

Issues and Challenges Impacting Domain Name Registrants

Semi-Annual Report
Volume 1

26 September 2018



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
SUMMARY	3
ICANN GLOBAL SUPPORT CENTER (GSC) DATA	4
<hr/>	
Drivers for Registrant Contacts June-December 2017	5
Inquiry Category: Domain Management Issues	6
Inquiry Category: Domain Inquiry	6
Inquiry Category: WHOIS Verification Issues and Domain Suspensions	7
Inquiry Category: Rights Protection and Ownership Issues	7
Inquiry Category: Transfer Issues	8
Inquiry Category: Content Abuse, Fraud, and Phishing Issues	9
Inquiry Category: Renewal Issues	10
ICANN CONTRACTUAL COMPLIANCE DATA	10
<hr/>	
June 2018 Registrar Complaint Volume by Complaint Type	11
April-June 2018 Registrar Closed Complaints by Category and by Complaint Type	11
Complaint Type: Domain Deletion	12
Complaint Type: Domain Renewal	12
Complaint Type: Transfer	13
Complaint Type: Uniform Domain Name	13
Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP)	13
DATA AND OBSERVATIONS FROM ICANN COMPLAINTS OFFICE	14
CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	15
<hr/>	

Introduction

One of the efforts of the [ICANN Registrant Program](#) is to identify and raise awareness about issues and challenges that domain name registrants face in managing their domain names. To this end, the ICANN organization is publishing semi-annual reports aimed at providing quantitative data to inform community discussions and collaborations.

This inaugural report provides data from the ICANN Global Support Center (GSC), ICANN Contractual Compliance and some observations from the ICANN Complaints Office¹.

The GSC data is for the six-month period from July-December 2017. Fifteen percent of the total inquiries from each inquiry category (e.g., Renewals, Transfers, WHOIS inquiries) was reviewed and further categorized into more specific issue areas.

The ICANN Contractual Compliance data is pulled from the June 2018 monthly dashboard report and the 2018 Q2 (April-June) quarterly report, which can both be accessed in their entirety [here](#). ICANN Contractual Compliance's comprehensive and transparent reporting methodology is available [here](#).

The data and observations from the ICANN Complaints Office come from the ICANN Complaints Office Semi-Annual Report published in March 2018 which can be read in its entirety [here](#).

Summary

Based upon the data and observations from ICANN GSC, Contractual Compliance and Complaints Office:

- During the GSC June-December 2017 reporting period, the four most common inquiry types from registrants were domain management issues, WHOIS verification and suspensions, rights protection, and ownership disputes and transfer issues. These four categories account for 71 percent of the 4,582 inquiries received during this reporting period.

¹ Note: An issue could be submitted to multiple ICANN channels (i.e., GSC, Contractual Compliance, Complaints Office). This report did not attempt to determine which inquiry was submitted to multiple channels.

-
- ⦿ Within the domain management category, the top inquiries were regarding WHOIS (e.g., incorrect information, public display of the information, questions on how to update) and complaints about unresponsive or uncooperative webhost/reseller.²
 - ⦿ Within the WHOIS verification suspensions category, the top inquiries were regarding domains still being blocked/suspended after the registrant has updated/verified the WHOIS information, registrants' claim that they have not received verification emails and their domain name registration is still pending,
 - ⦿ Within the rights protection category, the top inquiries were regarding registrants' claim that someone registered a domain infringing on their trademark/intellectual property and that their domain has been illegally transferred and is being held hostage.³¹
 - ⦿ Within the transfer category, the top inquiries were regarding transfer requests that could not be completed, and registrar being unresponsive or uncooperative to transfer requests (e.g., registrar has shut down, not replying to communications).

- While ICANN Contractual Compliance does not track if complainants are registrants or not, they estimate that four of the most common complaint types filed by registrants with ICANN Contractual Compliance are related to Domain Deletion, Domain Renewal, Transfer and UDRP.

