



PUBLIC COMMENTS DATA ANALYSIS REFRESH

Period: January 2010-June 2014

3) Findings Related to Comments and Replies

This Section summarizes findings that relate to ICANN community comments and replies rather than the formal solicitations themselves.

A. Most Popular Solicitation Topics (Total Comments Received)

The top ten most popular³ Public Comments topics during the years 2010-2014 (2Q) are shown in Table 1 below, sorted in descending order by total number of submitted posts:

Table 1.

| Title | Close Date | Comments |
|---|------------|----------|
| Phased Allocation Program in .JOBS | 15-Jul-10 | 316 |
| New gTLD Program – Draft Expressions of Interest/Pre-Registrations Model | 27-Jan-10 | 277 |
| "Closed Generic" gTLD Applications | 8-Mar-13 | 252 |
| Proposal for Renewal of the .NET Registry Agreement | 10-May-11 | 186 |
| Proposed Final New gTLD Applicant Guidebook | 15-Jan-11 | 177 |
| New gTLD Program - Draft Applicant Guidebook, Version 4 and Explanatory Memoranda | 21-Jul-10 | 164 |
| New gTLD Board Committee Consideration of GAC Safeguard Advice | 4-Jun-13 | 129 |
| New gTLD Applicant Guidebook – April 2011 Discussion Draft | 15-May-11 | 107 |
| Trademark Clearinghouse "Strawman Solution" | 5-Feb-13 | 95 |

Note that no solicitation has received more than 100 comments after June 2013.

B. Least Popular Solicitation Topics (Total Comments = 0)

At the opposite end of the sort array, there were 25 Public Comments topics (see Table 2) for which there were no comments or replies submitted (8.7% of the study sample).

³ Two solicitations dealing with the .XXX domain (May & September 2010) were eliminated from this study as significant outliers having received over 13,000 and 700 submissions respectively. Nothing close to those volumes has occurred for any solicitation in the past four years.



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Table 2.

| Year | Solicitations with 0 Comments | Total Solicitations by Year | Pct of Total Solicitations |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2010 | 7 | 77 | 9.1% |
| 2011 | 8 | 72 | 11.1% |
| 2012 | 3 | 61 | 4.9% |
| 2013 | 6 | 58 | 10.3% |
| 2014 (1/2 year) | 1 | 18 | 5.5% |
| Total | 25 | 286 | 8.7% |

C. Public Comments Participation Levels (Total Comments)

In order to compute a statistically representative number of comments that reflects the Public Comments experience from 2010-2014 (2Q), it is important to recognize that there have been several topics which generated abnormally high comment levels (see Top Ten List in Table 1 above). In this data set, if we were to calculate the simple average of all comments received across the 286 Public Comments topics, it would equal 15; however, that figure is misleading because it is heavily influenced by a few unusually large volumes.

