



2023 WHOIS Accuracy Annual Report

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As required by the Department of Commerce/Registry Services, LLC (“Registry Services”) usTLD Contract, this report provides an annual review of the accuracy review of WHOIS enforcement and data accuracy audits.

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Overview

Registry Services, LLC (“Registry Services”), as part of its usTLD WHOIS Accuracy Policy (WAP), conducts several audits during the year that are aimed at identifying any registration data inaccuracies which may be inconsistent with the .US domain registration terms and conditions. The WAP investigations broadly fall into the following categories:

- WHOIS/Nexus Data Reminder Policy
- WHOIS/Nexus Data Problem Reporting Tool
- WHOIS Data Audit for Proxy Registrations
- WHOIS Semi-annual Large Data Random Sampling
- Nexus Data Random Sampling
- Random inspection of Registrar websites for WHOIS functionality

Registry Services captures the results from these audits and provides an annual report to the Department of Commerce/NTIA as part of its contractual requirements. The report summarizes what was uncovered in the investigations along with what, if any, remedial actions were taken to ensure compliance. The data captured and analyzed in this report is as of December 31, 2023.

Registry Services has instituted several WHOIS Accuracy policy programs for the .US domain extension which are aimed at enforcing compliance among registrars as well as registrants. Registry Services provides different avenues through which third parties can remain engaged in policing the .US space to ensure that it maintains credibility, integrity, and security. Registry Services, by utilizing these programs, continues to be among leading entities in the fight against Internet fraud and other forms of malicious activity.

Enforcement and Results

WHOIS/Nexus Reminder Policy

Registry Services, during 2023, met the WHOIS/Nexus Reminder Policy requirement by sending out a reminder notice to the registrar channel base. The reminder specified for the registrars the time frames which the registrars were required to send the WHOIS data verification notices to registrants of second level .us domain names. The notice had an attachment of the WHOIS Reminder Policy containing detailed instructions on the format and content of the registrant reminder notice. There were 241 active usTLD accredited registrars as of December 2023.



WHOIS/Nexus Data Public Reporting Tool

Registry Services has enacted a special protocol for the usTLD, allowing the public to submit WHOIS inaccuracy reports on domains that they have identified as containing incorrect data, including a complete set of processes to handle all requests, from receiving the request to its outcome, which includes contacting the Registrar of record to assume corrective action. The WHOIS/Nexus Data Reporting Tool is a public customer-facing web interface that allows third parties to submit complaints about .US domain names with registration information that they suspect to be inaccurate. To protect against abuse of the reporting tool, an auto-generated email to the complainant requires confirmation that the complaint is valid before it is logged for action by the Compliance team. During calendar 2023, a total of 150 submissions were received and subject to accuracy/eligibility complaint review through the tool. 34 (22.66%) of the reported domains were confirmed to be accurate, and no action taken. 87 (58%) were identified to need further investigation to be addressed and corrected. 29 (19.33%) of the complaints were invalidated as they were never confirmed by the submitter.

Registry Services treats third party complaints seriously and continues to allocate a substantial amount of resources toward the expeditious investigation of all domains about which it receives complaints. As shown by the above statistics, many of the complaint domain names end up being further investigated and subject to usTLD policies to be corrected for inaccuracies or actioned for non-compliance, hence the importance of investing the time and resources to ensure that each reported case is handled and resolved responsibly.

Data Accuracy Audits

Registry Services performs data accuracy audits, in addition to receiving complaints via the automated reporting tool. The goal of investigation is twofold: to determine:

1. The accuracy of the registrant contact data of each selected domain per the WHOIS Accuracy Policy, and
2. The registrant's eligibility to maintain a .US domain name under the usTLD Nexus Requirements Policy from information provided in the domain record.

Registry Services then connects with the sampled registrants with apparent inaccurate contact information via the email address provided in registration records. The domains which pass the accuracy and eligibility tests are recorded as such and are normally excluded from future random investigations unless a complaint is filed challenging the veracity of the registration record.

