

Can Swapping Be Differentially Privacy?

A Refreshment Stirred, not Shaken

James Bailie[†], Ruobin Gong[‡] and Xiao-Li Meng[†]

Statistics Department, [[†]Harvard/[‡]Rutgers] University

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- The choice of \mathcal{X} , \mathcal{D} , d_{P_r} and $d_{\mathcal{X}}$ determine the *flavour* of DP.

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 - ▶ *How much* protection is afforded?
 - ▶ Quantified by **the privacy-loss budget $\varepsilon_{\mathcal{D}}$** .

Some Examples in the Literature

\mathcal{X} : DP for network data (Hay et al., 2009) for geospatial data (Andrés et al., 2013) Pufferfish DP (Kifer & Machanavajjhala, 2014) noiseless privacy (Bhaskar et al., 2011) privacy under partial knowledge (Seeman et al., 2022) privacy amplification (Beimel et al., 2010; Balle et al., 2020; Bun et al., 2022)

\mathcal{D} : privacy under invariants (Ashmead et al., 2019; Gong & Meng, 2020; Gao et al., 2022; Dharangutte et al., 2023) conditioned or empirical DP (J. M. Abowd et al., 2013; Charest & Hou, 2016) personalized DP (Ebadi et al., 2015; Jorgensen et al., 2015) individual DP (Soria-Comas et al., 2017; Feldman & Zrnic, 2022) bootstrap DP (O’Keefe & Charest, 2019) stratified DP (Bun et al., 2022) per-record DP (Seeman et al., 2023+) per-instance DP (Wang, 2018; Redberg & Wang, 2021)

$d_{\mathcal{X}}$: $(\mathcal{R}, \varepsilon)$ -generic DP (Kifer & Machanavajjhala, 2011) edge vs node privacy (Hay et al., 2009; McSherry & Mahajan, 2010) d -metric DP (Chatzikokolakis et al., 2013) Blowfish privacy (He et al., 2014) element level DP (Asi et al., 2022) distributional privacy (Zhou et al., 2009) event-level vs user-level DP (Dwork et al., 2010)

$d_{\mathcal{P}_r}$: (ε, δ) -approximate DP (Dwork, Kenthapadi, et al., 2006) Rényi DP (Mironov, 2017) concentrated DP (Bun & Steinke, 2016a) f -divergence privacy (Barber & Duchi, 2014; Barthe & Olmedo, 2013) f -DP (including Gaussian DP) (Dong et al., 2022)

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 - ▶ TopDown satisfies ρ -zCDP (Bun & Steinke, 2016b), subject to its invariants.

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	d_{Pr}	$d_{\mathcal{X}}$ (Post-Imputation Unit)	Invariants (\mathcal{D})	Privacy-Loss Budget
TopDown*	D_{nor}	d_{Ham}^p (person)	Population (state) Total housing units (block) Occupied group quarters (block) Structural zeros	PL & DHC: $\rho^2 = 15.29$ $\epsilon = 52.83$ ($\delta = 10^{-10}$)
SafeTab**	D_{nor}	d_{Ham}^p (person)	None	DDHC-A: $\rho^2 = 19.776$ DDHC-B & S-DHC: <i>TBD</i> .
Swapping	d_{MULT}	d_{Ham}^h (household)	Varies but much greater than TDA	ϵ between 9.37-19.38

* (J. Abowd et al., 2022) ** (Tumult Labs, 2022)

- \mathcal{X} is always the space of possible Census Edited Files, \mathcal{X}_{CEF} .
- $D_{nor}(P, Q) = \sup_{\alpha > 1} \frac{1}{\sqrt{\alpha}} \max \left[\sqrt{D_{\alpha}(P||Q)}, \sqrt{D_{\alpha}(Q||P)} \right]$ is the normalised Rényi metric [zero concentrated DP] (with D_{α} the Rényi divergence of order);
- $d_{MULT}(P, Q) = \sup_{S \in \mathcal{F}} \left| \ln \frac{P(S)}{Q(S)} \right|$ is the multiplicative distance (pure DP); and
- d_{Ham}^u is the Hamming distance on units u (with $p =$ post-imputation person, $h =$ post-imputation household).
- \mathcal{D} is the invariant-induced multiverse $\mathcal{D}_c = \{ \{ \mathbf{x}' \in \mathcal{X}' : \mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x}) = \mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x}') \} : \mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{X} \}$.