- ⦿ During the Contractual Compliance Q2 April-June 2018 reporting period, the top closure reasons for domain deletion complaints was that the domain name was no longer suspended/wasn't suspended in the first place or was restored by the registrar.
- ⦿ The top closure reasons for domain renewal complaints were related to the registrar demonstrating compliance or correcting non-compliance with the Expired Registration Recovery Policy (ERRP).
- ⦿ The top closure reason for transfer complaints was that the complainant was indeed able to complete the transfer after initially filing the complaint.
- ⦿ The top closure reason for UDRP complaints was that the registrar demonstrated compliance with the UDRP Policy requirements.

- WHOIS verification/inaccuracies, domain transfers and renewals are among the top four categories of complaints/inquiries received by both GSC and Contractual Compliance.

- One of the key observations in the first [Semi-Annual Report of the ICANN Complaints Office](#) was that many registrants do not fully understand ICANN's remit and scope of authority.

ICANN Global Support Center (GSC) Data

ICANN GSC provides global, 5/24 support to registries and registrars, new generic top-level domain (gTLD) applicants, and the Internet community at large. Approximately 75-80 percent of all inquiries that the GSC receives come from registrants.

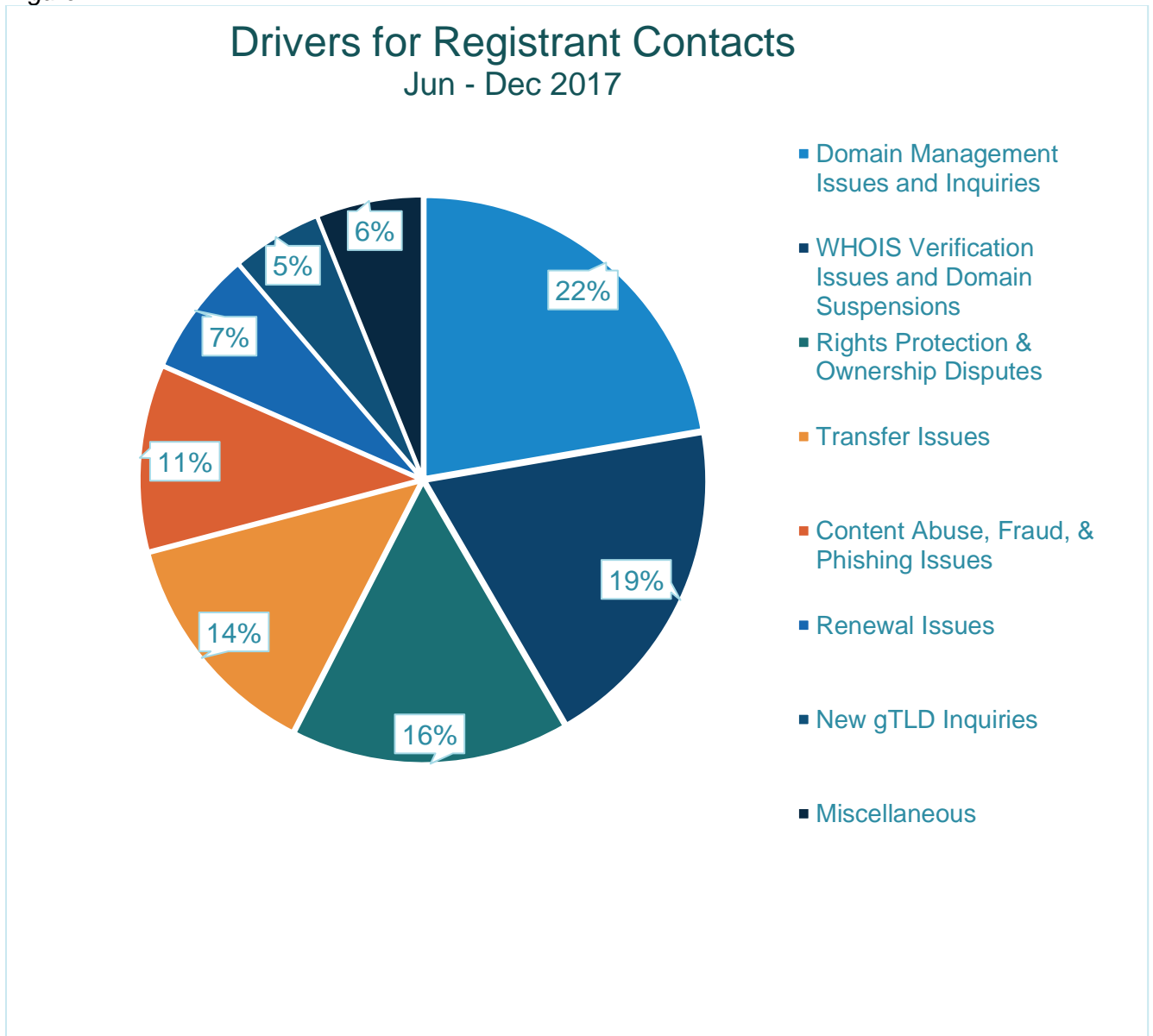
² It should be noted that Domain Management is a general category and some inquiries that are mapped to this category do touch on topics covered under other inquiry categories.

