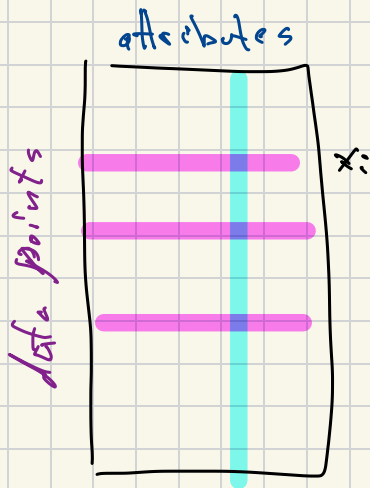


L22: (Differential) Privacy

Jeff M. Phillips

November 17, 2025

Data X



What if this was you?

Ethics = Empathy

Privacy and Data

- who gets access?
- to what?

Dawn of Data Science

→ Early 2000s

big companies

collected lots data about users
(thru web)

↳ Release sample data online
→ let academia figure out.

Late 2000s this stopped.

Example: Heath Records

STORY TIME:

Example: Heath Records

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2000, Massachusetts released all State employee's medical records in an effort for researchers to be able to study them.

Example: Heath Records

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2000, Massachusetts released all State employee's medical records in an effort for researchers to be able to study them.
- ▶ They wiped all ids, but kept zip codes, birthday, gender. Was declared anonymized by the government.

Example: Heath Records

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2000, Massachusetts released all State employee's medical records in an effort for researchers to be able to study them.
- ▶ They wiped all ids, but kept zip codes, birthday, gender. Was declared anonymized by the government.
- ▶ In Massachusetts, it was possible to buy voter data for \$20. It has names, zip codes, and gender of all voters.

Example: Heath Records

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2000, Massachusetts released all State employee's medical records in an effort for researchers to be able to study them.
- ▶ They wiped all ids, but kept zip codes, birthday, gender. Was declared anonymized by the government.
- ▶ In Massachusetts, it was possible to buy voter data for \$20. It has names, zip codes, and gender of all voters.
- ▶ A (then) grad student, Latanya Sweeney combined the two to identify the governor of Massachusetts. Story is, she mailed him his own health records!

Example: Heath Records

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2000, Massachusetts released all State employee's medical records in an effort for researchers to be able to study them.
- ▶ They wiped all ids, but kept zip codes, birthday, gender. Was declared anonymized by the government.
- ▶ In Massachusetts, it was possible to buy voter data for \$20. It has names, zip codes, and gender of all voters.
- ▶ A (then) grad student, Latanya Sweeney combined the two to identify the governor of Massachusetts. Story is, she mailed him his own health records!
- ▶ **Dr.** Sweeney now teaches at Harvard.

How to release data anonymously?

- to keep anonymity individuals
 - be able to make inference
-

k-anonymity: Remove information from records, until each combination of attributes maps to at least k individuals.

Diving Data

public attributes

- zip code
- age
- gender



id

joe	C
Kim	C
Sam	No
Joe	C
	No

private attribute

- has cancer
- has diabetes
- search history

l-diversity: k-anonymity $\oplus$

each group has diversity
in private values

What if multiple private attributes?

- lung cancer
- skin cancer

rel pub	priv.
	L S
	X S
	L X
	X X

t-closeness $\&$ l-diversity $\oplus$

the private distribution values
close full data set.

Example: Netflix Prize

STORY TIME:

Example: Netflix Prize

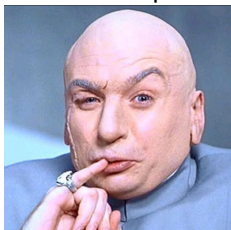
STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2006, Netflix (e.g., DVDs) released awesome data sets $D_1 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade}, \text{grade} \rangle\}$.
And another set $D_2 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade} \rangle\}$.
Wants researchers to predict grade on D_2 .
(Had another similar private data D_3 to evaluate grades :
cross validation.)

