

# Assignment 4: Data Breach Analysis

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DEADLINE: Monday, November 30, 11:59 pm ET.

## Objective of this Assignment

- To introduce you to reliable sources of news and information about information security and to immerse you in the media discourse surrounding the topic
- To encourage you to critically analyze information security practices and the disclosure of information theft as a broad social process

Please note that this is an *individual* project and each person can talk to others, but must ultimately do their own research and write their own assignment report.

## Data Breaches: the New Normal

Once rare, the phenomena of major data breaches and data theft in government and private sector organizations now happens on an almost weekly, if not daily basis. The Identify Theft Resource Center identified 783 unique cases of data theft in 2014: compared to the statistics from 2013 these figures indicate a 25% increase in the amount of breaches from one year to the next. The data exfiltrated from these breaches includes intellectual property, financial and personal information. While the theft of this data can damage the finances and reputation of an organization, it also has a collateral impact among the individuals who have their data stolen.

This assignment will ask you to identify, investigate and research a data breach and write a brief report about it. To do so you need to answer a number of questions: What organization was affected? What kind of data/information was stolen? Is there an explanation, or any theories about how this information was stolen? Is there information and/or theories about who stole this data, or what their motivations may have been? What kind of privacy impact does the stolen data have for individuals who trusted this organization with information? How did the organization respond to the data breach? How has this organization responded to the data breach? Are there examples of individuals who have experienced negative effects (consequences) from having their data stolen? What are some prevailing opinions presented in the media regarding the organization affected, the data stolen and the individuals who had their data stolen? A good report should answer some, if not all of these questions in 1-2 pages.

## Report Format and Grading

Briefs should focus on a one (1) data breach and be no shorter than one (1) full page and no longer than two (2) full pages, single spaced. Your answers only need to be short responses 1-3 sentences in length.

**Example:** *What was the privacy impact of this data breach?*

*Apple's customer's account details including phone number, home address, usernames and passwords*

A bibliography should be attached to the assignment on a separate page. The bibliography does not count towards the length of the assignment or the length of the page (each brief should be 1-2 pages + a bibliography). You may use any citation style you are comfortable with.

Please submit your report via Blackboard at <http://portal.utoronto.ca>. Please logon in advance to Blackboard to understand how to submit your assignment. Waiting until the last minute may lead to unnecessary stress.

## **Evaluation**

Assignments will be evaluated on:

1. The appropriate selection of a data breach
2. The effort made to answer most – if not all – the questions listed in the description
3. The clarity (spelling, grammar) of the writing
4. The effort made to research the assignment

## **Constraints**

Please **do not write** a brief covering the Ashley Madison (Avid Life Media) or the 2014 Sony Pictures breaches, these stories have been covered broadly in the mainstream press – the purpose of this assignment is for you to explore this phenomena through the research and selection process.