³¹ It should be noted that Rights Protection is a general category and some of the inquiries mapped to this category do touch on topics covered under other inquiry categories.

The chart below categorizes the main drivers for inquiries received by GSC during the period of June-December 2017. In total, 4,582 registrant cases were logged during this period.

Drivers for Registrant Contacts June-December 2017

Figure 1:



Further analysis was performed on 15 percent of the total inquiries from each inquiry category (e.g., Renewals, Transfers). In viewing the information in the tables below, it should be noted that an inquiry could touch on multiple topics and therefore the categorization of the inquiry is subjective. Some of the inquiries mapped to a particular category could touch on topics covered under other categories as well.

Inquiry Category: Domain Management Issues

Figure 2:

Inquiry Description	# of Inquiries
Registrant complaint regarding WHOIS (e.g. incorrect information, public display of information, how to update).	12
Registrant complaint about unresponsive or uncooperative webhost/reseller.	9
Registrant complaint regarding high fees.	6
Registrant having issue with login credentials.	6
Foreign government requiring physical proof of identity for domain ownership.	2
General complaints, inquiries, comments (e.g. status of their domain registration, how to renew/delete domains, who is their registrar, etc.).	20
Total Inquiries Analyzed	55 (15%)
Total Inquiries Submitted	367

Inquiry Category: Domain Inquiry

Figure 3:

Inquiry Description	# of Inquiries
Registrant complaint regarding high fees associated with domain renewal or transfers.	7
Registrant complaint that domain is taking too long to be up for registration again after being deleted.	3
Registrant claims they never received renewal notice and now they must pay a redemption fee.	2
Registrant inquiring about how to contact registrar of expired domain.	1
Total Inquiries Analyzed	13 (15%)

Total Inquiries Submitted	83
---------------------------	----

Inquiry Category: WHOIS Verification Issues and Domain Suspensions

Figure 4:

Inquiry Description	# of Inquiries
Registrant claimed their domain is still blocked/suspended even after updating/verifying WHOIS information.	13
Registrant claimed they have not received verification emails and their domain registration is still pending.	11
Registrant requested removal of their WHOIS information.	10
Registrant asked ICANN to change their WHOIS information.	9
Registrant inquired about validity and authenticity of WHOIS verification email.	8
Registrant reported incorrect/fraudulent WHOIS information from various domains.	5
Registrant complained about Issues with resellers/webhosts/registrar.	3
General complaints, inquiries, comments (e.g. want to know how to renew a domain, confirming date of expiration, forgotten login details, asking what privacy options are available).	13
Total Inquiries Analyzed	72 (15%)
Total Inquiries Submitted	480

Inquiry Category: Rights Protection and Ownership Issues

Figure 5:

Inquiry Description	# of Inquiries

Registrant claims that someone registered a domain infringing on their trademark/intellectual property.	19
Registrant claims their domain has been illegally transferred and is being held hostage.	12
Registrant says former employee who registered domain is refusing to relinquish ownership.	6
Registrant let domain expire/failed to renew and lost domain and are asking ICANN to help retrieve it.	6
Interested party wants ICANN to connect them with current domain holder to negotiate a deal.	5
Registrant claims someone registered domain that both violates their intellectual property and has stolen and published their content and data.	5
Registrant claims someone is registering domains illegally infringing on their trademark and engaging in phishing scams.	3
General complaints, inquiries, comments (e.g. lawyer contacting ICANN on behalf of client, how to purchase/renew domain, students conducting research, unhappy with registrar/reseller).	8
Total Inquiries Analyzed	64 (15%)
Total Inquiries Submitted	423