Example: Netflix Prize

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2006, Netflix (e.g., DVDs) released awesome data sets $D_1 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade}, \text{grade} \rangle\}$.
And another set $D_2 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade} \rangle\}$.
Wants researchers to predict grade on D_2 .
(Had another similar private data D_3 to evaluate grades : cross validation.)
- ▶ If certain improvement over Netflix's algorithm, get \$1 million!



Example: Netflix Prize

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2006, Netflix (e.g., DVDs) released awesome data sets $D_1 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade}, \text{grade} \rangle\}$.
And another set $D_2 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade} \rangle\}$.
Wants researchers to predict grade on D_2 .
(Had another similar private data D_3 to evaluate grades : cross validation.)
- ▶ If certain improvement over Netflix's algorithm, get \$1 million!
- ▶ Led to lots of cool research!

Example: Netflix Prize

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2006, Netflix (e.g., DVDs) released awesome data sets $D_1 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade}, \text{grade} \rangle\}$.
And another set $D_2 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade} \rangle\}$.
Wants researchers to predict grade on D_2 .
(Had another similar private data D_3 to evaluate grades : cross validation.)
- ▶ If certain improvement over Netflix's algorithm, get \$1 million!
- ▶ Led to lots of cool research!
- ▶ Raters of movies also rated on IMDB (w/ user id, time stamp)

Example: Netflix Prize

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2006, Netflix (e.g., DVDs) released awesome data sets $D_1 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade}, \text{grade} \rangle\}$.
And another set $D_2 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade} \rangle\}$.
Wants researchers to predict grade on D_2 .
(Had another similar private data D_3 to evaluate grades : cross validation.)
- ▶ If certain improvement over Netflix's algorithm, get \$1 million!
- ▶ Led to lots of cool research!
- ▶ Raters of movies also rated on IMDB (w/ user id, time stamp)
- ▶ Researchers showed that by linking who rated similar sets of movies, with similar scores and times, they could identify many people.

Example: Netflix Prize

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2006, Netflix (e.g., DVDs) released awesome data sets $D_1 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade}, \text{grade} \rangle\}$.
And another set $D_2 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade} \rangle\}$.
Wants researchers to predict grade on D_2 .
(Had another similar private data D_3 to evaluate grades : cross validation.)
- ▶ If certain improvement over Netflix's algorithm, get \$1 million!
- ▶ Led to lots of cool research!
- ▶ Raters of movies also rated on IMDB (w/ user id, time stamp)
- ▶ Researchers showed that by linking who rated similar sets of movies, with similar scores and times, they could identify many people.
- ▶ (maybe watched embarrassing films on Netflix, not listed on IMDB)

Example: Netflix Prize

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2006, Netflix (e.g., DVDs) released awesome data sets $D_1 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade}, \text{grade} \rangle\}$.
And another set $D_2 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade} \rangle\}$.
Wants researchers to predict grade on D_2 .
(Had another similar private data D_3 to evaluate grades : cross validation.)
- ▶ If certain improvement over Netflix's algorithm, get \$1 million!
- ▶ Led to lots of cool research!
- ▶ Raters of movies also rated on IMDB (w/ user id, time stamp)
- ▶ Researchers showed that by linking who rated similar sets of movies, with similar scores and times, they could identify many people.
- ▶ (maybe watched embarrassing films on Netflix, not listed on IMDB)
- ▶ Class action lawsuit filed (later dropped) against Netflix.

Example: Netflix Prize

STORY TIME:

- ▶ In 2006, Netflix (e.g., DVDs) released awesome data sets $D_1 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade}, \text{grade} \rangle\}$.
And another set $D_2 = \{\langle \text{user-id}, \text{movie}, \text{date of grade} \rangle\}$.
Wants researchers to predict grade on D_2 .
(Had another similar private data D_3 to evaluate grades : cross validation.)
- ▶ If certain improvement over Netflix's algorithm, get \$1 million!
- ▶ Led to lots of cool research!
- ▶ Raters of movies also rated on IMDB (w/ user id, time stamp)
- ▶ Researchers showed that by linking who rated similar sets of movies, with similar scores and times, they could identify many people.
- ▶ (maybe watched embarrassing films on Netflix, not listed on IMDB)
- ▶ Class action lawsuit filed (later dropped) against Netflix.
- ▶ Netflix Prize had proposed sequel, dropped in 2010 for more privacy concerns.

