

Volume 2: Issues and Challenges Impacting Domain Name Registrants

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Introduction

An ongoing activity of the [ICANN Registrant Program](#) is to identify and raise awareness amongst the community about some of the most common issues and challenges that domain name registrants face in managing their domain names and navigating the Domain Name System (DNS) ecosystem. In an effort to spur discussion and thinking around these important issues, the ICANN organization is periodically publishing quantitative data from our touch points with registrants to inform the community.

This is the second iteration (Volume 2) of this reporting effort and provides data from the [ICANN Contractual Compliance](#), [ICANN Global Support Center \(GSC\)](#), as well as some observations from the [Inter-Registrar Transfer Policy \(IRTP\) Status Report](#) and [Office of the Ombudsman](#).

The first report published in September 2018 is available [here](#). This report aims to build upon the data reported on and analyzed in Volume 1 and hopes to further inform the community about some of the common trends that ICANN org is seeing in regards to inquiries and questions domain name registrants are coming to us with.

Inquiries about this report and the ICANN Registrant Program may be directed to the ICANN Global Support Center at globalsupport@icann.org.

Summary

Based upon the data and observations from ICANN's Global Support Center (GSC) and Contractual Compliance:

- ⦿ During the GSC June-December 2018 reporting period, the top drivers for registrant contacts with GSC were general domain management issues, WHOIS verification and suspensions, rights protection, domain abuse and website content. These drivers constituted 66% of all registrant inquiries.
 - The most common GSC responses to domain management-related inquiries were about domain transfers to another registrant or registrar; renewing domain names including domain names that had expired; general domain name registration support; ccTLD issues or inquiries and general registrar customer service issues.
 - The most common GSC responses to WHOIS-related inquiries were about complaints related to domain name suspensions; how registrants can verify their contact information and about the WHOIS Data Reminder Policy (WDRP).
 - The most common GSC responses to content-related inquiries were about web content, spam, scams, phishing and other fraudulent website complaints and how to report on these.
 - The most common GSC responses to Rights Protection/Trademark Clearinghouse (TMCH)-related inquiries were about trademark infringement, cybersquatting, Uniform Domain-Name Dispute Resolution (UDRP) questions and obtaining a website registered to someone else.
- ⦿ The most common complaint types filed by registrants with ICANN Contractual Compliance continue to be related to WHOIS Inaccuracies, Domain Deletion, Domain Renewal, Transfer and UDRP.
- ⦿ Both Contractual Compliance and GSC continue to receive the majority of inquiries/complaints from registrants related to WHOIS verification/inaccuracies, domain transfers and renewals.

ICANN Global Support Center Data and Observations

ICANN's GSC provides global, five days a week/24 hours per day support to contracted parties, new gTLD applicants, and the Internet community at large. Approximately 70% of all inquiries that ICANN Global Support Center receives come from registrants.

The chart below categorizes the main drivers for inquiries received by GSC during the period of June-December 2018. In total, 9,933 registrant cases were logged during this period.

Top Drivers for Registrant Contacts June – December 2018

Figure 1:



GSC Observations of Registrant Issues and Challenges

Registrants generally are contacting GSC through:

- ⊙ Registrar or reseller referral
- ⊙ Internet search
- ⊙ 'Contact Us' on icann.org
- ⊙ ICANN Complaints Office
- ⊙ Phone call

Inquiries closed upon:

- ⊙ Help to identify a registrar
- ⊙ Registrar and/or registry process explanation
- ⊙ Navigation to information on icann.org
- ⊙ Explanation of ICANN's role
- ⊙ Referral to ICANN Contractual Compliance

Volume trends (what types of inquiries have been increasing in volume?):

- ⊙ Fraud, content abuse, phishing
- ⊙ Renewals and transfer issues
- ⊙ Rights protection and ownership abuse

Top GSC Responses to Common Registrant Inquiries

Each inquiry received by GSC is categorized based upon the subject of the inquiry. To respond and address inquiries, GSC uses curated responses in their written replies to inquiries to answer questions and give further information about how issues can be resolved, etc.

The following tables show the most commonly used responses to issues under the 'Second Level Domain' category which is where the majority of registrant inquiries are categorized by the GSC team. In total, 13,562 inquiries were categorized under the Second Level Domain category in 2018. Registrant inquiries were most commonly sub-categorized as Domain Management (7,392 Inquiries), WHOIS (2,308 Inquiries), Content (1,724 Inquiries) and Rights Protection/TMCH (1,251).

Oftentimes inquiries touch upon more than one issue and therefore require more than one knowledge article in the responses from GSC¹. Despite these methodological irregularities in gathering and presenting this raw data²; we still believe that by looking at the most commonly used knowledge articles, we can gain some interesting insights into the driving issues/challenges that registrants are coming to GSC with inquiries about.

