



.IE Domain Profile Report 2021



Foreword

The .IE Domain Profile Report explores and analyses the .ie database. In this edition, we assess the full year of 2021, including the pandemic's impact on .ie domain registrations, the overall growth of the .ie database, and country and county of domain registration.

We also examine the broader .ie ecosystem, including domain usage, the breakdown of Content Management System (CMS) usage by .ie domain owners, .ie domain security features, keyword usage in new .ie domain registrations, .ie website categorisation and .ie market share and international growth.

2021 was the second-best year for new .ie domain registrations, with H1 2021 the strongest half-year period on record. 62,198 new .ie domains were registered in 2021, bringing the total .ie database to 330,108, up 6.5% on 2020.

As our timeline shows, there was, at least for the first half of the year, strong correlation between the course of the pandemic and new .ie domain registrations. Ireland began 2021 in strict lockdown; non-essential retail was closed until mid-May. As a result, we can see a clear uptick in new .ie domain registrations in January, February and March, a visible indication of the mass movement of SMEs, including hospitality businesses, online. A website ensures that a business can continue to communicate with and sell to its customers and clients, even if its physical premises are closed.

However, despite the difficult start, 2021 was not 2020. Indeed, by late summer and early autumn, strong vaccination rates and easing of restrictions seemed for the first time to break the previously strong connection between the introduction or relaxation of pandemic restrictions and the rate of new .ie domain registrations. This tentative decoupling suggests two things.

First, the Irish economy has, for the most part, exited the 'acute response' phase of the pandemic. As a result, businesses have now factored-in the uncertainty of restrictions and reduced trading ability to their commercial operations and planning.

Second, SMEs are no longer simply 'reacting' to the pandemic. Instead, and as our most recent .IE Tipping Point research shows, consumer behaviours are changing and SMEs are changing with them. Businesses are investing in new websites, integrating e-commerce technology, and making use of productivity-enhancing tools all year round.

This report also reveals more about the technical specifications of .ie domains and websites, including, for the first time, CMS usage by .ie domain owners with content-rich websites. More than 78% are powered by WordPress, followed by Wix and Squarespace.

54% of .ie websites have a security certificate, which ensures consumers can purchase goods and services in a safe online manner. Only a very small fraction of .ie domain owners have DNSSEC or Registry Lock, although the number using the latter feature has increased 179% year-on-year. This is an encouraging trend.

The macro environment is even more encouraging. The .ie domain accounts for 52.6% of all top-level domains registered in Ireland, ahead of .com by more than 20 percentage points. It is also one of the fastest-growing country domains in Europe, behind only .pt (Portugal) and .ee (Estonia), which demonstrates the impact of Covid-19 as a catalyst in accelerating digital adoption and usage.

