



.IE Domain Profile Report 2022



Foreword

The **.IE Domain Profile Report** is a comprehensive exploration of the **.ie** database. In this edition, we assess the full year of 2022. We analyse the number of **.ie** domains registered, the counties and countries where they were registered and take a look at the broader **.ie** ecosystem.

In 2022 there was a sizeable drop in new **.ie** registrations year-on-year (-22.6% v 2021). However, when compared to more normal pre-pandemic levels the drop is much less significant at 4% (2022 v 2019). The mass digital mobilisation of 2020 and 2021 has tapered off. After a growth surge in 2018, due to the removal of the claim to the name requirement, a cooling off period followed and registrations remained steady. Since the record-breaking highs in **.ie** registrations through Covid, a similar cooling off is now evident. Coupled with this, the rate of domain renewals has dropped resulting in overall flat growth for 2022. The main reasons for not renewing domains relate to a business idea not materialising or that the domain is no longer required due to it being used for a single event or company closure.

While the **.ie** database remains flat year-on-year, the overall trend is positive. Since the end of 2019, before the onset of the pandemic and a peak in new registrations, the database has grown by 17%.

Post Covid, however, new challenges emerge. The economic backdrop of inflation, increased energy costs and interest rate increases have had a significant impact. **PwC** predicts that business failure rates will rise in 2023. The **Central Statistics Office** reports that at November 2022, retail sales were 4.2% lower than in 2021.

At the same time, Ireland's Gross National Income growth was 15.4% in 2021 but will drop to single digit increases for 2022 / 2023. Uncertain times are ahead.

Encouragingly, the **Government's White Paper on Enterprise 2022 – 2030** has a stated ambition to incentivise accelerated adoption of digital across enterprise through capital grants, training and consultancy supports. We welcome digital supports for SMEs so they can remain agile and use digital technology to survive and thrive. In these challenging times SMEs must be commended on their continued resilience.

The pandemic forced many SMEs to rethink the way they do business. Digital change is constant, so the need for investment is greater now than ever before. Consumer expectations also change as technology evolves - they are driven by convenience and ease of use. There are clear benefits to digital investment. Online tools can boost efficiency and productivity. Our **.IE Tipping Point Report 2022** revealed that of the SMEs that invested in their online services since Covid, 1 in 3 were busier than before the pandemic and 36% maintained the same level of business. 54% of SMEs are planning a significant digital investment in the next 5 years, with most focusing on launching a new website or improving their existing one.

The report also highlighted generational differences among consumers, with digital-first shopping particularly apparent with younger shoppers. Businesses need to factor in the preferences of digital natives so they don't miss out on crucial sales, especially as this cohort get older.

The reputational strength of the **.ie** domain continues. It accounts for 53.6% of all top-level domains hosted in Ireland, ahead of **.com** by more than 23 percentage points.

Cybersecurity is a key focus for us. With the ever-increasing level of cyber attacks there's a need for vigilance by consumers and employees. Awareness programmes from the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau, the banks and An Post are to be welcomed.

Through our policies and protocols, we proactively tackle technical abuse in the **.ie** namespace and are dedicated to fighting malware and phishing. Together with our partners, we are enabling a better Ireland online through our technical and policy-based guardianship of the national critical infrastructure.

David Curtin
Chief Executive, .IE

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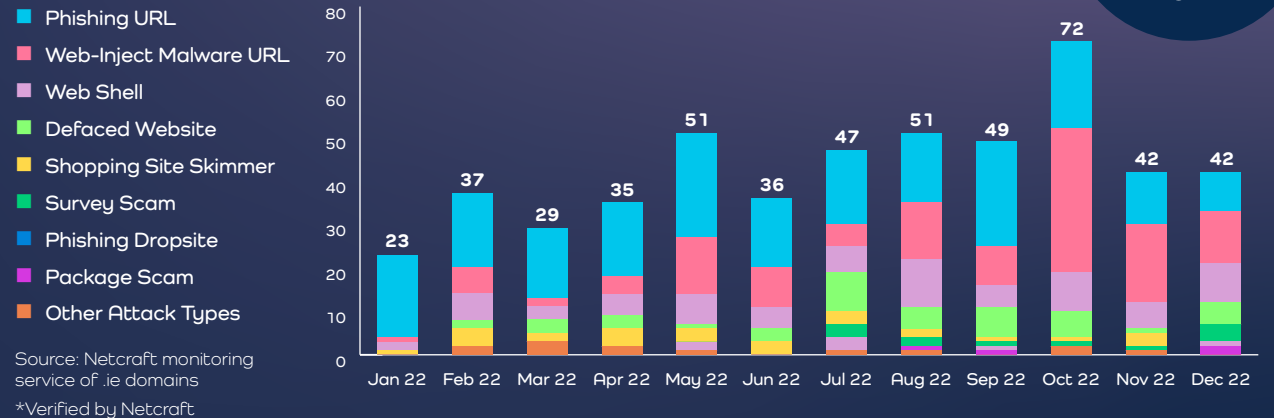
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Cybersecurity – a key focus for the .ie namespace

