



Domain Registration Trends Report Q2 2022





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Executive Summary

Domain registration behavior is often affected by the latest online trends. Examples include the cryptocurrency and nonfungible token (NFT) craze and the paradigm shift to e-commerce. In the same way, domain registration may also mirror real-world occurrences, such as current events.

Our real-time access to WHOIS and Domain Name System (DNS) intelligence allowed us to take a glimpse at significant domain registration trends and themes. In Q2 2022, we observed celebration-related registrations that peaked in the weeks before their significant dates. We also saw a rise in the volume of new domains related to news and global events.

On the other hand, some age-old themes remained, resulting in domains relevant to online shopping. We detailed our observations in this report, including these key findings:

- The top IP geolocation and registrant country across all domain registration trend drivers was the U.S.
- GoDaddy was the top registrar, except for e-commerce-related domains for which the majority of the domains were managed by Wix.
- On average, 3.67% of the domains across all the drivers were malicious, led by tax-related malicious properties at 12%.





2

Main Trends and Themes

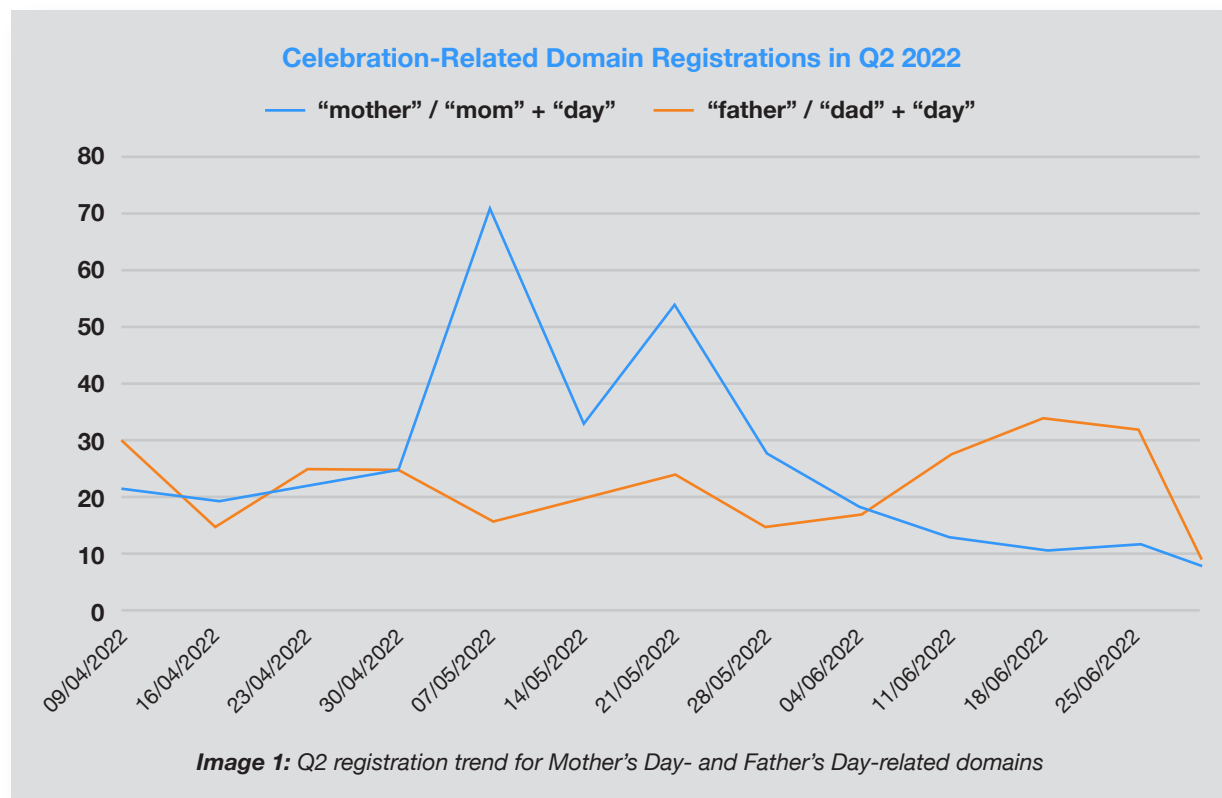


We focused on six trends that domain registration behaviors usually mirror. We then identified the IP geolocation, registrant countries, registrars, and malicious usage of the domains with the help of [Bulk IP Geolocation Lookup](#), [Bulk WHOIS Lookup](#), and [Domain Malware Check API](#). The details of our findings are presented in the following sections.

2A: Celebration-Related Trends

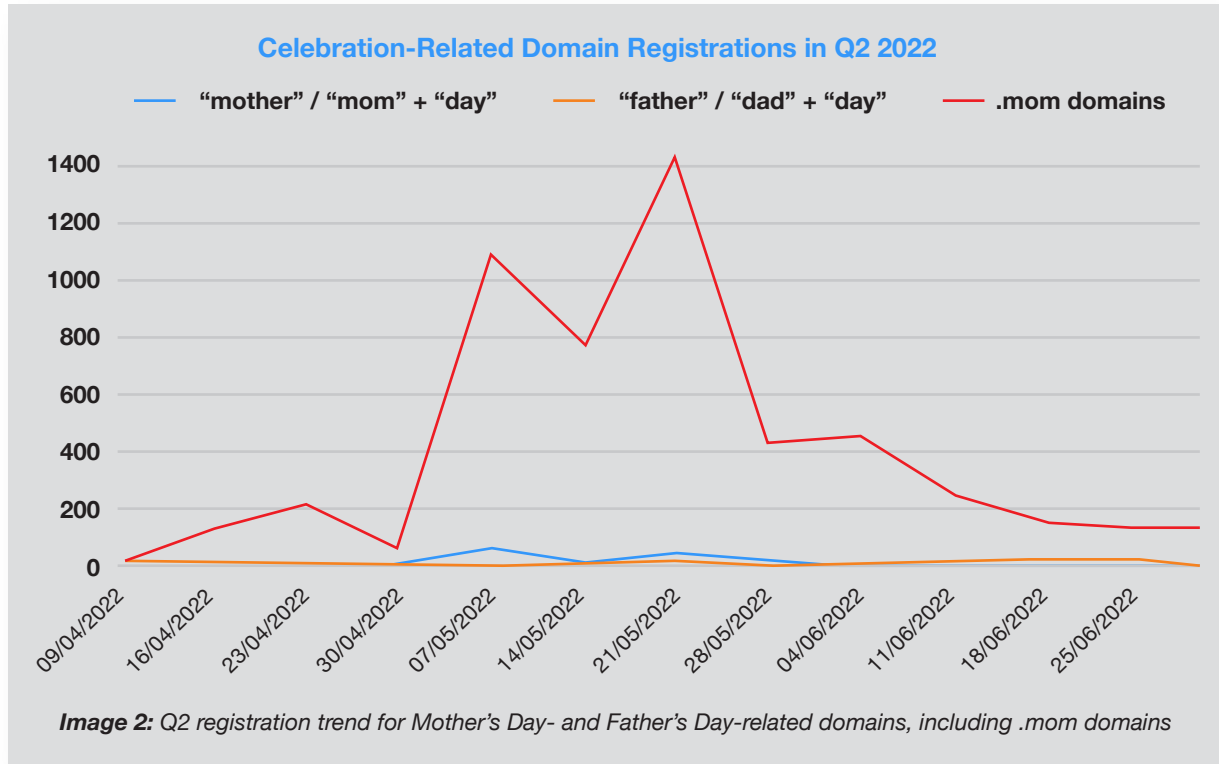
Holidays and celebrations generally cause a stir online, as people search the Internet for gift ideas, places to stay at, and recreational activities. For instance, Valentine's Day usually drives up interest in online dating sites. Domain registrations also get impacted as a result of the attention.

Among the most significant celebrations in Q2 were [Mother's Day](#) (8 May 2022) and [Father's Day](#) (19 June 2022). During the quarter, relevant registrations rose in the week leading up to 8 May and 19 June, respectively. The trend is reflected in the chart below.





Mother's Day domains, most notably properties under the .mom TLD, peaked in the week ending 7 May, and again on 21 May. The chart below shows all celebration-related domain registrations.



By the end of the quarter, about 80% of the domains continued to resolve to IP addresses. A majority (80.5%) of the domains were geolocated in the U.S. Similarly, the U.S. was the top registrant country, accounting for 56% of the total registration volume.





