week). WPBS has 210 GRPs.

GRPs denote the amount of viewing attracted by programs or dayparts. They offer a precise statistical measurement of audience attraction and schedule performance.

# SHARES:

**Definition:** The percentage of homes using television that view a particular program or daypart. A share differs from a rating because it has a different denominator.

For a share, the denominator is the number of homes using television (HUT) during the telecast of the program or daypart. (For a rating, it is the total number of TV households in the market, whether or not those homes are watching TV at the time.)

**How Shares Are Reported:** Shares are available for dayparts and for programs.

**More about Shares:** The share is always higher than the rating. Shares reflect the number of homes viewing television at the time.

**Sesame Street** can get a 50 share at 6 a.m. on a Sunday morning because only 5,000 television sets are turned on, half of them to public television. At other times **Sesame Street** might get a three share despite having five times as many viewing households.

Shares should only be compared in similar time periods since their denominators (HUTs) fluctuate depending on day, time or month. Ratings can be compared across dayparts or sweeps since their denominators (Total Homes) remain constant.

Shares may be found in the TRAC Website.

**Formula:** The number of homes viewing a program divided by the number of homes viewing television at the time. The result is multiplied by 100 and rounded.

**Example and Use:** **Washington Week** was viewed by 15,000 homes. The total number of homes viewing broadcast or cable in the market during the time period was 500,000 homes. Thus,  $15,000/500,000 \times 100 = 3$  share.

Total shares at any given time usually add to slightly more than 100 due to second set usage in some of the market's households.

Shares help stations compare program performances with those of other stations in its market during the same time slot. Shares are a rough indicator of a program's market appeal.

# OTHER TERMS:

**Daypart:** A daypart is a specific portion of a week for which ratings are reported. For example, in the Eastern Time Zone, prime time covers Monday through Sunday 8-11 p.m. and early fringe includes Monday through Sunday 5-8 p.m.

**Diary Measure:** Nielsen recruits (usually by telephone) a sample of homes that keep records of their TV viewing in a one-week diary. Diaries are mailed to respondents and then mailed back to Nielsen for tabulation. The diary keepers are asked to enter call letters, channel positions, program titles and persons in the home who watched. Since diaries cover only a one-week period, four separate samples of homes are used for each sweep. The Nielsen diary week begins on a Thursday and concludes on Wednesday.

**DMA or Designated Market Area:** DMAs are named according to their principal cities. Nielsen assigns all counties in the U.S. area to one (and only one) DMA market. A county is assigned to a DMA if 50% of its viewing goes to stations in the designated market area.

**Local People Meter or LPM Measure:** In households in the largest markets, TV set tuning is monitored each minute by electronic household meters. Panelists use a remote control to report who in the household is viewing. Using this method, demographic and household information is collected simultaneously. LPMs produce slightly reduced PUT levels and lower viewing levels for public TV stations than household meters. However, Nielsen asserts that LPMs are more rigorous than household meters because Nielsen uses more controls when selecting the LPM sample, recruits more households to participate, and the panel is turned over every two years as opposed to every five years under the old method.

**Metro:** Metro consists of the more urban, central counties of a market. Nielsen designates a market's metro area.

**NSI or Nielsen Station Index Area:** The NSI area includes all counties required to account for 95% of viewing to the DMA's home stations. The NSI area covers Metro, DMA and fringe counties. These fringe counties lie outside the DMA but still contribute viewing to the DMA's home stations. The fringe counties contributing most viewing to the DMA are added to the Metro and DMA counties one by one until the 95% threshold is reached.

**Set Meter Measure:** In many larger markets, TV set tuning is monitored each minute by electronic household meters. The information is communicated electronically to Nielsen daily.

Meters report more viewing than diaries simply because diary keepers forget to record all viewing.

This meter method collects household viewing information only. Person ratings for metered markets are a combination of diary-derived age/sex information and household meter data. Households can drop out of the panel at any time, but Nielsen retires them after five years.

**Universe:** The population of a market expressed as either TV households or person demographics (age, gender, race, etc.).

# ABOUT TRAC

Since 1979, TRAC Media Services has provided ratings analysis and research for stations, producers and service organizations in the public television system. TRAC also specializes in the area of public television membership research, focusing primarily on pledge. TRAC has worked extensively in community ascertainment and engagement, performing sophisticated community Listening Projects in many areas of the country.

TRAC Media Services is more than data. Trends within the public television system are observed and studied, and the company provides detailed analyses and consultation in all areas of its research. TRAC Media Services, the founder and administrator of The Public Television Programmers' Association, provides training and idea-exchange seminars to a wide variety of professions within the public television community. It is a leader in internet and new media metrics.

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