QRStuff

The QRStuff State of QR Codes Report 2026

What happens after the scan

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2026 Edition

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What happens after the scan

QRStuff Research

QR codes have moved from novelty to everyday infrastructure. This report combines QRStuff platform data with external market research to explain how the channel is changing, what people create, where scans lead, and why the next phase of QR maturity depends less on printing more codes and more on designing better post-scan journeys.

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This report uses aggregate, publication-safe QRStuff platform outputs and external public sources. It does not publish raw URLs, customer names, account IDs, device IDs, or customer-level tables.

The scan is no longer the finish line. It is the first measurable step in a physical-to-digital journey.

Foreword: The Scan Is No Longer the Finish Line

For years, the QR code industry had a simple adoption question: would people scan? That question has largely been answered. Smartphone cameras recognize QR codes natively, consumers encounter them on menus, packaging, signage, receipts, business cards, tickets, product inserts, and payments screens, and businesses increasingly treat QR as a durable access layer rather than a short-lived campaign trick.

The more important question now is: **what is the scan being asked to do?**

That question changes the lens. A QR code is not just a square graphic, a link, or a scan count. It is a promise made in a physical context. The person scanning is usually standing in a restaurant, holding a product, reading a sign, joining an event, opening a manual, comparing a property, or trying to complete a task. If the destination wastes that context, the campaign loses momentum. If the destination matches the moment, the QR code becomes a bridge from attention to action.

This is why QRStuff's data is useful. It does not only show that scans happen. It shows what customers create, how scanning has changed over time, where external destinations lead, and how often those journeys are instrumented for measurement. In QRStuff platform data, the channel looks mature: 2025 scans moderated from the 2024 peak, but remained 2.7x the 2018-2019 average; external destinations were overwhelmingly specific pages rather than generic homepages; and high-scan links showed materially stronger visible campaign tracking.

The conclusion is not that every QR program is sophisticated. It is that QR has become common enough for sophistication to matter. The next advantage belongs to organizations that manage QR codes as a journey system: clear physical context, useful mobile destination, trusted experience, and measurement beyond the scan.

Executive Summary: QR Codes Have Become Everyday Infrastructure

QR codes are now embedded in the habits and systems around mobile life. 91% of U.S. adults owned a smartphone in 2025, up from 35% in 2011 (Pew Research Center).[1] That matters because the practical scanner is already in the customer's hand. At the same time, GS1's Sunrise 2027 initiative is pushing retail toward 2D barcodes, including QR codes powered by GS1, so one symbol can support point-of-sale scanning and digital product information.[2] Juniper Research projects global QR code payment value to grow from $5.4 trillion in 2025 to more than $8 trillion by 2029.[3] These are different markets, but they point in the same direction: QR is becoming infrastructure.

QRStuff's first-party data adds a destination-level view to that market story. In QRStuff platform data, dynamic scans reached 88.2 million in 2025. That was down 12.2% from 2024, but still 2.7x the 2018-2019 pre-pandemic average and equivalent to a 16.1% CAGR from 2018 to 2025. The pattern is better described as normalization after a peak than as channel collapse.

The strongest findings:

- **QR is mature, not exhausted.** In QRStuff platform data, 2025 dynamic scans retained 87.8% of the 2024 peak and were still 2.7x the 2018-2019 average. Scans per newly created code rose from 47.7 in 2024 to 62.9 in 2025 because code creation fell faster than scan activity. This is a platform ratio, not scans per individual code, but it suggests an installed-base effect.
- **The destination is usually specific.** Among reviewed external Q1 2025 destinations, 82.7% were deep pages and 11.8% were homepages. The QR use case is usually not "visit our website." It is "open the thing that helps right now."
- **URL dominates creation, but URL is only the container.** URL codes represented 66.3% of public January 2025 creations, while the non-URL long tail represented 33.7%. Destination intelligence is needed because two URL codes can have completely different jobs.
- **Measurement is still the weak link.** Only 3.9% of external destinations in the creation-weighted sample carried visible campaign tracking parameters. Among high-scan links, visible campaign tracking was 3.2x higher. Mature programs appear more likely to instrument the journey.
- **Security basics are mostly normalized.** Among reviewed external destinations, 97.7% used HTTPS. That does not guarantee trust, safety, or quality, but it means the baseline web security expectation is largely present.
- **Action-oriented destinations are gaining share in samples.** Forms, surveys, and lead-capture deep pages rose 3.4 percentage points from January to October across fixed monthly samples. This is sample-based, not a full-year census, but it is directionally consistent with QR moving

[1] Pew Research Center, "Mobile Fact Sheet" (Demographics of Mobile Device Ownership and Adoption in the United States). Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 5-June 18, 2025; accessed June 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/

[2] GS1 US, "What is GS1 Sunrise 2027?" Industry initiative (voluntary), targeting retail point-of-sale capability to read 2D barcodes alongside UPC/EAN by the end of 2027. https://www.gs1us.org/industries-and-insights/by-topic/sunrise-2027

[3] Juniper Research, "QR Code Payments to Exceed $8tn by 2029," press release, Feb. 10, 2025. https://www.juniperresearch.com/press/qr-code-payments-to-exceed-8tn-by-2029/

from information access toward workflow initiation.

- **QR is professionalizing: two populations, two destinies.** The half-life of a dynamic code created by a registered user rose from ~5 months (2019 cohort) to 13 months (2024), while anonymous codes have stayed flat at roughly 5 months since 2019. Twenty-two months in, about 1 in 8 registered users' 2024-cohort codes was still being scanned, versus roughly 1 in 27 platform-wide. This is selection, not causation: committed use cases gravitate to accounts.
- **A small evergreen core does most of the scanning work.** Platform-wide, fewer than 1 in 10 dynamic codes are evergreen — scanned steadily across their whole first year — yet they earn roughly two-thirds of all first-year scans. Among registered users' codes, evergreens are 3 in 10 codes and earn 74% of scans.
- **Scanning is global and diversifying rapidly.** Full-year 2025 data covers 101.9M geolocated scans across 239 countries. The United States led at 36.3% — down from 40.1% in 2024. India climbed from third to second place at 7.0% of scans, the largest single-year scan-volume rise in the dataset; Indonesia held the top three at 5.7% after slipping from second to third. Asia-Pacific now accounts for 28.2% of all scans (up from 26.2%), while North America's share fell from 43.3% to 38.7%. Europe holds 21.0%.
- **Seventeen years of product evolution.** Creation-year type mix (2009–2025, ex-Visualead) shows URL dominance easing as WiFi, vCard, and utility types grow; dynamic (tracked) codes now account for the majority of new creations. Milestone-year geography extracts (2012, 2016, 2020, 2022, 2025) show scan share shifting from US–Europe concentration toward Asia-Pacific.
- **Codes are durable, and the decline was front-loaded.** Of codes created in January 2024, about 26% were still being scanned a year later, with an active-code half-life near 5.3 months. The 2025 decline was concentrated in the first half (H1 down 20.7% versus H2 down only 2.5%, with Q4 up 10.6%), which reads as stabilization rather than continued decline — though a two-year comparison should not be treated as a guaranteed forward trend.

Market context explains why people can scan. QRStuff data explains what those scans are asked to do. The gap between the two is where QR strategy now lives.

State of the QR Market: Mobile Habits, Payments, Packaging, and Trust

The QR market is not one market. It is a pattern that appears wherever physical objects, places, and moments need to connect to digital content. The same technology supports a restaurant menu, a payment terminal, a product passport, a warranty registration form, an event check-in, a healthcare instruction page, and a real-estate tour.

Mobile habits made scanning ordinary

QR adoption depends on the presence of capable scanning devices and the comfort to use them. In the U.S., Pew's 2025 mobile fact sheet reported 98% cellphone ownership and 91% smartphone ownership among adults.[1] That does not measure QR behavior directly, and it should not be treated as a global QR adoption statistic. It does establish the consumer infrastructure that makes QR scanning low-friction in mature smartphone markets.

Competitor reports now tend to assume that basic scanning literacy exists. Uniqode's 2026 State of QR Codes report, publicly released in March 2026,[2] says it analyzed 188 million scans across 796,000 QR codes, surveyed 524 marketers and 1,000 consumers, and found that 71% of consumers said QR codes were useful in daily life.[3] Bitly's 2026 scan report frames QR as a "behavioral interface" and argues that scan growth can outpace new-code creation as QR literacy compounds.[4] These reports are platform-specific and should be read with vendor caveats, but their editorial direction matches QRStuff's first-party evidence: the value is shifting from "can we get scans?" to "what do scans reveal and enable?"

Payments show QR as a utility layer

Juniper Research projects QR code payment value to grow from $5.4 trillion in 2025 to more than $8 trillion by 2029, driven by national QR schemes, account-to-account payments, and low implementation costs.[5] Payments are not the same as marketing QR codes, but the payment market is important because it trains consumers to treat scanning as a normal transactional behavior. A code can be a

[1] Pew Research Center, "Mobile Fact Sheet" (Demographics of Mobile Device Ownership and Adoption in the United States). Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 5-June 18, 2025; accessed June 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/

[2] Uniqode (via PR Newswire), "Uniqode Releases State of QR Codes 2026 Report...," Mar. 18, 2026. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/uniqode-releases-state-of-qr-codes-2026-report-examining-qr-code-adoption-among-marketers-and-consumer-scanning-behavior-302716784.html

[3] Uniqode, "The State of QR Codes 2026." Based on a survey of 524 U.S. marketers and 1,000 U.S. consumers and analysis of 188M+ scans across ~796,000 QR codes (Jan-Dec 2025). https://www.uniqode.com/unique-angles/playbooks/state-of-qr-codes-2026

[4] Bitly, "The State of QR Code Scans in 2026." Bitly platform data; accessed June 2026. https://bitly.com/blog/state-of-qr-code-scans-2026/

[5] Juniper Research, "QR Code Payments to Exceed $8tn by 2029," press release, Feb. 10, 2025. https://www.juniperresearch.com/press/qr-code-payments-to-exceed-8tn-by-2029/

menu, a payment rail, a ticket, a proof point, or a service entry point.

Packaging is becoming a data interface

GS1 Digital Link reframes the barcode as a gateway to online product information. GS1 describes a migration toward a single multipurpose 2D barcode that can be used at retail point of sale and for access to certifications, instructions, product information, traceability, and other digital content.[6] GS1 US calls the transition Sunrise 2027: retailers should be able to scan, at point of sale, 2D barcodes alongside traditional UPC/EAN barcodes by the end of 2027.[7]

The European Digital Product Passport adds regulatory pressure in some categories. GS1 describes the DPP as a data structure accessible through an internationally standardized data carrier, and cites February 2027 as the target for the first prioritized-product DPPs to be operational.[8] That February 2027 date should not be read as a general Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) DPP deadline. The only legally fixed 18 February 2027 obligation is the EU Battery passport. Broader ESPR product passports are set per sector through delegated acts that are not yet dated and are widely expected between 2028 and 2030.

These standards matter for marketers because packaging QR codes are no longer only promotional. They can become persistent product interfaces that carry compliance, sustainability, support, authentication, recycling, and loyalty experiences over time.

Trust is now part of the product

As QR becomes ordinary, it also becomes an attack surface and a trust surface. Uniqode reported that almost 60% of consumers were confident QR codes are safe to scan, while a sizeable share remained neutral and could be reassured by branded domains, clear calls to action, and fast-loading landing pages.[9] QRStuff's destination sample found that 97.7% of reviewed external destinations used HTTPS. That is encouraging, but HTTPS is a baseline. Trust also depends on whether the code looks official, whether the call to action is clear, whether the destination domain matches expectations, and whether data collection is transparent.

Market context explains the scan; QRStuff data explains the journey

The external sources and the QRStuff first-party data describe two halves of the same picture. The market data explains why people can and do scan. The QRStuff data explains what the scan is actually being asked to do. Read together:

- **Devices are ready.** Pew reports 91% U.S. adult smartphone ownership in 2025.[10] QRStuff data

[6] GS1, "GS1 Digital Link." https://www.gs1.org/standards/gs1-digital-link

[7] GS1 US, "What is GS1 Sunrise 2027?" Industry initiative (voluntary), targeting retail point-of-sale capability to read 2D barcodes alongside UPC/EAN by the end of 2027. https://www.gs1us.org/industries-and-insights/by-topic/sunrise-2027

[8] GS1, "GS1 Digital Product Passport Provisional Standard." GS1 states the first EU prioritised-product DPPs will be operational by February 2027. Note: the only legally fixed Feb 18, 2027 deadline is the EU Battery passport (Regulation (EU) 2023/1542); broader DPPs under the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (EU 2024/1781) are set per sector via delegated acts not yet dated. https://www.gs1.org/standards/standards-emerging-regulations/DPP

[9] Uniqode, "The State of QR Codes 2026." Based on a survey of 524 U.S. marketers and 1,000 U.S. consumers and analysis of 188M+ scans across ~796,000 QR codes (Jan-Dec 2025). https://www.uniqode.com/unique-angles/playbooks/state-of-qr-codes-2026

[10] Pew Research Center, "Mobile Fact Sheet" (Demographics of Mobile Device Ownership and Adoption in the United States). Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 5-June 18, 2025; accessed June 2026. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-

shows the corresponding behavior: scans remained 2.7x the 2018–2019 average even after the 2025 moderation, and codes keep getting scanned for months after creation.

- **Scanning is a normal transaction.** Juniper projects QR payment value to grow from $5.4 trillion in 2025 to more than $8 trillion by 2029.[11] QRStuff data shows the same comfort outside payments: the top content types are everyday utilities — reviews, WiFi, vCards, PDFs, maps — not just campaigns.
- **The market has matured past adoption.** Uniqode analyzed 188 million scans across roughly 796,000 codes and found 71% of consumers call QR useful, yet only 12% of marketers connect scans to revenue.[12] QRStuff data shows the same gap from the destination side: only 3.9% of creation-sample destinations carry visible campaign tracking.
- **Scans are first-party signals.** Bitly frames QR as a behavioral interface where scan growth can outpace new-code creation.[13] QRStuff data shows exactly that ratio shift: scans per newly created code rose from 47.7 in 2024 to 62.9 in 2025 as creation fell faster than scanning.
- **Packaging is becoming an interface.** GS1 Digital Link and the voluntary Sunrise 2027 initiative point toward multipurpose 2D barcodes at retail point of sale.[14][15] QRStuff data shows demand for specific, persistent destinations: 82.7% of reviewed external destinations are deep pages, not homepages.
- **Service moments are real.** The National Restaurant Association reported 59% of full-service and 57% of limited-service customers willing to use QR menus.[16] QRStuff data shows the destination patterns — documents, forms, and media — that those service moments depend on.

sheet/mobile/

[11] Juniper Research, "QR Code Payments to Exceed $8tn by 2029," press release, Feb. 10, 2025. https://www.juniperresearch.com/press/qr-code-payments-to-exceed-8tn-by-2029/

[12] Uniqode, "The State of QR Codes 2026." Based on a survey of 524 U.S. marketers and 1,000 U.S. consumers and analysis of 188M+ scans across ~796,000 QR codes (Jan-Dec 2025). https://www.uniqode.com/unique-angles/playbooks/state-of-qr-codes-2026

[13] Bitly, "The State of QR Code Scans in 2026." Bitly platform data; accessed June 2026. https://bitly.com/blog/state-of-qr-code-scans-2026/

[14] GS1, "GS1 Digital Link." https://www.gs1.org/standards/gs1-digital-link

[15] GS1 US, "What is GS1 Sunrise 2027?" Industry initiative (voluntary), targeting retail point-of-sale capability to read 2D barcodes alongside UPC/EAN by the end of 2027. https://www.gs1us.org/industries-and-insights/by-topic/sunrise-2027

[16] National Restaurant Association, "Restaurant Technology Landscape Report 2024." https://go.restaurant.org/rs/078-ZLA-461/images/NatRestAssoc_TechLandscapeReport_2024.pdf

Why QR Codes Are Growing Beyond Marketing

The common mistake is to treat QR as a media format. In practice, QR is a low-cost physical trigger for a digital workflow. That makes it useful in many functions that are adjacent to, but not limited to, marketing.