Inquiry Category: Transfer Issues

Figure 6:

Inquiry Description	# of Inquiries
Registrant inquiring about transfer requests that could not be completed (e.g., due to registrant having incorrect WHOIS data, recently changed contact details, or has recently purchased domain).	23
Registrant inquiring about registrar being unresponsive or uncooperative to transfer requests (e.g. requesting higher fees, has shutdown, not replying to communication).	20
Registrant requesting AuthCode directly from ICANN.	12

Registrant requesting that ICANN expedite the transfer process.	7
Registrant inquiring about the transfer process or contacting ICANN directly to initiate transfer.	7
Registrant inquiring about registrar having said they sent AuthCode but registrant has not received.	6
Registrar refusing to/not responding to request to send AuthCode to registrant (e.g. domain blocked/suspended, registrar closed/suspended).	4
General complaints, inquiries, comments (e.g. process takes too long, haven't received confirmation of transfer, verification of registrar, web-host versus registrar clarification, recommending the suspension of various registrars, fee-related inquiries).	11
Total Inquiries Analyzed	90 (15%)
Total Inquiries Submitted	592

Inquiry Category: Content Abuse, Fraud, and Phishing Issues

Figure 7:

Inquiry Description	# of Inquiries
Complaint regarding domain being used for phishing.	15
Complaint regarding the public posting of personal information without consent.	12
Complaint against offensive/illegal content hosted on website or unhappiness with site quality.	5
Complaint regarding WHOIS information or spam associated with it.	3
Registrant claims domain is infringing on their intellectual property and stealing content.	3
Total Inquiries Analyzed	38 (15%)
Total Inquiries Submitted	252

Inquiry Category: Renewal Issues

Figure 8:

Inquiry Description	# of Inquiries
Registrant cannot contact reseller/registrar, or is not receiving response (due to registrar change, reseller shutdown, lack of renewal cooperation, etc.).	9
Registrant complained that fee was paid for domain renewal, but domain was not renewed.	8
Registrant complained that registrar sold domain prior to completion of redemption period.	6
Registrant unhappy with high fees in redemption period (fee-related inquiries).	5
Registrant claimed they never received renewal notices.	4
Registrant inquired about issues related to simultaneous transfer and renewal of domain name.	4
Registrant inquired about issues related to auto-renewals (unintended renewals and failed auto-renewals).	3
General complaints, inquiries, comments (e.g. want to know how to renew a domain, asking how long redemption period lasts, confirming date of expiration, want to purchase recently expired domain).	10
Total Inquiries Analyzed	50 (15%)
Total Inquiries Submitted	338