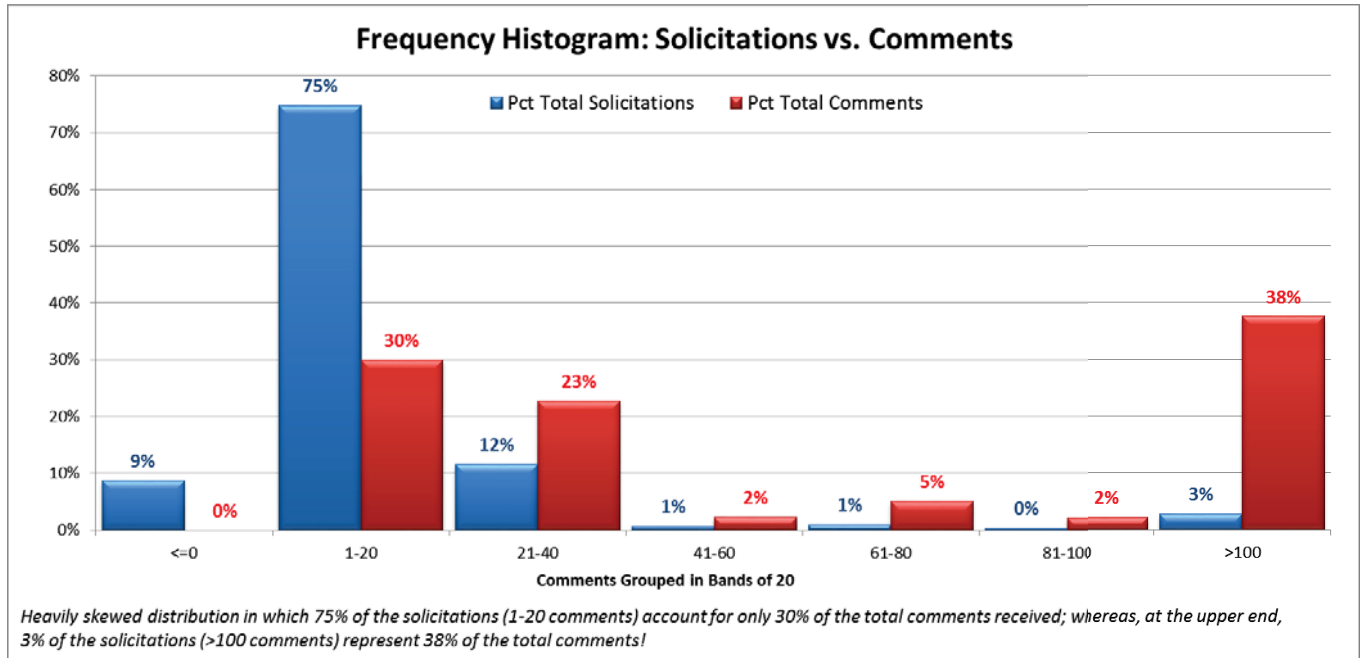
To highlight this phenomenon visually, Chart 4 (below) is a frequency histogram which shows, in increments of 20, the percentage of Solicitations (blue) and Comments (red) within each band. For example, the 2nd grouping of bars signifies that 75% of the solicitations (214 out of 286) received 1-20 comments, but that grouping accounted for only 30% of the total comments submitted (1284 out of 4277). Similarly, at the upper tail, 3% of the solicitations (8 out of 286) were responsible for 38% of the total comments received from 2010-2014 (2Q)! Given this heavily skewed and lopsided distribution, it would be inappropriate to allow a small number of outlier values to significantly influence any representation as to the typical number of Public Comments experienced. As can be interpreted directly from Chart 4, a sizable majority of solicitations (84%) receive between 0 and 20 comments.



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Chart 4.



Recognizing that simple averages (means) are inappropriate for such a skewed distribution, the preferred measure of central tendency to apply is the median, that is, the mid-point where 50% of the results occur above and below the statistic.

Chart 5 below shows the median number of comments by quarter over the study period. For this purpose, comments and replies were summed together without distinction in determining overall participation rates.

The graphic illustrates that, during the period from 1Q/2010 through 4Q/2011, the average number of comments (using medians⁴) per solicitation was 6.0 and, after the introduction of the ATRT1 recommendations, that number dropped slightly to 5.0. There is no evidence available to support an inference or causal connection that this minor decrease is related to the implementation of the ATRT1 recommendations. In fact, the four highest volume quarters recorded occurred after December 2011 (see 1Q/2012, 2Q/2013, 1Q/2014, 2Q/2014).