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 - ▶ The practice of DP is often left stranded

DP's Framing of Data Privacy (Seeman & Susser, 2023)

1. DP is a condition on the statistic T :
 - ▶ Conceives of data privacy as robustness
 - ▶ Focuses on *forward-looking, individual-based harms*
2. (More exactly) DP is a restriction on the *data-release model* $\{P_{\mathbf{x}} : \mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{X}\}$
 - ▶ Conceives of data privacy as a limit on *probabilistic inference*
 - ▶ Focus on two aspects of forward-looking harms: the probability and strength of an *inferential, individual-based disclosure* (IIB)
 - ▶ Assumes a way to quantify IIBs (e.g. via the privacy loss random variable)
3. DP is not a holistic framework for assessing privacy
 - ▶ The theory of DP brackets other privacy concerns
 - ▶ The practice of DP is often left stranded
 - ▶ DP needs to be integrated into broader theories of privacy (Benthall & Cummings, 2024)

Data Swapping Visualisation

State	Location	Number of adults	Number of children	Age1	Race1	...
MA	Cambridge	2	2	45	White	...
TX	Houston	1	0	28	Hispanic	...
WA	Tacoma	5	0	67	Asian	...
MA	Somerville	2	2	50	Black	...
⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮

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V_{Swap}

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V_{Stratify}

V_{Swap}

V_{Rest}

Data Swapping Visualisation

Massachusetts: Location by Race (head of household) Contingency Table

	White	Hispanic	Asian	Black	...
Boston					
Cambridge					
Brookline					
Somerville					
Watertown					
⋮					

Data Swapping Visualisation

Massachusetts: Location by Race (head of household) Contingency Table

	White	Hispanic	Asian	Black	...
Boston					
Cambridge	-1			+1	
Brookline					
Somerville	+1			-1	
Watertown					
⋮					

Data Swapping Visualisation

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Changes: Interior cells of $\mathbf{V}_{\text{Rest}} \times \mathbf{V}_{\text{Swap}}$.

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Invariants:

1. $\mathbf{V}_{\text{Stratify}} \times \mathbf{V}_{\text{Rest}}$
2. $\mathbf{V}_{\text{Stratify}} \times \mathbf{V}_{\text{Swap}}$

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If a mechanism T contains an invariant (and x, x' have different values for this invariant), then P_x and $P_{x'}$ do not have common support, and so

$$d_{\text{MULT}}[P_x, P_{x'}] = D_{\text{nor}}[P_x, P_{x'}] = \infty.$$

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Modifying the definition of DP:

$$d_{\text{Pr}}[\mathbb{P}_{\mathbf{x}}, \mathbb{P}_{\mathbf{x}'}] \leq \varepsilon d_{\mathcal{X}}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}').$$

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- ▶ This is a necessary and sufficient modification for the release of invariants.

Swapping Satisfies DP, Subject to Its Invariants

Permutation swapping

Input: a dataset \mathbf{x} .

Define strata as groups of records which match on the swap key $\mathbf{V}_{\text{Stratify}}$.

Within each stratum:

1. Select each record independently with probability p (the swap rate).
2. Randomly permute swapping variable \mathbf{V}_{Swap} of selected records.

Output: the *swapped* dataset \mathbf{w} .

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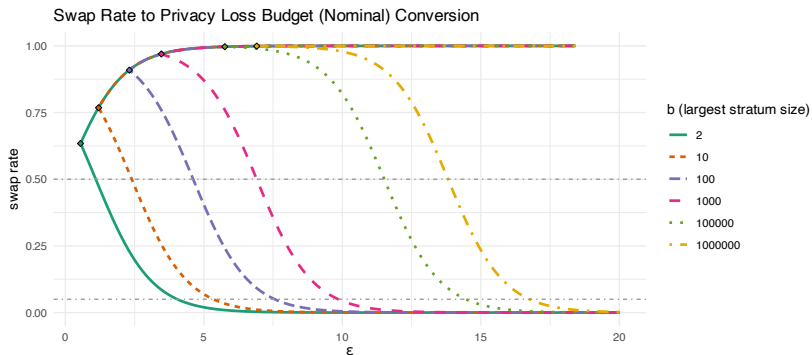
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Permutation swapping is DP subject to its invariants, with input divergence

$d_{\mathcal{X}} = d_{\text{Ham}}^u$, output divergence $d_{\mathcal{P}\mathcal{X}} = d_{\text{MULT}}$ and budget

$$\varepsilon = \begin{cases} \ln(b+1) - \ln o & \text{if } 0 < p \leq 0.5, \\ \max\{\ln o, \ln(b+1) - \ln o\} & \text{if } 0.5 < p < 1, \end{cases}$$

where $o = p/(1-p)$ and b is the maximum stratum size.