WHOIS Inaccuracy Audit

The usTLD WHOIS policy is unique, requiring Registry Services to check registration data for accuracy and completeness per policy requirements. A complete and accurate WHOIS database promotes the public interest and can be a tool, for those with legitimate interest to receive the data, to help prevent identity theft, fraud and other online crime, promote the public's ability to police its rights against



unlawful copyright and trademark infringement, and avoid technical mishaps. Registry Services conducts an annual WHOIS data accuracy audit, testing whether usTLD Registrars are investigating and correcting WHOIS and Nexus related contact details in response to inaccuracies reported through WHOIS Data Accuracy Report System. Per contractual requirements, no less than twice per year, Registry Services performs a manual review of a random sampling of at least 2,500 usTLD domain names to test the accuracy of the WHOIS information, by examining the WHOIS data for prima facie evidence of inaccuracies.

A total of 5,000 domain names were randomly selected from the database over the 52-week period in 2023. Of this total 4,721 (94.42%) were deemed in compliance from the initial investigative review. Of the remaining 279 (5.58%) domains that were subject to further investigation, 181 (3.62%) did not meet WHOIS data accuracy or Nexus Policy requirements and were subject to compliance reviews along with the Sponsoring Registrar. In addition, 25 domains (0.50%) were identified as “privacy” or “proxy” registrations and 70 (1.40%) were deemed non-compliant with usTLD Nexus requirements. The investigation involved scanning of the WHOIS data of the selected names for “proxy” or “private” registration markers.

The final tally indicates that 94.42% of the domains that were pulled for the WHOIS Inaccuracy Audit were compliant. These results show that (a) a substantial percentage of the domains registered in the .US space are compliant, and (b) the rigor employed by Registry Services to enforce policy is achieving the desired goal of ensuring compliance while at the same time allowing the domain space to grow.

Category	Number	Comment	Percent of Total
Total Domains Selected	5,000		100.0%
Names that were compliant	4,721	Deemed compliant	94.42%
Domains with INACCURACIES	181	Missing phone #, address, contact fields, etc.	3.62%
Names needing NEXUS CHECKS	70	Non-compliance with Nexus Requirements	1.40%
Names with PRIVACY/PROXY	25	“Proxy” or “Private” markers identified	0.50%

**** Note:** There may be certain .US domain names that may have been flagged or investigated for more than one category based on the initial investigation.

Nexus Data Accuracy Audit

The usTLD namespace is unique in that it requests additional registration data (“Nexus” data) for each registrant of every domain registration. There are three (3) main categories of Nexus data:



1. Individuals (“C1”)
2. U.S. Businesses (“C2”)
3. Foreign businesses showing a bona fide interest in the US (“C3”)

Registry Services conducts regular spot-checks for Nexus compliance each month. These checks are in addition to investigating specific Nexus check requests from third parties. A total of 19,232 domain names were randomly selected from the database over the 52-week period in 2023 that were subject to the Nexus Data Accuracy audit. Of this total 17,939 (93.27%) were deemed in compliance from the initial investigative review. Of the remaining 1,293 (6.72%) domains that were subject to further compliance review, 35 (0.18%) confirmed eligibility without needing correction. The remaining (6.54%) did not complete the data accuracy investigative requirements and were deleted along with any domains tied to the same failed Nexus details. There was a total of 32,838 .US domains deleted during 2023 as part of the Nexus Data Accuracy audit.

Category	Number	Comment	Percent of Total
Total Domains Selected	19,232		100%
Names that were compliant	17,939	Deemed compliant	93.27%
Domains confirmed ELIGIBILITY (no correction needed)	35		0.18%
Domains did NOT meet NEXUS	1,258	Domains deleted per Nexus Policy	6.54%
Domains with same NEXUS details	32,838	Domains deleted per Registry & Nexus Policy	--

Inspection of Registrars' WHOIS Functionality

No less than once per year, Registry Services tests a significant number of Registrars, to ensure that each Registrar is complying with the WHOIS functionality required in the usTLD Registrar Accreditation and Registry-Registrar Agreement. This includes verifying that the Registrar is either providing a WHOIS interface directly or linking to Registry Services’ authoritative WHOIS service. Tests involved Registry Services’ customer support team visiting each randomly selected registrar's public-facing website to check and confirm that the registrar was complying with its contractual requirements. In 2023, tested usTLD accredited Registrars were all determined to be in compliance.



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