



.IE Domain Profile Report 2021

January–June



Foreword

The .IE Domain Profile Report explores and analyses the .ie database. In this edition, we assess the first half-year period of 2021 (1 January–30 June), tracking the pandemic’s continuing effect on new .ie domain registrations and the counties and countries where they were registered. We also examine the broader .ie ecosystem, including the .ie domain’s market share and growth and the use of additional security features by .ie domain holders.

H1 2021 is the strongest first half-year period for new .ie domain registrations on record. 33,815 new .ie domains were added to the database by 30 June, up 1.6% on the same period last year. The total .ie database now stands at 324,074, up 9.6% year-on-year.

Our timeline of new .ie domain registrations from January 2020 to June 2021 shows that, like last year, registrations in H1 2021 correlated with the Government’s pandemic restrictions. In Q1 2021, for example, the period of particularly severe post-Christmas lockdown that restricted in-store shopping to essential retail, the number of new .ie domain registrations increased dramatically. In Q2, .ie domain registrations slowed as the Government permitted nearly all non-essential businesses to re-open their physical premises fully or partially.

Nevertheless, new .ie domain registrations remain high. It is clear that an increasing number of SMEs recognise that digital is crucial to the survival of their business. This is evidenced by findings from our latest .IE Tipping Point report which show that 58% of consumers will prioritise online shopping over in-store in 2021.

Even with the option to shop in-store, for convenience or price reasons many consumers simply prefer to buy online, or at the very least browse or research products online before buying them in-store. The pandemic has greatly accelerated the trend towards omni-channel retail, whereby the process of buying and selling a product or service integrates digital and physical platforms.

Keyword analysis of new .ie domain registrations in H1 2021 shows that while domain names with explicitly Covid-related keywords, such as ‘virus’, ‘PPE’ and ‘sanitiser’ have dropped by 76%, general health-related keywords, such as ‘pharmacy’ and ‘wellness’ have increased by 18%. This suggests that healthcare practitioners, such as GPs, pharmacists and counsellors, continue to move their services online.

Keywords related to the so-called ‘outdoor summer’ of 2021 have also increased. New .ie domain registrations containing words such as ‘patio’, ‘barbecue’ and ‘pool’ rose by 64% year-on-year, suggesting increased online retail of outdoor entertainment and hospitality products.

This .IE Domain Profile Report also assesses the use of third-party security features by .ie domain holders. Since the ransomware attack on the HSE in May, the importance of cybersecurity to government institutions and private businesses has come into sharp focus. While use of security certificates is relatively high for .ie websites, our data shows that additional robust domain security features, such as DNS Security Extensions and Registry Lock, are used by a tiny minority of .ie domain holders.

The .ie domain is still the domain of choice for Irish businesses and individuals. At 5.1%, it holds the highest market share of all top-level domain names, including .com at 32%. With 10.8% year-on-year growth Portugal is the fastest growing country domain in Europe. Ireland’s .ie domain is a fast follower in second place with 9.6% growth year-on-year. This is good news for the Irish economy given that new domain registrations are a forward indicator of digital intent and future e-commerce activity.