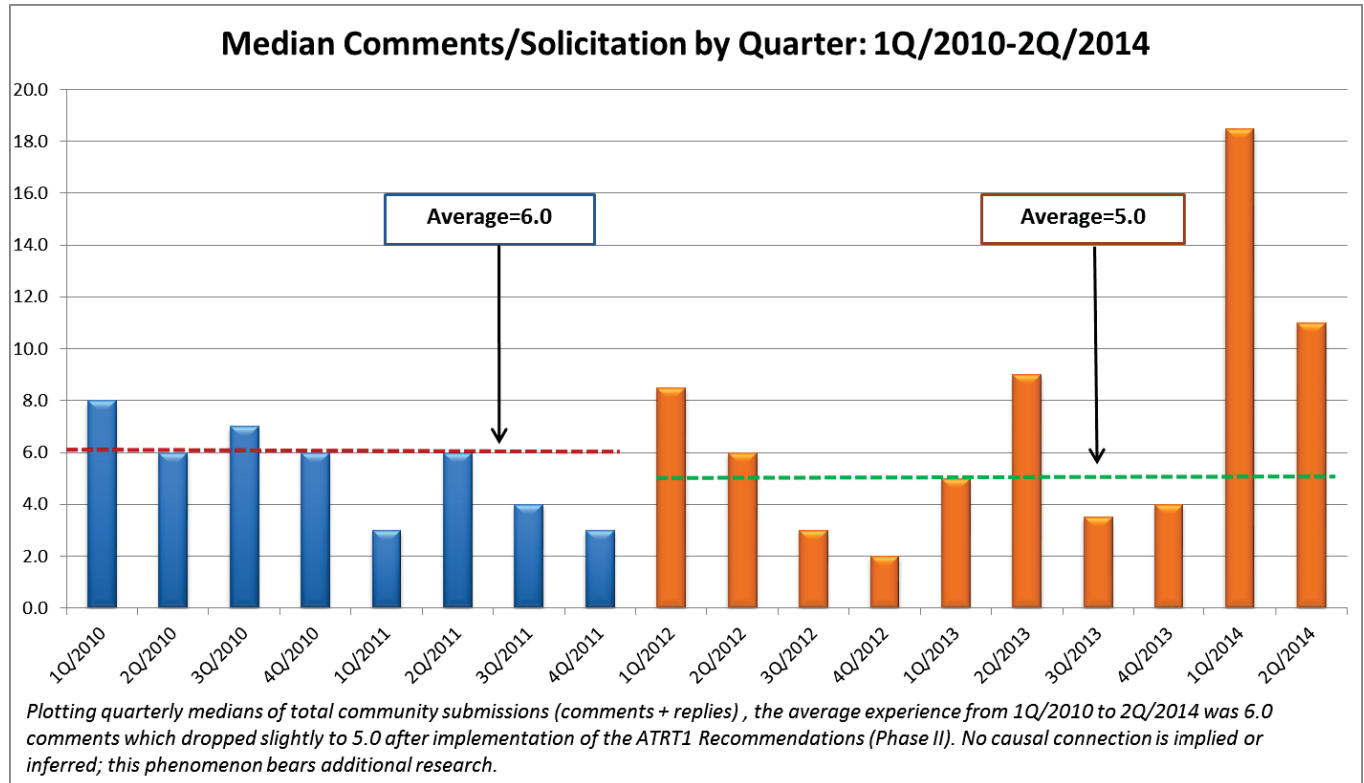
⁴ Technically, it is not normally legitimate to average medians; however, in this instance, it is useful as a quick test to determine whether or not participation levels changed markedly pre- and post-implementation of the ATRT1 Recommendations. In this instance, there is no compelling evidence of any material change in the response rates.



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Chart 5.



