

Data For Good: Your User Guide

Overview

Welcome to the Social Media Data Donation project! This is an open-source browser extension designed for people like you who want to contribute to meaningful research while keeping their privacy intact.

By using this extension, you can safely and anonymously share your social media interaction data from platforms like Instagram and X (formerly Twitter). This data helps researchers and data scientists understand how people engage with content, what trends emerge, and how social media platforms evolve, all without ever revealing your personal identity.

Your contribution helps build a better understanding of our digital world!

How It Works

It's simple:

1. **Install the Extension:** You'll add our small, lightweight extension to your web browser.
2. **Browse as Usual:** Go about your normal social media browsing on Instagram or X.
3. **Data Collection (Anonymized!):** The extension quietly observes how you interact with posts (like views, likes, comments, shares, and how long you spend on content).
4. **Privacy First:** Before any data leaves your browser, it's completely anonymized. We remove anything that could identify you.
5. **Research Insights:** This anonymous data is then sent to our secure backend, where AI helps classify the type of content you're interacting with (e.g., news, comedy, educational). This helps researchers study broad patterns.
6. **Earn Points:** As you contribute, you'll earn points and level up, visible right in the extension!

Features for You

- **Supports Instagram & X:** Works seamlessly on two of the most popular social media platforms.
- **Your Privacy is Paramount:** We guarantee that no personal information (like your username, email, or direct messages) is ever collected or stored. All data is anonymized.

- **Easy to Use:** A simple on/off switch in the extension popup gives you full control over when data is collected.
- **See Your Impact:** Track your contributions with a fun gamification system, earning points and reaching new levels.
- **Transparent & Trustworthy:** Because it's open-source, anyone can inspect the code to see exactly how it works and what data is handled.

What Data is Collected (Anonymously)

We only collect *interaction patterns* and *content metadata*, never your personal details.

Examples of Data Collected:

- **Interaction Type:** Did you like a post? Share it? Comment on it? Just view it?
- **Time Spent:** How long did you spend looking at a particular post or scrolling your feed?
- **Content Type:** Was the post text, an image, or a video?
- **Platform Behavior:** How long was your browsing session on the platform?
- **Content Topic:** What general topic was the post about (e.g., "politics," "sports," "entertainment")? This is determined by AI classification of the content.

What is NEVER Collected:

- **Your Identity:** No usernames, profile names, email addresses, or any other personal identifiers.
- **Private Messages:** Your direct messages or private conversations are never accessed.
- **Specific Content:** We analyze content *type* and *topic*, but we don't store the exact text of your posts or comments, or the original images/videos themselves.
- **Location Data:** We do not track your precise location.
- **Account Credentials:** Your login information is never touched.

How to Install (Chrome/Edge/Brave)

Since this is an open-source project, you'll install it as an "unpacked" extension. Don't worry, it's straightforward!

1. **Download the Extension Files:**
 - First, you'll need to get the extension's code. This usually involves downloading a .zip file from the project's GitHub page and extracting it to a folder on your computer (e.g., SocialMediaExtension). Make sure you remember where you save this folder.
2. **Open Extension Management:**

- Open your browser (Chrome, Edge, or Brave).
- Type `chrome://extensions/` into the address bar and press Enter. (For Edge, it might be `edge://extensions/`).
- 3. **Enable Developer Mode:**
 - In the top-right corner of the extensions page, find a toggle switch labeled "Developer mode" and turn it **ON**.
- 4. **Load the Extension:**
 - After enabling Developer mode, you'll see a new button appear, usually labeled "Load unpacked" or "Load unpacked extension." Click this button.
 - A file browser window will open. Navigate to the folder where you extracted the extension files (the `extension/` folder within the project, not the whole project folder). Select this `extension/` folder and click "Select Folder" or "Open."
- 5. **You're Done!:**
 - The "Social Media Data Donation" extension should now appear in your list of installed extensions. You might see its icon in your browser's toolbar. If not, click the puzzle piece icon (Extensions) in your toolbar to pin it for easy access.

Using the Extension

1. **Open the Popup:** Click on the extension icon in your browser's toolbar.
2. **Give Consent:** The first time you open it, you'll be asked for your consent to start data collection. You **must** agree to this for the extension to work.
3. **Start/Stop Collection:** Inside the popup, you'll find a clear toggle switch to start or stop data collection at any time. You are always in control.
4. **Check Your Stats:** The popup will also show you your current level, points earned, and how many data points you've contributed.

Gamification: Your Contribution, Your Rewards!

We believe in recognizing your valuable contributions. The extension includes a simple gamification system:

- **Points:** You earn points for every interaction you make while the extension is active. More significant interactions (like commenting or sharing) might earn more points than just viewing.
- **Levels (Tiers):** As you accumulate points, you'll progress through different levels. Each level represents a milestone in your contribution.
- **Track Your Progress:** The extension popup provides a quick overview of your current points and level, allowing you to see your impact grow!

Your Privacy and Security

We are committed to protecting your privacy. Here's why you can trust this extension:

- **Anonymization:** All data is processed to remove any personal identifiers before it leaves your browser.
- **No Direct Access:** The extension does not access your private messages, account passwords, or any sensitive personal information.
- **Open Source:** The entire codebase is publicly available. This means anyone can review the code to verify its privacy claims and ensure no hidden data collection is occurring. Transparency is key.
- **Voluntary:** Data collection is always opt-in. You decide when to start and stop.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: Will this extension slow down my browser?

A: No, the extension is designed to be lightweight and efficient, with minimal impact on your browsing speed.

Q: Can I stop contributing at any time?

A: Yes, absolutely. You can toggle data collection on or off at any moment directly from the extension's popup.

Q: What if I clear my browser data?

A: Clearing browser data might reset the extension's local storage, including your points and level. However, the data already sent to the backend remains part of the anonymized research dataset.

Support & Contribution

If you have any questions, encounter issues, or want to contribute to the project, please refer to the project's main documentation or GitHub repository. As an open-source project, community involvement is highly valued!

Thank you for being a part of this important initiative!