For marketers, QR codes connect print, packaging, retail, events, direct mail, out-of-home, and local campaigns to measurable digital actions. For operators, they reduce friction in service moments: menus, check-ins, forms, instructions, app downloads, WiFi access, reviews, and support. For product teams, they turn physical products into software-adjacent surfaces. For compliance and supply-chain teams, they can expose structured information that is too dynamic or too detailed for packaging alone.

This breadth is visible in QRStuff creation data. URL was the dominant public January 2025 content type, but the long tail included text, vCard, Google Review, WiFi, phone links, PDFs, Instagram, maps, images, YouTube, Google Forms, email, digital business cards, app downloads, and other content types. That diversity matters because it shows QR as a tool for everyday utility, not just acquisition.

The strategic implication is simple: QR should be planned around the job to be done after the scan. The code itself is the smallest part of the system.

The QRStuff Dataset and Methodology

QRStuff operates one of the longest-running QR platforms in the market. This report uses aggregate platform outputs from the `phase1-20250602` build, including:

- Dynamic scan aggregates from 2009 through 2025.
- QR code creation records, with Visualead-linked accounts excluded from the main code-creation and destination cohorts.
- External destination samples from Q1 2025 and scan-weighted January 2025 links.
- Deep-page use-case samples from January, April, July, and October 2025.
- A full-year 2025 geolocated scan dataset (101.9M scans across 239 countries, extracted via 27 bi-weekly windows from the QRStuff scan log) for country and region distribution.
- Derived robust statistics: year-over-year decomposition, multi-window CAGRs, monthly and day-of-week seasonality, client scan concentration, and creation-cohort longevity.
- Signature lifecycle analyses from the `signature-20260612` build: multi-cohort survival curves and half-lives (January cohorts 2019-2024), lifecycle archetypes, and first-year scan benchmarks — published in both registered-account and anonymous-inclusive (platform-wide) scopes.
- User-agent traffic bucket diagnostics for one sample day.
- Derived analytical findings built from reviewed aggregate outputs.

Several limits are important:

- Scan totals are aggregate hits. Bot/prefetch methodology approved 2026-06-12 (Declan Ahern): user-agent keyword matching + zero-device-count signal accepted as the first-generation filter.
- Destination statistics are sample-based, not a full census of every QRStuff code.
- Destination categories are deterministic classifications with editorial QA; some categories require continued refinement before stronger claims are made.
- Geography is now reported from comparable full-year 2024 and 2025 extracts (bi-weekly chunked windows from shorturl_log; 2025: 101.9M geolocated scans across 239 countries). k-anonymity threshold: 100 scans (25 countries suppressed). The prior 30-day April–May 2024 census is superseded for publication.
- Industry metadata is thin. Among top all-time code-volume candidates, GICS coverage was 30.0%, so industry claims are framed as segment implications, not platform-wide industry rankings.

Privacy rule: the report uses aggregate statistics only. It intentionally excludes raw destination URLs, customer names, account IDs, device IDs, and unsuppressed customer-level tables.

1

The Big Picture

16 years. 88.2 million scans in 2025.

The Long Arc: QR Usage From Novelty to Infrastructure

From 5,813 scans in 2009 to 88.2 million in 2025: QR codes are now infrastructure.

QRStuff's dynamic scan history starts in 2009 with 5,813 recorded dynamic scans and reaches 88.2 million in 2025. The path is not a smooth line. The channel grew through the 2010s, accelerated during the pandemic era, reached 100.5 million scans in 2024, then moderated to 88.2 million scans in 2025.

That 2025 decline should be stated plainly: dynamic scans fell 12.2% year over year in QRStuff platform data. But the more useful market reading comes from the longer baseline. 2025 scan volume remained 2.7x the 2018-2019 average. From 2018 to 2025, scans grew at a 16.1% CAGR; from 2021 to 2025, they grew at a 7.3% CAGR despite the 2025 decline.

2025 scans were still 2.7x the 2018-2019 average in QRStuff platform data.

The installed-base signal is especially important. Annual scans per newly created code rose from 47.7 in 2024 to 62.9 in 2025 because code creation fell faster than scan activity. This should not be read as the average performance of a single code. It is an annual platform ratio. Still, it suggests that QR engagement can persist even when fewer new codes are created.

The quarterly story adds nuance. Q1 through Q3 2025 were down against their 2024 counterparts, while Q4 2025 rose year over year. With only two years in the comparison, this is not a robust seasonality model. It does show why the year should not be reduced to a single decline number. A mature channel can have both moderation and pockets of renewed activity.

Seventeen years of QR: types, tracking, and geography waves

QRStuff's creation log reaches back to 2008, giving a view competitors rarely publish: how the product mix and geographic footprint evolved alongside scan volume. Three longitudinal extracts anchor this section.

Data type mix groups every QR code created in each calendar year by content type (ex-Visualead). Website URL codes still dominate, but their share has fallen as WiFi, vCard, plain text, PDF, and form types grew — QR moved from "link to a website" toward everyday utility payloads.

Dynamic vs static counts codes linked to a tracked short URL (dynamic, scannable and updatable) versus codes with content encoded directly in the symbol (static). Dynamic share rose steadily from the early platform years: most new QRStuff codes are now trackable dynamic codes, not one-off static payloads.

Geography waves compare full-year country scan share at milestone years (2012, 2016, 2020, 2022, 2025). The US remains the largest market throughout, but India, Indonesia, and broader Asia-Pacific share expand visibly in the 2020s panels — the same shift visible in the 2024→2025 rank-change chart in the geography chapter.

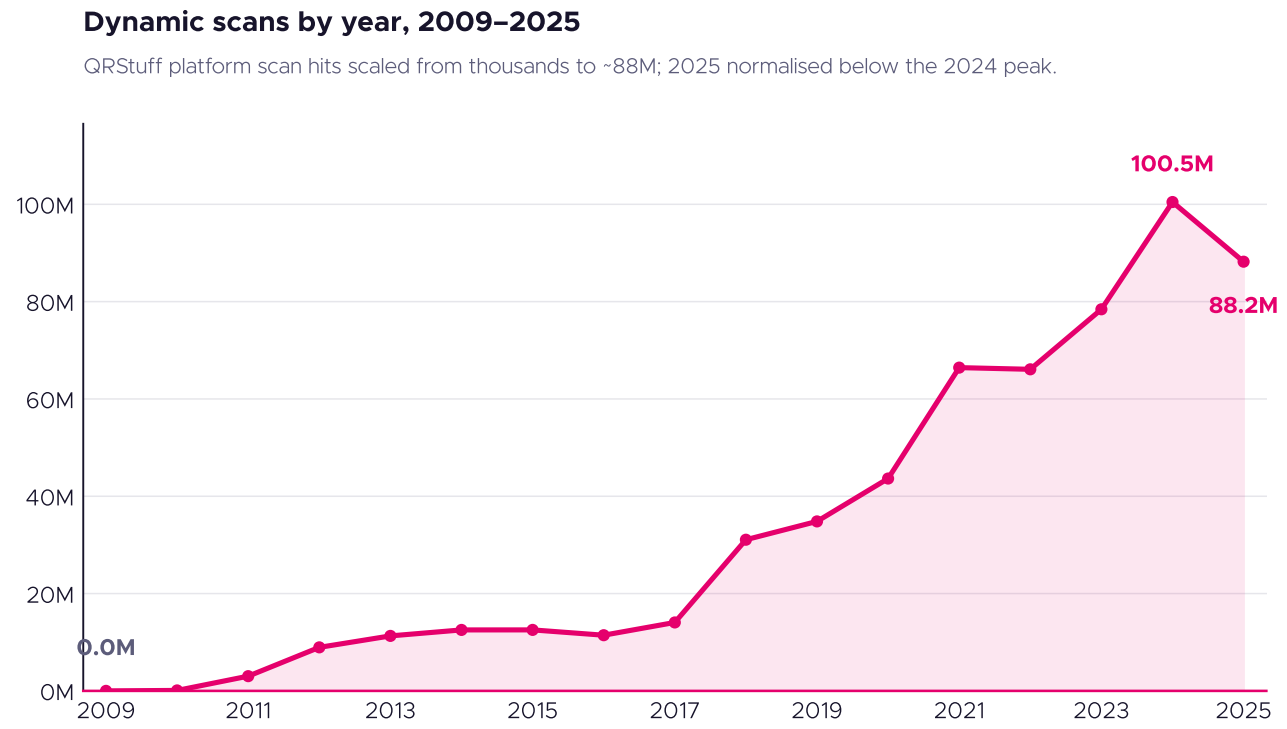

Figure 1: **Long-term dynamic scan history, 2009–2025.** Source: QRStuff platform data (`scan_trend_long_term.json`). Aggregate dynamic scan hits; bot/prefetch filter methodology approved 2026-06-12.

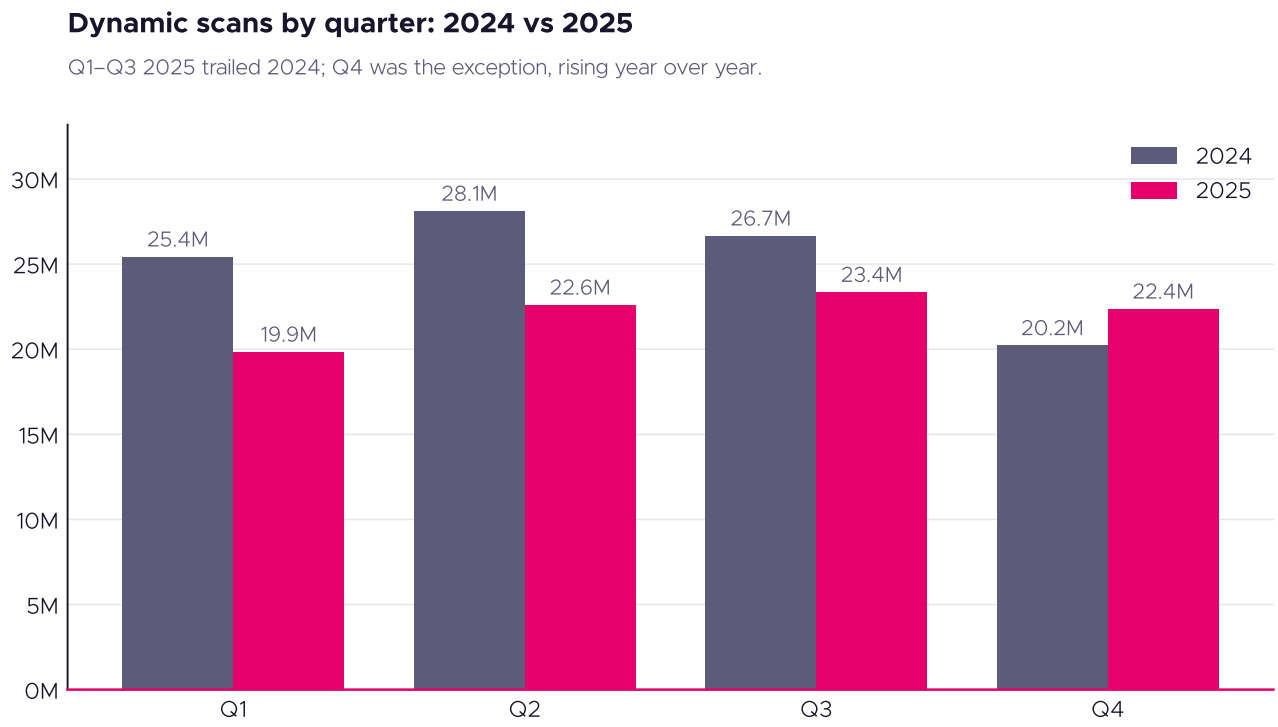

Figure 2: **Dynamic scans by quarter, 2024 vs 2025.** Source: QRStuff platform data (`scan_trend_2024_2025.json`). Q4 2025 was the exception to the annual moderation pattern.