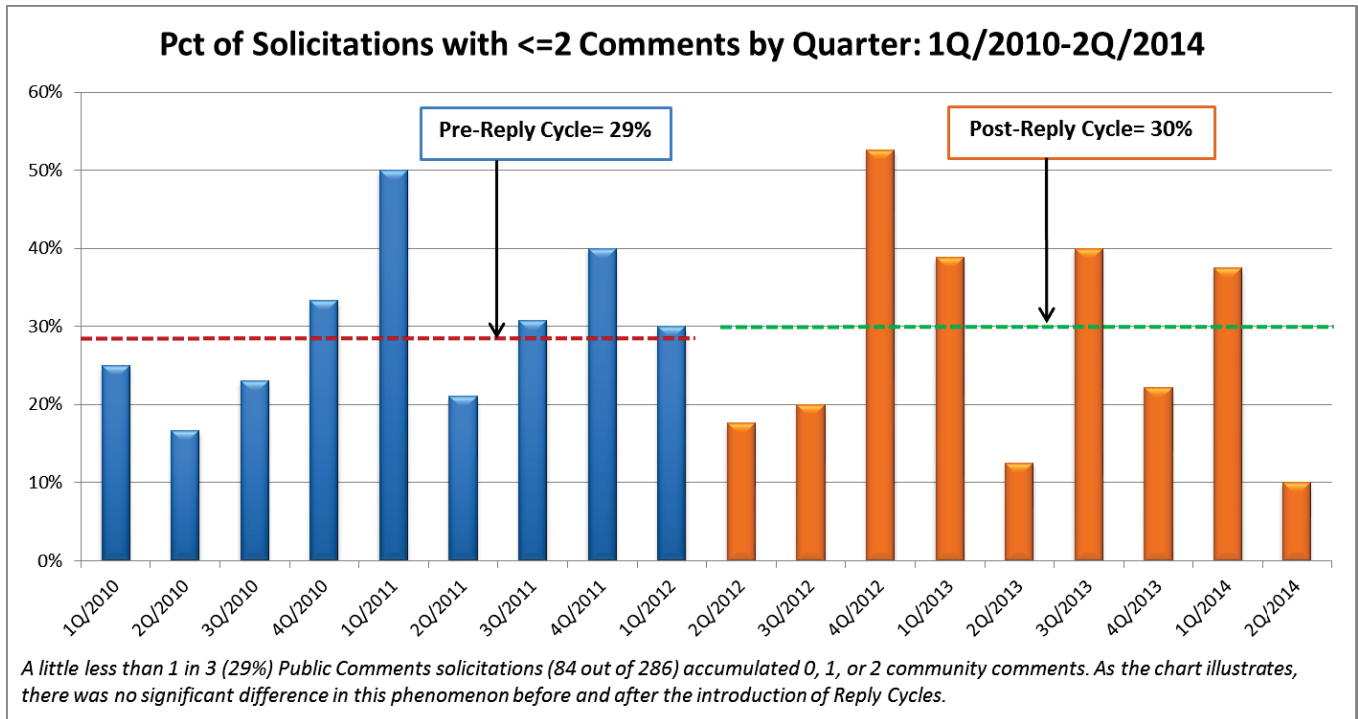
While examining the overall participation experience, the next graphic (Chart 6) illustrates that, overall, 29% of all solicitations from 2010-2014 (2Q) received less than or equal to 2 comments and, although not displayed in the chart, 9% (or 25 solicitations) experienced zero submissions. There was no fundamental change in this data before (29%) or after (30%) the implementation of the ATRT1 Recommendations in 1Q/2012.



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Chart 6.



D. Reply Cycles (ATRT1 Recommendation #16)

In capturing data relating to Reply Cycles, it may be helpful to recall the published rules related to comments and replies. Quoting from the ICANN.org [Public Comments](#) home page:

“Each public comment topic (opened from 1 January 2012) is subject to a Comment and a Reply period as follows:

- *The official minimum Comment period is 21 days.*
- *The official minimum Reply period is 21 days.*
- *If no substantive comments are received during the Comment period, then there will be no Reply period.*
- *During the Reply period, participants should address previous comments submitted; new posts concerning the topic should not be introduced. When constructing Replies, contributors are asked to cite the original poster's name, comment date, and any particular text that is pertinent.”*

It is important to note that, in the first two months of 2012, most solicitations that closed were started in 2011; therefore, they did not have any Reply Cycle information. Practically, the Reply Cycle data became reliable starting in March 2012.

