

Data Brokers and the Sale of Military Data

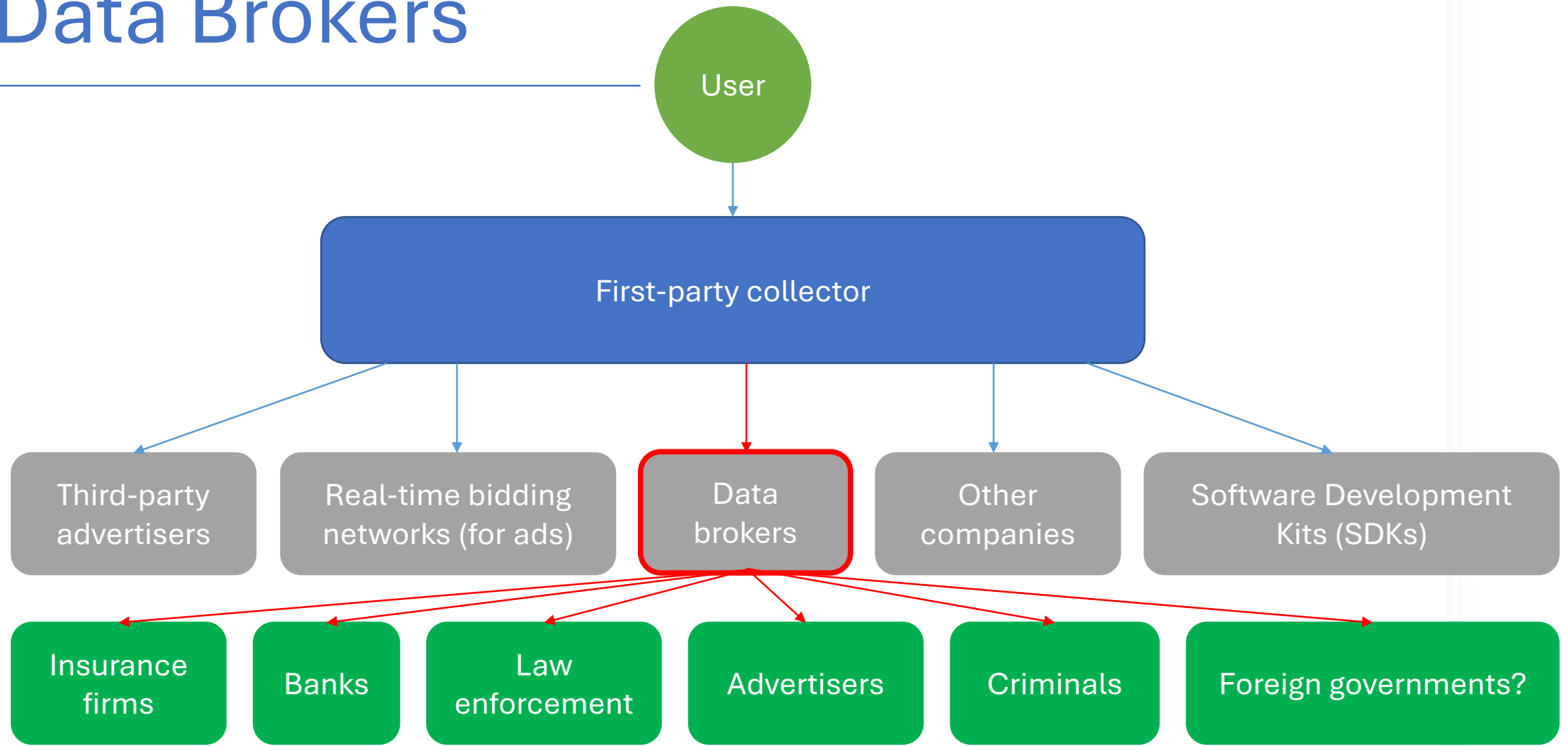
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CFA Consumer Assembly

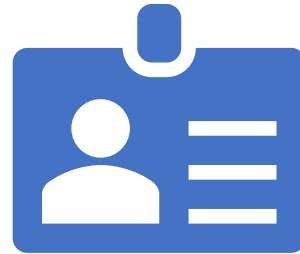
Data Brokers



Focus Areas



Data on elderly Americans and people with Alzheimer's



Employee data



Student data



Exploitative targeting



Data on military & national security personnel



People search websites & domestic and intimate partner violence

Types of Data Available



Demographic data (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, income level, ...)

Political preferences and beliefs (favorite candidates, parties, organizations, causes, ...)

Whereabouts and real-time locations (home addresses, last known locations, and GPS data)

Financial and purchase data (within and beyond FCRA coverage)

Health and mental health data

Biometric and genetic data

Major Data Brokers (US)



(2018 revenue: \$917M)



(2018 revenue: \$1.9B)



(2021 revenue: \$5.36B)



CoreLogic®



(2021 revenue: \$4.923B)



(2021 revenue: \$40.48B)



(2021 revenue: \$2.99B)



(est. revenue: \$974.3M)

Who Buys Brokered Data?