Conversion between the swap rate (p) and the nominal PLB (ϵ) at different levels of b . Note that:

1. For each b , there's a **smallest attainable** $\epsilon_b > 0$;
2. For each b , every $\epsilon > \epsilon_b$ is satisfied by **two** different swap rates;
3. (counterintuitive) For the same swap rate, the larger the b , the **larger** the ϵ !

The TopDown Algorithm (TDA) (J. Abowd et al., 2022)

Two-step procedure:

0. Start with a Census edited file $\mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{X}_{\text{CEF}}$.

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where $\mathbf{W} \sim \mathcal{N}_{\mathbb{Z}}(\mathbf{0}, \mathbf{\Sigma})$, so that \mathbf{T} satisfies $\text{DP}(\mathcal{X}_{\text{CEF}}, \{\mathcal{X}_{\text{CEF}}\}, d_{\text{Ham}}^p, D_{\text{nor}})$ with budget ρ_{TDA} (Canonne et al., 2022).

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2. “Post-process”: find dataset \mathbf{z} with $\mathbf{q}(\mathbf{z})$ close to $\mathbf{T}(\mathbf{x})$ such that $\mathbf{c}_{\text{TDA}}(\mathbf{z}) = \mathbf{c}_{\text{TDA}}(\mathbf{x})$.

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TDA satisfies $\text{DP}(\mathcal{X}_{\text{CEF}}, \mathcal{D}_{\mathbf{c}_{\text{TDA}}}, d_{\text{Ham}}^p, D_{\text{nor}})$ with budget ρ_{TDA} .

Theorem: TDA Satisfies DP, Subject to Its Invariants

Let $\mathbf{c}_{\text{TDA}} : \mathcal{X}_{\text{CEF}} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^l$ be the invariants of TDA and let $\mathcal{D}_{\mathbf{c}_{\text{TDA}}}$ be the induced data multiverse:

$$\mathcal{D}_{\mathbf{c}_{\text{TDA}}} = \{\mathcal{D} \subset \mathcal{X}_{\text{CEF}} \mid \mathbf{c}_{\text{TDA}}(\mathbf{x}) = \mathbf{c}_{\text{TDA}}(\mathbf{x}') \forall \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}' \in \mathcal{D}\}.$$

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- Let \mathbf{c}' be any proper subset of TDA's invariants. TDA does not satisfy $\text{DP}(\mathcal{X}_{\text{CEF}}, \mathcal{D}_{\mathbf{c}'}, d_{\mathcal{X}}, D_{\text{nor}})$ with any finite budget ρ .

What if the 2020 Census Used Swapping?

The total nominal ε achievable by applying swapping to the 2020 Decennial Census for a variety of $\mathbf{V}_{\text{Stratify}}$, \mathbf{V}_{Swap} , and swap rate choices.

$\mathbf{V}_{\text{Stratify}}$	\mathbf{V}_{Swap}	b	total ε $p = 5\%$	total ε $p = 50\%$	Largest stratum
state	county	13680081	19.38	16.43	California
state \times household size	county	3653802	18.06	15.11	California, 3-household
county	tract	3445076	18.00	15.05	LA County
county \times household size	tract	853003	16.60	13.66	LA County, 3-household
block group	block	21535	12.92	9.98	a FL block group
block group \times household size	block	11691	12.31	9.37	a FL block group, 3-household

Note. For a fixed $(\mathbf{V}_{\text{Stratify}}, \mathbf{V}_{\text{Swap}}, p)$ setting, the nominal ε would be the **total PLB** for all data products derived from the swapped dataset, including P.L. 94-171, DHC, Detailed DHC for both persons and household product types.

