

Trump Wants to Merge Government Data. Here Are 314 Things It Might Know About You.

Elon Musk's team is leading an effort to link government databases, to the alarm of privacy and security experts.



By Emily Badger and Sheera Frenkel

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The federal government knows your mother's maiden name and your bank account number. The student debt you hold. Your disability status. The company that employs you and the wages you earn there. And that's just a start.

It may also know your ...

Active-duty military status
Addiction treatment records
Adjusted gross income
Adopted child's name
Adverse credit history
Alimony paid
Business debts canceled or forgiven
Charitable contributions
Child support received
Country of birth
Country of citizenship
Credit and debit card numbers
Criminal history
Date of birth
Date of hiring
Dependent Social Security numbers
Disability entitlement
Driver's license or state ID number
Effective tax rate
Employer name
Employment termination dates
Farm income/loss
Foreign business partners
Full name
Gambling income
Health provider name and number
High school
Home/personal phone number
Incarceration status
IP address
Marital status
Marriage certificate
Medical diagnoses
Mother's maiden name
Moving expenses

Nonresident alien status
Parent educational attainment
Passport number
Personal bank account number
Personal email address
Personal taxpayer ID number
Place of birth
Prior status in foster care
Reason for separation (for unemployment claims)
Social Security number
Sources of income
Spouse's demographic information
Student loan defaults
Taxable I.R.A. distributions
U.S. visa number

and at least 263 more categories of data.

Source: Agency documents assembled by The New York Times

These intimate details about the personal lives of people who live in the United States are held in disconnected data systems across the federal government — some at the Treasury, some at the Social Security Administration and some at the Department of Education, among other agencies.

The Trump administration is now trying to connect the dots of that disparate information. Last month, President Trump signed an executive order calling for the “consolidation” of these segregated records, raising the prospect of creating a kind of data trove about Americans that the government has never had before, and that members of the president’s own party have historically opposed.

The effort is being driven by Elon Musk, the world’s richest man, and his lieutenants with the Department of Government Efficiency, who have sought access to dozens of databases as they have swept through agencies across the federal government. Along the way, they have elbowed past the objections of career staff, data security protocols, national security experts and legal privacy protections.

So far, the Musk group's success has varied by agency and sometimes by the day, as differing rulings have come down from federal judges hearing more than a dozen lawsuits challenging the moves. The group has been temporarily blocked from sensitive data at several agencies, including the Social Security Administration. But on Monday, an appeals court reversed a preliminary injunction barring the group's access at the Treasury, the Department of Education and the Office of Personnel Management.

And this week, the Internal Revenue Service agreed to help the Department of Homeland Security obtain closely held taxpayer data to help identify immigrants for deportation, over the objections of career employees. In the wake of that decision, the acting I.R.S. commissioner and other top officials are preparing to resign.

The categories of information shown here are drawn from 23 data systems holding personal information about the public across eight agencies that Mr. Musk's aides are seeking to access, according to people familiar with their efforts as well as internal documents and court depositions. In all, The New York Times identified more than 300 separate fields of data about people who live in the U.S. contained in these data systems.

Personal data held in systems DOGE has sought to access

- Academic rank
- Active-duty military status
- Addiction treatment records
- Adjusted gross income
- Adopted child's gender
- Adopted child's name
- Adopted child's placement agency
- Adoption credit claimed
- Adoption Taxpayer ID Number
- Adoptive parent name
- Adoptive placement agency
- Adoptive placement agency Employer ID Number
- Adverse credit history
- Alimony paid
- Alimony received
- Amount of federal taxes owed
- Amount of federal taxes refunded
- Amount of institutionally provided financing owed
- Amount of Medicare conditional payment
- Amount of student loan debt
- Area of medical residency
- Area of study
- Auto insurance effective date of coverage
- Auto insurance policy number
- Automobile medical policies
- Bank
- Bank information (for your Medicare providers)
- Biometric identifiers
- Birth certificate
- Business address
- Business bad debt
- Business bank account number
- Business closures
- Business debts canceled or forgiven