Law enforcement



Insurance firms



Banks & financial institutions



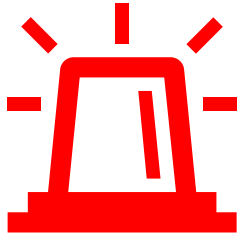
Companies running ads



Companies doing market & customer research



Scammers



Abusive individuals

Duke Nov. 2023 Military Study

Focus: data related to US military servicemembers, their families, veterans, and military facilities

Phase 1: Scraped data broker sites; interested in data on location, politics, finances, health conditions, family members, demographic information (incl. marital status, religion, sexual orientation), and more

Phase 2: Contacted 12 data brokers via US domain/email

- Had phone calls with 4
- Purchased 5 datasets on US military servicemembers from 3 brokers



Phase 3: Contacted 4 data brokers via *.asia* domain/email

- Had phone call with 1 broker
- Purchased 3 datasets on US military servicemembers from 3 brokers
- Brokers were same ones we contacted via US domain

In report, brokers are referred to as “Broker 1,” “Broker 2,” etc. — combination of IRB requirement to protect privacy of data broker sales representatives + confidentiality terms signed when buying data

Phase 1: Website Scraping

Before initiating any data purchasing, we:

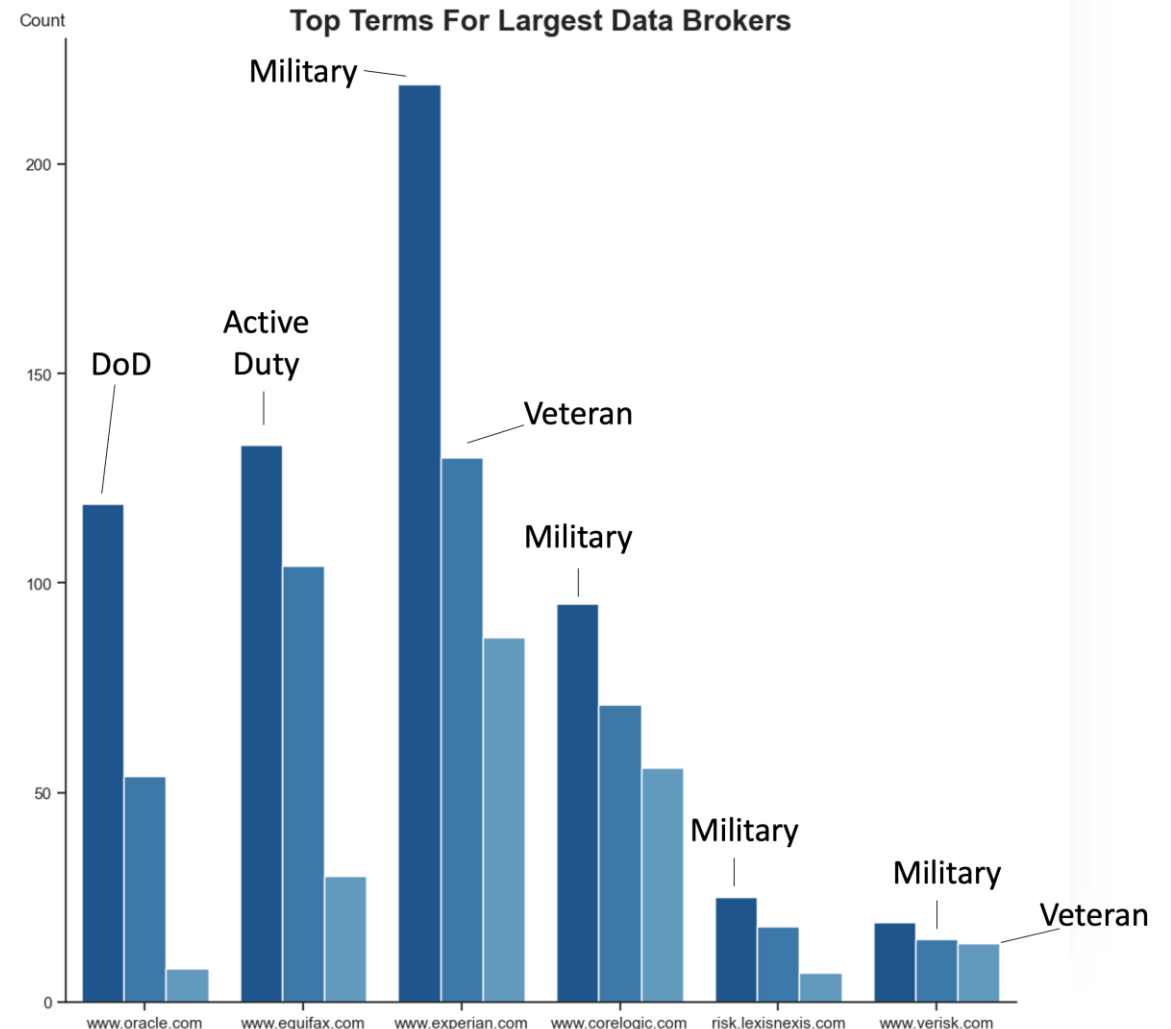
- Pulled “data broker” entries from Vermont and California state registries — 533 total
- Built an automated searching tool to search for key terms, from “military” to “Alzheimer’s”

