



"Last 3 days" Reporting Rule

When it comes to GA4 data reporting, you should avoid analysis within the window of the last 3 days. Realtime reporting and data analysis within this window are now outside the scope of "reliable."

In GA4, events can be processed even if they arrive up to 72 hours late. Such events are called 'late events' as they are not sent immediately. That means it may take up to 3 full days for data to be fully processed and available in your GA4 reports. This not only accounts for Event-based reports, but also Acquisition-based reports.

You may see incomplete/inaccurate data and draw wrong conclusions if you analyze the data before it has been fully processed.

Below are some examples of what unprocessed data may look like:

1. You may see a value of (not set) for a custom dimension during the first 24 hours after its creation.
2. Sometimes, you may need to wait for up to 48 hours for (not set) to disappear from your GA4 reports.
3. Server-side tracking can sometimes delay data processing, especially if your server is experiencing high traffic or latency. In such cases, data might not be available in GA4 reports immediately, and you could see (not set) values temporarily.
4. Data sent via the Measurement Protocol can be submitted with a delay, especially if it includes backfilling historical events.
 - The Measurement Protocol allows developers to send raw user interaction data directly to Google Analytics servers. For our needs, It essentially allows for data to be collected from tools and solutions we have on our sites.
 - Third party tools such as CarNow and Gubagoo utilize the Measurement Protocol when setting up the API Secret Key. Because of this, data pushing from these tools is more likely to be affected during this 3 day period.
5. If you use the GA4 data import feature to enrich your data, it can take time for the imported data to be processed and integrated with your standard event data.



Examples continued...

6. Building and populating audiences, especially with more complex criteria, might not be instantaneous. It can take time for all users to be evaluated against the criteria of new or modified audiences.
7. If your GA4 property receives late events, it will take time for all events to align correctly with their respective sessions.
8. Some reports or metrics might update faster than others, leading to temporary inconsistencies between different views or summaries of your data.
9. GA4 aggregates data at different levels (e.g., user, session, event, item), and some of these aggregation processes can introduce delays, especially with large data volumes.
10. Sometimes, data might need corrections or adjustments due to filters, data imports, or other configurations. These adjustments can introduce additional processing time.
11. If you are integrating GA4 with Google Ads or other advertising platforms, there is often a delay in importing data, which can introduce temporary inconsistencies between different reports.



Why Is this Important?

This is an important concept to understand, as it will lead to issues with reporting and analyzing data.

If the previous 3 days are included in the date range when viewing a report or simply viewing the data, we can expect missing data sets, inaccurate metrics, and overall issues with the accuracy of that data.

This can affect what we are seeing when looking at Standard Reports, Exploration Reports as well as when viewing Prizm Reports. It is very important to understand the issues that can occur from this “3 Day Rule” and to take them into consideration whenever analyzing data!

Resources

Helpful LinkedIn post - [HERE](#)