Permutation Swapping

Input: Dataset \mathbf{X}

```
1: for  $j = 1, \dots, \mathcal{J}$  do
2:   if  $n_j = 0$  or  $n_j = 1$  then
3:     continue
4:   end if
5:   for record  $i$  with category  $j$  do
6:     Select  $i$  with probability  $p$ 
7:   end for
8:   if 0 records selected then
9:     continue
10:  else if exactly 1 record selected then
11:    go to line 5
12:  end if
13:  Sample uniformly at random a derangement  $\sigma$  of the selected records.
14:  /* Permute the swapping variable of the selected records according to  $\sigma$ : */
15:  Save copy  $\mathbf{X}_0 \leftarrow \mathbf{X}$  before permutation
16:  Let  $k^{\mathbf{X}}(i)$  be the value of the swapping variable of record  $i$  in dataset  $\mathbf{X}$ .
17:  for all selected records  $i$  do
18:    Set  $k^{\mathbf{X}}(i) \leftarrow k^{\mathbf{X}_0}(\sigma(i))$ 
19:  end for
20: end for
21: Set  $\mathbf{Z} \leftarrow \mathbf{X}$  to be the swapped dataset.
22: return contingency table  $[n_{jkl}^{\mathbf{Z}}]$ 
```

Intuition of the Proof that Permutation Swapping Is DP

1. We need to show that, for fixed datasets \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}' , \mathbf{w} in the same data universe \mathcal{D} ,

$$\Pr(\sigma(\mathbf{x}) = \mathbf{w}) \leq \exp(d_{\text{Ham}}^u(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}')\varepsilon) \Pr(\sigma'(\mathbf{x}') = \mathbf{w}),$$

2. We can show that there exists a derangement ρ of m records such that $\mathbf{x} = \rho(\mathbf{x}')$.
3. There is a bijection between the possible σ and σ' given by $\sigma' = \sigma \circ \rho$.
4. Hence, if m_σ is the number of records deranged by σ , we have

$$m_\sigma - m \leq m_{\sigma'} \leq m_\sigma + m.$$

5. This gives a bound on $\Pr(\sigma)/\Pr(\sigma')$ in terms of $\sigma^{m_\sigma - m_{\sigma'}}$ and the ratio between the number of derangements of $m_{\sigma'}$ and of m_σ .
6. For $\sigma \leq 1$, this can be bounded by $\sigma^{-m}(b+1)^m$ using the above inequality. The result for $0 < p \leq 0.5$ then follows with some algebraic simplification.

The TopDown Algorithm (J. Abowd et al., 2022)

Input:

Census Edited Files $\mathbf{X}_p, \mathbf{X}_h$ at the person and household levels

Person queries \mathbf{Q}_p

Household queries \mathbf{Q}_h

Privacy noise scales \mathbf{D}_p and \mathbf{D}_h

Constraints \mathbf{c}_{TDA} (including invariants, edit constraints and structural zeroes)

(Optional) previously released statistics \mathbf{P} , as aggregated from a microdata file (where the aggregation was achieved using a function \mathbf{H})

1: Step 1: Noise Infusion

2: Sample discrete Gaussian noise

3: $\mathbf{W}_p \sim \mathcal{N}_{\mathbb{Z}}(\mathbf{0}, \mathbf{D}_p)$

4: $\mathbf{W}_h \sim \mathcal{N}_{\mathbb{Z}}(\mathbf{0}, \mathbf{D}_h)$

5: Compute Noisy Measurement Files:

6: $\mathbf{T}_p(\mathbf{X}_p) \leftarrow \mathbf{Q}_p(\mathbf{X}_p) + \mathbf{W}_p$

7: $\mathbf{T}_h(\mathbf{X}_h) \leftarrow \mathbf{Q}_h(\mathbf{X}_h) + \mathbf{W}_h$

8: Step 2: Post-Processing

9: Compute Privacy-Protected Microdata Files $\mathbf{Z}_p, \mathbf{Z}_h$ as a solution to the optimisation problem:

10: Minimize loss l between $[\mathbf{T}_p(\mathbf{X}_p), \mathbf{T}_h(\mathbf{X}_h)]$ and $[\mathbf{Q}_p(\mathbf{Z}_p), \mathbf{Q}_h(\mathbf{Z}_h)]$

11: subject to constraints $\mathbf{c}_{\text{TDA}}(\mathbf{Z}_p, \mathbf{Z}_h) = \mathbf{c}_{\text{TDA}}(\mathbf{X}_p, \mathbf{X}_h)$ and $\mathbf{H}(\mathbf{Z}_p, \mathbf{Z}_h) = \mathbf{P}$.