During the data capture effort, it was observed that a sizable quantity of email submissions appeared, on the surface, not to be replies to previously posted comments. In order to evaluate this hypothesis,



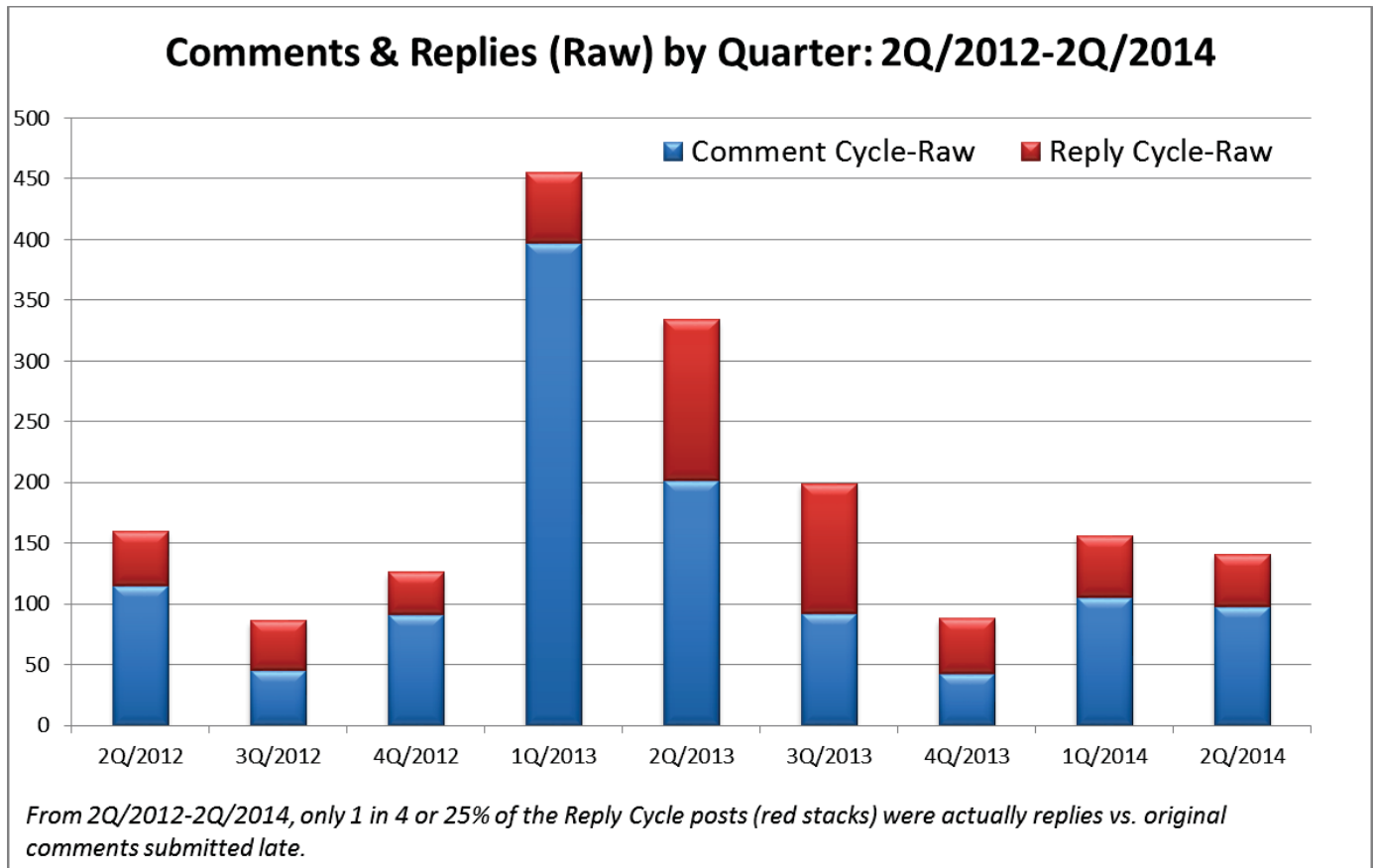
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a separate manual exercise was launched to examine the content of every individual email posted during the officially scheduled Reply Cycles from March 2012 through June 2014.

