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44% increase in websites with security certificates as businesses prioritise online safety this Black Friday — .IE figures

- **6% growth in number of Irish businesses trading online year-on-year**
- **40% of all registered .ie domains have a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) or Transport Layer Security (TLS) cert**
- **The .ie domain now accounts for 53% of active domains hosted in Ireland**
- **.IE CEO: "As the demand for online shopping continues to increase among consumers, we urge all businesses to ensure that their customers are safe while using their website."**

The number of active .ie domains with security certs has increased by 44% this Black Friday compared to 2020, according to new data released by .IE, the managers of Ireland's trusted online .ie address.

According to the data, a total of 128,006 .ie domains have an active Secure Socket Layer (SSL) or Transport Layer Security (TSL) cert on their website this year, accounting for 40% of all websites linked to domains on the .ie database.

SSL and TSL certs ensure that sensitive information such as credit card numbers and personal data are transmitted privately using encryption.

The growth in .ie websites with security certs suggests that Irish businesses are actively looking to enhance their websites to ensure year-round consumer safety. This is particularly important in protecting consumers who will be shopping online this Black Friday and Cyber Monday, as cybercriminals are expected to be active again this year.

The digital SME

According to the most recent .IE Tipping Point Report *, an increasing proportion of businesses recognise that a digital channel is key to their survival while the pandemic continues.

The number of Irish SMEs that have invested money in their online presence has grown significantly: 55% have invested since the beginning of the pandemic, up from just 21% in 2020. Because of this investment, 78% of SMEs say they have been able to sustain pre-Covid levels of business or are busier than before, up from 46% in the summer of 2020.

Overall, the number of Irish businesses with an active .ie domain has increased by 6% year-on-year showing the continued focus on online trading in 2021 as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The .ie domain is the preferred choice for Irish businesses and now accounts for 53% of all active domains hosted in Ireland, up two percentage points since 2020.

Consumer trends

The .IE Tipping Point report also found that the way Irish consumers spend online and in-store is changing: 68% of consumers reported that they spent more online in 2020 than they did in 2019.

This growth in online shopping was also reflected in last year's Black Friday figures. Spending on Irish websites increased by 135% as many businesses moved online during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

However, as more and more Irish consumers look to shop and spend online, this creates opportunities for cybercriminals interested in stealing customer data, intercepting transactions, or carrying out other scams.

Commenting, David Curtin, CEO of .IE, said:

"Black Friday is one of the busiest shopping days of the year for Irish consumers, with most Irish shoppers planning to spend around €300 each on the sale day, both online and in bricks-and-mortar stores.***

"As more and more businesses move online, we anticipate another surge in online shopping this year as consumers look for a more convenient and local experience.

"It is extremely encouraging to see the increase in businesses operating SSL and TSL security certs on their website. As the demand for online shopping continues to increase among consumers, we urge all businesses to ensure that their customers are safe while using their website.

"For customers, using common sense and observing basic security rules makes online shopping a safe and convenient experience. Black Friday, coupled with increased online spending on Cyber Monday, presents a perfect opportunity for cybercriminals.

"When it comes to buying products online, consumers should always shop with trusted retailers and recognisable brands.

"There are also some quick and easy signs to look out for, to ensure a site's safety. If the website URL begins with 'https' instead of 'http', then the site is secured using an SSL or TSL certificate. A padlock icon displayed in a web browser also indicates that a site has a secure connection with a valid certificate and cannot be intercepted by a third party. If you don't see these security signs, we would not encourage you to buy from that site.

"If you're suspicious, you can also consider online reviews to see if other shoppers share your concern. Consumers should always avoid downloading unfamiliar apps and clicking on unsolicited links. Remember the old adage – if deals and prices seem too good to be true—they probably are."

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Sources

* https://www.weare.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/IE-Tipping-Point-Report-2021.pdf

**   https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2020/1129/1181281-irish-e-tailers-recorded-135-black-friday-boost/
*** https://black-friday.global/en-ie/

About .IE

.IE is the national registry for .ie domain names and the trusted and progressive guardian of Ireland's unique online .ie address. Our purpose is to enable and empower people, communities, and businesses across Ireland to thrive online.

We operate the domain name system (DNS) for the .ie namespace, facilitate an independent dispute resolution service, and operate a public WHOIS lookup service for .ie domains.

In cooperation with our Registrars, technical partners, and stakeholders, we help advance Ireland's internet ecosystem. Good governance is evidenced in our policy development process for the .ie namespace, which follows a bottom-up, consensus-driven approach through a multi-stakeholder Policy Advisory Committee.

At .IE we are committed to digital advocacy for SMEs and for local communities. Through stakeholder engagement initiatives such as .IE Digital Town, we work with and support SME organisations to improve their members' online presence and e-commerce capabilities so they can unlock the power of the internet to boost sales to local consumers.

We also produce fact-based research for the business community and policymakers, such as the .IE Domain Profile Report and the .IE Tipping Point, which charts the attitudes to digital of Irish SMEs and consumers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are over 329,000 .ie domain names registered. Since March 2018, it is easier and faster to register a .ie domain. As part of the domain registration process, every applicant must provide tangible evidence of a connection to Ireland.

www.weare.ie