

Coronavirus (COVID-19) & ABC Exclusions



Temporary changes to Standards

Introduction

In order to respond effectively to industry needs during these COVID-19 restrictions, and further to the temporary changes already [announced on 25th March](#), we're making available an alternative method of reporting relating to the exclusion of issues from publications' average circulations.

This alternative acknowledges the entirely unusual nature of the COVID-19 restrictions by reporting affected issues in a different way, so they are not compared with other periods and do not form part of trend reporting yet, in the interests of transparency, remain available to buyers.

Reporting changes

During the COVID-19 restrictions publishers will either:

- Continue publishing their standard certificates, using current exclusion rules (as defined in the relevant [ABC Reporting Standards](#)); or
- Utilise a special stand-alone 'COVID-19 certificate', as detailed below, that will appear on our website but which will not appear in our normal reports.

Stand-alone COVID-19 Certificate

This certificate will:

- Be published on our website.
 - Data from this certificate will not appear in normal ABC Reports (including the ABC data hub, ABC industry reports) or in files supplied to commercial partners, such as Mediatel.
- Carry appropriate identification and explanation as to the events surrounding its use.
- Include an average circulation of all issues published in the period covered by the certificate.
- Not allow issues to be excluded due to COVID-19 effects.
- Allow exclusions under normal Public Holiday exclusion rules.
- Include all the normal analyses and breakouts.

Reporting Periods and use of COVID-19 certificates

1. For newsbrands that report ABC data on a monthly basis:

- a. The March 2020 reporting period will be shortened to three weeks (2nd March to 22nd March) and will be reported as a standard certificate, using existing exclusion rules where applicable.
- b. From the April 2020 reporting period onwards publications will report COVID-19 certificates until such time as ABC agrees that the COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted and are no longer relevant.
- c. The April 2020 & May 2020 reporting periods will be adjusted to the five weeks 23rd March to 26th April and 27th April to 31st May 2020 respectively. From June 2020 and onwards reporting periods will follow the [ABC Accounting Calendar](#) unless further amendment is deemed appropriate.

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- d. As well as the COVID-19 certificates, the ABC website will carry a summary table for newsbrands, that includes for each:
 - Total monthly average.
 - A link to the relevant certificate.
 - A month on month trend percentage.
- e. The normal timetable for return submission and certificate issue will continue to apply.

2. For magazines and newspapers reporting ABC data on a six or twelve monthly basis:

- a. Publishers will report a certificate for their normal ABC reporting period (January to June 2020 or January to December 2020).
- b. Publishers may choose to:
 - i. Include all published issues on the standard ABC certificate, using existing exclusion rules; or
 - ii. Publish two certificates:
 - i. The standard certificate that includes all issues outside the COVID-19 period; and
 - ii. A COVID-19 certificate that includes the issues falling within COVID-19 period.

The COVID certificate will effectively take a slice out of the normal reporting period, to include only the affected issues. *For example: If April and May issues are affected, a magazine could choose to report a January to June 2020 certificate including January, February, March and June issues, and a COVID-19 certificate including the April and May issues.*

Notes:

- The intention is that COVID-19 certificates will be available for reporting periods during which significant government restrictions in the movement of people or closure of workplaces and retail outlets are in force.
- We deem significant restrictions to have commenced in March, following the Government announcement on the 16th urging people to work from home.
- We will determine the end of this period in the light of future events and this will be communicated to all members.
- For publications with a significant overseas circulation we'll consider the implication of significant restrictions (similar to those referenced in the UK) in other key markets and may reflect this in the application of COVID-19 reporting for such titles.

The impact on circulations is developing as we produce this guidance. We hope the above provides clarity and an appropriate degree of flexibility on how you report your publications' circulations. We will keep the situation under review.