Top Registrant Countries of Celebration-Related Domains Added in Q2 2022

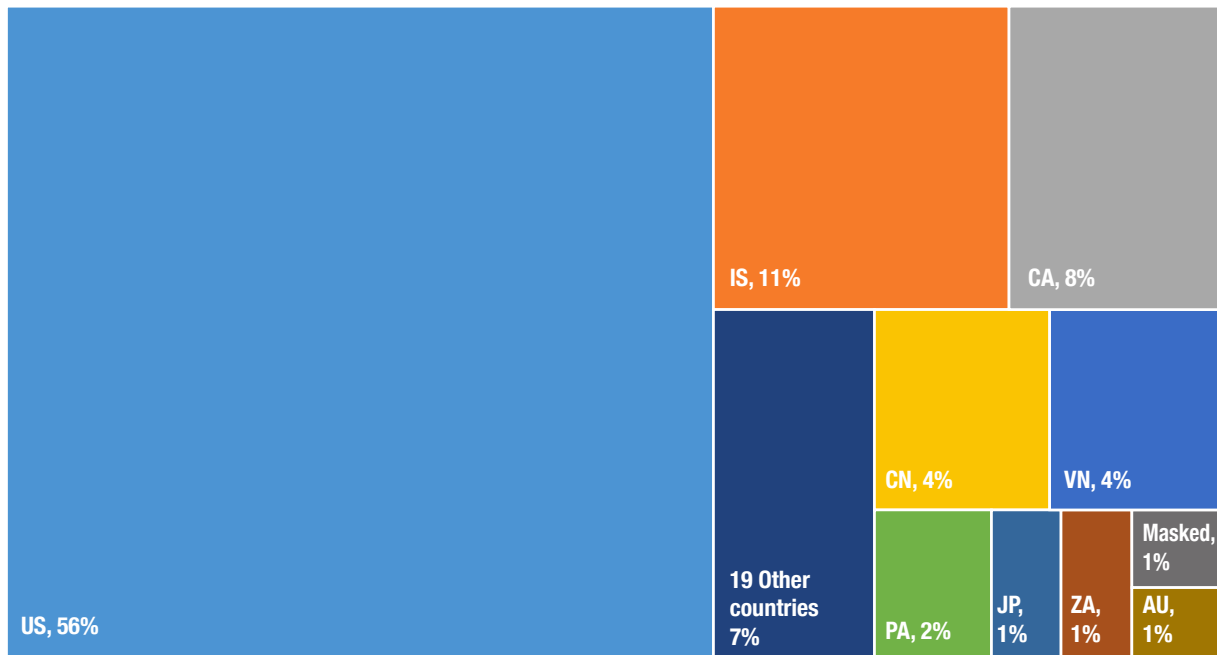


Image 4: Top registrant countries of the Mother's Day- and Father's Day-related domains

Approximately 1% of the celebration-related digital properties were flagged as malicious by various malware engines.

The top 10 registrars accounted for about two-thirds of the domain registrations, while the rest were distributed across 80 other registrars. GoDaddy led the top 10, accounting for 25% of the domains.

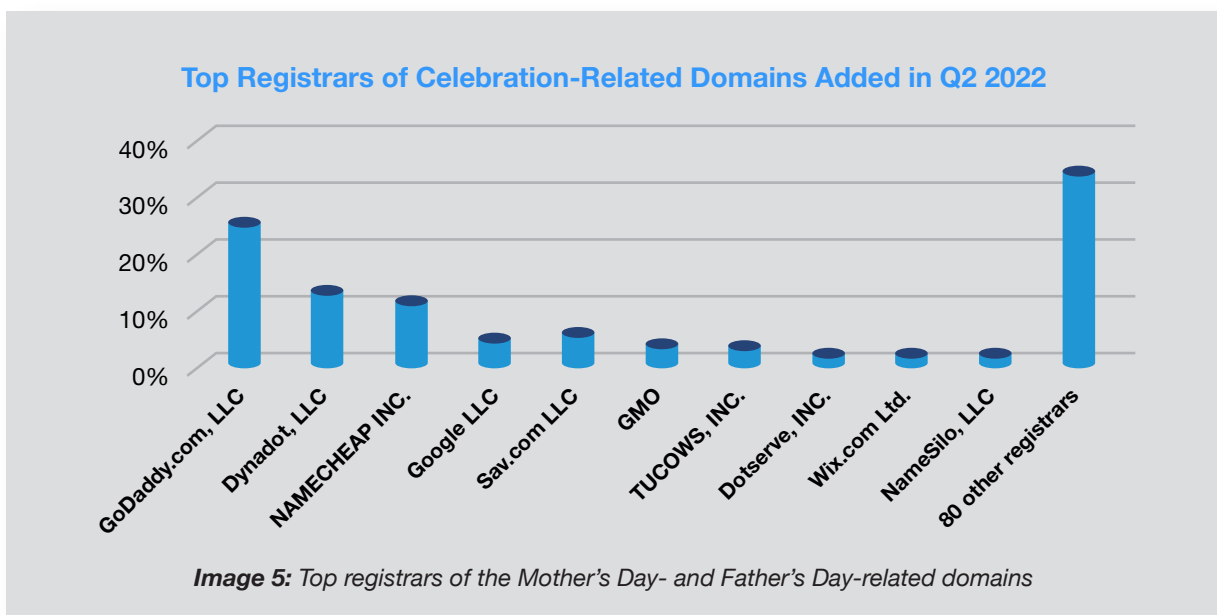


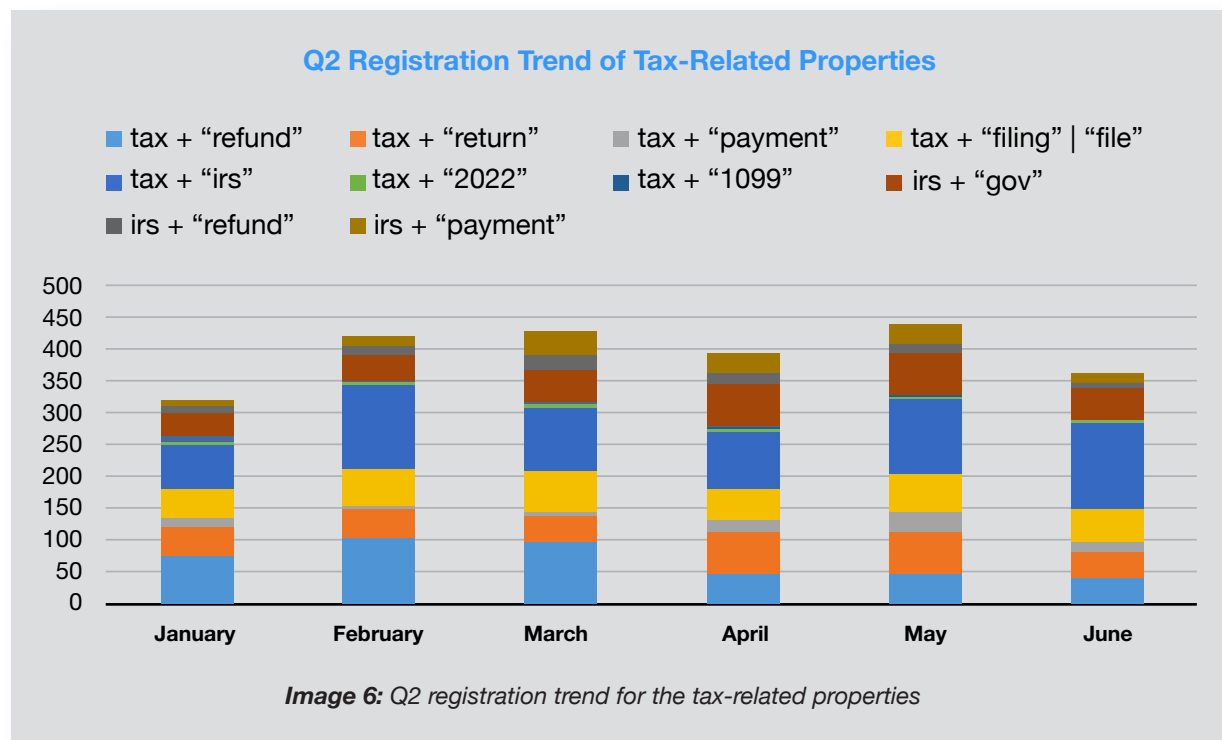
Image 5: Top registrars of the Mother's Day- and Father's Day-related domains



2B: Seasonal Themes

In many cases, time-sensitive matters tend to draw attention, affecting domain registrations. One example is the U.S. tax season, which kicked off on 24 January 2022 with a deadline of 18 April 2022.

The registrations of tax-related domains increased by about 30% from January to February, plateaued throughout March, and slightly dropped in April. Interestingly, the domain registrations rose again in May. The number of new tax-related domains added in June was higher than that recorded in January, resulting in Q2 having more tax-themed domain registrations than Q1.



An alarming 12% of the Q2 properties were flagged as malicious. We also found the same percentage of malicious properties in our [threat report](#) dedicated to the tax season published last March.

The domain's top IP geolocation and registrant country was the U.S., accounting for 73% of the IP resolutions and 53% of the registrations. Canada, the U.K., and India also made it to both top 10 lists.



