

HCA Data Release Policy

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The mission of the Human Cell Atlas is to create comprehensive reference maps of all human cells—the fundamental units of life—as a basis for both understanding human health and diagnosing, monitoring, and treating disease.

Similar to pioneering projects such as the Human Genome Project, the 1000 Genomes Project, and others, the HCA seeks rapid and open data dissemination and use as quickly and broadly as possible, to the extent allowed by ethical and legal compliance, in accordance with the [Fort Lauderdale principles](#). The data release policy also takes into account that patient and donor consents and legal regulations are likely to differ across countries and scenarios. Nevertheless, members of the HCA should aim to finalize agreements that allow the broadest, least restricted data release and use, including across national borders, to the extent possible.

The HCA appreciates the extensive efforts by the groups participating in all the aspects of this project, recognizing that the HCA could not happen without the contributions by many, including individuals who donate samples, as well as students, postdocs, researchers, research associates, clinicians and principal investigators, who have the duty to report their achievements in scientific publications and to their funders. We recognize the need and right of the authors of each dataset to be the first to report their data production and interpretation, while simultaneously releasing the data to the community prior to publishing such reports. To ensure that both goals are met, we aim to create a rewarding and supportive publication and data release environment that encourages timely release of data through the HCA Data Coordination Platform.

General data sharing policy

Data sharing: Data uploaded to the Data Coordination Platform should be complete and available to the extent permitted by consent and legal regulation that is attached to each data set, in accordance with Fort Lauderdale principles, and should be uploaded as soon as possible after generation.

Data use: In keeping with Fort Lauderdale principles, data users may immediately analyze part or all of the data but should refrain from reporting global analyses until the data producers publish their first paper reporting results of global analyses. This allows the data producers the opportunity to be the first to present global analyses of their data.

Researchers who have used HCA data in the DCP to analyze one or a few genes within a specific network may present posters, talks, and papers that include these data prior to the first global paper from the data generators, as long as the study is not attempting to publish any broad or comprehensive analysis of the data. Researchers may also present method development posters, talks, and papers using unpublished HCA data, as long as those do not include global analyses. The data must be cited with its DOI, and data generators should be notified as a courtesy. If in doubt, such secondary users of DCP data should contact the data generators to agree upon an appropriate and fair scope for the use of DCP data in the secondary users' study.

All the publications using the HCA data should:

1. Reference the dataset(s)'s DOI(s). Each data release will have a DOI and each dataset within that (for e.g. corresponding to a publication) will also have its own DOI and/or accession. The assignment of these is part of the data release process for the DCP and will be driven by this policy.
2. Acknowledge the particular laboratory(s) generating the particular dataset(s) and the HCA, using text automatically generated by the DCP.
3. Cite the most recent publications regarding the HCA data coordination platform, relevant data release and/or dataset DOI and refer to the web portal.