



CENTR STUDY 2024

Domain Renewal Study: Analysing the relationship between web content, domain age and renewal rates

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Background

As the market continues to mature, understanding the likelihood of domain renewal should be considered important to better predicting TLD registrations and Registry financials. This study aims to understand the relationship between how domains are used (via technical classifications), their age and their propensity to renew.

The hypothesis suggests that domains with high content are more likely to renew compared to those that are parked or lack web content. The study examined two key variables: 1) domain age and 2) domain classification, and analysed how these factors correlate with renewal rates of ccTLDs.

Methodology

1. CENTR collected list of domains with expiry dates within April 2024 from participant member registries.
2. Domains were scanned in March 2023 using the CENTR [signs-of-life crawler](#) with each domain classified as high-content, low-content or no content as well as other technical attributes (e.g. redirects, presence of MX, SSL etc). Note that not all domains were scanned. The study capped the number of domains scanned per TLD at 50,000 (random sample) to keep data analyse and storage manageable.
3. 90 days after the expiry month, participants provide the same list with a column indicating renewal status (TRUE/FALSE).

Study parameters

ccTLDs in study	(21) au, be, ca, cy, dk, ee, fr, ge, hu, il, it, lv, me, no, nz, pt, se, si, sk, ua, uk
Domains classified	703,862
Classification month	March 2024
Expiry month	April 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the relationship between domain classification, age, and renewal rates across ccTLDs, focusing on how content and longevity influence domain retention. The study classifies domains into high-content (developed websites), low-content (parked sites), and no-content (no web presence) categories, comparing renewal rates within each group.

High-content domains exhibit the highest renewal rates at 90.3%, renewing approximately 15% higher than other categories. Low-content domains have a renewal rate of 78.5%, while no-content domains show the lowest renewal rate at 70.3%.

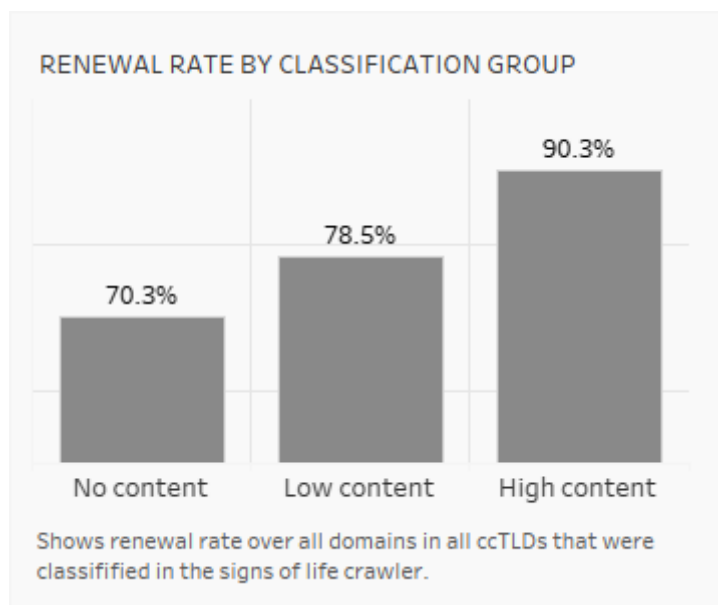
Domain age is also a key factor, with renewal rates increasing as domains age. The renewal rate rises from 54% for domains in the 1-2 year cohort to 95% for domains aged 18+ years, reflecting the growing value of domains as they mature. However, content remains a stronger predictor of renewal than age; high-content domains consistently outperform no-content and low-content domains, even when the latter are older.

The report concludes that registries can positively influence renewal rates by promoting content development through partnerships with registrars, offering educational initiatives, and providing incentives like discounted renewal fees for domains with active content. Promoting features like MX records and SSL certificates early in the domain lifecycle can further encourage engagement and retention. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of content in driving long-term domain retention across ccTLDs.

DOMAIN CLASSIFICATION AND RENEWAL

The signs of life crawler classified domains in the study into 3 areas: high-content (developed websites), low-content (mostly parked sites) and no-content (no web content). The classification groups were then compared to their renewal rates.

Domains classified as high-content have the highest renewal rate (90%). These domains were renewed at roughly 15% higher than all other domains. Low-content domains renewed at 79% and domains classified as no-content had the lowest renewal rate at 70%. The below chart reflects these figures across all domains studied, showing renewal rates by their classification grouping.