Top IP Geolocations of Tax-related Domains Added in Q2 2022

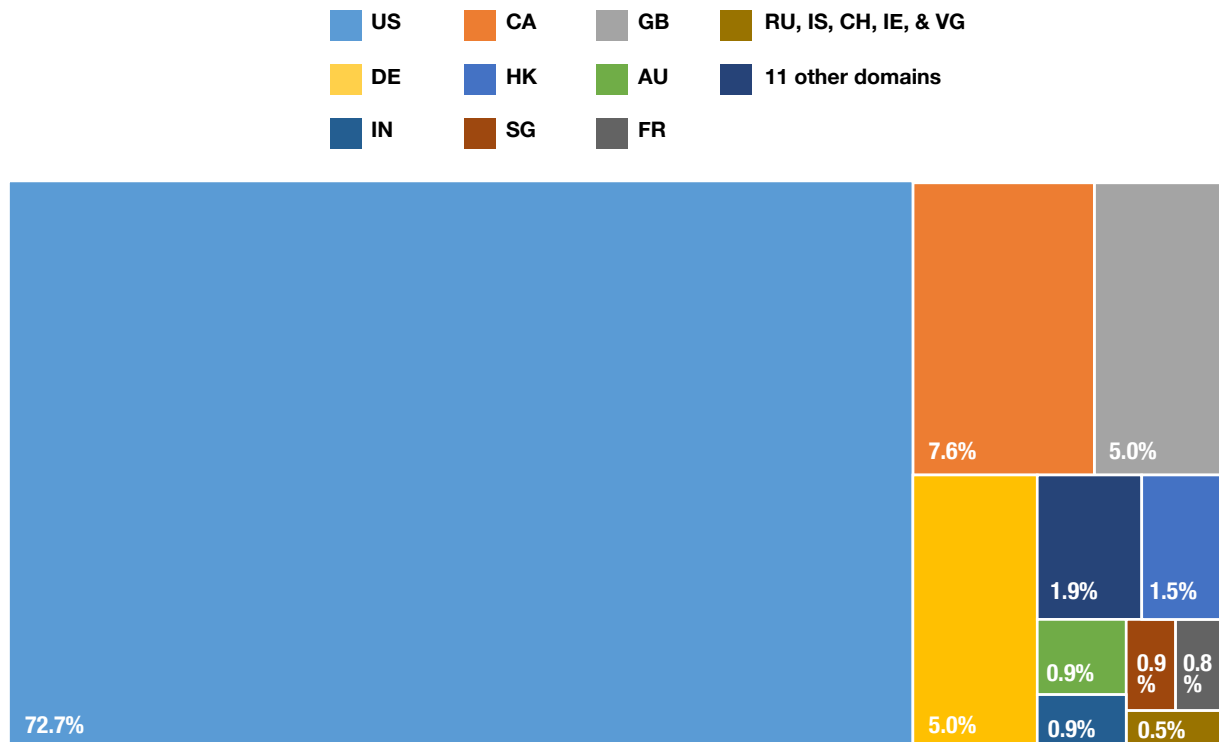


Image 7: Top IP geolocations of the tax-related properties

Top Registrant Countries of Tax-Related Domains added in Q2

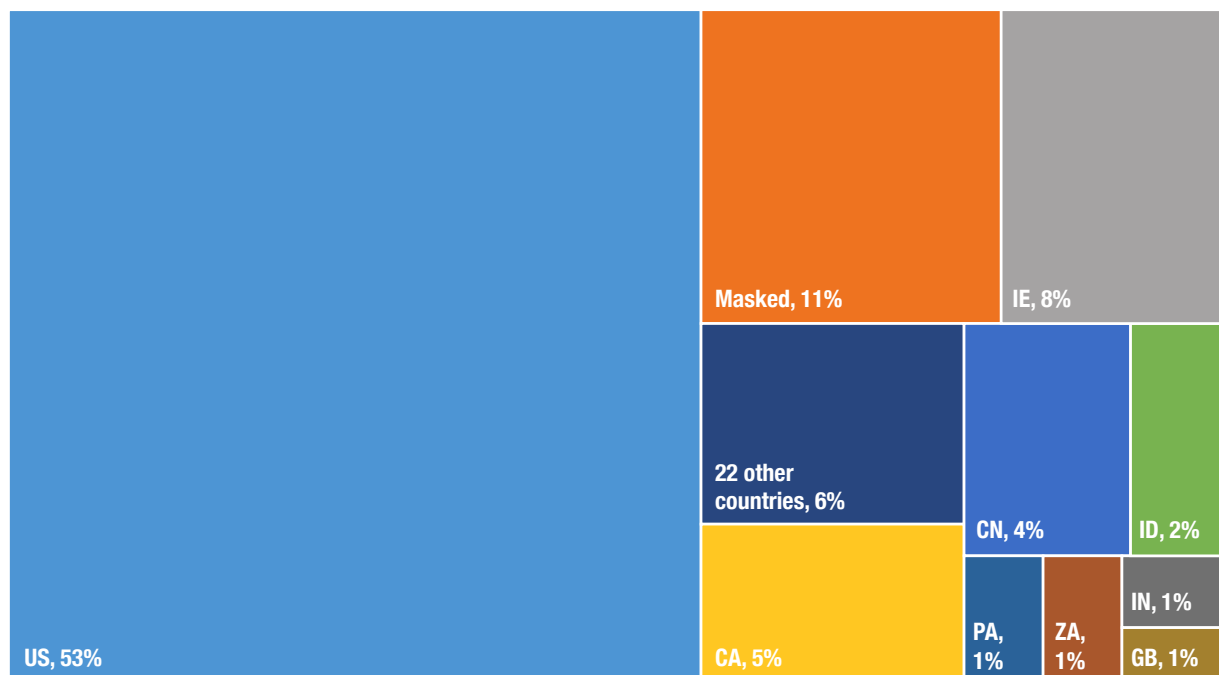
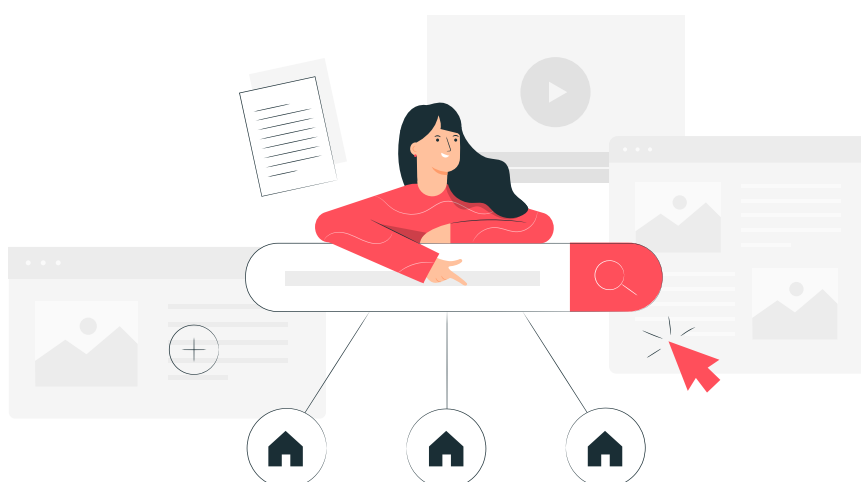
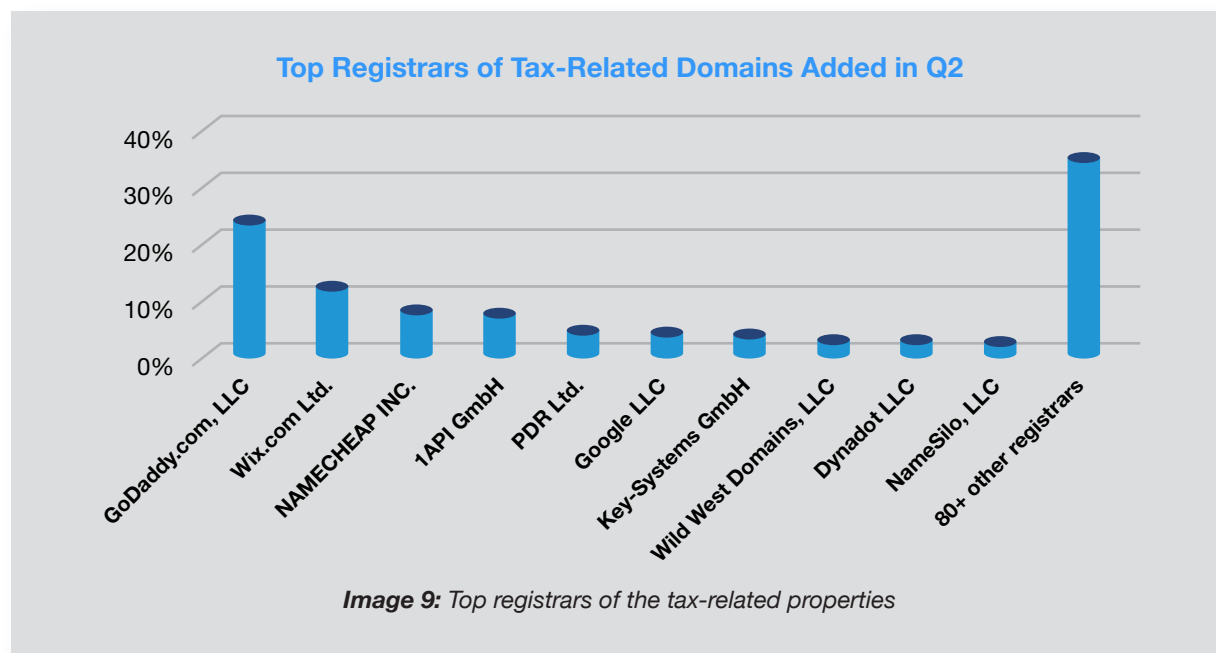


Image 8: Top registrant countries of the tax-related properties

About 24% of the domains were managed by GoDaddy, followed by Wix (12%) and Namecheap and 1API (8% each). The top 10 registrars of the tax-related domains are presented in the chart below.