David Curtin
Chief Executive, .IE

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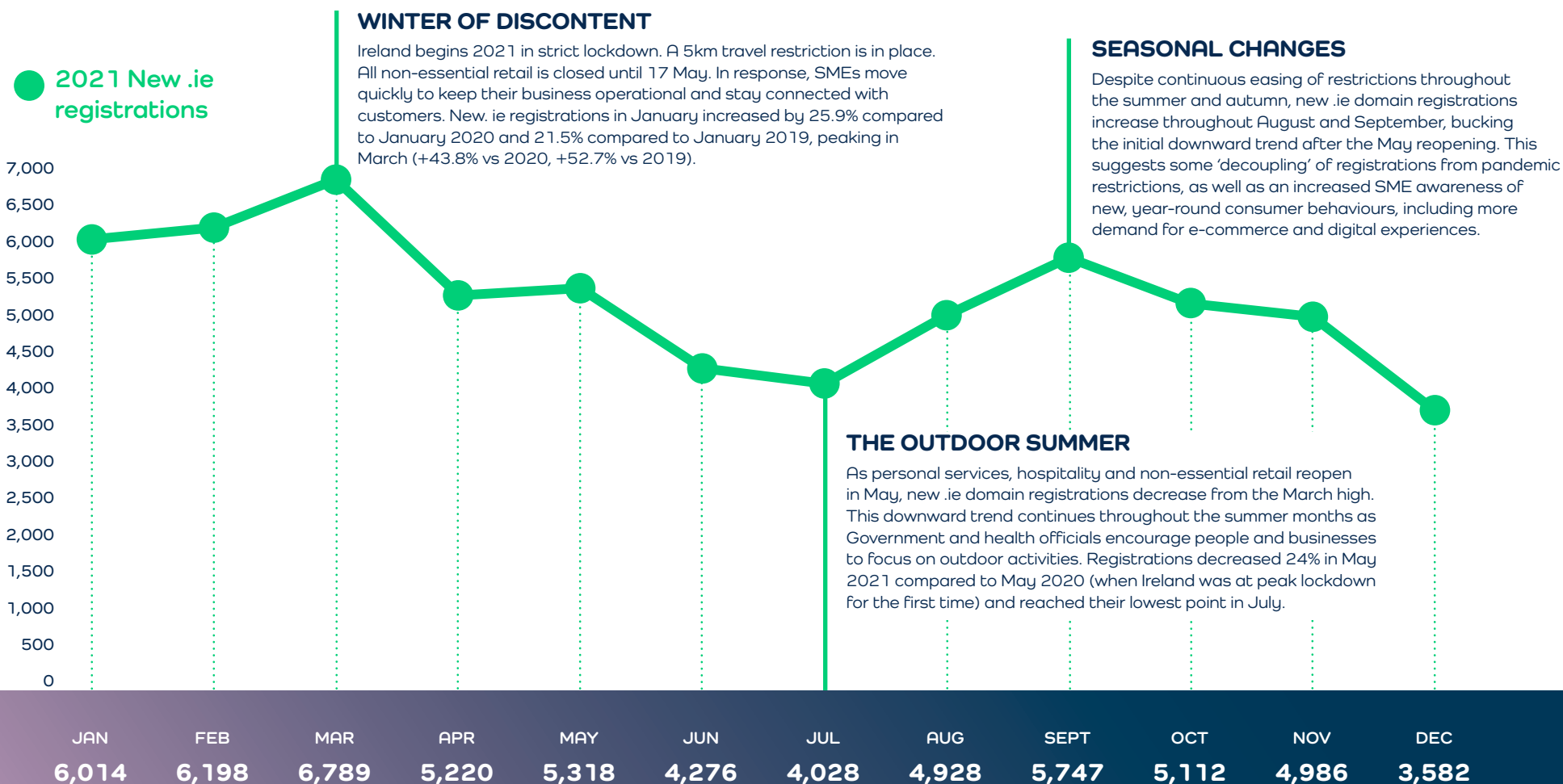
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Timeline of new .ie registrations in 2021

In the 2020 and H1 2021 .IE Domain Profile Reports, we showed that trends in new .ie domain registrations largely correlated with the national response to the pandemic, such as Government-ordered lockdowns and re-openings. Looking at 2021 in full, this again appears to be broadly the case. New .ie domain registrations surged throughout the winter as the country endured strict business and travel restrictions; SMEs adapted by building new websites and selling online. Registrations tapered off in the summer as the country reopened and the Government encouraged outdoor activities.

However, domain registrations and the pandemic appear to 'decouple' in August. Even as the Government continued to ease restrictions throughout the summer and autumn, .ie domain registrations increased again, reaching their highest level since March in September. This may suggest that most businesses have priced in the effects of the pandemic and are no longer simply 'reacting' to it. Rather, they are now operating 'as normal', in a way that is now conscious of growing consumer demand for digital convenience and experiences.