- Business depreciation
- Business entity type
- Business income/loss
- Business rents paid
- Business repairs and maintenance costs
- Business taxpayer ID number
- Cancellation of debt
- Capital gain/loss
- Casualty and theft losses from federal declared disaster
- Charitable contributions
- Child and dependent care tax credit claimed
- Child support received
- Children of Fallen Heroes Scholarship eligibility indicator
- Citizenship status
- Classification of instructional programs code
- Clean vehicle credit claimed
- Company named in consumer complaint
- Consumer product complaints (including mortgages, loans, credit cards)
- Cost of goods sold (for business)
- Country of birth
- Country of citizenship
- Course of study completion date
- Course of study completion status
- Course of study program length
- Credit and debit card numbers
- Credit report information
- Criminal history
- Date of accident, injury or illness
- Date of birth
- Date of death
- Date of hiring
- Date of original divorce or separation agreement
- Dates of employment
- Dates of medical service
- Deductible part of self-employment tax
- Degrees
- Delinquency on federal debt status
- Dependency status
- Dependent names
- Dependent of a resident alien
- Dependent of U.S. citizen/resident alien
- Dependent relationship to you
- Dependent Social Security numbers
- Dependent/spouse of a nonresident alien holding a U.S. visa
- Device ID
- Digital assets received as ordinary income
- Disability entitlement
- Disadvantaged background status
- Disability status
- Dividend income
- Driver's license or state ID number
- Earnings
- Education and training (for unemployment claims)
- Education tax credits claimed
- Educator expenses paid
- Effective tax rate
- Employee benefit plans offered (for business)
- Employee ID number
- Employer account number
- Employer address
- Employer name
- Employer reported total employees
- Employer-provided adoption benefits
- Employer-reported total wages paid by quarter
- Employment information
- Employment status
- Employment termination dates
- Energy efficient commercial buildings deduction
- Energy efficient home improvement credit claimed
- Entitlement benefits held by related Social Security number holders
- Expected student enrollment
- Failure to file taxes penalty
- Failure to pay taxes penalty
- Family court records
- Family size
- Farm income/loss
- Federal Employer ID Number
- Federal housing assistance received
- Federal income tax withheld
- Financial aid profile
- First-time homebuyer credit claimed
- Foreign activities
- Foreign address
- Foreign bank and financial accounts
- Foreign business partners
- Foreign coverage credits
- Foreign earned income exclusion
- Foreign interests in business
- Foreign tax ID number
- Free or reduced-price school lunch received
- Full name

- Funding arrangements of employer group health plan
- Gambling income
- Gender
- Gross business profit
- Gross business receipts or sales
- Health insurance claim number
- Health insurance effective date of coverage
- Health insurance policy number
- Health provider name and number
- Health savings account deduction claimed
- Health supplier name and number
- High school
- Higher ed institutions designated to receive FAFSA form
- Home/ mailing address
- Home/ personal phone number
- Homeless status
- Hospitalization records
- Household employee name
- Household employee Social Security number
- Household employee wages
- Incarcerated student indicator flag
- Incarceration status
- Income and assets (for student aid eligibility)
- Inventions
- Investment interest received
- IP address
- I.R.A. deduction
- Job title
- Jury duty pay
- Late tax filing interest
- Level of postsecondary education study
- Login security questions and answers
- Login.gov password
- Marginal tax rate
- Marital status
- Marriage certificate
- Medicaid received
- Medicaid waiver payments
- Medical and dental expenses paid
- Medical claims payments
- Medical diagnoses
- Medical notes
- Medical records number
- Medical residency date completed
- Medicare invoices (sent to your provider)
- Medicare payments received (by your provider)
- Military service credits
- Mortgage interest paid
- Mother's maiden name
- Moving expenses
- Name/ address of business partnership
- Names of other corporate officers of an LLC
- Naturalization records
- Nature of medical service
- Net farm profit/loss
- Nonresident alien status
- Nonresident alien student, professor or researcher
- Number of agricultural employees employed
- Number of employees
- Number of family members in college
- Occupation title or code
- Olympic and Paralympic medals, prize money
- Ordinary business income
- Parent demographic information
- Parent educational attainment
- Parent killed in the line of duty
- Parental income and assets (for student aid eligibility)
- Parents' demographic information
- Passport number
- Pell Grant additional eligibility indicator
- Pell Grant collection status indicator
- Pell Grant status
- Personal and professional references (for federal job applicants)
- Personal bank account number
- Personal bank account routing number
- Personal email address
- Personal tax payment history
- Personal taxpayer ID number
- Photographic identifiers
- Photographs of government-issued IDs
- Physician name and number
- Place of birth
- Plans for federal grant funding (including schedules, diagrams, pictures)
- Postsecondary education institution
- Power of attorney name and address
- Prescription drug coverage
- Principal business activity
- Principal business product or service
- Prior status as a legally emancipated minor
- Prior status as a ward of the court
- Prior status as an orphan