David Curtin
Chief Executive, .IE

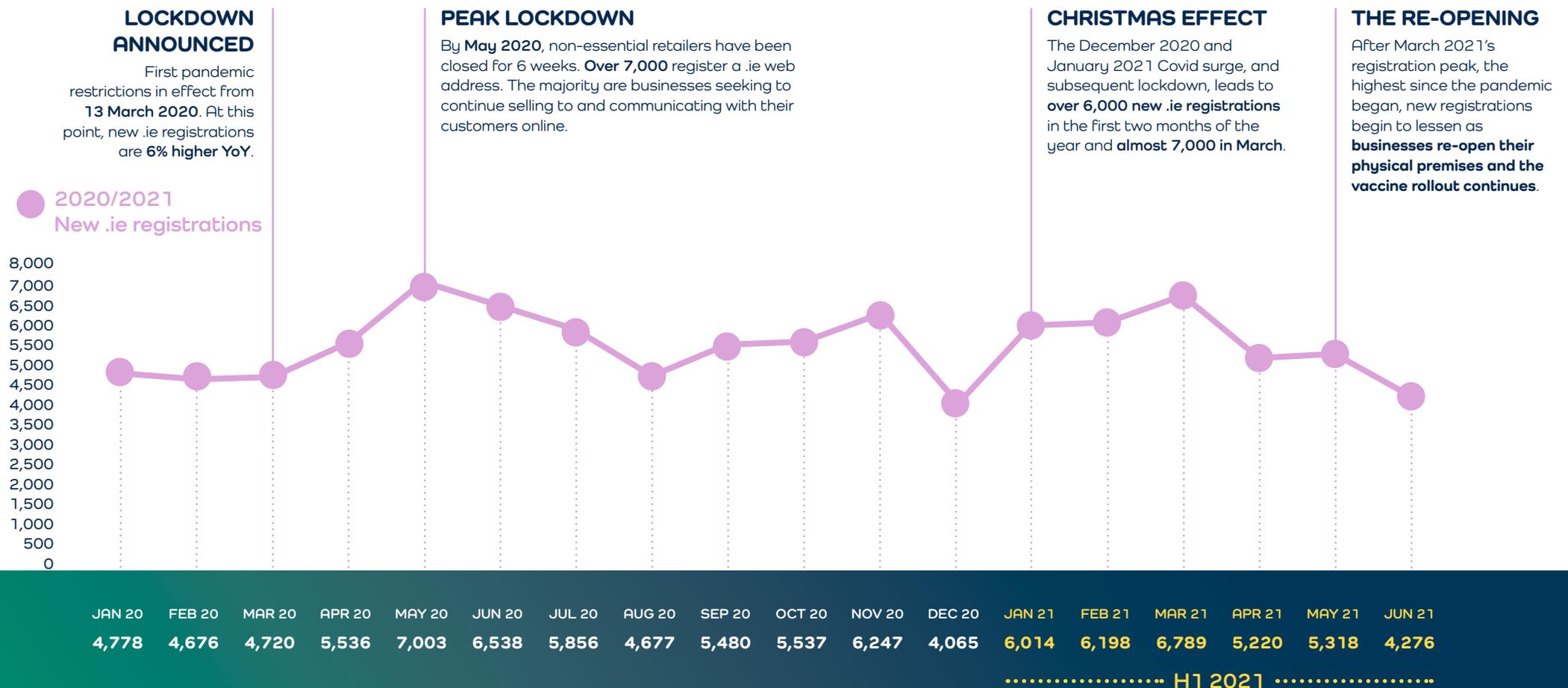
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Timeline of new .ie registrations January 2020–June 2021

In the .IE Domain Profile Report 2020, we noted trends in pandemic-era .ie domain registrations largely correlated with the Government’s lockdown restrictions. There are signs of this continuing. After a pre-Christmas drop-off relative to the rest of 2020, new .ie domain registrations picked up markedly in Q1 2021, peaking in March. This coincided with the Government’s post-Christmas lockdown, which compelled many offline SMEs to invest in their digital presence. While the announcement of business re-openings from April led to a gradual decline from the peak, new .ie domain registrations remain high. This suggests that despite the return of physical business, SMEs recognise that consumers want more digital choice and, in many cases, prefer e-commerce to in-store shopping.



LOCKDOWN ANNOUNCED

First pandemic restrictions in effect from **13 March 2020**. At this point, new .ie registrations are **6% higher YoY**.

PEAK LOCKDOWN

By **May 2020**, non-essential retailers have been closed for 6 weeks. **Over 7,000** register a .ie web address. The majority are businesses seeking to continue selling to and communicating with their customers online.

