# Measuring Television Viewership

## What is the issue?

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- Information and Broadcasting Ministry has asked TRAI for installing a chip in the new Set-Top-Boxes to measure viewership.
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- It is essential in this backdrop to look at how viewership is measured currently and what difference could chips make.
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## What is I&B Ministry's proposal?

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- I&B Ministry recently sent a letter to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).
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- This was regarding new licences for Direct-To-Home service providers.
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- The Ministry said it was proposed to ask DTH operators to install a chip in the new Set-Top-Boxes.
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- The chip could give data about channels watched and their duration.
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## What was TRAI's response?

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- TRAI has said that installing a chip was not part of the initial reference from the Ministry.
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- So, it was not discussed for the recommendations for new DTH licences that it gave in 2014.

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- It was on these recommendations that the Ministry had asked TRAI further questions.
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- A “new issue” could not be part of a “back reference”.
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- If the Ministry desires the regulator’s recommendation on it, it must ask "officially".
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- However, the Ministry has not sent such a request yet.
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## How is television viewership measured currently?

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- The Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) is an industry body.
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- It is jointly owned by advertisers, ad agencies, and broadcasting companies.
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- They are represented by Indian Society of Advertisers, Indian Broadcasting Foundation and Advertising Agencies Association of India.
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- It measures television viewership in the country, using television rating points, or TRPs.
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## How does it work?

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- BARC has installed “**BAR-O-meters**” in around 30,000 empanelled households across the country.
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- These **households are classified** into 12 categories.
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- This is under the New Consumer Classification System (NCCS), the so-called “new SEC” that was adopted by BARC in 2015.
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- The classification is based on the **education level** of the main wage earner and the ownership of consumer durables.
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- While watching a show, the members of the household register their presence by pressing their viewer ID button.
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- It thus captures the **duration** for which the channel was watched and by **whom**.
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- It also provides data on viewership habits **across age and socio-economic groups.**
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- This data is one of the most important considerations for advertisers and agencies.
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- It influences their choice of channel to advertise their products.
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## What is the need for a chip-based survey?

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- The panel used to capture TRPs should be representative of the country's population.
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- Also, the methodology must be economically viable for the industry.
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- But there are some concerns in regard to all these:
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- **BARC** - There are concerns that BARC was underreporting viewership numbers for Doordarshan.
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- Thus there was apprehension that the data produced by BARC was not accurate.
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- **Cost** - This could impact the advertising costs of the government.
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- As, some channels with low viewership could charge more for advertisements.
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- **Monopoly** - BARC was a "monopoly".
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- It did not disclose its methodology in sufficient detail.
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## How effective could chips be?

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- A basic chip passively records TV viewership data of households that have set-top boxes.
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- It could only capture the duration of viewership for each channel.
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- But still it would be able to potentially capture this data for a much larger TV-watching population.
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- As per the Ministry, installing chip to Set-Top-Boxes could ensure a more “accurate assessment of viewers”.
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- This can help advertisers and advertising agencies make more effective choices.
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## What are the concerns?

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- **Groups** - No information about the TV-watching habits of different age groups will be captured.
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- Also, the data could not reflect viewership patterns in terms of different socio-economic groups.
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- **Quality** - Data from a basic chip could be quantitatively richer, but not necessarily qualitatively better.
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- Notably, the latter is essential for the advertising industry and, therefore, the broadcasting industry.
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- If the chip is to capture qualitative data as well, each set-top box will have to be equipped with a unique identifier.
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- This could naturally lead to concerns over privacy.
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- **Coverage** - The proposal is only for set-top boxes of DTH customers.
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- Whereas TRAI recommends that TRP measurements should be platform-

agnostic.
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- It means that it should reflect the viewership of cable TV and IPTV, etc., as well.
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**Source: Indian Express**

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