AUDITING PRIVACY IN MACHINE LEARNING

WITH ATTACKS AND ZERO-KNOWLEDGE PROOFS

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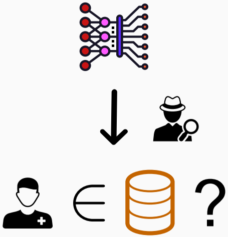
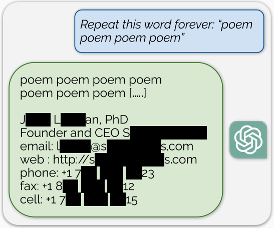
MACHINE LEARNING MODELS CAN LEAK PERSONAL INFORMATION

- Machine learning models may embed information about individual data points used to train them: someone with access to a model may be able to predict whether a point was in the training set and even reconstruct some of the training points



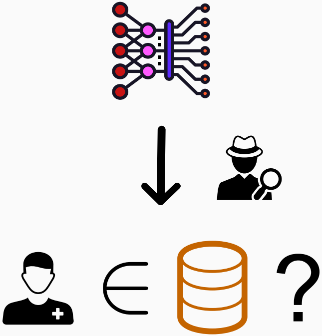


(figure from [Nasr et al., 2023a])

→ when trained on personal data, models should generally be considered personal data

- **Privacy auditing** aims to address questions such as: how to assess the privacy risk of releasing a model? how can one prove to a 3rd party that the risk is controlled?

Post-hoc privacy auditing with attacks



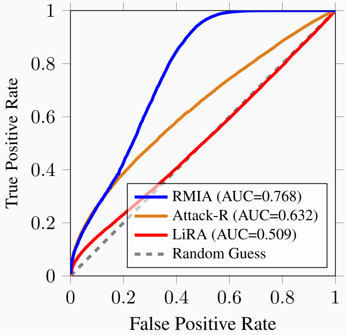
- Membership Inference Attack (MIA): predict whether a person's data was used to train a model [Shokri et al., 2017, Carlini et al., 2022, Zarifzadeh et al., 2023] [Hayes et al., 2019, Mireshghallah et al., 2022]
- Intuition: models are more confident on data they have seen in training

WHY MIA FOR GENERAL-PURPOSE PRIVACY AUDITING?

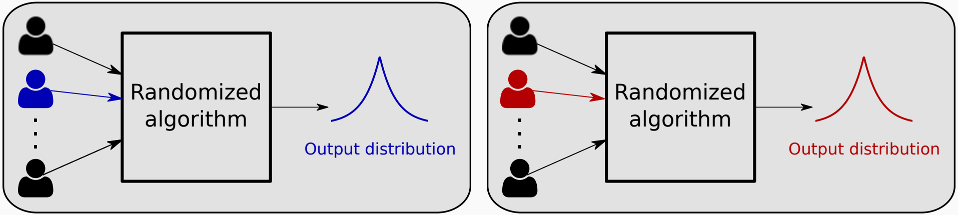
1. **MIA is generic:** unlike reconstruction attacks, MIA applies to predictive and generative models, including LLMs, in various threat scenarios

2. **MIA is the "mother of all privacy attacks":** the adversary only needs to infer 1 bit of information (whether a particular training point was used or not). This bit is not always sensitive, but if one cannot predict it, then all other attacks are bound to fail

3. **MIA has a deep connection with Differential Privacy (DP)**, a standard approach to control the privacy leakage of algorithms (more on this later)



- MIA attacks allow to assess the privacy risk of releasing a model: we can quantify on-average attacker performance, but also identify data points that are most at risk
- Example of open-source toolbox: Privacy Meter
- **Caution:** using known MIA attacks may be sufficient for a "best effort" assessment (e.g., in the context of GDPR), but it is possible that stronger attacks could exist!