This first Chart 7 shows the actual (raw) quantities of Comments and Replies received by quarter prior to any data cleanup. The red stacks appear to be substantial, especially compared to the blue comments bars; moreover, in the aggregate, they represent just under 30% of the total submissions. Because this information is being displayed quarterly, the reader may be interested to know that the average⁵ number of Replies per solicitation (unadjusted) was **4.3** from March 2012 through June 2014.

Chart 7.



Once the Replies were analyzed individually, a revised accounting became available. Chart 8 below shows the aftermath of the data cleanup effort through which it was uncovered that 75% of the

⁵ In this instance, computing an average vs. median is appropriate because there were no significant outliers in the distribution of Replies from Mar 2012 through Jun 2014.

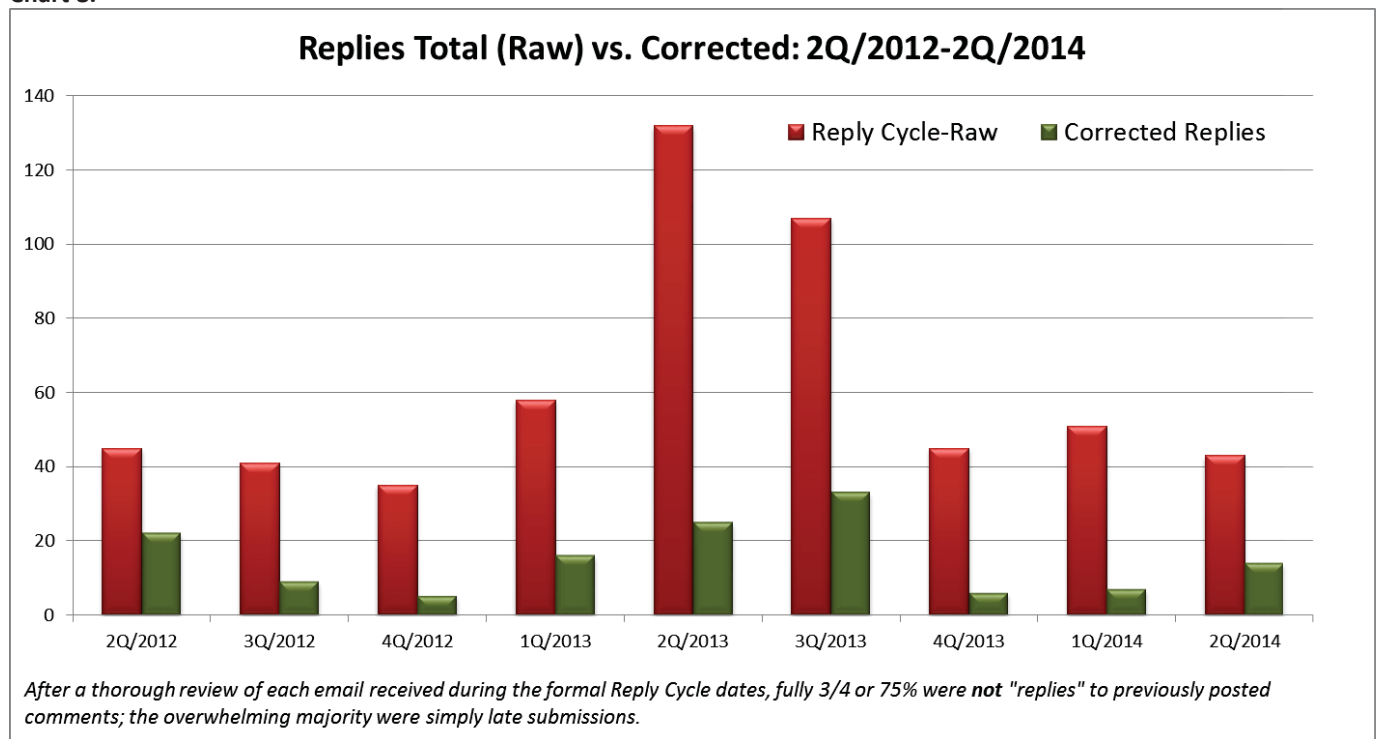


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emails posted during the scheduled Reply Cycle were NOT actual replies to any previous submission; rather, they were most typically original comments forwarded after the initial Comment Cycle