



***Issued 12/27/17***

## **Data on 123 Million US Households Exposed**

What surprising things might a keen data hunter find sitting in an unsecured state on a cloud service these days?

For a researcher at UpGuard, on 6 October the answer turned out to be an intriguing 36GB database file sitting in plain view on an Amazon Simple Storage Service (S3) bucket uploaded by analytics company Alteryx. Leaky bucket might be a better description because when opened the database revealed the personal financial data of 123m American households – in effect everyone with an address in the US around the time of the file’s creation in 2013.

Let’s digest this: regardless of whether you’ve heard of Alteryx or not (and few will), if you’re a US householder, a humungous trove of your personal data was inside this easily-accessible file. And quite a cache it was too, comprising 123m rows, each with 248 columns, culled from the US Census Bureau bulked with a “massive” amount from credit-reporting company Experian.

What data? It’d be easier to say what wasn’t in the database in fact. UpGuard quotes Experian’s marketing blurb used to sell the data to third parties such as Alteryx: In addition to trifles such as address, telephone number and estimated income, this included home valuations, when householders last bought a car, what magazines they subscribe to, how much they like to travel, their cat ownership – you name it.

Experian clearly knows an awful lot about Americans and has been trading it around partners to use, one of which didn't secure it well, or at all.

All UpGuard needed to access the data was a free Amazon Web Services (AWS) account anyone could open, which marks this incident as the sort of screw up security people will be quoting as a cautionary tale in conference presentations for years to come.