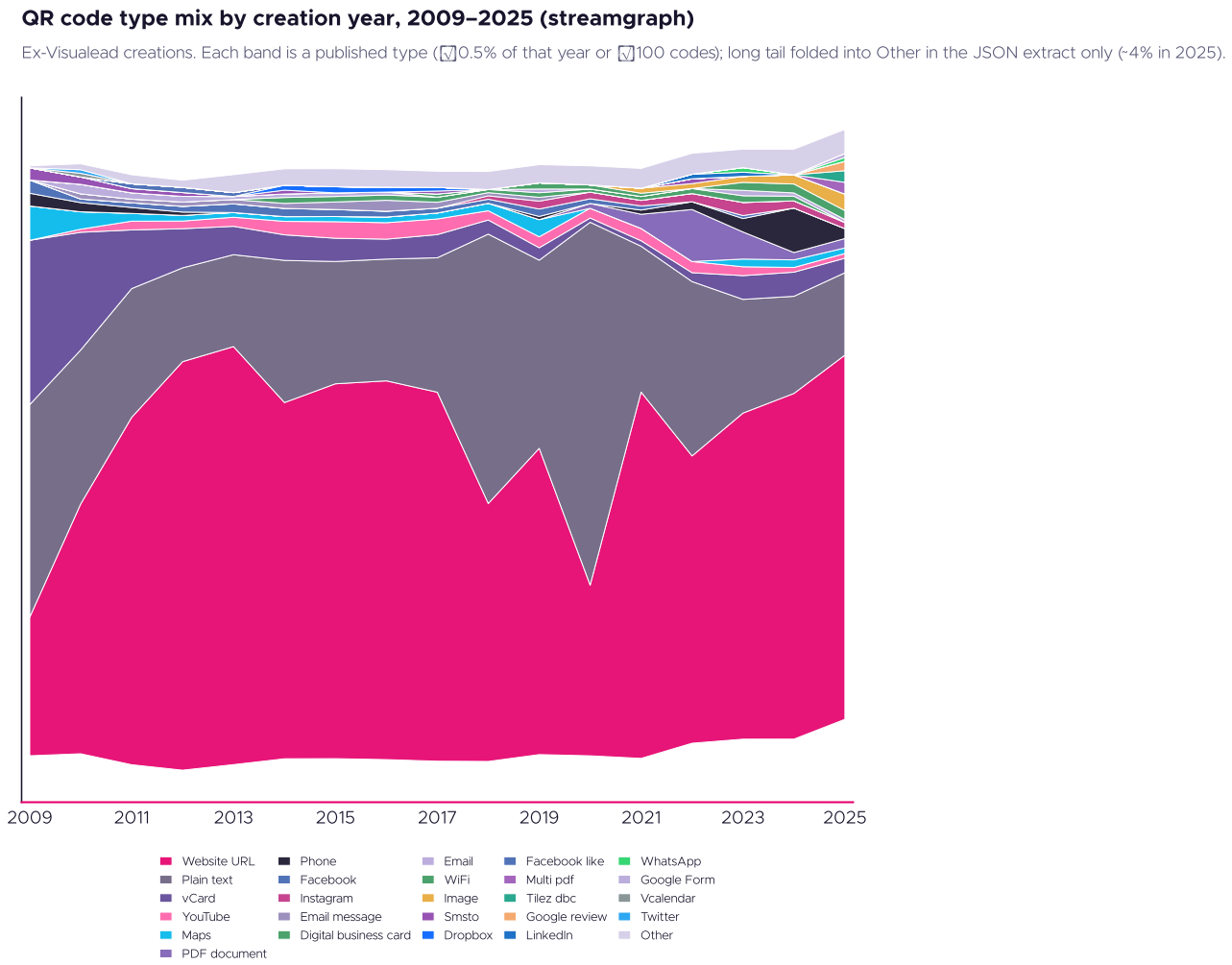

Figure 3: **QR code type mix by creation year, 2009–2025.** Source: `data_type_mix_by_year.json`. Ex-Visualead; wiggle-offset streamgraph with all published types (≥0.5% per year); long tail in Other (~4% in 2025).

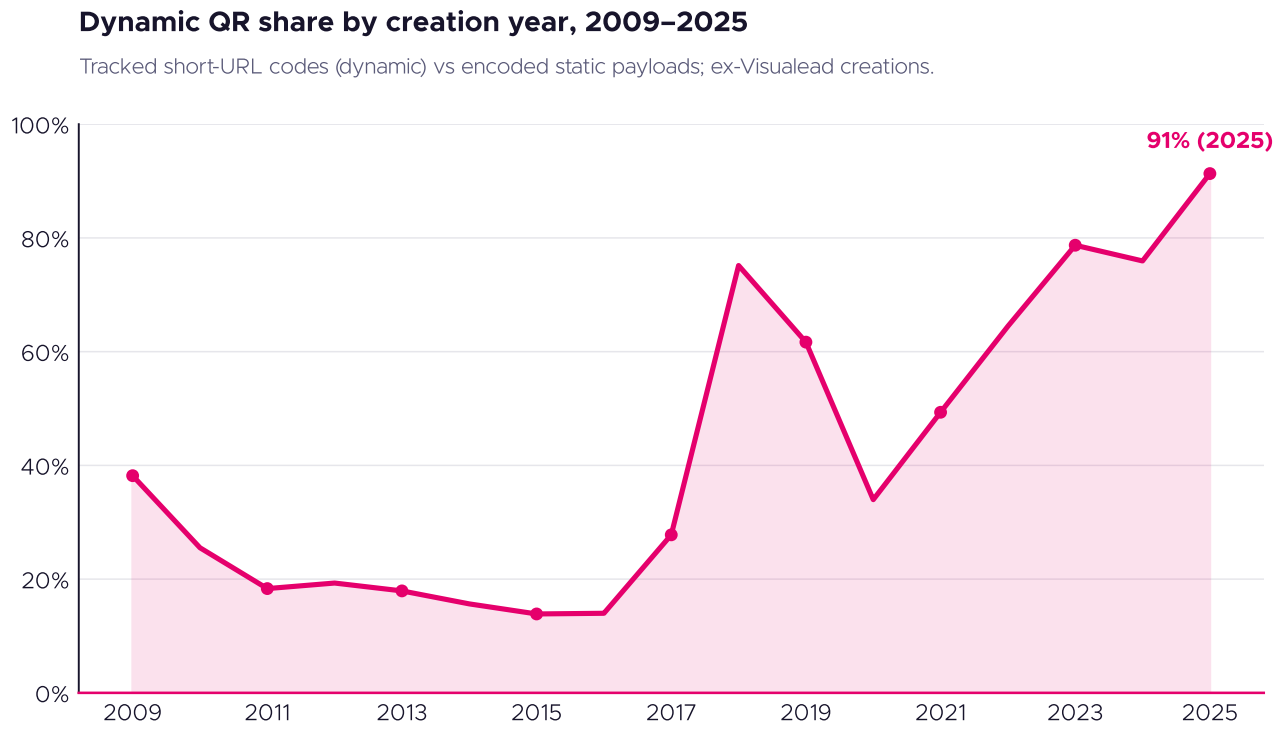

Figure 4: **Dynamic QR share by creation year.** Source: `dynamic_static_split_by_year.json`. Dynamic = idshorturl present; ex-Visualead.

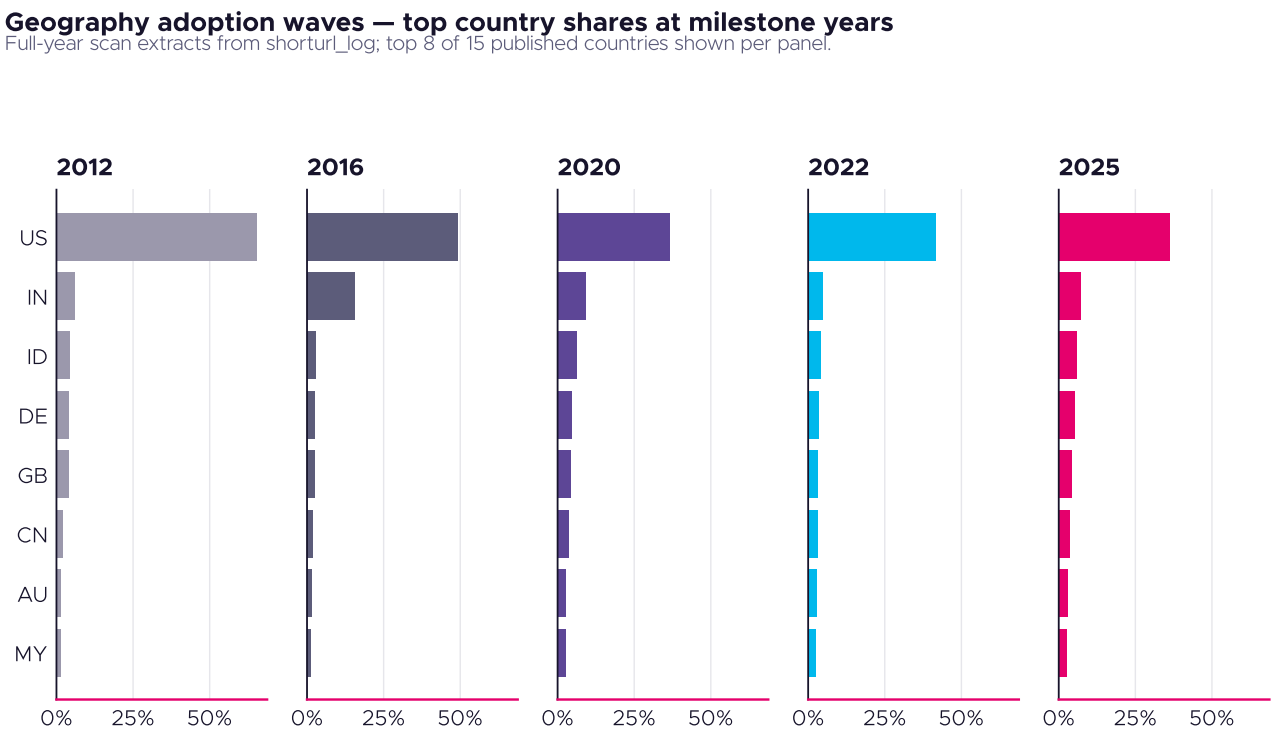

Figure 5: **Geography adoption waves at milestone years.** Source: `geography_country_top15_{2012,2016,2020,2022,2025}_full_year.json`. Top eight countries shown per panel.

2

Scan Trends: 2009–2025

2.7× above the pre-pandemic average.
16.1% CAGR since 2018.

The Shape of Demand: When, How Long, and How Concentrated

The top 100 clients account for 61% of all scans.

The headline -12.2% number hides a more interesting structure. When the 2025 decline is decomposed by half-year, it was clearly front-loaded: first-half scans fell 20.7% year over year, while second-half scans were down only 2.5%. Q4 2025 actually rose 10.6% year over year. The honest reading is that the decline happened early in the year and the channel had nearly recovered to 2024 levels by the end of it.

The 2025 decline was front-loaded: H1 was down 20.7% year over year, but H2 was down only 2.5% and Q4 rose 10.6%.

That second-half stabilization should not be over-read. The comparison spans only two years, and Q4 strength can be influenced by individual breakout campaigns. H2 should be treated as evidence of stabilization, not as a guaranteed forward growth trend.

Scanning has a clear annual and weekly rhythm

Pooled across 2024 and 2025 on a day-length-normalized basis, scan activity peaks in spring and bottoms in mid-winter. April indexed at 1.17 against an average month of 1.00, while January indexed at 0.80. The weekly pattern is just as clear: Tuesday is the busiest scan day at an index of 1.10, Sunday is the quietest at 0.85, and weekday volume runs 17.3% above weekend volume. That workweek shape is consistent with QR being used heavily in workplace, retail, education, and B2B contexts, not only in leisure settings.

Codes keep working long after they are created

A QR code is not a one-day campaign asset. Following the cohort of codes created in January 2024, about 26% were still being actively scanned twelve months later and roughly 20% at twenty-four months. The active-code half-life — the point where half of the cohort's month-one active codes have stopped generating scans — is around 5.3 months. Cohort scan volume peaks about two months after creation, consistent with a print-and-deploy lead time before codes go live in the field. That 5.3-month figure is a platform-wide average across all codes, anonymous and registered alike; The Lives of a QR Code chapter shows it splits into two very different populations, with codes created by registered users lasting far longer.

So what: durable engagement is the rule, not the exception. Because codes often live for months or years, dynamic destinations and live-code audits matter: a code that still scans but points to stale content is an operational risk.

Activity is spread across a broad base of customers

Monthly scan seasonality index, 2024–2025

Spring peaks (April 1.17) and mid-winter troughs (January 0.80), day-length normalised.

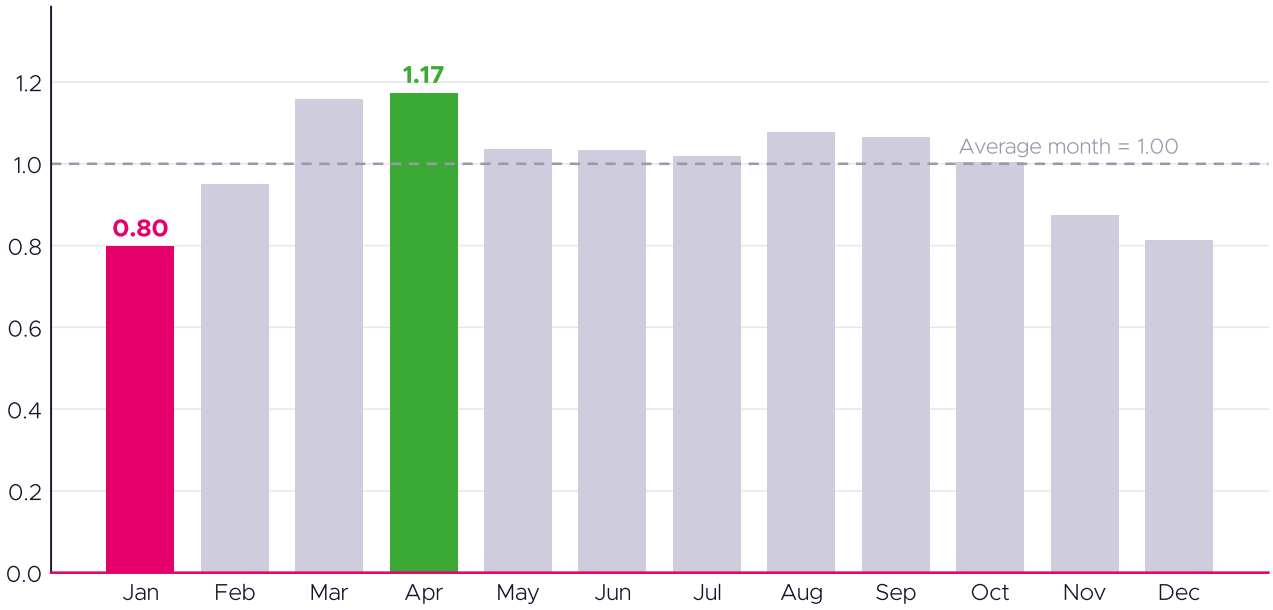

Figure 6: **Monthly scan seasonality index, 2024–2025.** Source: QRStuff platform data (`monthly_seasonality_2024_2025.json`). Day-length-normalized two-year index; aggregate hits; not a robust long-run seasonal model.

Day-of-week scan seasonality, 2024–2025

Tuesday is busiest (1.10) and Sunday quietest (0.85); weekdays run ~17% above weekends.