Observations around individual ccTLDs

Age and renewals:

- TLDs with older domains show generally higher renewal rates for all classification types.
- TLDs with younger domains have relatively lower overall renewal rates, with higher variability between content types.

High-content domains:

- Across all TLDs, high-content domains tend to have significantly higher renewal rates (often above 90%). This suggests that domains with active websites are more likely to be renewed.

Low-content and no-content domains:

- For most TLDs, no-content domains consistently have the lowest renewal rates

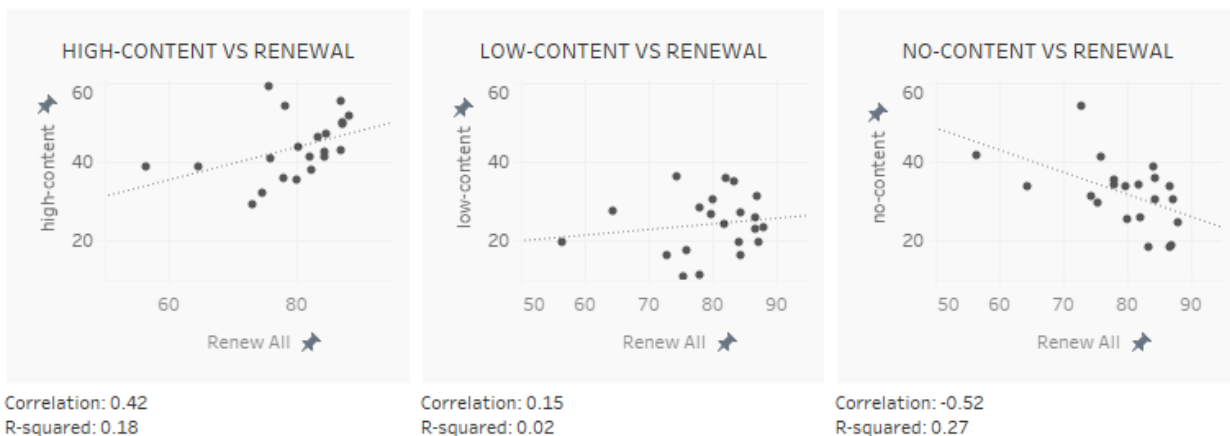
- Low-content domains generally have slightly better renewal rates than no-content but still lag behind high-content domains.

Correlation analysis

The study looked at a variety of relationships between variables in the study. Some of these relationships are outlined below:

- The proportion of high-content domains shows a moderate positive correlation with overall renewal rates ($r = 0.42$, $R^2 = 0.18$).
- The proportion of no-content domains is negatively correlated with overall renewal rates ($r = -0.52$, $R^2 = 0.27$), showing that a higher presence of inactive domains tends to drag down renewal performance.
- Data indicates that having an MX record on high-content domains generally makes its renewal more likely, with a moderately strong correlation ($r = 0.55$).
- Data shows that having SSL on high-content domains somewhat increases the likelihood of renewal, with a moderate correlation ($r = 0.42$).
- The correlation coefficient between the percentage of redirected domains and the overall renewal rate is approximately 0.057. This very low correlation suggests that there is no significant relationship between the percentage of domains that were redirected and the overall renewal rate.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DOMAIN CLASSIFICATIONS AND RENEWAL RATES