Number of verified* cyber attacks taken down

514
Jan - Dec
2022



.IE is designated as an Operator of Essential Services (OES) under the Network and Information Systems (NIS) directive. As one of the guardians of Ireland’s **national critical internet infrastructure**, the .ie namespace, we are acutely aware of helping to protect Irish consumers and SMEs from cyber criminals.

We take a number of steps to keep the .ie domain safe and this ensures that the level of security threat to .ie websites is considerably lower than other top level domains, such as .com.

The SpamHaus Project, an international non-profit organisation that tracks spam and related cyber threats such as phishing, malware and botnets, collates a Badness Index for top level domains. The Badness Index for .ie is 0.0% / 0.00.

Manually review .ie applications

Only individuals and businesses with a provable connection to Ireland can register a .ie domain, and applications from new customers are manually reviewed to ensure that they meet this requirement. This process keeps the .ie domain largely free from registrations by bad actors for their quick-moving scams and other illegal activities that unmanaged registries cannot detect as easily.

Consumer protection protocols

We have established protocols with regulators to address online illegality and to permit ‘take-down’ of .ie websites under certain circumstances. There is a Regulatory Authority Protocol for dealing with illegal content on .ie websites. The regulatory authorities with whom we engage include the Corporate Enforcement Authority, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, the Central Bank and the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau, amongst others.

Proactively respond to online abuse

We employ **Netcraft**, who provide internet security services, including cybercrime disruption. These services allow us to proactively respond to online abuse issues, such as websites that are hosting malware, phishing or botnets. Netcraft notifies our Registrars (companies that sell and manage .ie domains on our behalf). The domain holder can then, with the help of their Registrar or hosting provider, take the required corrective action. Netcraft will monitor the website after the fix to ensure the issue is resolved. This service is invaluable as it helps innocent victims, such as SMEs, who might be unaware that they have experienced a cyber attack, to take the required remediation action.

Use of domain security features

We regularly advise .ie domain holders, especially SMEs, to integrate additional third-party security features, such as website security certificates and DNS Security Extensions.

60%

of content-rich .ie websites are secured with a security certificate (-6 percentage points YoY)

Security certificates encrypt the communication between the website and its visitors. This means that cyber criminals cannot intercept a customer's data. Websites with a security certificate have URLs that begin with https://.

The decrease is somewhat surprising, in the light of the increased number of cyber attacks, coupled with heightened awareness of online security.

757

.ie domains are secured with DNSSEC (+51% YoY)

DNS Security Extensions (DNSSEC) uses cryptography to add an extra layer of security to a .ie domain.

This strong increase is welcome, albeit from a low base.

57

.ie domains are secured with Registry Lock (+19% YoY)

Registry Lock is a service which requires a passphrase, thereby preventing unauthorised or unwanted changes to a .ie domain. The aim of the service is to minimise the risk of unauthorised changes, terminations or transfers, in cases where a user's information has been leaked or systems are hacked. With cybercrime on the increase, it is important that all businesses and in particular, brand managers, use this service to improve their website's security.



Analysis of .ie domain database and growth

Flat growth in 2022 with .ie registrations back at pre-pandemic levels.

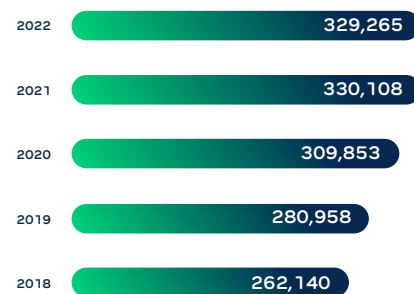
There were **329,265** .ie domains in the database at the end of 2022, a **0.3%** decrease on 2021. While this is the first year that we have seen flat growth, the multi-year trend remains positive. The database grew by **17.2%** on pre-pandemic 2019 and by **26%** on 2018 (five years ago).

New .ie domain registrations decreased by **22.6%** in 2022 compared to 2021 due to a slowing down in the rate of registrations seen during the pandemic. This predicted decrease follows a surge in growth when businesses across Ireland mobilised to get online during restrictions.