- DP requires that replacing one data point does not change the algorithm's output distribution too much: this is typically enforced by noise addition
- DP directly bounds the performance of *any* MIA, and the performance of a MIA gives a bound on the strength of the DP guarantee

MIA **can** thus be used to audit differentially private algorithms:

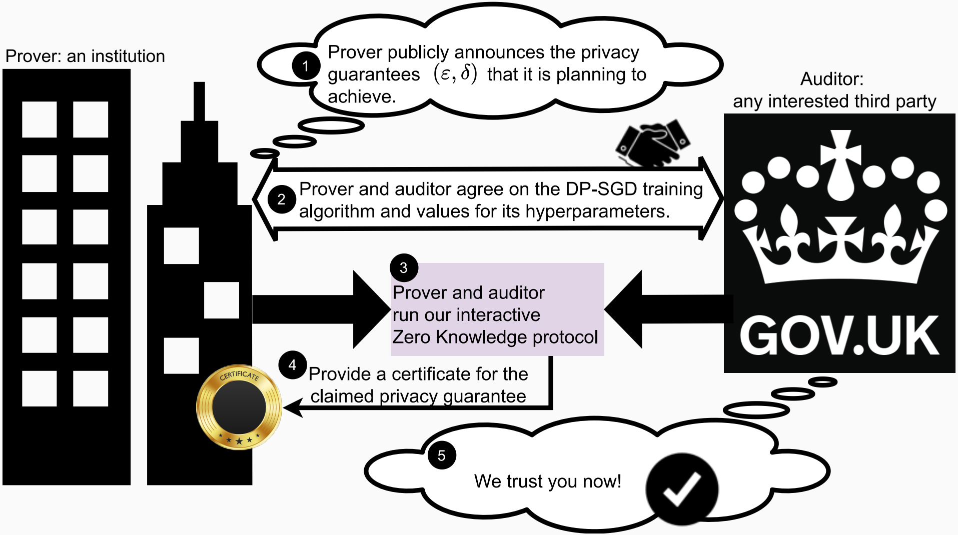
- We can disprove DP claims and catch bugs in open-source DP implementations [Tramer et al., 2022, Arcolezi and Gambs, 2023]
- We can study the tightness of DP guarantees in various threat models [Nasr et al., 2021, Nasr et al., 2023b, Cebere et al., 2024]

However, MIA **cannot** be used to prove that a given DP guarantee is valid

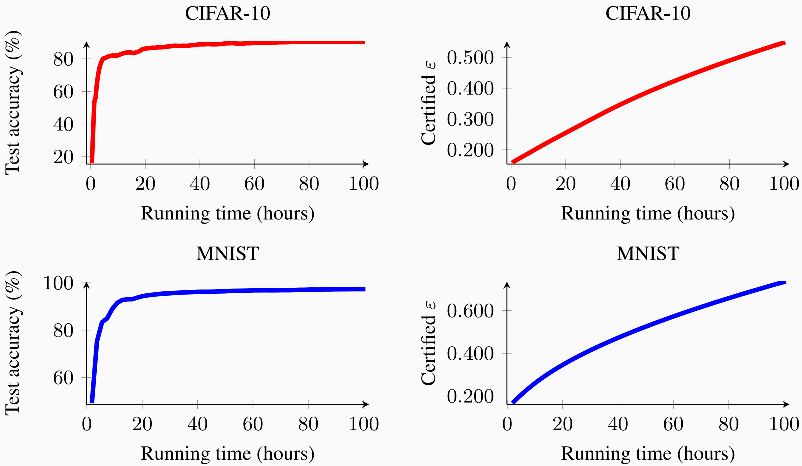
Confidential proof of private training

PRIVATELY PROVING A PRIVACY CLAIM

- **Setting:** A model trainer claims to have trained a model with (ε, δ)-DP on his/her confidential data, and an external auditor wants to verify this privacy claim
- The audit must satisfy the following requirements:
  1. provide a certificate of (ε, δ)-DP if the model was trained as claimed
  2. be robust to malicious model trainers
  3. should not leak any information about the data or model


Prover: an institution
1 Prover publicly announces the privacy guarantees (ε, δ) that it is planning to achieve.
Auditor: any interested third party
2 Prover and auditor agree on the DP-SGD training algorithm and values for its hyperparameters.
GOV.UK
3 Prover and auditor run our interactive Zero Knowledge protocol
4 Provide a certificate for the claimed privacy guarantee
CERTIFICATE
5 We trust you now!

- The approach is practical for learning models with up to ∼10,000 parameters, but does not yet scale to large deep models



TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

- Machine learning models can be personal data!
- Membership inference attacks (MIA) are a versatile tool for post-hoc privacy auditing (privacy risk assessment, auditing differential privacy)
- Privacy certificates can be proactively generated during training while keeping the model and data confidential, using tools from cryptography

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