- Prior status in a legal guardianship
- Prior status in foster care
- Private health insurer/underwriter group name
- Private health insurer/underwriter group number
- Private health insurer/underwriter name
- Prizes and award income received
- Psychological or psychiatric health records
- Qualified electric vehicle credit claimed
- Railroad retirement credits
- Reason for separation (for unemployment claims)
- Relationships to other Social Security number holders
- Rental management fees paid
- Rental, royalty, partnership, etc. income/loss
- Rents received
- Residential clean energy credit claimed
- Royalties received
- Salaries and wages earned
- Salary history (for federal job applicants)
- Scholarship and fellowship grants received
- Seasonable employer status
- Self-employed health insurance deduction
- Self-employment tax
- Self-photograph
- Sex
- Social Security date of filing
- Social Security number
- Social Security numbers of other corporate officers of an LLC
- Social Security primary insurance amount
- Social Security/S.S.I. representative payee
- Sources and amounts of non-Social Security income
- Sources of income
- Spousal income and assets (for student aid eligibility)
- Spouse demographic information
- Spouse of a resident alien
- Spouse of U.S. citizen/resident alien
- Spouse's demographic information
- Spouse's Social Security number
- Standard employee identifier
- State and local taxes paid
- Stock options received
- Student entitlement
- Student loan forbearances
- Student loan amount
- Student loan balances
- Student loan cancellations
- Student loan claims
- Student loan collections
- Student loan defaults
- Student loan deferments
- Student loan disbursement dates
- Student loan disbursements
- Student loan ID
- Student loan interest deduction
- Student loan overpayments
- Student loan promissory notes
- Student loan refunds
- Student loan repayment plan
- Student loan status
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance received
- Supplemental Security Income eligibility
- Supplemental Security Income eligibility amount
- Supplemental Security Income payment amounts
- Tax filing status (married, individual, filing jointly)
- Tax preparer tax ID number
- Taxable dependent care benefits
- Taxable income
- Taxable interest income
- Taxable I.R.A. distributions
- Taxable pension distributions
- Taxable Social Security benefits
- Taxable state/local refunds
- Taxes paid on wagers
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families received
- Tests for H.I.V./AIDS
- Tip income
- Total number of dependents
- Total number of tax exemptions
- Total payments to all employees
- Total tax owed and paid
- Type of bank account (checking/savings)
- U.S. resident alien status
- U.S. visa expiration date
- U.S. visa number
- Unaccompanied alien child status
- Unaccompanied alien children sponsor status
- Unemployment compensation received
- Vehicle identifiers
- Veteran disability determination dates
- Veteran status
- Visa expiration date
- Wages earned while incarcerated
- WIC nutrition assistance received

- Work email address
- Work experience (for federal job applicants)
- Work phone number
- Workers' compensation coverage
- Workers' compensation offset

Source: Agency documents assembled by The New York Times

If anything, this list is an undercount. Through his executive orders, Mr. Trump has sought to grant Mr. Musk's group access to "all unclassified agency records" — a category that leaves out national security secrets but that includes personally sensitive information on virtually everyone in America.

With such data stitched together, Mr. Musk and the White House have said they could better hunt for waste, fraud and abuse.

"The way the government is defrauded is that the computer systems don't talk to each other," Mr. Musk said in a recent Fox News interview. Link the data, he suggested, and the government could identify swindlers who collect aid from one agency when the I.R.S. knows their income is too high or when the Social Security Administration knows their age is too low.

