

## POLICY BRIEF

# FINER LEVEL OF GEOGRAPHIC CONTROL – GEO ZONES

## OVERVIEW

Nielsen Audio's sampling units are defined by counties or split portions of counties. Since 2011, Nielsen Audio introduced a sample control enhancement in its Nielsen PPM™ markets called Geographic Zones (Geo Zones). Geo Zones are clusters of zip codes ideally with socio-economic similarity. These zones will aid in selecting and managing sample at a more discrete level and will provide a finer level of geographic control for each sampling unit (county or split portion of a county<sup>1</sup>) with Nielsen PPM market panels.

## CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING GEO ZONES

The establishment of Geo Zones requires an in-depth analysis of a sampling unit, including its population by zip code, zip code locations, In-Tab Sample Target, and socio-economic characteristics. The criteria follow:

- Zones are nested within a single sampling unit (whole or split portion of a county).
  - This ensures that zone proportionality directly correlates to sample unit proportionality.
- Zones are created to be as geographically compact as possible.
  - When dividing a sampling unit into two or more zones, urbanicity (population density) and income characteristics may also be considered.
  - Income and urbanicity characteristics are based upon Nielsen Demographics PRIZM® clusters.
- This ensures a finer, more discrete level of geographic control.
- Any sampling unit with an In-Tab Sample Target of 79 or less is one zone.
- A sampling unit with an In-Tab Sample Target of 80 or more is generally divided into two or more zones, each with an In-Tab Sample Target of 40 or greater, unless:
  - No combinations of zip codes can produce two logical zones, each with an In-Tab Target of 40.
- Zones have an In-Tab Sample Target of 120 or less.

## MAINTAINING GEO ZONE DEFINITIONS

Nielsen Audio reviews Geo-Zone Definitions annually. Any changes to a sampling unit's roster of zip codes which then causes a shift in zip codes assigned to its Geo-Zone(s) will prompt an extensive, in-depth review of the respective Geo Zone definition(s). The above criteria used to establish Geo Zones will be applied for any necessary updates. Updates will occur during October reporting periods, respectively.

## SAMPLE PERFORMANCE AND AUDIENCE ESTIMATES REPORTING

Nielsen Audio will continue to report to subscribers sample performance at the Metro, county, and ethnic levels, as currently available in Nielsen Audio eBook's Sample Summary and via Nielsen Audio's subscriber Web site, DDI Reports. Similarly Nielsen Audio will continue to "weight" its sample to population estimates and report audience listening by county (or portion of a county). Since Geo Zones represent a very small subset of the total sample, weighting for and reporting of audience estimates at such a discrete level would not improve ratings reliability.

For further information on Geo Zones,

## CONTACT:

**Ryan Samuels**, Director, Policy  
U.S. Local Media – Policy and Guidelines  
Email: ryan.samuels@nielsen.com  
Phone: (667) 786-4559

**Paul Gussack**, Research Executive  
U.S. Local Media – Policy and Guidelines  
Email: paul.gussack@nielsen.com  
Phone: (667) 786-4558

<sup>1</sup> A county split portion includes ethnically split portions (High-Density Black Areas, High-Density Hispanic Areas), and Balances, as well as Geographically Split portions.

**PPM ratings are based on audience estimates and are the opinion of Nielsen and should not be relied on for precise accuracy or precise representativeness of a demographic or radio market.**

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