CHRISTMAS EFFECT

The December 2020 and January 2021 Covid surge, and subsequent lockdown, leads to **over 6,000 new .ie registrations** in the first two months of the year and **almost 7,000** in March.

THE RE-OPENING

After March 2021’s registration peak, the highest since the pandemic began, new registrations begin to lessen as **businesses re-open their physical premises and the vaccine rollout continues**.

Analysis of .ie domain database and growth

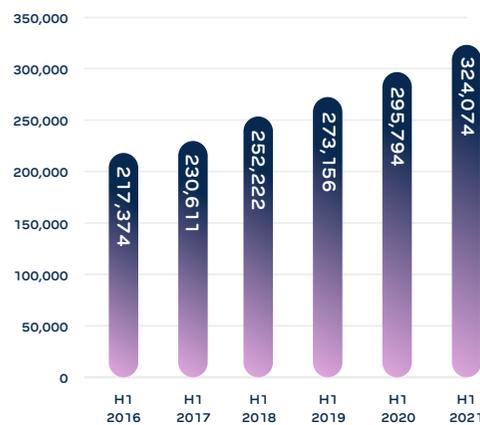
Strong growth of new registrations continues in 2021.

There were **324,074** .ie domains in the database at the end of H1 2021 (30 June), a **9.6%** increase on the same period last year. The database has grown **49%** on the same period five years ago (H1 2016).

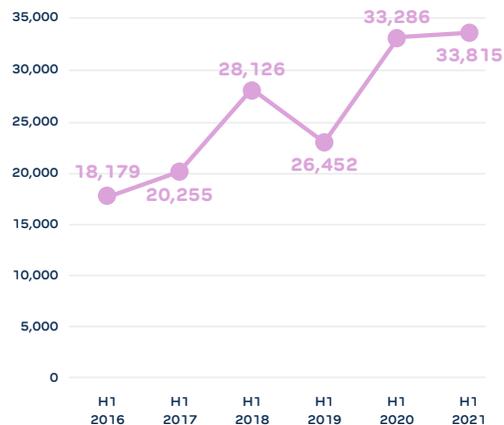
New .ie domain registrations increased by almost **34% year-on-year in Q1 2021**, which **approximates to the post-Christmas lockdown period**, but decreased by **22% year-on-year in Q2 2021**, which broadly corresponds with the partial or full re-opening of physical business premises.

Despite the drop-off in Q2 2021 relative to Q2 2020 (last year's 'peak lockdown'), new .ie domain registrations remain high. In terms of new .ie domain registrations, H1 2021 was the **best-performing first half-year period on record**, with 33,815 new .ie registrations, up 1.6% year-on-year.

TOTAL DATABASE



NEW REGISTRATIONS



1.6%

increase in new .ie registrations

(H1 2021 v H1 2020)

-4.2%

Net growth

(registrations - deletions)

(H1 2021 v H1 2020)



Analysis of .ie domains by geography

Registered .ie domains on the island of Ireland



Great Britain comprises the majority of internationally registered .ie domains; new registrations increased by **10.3%** year-on-year in H1 2021, from **718** to **792**.

Bulgaria registered the second-highest number of new .ie domains in H1 2021 (447, -2.2%), followed by the **United States** (270, +110.9%) and **Germany** (115, +51.3%).

Individuals or organisations that register a .ie domain from overseas either have business operations in Ireland or can prove another type of professional or personal connection to Ireland.



31,442
new .ie domains registered on the island of Ireland in H1 2021

+0.2%
on H1 2020

2,373
new .ie domains registered internationally in H1 2021

+23.7%
on H1 2020

Total number of internationally registered .ie domains

International

28,406

Top 3 international registrants:



Great Britain
11,067



United States
4,991



Germany
2,425



Analysis of .ie domains by county

Donegal

Donegal recorded the largest increase in new .ie registrations in the Border counties in H1 2021 (+11.9%).

