

The Stat Sniff Test

Discover whether a number is a genuine measure or marketing

Some numbers are solid, some are not, and they look identical on a slide. Run any bold stat past these nine questions before you stake your name on it. You do not need to be a statistician, you just need to know where to look.

The nine questions

1. Who produced it? **[KEY]**

Independent measurer, not the company selling the product.

3. Who was measured?

A fair representation of your market, not the seller's own users.

5. Compared with what?

A genuine control or like-for-like benchmark, not a number in isolation.

7. Watch the verb.

"Drove / delivered" claims cause; most data only shows correlation. Look for a control.

9. Who paid?

Funding disclosed. Hidden funding should stop you repeating it until you find out more.

2. Can you see the method? **[KEY]**

Sample, method and definitions published, not "on request".

4. Is the base big enough?

Reasonable for how hard that audience is to reach; watch a % on a tiny slice.

6. Is the difference significant? **[KEY]**

Tested, with the level stated (e.g. 95%). "No test" is a red flag.

8. Typical or best?

An average with the range shown, not the cherry-picked standout.

How to score it

Score each question **2** (clean), **1** (handle with care) or **0** (red flag). The three **[KEY]** questions, the ones that decide whether a number is evidence at all, count double. Total out of **24**. **Guardrail:** a zero on any KEY question (independence, method or significance) caps you out of green, however well it scores elsewhere.

19–24 Passes the sniff test

Repeat it with confidence. Keep the source to hand.

11–18 Handle with care

Defensible gaps. Ask for the missing piece(s) first.

0–10 Marketing, not measurement

A sales aid. Get the method and proof, or leave it out.

Built by Anita Caras, Caras Consulting. I help industry bodies, media owners, brands and ad-tech businesses tell the difference between measurement and marketing, and build numbers that survive the scrutiny. If a stat landed in amber or red, that is exactly what I am useful for. carasconsulting.co.uk · [LinkedIn](#) · Try the interactive version: [add your link]

Principles grounded in CAP Code rule 3.7 (substantiation of objective claims) and the MRS Code of Conduct (making method available).