But critics such as privacy groups, public employee unions and immigrant rights associations who have sued to block the group's data access warn that so much accumulated information could be used for far more than detecting fraud — and would be illegal.

This assembled data, they say, would give the government too much power, including potentially to punish critics and police immigrants. It would create a national security vulnerability that could be targeted by hostile nation states. And it would break a longstanding covenant between the federal government and the U.S. public rooted in privacy laws — that Americans who share their personal data with official agencies can trust that it will be secured and used only for narrow purposes.

Ways these agencies may have obtained your data

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

- You have filed complaints about companies or products, including about your mortgage or credit cards

Education	• You have applied for or received student loan aid
General Services Administration	• You have used Login.gov to verify your identify on government forms
Health and Human Services	• You are a doctor providing patients care and receiving payment • You have Medicare or Medicaid • Your employer reported your hiring and wages • You have received unemployment benefits • You have applied for a grant • You have sponsored an unaccompanied alien child
Labor	• Your employer has filed information, including with states, about your employment and wages and unemployment taxes paid • You have received unemployment
Office of Personnel Management	• You have ever applied for a job with the federal government
Social Security Administration	• Your parents applied for a Social Security number for you at birth • You have paid Social Security taxes through your job • You have applied for or collect Social Security or Supplemental Security Income benefits
Treasury	• You have filed taxes or tax forms • You have been listed in tax forms filed by others • You have ever received payments from or made payments to the government

Source: Agency documents assembled by The New York Times

Privacy advocates say that all this data could enable the government to punish its political opponents by weaponizing information about an individual's personal life (bankruptcies, criminal histories, medical claims) or halting the benefits they receive (housing vouchers, retirement checks, food assistance).

“They have not demonstrated a single case in which fraud detection has required some universal governmental access to everybody's data,” said Representative Jamie Raskin, Democrat of Maryland. “In fact, the creation of a monster uniform database of all information on all citizens will be an invitation to fraud and political retaliation against the people.”

That is how personal data is tracked and used in authoritarian states, Mr. Raskin added. Both Russia and China stockpile data on their citizens to track opponents and squash dissent of the ruling party in government.

The White House declined to directly address how it would safeguard and use the data it is seeking to consolidate, including whether the administration is trying to create one central database, citing only its focus on fraud.

“Waste, fraud and abuse have been deeply entrenched in our broken system for far too long,” the White House spokesman Harrison Fields said in a statement. “It takes direct access to the system to identify and fix it.”

Technologists warn that trying to match complex data sets to make decisions about government programs — including by using artificial intelligence to identify waste in government spending, as Musk allies have discussed — could produce rampant errors and real-world harm.

And national security experts note that a large collection of data about American citizens would be an enticing target for enemy nation states, hackers and cybercriminals. Countries including China, Russia and Iran have been behind major breaches of U.S. government databases in recent years, U.S. officials have said.

Private companies and data brokers that buy and sell data know plenty about Americans, too. But a crucial difference lies in what the federal government alone can do with that data, privacy advocates say. Google doesn't control the apparatus of immigration enforcement. Target doesn't have the power to halt Social Security payments.

"This gets to a fundamental point about privacy: It is not just the question of, 'Does anyone else in the world know this about me?'" said John Davisson, the director of litigation at the Electronic Privacy Information Center, which has sued the administration to block DOGE's access to financial data at the Treasury and federal work force records at the Office of Personnel Management. "It is a question of *who* knows this about me, and what can they lawfully — or as a practical matter — do with that information?"

Privacy over efficiency

Congress debated that question 50 years ago as it considered passing a law to protect the privacy of Americans' data in the wake of the Watergate scandal and with the growing computerization of personal records.

"Where will it end?" said the Republican senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona at the time. "Will we permit all computerized systems to interlink nationwide so that every detail of our personal lives can be assembled instantly for use by a single bureaucrat or institution?"

With the passage of the 1974 Privacy Act, Americans chose privacy over efficiency, said Julian Sanchez, a libertarian privacy scholar.