Mayo

Mayo recorded the largest increase in new .ie domain registrations (+14%) among the West of Ireland counties in H1 2021. This continues the high growth of 41.5% in 2020 (v 2019).

Kerry

Kerry closely followed Laois with an 18% YoY increase in new .ie domain registrations. Kerry registered 845 .ie domains in H1 2021.

Antrim

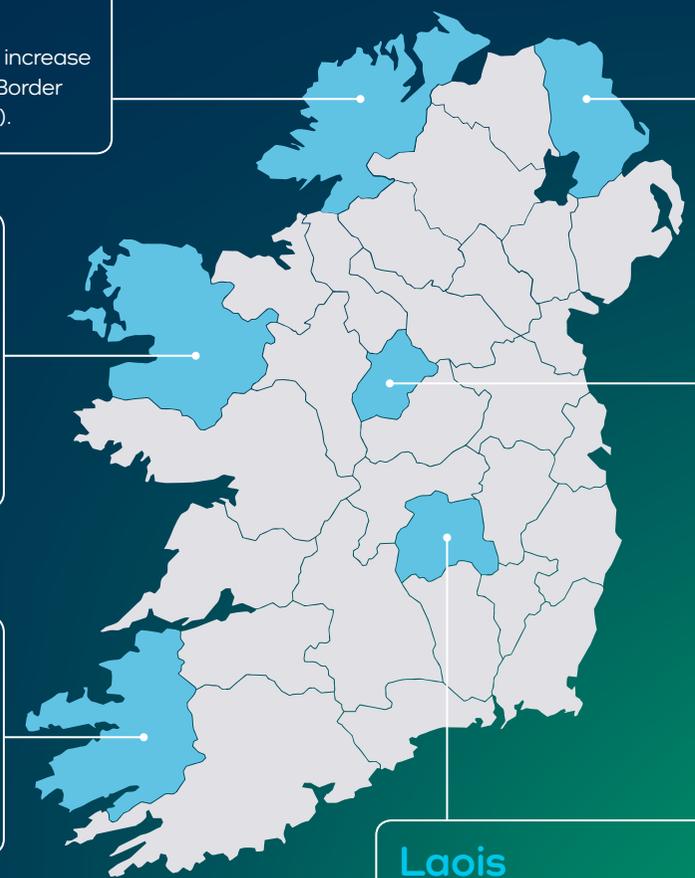
Antrim recorded the largest YoY increase in new .ie domain registrations (+17.1%) in Northern Ireland in H1 2021.

Longford

Longford recorded the largest YoY increase in new .ie domain registrations (+23.6%) on the island of Ireland in H1 2021.

Laois

Laois recorded the second largest YoY increase in new .ie domain registrations (+18.1%) in H1 2021.



County	Island of Ireland database % share	New registrations H1 2021	% growth vs H1 2020
Antrim	0.56%	150	+17.2%
Armagh	0.18%	42	-20.8%
Carlow	1.63%	468	-37.4%
Cavan	0.93%	321	-15.5%
Clare	1.81%	639	-7.4%
Cork	8.79%	3,032	+10.9%
Derry	0.18%	63	+1.6%
Donegal	1.68%	565	+11.9%
Down	0.43%	152	+8.6%
Dublin	43.65%	11,949	-4.4%
Fermanagh	0.06%	20	-20.0%
Galway	4.58%	1,675	+13.4%
Kerry	2.11%	845	+18.0%
Kildare	4.50%	1,465	-2.8%
Kilkenny	1.47%	443	-5.7%
Laois	1.05%	405	+18.1%
Leitrim	0.46%	156	-4.3%
Limerick	2.90%	932	+5.8%
Longford	0.49%	173	+23.6%
Louth	2.23%	737	+14.4%
Mayo	1.82%	691	+14.0%
Meath	3.58%	1,381	+16.8%
Monaghan	0.68%	226	-5.8%
Offaly	0.91%	314	+4.7%
Roscommon	0.79%	283	+9.7%
Sligo	1.11%	364	-1.1%
Tipperary	1.83%	682	+3.0%
Tyrone	0.20%	74	-9.8%
Waterford	1.88%	701	+13.1%
Westmeath	1.28%	389	-23.3%
Wexford	2.55%	910	+0.7%
Wicklow	3.68%	1,195	-10.0%
Total	100%	31,442	

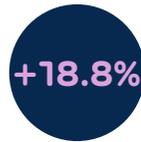
Analysis of .ie domain ecosystem

How has the pandemic affected new .ie web address keywords?