Content as driver for renewal

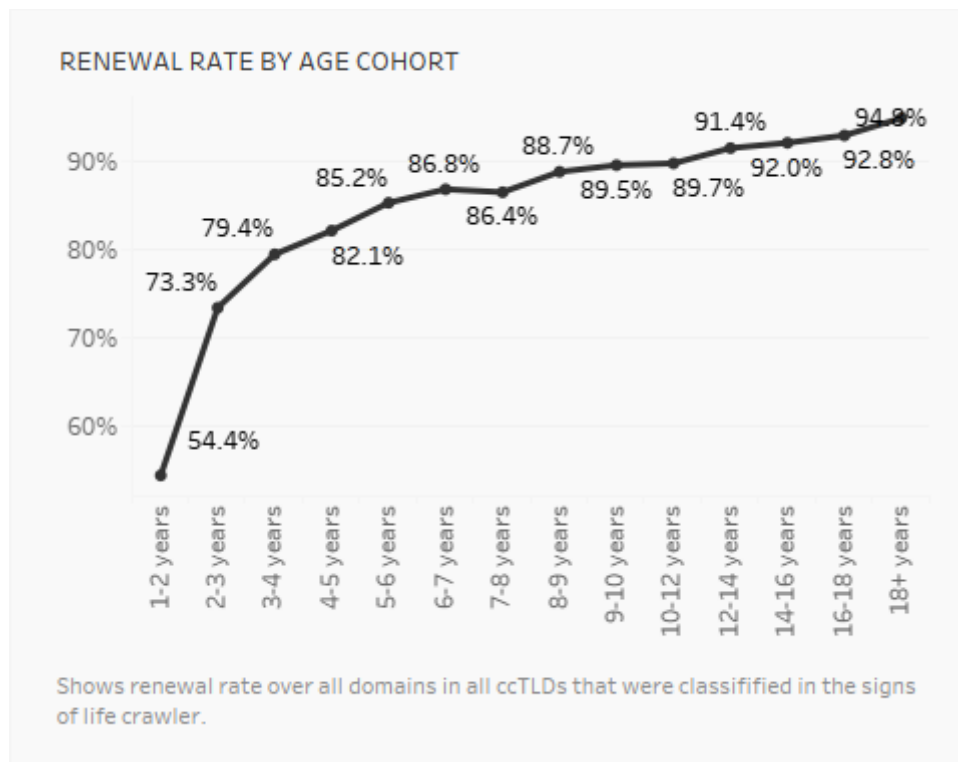
While the analysis shows high-content domains are a driver of increased renewal performance it's worth exploring how these relationships vary between ccTLDs. The renewal rates between of high-content domains and all other domains can give an insight to importance of web content in a ccTLD. Larger gaps suggest that

content plays a major role in whether a domain is renewed, while smaller gaps may indicate that web content is less influential in the renewal process.

DOMAIN AGE AND RENEWAL

There is a clear trend of increasing renewal rates as domains age. Starting from the 1-2 years cohort, where only about 54% of domains renew, the renewal rate steadily climbs to 95% in the 18+ years cohort (see chart below). The 1-2 years cohort shows the lowest renewal rate (54%) which may reflect speculative or short-term registrations. By the time domains reach the 4-5 years mark, the renewal rate exceeds 82%, and it continues to rise steadily. This suggests that domains that survive beyond the initial few years are increasingly valuable or important to their owners, leading to higher retention.

The highest renewal rate is observed in the 18+ years cohort, where 95% of domains are renewed. This reflects the high value associated with long-held domains, likely due to established brands, SEO value, or other business needs. See annex table 1 for age cohort renewal table