Differential Privacy (DP)

Guarantee on release data X_1

so if another dataset X_2

$$\text{diff}(X_1, X_2) = |X_1 \Delta X_2| = 1$$

$$\frac{\Pr[g(X_1) = v]}{\Pr[g(X_2) = v]} \leq \exp(\epsilon) \approx 1 + \epsilon$$

$= e^\epsilon$

$\Rightarrow \epsilon$ -DP

$$\epsilon = 0.10$$

Want to hold for class of queries $\mathcal{Q}$
 $g \in \mathcal{Q}$

$$\frac{P_c[g(x_1)=r]}{P_c[g(x_2)=r]} = Z \Rightarrow \text{twice as likely to predict } x_1 \text{ than } x_2$$

$1 \leq Z$
 $\Rightarrow Z=1$

$$\frac{P_c(g(x_1)=r)}{P_c(g(x_2)=r)} = q_1$$

Use $\varepsilon \in (0, \infty)$

usually $\varepsilon \geq 1$ or

Data $X \in \mathbb{R}$

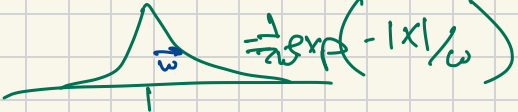
x_i

(ex. height of SLs Stallone)

$x_1 = 68$ inches

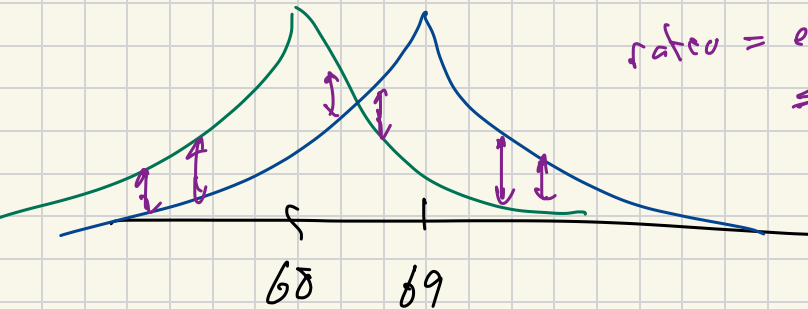
$x_2 = 69$ inches

$\text{diff}(x_i, y_i) = 1$

$$s = g(x_i) = x_i + \text{Lap}(0, w) \quad w = 1/2$$


$$\frac{P_1[s_i = 70]}{P_2[s_i = 70]} = \frac{\cancel{\frac{1}{2w}} \exp(|68-70|/w)}{\cancel{\frac{1}{2w}} \exp(|69-70|/w)} = \frac{\exp(\frac{1}{2} |68-70|)}{\exp(\frac{1}{2} |69-70|)} = \exp(\frac{1}{w}) = \exp(2)$$

$$\text{rate} = \exp(\frac{1}{4}) \approx 1.28$$



Bernoulli Example

$$X_1 = 1$$

$$X_2 = 0$$

$$g(x_i) = X_i + \text{Lap}(1/\varepsilon)$$

$$\frac{\Pr[g(x_1) = 1.2]}{\Pr[g(x_2) = 1.2]} = \frac{\exp(|1.2-1|/(1/\varepsilon))}{\exp(|1.2-0|/(1/\varepsilon))}$$

$$\begin{aligned} &= \exp(\varepsilon(|1.2-1| - |1.2-0|)) \\ &= \exp(\varepsilon) \end{aligned}$$

Data has:

$$X_1 = [1, 0, 1, 0, 0, 0]$$

$$X_2 = [1, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0]$$

mg data

$$g(x_i) = |R \cap X_i| + \text{Lap}(1/\epsilon)$$

↑
range