"We made a very conscious choice to say we're accepting the costs of inefficiency," he said, "because if a unified database came into the hands of someone who wanted to put state power to some repressive purpose, their task would be made too easy by that centralization."

At times, he said, libertarians have been called paranoid for suggesting such a scenario was still realistic in America in the 21st century.

“I think it’s very evident,” he said, “now it is.”

In Mr. Trump’s March 20 executive order, he called for “eliminating information silos” across the government. Within 30 days, the order states, “agency heads shall, to the maximum extent consistent with law, rescind or modify all agency guidance that serves as a barrier to the inter- or intra-agency sharing of unclassified information.” The administration has not specified who would be able to view data that gets consolidated across the government, but the order broadly grants wide-ranging access to federal officials “designated by the president or agency heads.”

The president also is targeting information held by states, seeking “unfettered access to comprehensive data” related to programs that receive federal funding.

The White House did not respond to the concerns raised by critics about the risks of pulling these data streams together.

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Federal Student Aid

AN OFFICE OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FAFSA® Form

Free Application for Federal Student Aid

OMB No. 1845-0001

For help in filling out the FAFSA form, go to [StudentAid.gov/fafsa/help](https://studentaid.gov/fafsa/help) or call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).

Student

► The student must complete this section.

Questions 1–24 apply to the student. Leave blank any questions that don't apply to the student.

1 Student Identity Information

The student's full legal name, for example, as it appears on their Social Security card.

First name

Middle name

Last name

Suffix (e.g., Jr. or III)

Date of birth

MM / DD / YYYY

Social Security number (SSN)

Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)

If the student does not have an ITIN, leave this field blank.

Student

The federal student aid application asks about your income and assets, as well as those of your parents and spouse. studentaid.gov

Form 1040

Department of the Treasury—Internal Revenue Service

U.S. Individual Income Tax Return

2024

OMB No. 1545-0074

IRS Use Only—Do not write or staple in this space.

For the year Jan. 1–Dec. 31, 2024, or other tax year beginning 2024, ending 2024, 20

See separate instructions.

Your first name and middle initial

Last name

Your social security number

If joint return, spouse's first name and middle initial

Last name

Spouse's social security number

Home address (number and street). If you have a P.O. box, see instructions.

Apt. no.

City, town, or post office. If you have a foreign address, also complete spaces below.

State

ZIP code

Foreign country name

Foreign province/state/county

Foreign postal code

Presidential Election Campaign

Check here if you, or your spouse if filing jointly, want \$3 to go to this fund. Checking a box below will not change your tax or refund.

☐ You ☐ Spouse

Filing Status

☐ Single

☐ Married filing jointly (even if only one had income)

☐ Married filing separately (MFS)

☐ Head of household (HOH)

☐ Qualifying surviving spouse (QSS)

If you checked the MFS box, enter the name of your spouse. If you checked the HOH or QSS box, enter the child's name if the qualifying person is a child but not your dependent:

☐ If treating a nonresident alien or dual-status alien spouse as a U.S. resident for the entire tax year, check the box and enter their name (see instructions and attach statement if required):

Digital Assets

At any time during 2024, did you: (a) receive (as a reward, award, or payment for property or services); or (b) sell, exchange, or otherwise dispose of a digital asset (or a financial interest in a digital asset)? (See instructions.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

Standard Deduction

Someone can claim:

☐ You as a dependent

☐ Your spouse as a dependent

☐ Spouse itemizes on a separate return or you were a dual-status alien

Age/Blindness

You: ☐ Were born before January 2, 1960 ☐ Are blind

Spouse: ☐ Was born before January 2, 1960 ☐ Is blind

Dependents

(see instructions):

(1) First name

Last name

(2) Social security number

(3) Relationship to you

(4) Check the box if qualifies for (see instructions):

Child tax credit

Credit for other dependents

If more than four dependents, each line includes last name

This I.R.S. tax return form asks about your dependents and the bank account where any deposits are refunded. irs.gov

It remains to be seen whether the courts will ultimately permit the administration’s efforts, some of which appear to run counter to the Privacy Act and other laws.

