

Phone records reveal more than you think

By Patricia Yollin, KQED-TV

In November, two computer science graduate students at Stanford University began a study of phone metadata privacy. They figured that this kind of information could be extremely sensitive, but they didn't expect to find much evidence one way or the other.

They were wrong.

The two grad students identified the participants' contacts by matching phone numbers against Yelp and Google Place directories to see who was receiving calls. The participants contacted 33,688 unique numbers. Of those, 18 percent – or 6,107 – were identified.

The computer scientists analyzed individual calls to numbers that could be deemed sensitive – anything a person might not want to be public, such as political or religious affiliation, health status, gun ownership or finances. They created 11 sensitive categories in the study, and then they analyzed patterns of calls.

Read the whole story