

Understanding Data Release Levels

Background

Data is most valuable when it can be compared to other datasets. Standardization ensures that data can be interpreted consistently across time and context. Clearly defining and communicating aspects of standardization—such as release levels—is essential to interpreting data accurately and supporting agency-wide consistency.

A **Release Level** is a designation indicating the maturity and finality of a dataset at the time of release. Release levels are a type of metadata assigned to all data assets managed by the Department of Health.

All release levels may refer to either aggregate or record-level datasets and datasets shared internal to the government agency or external (i.e., to the public). All reports or data products, other than live data feeds, produced by the Department of Health are a static snapshot of the data at a specific date and time when produced. It is recommended to always reference the “last updated” date. Showing when data were “last updated” helps people know how recent the information is, whether it reflects current conditions, and how things may have changed when comparing different data releases.

Preliminary Release Level

Description: Data is raw, incomplete, and has undergone minimal validation. Shared for operational awareness only.

Validation: Basic error and/or gap checking to identify obvious issues or quality checks.

Updates: Yes - updates allowed

Important Note About This Data:

This data from the Pennsylvania Department of Health is preliminary or provisional. That means it is still being reviewed and could change. It is shared now to help people make timely decisions during public health events or emergencies. Be careful when using this information to make important decisions. It has not yet been fully reviewed or approved. The Department of Health and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are not responsible for any issues caused by how this data is used — either with or without permission. Any conclusions or analyses made using preliminary release level data are your own. If you have questions about this data or how to use it, contact the Office of Health Informatics governance team at RA-DHDMIMAILBOX@pa.gov.



Provisional Release Level

Description: Data is partially complete and has undergone validation for correctness and completeness.

Validation: Full validation by content and analysis teams.

Updates: Limited

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Final Release Level

Description: Data is fully validated, static, and not subject to revision.

Validation: Validation and quality assurance complete.

Updates: No

Important Note About This Data: *This data from the Pennsylvania Department of Health is final, meaning it has been reviewed and fully validated. However, it still shows a snapshot of information at a specific point in time. Use caution when making decisions based on this data, especially if they involve public safety or important business matters. The Department of Health and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are not responsible for any problems caused by how final release level data is used. Any conclusions or interpretations made using this data are your own. If you have questions about this data or how to use it, please contact the Office of Health Informatics governance team at RA-DHDMIMAILBOX@pa.gov.*