INEQUALITY AND LEGITIMACY IN ICANN

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Roundtable 'ICANN: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion'

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

Introduction to the study and its objectives

The concept of legitimacy

Perceptions of (problematic) inequality in ICANN

Associations between perceptions of (problematic) inequality and legitimacy beliefs vis-à-vis ICANN

Implications

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Research problem: how far, and on what grounds, does multistakeholderism as a mode of global governing gain legitimacy?

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Research aim: to measure the levels of legitimacy beliefs toward a key multistakeholder apparatus (ICANN) and to identify what generates (or limits) those beliefs – our follow-up study aims to do the same vis-à-vis the RIRs

Evidence base:
- 467 survey interviews (open- and closed-ended questions) with insiders to the ICANN regime (board, staff, community)
- Interviews conducted in 2018-2019

THE CONCEPT OF LEGITIMACY

Abstractly: the belief and perception that a governing power has the right to rule and exercises that right appropriately

Concretely: the opinion that ICANN has the right to formulate and administer (certain) rules for the global internet

Legitimacy is about underlying confidence in and approval of a governance arrangement

Legitimacy involves more than passing support for particular measures, policies or leaders, and instead entails deeper faith in the governance apparatus as such

KEY FINDINGS

1. Large majorities of participants at ICANN perceive substantial inequalities in influence in ICANN: especially in respect of English language skills and the North/South divide; and also in respect of age, ethnicity/race, and gender.

2. Many participants moreover find these inequalities in influence problematic for ICANN.

3. Persons on the subordinated side of the inequality (e.g., women and younger participants) tend to perceive greater inequalities in influence and find them more problematic for ICANN.

KEY FINDINGS

4. Yet, perceptions of (problematic) inequality generally do not explain variation in legitimacy perceptions vis-à-vis ICANN (apart from North/South inequality).

5. In developing their legitimacy beliefs, participants in ICANN tend to prioritise other (institutional) aspects of ICANN (e.g. accountability, problem-solving effectiveness etc.).
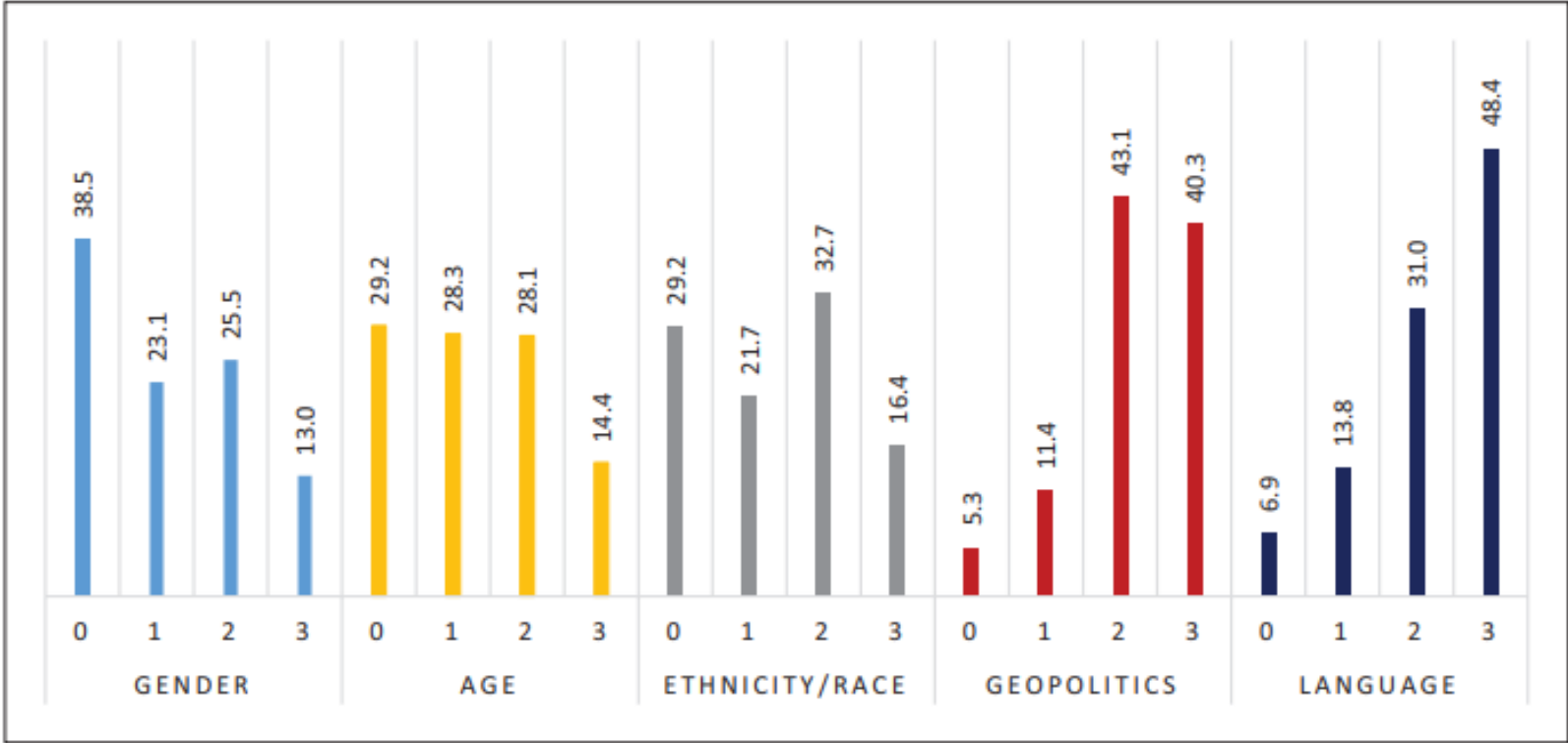
PERCEPTIONS OF INEQUALITY

Figure 1. Perceptions of inequalities at ICANN as percent of total respondents.
A score of 0 indicates no perceived inequality, a score of 3 indicates the greatest perceived inequality.