had ended⁶. In other words, it appears as though some contributors utilized the Reply Cycle as an effective extension of the original comment period. It should be noted that the published rules concerning comments and replies were not monitored or moderated by ICANN Staff at any time since the Reply Cycle was first introduced.

Chart 8.



To provide an indication as to the level of participation in Reply Cycles, the following frequency histogram (Chart 9) shows that just under 64% of all solicitations received zero (0) Replies and nearly 80% received 0-1 Replies.

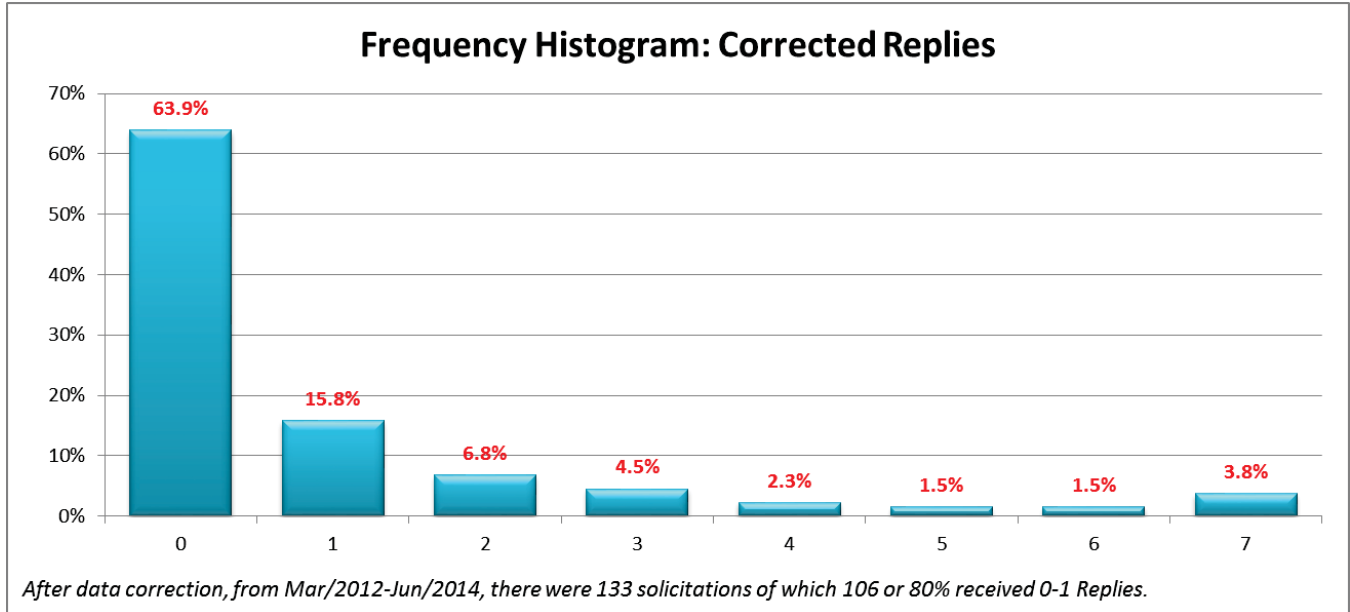
⁶ These numbers were added back to the original comments totals for subsequent analysis.



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Chart 9.



Post data cleanup, Chart 10 (below) shows that the average number of Replies per Forum was not **4.3** (the raw result); rather, it was essentially **1.0** during the period 2Q/2012-2Q/2014. The aggregate number of Replies, after correction, represented only 8% of the total submissions versus 30% using the unadjusted figures.



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Chart 10.