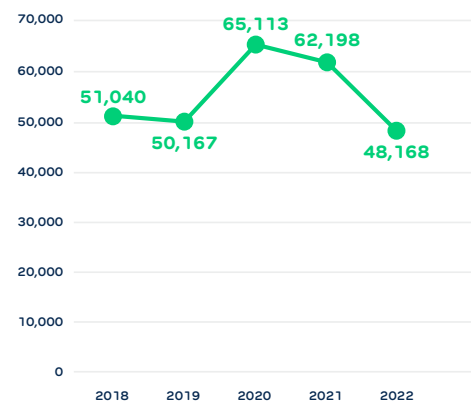
As we exited the acute stage of Covid, registrations moved back to pre-pandemic levels with a more modest 4% decrease when comparing 2022 against 2019.

A large proportion of new registrations in 2022 came from existing .ie customers who were able to avail of our express registration process. Returning customers do not need to be re-validated.

TOTAL DATABASE



NEW REGISTRATIONS



-0.3%

change in .ie database
(2022 v 2021)

-22.6%

new .ie registrations
(2022 v 2021)



Analysis of .ie domains by geography

Registered .ie domains on the island of Ireland

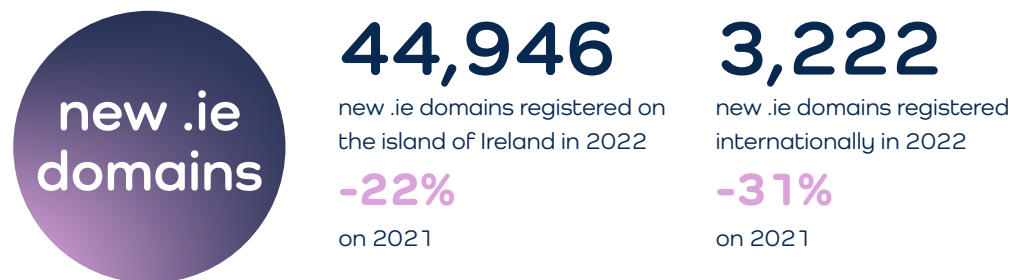


Great Britain accounts for the majority of internationally registered .ie domains. However, new registrations from Great Britain decreased by **26%** year-on-year in 2022, from **1,355** down to **1,003**.

Bulgaria registered the second-highest number of new .ie domains in 2022 (825), followed by the **United States** (257) and **Germany** (128).

Individuals or organisations that register a .ie domain from overseas either have business operations and customers in Ireland or can prove another type of professional or personal connection to Ireland. The registered owner is traceable, thanks to the pre-registration checks on corporate identity and connection to Ireland.

91% of .ie domains are registered on the island of Ireland.



Total number of internationally registered .ie domains

International
29,895

Top 3 international registrants:



Analysis of .ie domains by county

% difference in new .ie registrations 2022 v 2019



Mayo

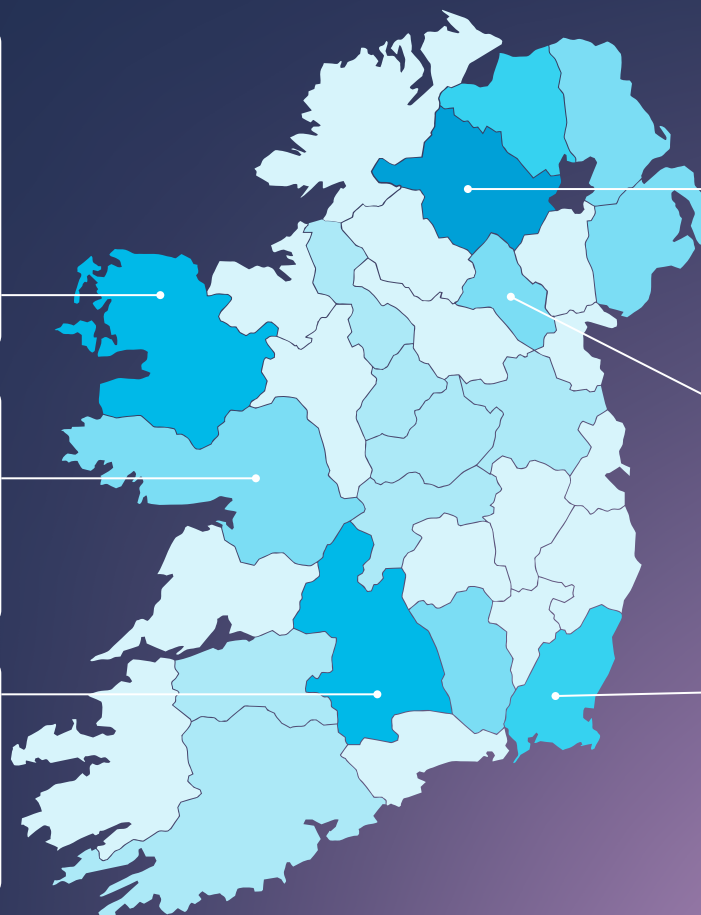
Mayo continues its strong performance and had the largest percentage growth (+24.1%) in new .ie domain registrations for any county in the West of Ireland, 2022 v 2019.