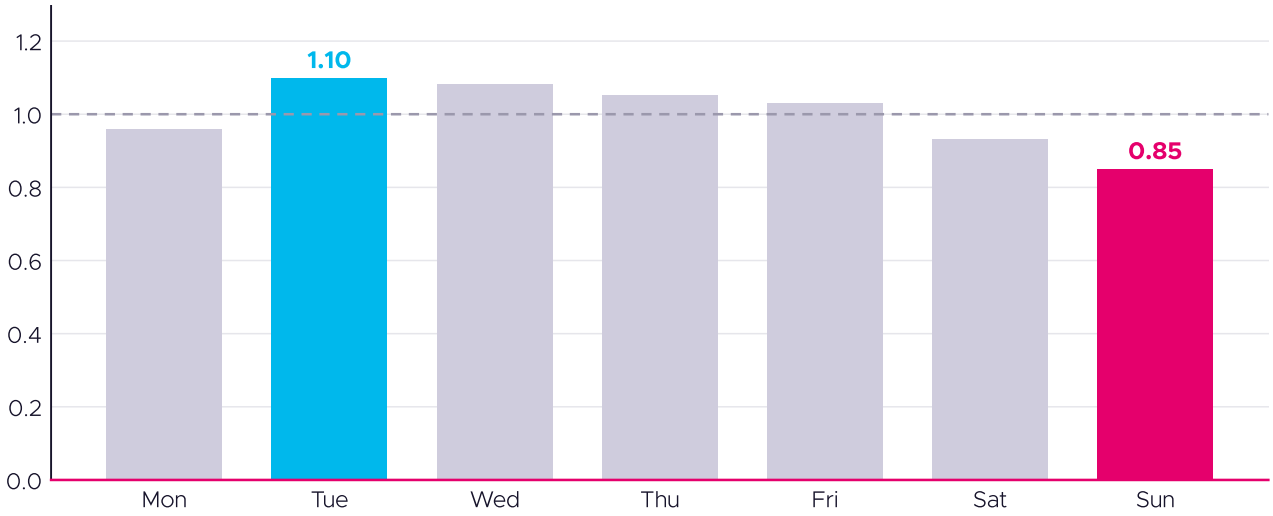

Figure 7: **Day-of-week scan seasonality, 2024–2025.** Source: QRStuff platform data (`dayofweek_seasonality_2024_2025.json`). Pooled 24-month index; aggregate hits.

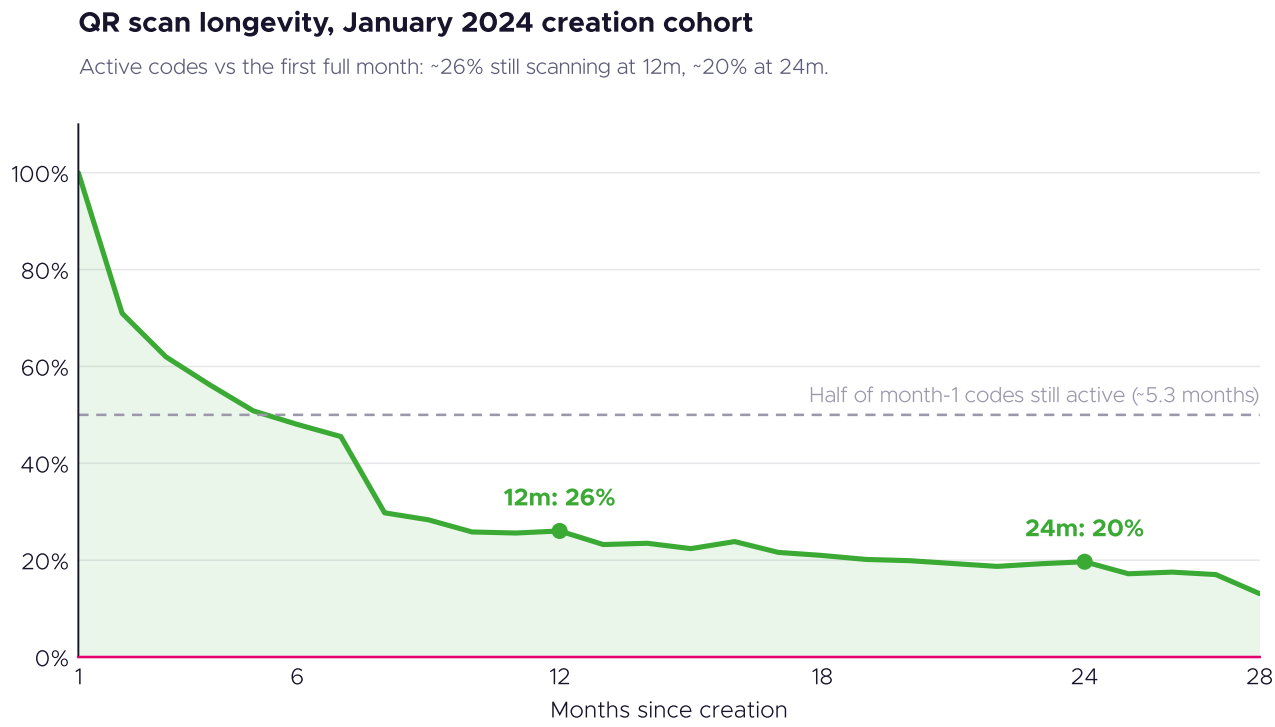

Figure 8: **QR scan longevity, January 2024 creation cohort.** Source: QRStuff platform data (`scan_longevity_cohort_2024_01.json`). Active-code retention vs the first full month; single cohort; total scan volume is outlier-driven and read cautiously.

Scan activity is not dependent on a single account. In 2025 Q1, the top 10 client accounts generated 23.7% of scans and the top 100 generated 61.0%, out of 12,751 active registered accounts — a strong head with a long tail. Like all client-level statistics in this report, these figures cover registered accounts only: the anonymous/guest creation bucket is not a client account and is excluded, along with internal accounts (see The Lives of a QR Code for the registered-versus-anonymous scope axis). The Herfindahl-Hirschman concentration index rose across 2025 from about 0.0093 to 0.0129, which corresponds to the effective number of clients falling from roughly 107 to 77. This is a normal pattern for a platform where individual breakout campaigns come and go; it is reported as shares and indices only, with no client identities.

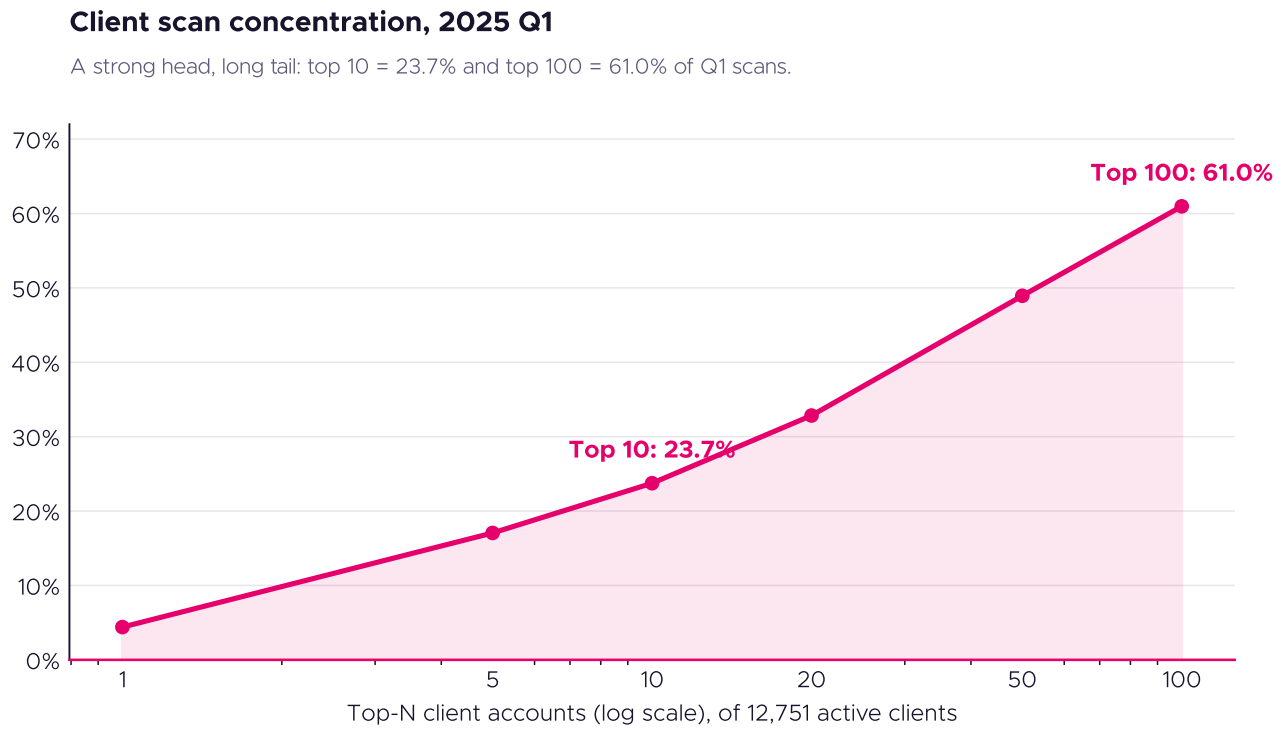

Figure 9: **Client scan concentration, 2025 Q1.** Source: QRStuff platform data (`client_scan_concentration_topn_2025_q1.json`). Cumulative top-N share of scans; ranks and shares only, no client identities; excludes internal accounts.

What People Create With QR Codes

The first creation finding is predictable: URL codes dominate. In public January 2025 QRStuff creation data, URL represented 66.3% of creations. The next largest content types included text, vCard, Google Review, WiFi, phone links, PDFs, Instagram, maps, images, YouTube, Google Forms, email, digital business cards, and app downloads.

The second finding is more useful: URL is not a use case. It is a container. A URL code can open a menu, product detail page, review flow, map, warranty registration form, support article, donation page, event schedule, loyalty offer, or video. Counting URL codes tells us that the web remains the dominant destination layer. It does not tell us what the code is trying to accomplish.

The non-URL long tail is therefore strategically important. It shows QR being used for utility: contact exchange, WiFi access, reviews, documents, maps, media, forms, email, and app acquisition. These are everyday tasks, not just campaigns. They also have different success metrics. A WiFi code succeeds when access is easy. A review code succeeds when the customer leaves a review. A PDF code succeeds when a document is opened at the right moment. A form code succeeds when the user submits.

So what: QR planning should start with the post-scan job. The content type is a delivery choice; the business outcome is the design target.

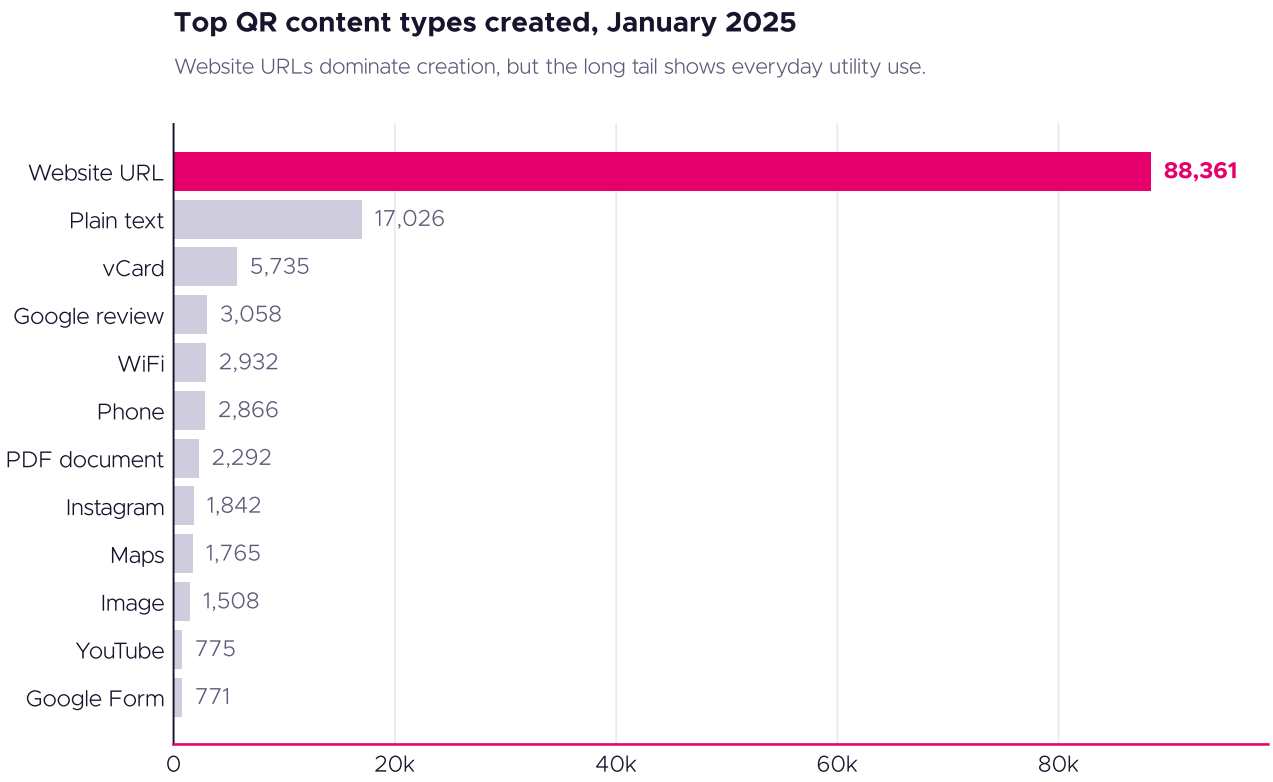

Figure 10: **Top QR content types created, January 2025.** Source: QRStuff platform data (`content_type_creation_2025_01_ex_visualead.json`). January snapshot; Visualead-linked accounts excluded; small cells suppressed.

3

Destination Intelligence

Only 3.9% of QR destinations carry campaign-tracking parameters.

What Happens After the Scan: Destination Intelligence

Only 3.9% of QR code destinations carry campaign-tracking parameters.

The most revealing QRStuff finding is about destination shape. Among reviewed external Q1 2025 destinations, 82.7% were deep pages, 11.8% were homepages, 3.3% were direct files, and 2.3% were product or shop pages.

That is the clearest evidence that QR has moved beyond generic web linking. A person scanning a code usually has context already. They are in front of a sign, product, table, poster, vehicle, handout, shelf, ticket, or package. In that moment, a homepage often asks the user to restart the journey. A deep page can continue it.

82.7% of reviewed external Q1 2025 destinations were deep pages.

The category breakdown reinforces the point. Owned and general websites accounted for 65.8% of external destinations, but social, cloud documents, forms or surveys, media, direct downloads, e-commerce, maps/local search, booking, and app-store destinations also appeared. QR is functioning as a physical-world router into a wide range of digital experiences.

Among reviewed external destinations, 97.7% used HTTPS. This is a useful baseline signal: most destinations meet the basic expectation of encrypted transport. But it should not be overclaimed. HTTPS does not mean the destination is trustworthy, fast, accessible, privacy-clear, or conversion-ready. It means the easiest security baseline has mostly been normalized.

