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Team IC23009 Abstract (Breaking Free of Data Brokers)

In today’s world, data is the biggest asset. Some companies – known as data brokers – mine and compile personal data. They then sell it to advertisers or publish it online. Anyone can look up this data, typically for free. Having your sensitive data publicly available is a privacy concern. Since data brokers are legal in the US, consumers cannot fight the practice directly. However, users can request the removal of their data, but this is often a hassle. As such, our team aims to facilitate the removal of publicly available online data.

The privacy-concerned individual may be quick to remove their data from data brokers. However, most individuals may not know where to start or how to remove their data. To address these issues, our team proposes a web application that outlines the data brokers may have a user’s data. In the web app, a user would input basic personal information (full name, zip code, location, and age). After the user submits their information, the web app will query the available data brokers from the GitHub page. The web app will then list and rank the data brokers that may have your data. We will rank data brokers based on occurrences, difficulty, and importance. Once the list is generated, the user can access specific instructions for removing their data from the specified data broker. If desired, users can click on a selected data broker and see the queried results. To supplement the web app design, we plan to deliver insightful data broker statistics. This will help visualize the state of data brokers.