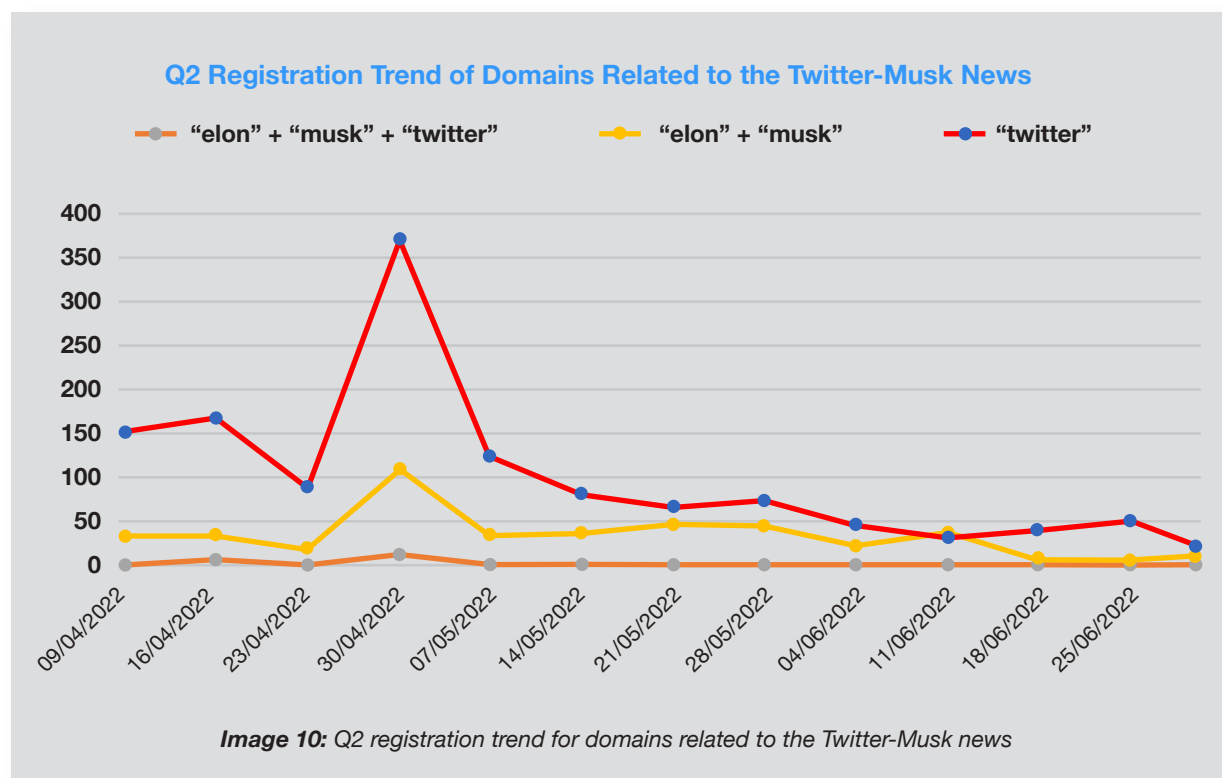


2C: News-Related Trends

We have repeatedly [seen headlines](#) aligning with spikes in related domain registrations. Coincidental or not, some registrants may think that domains relevant to current events are lucrative investments.

In Q2, the top news reflected in the DNS was Elon Musk's offer to buy Twitter and the company's subsequent acceptance of the US\$44-billion deal. The offer was accepted on 25 April 2022, and the registration of domains containing "Elon Musk" and "Twitter" significantly increased that week. By the end of Q2, 3% of these properties were reported as malicious.

The chart below reflects the registration trend related to news about Elon Musk and Twitter.



The domains' IP geolocation and registrant countries mostly pointed to the U.S. and Canada. However, several domains also resolved to or were registered in other countries and territories, such as China, Germany, and Russia.



Top IP Geolocations of Domains Related to the Twitter-Musk News

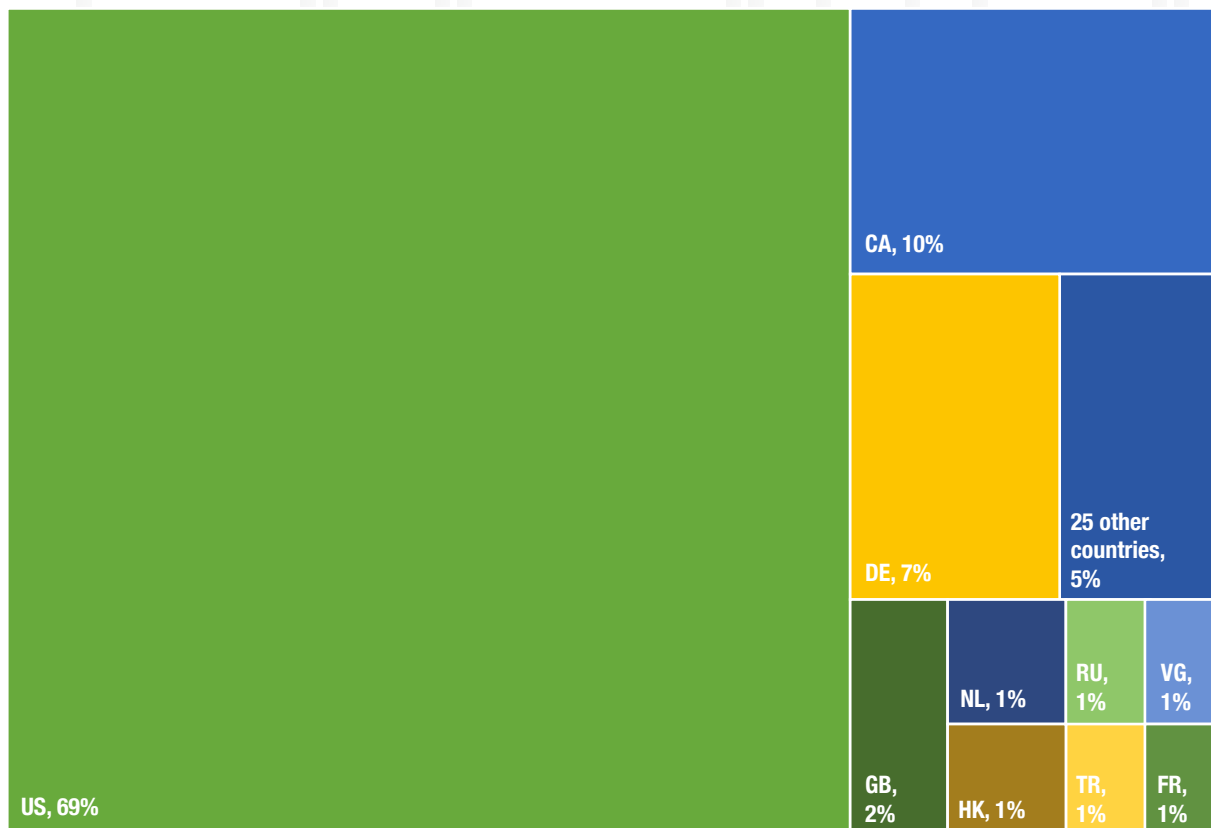


Image 11: Top IP geolocations of domains related to the Twitter-Musk news

Top Registrant Countries of Domains Related to the Twitter-Musk News

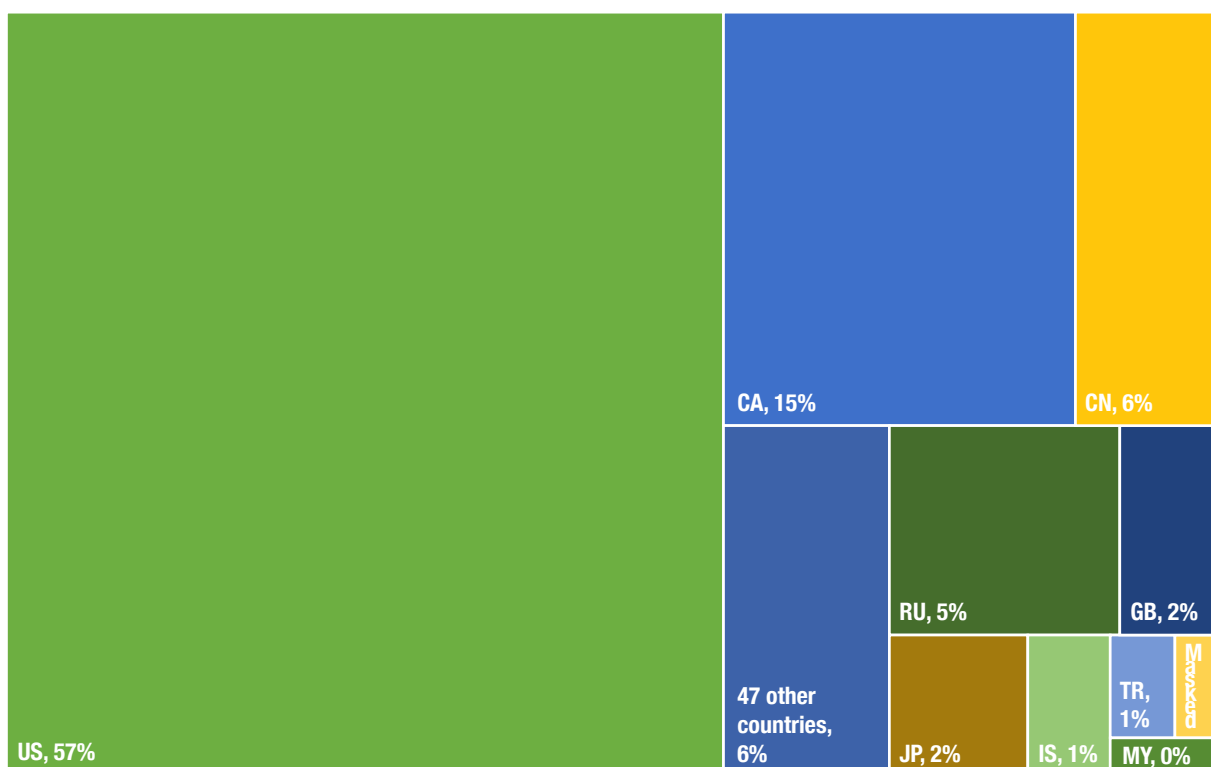
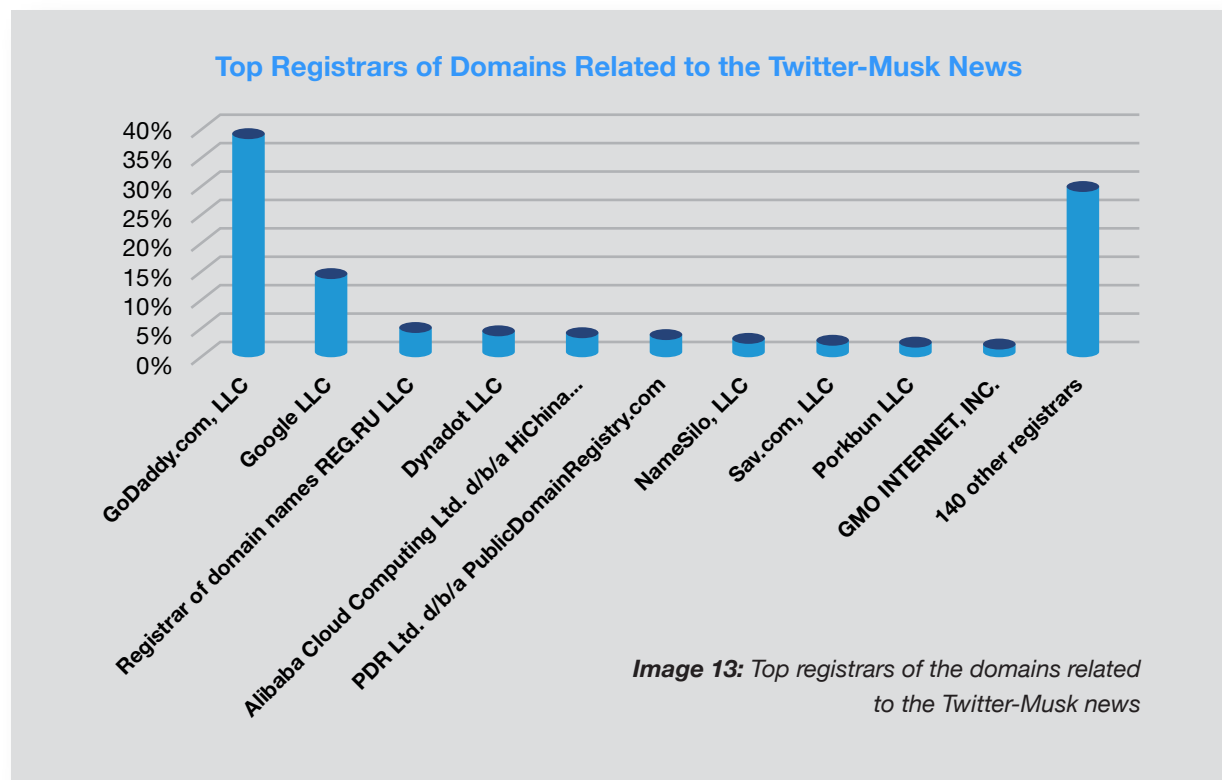