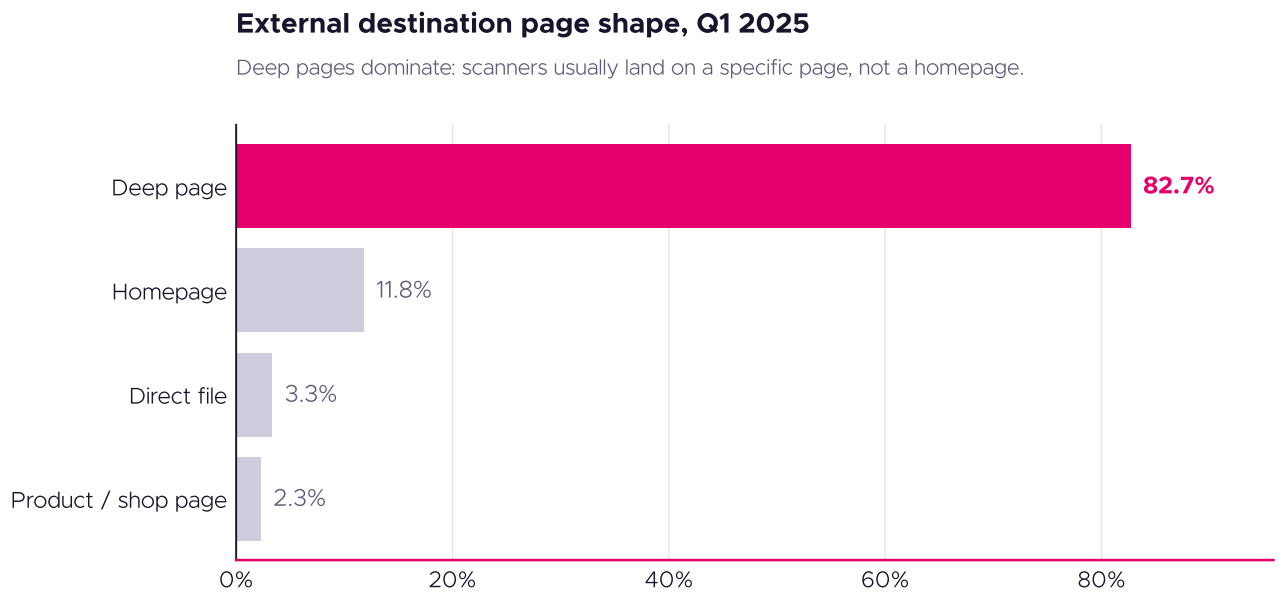

Figure 11: **External QR destination page shape.** Source: QRStuff Q1 2025 external destination sample (`destination_external_page_shape_2025_q1_100k.json`). Raw URLs not published.

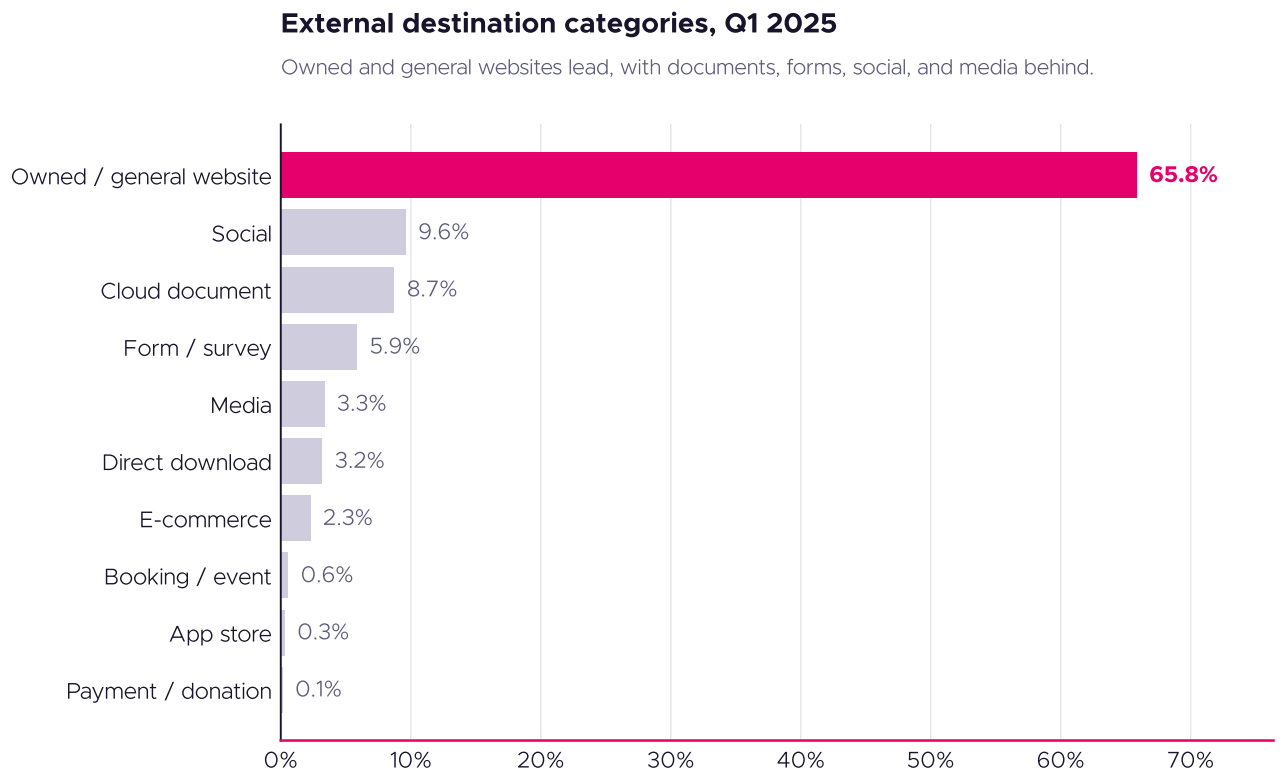

Figure 12: **External QR destination categories.** Source: QRStuff Q1 2025 external destination sample (`destination_external_categories_2025_q1_100k.json`). Deterministic category labels with editorial QA.

Deep Pages, Forms, Files, Media, and Product Journeys

Deep-page analysis turns the report from a scan-volume story into a use-case story. Across fixed monthly samples from January, April, July, and October 2025, several use cases appeared consistently:

- Documents, files, and resources.
- Forms, surveys, and lead capture.
- Video, media, and audio.
- Social profiles and messaging.
- Events, programs, and ticketing.
- Real-estate tours and floorplans.

The strongest trend candidate is forms and lead capture. In fixed samples, forms, surveys, and lead-capture deep pages rose 3.4 percentage points from January to October. This is not a full-year census, but the labels have been reviewed and the signal is strategically meaningful. It suggests QR destinations are not only answering "tell me more." They are increasingly asking the scanner to do something.

Files and documents also matter. A direct file or cloud-document destination may look less glamorous than an interactive campaign, but in many industries it is the practical payload: menus, manuals, forms, brochures, spec sheets, certificates, safety instructions, sales collateral, and event materials.

Media destinations show QR's role as a bridge to richer explanation. A printed surface can be static, but a QR destination can demonstrate, train, entertain, or support. In physical-product journeys, this is especially valuable because the code can keep pointing to current content after the package has shipped.

Real estate is best treated as a segment spotlight rather than a year-round headline. The samples showed a January spike in real-estate tours and floorplans, then lower shares later — a seasonal, campaign-driven segment rather than a year-round trend.

A combined treemap of the four 2025 quarterly destination samples (n=26,808 external URLs after excluding QRStuff-hosted proxies) makes the volume hierarchy visible. Deep pages account for 81.4% of sample destinations; within deep pages, documents and files (9.9%), forms and lead capture (7.6%), video and media (8.7%), and real-estate tours (2.6%) are the largest editorially labelled categories after the residual "specific page (other)" bucket. These are sample counts, not platform-wide totals, but they quantify where deep-page volume concentrates.

External QR destination volumes (n=26,808)

2025 quarterly samples (Jan/Apr/Jul/Oct). Deep pages = 81.4%; documents, forms, and real estate are the largest labelled use cases.

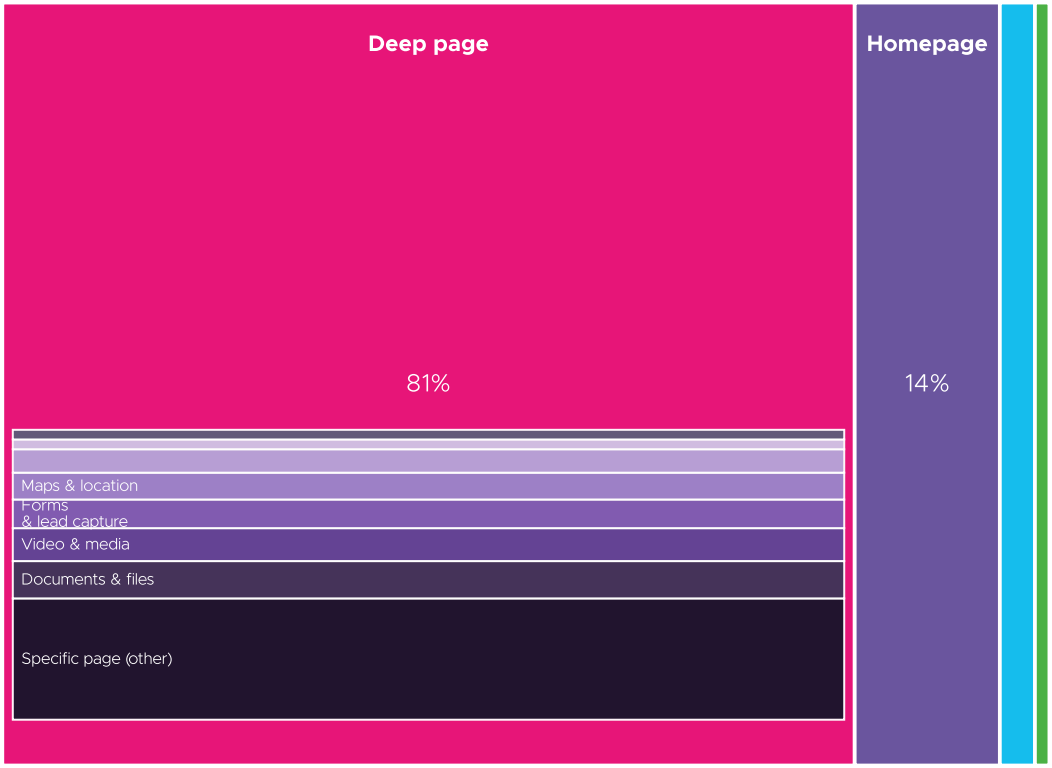

Figure 13: **External destination volumes by page shape and use case.** Source: `destination_treemap_2025.json`. Combined Jan/Apr/Jul/Oct 2025 quarterly 10k samples; n=26,808 external destinations.

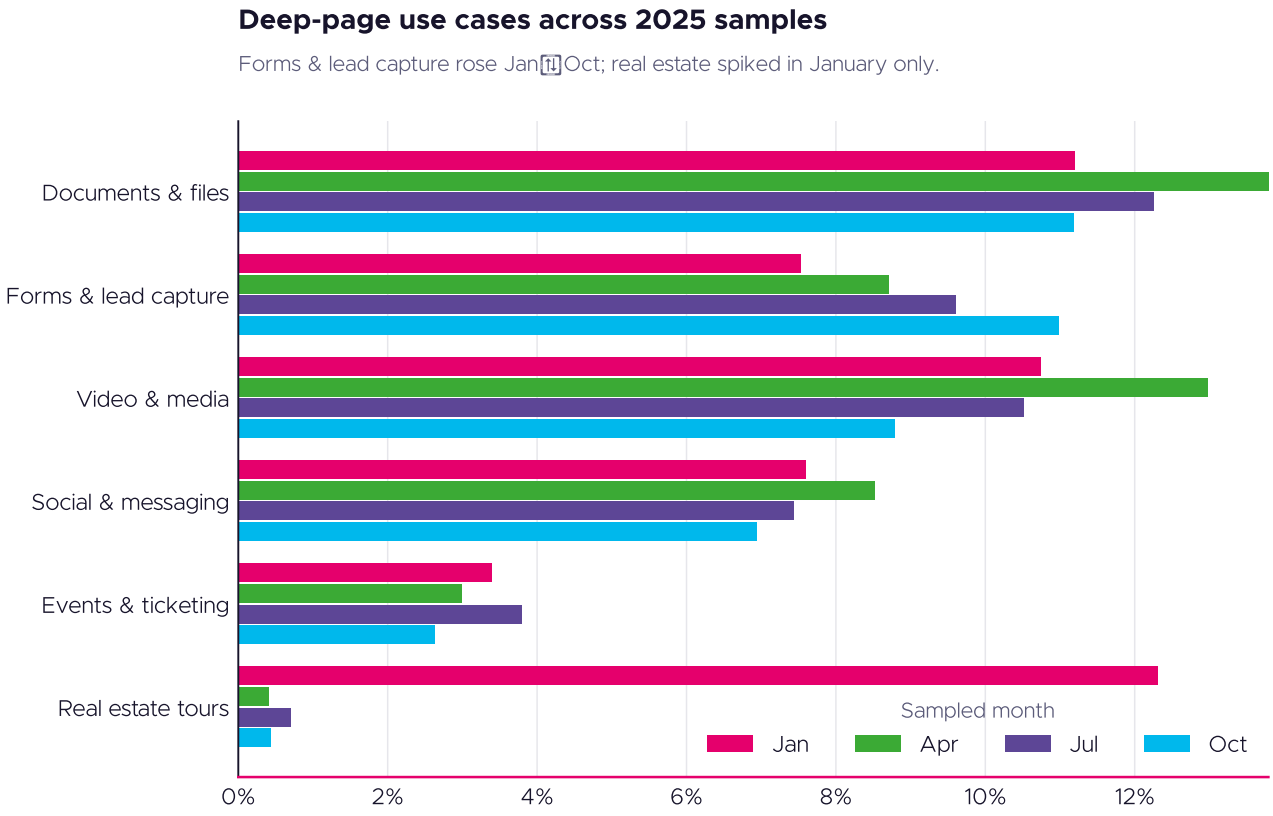

Figure 14: **Deep-page use cases across sampled months.** Source: QRStuff fixed 10k monthly samples (`deep_page_use_case_period_comparison_2025.json`). Sampled months, not a full-year census.

4

Where QR Codes Are Scanned

239 countries. Asia-Pacific surges to 28.2% as North America eases to 38.7%.

Where in the World QR Codes Are Scanned

QR scanning is global — and the geographic mix shifted meaningfully in 2025. Full-year 2025 data covers 101.9 million geolocated scans across 239 countries, extracted via 27 bi-weekly windows from the QRStuff scan log.