PERCEPTIONS OF (PROBLEMATIC) INEQUALITY

Table 2. Perceptions of problematic inequalities.

	Mean	SD	95% confidence interval	Range	n
All respondents					
Language	2.13	1.17	[2.02, 2.23]	0–4	462
Geopolitics	2.09	1.13	[1.98, 2.19]	0–4	450
Ethnicity/race	1.61	1.40	[1.48, 1.74]	0–4	449
Gender	1.48	1.46	[1.34, 1.61]	0–4	451
Age	1.28	1.30	[1.16, 1.40]	0–4	449
Only respondents who perceive those inequalities					
Gender	2.42	1.10	[2.29, 2.55]	0–4	276
Language	2.28	1.05	[2.18, 2.38]	0–4	430
Ethnicity/race	2.28	1.11	[2.16, 2.41]	0–4	316
Geopolitics	2.20	1.05	[2.10, 2.30]	0–4	426
Age	1.82	1.20	[1.69, 1.95]	0–4	317

0 = not at all problematic, 1 = a little problematic, 2 = moderately problematic, 3 = quite problematic, 4 = extremely problematic. 'I do not know' is treated as item non-response.

Table 3. Perceptions of inequality and perceptions of problematic inequality: Independent-samples *t*-tests (two-tailed).

	Range[a]	Dominant group			Subordinated group		
		Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n
Perceptions of inequality							
Language	0–3	2.19	0.92	386	2.36	0.92	76
Geopolitics	0–3	2.13	0.83	308	2.30*	0.83	145
Ethnicity/race	0–3	1.30	1.04	277	1.49	1.10	135
Age	0–3	1.20	1.01	335	1.50**	1.08	115
Gender	0–3	0.99	1.00	307	1.41***	1.16	143
Perceptions problematic inequality (all respondents)							
Language	0–4	2.04	1.15	384	2.57***	1.15	75
Geopolitics	0–4	1.94	1.11	305	2.38***	1.13	141
Ethnicity/race	0–4	1.53	1.37	275	1.74	1.42	130
Gender	0–4	1.28	1.37	305	1.89***	1.57	141
Age	0–4	1.16	1.27	332	1.63***	1.31	115
Perceptions problematic inequality (only respondents who perceive an inequality)							
Language	0–4	2.19	1.05	358	2.76***	0.95	70
Geopolitics	0–4	2.05	1.03	289	2.53***	1.00	133
Ethnicity/race	0–4	2.19	1.11	192	2.38	1.11	95
Age	0–4	1.70	1.20	227	2.10**	1.11	89
Gender	0–4	2.23	1.08	175	2.75***	1.09	97

PERCEPTIONS OF (PROBLEMATIC) INEQUALITY: ASSOCIATIONS WITH LEGITIMACY

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Perceptions of inequalities				
Geopolitics	−0.46 (0.16)	0.630**		
Language skills	−0.18 (0.14)	0.837		
Age	−0.01 (0.12)	0.991		
Gender	−0.04 (0.13)	0.957		
Ethnicity/race	−0.02 (0.14)	0.981		
Perceptions of problematic inequalities				
Geopolitics			−0.80 (0.26)	0.450**
Language skills			−0.04 (0.21)	0.962
Age			0.17 (0.19)	1.181
Gender			−0.10 (0.24)	0.909
Ethnicity/race			0.23 (0.25)	1.264
Respondents from perceived dominant/subordinated positions				
Geopolitics (Global North = 0)	0.09 (0.33)	1.089	−0.30 (0.49)	0.739
Language skills (advanced English = 0)	0.41 (0.33)	1.510	0.98 (0.61)	2.670
Age (older-aged = 0)	−0.27 (0.26)	0.763	−0.02 (0.39)	0.980
Gender (men = 0)	0.05 (0.25)	1.050	−0.11 (0.39)	0.898
Ethnicity/race (white = 0)	−0.55 (0.33)	0.577	−0.42 (0.46)	0.656

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

Perceptions of (problematic) inequality do not explain variation in legitimacy beliefs vis-a-vis ICANN (with the exception of **North/South inequality**).

That said, participants in ICANN do observe strong inequalites in ICANN and find them problematic for ICANN (so it might be good to address these issues).

One might still affirm **normative grounds** for addressing inequalities in influence, even if most ICANN insiders do not prioritize this issue.

It is important to note that our study only covered **insiders in ICANN**. Outsiders might observe stronger inequalities, find them more problematic, and link them more to legitimacy beliefs).

Thank you! Are you interested in learning more?

Jongen, Hortense & Jan Aart Scholte (2022) 'Inequality and Legitimacy in Global Governance: An Empirical Investigation,' *European Journal of International Relations,* 28(3), 667-695.

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