Image 12: Top registrant countries of domains related to the Twitter-Musk news

Again, GoDaddy topped the list of registrars, managing 39% of the domains. It was followed by Google (14%) and hundreds of other countries (47%). The top 10 registrars are shown in the chart below.





2D: World Event-Themed Registrations

Global affairs like the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly affected domain registration behaviors, with people adding [pandemic-related websites](#), [vaccine-themed domains](#), and other relevant domain registrations since 2020.

This year, the world is witnessing the Russia-Ukraine war. Within the week since the war started on 24 February 2022, domains containing the names of both countries began blowing up in the DNS. Several of these domains also contained strings like “help,” “aid,” “support,” and “donate.”

While most of the registrations occurred in March, they exceeded pre-war levels throughout Q2. It’s also important to note that about 1% of the domains added during that quarter were found malicious. The registration trend is illustrated in the graph below.



The IP resolutions and registrant locations primarily pointed to the U.S., although several also originated from Russia and Ukraine.



Top IP Geolocations of Properties Related to the Russia-Ukraine War

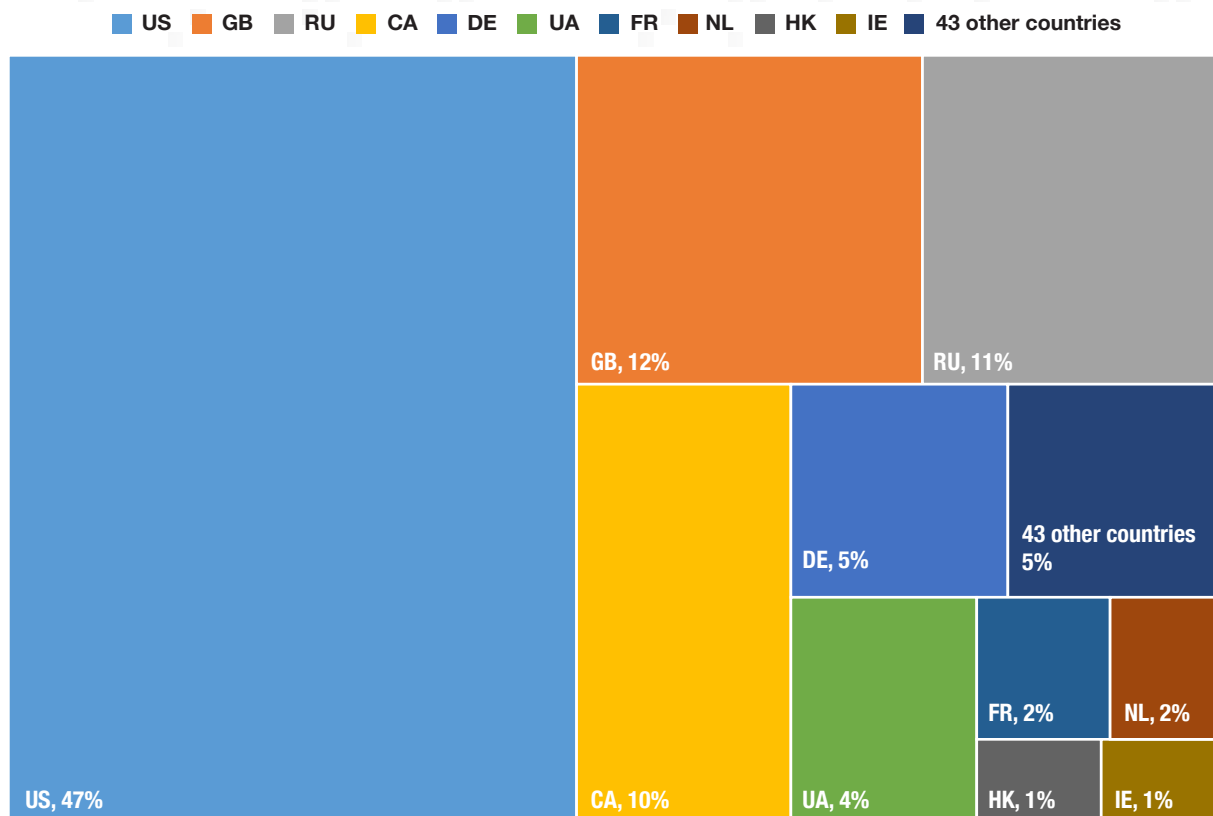


Image 15: Top IP geolocations of the domains related to the Russia-Ukraine war

Top Registrant Countries of Properties Related to the Russia-Ukraine War

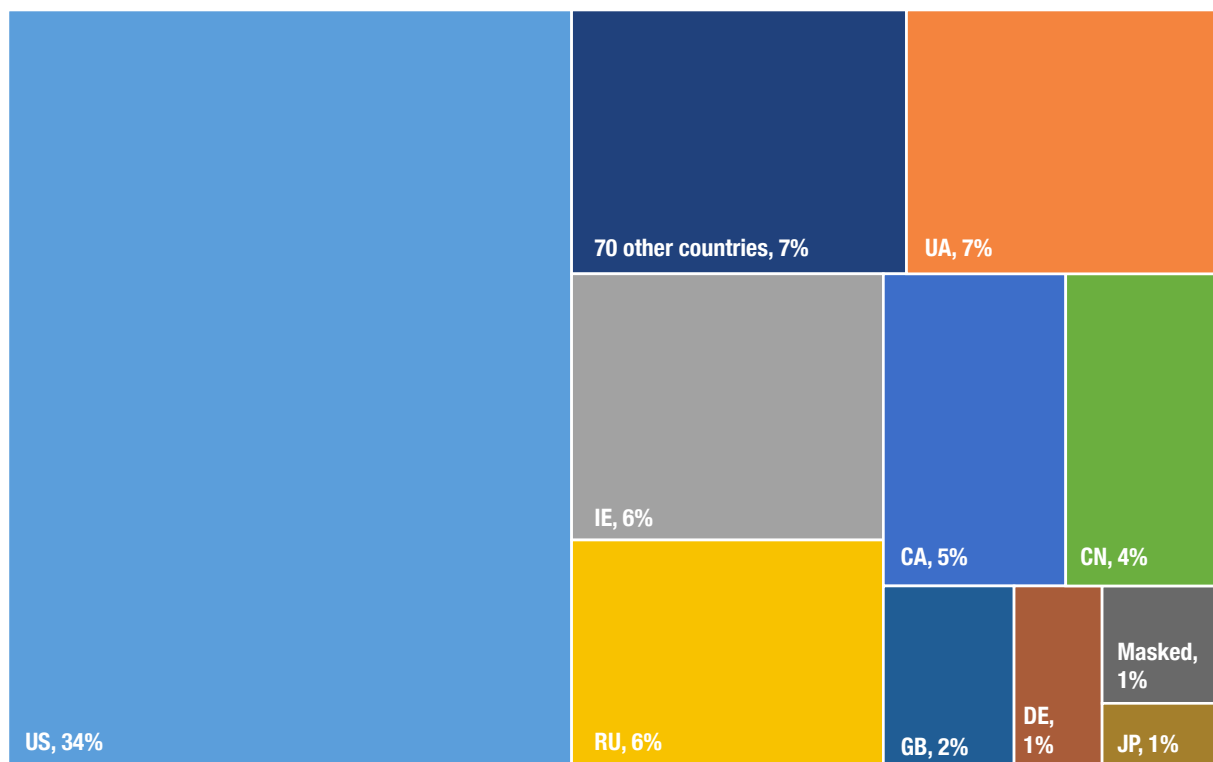


Image 16: Top registrant countries of the domains related to the Russia-Ukraine war

The top registrars included those based in Russia and Ukraine, although GoDaddy and Namecheap still took the lead.