The United States remains the single largest scan market at 36.3% — down from 40.1% in 2024. The more striking story is below the top spot. India climbed from third to second place, representing 7.0% of all scans, the largest single-year scan-volume rise in the dataset. Indonesia slipped from second to third at 5.7% while its share still grew. Germany ranks fourth at 5.3% (up from sixth) and the United Kingdom fifth at 4.3%. China slipped from fifth to sixth (3.7% 3.5%). Turkey fell from tenth to twenty-fourth, the largest rank drop in the top 30.

India rose from #3 to #2 — the largest single-year scan-volume rise in the dataset. Asia-Pacific now accounts for 28.2% of all scans, up from 26.2% in 2024.

> **Note**
>
> **YoY geography shift:** India climbed from #3 to #2 — the largest single-year scan-volume rise in the dataset — while Germany rose from #6 to #4 and Turkey fell from #10 to #24. Asia-Pacific now accounts for 28.2% of all scans, up from 26.2% in 2024, as North America's share fell from 43.3% to 38.7%. **Methodology:** Comparable full-year 2024 and 2025 geolocated scan extracts; same bi-weekly chunked method both years (2025: 101.9M scans across 239 countries).

By macro-region, North America led at 38.7% of scans (down from 43.3% in full-year 2024), followed by Asia-Pacific at 28.2% (up from 26.2%), Europe at 21.0%, and the Middle East and North Africa at 7.1%. MENA intensity remains notable: countries such as Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar showed far more scans per active code than the global average, consistent with concentrated national QR programs.

Methodology: comparable full-year 2024 and 2025 geolocated scan extracts via bi-weekly 14-day windows on shorturl_log (2025: 101.9M scans, 239 country codes). k-anonymity threshold: 100 scans (25 countries suppressed). No Visualead exclusion applied (cohort is <0.01% of total scans). Country region labels are editorial macro-regions; countries with very small scan volumes are folded into an aggregated bucket in the suppressed full distribution per the privacy configuration. Supersedes the prior 30-day April–May 2024 census for publication.

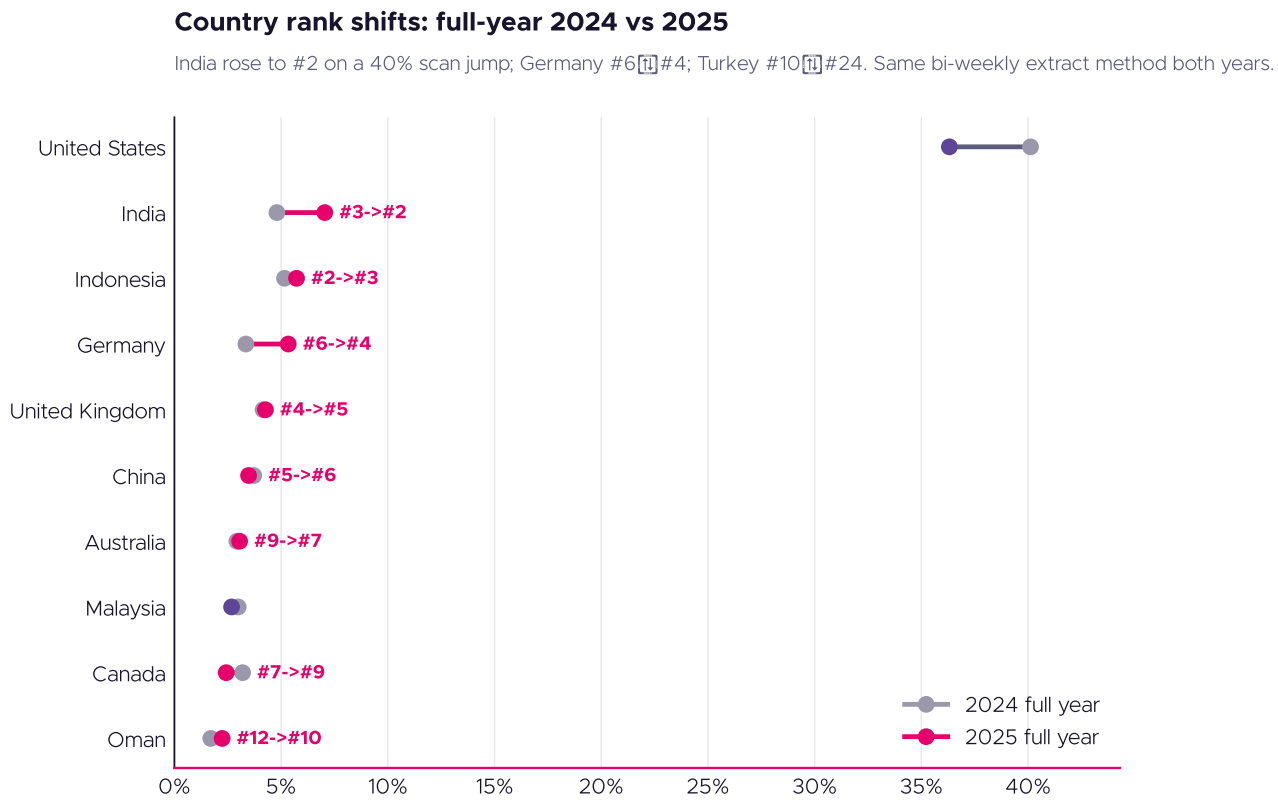

Figure 15: **Country rank shifts, full-year 2024 vs 2025.** Source: `geography_country_top30_2024_full_year.json`, `geography_country_top30_2025_full_yea` Top 10 countries by 2025 rank; same bi-weekly extract method both years.

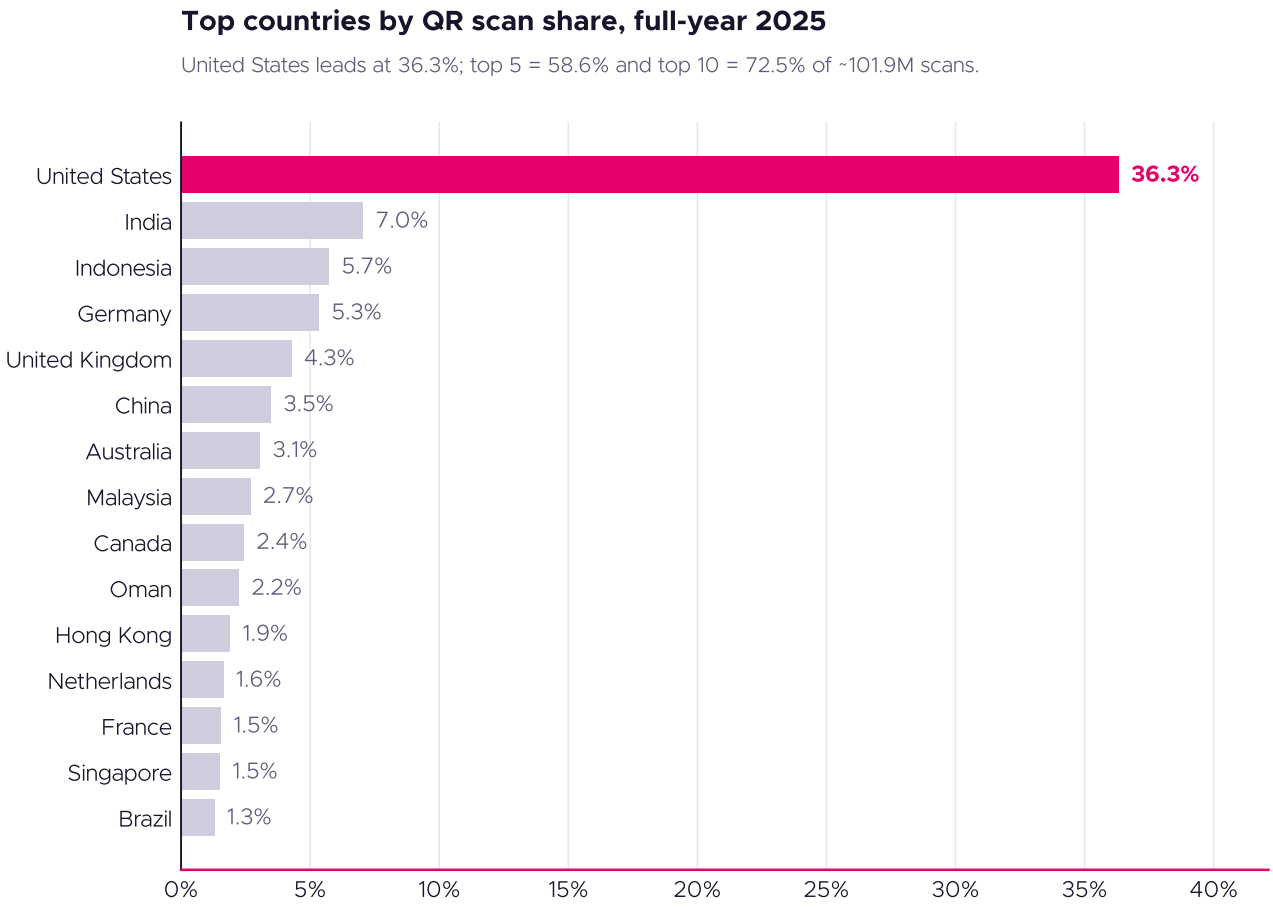

Figure 16: **Top countries by QR scan share, full-year 2025.** Source: QRStuff platform geography data (`geography_country_top30_2025_full_year.json`). 101.9M geolocated scans; aggregate scans only; no URLs, clients, or account IDs.

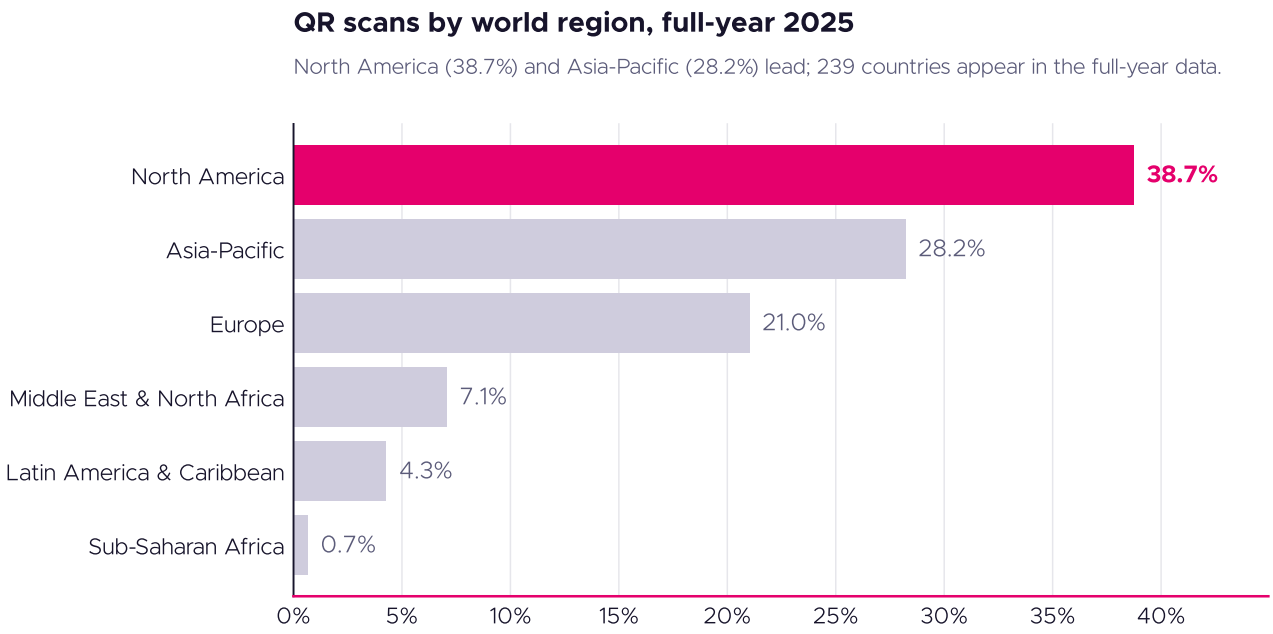

Figure 17: **QR scans by world region, full-year 2025.** Source: QRStuff platform geography data (`geography_region_summary_2025_full_year.json`). Editorial macro-region mapping; transcontinental states documented in methodology notes.

5

The Lives of a QR Code

Half-life of a registered user's code:

5 months in 2019 to 13 months in 2024.

The Lives of a QR Code

The half-life of a registered user's dynamic code rose from 5 months (2019 cohort) to 13 months (2024).

Scan volume says how much scanning happens. Destination intelligence says what the scan is asked to do. This chapter answers a third question: **how long does a QR code keep working after it is created?** Three new analyses — multi-cohort survival, lifecycle archetypes, and first-year scan benchmarks — follow dynamic codes from the moment of creation through their first months and years of life.

One definition matters for everything in this chapter. QRStuff codes come from two distinct populations: codes created by **registered users** (signed-in accounts) and codes created **anonymously** as guests. Anonymous creations are the platform's majority — roughly seven in ten dynamic codes — and this registered-versus-anonymous split is the scope axis for every client-level statistic in this report, including the customer-concentration figures earlier. Both scopes are published here, so every claim can be checked against the platform-wide numbers.

Two populations, two destinies

The durability story is a tale of two populations.

Codes created by registered users have become markedly more durable. For the January 2019 cohort, the half-life of a registered user's dynamic code — the point where the share of still-active codes falls below half of its month-one level — was 5 months. For the January 2024 cohort it was 13 months. The trend is not perfectly monotone (2020 dipped to 2 months, on which more below), but the direction is clear, and it survives a content-mix sensitivity check: within Website-URL codes only, half-lives rose from 3-6 months across the 2019-2021 cohorts to 10-15 months for 2023-2024.

Anonymous codes show no such trend. Platform-wide — with the anonymous bucket included — half-lives have stayed flat at roughly 4-6 months (the COVID-hit 2020 cohort aside), and the URL-only figure sits at about 5 months for every cohort from 2021 through 2024. Casual codes are disposable, and they always have been.

Casual codes die within a month or two of their last campaign. The half-life of a registered user's dynamic code rose from ~5 months (2019 cohort) to 13 months (2024).

The endurance gap is starkest at long range. Twenty-two months after creation, 12.6% of the January 2024 registered-user cohort was still being scanned — about **1 in 8 codes**, and roughly 1.5x the rate of any 2019-2022 cohort at the same age. Platform-wide, the same figure is 3.7%, or about **1 in 27**.

This contrast must be read carefully. It is **selection, not causation**: codes created by registered users last longer, but nothing in this data says that registering makes a code last longer. People with durable use cases — menus, packaging, signage, operations — are more likely to create accounts; people testing or running one-off jobs are more likely to stay anonymous. The honest market reading is that **QR is professionalizing**: a growing population of committed users is deploying codes that keep earning scans for a year or more, on top of a stable base of disposable casual use.

