

23 September 2021

fyi-request-16538-fae0b1a1@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe

Information request: Mobile phone tracking by Data Ventures

Thank you for your recent email, to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, requesting information under the Official Information Act 1982. The Office of the Privacy Commissioner transferred your request to Stats NZ on 2 September 2021.

With respect to mobile phone data used to generate the Population Density Model, you have asked to be provided with information discussing:

- 1) *The method of how the mobile phone location data is collected,*
- 2) *How the collected data is anonymised."*

The Population Density Model, developed by Data Ventures (the commercial arm of Statistics New Zealand) provides hourly estimates of population mobility in New Zealand using pre-aggregated and pre-anonymised mobile phone data, complemented by modelling of the New Zealand population.

Telecommunications companies Spark and Vodafone provide Data Ventures with counts of mobile phone devices at cell towers across New Zealand, to provide a snapshot of population density changes in a given area on an hourly basis. Data Ventures converts the total device count into population counts, which includes taking into consideration that some New Zealanders have multiple mobile phones while others do not own any mobile phones.

Maintenance of individual privacy is a serious consideration through this process. Data Ventures ensures all data is aggregated and anonymised by Spark and Vodafone before being provided. No individual or identifiable data is provided to Data Ventures and no individual mobile devices or movements of an individual are tracked through the process. Any low counts of mobile devices in a location are suppressed. For these reasons, privacy of individual movements and mobile phone usage is assured.

Data Ventures works closely with the Privacy Commissioner to ensure that data is not used in a way that threatens the rights of New Zealanders. Further information on how privacy is protected in the Population Density Model can be found in the Privacy Impact Assessment at this [link](#). The methodology used has been endorsed by Office of the Privacy Commissioner.

Thank you for taking the time to write, and I hope you find this information useful.

Ngā mihi nui



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Stats NZ