



NNEDV

## People Searches & Data Brokers

### What Are Public Records?

Public records are records or files that are recorded by local, state, federal or other government agencies. Most public records are available to the public for free or for an administrative fee. The availability of certain records is determined by federal, state, and local regulations.

Public records may include—

- court files, including case indexes, tax liens and judgments, bankruptcy files, criminal arrest and conviction records, warrants, civil court recordings
- property records
- driver's license information
- registered voter files
- professional or business licenses
- birth certificates
- marriage certificates
- death certificates
- divorce records
- arrest records
- change of address form

### Why Are These Records Public?

Public records provide notice to society so we can monitor the government's official actions and hold them accountable. They also provide notice of the "official" status of an individual and property. Public records also allow employers to do background checks.

### Who Can Access Public Records?

Federal level public records can be accessed through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Each state has its own state-level version of FOIA. Some court and



government agencies make their records available online. Some agencies have a process in which individuals may request information.

### **Third-Party Access**

Information or data brokers can buy public records. They compile the information to create a full picture of an individual, known as data mining. They then sell that information individuals, government, advertisers, etc.

### **Preventing Your Information from Being Collected**

The best way to keep your information from being collected by data brokers is to be careful about who you release it to in the first place. You may not have a choice in some cases, such as public records. However, you can look at their privacy policy, which states who they share their information, or ask them how and where they share their information and how can others see the information you're sharing. Be thoughtful when giving out any personally identifying information whether you are filling out discount or warranty cards or shopping.

### **Removing Your Information**

For a fee, some online privacy companies, such as Abine, Safe Shepherd, or Reputation will remove your information from online search engines. Some of them will contact companies that are sharing personal information and opt-out on your behalf. (You can do this yourself.) Some companies will monitor the sites to ensure that your data doesn't come back. Other companies will simply bury your data by introducing false data to obscure your correct information.

## **Google**

### *Where Do They Get Their Data?*

Basically, Google searches websites. Google indexes words on web pages into a huge database. When you search for something, it compares your search query to the index and pulls up the most relevant site based on your search terms.



### *Can I Opt-Out of Google?*

In terms of the search engine, Google merely indexes other sites. If you find personal information about yourself through a Google search, you will need to contact the website (not Google) to ask them to take down your information. However, if your information is found in Google's Maps or address listings, Google may be able to take that down. If a confidential domestic violence shelter address is on Google listings and Google maps, contact Safety Net and we will help you work with Google to take down that information.

See also more [Google's privacy policies](#) for their various products.

### **Pipl**

#### *Where Do They Get Their Data?*

Other search engines such as Google basically searches through web sites. Pipl gather their information from the "deep web." The deep web refers to online databases that store personal profiles, public records, and other people-related documents. Sites that have deep web content include amazon.com, Friendster.com, Myspace.com, LexisNexis, flickr, etc.

#### *Can I Opt-Out of Pipl?*

No. They are only a search engine and merely links to other sites. You will need to contact the website that is the publishing your information.

### **Zabasearch**

#### *Where Do They Get Their Data?*

Zabasearch gets their data from public record sources. They don't keep any databases of people's information. Instead, they just gather information from public records.

#### *Can I Opt-Out of Zabasearch?*

You can "opt out" your public information from being viewable on the ZabaSearch website, by verifying your identity and faxing your proof of identity to



ZabaSearch. Proof of identity can be a state issued ID card or driver's license. If you are faxing a copy of your driver's license, black out the photo and the driver's license number. They only need to see the name, address and date of birth. Fax to 425-974-6194 and allow 4 to 6 weeks to process your request.

## Intelius

### *Where Do They Get Their Data?*

Intelius is a very well-known information broker. They get their data from public records.

### *Can I Opt Out of Intelius?*

You can opt out of showing up through a search on the Intelius's website by verifying your identity with them. You can fax, submit online or mail your photo ID to them. If you are faxing or uploading a copy of your driver's license, black out the photo and the driver's license number. They only need to see the name, address and date of birth. Fax to 425-974-6194 or submit via mail to: Intelius Consumer Affairs PO Box 808 Bothell, WA 98041-0808. Allow 7-14 days to process your request.

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