

POLICY BRIEF

PANEL COMPLIANCE AND SECURITY CONTROLS

The maximum amount of time a household may participate in the panel is approximately 24 months from the date the household agreed to participate.

In certain circumstances, we may remove the household from the Panel prior to that expiration date. This policy brief offers an overview of these other circumstances and additional information.

‘REMOVE FROM THE PANEL’

We use ‘remove the household from the Panel’ as an umbrella term to describe the series of our back of house actions that ends the household’s participation in the Panel.

The removal process begins by classifying the household so that the PPM system will discard any information that household may return in the future. From the moment we classify the household in this manner, the household will not contribute any information to the audience estimates.

We then communicate with the household that it will be leaving the Panel and begin the process to collect the household’s meters and beacons.

WHY REMOVE THE HOUSEHOLD EARLY

Panel stability is a key aspect of our services’ quality. As such, we do not take the prospect of removing a household from the Panel lightly. Nevertheless, there are some circumstances where removing a household is necessary.

The rationale for removing a particular household from the Panel will fall into one of two general categories: non-compliance or a breach of Panel security. Examples of specific actions that may prompt us to remove a household from the Panel include when a member of the household:

- Consistently fails to follow our instructions to wear or carry meters;

- Engages in serious, repetitive non-compliant behavior, (such as wearing multiple meters, or placing a meter on a mechanical device to artificially generate motion);
- Divulges the household’s participation in the Panel via social media or some other means; or
- Secured meters for persons that do not live in the household full-time (in order for that non-household person to participate in the Panel).

SYSTEM CHECKS AND ANALYSIS

Each day, the PPM system automatically checks the Panel’s data and flags any household whose data may indicate serial non-compliance or that a breach of panel security has taken place. If the system flags a household, an analyst will review the household’s information and determine the next best course of action. Detailed information about these protocols, analyses, and systems remains confidential.

NON-COMPLIANCE

We instruct each Panelist to wear or carry his or her PPM during all waking hours, charge the meter when retiring for the day, and avoid carrying another family member’s meter. We closely monitor how each Panelist complies with these instructions. We will remove a household from the Panel if the household consistently fails to follow our instructions to wear/carry meters over time.

As we evaluate a Panelist’s compliance, we consider how special circumstances may prevent the Panelist from following this instruction. Examples of such special circumstances include a school’s or employer’s prohibition against carrying electronic devices, chronic illness, an extended power outage, etc.

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When we remove a non-compliant household from the Panel, any data that household may have contributed to the current report period's In-Tab sample will remain in the sample.

PANEL SECURITY

We may also elect to remove a household from the Panel due to a breach of Panel security. We consider activities such as disclosure of participation in a public forum, surrendering control of the meter to a non-authorized person, or the participation of a media-affiliated person in this category. No two Panel security breaches are exactly alike. As such, we handle each on a case-by-case basis.

Once we discover a potential security breach may have occurred, we conduct a detailed investigation of the incident. This investigation may include steps such as additional household interviews, review of data from other sources, in-market observation, etc.

When the investigation yields information sufficient to assist in decision-making, we convene a committee of senior staff representing Nielsen's Policy, Product Leadership, Data Science, and Operations workgroups. This committee reviews the household's listening and motion data, the investigation's findings, and other relevant information. That team will then determine if the household should be retained or removed from the Panel.

If the committee determines it is appropriate to remove the household from the Panel, the committee will then determine what steps to take – if any -- to adjust the data.

In such instances, the committee has multiple options to consider. Taking into account the calendar date of the initial security breach, the committee may elect to retain the household's data in the current report period's monthly in-tab sample, remove it from the monthly sample, retain the household's 'secure' weeks of data in the monthly sample but remove 'unsecure' weeks from the weekly sample, etc. While the committee works within a set frame of guidelines, its decision on this point will reflect the specifics and nature of that particular circumstance only.

In extreme circumstances, the committee may also consider if it would be appropriate to remove the household's data from previous report periods and reissue the data. Generally, we will reissue a report if removing the household from the sample and reprocessing the data changes a significantly ranked station's AQH Persons rank in either the Persons 6+, 18-34, 18-49, or 25-54 demo during either the Monday-Sunday 6AM to Midnight or Monday-Friday 6AM to 7PM

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dayparts, *and* if the affected station's reprocessed AQH Persons estimate is at least 5% different in the demo/daypart where the station's rank changed.

AN INVISIBLE PROCESS

The household removal process is nearly invisible to the marketplace. While the process is ongoing every day of the year, we generally do not communicate information about the process or its results to the marketplace at large.

The marketplace should not view this level of confidentiality as indicative of any intent to shroud our methods in mystery or hide information that should be disclosed.

Rather, as a matter of our personal information policy, we do not notify the marketplace of any specific Panelist information, including the outcomes of standard/automated non-compliant household removals with any special communications.

Because breaches of Panel security tend to have a higher degree of visibility, it is more likely that we will communicate with the marketplace regarding a Panel security breach. The type, nature, timing, and audience for such communications will vary from one instance to another.

AUDIT AND VALIDATION

Every PPM market participates in the MRC accreditation process. As a part of that process, all of the controls, policies, and procedures described in this brief are audited and validated by independent auditors on behalf of the MRC.

POLICY EVOLUTION

As is the case with our research methods in general, we are always looking for ways to improve and enhance our Panel security procedures. Because of their nature, we may not be able to broadly communicate with the marketplace regarding these efforts or any upcoming enhancements. Nevertheless, the marketplace can be confident that we are always striving to do better and will implement new procedures when they will help us improve the quality of our Panels.

CONTACT

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