Galway

With 8.4% growth in new .ie registrations, 2022 v 2019, Galway followed Mayo's strong growth in the West of Ireland.

Tipperary

With 26.5% growth in new .ie domain registrations, 2022 v pre-pandemic 2019, Tipperary came in second overall.



Tyrone

Tyrone recorded the largest percentage growth (+73.4%) in new .ie domain registrations compared to pre-pandemic 2019, albeit from a low base.

Monaghan

Amongst the border counties, Monaghan had the largest percentage growth (+8.4%) in new .ie domains registrations 2022 v 2019.

Wexford

Wexford came out on top in Leinster with an 18.2% increase in new .ie domain registrations 2022 v 2019.

County	Island of Ireland database % share	New registrations 2022	% difference v pre-pandemic 2019
Antrim	0.58%	274	7.9%
Armagh	0.17%	62	-26.2%
Carlow	1.6%	726	-16.4%
Cavan	0.93%	479	-0.8%
Clare	1.75%	785	-3.1%
Cork	8.83%	4,076	0.5%
Derry	0.18%	92	15.0%
Donegal	1.67%	796	-5.6%
Down	0.43%	223	7.2%
Dublin	43.24%	17,510	-7.7%
Fermanagh	0.07%	29	-9.4%
Galway	4.59%	2,303	8.4%
Kerry	2.16%	1,070	-0.9%
Kildare	4.4%	2,040	-13.6%
Kilkenny	1.52%	855	7.0%
Laois	1.06%	541	-16.1%
Leitrim	0.46%	217	4.8%
Limerick	2.98%	1,344	1.4%
Longford	0.5%	252	0.4%
Louth	2.2%	1,005	-7.3%
Mayo	2.04%	1,075	24.1%
Meath	3.58%	1,815	2.8%
Monaghan	0.68%	272	8.4%
Offaly	0.92%	445	4.5%
Roscommon	0.82%	369	-15.2%
Sligo	1.06%	414	-13.6%
Tipperary	1.96%	1,042	26.5%
Tyrone	0.22%	137	73.4%
Waterford	1.84%	871	-10.3%
Westmeath	1.32%	689	3.9%
Wexford	2.67%	1,504	18.2%
Wicklow	3.57%	1,634	-12.8%
Total	100%	44,946	

Analysis of .ie domain ecosystem

The long and the short of it

One of the longest .ie website addresses is:



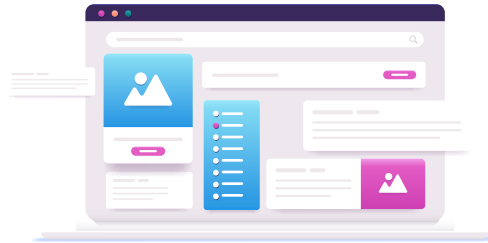
One of the shortest .ie website addresses is:



.ie domain usage

Website
47%

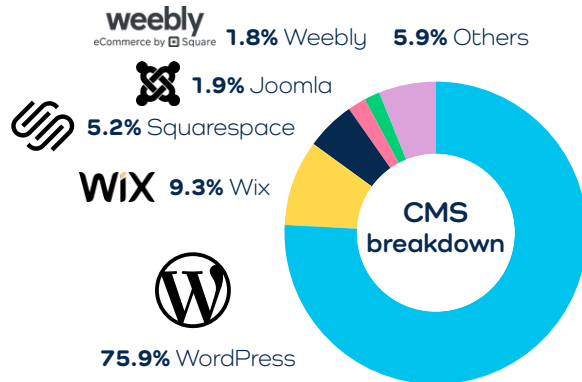
of all .ie domains have a content-rich website



Website content management system (CMS)

60%

of .ie domains with a content-rich website use a CMS.



Interestingly 40% of content-rich websites don't have a CMS.

Wix grew its share of the total, while WordPress remained the most popular CMS.