The Privacy Act prohibits agencies from disclosing personal information without your consent. Agencies also generally aren’t supposed to share data across the government for a purpose unrelated to why it was originally collected.

That means, for example, that the government shouldn't use personal data you handed over to apply for student loans to later carry out immigration enforcement against your parents. Or use information you filed to itemize your tax deductions to later identify you as a supporter of left-leaning causes.

"The government is not necessarily supposed to be thinking creatively about how it can combine all of the information that it has ever collected about you and your family across dozens of databases over the course of your entire life to find out new things about you," said Aman George, senior counsel with Democracy Forward, a liberal-leaning legal group that has brought some of the lawsuits against DOGE.

There are some exceptions to legal privacy standards, including for criminal investigations and for government employees who need restricted data to do their lawfully assigned jobs. But courts that have blocked DOGE's data access, for now, have found that Mr. Musk's team probably doesn't have such a need given the group's vague and shifting mandate.

"Instead, the government simply repeats its incantation of a need to modernize the system and uncover fraud," wrote district Judge Ellen L. Hollander in issuing a temporary restraining order at the Social Security Administration. "Its method of doing so is tantamount to hitting a fly with a sledgehammer."



Posters have appeared around Washington protesting Elon Musk's efforts to access personal data. Ben Curtis/Associated Press

The Internal Revenue Code and Social Security Act add even stricter protections to tax data. And other laws have set security standards for maintaining government data and made it a crime to access a government computer or share data without authorization.

Mr. Musk's team, according to Times reporting and court filings, has also targeted dozens of systems that track federal employees, government acquisition and contracting, and government spending to businesses and outside entities while pursuing widespread staff reductions across the bureaucracy.

The cost of wrong results

The notion of connecting government data systems is much harder than it sounds, former officials said.

When the I.R.S. tried to study if it could identify people eligible for the earned-income tax credit about a decade ago, it ran into different programs and data sets using different definitions for "family" and "income," said Nina Olson, the former

national taxpayer advocate at the I.R.S. from 2001 to 2019.

Try matching data across an even wider array of government systems, and the incongruities would multiply.

“The data is not fit for the purpose that you’re trying to use it for,” said Ms. Olson, the executive director of the Center for Taxpayer Rights, which is also suing the government. “And you’ll get wrong results, and there’s consequences to those wrong results.”

People could be cut off from benefits or identified for deportation for suspicious indicators that have benign explanations. However, Mr. Musk has shown little interest in the details of those explanations. He has repeatedly misrepresented data about dead people and immigrants receiving Social Security. He has suggested something nefarious must explain a surge in tax credits that can be traced to expansions of the child tax credit and pandemic relief.

What happens if a family claiming a tax credit for the first time is flagged for fraud — and has their Medicaid cut off, too?

“What will their resolution process be? Will they act first and deal with the fallout later?” said Elizabeth Laird with the Center for Democracy and Technology.

“People who maybe are like, ‘Well, I got notified my data was breached 10 years ago and I’ve been fine’ — I don’t think they’ve been subjected to what we may see this used for.”

About this project

To identify the data variables shown here, The Times compiled a list of data systems DOGE has sought to access, relying on reporting and legal documents. For each data system, we then gathered the data collection elements listed in Privacy Impact Assessments or System of Records Notices required by law. Where that information was vague (for example your “tax records”), we relied on other documentation to compile more specific data fields (like the line items on a 1040 individual income tax return). In some cases, DOGE has sought access to data retrieval systems and data warehouses that pull information from many separate systems. In such cases, we tried to identify information in those interconnected systems, too.

While we identified about 80 data systems in total that have been targeted by DOGE, this analysis illustrates only those that contain personal information about the American public. We excluded data systems that hold personal information only on federal employees; those that contain primarily information about businesses

and institutions; and those that manage internal processes, like setting up emails and sending out invoices. Our definition of the American public includes many smaller subpopulations, like anyone who has ever applied for a federal job, a student loan, a research grant or unemployment benefits. Data collected about those groups (for example, the college you attended if you had a student loan) may not be known by the government about everyone in America.

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