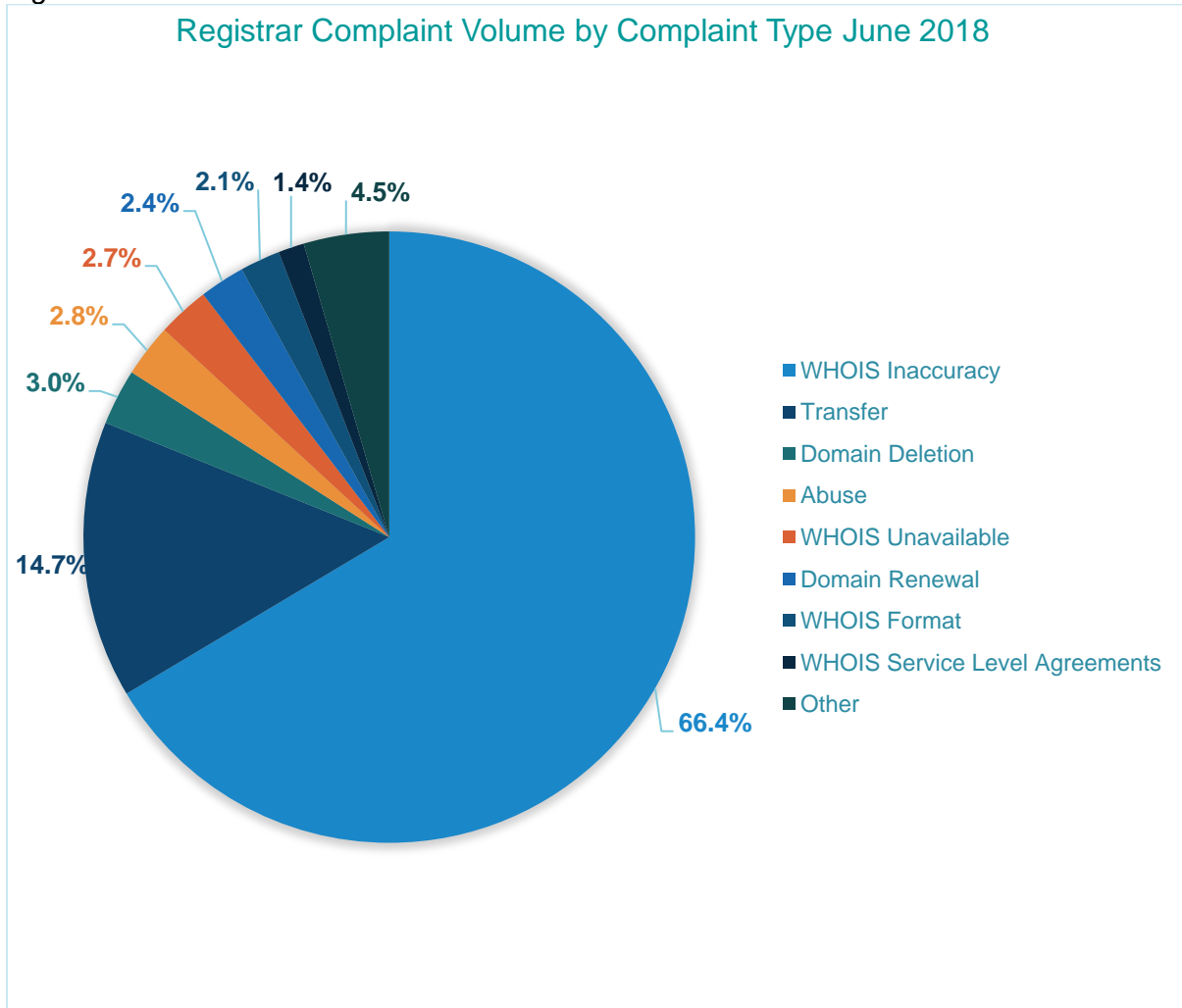
ICANN Contractual Compliance Data

The goal of ICANN Contractual Compliance is to ensure that registries and registrars 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 table gives a breakdown of the most common types of complaints received against registrars during the month of June 2018, irrespective of submitter. In total, 2,259 complaints were received against registrars during June 2018.

June 2018 Registrar Complaint Volume by Complaint Type

Figure 9:



April-June 2018 Registrar Closed Complaints by Category and by Complaint Type

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 transfers, deletions, renewals and UDRP (Uniform Domain-Name Dispute Resolution) issues. The following tables provide some additional detail on these particular four complaint types commonly filed by registrants.

Unlike GSC's categorization of inquiries in the figures above, which is based on the nature of the inquiry submitted, compliance categorized complaints in this particular data set by how the complaint was closed. These tables present the number of resolved closed complaints for registrars by closure code. Complaints are considered closed/resolved when the reporter's complaint has been resolved or the contracted party has reviewed the complaint, responded to ICANN and/or demonstrated compliance.

By examining the descriptions of how and why the complaints were resolved/closed, we can learn more about some of the common issues and challenges that registrants are initially coming to ICANN Contractual Compliance with to be resolved.

In total, there were 2,922 complaints closed against registrars during Q2 2018.