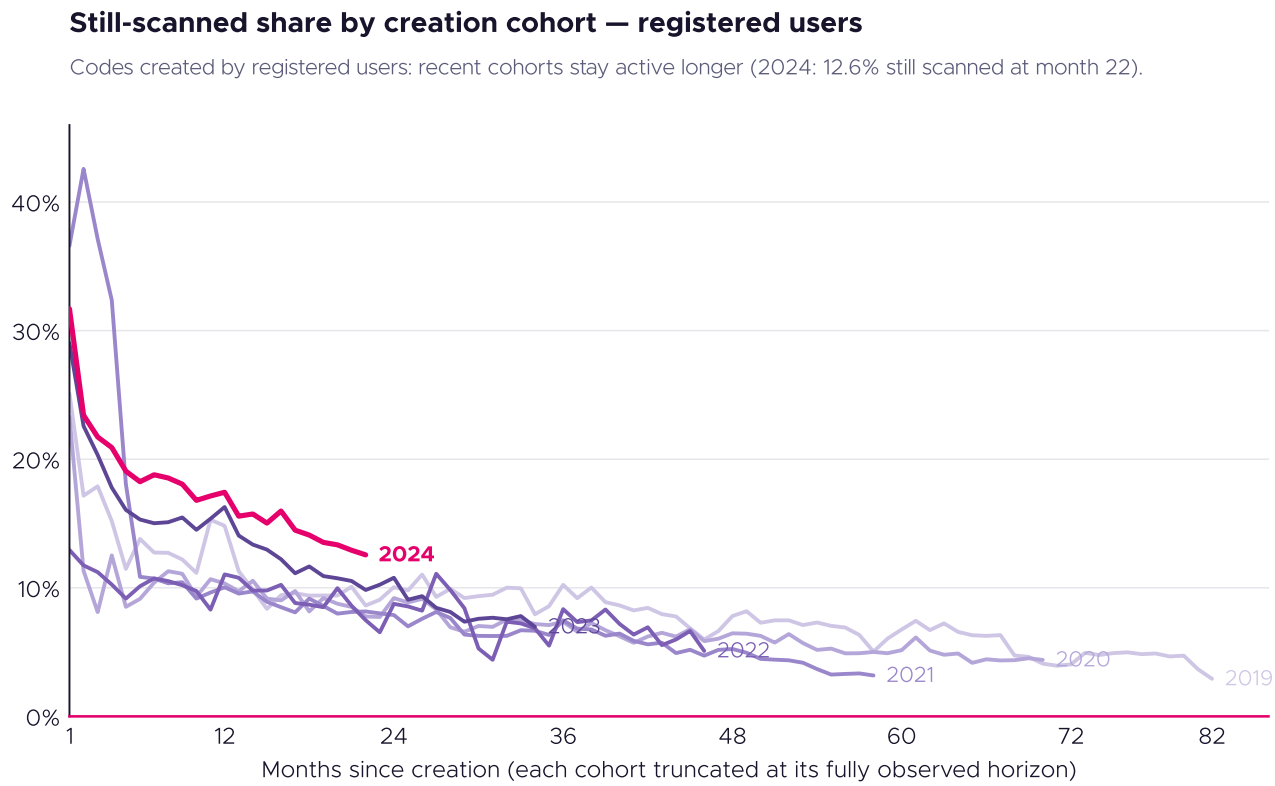

Figure 18: **Survival curves by creation cohort, registered users.** Source: QRStuff platform data (`cohort_survival_curves.json`). Share of ever-scanned codes still active by month since creation; each January cohort truncated at its fully observed horizon; codes created by registered users only.

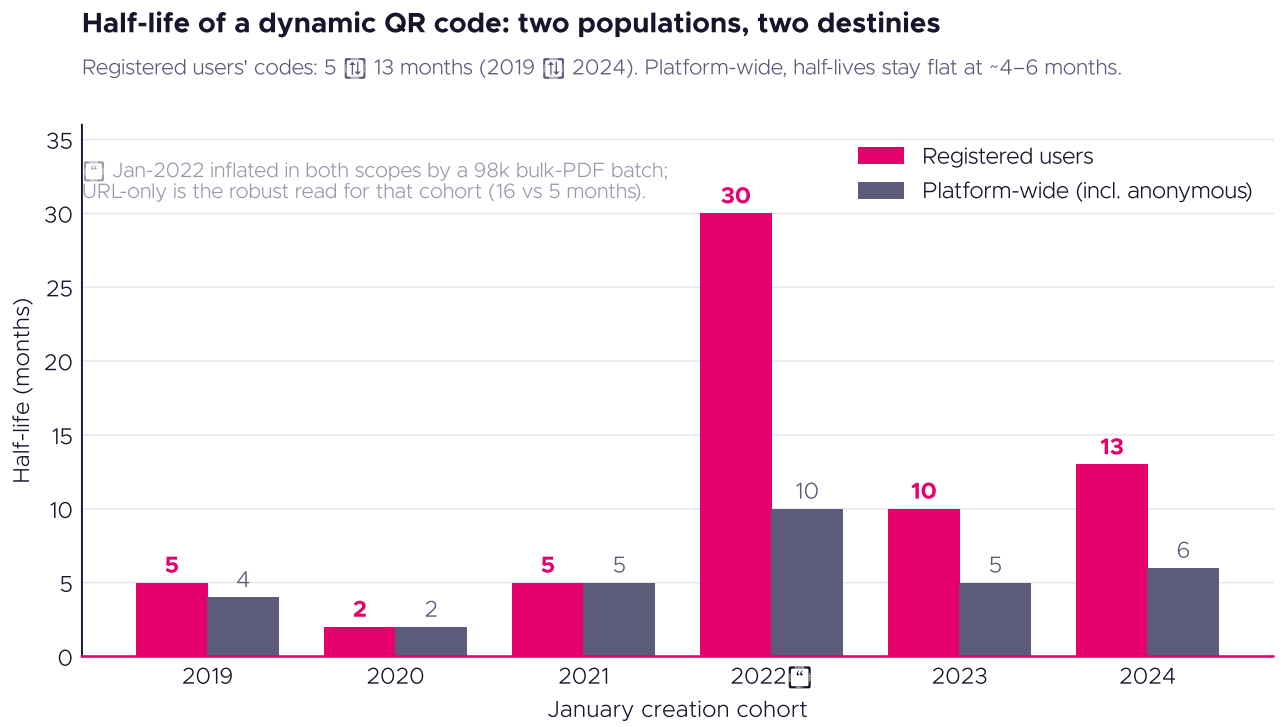

Figure 19: **Half-life contrast: registered vs platform-wide.** Sources: QRStuff platform data (`cohort_half_life_summary.json`, `cohort_half_life_summary_incl_anon.json`). Both scopes published in full; Jan-2022 distorted by a bulk-PDF batch in both scopes.

Two cohorts need annotation. The **January 2020 cohort** was created weeks before COVID-19 lockdowns and its short half-life (2 months registered) reflects that disruption, not a behavior baseline. The **January 2022 cohort's** all-codes half-life is mechanically inflated in both scopes by a single bulk batch of roughly 98,000 PDF codes from 226 clients, which depresses the month-one share that the half-life is measured against; the URL-only figure (16 months registered, 5 platform-wide) is the honest read for that cohort.

The four lives of a QR code

What does a code's first year actually look like? Clustering the monthly scan shape of every registered-user dynamic code created in the first half of 2024 (112,621 ever-scanned codes, full population) produces four stable lifecycle archetypes:

Table 1: Lifecycle archetypes, registered-user codes created 2024 H1.

Archetype	Share of codes	Share of first-year scans	Median first-year scans
One-month wonder	54.2%	11.6%	3
Evergreen workhorse	30.6%	74.0%	15
Campaign burst (month 1)	9.6%	10.8%	8
Campaign burst (month 2)	5.7%	3.5%	8

A small majority of registered users' scanned codes (54.2%) are **one-month wonders**: 94% of their scans fall in the creation month, and then the scanning essentially stops — likely a mix of testing, abandoned projects, and one-off events. The **evergreen workhorses** are the inverse: 30.6% of codes, scanned steadily across all twelve months, earning **74% of all first-year scans**. The two **campaign-burst** shapes peak a month or two after creation (63% and 56% of their scans in the peak month respectively), consistent with a print-and-deploy lead time before a campaign goes live. Notably, no "late bloomer" cluster emerged: codes that start slow generally stay quiet.

Platform-wide, evergreen codes are fewer than 1 in 10 — but they earn roughly two-thirds of all first-year scans.

That last formulation is deliberately scope-free, because it is the robust version of the finding. Re-running the clustering platform-wide (anonymous codes included, 403,690 ever-scanned codes) reproduces all four archetype shapes; the mix shifts hard toward early death — evergreens fall to 8.3% of codes — but the concentration survives: that evergreen minority still earns 65.7% of all first-year scans. However the population is cut, a small evergreen core does most of the platform's scanning work.

Content type shapes the odds. Among registered users' codes, app-download (37.6%), YouTube (37.0%), and Website-URL codes (33.5%) are the most likely to become evergreen, while social-link and image codes are overwhelmingly one-month wonders (88% and 80% respectively). A PDF code is about 2.2x more likely than an image code to become evergreen (25.5% vs 11.8%).

What a "good" QR code earns: first-year benchmarks

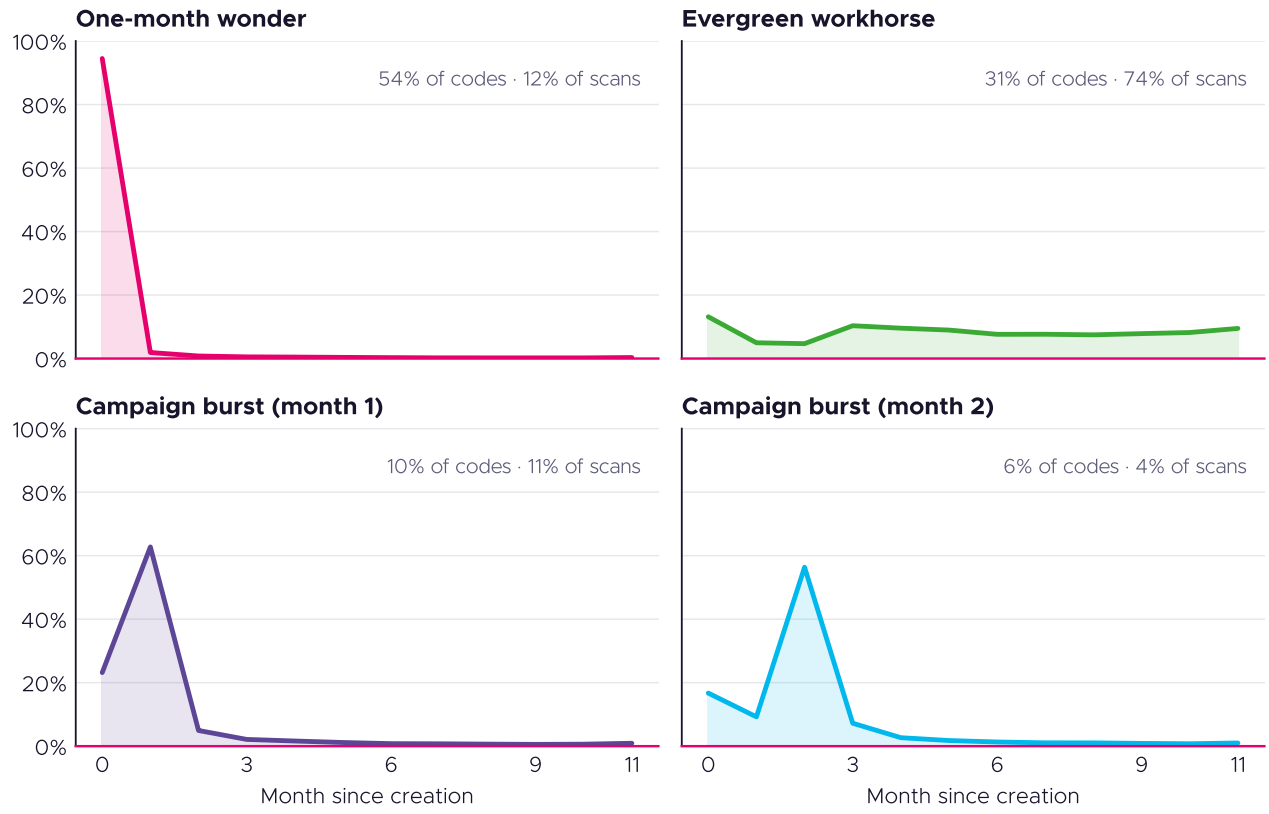

Figure 20: **The four lives of a QR code.** Source: QRStuff platform data (`lifecycle_archetypes_centroids.json`). Average first-year scan shape per archetype; registered users' 2024 H1 cohort; k-means on shape-normalized monthly vectors.

The archetypes describe shape. Benchmarks describe size — and the distribution is heavily skewed, so this report publishes percentiles only, scoped to registered accounts (the relevant comparison population for customers).

The median ever-scanned dynamic code created by a registered user in early 2024 earned **5 scans in its first year** (Website-URL codes: 7). The top 10% threshold is 98 scans — **roughly 20x the median** — and the top 1% exceed 1,769. That heavy tail is consistent with the client-concentration findings earlier in this report: a small share of codes, like a small share of accounts, does most of the work.

The median scanned code earns 5 first-year scans; the top 10% earn ~20x that.

Activation is the other benchmark reality, and it is the one finding that is genuinely scope-stable: **about half of dynamic QR codes (48-53%) are scanned at least once in their first year** (48.4% of registered users' codes; 52.7% platform-wide). The other half are created and never scanned at all — which is why the median across all created codes is zero.

Content type matters enormously. Workflow types massively out-earn link types per code: attendance check-in codes have a median of 27.5 first-year scans and a top-10% threshold of 1,326, and app-download codes a median of 21 with a top-10% threshold of 1,394, against medians of 5 or below for business cards, PDFs, and images.