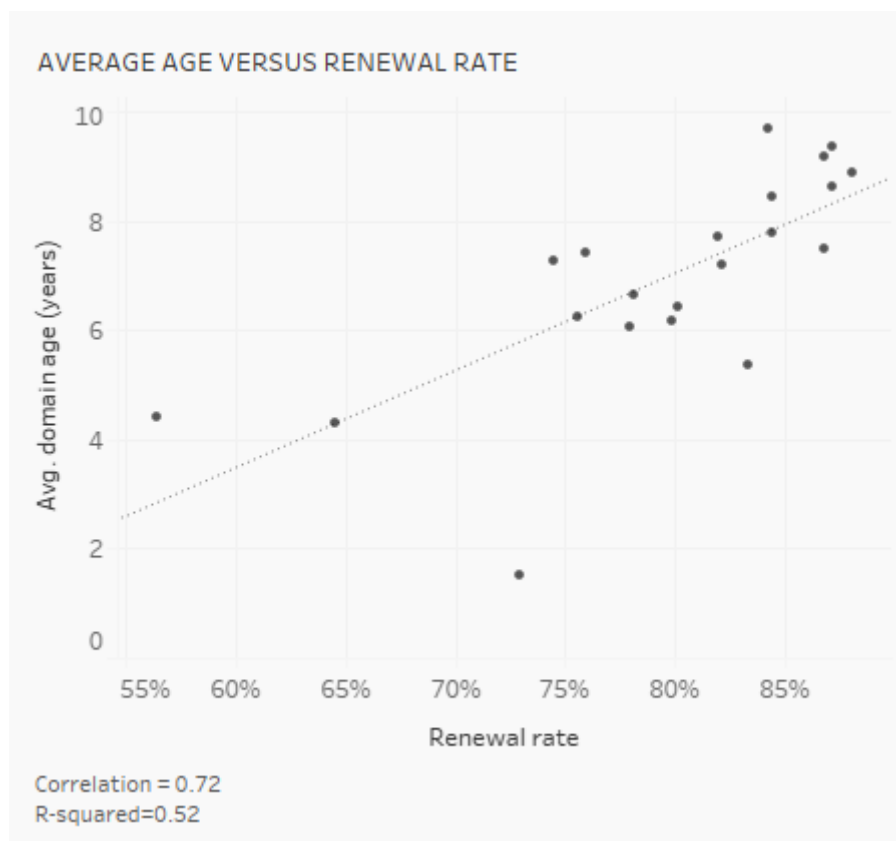
Age is a Strong Predictor of Renewal

Across all categories (high-content, low-content, and no-content), there is a consistent trend showing that older domains are more likely to be renewed. This suggests that domain owners attach increasing value to domains as they age, regardless of whether they actively use the domain for content or not.

The correlation is strongest for high-content domains, meaning that domains with active content not only have higher renewal rates but are also more likely to be renewed as they age. This highlights that content is a critical factor in domain retention, especially for older domains.

While high-content domains have the strongest correlation between age and renewal, even low- and no-content domains show a significant relationship between age and renewal rates. This may reflect that older domains, even without content, are retained due to speculative reasons or because they have accumulated value over time.

At most risk of non-renewal are young domains with no content which typically have lower renewal rates. Without active content, these domains likely hold less immediate value for their owners, making them more susceptible to being dropped when they reach expiration.



CONCLUSIONS

The data reveals a clear link between content classification, domain age, and renewal rates across ccTLDs. High-content domains, particularly those that are older, are much more likely to be renewed, whereas no-content and younger domains are at higher risk of being dropped. These low and no-content domains tend to have lower renewal rates even when they are older.

As domains get older (higher median age), their renewal rates generally improve. For example, in .dk, the no-content domains have a median age of 3,660 days (about 10 years), and their renewal rate is 78%. However, high-content domains with a median age of 2,948 days (about 8 years) have a much higher renewal rate of 94%.

Across many TLDs, there is a clear trend that older domains—whether no-content, low-content, or high-content—are more likely to be renewed, but high-content domains consistently have the highest renewal rates across all age groups.

Which is More Important: Age or Content?

The renewal rates for high-content domains consistently outperform both no-content and low-content domains, even when the latter categories have older median ages. This suggests that while age helps improve renewal rates, content is a more important factor in determining whether a domain is renewed.

Overall, content classification is a stronger predictor of domain renewal rates than age. High-content domains, regardless of their age, tend to have higher renewal rates, whereas no-content and low-content domains, even when older, are more likely to be dropped.

What can a registry do to create a positive influence to renewal rates?

While registries may not have a direct role to influence domain holders to develop high-content sites (to improve renewal rates) they can play a role in promoting the value of content development through collaborations (e.g. registrars) and educational initiatives. By highlighting the correlation between content-rich sites and higher renewal rates, registry operators could indirectly support early-stage retention efforts.

Additional ideas on creating a positive influence to renewal rates.

1. Work with registrars to educate domain owners on the importance of building and maintaining content for their domains. Highlight to registrars the strong correlation between high-content websites and higher renewal rates.
2. Promote or utilize tools, resources, or discount programs on website building platforms to encourage domain owners to develop content.

3. Offering reduced renewal fees or other benefits for domains with active content, such as offering lower fees for domains that install SSL certificates or MX records (indicating active use).
4. Promote the adoption of key features such as MX records and SSL certificates early in the domain lifecycle. The data shows that domains with email services (MX records) and SSL certificates are more likely to be renewed. By offering discounts or bundles for these services in the first year, registries may increase domain owners' engagement with their domains, leading to higher retention rates.
5. Study the classification of domains at registrar level to better understand the key drivers to the registry renewal rates. Incentivise registrars that delivery high-content domains (e.g. within a period of time)