Study uses Google Street View to accurately predict neighborhood demographics

A new study shows Google's Street View feature, the ground-level panoramic photos of streets you can see on Google Maps, could change the way potential homebuyers research neighborhoods before making their big purchase -- as well as further inflame the national conversation around gentrification, affordability and housing discrimination. The study, published on November 28 in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, claims to be able to identify socioeconomic attributes of certain ZIP codes from photos of the cars sitting in neighborhood driveways with an exceptionally high degree of accuracy. Lead by a team of researchers from Stanford, University of Michigan and Rice University, the study analyzed 50 million photos of street scenes gathered by Google's ever-roving Street View camera cars, then employed a machine learning technique, a type of artificial intelligence, known as a "convolutional neural network." In this case, the network analyzed cars that appe...

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