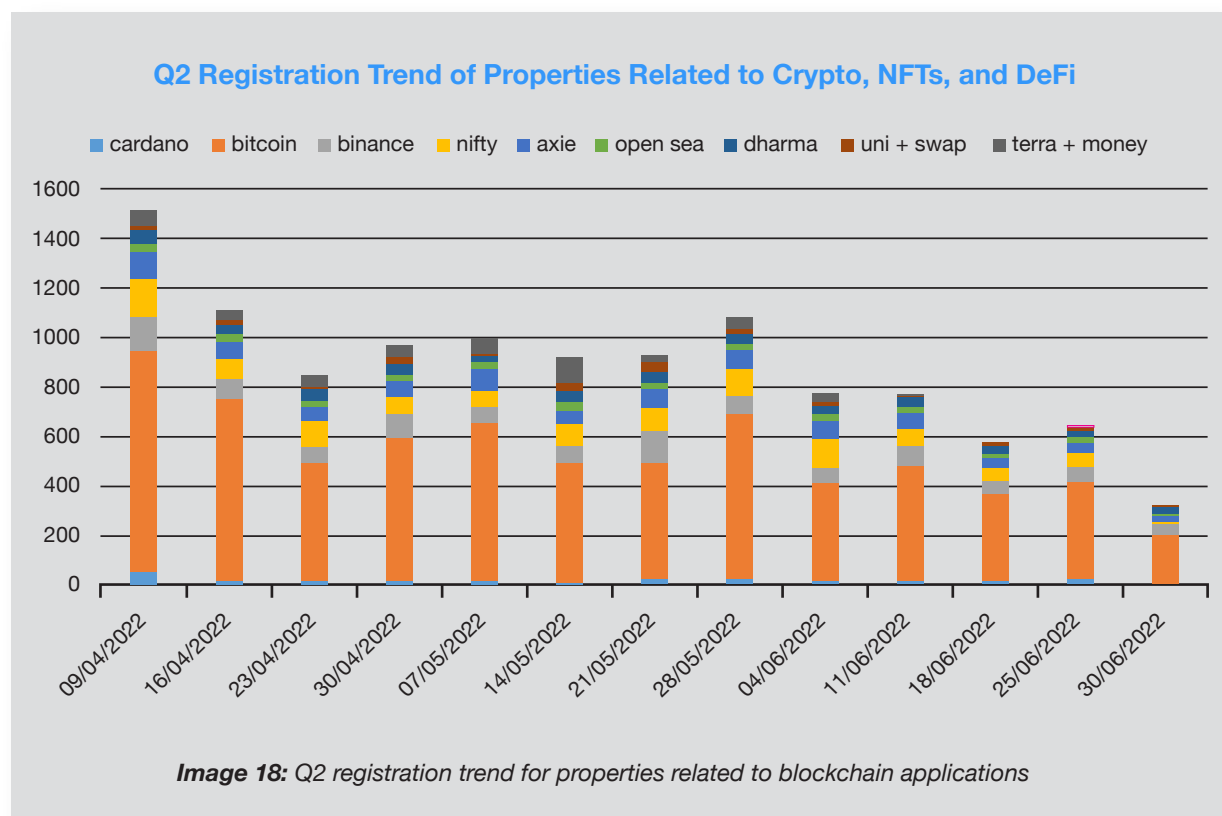




2E: Blockchain-Related Trends

The applications of blockchain technology have immensely added complexity to how people behave online. Cryptocurrencies, NFTs, and decentralized finance (DeFi) platforms are just some blockchain applications that have and continue to cause quite a stir, including in the DNS.

In Q2, we detected more than 11,400 domains containing the names of some of the top NFT and DeFi platforms and cryptocurrencies. These companies include Cardano, Axie, and Terra Money. The first two weeks of the quarter accounted for most of the registered domains. The registrations were erratic throughout May until they steadily dropped in the final weeks of June.



Like most cybersquatting domains, these blockchain-related properties could serve as vehicles for phishing, scams and malware distribution. In fact, about 2% of the domains have been flagged as malicious based on a malware check performed on 2 July 2022.

The U.S. remained the top IP geolocation and registrant country. The rest of the top 10 can be seen in the succeeding charts.



Top IP Geolocations of Domains Related to Crypto, NFTs, and DeFi

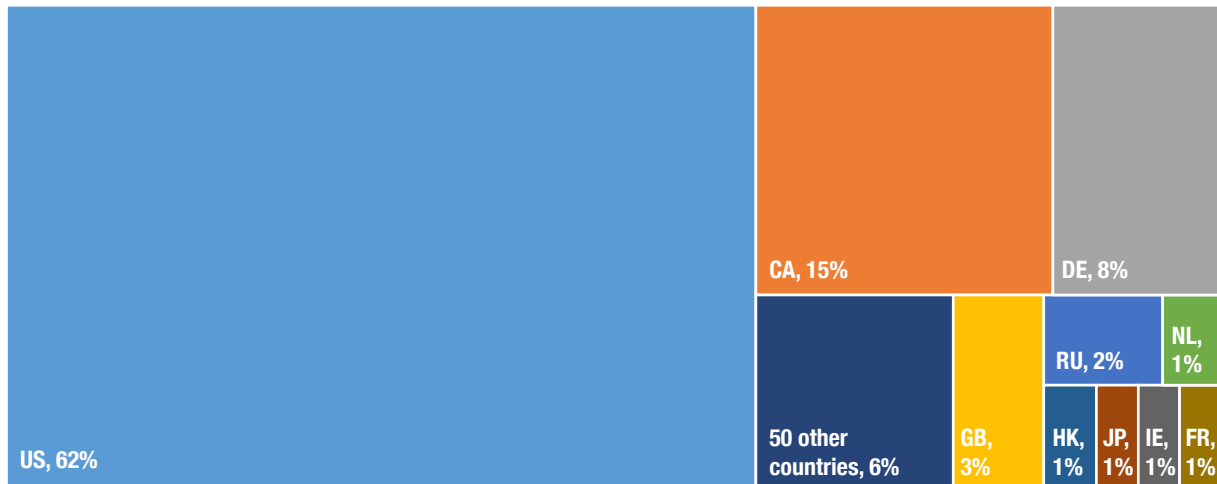


Image 19: Top IP geolocations of the properties related to blockchain applications

Top IP Registrant Countries of Domains Related to Crypto, NFTs, and DeFi

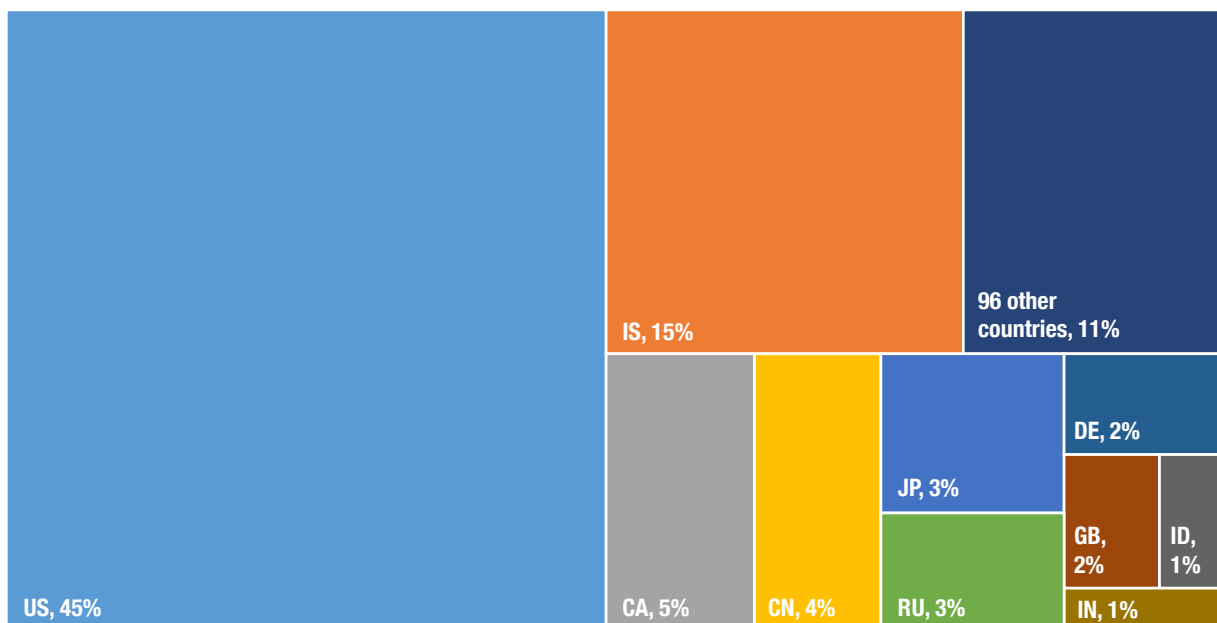
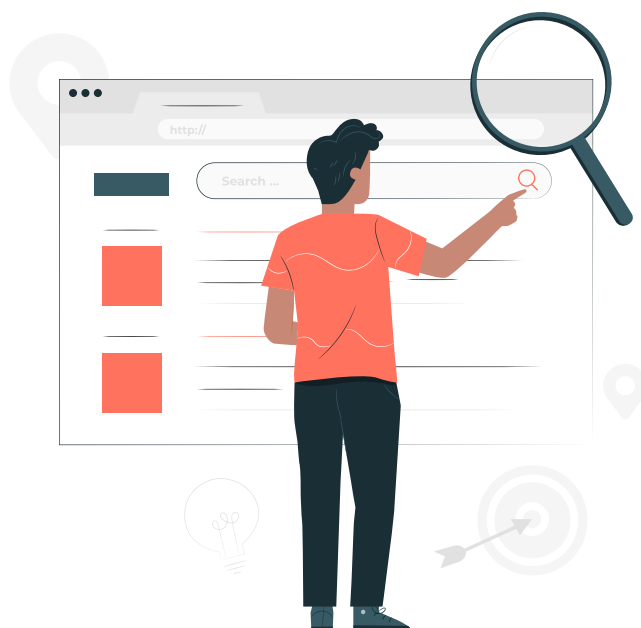
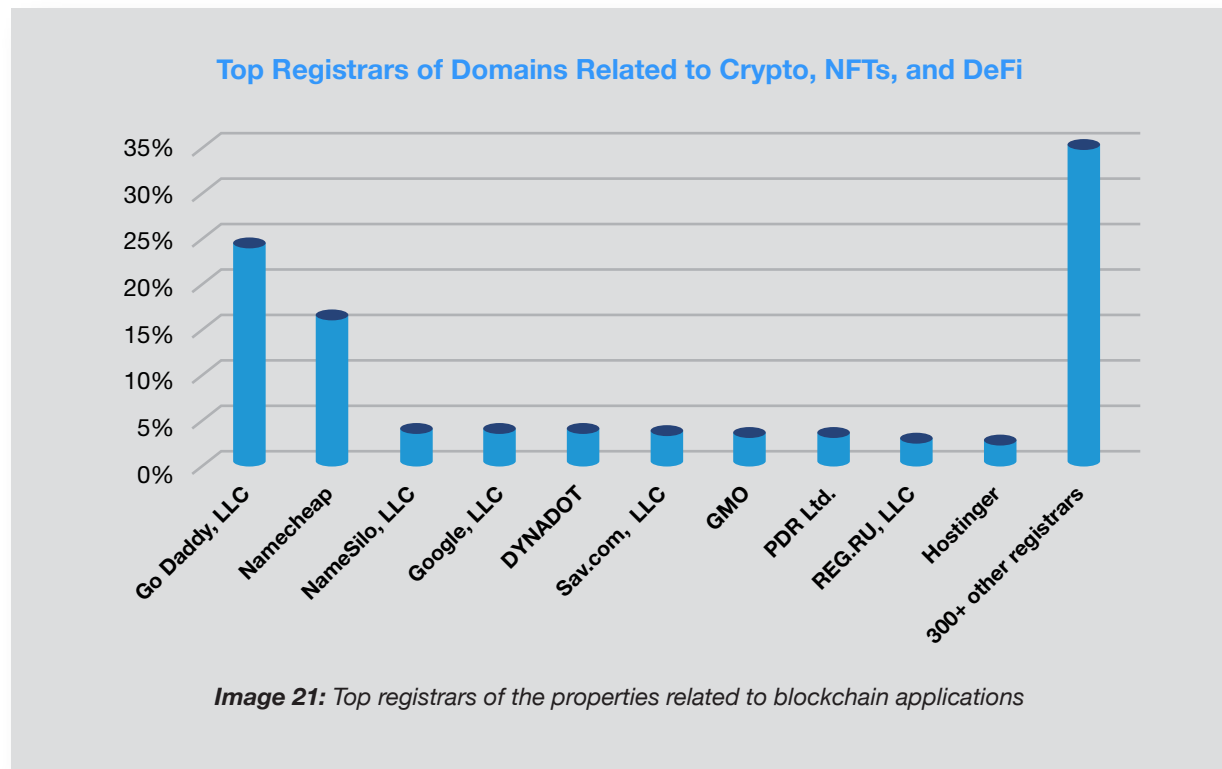