Complaint Type: Domain Deletion

Figure 10:

Complaint Closure Description	# of Complaints
The domain is no longer suspended.	28
The domain was not suspended at the time the complaint was processed.	9
The registrar restored the domain.	2
The registrar's deletion of the domain was compliant.	2

Complaint Type: Domain Renewal

Figure 11:

Complaint Closure Description	# of Complaints
The registrar demonstrated compliance with the Expired Registration Recovery Policy (ERRP) requirements.	13
The registrar corrected its ERRP noncompliance.	12
The domain has been renewed with the same registrant.	10
The registrar corrected its noncompliance.	3
The registrar demonstrated compliance.	3

Complaint Type: Transfer

Figure 12:

Complaint Closure Description	# of Complaints
The transfer has been completed.	131
The registrar demonstrated compliance with its contractual requirements.	18
The transfer cannot be completed due to a transfer or registration within the past 60 days, or a change of registrant lock.	13
The registrar provided evidence that the transfer AuthInfo code was provided to the registrant and the public WHOIS shows the domain is unlocked for transfer.	12
The registrar demonstrated compliance.	8
The registrar demonstrated compliance with the change of registrant requirements.	7
The transfer cannot be completed due to a dispute over the identity of the registrant or administrative contact.	7
The transfer cannot be completed due to the change of registrant lock.	5
The transfer cannot be completed due to evidence of fraud.	4
The transfer was denied because of a court order received by the registrar.	4
The transfer cannot be completed without proof of the transfer contact's identity.	3
The transfer cannot be completed due to a transfer within the past 60 days.	2
The registrar corrected its noncompliance.	1
The transfer cannot be completed due to the domain being in redemption grace period or pending delete status.	1

Complaint Type: Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP)

Figure 13:

Complaint Closure Description	# of Complaints
The registrar demonstrated compliance with the UDRP requirements.	15
The registrar locked a domain subject to a UDRP proceeding.	6
The registrar verified the domain with the UDRP provider.	3
The registrar corrected its noncompliance.	3

Data and Observations from ICANN Complaints Office

One of the key observations in the first [Semi-Annual Report of the ICANN Complaints Office](#) was that many registrants do not fully understand ICANN's remit and scope of authority. The below excerpt from the report notes that the Complaints Office received over 300 submissions regarding issues that fall outside of ICANN's scope, and many of these submissions are likely to have come from registrants as many of the submissions were related to managing domain names and/or general miscommunication or lack of understanding of the role of both ICANN and domain name registrars.

"Understanding ICANN's Remit

The remit of ICANN is not widely understood by users and/or registrants. People often believe the ICANN org's authority extends beyond what it is.

During the semi-annual reporting period, the Complaints Office received over 300 submissions regarding issues that fall outside ICANN's scope. The "out of ICANN's scope" submissions are largely comprised of:

- Dissatisfaction with customer service received from a contracted party*
- Lack of understanding regarding the role of registrars, resellers and web-hosting companies*
- Claims of identity theft, illegal activity, financial scams, disputes between private parties over domain name registration, unauthorized use of content, deceptive practices, etc.*
- Requests for the ICANN org to "regulate" contracted and non-contracted parties*
- Requests for the ICANN org to delete, register, lock or unlock domain names*
- Requests for the ICANN org to address criminal activity*
- Requests for the ICANN org to address issues related to online content or spam*

In addition to submissions that are outside of ICANN's scope, there were also several submissions that, while the complainant was offering a criticism of the ICANN org, they were not issues the org is empowered to resolve. For example, requests for the ICANN org to change a Consensus Policy or to compel a registrar to renew or reinstate an expired domain name.

Adding to the confusion about the ICANN org's remit, registrants often times receive inaccurate or confusing information from their domain name providers, such as: ICANN has locked your domain name, or you need to verify your contact data with ICANN.

This observation is derived from: the high number of "out of ICANN's scope" submissions which appear to be related to misunderstanding ICANN's remit and authority, and complaints C-2017- 00001, C-2017-00002, C-2017-00009, C-2017-00013, C-2017-00014, and C-2017-00017."

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 registrant@icann.org.