Analysis of .ie domain database and growth

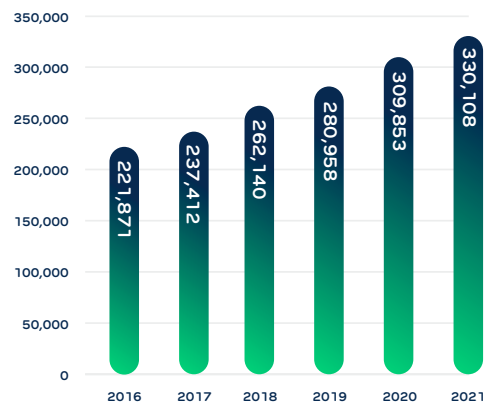
Growth continued in 2021.

There were **330,108** .ie domains in the database at the end of 2021, a **6.5%** increase on 2020. The database grew by **48.8%** on 2016 (five years ago) and **88.9%** on 2011 (ten years ago).

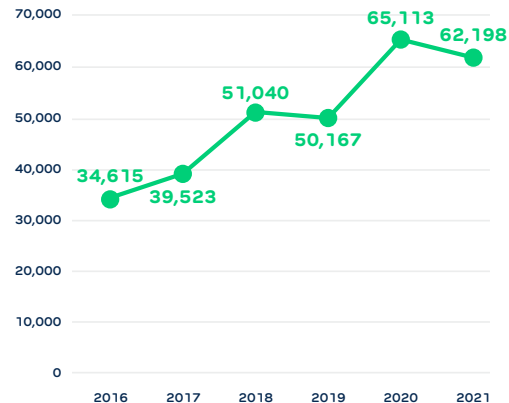
New registrations increased by **1.7%** in H1 2021 compared to H1 2020 but decreased by **10.9%** in H2 2021 compared to H2 2020. This can largely be attributed to the difference in the pandemic situation. In H2 2021, unlike the same period in the previous year, restrictions were eased and shops and hospitality businesses generally remained open.

Despite the decline in H2 2021 relative to H2 2020, 2021 was the second-best year for new .ie domain registrations on record. Compared to the pre-pandemic year of 2019, new .ie registrations increased by **23.9%** in 2021.

TOTAL DATABASE



NEW REGISTRATIONS



-4.5%

New .ie registrations
(2021 v 2020)

+6.5%

Net growth

(on database on 31 December 2020)



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 **14.1%** year-on-year in 2021, from **1,578** down to **1,355**.

Bulgaria registered the second-highest number of new .ie domains in 2021 (1,231), followed by the **United States** (443) and **Germany** (212).

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.