Figure 2:

Sub-Category: Domain Management	7,392
Most Common Responses Used:	
Domain Transfer - FAQ for registrant; transfer domain name to another registrar; inter-registrant transfer.	1,704
General help with a domain name and registration best practices	1,093
Domain renewal including renewing expired domain	817
How do I get a website that is registered to someone else including trademark infringement / cybersquatting and UDRP inquiries?	574
Registrar customer service issues; web hosting provider or reseller assistance	544
ccTLDs domain issues and inquiries	349
Change of registrant contact information	281
Cancelling or deleting a domain name	222
Domain name suspended	219
Domain pricing and premium fees	128

¹ We recognize that there is some overlap/duplication in regards to the GSC responses ('knowledge articles') used both within and across sub-categories. This is a result of the individual GSC team members responsible for handling the individual inquiries having a variety of different but sometimes very similar knowledge articles to use depending on the specific inquiries (very often the registrant is asking multiple questions within one inquiry). Knowledge articles that were similar were therefore combined for the purpose of these tables.

² When analyzing the data related to knowledge articles to common registrant inquiries; the following methodology was used: under the domain management sub-category, knowledge articles used less than 90 times were omitted; under the WHOIS sub-category, knowledge articles used less than 40 times were omitted; under the Content sub-category knowledge articles used less than 40 times were omitted and under the Rights Protection/TMCH category knowledge articles used less than 50 times were omitted.

Figure 3:

Sub-Category: WHOIS	2,308
Most Common Responses Used:	
Domain name suspended	609
How do I verify my WHOIS data?	475
WHOIS Data Reminder Policy (WDRP) Inquiry and WHOIS Accuracy Program	388
Finding WHOIS information about a domain name registrant	91
WHOIS - Why are you publishing my personal information?	76
About WHOIS and reporting incorrect WHOIS information	71
What are WHOIS Proxy/Privacy Services?	45
Change of Registrant Contact Information	42

Figure 4:

Sub-Category: Content	1,724
Most Common Responses Used:	
Information on web content, spam, scam, fraud, phishing email, copyright infringement and other website content complaints	1,185
ccTLDs domain issues and inquiry	110
How do I report Fraudulent/Phishing email or websites?	79

Figure 5:

Sub-Category: Rights Protection / TMCH	1,251
Most Common Responses Used	
How do I get a website that is registered to someone else? (Including trademark infringement /cybersquatting/UDRP infringements)	723
Domain name transfer due to trademark infringement/rights protection issue	64

ICANN Contractual Compliance Data

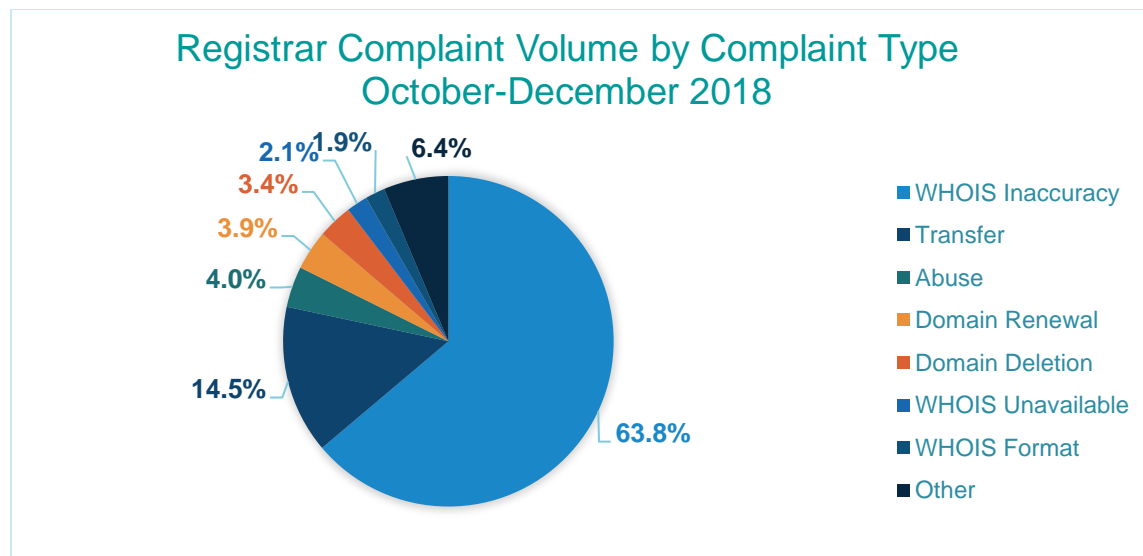
The goal of ICANN Contractual Compliance is to ensure that ICANN's contracted parties fulfill the requirements set forth in their agreements with ICANN. ICANN Contractual Compliance publishes periodic reports for closed complaints by inquiry/notice category. It's important to note that not all complaints received by ICANN Contractual Compliance come from domain name registrants, as complaint filing is open to anyone.