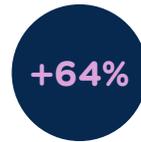
Pandemic keywords

Pandemic-related keywords, such as 'Covid', 'sanitiser' and 'vaccine', decreased by **76.4%** in new registrations H1 2021 v H1 2020.



Health keywords

General health-related keywords, such as 'doctor', 'pharmacy/ pharmacist', 'wellness' and 'fitness', increased **18.8%** in new registrations H1 2021 v H1 2020.



Outdoor summer keywords

Keywords related to an outdoor summer, such as 'barbecue', 'pool', 'patio', 'tent' and 'bicycle/ bike', increased by **64.0%** in new registrations H1 2021 v H1 2020.

Use of domain security features

All new .ie domain registrations are manually verified and approved by a .IE team member. Once approved, .ie domain holders can integrate additional third-party security features, such as website security certificates and DNS Security Extensions.

Security Certificates

100,576

.ie websites have a security certificate (+20.4% YoY)

42.6%*

of all .ie websites

Security certificates prove to visitors that they are on an authentic and secure website. Websites with a security certificate have URLs that begin with `https://`

DNS Security Extensions (DNSSEC)

356

.ie domains have DNSSEC (+12.3% YoY)

0.11%

of all .ie domains

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

Registry Lock

45

.ie domains have Registry Lock (+15.4% YoY)

0.01%

of all .ie domains

Registry Lock is a manual service which prevents unauthorised or unwanted changes to a .ie domain. The aim of the service is to minimise the risk of unwanted changes, terminations or transfers, even if user information is leaked or systems are hacked.

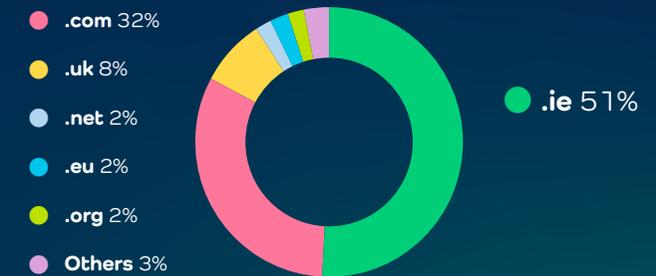
Source: Pandalytics June 2021

* The total percentage of .ie websites with a security certificate has decreased from 64% as reported in the .IE Domain Profile Report 2020. This may be due to 'under developed' websites, which are typically new websites with a single page or social media link, being included in figures for the first time.

Other ecosystem facts

Market share of Ireland's hosted domains

(by top-level domain)



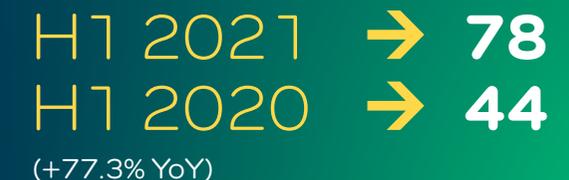
Source: HosterStats December 2020

Top 5 country code top-level European domain growth YoY



Source: CENTR June 2021

Number of new .ie registrations with a fada



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 324,000 .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



Contact

.IE
2 Harbour Square
Dun Laoghaire
Co Dublin
A96 D6R0

Tel +353 (0)1 236 5400
Email marketing@weare.ie
Twitter [dot_IE](https://twitter.com/dot_IE)