Image 20: Top registrant countries of the properties related to blockchain applications

GoDaddy and Namecheap also remained the top registrars.



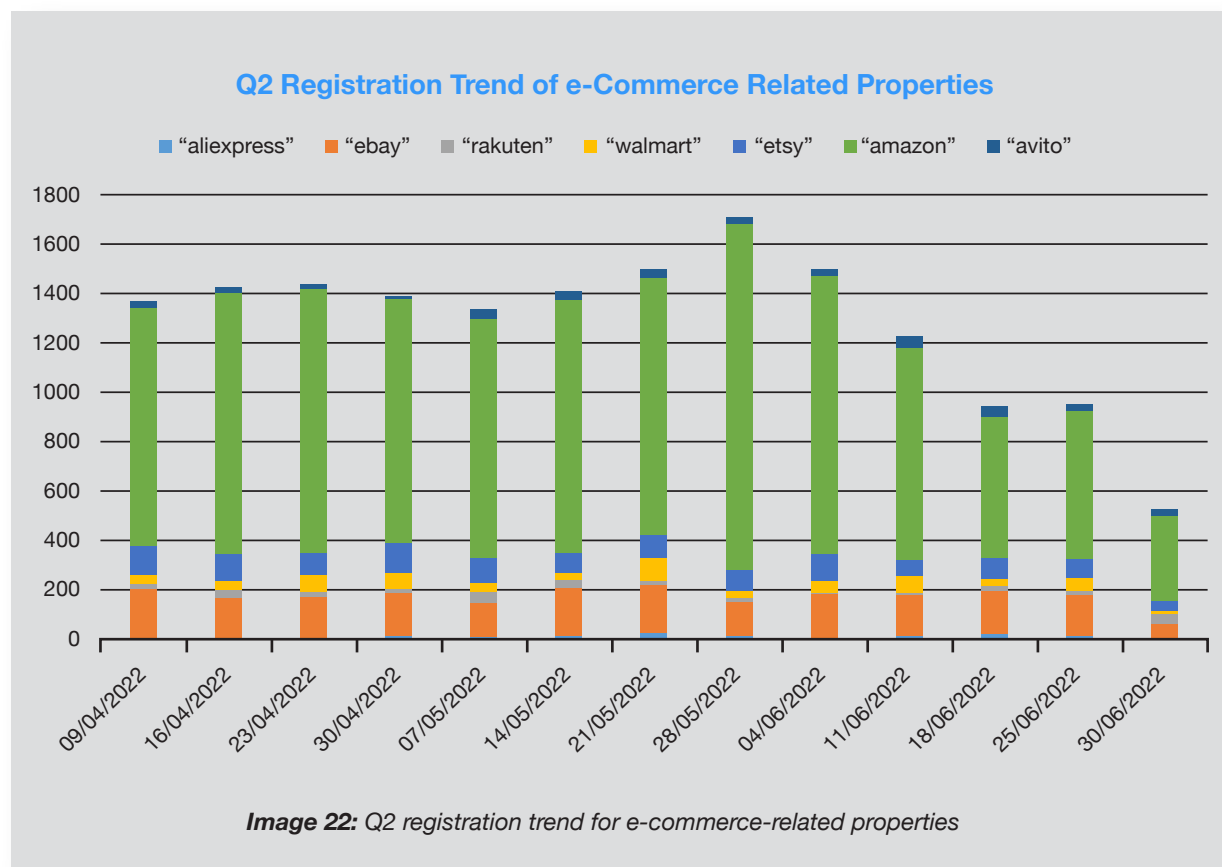


2F: Industry-Related Registrations

We studied the digital footprints of several industries, including [container shipping lines](#), [car dealerships](#), and [social media platforms](#). In most cases, we discovered thousands of cybersquatting properties targeting the leading companies in the industry under scrutiny.

In Q2, we discovered a persistent danger in the form of e-commerce look-alike domains. In a [research](#) conducted in early June, we found more than 13,000 cybersquatting domains targeting some of the frequently visited online shopping platforms. By the end of the quarter, the number rose to 16,745.

Online shopping-related domain registrations increased in the week ending 28 May 2022, as shown in the chart below.



As with the domains recorded for other trends and themes, the top geolocation of the online shopping-related properties was the U.S. It was also the top registrant country.