Output:

Privacy-Protected Microdata Files $\mathbf{Z}_p, \mathbf{Z}_h$, and

Noisy Measurement Files $\mathbf{T}_p(\mathbf{X}_p), \mathbf{T}_h(\mathbf{X}_h)$ at the person and household levels.

Examples of \mathcal{D} , $d_{\mathcal{X}}$ and d_{Pr}

1. An *invariant-compliant data universe*:

$$\mathcal{D}_{\mathbf{c}} = \left\{ \mathcal{D} \subset \mathcal{X} : \mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x}) = \mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x}') \forall \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}' \in \mathcal{D} \right\},$$

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for some invariants $\mathbf{c} : \mathcal{X} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^l$.

2. *Data divergence* $d_{\mathcal{X}}$ induced by a “neighbour” relation:

$$d_{\mathcal{X}}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } \mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}', \\ 1 & \text{if } \mathbf{x} \text{ and } \mathbf{x}' \text{ are “neighbours”,} \\ \infty & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Examples of \mathcal{D} , $d_{\mathcal{X}}$ and $d_{\mathcal{P}_r}$

3. *Divergence* $d_{\mathcal{P}_r}$ on (the probability distributions over) the output space

Examples of \mathcal{D} , $d_{\mathcal{X}}$ and d_{Pr}

3. *Divergence* d_{Pr} on (the probability distributions over) the output space

▶ *Pure ϵ -DP* (Dwork, McSherry, et al., 2006): d_{Pr} is the multiplicative distance

$$\text{MULT}(P, Q) = \sup \left\{ \left| \ln \frac{P(S)}{Q(S)} \right| : \text{event } S \right\}.$$

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- ▶ *Approximate (ε, δ) -DP* (Dwork, Kenthapadi, et al., 2006):

$$\text{MULT}^{\delta}(P, Q) = \sup_{\text{event } S} \left\{ \ln \frac{[P(S) - \delta]^+}{Q(S)}, \ln \frac{[Q(S) - \delta]^+}{P(S)}, 0 \right\},$$

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- ▶ *Zero Concentrated DP* (Bun & Steinke, 2016a):

$$D_{\text{nor}}(P, Q) = \sup_{\alpha > 1} \frac{1}{\sqrt{\alpha}} \max \left[\sqrt{D_{\alpha}(P||Q)}, \sqrt{D_{\alpha}(Q||P)} \right],$$

where D_{α} is the Rényi divergence of order α :

$$D_{\alpha}(P||Q) = \frac{1}{\alpha - 1} \ln \int \left[\frac{dP}{dQ} \right]^{\alpha} dQ,$$

Numerical demonstration: 1940 Census full count data

- V_{Swap} : household's county;
- V_{Stratify} (swap key): the number of persons per household \times household's state;
- $V_{\text{Hold}} - V_{\text{Stratify}}$: dwelling ownership.

The invariants c_{Swap} are

1. Total *number of owned vs rented dwellings* at each household size at the state level;
2. Total *number of dwellings* at each household size at the county level.

swap rate	0.01	0.05	0.10	0.50
ε	17.08	15.43	14.68	12.48

Table: Conversion of swap rate to ε (PLB). Under this swapping scheme, the largest stratum size is $b = 264,331$, the number of all two-person households of Massachusetts.

Numerical Demonstration: 1940 Census Full Count Data

Table: Two-way tabulations of dwelling ownership by county based on the 1940 Census full count for Massachusetts (left) and one instantiation of the Permutation Algorithm at $p = 50\%$ (right). Total dwellings per county, as well as total owned versus rented units per state, are invariant. All invariants induced by the Algorithm are not shown.

county	owned	rented	total	owned (swapped)	rented (swapped)	total (swapped)
Barnstable	7461	3825	11286	5907	5379	11286
Berkshire	14736	18417	33153	13770	19383	33153
Bristol	33747	63931	97678	35537	62141	97678
Dukes	1207	534	1741	946	795	1741
Essex	53936	81300	135236	52631	82605	135236
Franklin	7433	6442	13875	6337	7538	13875
Hampden	30597	58166	88763	32267	56496	88763
Hampshire	9427	8630	18057	8145	9912	18057
Middlesex	104144	147687	251831	100372	151459	251831
Nantucket	593	432	1025	471	554	1025
Norfolk	44885	40285	85170	38566	46604	85170
Plymouth	24857	23882	48739	21549	27190	48739
Suffolk	49656	176553	226209	67357	158852	226209
Worcester	53126	78535	131661	51950	79711	131661
total	435805	708619	1144424	435805	708619	1144424