“Military” — 7,728 hits

- E.g., “military readers”
- E.g., “Military Families Mailing List”

“Veteran” — 6,776 hits

- E.g., “veterans that own a motorcycle”
- E.g., ability to find a deceased veteran’s “claim or discharge number” by searching death records



Phase 2: Buying via US domain

Domain: *datamarketresearch.org* — did not set up a website page; hosted at US IP address

Email: *purchasing@datamarketresearch.org* — registered to domain

VPN: logged onto VPN location in Chicago when using laptop to check emails, attend Zoom calls

Purchased 5 datasets from 3 brokers

- **Cost:** \$0.125-0.22 per servicemember
- **Identifiability:** every single dataset we purchased was individually identified (with names)
- **NDA:** most brokers did not ask us to sign NDAs; two asked us to sign NDAs before speaking
- **Confidentiality:** all 3 brokers we bought from had confidentiality terms in their purchase orders
- **Payment:** brokers offered combinations of wire, ACH transfer, physical check, credit card, PayPal
- **Delivery:** datasets initially provided via File Transfer Protocol (FTP) in *.xlsx* or *.csv*; one broker sent an updated version of a dataset as an email attachment
- **Policy:** one broker asked if we intended to publish research on the data or share it with policymakers

Phase 2: Buying via US domain (cont.)

Dataset #1 (Broker 3)	Dataset #2 (Broker 3)	Dataset #3 (Broker 3)	Dataset #4 (Broker 4)	Dataset #5 (Broker 6)
<p>Contact data on 5,000 active-duty military personnel</p> <p>\$0.20/servicemember</p> <p>Name, home address, email, specific branch and/or agency (active-duty only) — such as “Marine Corp,” “Coast Guard,” or “Federal Government-National Security”</p>	<p>Contact data on 5,000 friends and family members of active-duty military personnel</p> <p>\$0.20/servicemember</p> <p>Name, home address, email, specific branch and/or agency (active-duty only)</p>	<p>Ailment and health condition data on 15,000 active-duty military personnel</p> <p>\$0.22/servicemember</p> <p>Name, home address, email, “individual ID,” and data (checkbox) on 15 different ailments/conditions, incl. Alzheimer’s, heart problems, asthma, bladder control difficulties, diabetes, hearing difficulties, high blood pressure, migraines, and physical handicap</p>	<p>Contact data on 5,000 active-duty military personnel</p> <p>\$0.125/servicemember</p> <p>Name, home address, email address, and wireless phone number</p>	<p>Contact, demographic, political, and financial data on each active-duty servicemember in its records (4,951 records), geofenced to DC/MD/VA</p> <p>\$0.213/servicemember (initially \$0.245 per)</p> <p>Name, home address, email, political affiliation, gender, age, income, net worth, credit rating, occupation, presence of children in the home (Y/N), marital status, homeowner/renter status, home value, and religion</p>

Phase 3: Buying via *.asia* domain

Dataset #6 (Broker 6)

Contact, demographic, financial, and other data on 5,048 military servicemembers, geofenced to Fort Liberty (Fort Bragg), Fort Walker (Fort AP Hill), and Quantico, VA; as well as DC/MD/VA

\$0.25/servicemember

Name, home address, email, gender, age, net worth, levels of education, occupation, numbers of children, ages of children, sexes of children, marital status, homeowner/renter status, ethnicity, language, religion, and credit rating

No issues or substantive barriers (including any apparent background check or asking questions that we would have to truthfully answer) on selling data on US military servicemembers to *.asia* domain

Data sent via FTP in unencrypted *.csv* file

Dataset #7 (Broker 3)

Contact data on 5,000 military servicemembers, geofenced to DC/MD/VA

\$0.32/servicemember

Name, address, email, and phone number

Dataset #8 (Broker 4)

Contact, financial, political, and other data on 5,000 military servicemembers

\$0.12/servicemember

Name, address, phone number, phone type, email, age, gender, marital status, homeowner status, estimated home value, “donor” (Y/N), current affairs/politics (Y/N), and “casino” (Y/N)

Thank You

Questions?

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