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



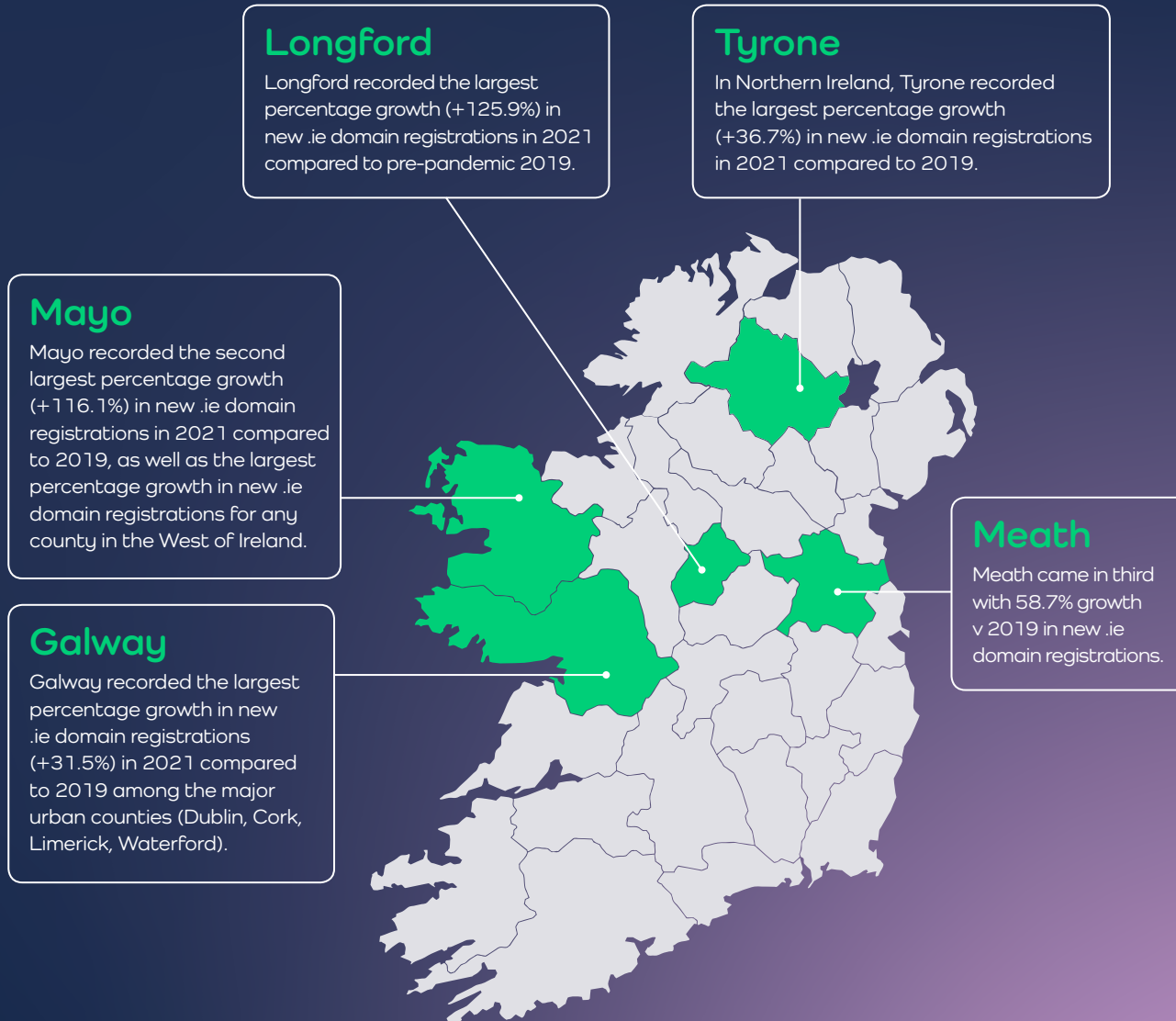
Total number of internationally registered .ie domains

International
29,373

Top 3 international registrants:



Analysis of .ie domains by county



County	Island of Ireland database % share	New registrations 2021	% growth vs pre-pandemic 2019
Antrim	0.56%	269	+5.9%
Armagh	0.17%	73	-13.1%
Carlow	1.62%	901	+3.8%
Cavan	0.90%	543	+12.4%
Clare	1.77%	1,039	+28.3%
Cork	8.75%	5,214	+28.6%
Derry	0.18%	108	+35.0%
Donegal	1.65%	971	+15.2%
Down	0.41%	238	+14.4%
Dublin	43.46%	22,147	+16.8%
Fermanagh	0.07%	41	+28.1%
Galway	4.57%	2,792	+31.5%
Kerry	2.13%	1,475	+36.6%
Kildare	4.46%	2,613	+10.7%
Kilkenny	1.46%	802	+0.4%
Laois	1.05%	703	+8.9%
Leitrim	0.46%	270	+30.4%
Limerick	2.94%	1,738	+31.1%
Longford	0.57%	567	+125.9%
Louth	2.19%	1,266	+16.8%
Mayo	2.04%	1,871	+116.1%
Meath	3.73%	2,803	+58.7%
Monaghan	0.68%	394	+56.9%
Offaly	0.90%	549	+28.9%
Roscommon	0.81%	526	+20.9%
Sligo	1.08%	592	+23.6%
Tipperary	1.85%	1,236	+50.0%
Tyrone	0.19%	108	+36.7%
Waterford	1.85%	1,157	+19.2%
Westmeath	1.29%	768	+15.8%
Wexford	2.59%	1,678	+31.8%
Wicklow	3.64%	2,078	+10.9%
Total	100%	57,530	