Top IP Geolocations of eCommerce Related Properties

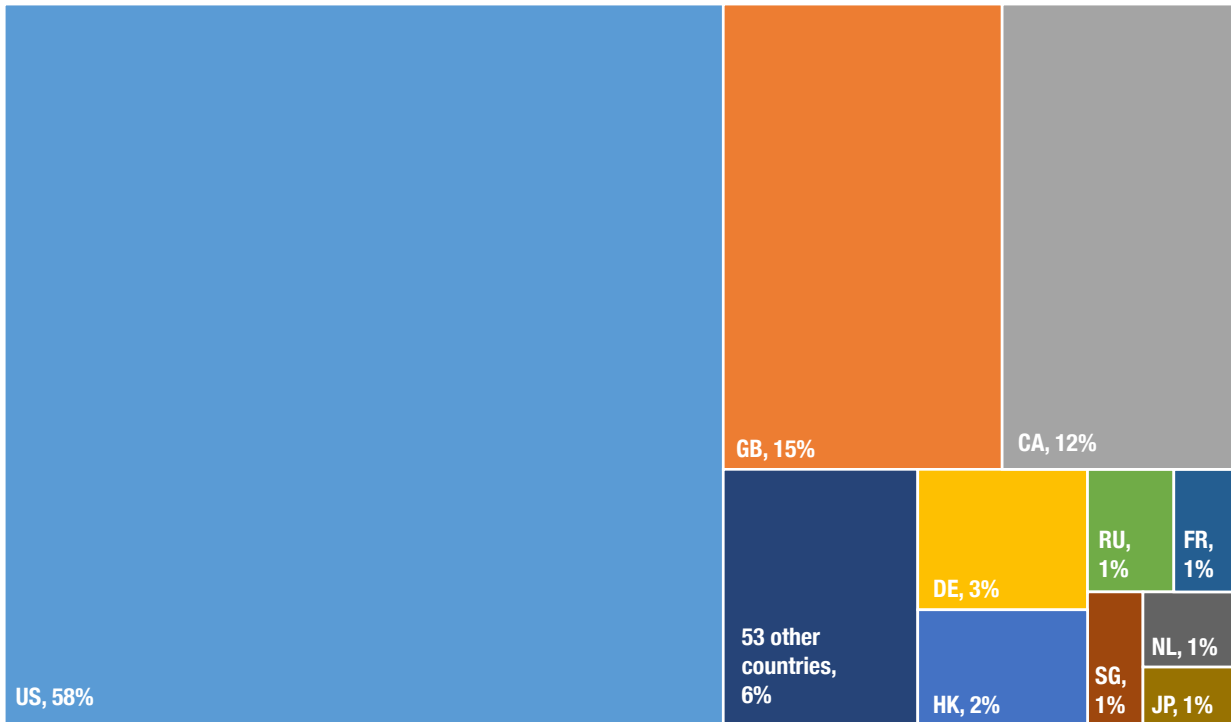


Image 23: Top IP geolocations of e-commerce-related properties

Top Registrant Countries of eCommerce Related Properties

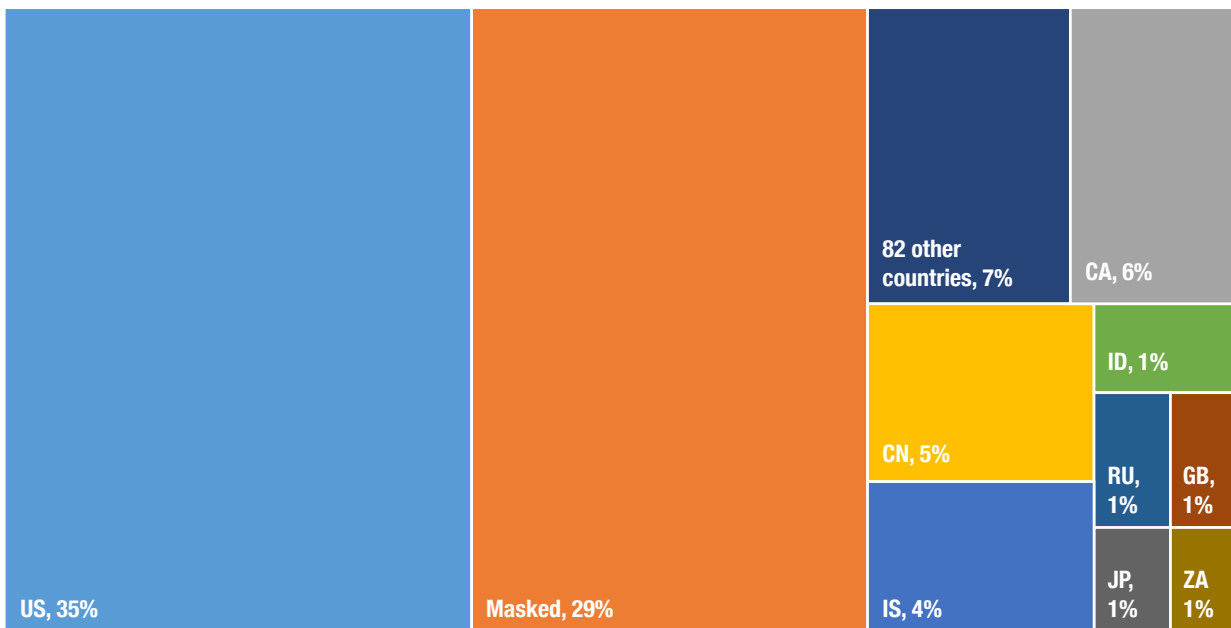


Image 24: Top registrant countries of e-commerce-related properties

However, the top registrar varied for this trend. Instead of GoDaddy, Wix, an e-commerce website builder, topped the list. About 3.22% of the domains were found malicious.

Top Registrars of eCommerce Related properties

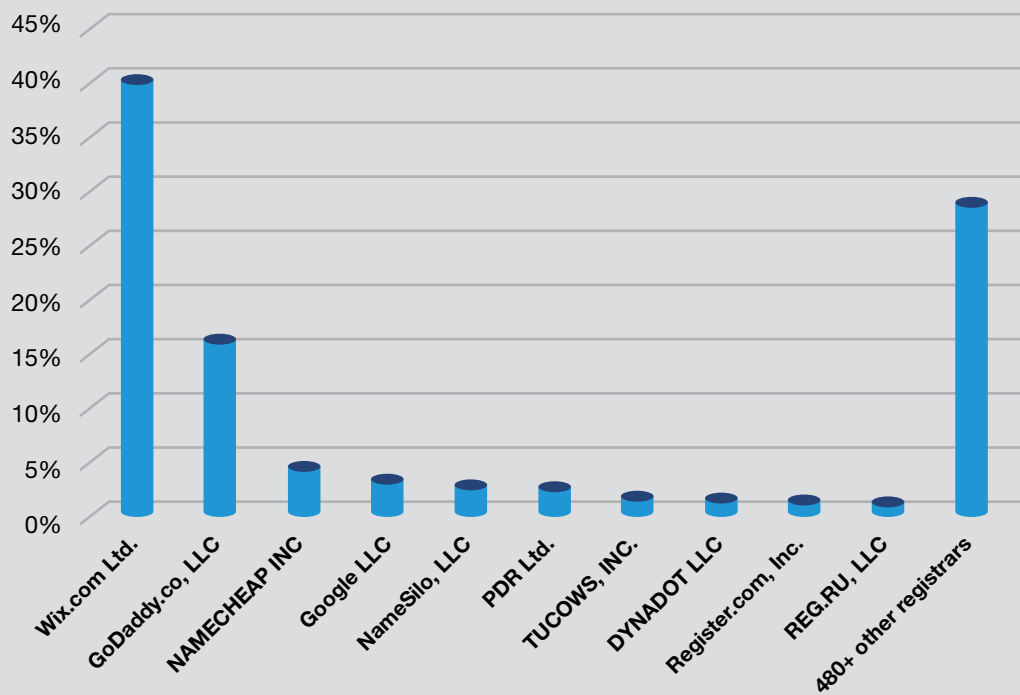
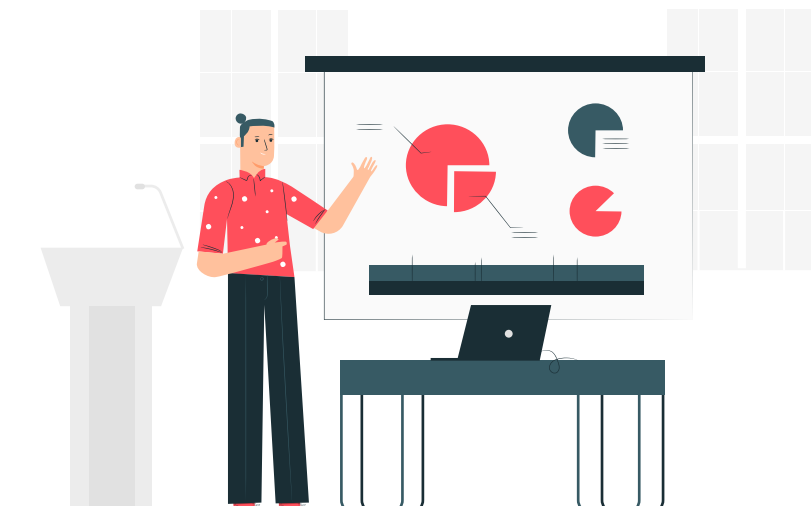


Image 25: Top registrars of e-commerce-related properties





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Key Takeaways

For the domain registration trends and themes in Q2, we arrived at insights that could possibly help shape future security practices and research projects. We listed them below.

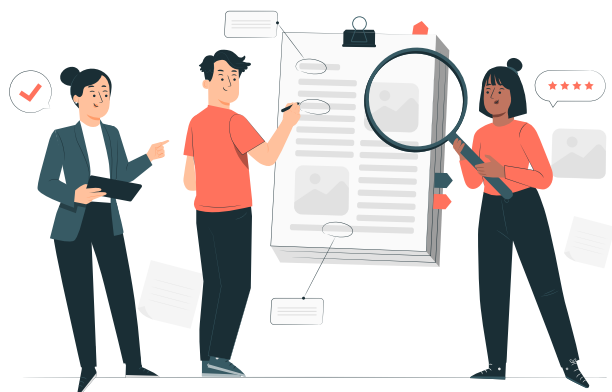
a. Celebration and season-related domain registrations begin increasing about 2–3 weeks before an event.

b. Global and local news may also drive up relevant domain registrations. While some domains may be innocent, others may take advantage of people's interest in the topic.

c. The tax season accounted for the highest percentage of malicious domain registrations. Threat actors could be more aggressive and persistent when immediate monetary gains are within reach.

d. Many domains had masked WHOIS records, which extended to registrant countries. While that can be concerning, some threat hunting techniques have proven effective despite data redaction. We tackled these in a separate [white paper](#).

e. Constant and real-time DNS monitoring and timely distribution of security notices about possible cyber threats connected to the holidays, events, and current events must be observed.





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Conclusion

Much has been said about how digitalization has affected the way people behave. And when we look closely, we can deduce that this also works the other way around when it comes to DNS activities and domain registration behaviors—they are influenced by people's actions both within and outside the online world.

Are you interested in observing domain registration trends and themes in your environment? Feel free to [contact us](#). We are also on the lookout for potential research collaborations.



About Us

WhoisXML API is a cyber intelligence provider that gives enterprises access to one of the largest repositories of well-parsed domain, subdomain, IP, and DNS data that enhances cybersecurity platforms' capabilities and helps security teams gain superior network security.

The data that WhoisXML API provides comes in different consumption models, ranging from APIs, data feeds, monitoring tools, and lookup tools, all of which make the Internet more secure and transparent. WhoisXML API has more than 50,000 satisfied customers, spanning law enforcement agencies, cyber forensics analysts, threat hunters, and cybersecurity solutions developers.



WhoisXMLAPI
The Who Behind Domain, IP & Cyber Threat Intelligence