The following data sets were derived from ICANN Contractual Compliance's online metrics reporting, which can be [accessed in their entirety here](#).

The following table gives a breakdown of the most common types of complaints received against registrars from October-December (Q4) 2018, irrespective of submitter. In total, 6,046 complaints were received against registrars during this period.

Registrar Complaint Volume by Complaint Type October – December 2018

Figure 6:



The next table gives a further detailed breakdown of complaint types against registrars during the same period, October-December (Q4) 2018. The **highlighted** complaint types are the most common complaint types submitted by registrants to ICANN Contractual Compliance.

Registrar Complaint Volume & Distribution

Figure 7:

Complaint Type	Q4 2018
Abuse	242
Customer Service	43
Data Escrow	70
Domain Deletion*	206
Domain Name System Security Extensions (DNSSEC), Internationalized Domain Names (IDN), Internet Protocol Version 6 (IPv6)	30
Domain Renewal*	235
Failure To Notify	10
Fees	7
Privacy/Proxy	9
Registrar Contact	35
Registrar Information Specification (RIS)	6
Registrar Other	23
Reseller Agreement	2
Transfer*	877
Uniform Domain-Name Dispute-Resolution (UDRP)*	54
WHOIS Format	117
WHOIS Inaccuracy*	3,860
WHOIS Service Level Agreements	95
WHOIS Unavailable	125
Total	6,046

While ICANN Contractual Compliance does not track if complainants are registrants or not, they estimate that some of the most common complaint types from registrants are about WHOIS Inaccuracies, Transfers, Deletions, Renewals, and UDRP issues.

Common WHOIS-related Complaints

- ⦿ Incorrect/invalid registration data displayed in WHOIS database.
- ⦿ “Missing” registration data due to the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Temporary Specification
- ⦿ Domain suspended or deleted for non-response to registrar or reseller
- ⦿ Registrants inability to update registration records
 - ⦿ No access to control panel or no ability to login
 - ⦿ Non-response from service provider or reseller

-
- ⦿ Domain holder issues – domains registered in name of hosting providers, resellers or former employees of registrant organization

Common Transfer Complaints

- ⦿ Unable to retrieve “AuthInfo” codes via control panel/user panel
- ⦿ Unable to unlock domain name via control panel/user panel
- ⦿ Transfer requests by someone not listed as registrant or Admin contact
- ⦿ Request transfer between web hosting or service providers
- ⦿ Registrar/reseller denied transfer due to additional fee, such as “Transfer Fee”
- ⦿ Registrar/reseller denied transfer due to pending/ future registration period
- ⦿ Unresponsive/uncooperative resellers or service providers
- ⦿ Hijacked domain/email accounts and unauthorized transfers

Common Renewal Complaints

- ⦿ Registrant did not receive renewal reminders since registrant email is non-functional
- ⦿ Registrant was not able to renew/restore domain because control panel was inaccessible
- ⦿ Registrant paid renewal fee, but domain name was not renewed
- ⦿ Registrar/reseller did not provide information about renewal/redemption fees
- ⦿ Customer service problems such as failed renewal due to payment methods and billing disputes (out of scope)
- ⦿ Reseller’s failure to send reminders, inform customer or other issue described above

Inter-Registrar Transfer Policy (IRTP) Status Report

The [IRTP Status Report](#) prepared by ICANN org for the consideration of the GNSO Council (Published in November 2018) includes some additional readily available and general data on domain transfers going back more than ten years. Readers interested in the history of the IRTP and the impact of the policy on registrants are encouraged to read the report.

Observations from ICANN Office of the Ombudsman

The most recent [Annual Report](#) of the current ICANN Ombudsman noted that his office received from time to time complaints regarding consumer issues about domain names (29 complaints between July 2017 and June 2018) and registrar/registry issues (27 complaints during this same period), which constituted the majority of the non-jurisdictional complaints to the Ombudsman's Office. The response from the Office of the Ombudsman consisted of a self-help email or a referral to the appropriate ICANN org function (usually Contractual Compliance or Global Support), along with an invitation to participate in the ICANN multistakeholder model if appropriate.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The ICANN Registrant Program will continue to work with departments across the organization that have touch points with registrants to gather and analyze data on an ongoing basis; and will publish a similar report semi-annually as part of our broader effort to raise awareness about the issues and challenges that registrants are facing. We encourage the ICANN community and any readers of this report to share any data they might have regarding issues impacting registrants to inform future conversations and work.

Feedback on this report and other relevant data on issues and challenges impacting domain name registrants can be sent to globalsupport@icann.org.