Analysis of .ie domain ecosystem

.ie domain usage

Website
74%

of all .ie domains
have a website
(244,186)



Email
71%

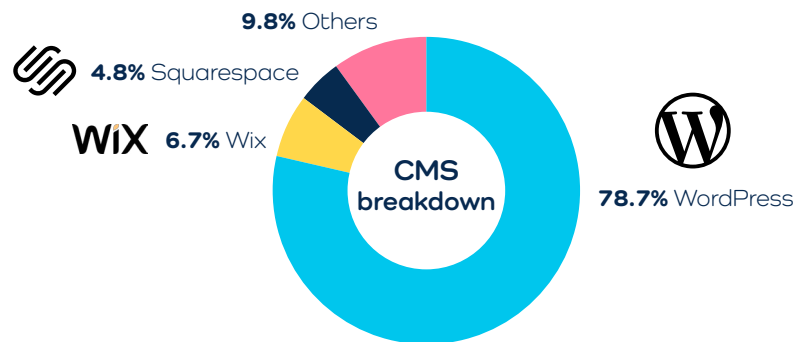
of all .ie domains
have an email
address (235,695)



Website content management system (CMS)

61%

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



The year in keywords

Covid-related keywords

e.g. 'Covid', 'vaccine', 'mask'

187

New .ie registrations with these keywords have decreased on 2020 with just 187 in 2021.

Health-related keywords

e.g. 'fitness', 'pharmacy/pharmacist', 'yoga'

1,343

New .ie registrations with these keywords remained strong in 2021 at 1,343.

Climate-related keywords

789 new .ie domains with climate-related keywords were registered in 2021, reflecting growing personal and commercial interest in sustainability and related issues.



.ie domain security features

54%

of all .ie websites are secured with a security certificate

Security certificates encrypt the communication between the website and its visitors. This means that the information entered on the website is processed securely, so that cyber criminals cannot intercept the data. Websites with a security certificate have URLs that begin with https://

0.16%

of all .ie domains are secured with DNSSEC

DNSSEC uses cryptography to add an extra layer of security to domains.