Keywords in 2022 - new registrations

Identity with 'Place' proved very popular

- ▶ 31 counties had their county name and / or 'IRELAND' as one of their top 3 keywords
- ▶ 'IRELAND' was the top keyword with 'DUBLIN' second and 'IRISH' third

Other top keywords

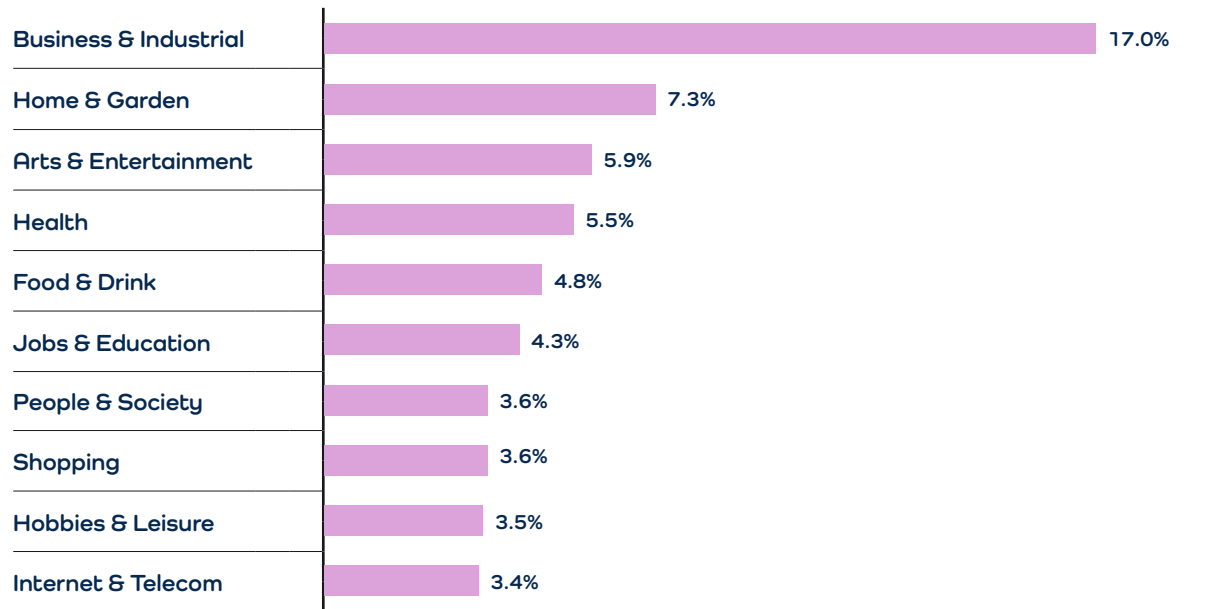
- HOME E DESIGN CLINIC
- SERVICES SHOP HOUSE CAR
- HEALTH GROUP TECH SOLUTIONS
- MEDIA GREEN SCHOOL

Word pairing themes in new domain names

- 'DENTAL' was a popular word in combination with 'clinic', 'dublin', and 'care'.
- 'GREEN' was coupled with 'solutions' and 'energy'.
- 'SCHOOL' was linked to 'driving' and 'motoring'.

.ie websites by content categorisation

Top categories 2022

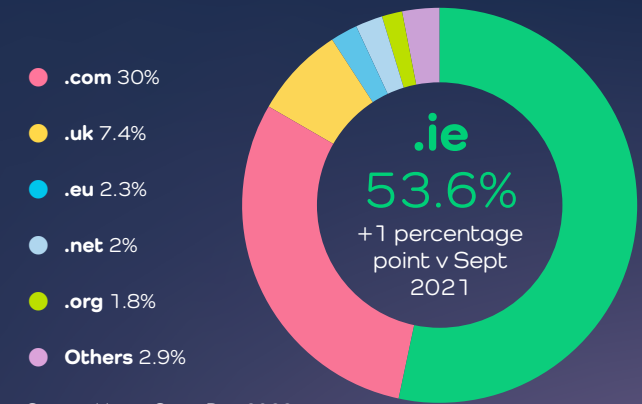


% share of .ie websites 2022

.ie domains with a content-rich website were analysed using Google Natural Language Processing classification. Each domain is included only once in the analysis.

Market share

Of Ireland's hosted domains, by top-level domain



Source: HosterStats Dec 2022



Number of new .ie registrations with a fada

2022 → 127

About .IE

.IE is the national registry for .ie domain names and the trusted and progressive guardian of Ireland's unique .ie online 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 local towns, communities and SMEs. 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 and productivity.

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 330,000 .ie domain names registered. As part of the domain registration process, every applicant must provide tangible evidence of its identity and its connection to Ireland.

.IE - providing a trusted, Irish .ie online identity

weare.ie



.IE is the trading name of IE Domain Registry CLG, company number 315315.

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