

# Ask Dr. Ed

## How Does Arbitron Handle the Measurement of Minority Groups?

A meeting was held recently to come up with new ways to dispel the myths that have spread over the years about the way Arbitron works. It was decided that someone should write an article to shed light on the subject. Since I missed the meeting, I was volunteered to write it.

One area that has generated more fables than Aesop is the question of how Arbitron measures black and Hispanic audiences. To clear the myths from the reality, here are some of the basics of just how Arbitron measures minority audiences.

To begin with the “big picture,” the first thing Arbitron does is an annual review of all markets to determine which ones should receive something called an “ethnic Differential Survey Treatment” (DST). In common radio parlance, Arbitron weights ethnic DST markets for a particular group. In reality, it means much more.

### How Markets Qualify for Ethnic DSTs

To qualify for an ethnic DST, at least 10 percent of a market’s Metro population must be black or Hispanic (9.5 percent rounds to 10). A Metro may also qualify for an ethnic DST if there are at least 75,000 black persons or 75,000 Hispanic persons, and the group makes up at least five percent of the Metro population (4.5 percent rounds to five).

And yes, this does mean that we weight the in-tab diaries for both the ethnic and nonethnic groups.

### How Markets Qualify for High-Density Areas

Now let’s talk about High-Density Areas (HDAs). These areas are usually referred to as either HDBAs or HDHAs, with the “B” in HDBA meaning black, and the “H” in HDHA representing Hispanic. Put simply, HDAs are areas that have a higher percentage of black or Hispanic populations.

Far more importance is generally attached to HDAs by radio folks than these designations actually deserve. HDAs primarily serve as

sampling areas. Because HDAs contain higher proportions of black or Hispanic residents, Arbitron uses them to help control the sample in DST markets. Households from HDAs may be of any race or ethnic group, but the fact is that we are more likely to find more black respondents in HDBAs and more Hispanic respondents in HDHAs. To see all the rules about HDAs, check out the Arbitron *Radio Description of Methodology* at our Web site [www.arbitron.com](http://www.arbitron.com).

### How DSTs Affect the Survey Process

The key difference between DST Metros and non-DST Metros is the way Arbitron interacts with diarykeepers. Differential is just that—we generally give higher premiums per person for participating in our surveys, and have more contact with the household for a particular group in a DST Metro.

The amount of money given to participants and the number of contacts differ from Metro to Metro. Arbitron reviews the sample performance and treatment history to determine the specific combination of money and contact we use.

### Are We Doing This to Play Favorites with One Group or Another? Absolutely Not.

The goal is simply to get our samples as proportional as possible without violating the tenets of random sampling.

The reality is that, in general, black and Hispanic persons are less likely to fill out and return diaries. In order to address that, we use a combination of oversampling, higher premiums and more contact. Arbitron uses these treatments to get proportional representation, not overrepresentation, of these groups. These efforts are really no different from what we do to get more young males to respond, another historically hard-to-reach group.

As always, I welcome your questions and comments. You can reach me at [ed.cohen@arbitron.com](mailto:ed.cohen@arbitron.com). ●



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