Community Radio National Listener Survey

About the Survey

The National Listener Survey is a survey of the community radio listening habits of Australians. It provides invaluable feedback to community radio stations about trends, listeners and the sector itself. This information is freely available via a series of Area Fact Sheets.

About McNair Ingenuity Research

McNair Ingenuity Research has been commissioned to conduct each of the National Listener Surveys to date (over 10 years). McNair Ingenuity Research is a fully accredited market and social research organisation and has 70 years experience conducting radio audience research, going back to the first radio audience studies conducted in Australia in 1934.

All consultants at McNair are Qualified Practicing Market Researchers. McNair is accredited under the international standard for market and social research, ISO20252:2012, and audited annually against this standard.

Summary of Method

The National Listener Survey is conducted by means of an interlaced survey of both online and telephone interviews amongst a large sample of more than 10,000 people aged 15 + throughout Australia per annum.

The interlaced method, which was adopted in 2012 to address the declining penetration and usage of landlines*, provides for a fully integrated dual method survey. The interlaced method combines a computer-based telephone interviewing technique with an online survey. The term *interlaced* reflects the dynamics of the design: the method does not comprise two independent surveys with disparate quota targets – rather, as the survey progressed, quotas of age and gender by location were modified to maximise the response rate in both methods and ensure the most valid sample was used.

The interviewing program in the 5 capital cities was conducted between April and November 2014 inclusive, the regional areas were conducted in May/June 2013 and May/June 2014, mainly on weekday evenings and weekends. Interviewing was conducted among people aged 15 and over, and quotas were used to ensure an equal number of men and women in each area, and a representative spread of age groups. A total of 11,442 interviews were conducted.

The results were “weighted” (to potential ‘000s) by age groups within gender within each of the above areas to reflect the known populations in each area, based on the most recent population information provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The questionnaire was identical for all areas except for the list of community, commercial, ABS/SBS radio stations, which was tailored for each area. Every community radio station in Australia (excluding RIBS stations) was listed in one or more areas. Most of the questions were the same as those asked previous surveys so that comparisons of results could be made.

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* A decreasing proportion of households have a landline telephone (73%) overall; and most people aged 25-34 cannot be reached via a landline – as 51% live in households without landlines. By comparison, 81% of Australians have access to the Internet at home (Source: Australian Communications and Media Authority, ACMA Communications Report 2013-14)
Comparison with GfK/Nielsen Radio Rating Surveys

The National Listener Survey, conducted by McNair Ingenuity Research, differs from the GfK/Nielsen in method, sample size and the age of participants. As shown by the graph below, both surveys achieve very consistent results, validating the accuracy of both measures (note: this graph compares the commercial station results of the National Listener Survey with the nearest comparable GfK/Nielsen surveys for Adelaide over time).

GfK/Nielsen surveys, like other traditional radio surveys in Australia, measure audiences by the use of a diary that has provision for a respondent to tick quarter-hour by quarter-hour and day-by-day the radio stations that he or she listens to over a seven-day period. This diary only explicitly lists commercial and ABC stations in the market. If a respondent listens to a non-listed station, they are still able to record this under other “other AM” or “other FM”. It can be fairly said that, as a result of specific community radio stations not being listed in the diary, any listening to them is underreported in GfK/Nielsen surveys.

In contrast, the National Listener Survey has been structured so that the call-signs and positions on the dial of all radio stations in a market are read out to respondents or displayed on the screen. The survey is carefully worded to ask about listening to each commercial, community and ABC station, based on availability by broadcast area.