Numerical Demonstration: 1940 Census Full Count Data

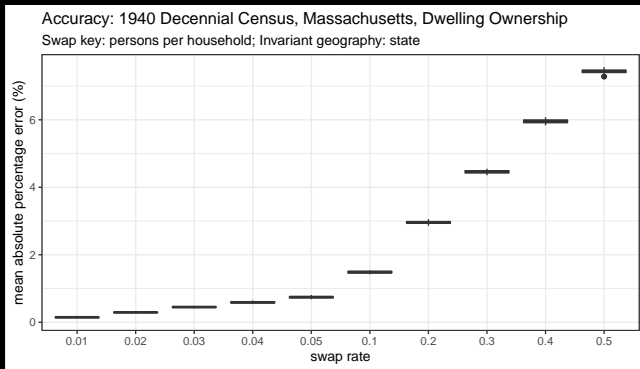


Figure: Mean absolute percentage error (MAPE) in the two-way tabulation of dwelling ownership by county induced by the Permutation Algorithm applied to the 1940 Census full count data of Massachusetts, at different swap rates from 1% to 50%. Each boxplot reflects 20 independent runs of the Algorithm at that swap rate.

Extending “Neighbour” Divergences to Metrics on \mathcal{X}

A divergence defined by neighbours:

$$d_{\mathcal{X}}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } \mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}', \\ 1 & \text{if } \mathbf{x} \text{ and } \mathbf{x}' \text{ are “neighbours”,} \\ \infty & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases}$$

can always be sharpened to a metric $d_{\mathcal{X}}^*(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}')$ defined as the length of a shortest path between \mathbf{X} and \mathbf{X}' in the graph on \mathcal{X} with edges given by r . For example the extension of the bounded-neighbours is the Hamming distance on unordered datasets:

$$d_{\text{Ham}}^u(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{2}|\mathbf{x} \ominus \mathbf{x}'| & \text{if } |\mathbf{x}| = |\mathbf{x}'|, \\ \infty & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

and the extension of unbounded-neighbours is the symmetric difference distance:

$$d_{\text{SymDiff}}^u(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{X}') = |\mathbf{X} \ominus \mathbf{X}'|.$$

The superscript u emphasizes that these distances are defined with respect to a choice of the privacy unit u .

Sufficiency and Necessity of Restricting the Data Universe

\mathcal{D}

1. For any $d_{\mathcal{X}}$ and d_{Pr} , the mechanism $T(\mathbf{x}) = \mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x})$ that *releases the invariants exactly* satisfies $(\mathcal{X}, \mathcal{D}_c, d_{\mathcal{X}}, d_{Pr})$ with *privacy budget* $\epsilon_{\mathcal{D}} = 0$.
2. Now suppose $d_{Pr}(P, Q) = \infty$ if $d_{TV}(P, Q) = 1$. Let \mathcal{D} be a data multiverse such that there exists datasets $\mathbf{x}_1, \mathbf{x}_2$ in some data universe $\mathcal{D}_0 \in \mathcal{D}$ with $d_{\mathcal{X}}(\mathbf{x}_1, \mathbf{x}_2) < \infty$ and $\mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x}_1) \neq \mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x}_2)$. Then T *does not satisfy* $(\mathcal{X}, \mathcal{D}, d_{\mathcal{X}}, d_{Pr})$ for any $\epsilon_{\mathcal{D}_0} < \infty$.
3. Suppose that a mechanism T varies within some universe $\mathcal{D}_0 \in \mathcal{D}_c$ in the sense that there exists $\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}' \in \mathcal{D}_0$ with $d_{\mathcal{X}}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') < \infty$ but $P_{\mathbf{x}} \neq P_{\mathbf{x}'}$.
When d_{Pr} is a metric, T *satisfies* $(\mathcal{X}, \mathcal{D}_c, d_{\mathcal{X}}, d_{Pr})$ *only if* $\epsilon_{\mathcal{D}_0} > 0$.

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