0.03%

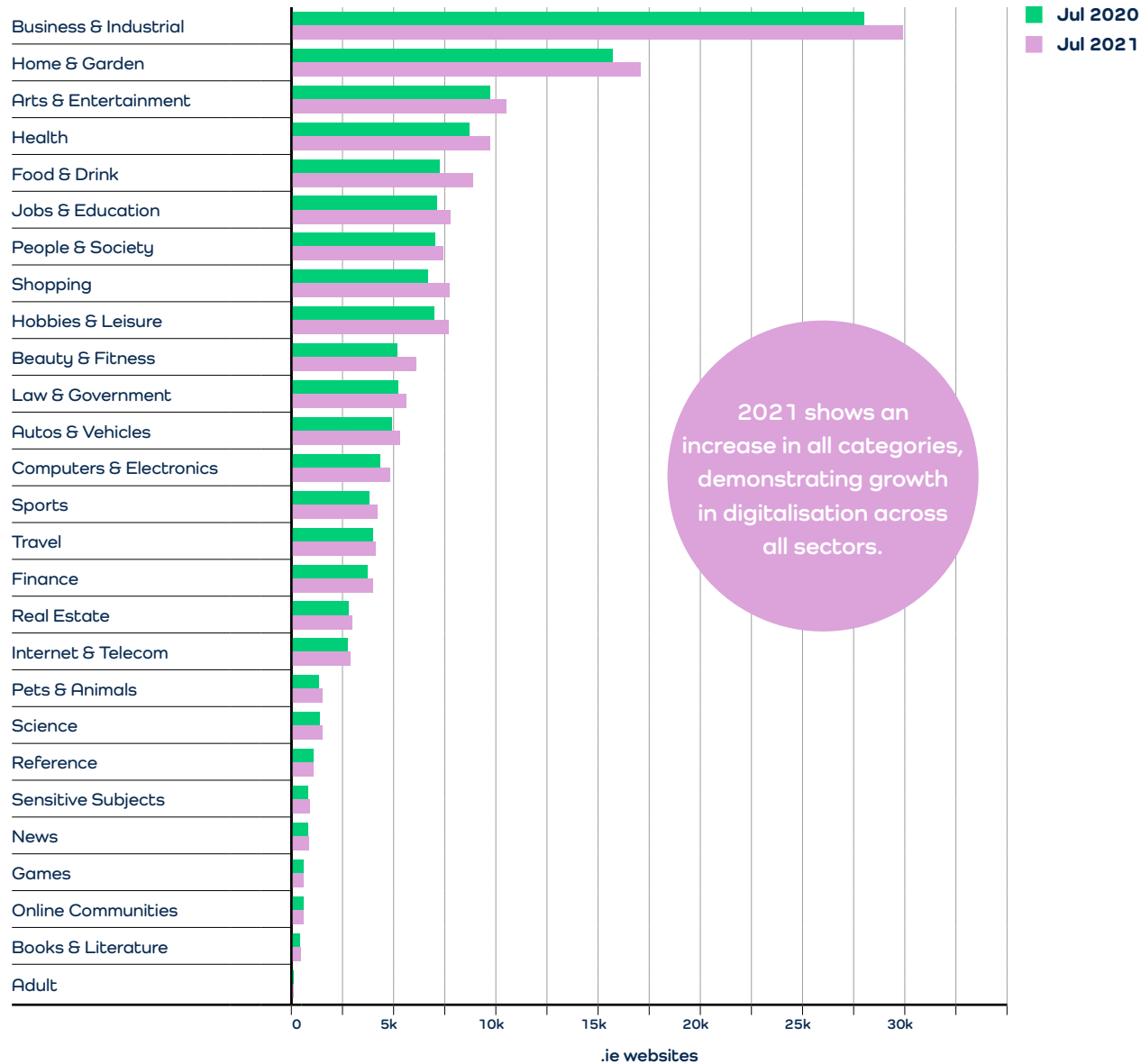
of all .ie domains are secured with Registry Lock (+178.9% YoY)

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, even if user information is leaked or systems are hacked. With cyber crime on the rise, it is important that more websites use this service.

New .ie registrations with a fada

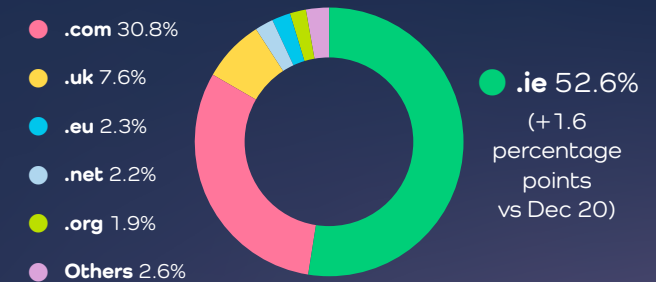
2021 → **146**
(+42% YoY)

.ie websites by content categorisation



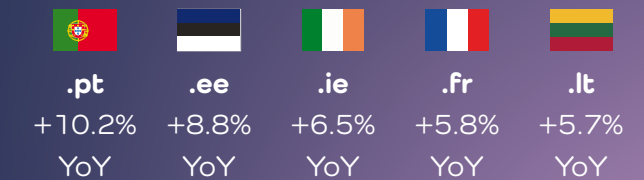
Market share of Ireland's hosted domains

(by top-level domain)



Source: HosterStats, September 2021

Top 5 country code top-level domain growth across Europe



Source: CENTR, December 2021

.ie domains with a content-rich website were analysed using Google Natural Language Processing classification.

The analysis includes multiple classifications (e.g. Business & Industrial AND Food & Drink) per domain.

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 330,000 .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.

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