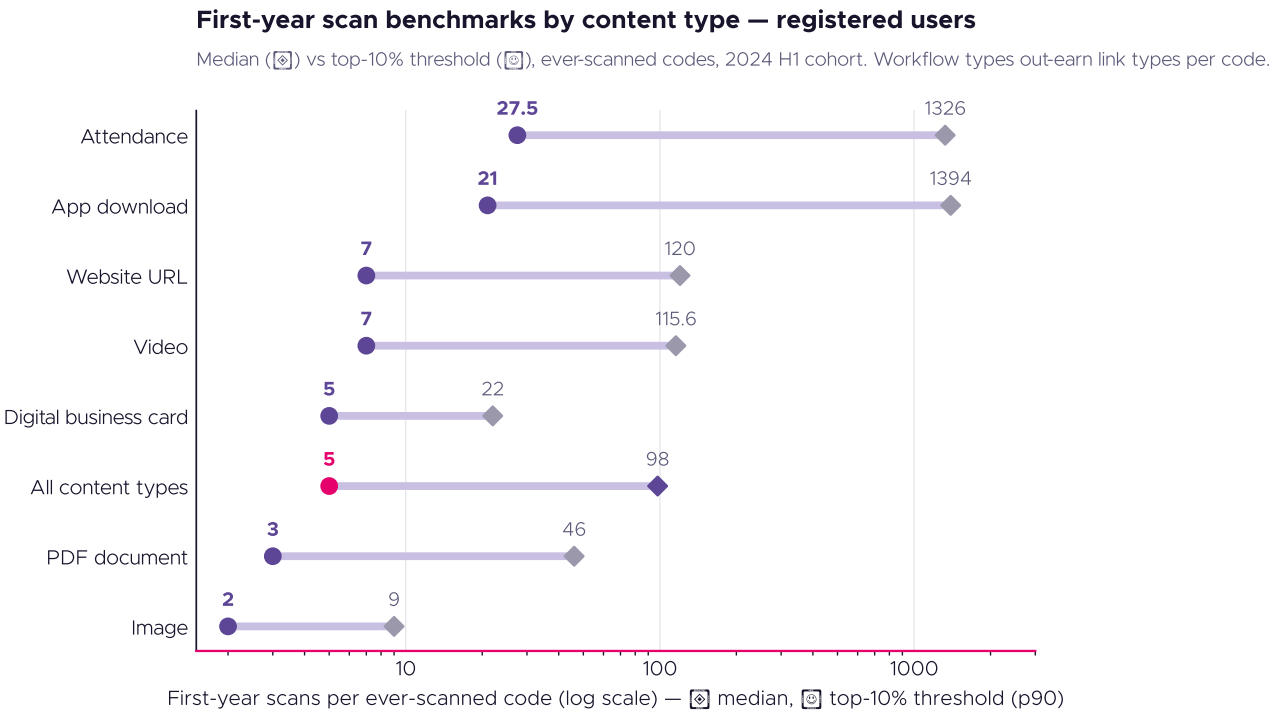

Figure 21: **First-year scan benchmarks by content type, registered users.** Source: QRStuff platform data (`scan_benchmarks_by_content_type.json`). Median and top-10% threshold (p90) per ever-scanned code, 2024 H1 cohort; percentile-only by design.

So what: plan for the archetype you want. If the code should be an evergreen asset, give it an evergreen job — a durable destination with a reason to rescan — and benchmark it against its content type, not against the platform average. A code that beats 98 first-year scans is in the top 10% of registered users' codes.

Scope and method notes: all three analyses use dynamic codes only, with per-cohort censoring (no cohort is reported past its fully observed horizon; data window ends 2025-12-31). "Registered users" excludes the anonymous/guest creation bucket and internal accounts; platform-wide variants are published alongside for full disclosure. Archetypes: k-means on shape-normalized 12-month vectors, k=4 chosen by silhouette (0.54) with a passed split-half stability check; the platform-wide replication selects k=6 (two extra early-decay variants) with the same four core shapes; archetype names are editorial labels. Benchmarks: bootstrap 95% confidence intervals on medians; content types under 100 ever-scanned codes suppressed; 99th-percentile figures are quoted only for the overall distribution, not for small content types. Scan counts are aggregate hits; bot/prefetch methodology approved 2026-06-12.

6

The Measurement Gap

96.1% of QR-driven traffic is invisible to marketing analytics.

The Measurement Gap: Why Scan Counts Are Not Enough

Evergreen codes — fewer than 1 in 10 platform-wide — earn roughly two-thirds of all first-year scans.

Destination intent is only half of QR maturity. The other half is measurement. If the business cannot connect scans to outcomes, the QR program may look active without becoming accountable.

In the Q1 2025 external destination creation sample, only 3.9% of destinations included visible campaign tracking parameters such as UTM parameters or common click identifiers. This should be framed carefully. It does not mean only 3.9% of QR programs measure results. Some teams may use redirect-layer analytics, server logs, CRM workflows, platform dashboards, private landing-page rules, or analytics configurations that are not visible in the final URL.

Even with that caveat, the signal matters. Visible campaign tagging is uncommon at creation time.

The scan-weighted sample tells a more mature story. Among top January short URLs by scan volume, visible campaign tracking was 3.2x higher than in the creation-weighted sample, rising from 3.9% of destinations to 12.5%. High-scan links were also 2.7x as homepage-heavy. This suggests that high-volume programs may behave differently from the average newly created code: more brand traffic, more evergreen destinations, and more measurement discipline.

Campaign-tagged destinations are about 3.2x over-represented among high-scan links (3.9% to 12.5%).

This is an association, not proven causation. The two figures come from different samples — a creation-weighted Q1 sample and a scan-weighted top-1,000 January sample — and the parameter classifier is an early deterministic version. The honest reading is that the codes marketers bother to instrument tend to be the ones that earn the most scans, not that adding a UTM parameter causes more scanning.

This aligns with external market research. Uniqode's 2026 report found that analytics was the feature marketers most valued and most wanted improved, while only 12% connected scans to revenue.[1] Bitly frames QR scans as first-party signals in a privacy-first marketing environment.[2] QRStuff data points to the same operational gap from another angle: scans and destinations exist, but visible instrumentation is uneven.

So what: A scan count is not a conversion metric. Strong QR programs define the desired action before printing the code and instrument the destination so teams can learn from the scan.

[1] Uniqode, "The State of QR Codes 2026." Based on a survey of 524 U.S. marketers and 1,000 U.S. consumers and analysis of 188M+ scans across ~796,000 QR codes (Jan-Dec 2025). https://www.uniqode.com/unique-angles/playbooks/state-of-qr-codes-2026

[2] Bitly, "The State of QR Code Scans in 2026." Bitly platform data; accessed June 2026. https://bitly.com/blog/state-of-qr-code-scans-2026/

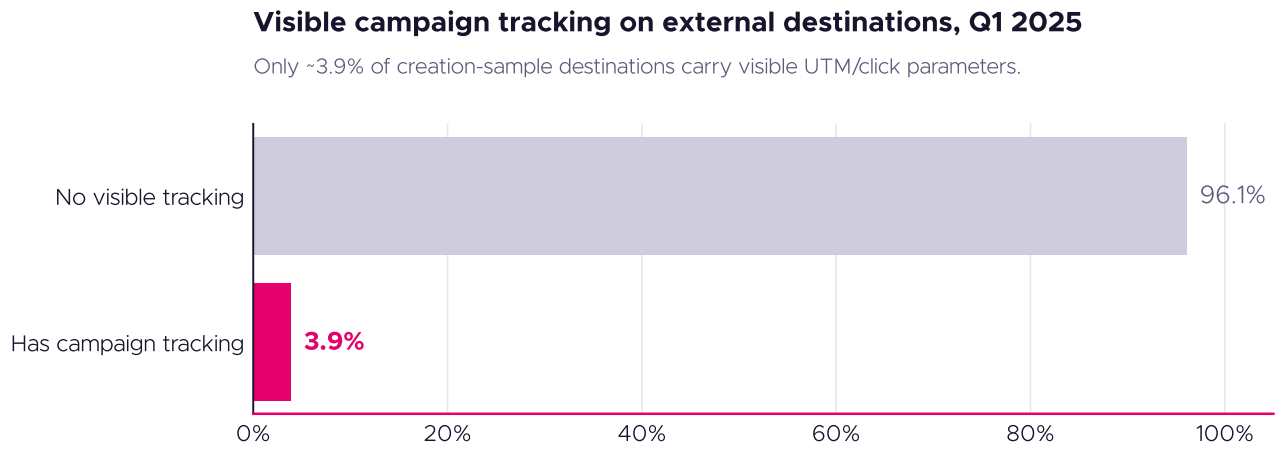

Figure 22: **Visible campaign tracking on external destinations.** Source: QRStuff Q1 2025 external destination sample (`destination_external_campaign_params_2025_q1_100k.json`). Visible URL parameters only; does not capture every analytics setup.

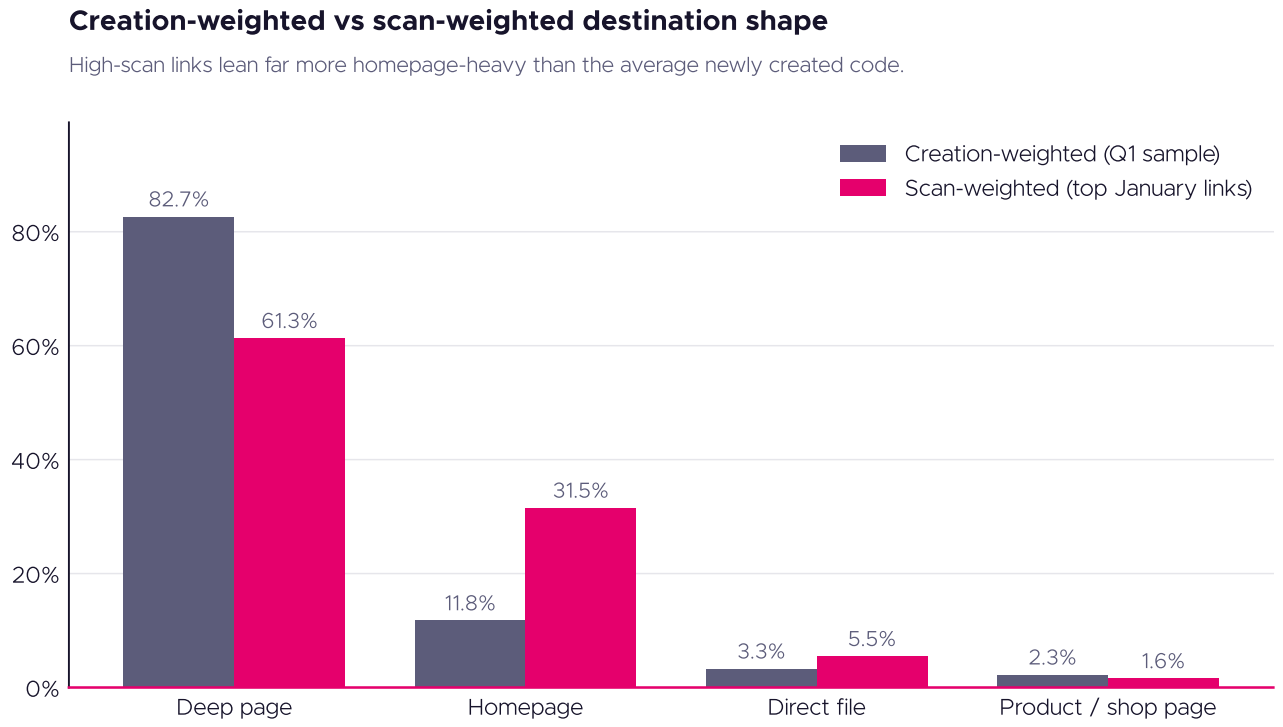

Figure 23: **Creation-weighted vs scan-weighted destination shape.** Source: QRStuff Q1 2025 creation sample and top January 2025 short URLs by scan volume (`destination_external_page_shape_2025_q1_100k.json`, `destination_scan_weighted_page_shape_2025_01_top1000.json`).

Industry Spotlights

The current QRStuff public dataset does not support precise industry rankings because customer industry metadata is incomplete. Instead, the strongest customer-facing use is a set of industry spotlights that combine broader market context with QRStuff destination patterns.

Restaurants and hospitality

Restaurants helped normalize consumer scanning during and after the pandemic, especially through menus, ordering, payments, loyalty, and review flows. The National Restaurant Association's 2024 technology report found that 59% of full-service customers and 57% of limited-service customers were willing to access menus via QR code.[1] For operators, the lesson is not only that menu scanning is acceptable. It is that the QR destination must be fast, readable, current, and useful in a high-intent service moment.

Retail and CPG

Retail and CPG are moving toward connected packaging. GS1 Digital Link and Sunrise 2027 create a standards-based reason to think beyond campaign QR codes. Product pages, ingredients, instructions, certifications, recycling, recalls, authenticity, loyalty, reviews, and support can all sit behind a product-linked experience. QRStuff's deep-page and destination data supports the same shift: specific destinations beat generic homepages.

Real estate

Real estate is a natural QR use case because physical signage and print materials often need to open a rich digital asset: a listing page, video walkthrough, tour, lead form, floorplan, or agent contact card. QRStuff's sampled real-estate spike is not stable enough for a platform-wide trend claim, but it is strong enough to mark real estate as a high-intensity seasonal segment.

Events and venues

Events use QR codes for check-in, agendas, maps, speaker information, lead capture, offers, post-event surveys, and downloadable resources. The post-scan job changes over the event lifecycle. Before the event, the code may drive registration. On site, it may orient attendees. Afterward, it may collect feedback or move people into a nurture flow.

Healthcare

Healthcare QR experiences must be treated with higher trust and accessibility standards. Use cases include patient instructions, appointment flows, wayfinding, medication information, device support,

[1] National Restaurant Association, "Restaurant Technology Landscape Report 2024." https://go.restaurant.org/rs/078-ZLA-461/images/NatRestAssoc_TechLandscapeReport_2024.pdf

and education. GS1 notes that healthcare often relies on GS1 DataMatrix and may convert identifiers into GS1 Digital Link URIs through scanning software rather than encoding Digital Link directly in a QR code.[2] The broader lesson is that healthcare QR journeys need clear source identity, privacy discipline, and careful user guidance.

Education

Education uses QR codes for campus wayfinding, classroom resources, attendance, surveys, library access, event materials, and parent or student communications. The best education QR experiences reduce friction without assuming every user has the same device, data plan, language, or accessibility needs.

[2] GS1, "GS1 Digital Link." https://www.gs1.org/standards/gs1-digital-link

Case Studies

The strongest proof of the post-scan thesis is in real customer programs. Eleven full, named case studies — spanning restaurants, education ministries, publishers, cultural venues, manufacturers, and CPG — are published in the online case-study collection at **qrstuff.com/scan-report/case-studies/**. The segment-level patterns below summarize the same accounts.

Platform figures are QRStuff first-party measurements verified against the platform database. Business outcomes and conversion figures are not measured by QRStuff. No raw destination URLs, account identifiers, or personal data are published. Featured organisations may request corrections at research@qrstuff.com.

A national restaurant chain — enterprise QR across marketing and operations. A large multi-location restaurant brand uses QRStuff at genuine enterprise scale, creating roughly 3.8 million codes all-time and maintaining a live estate of about one million codes, alongside very high scan volume. The pattern shows QR working on two jobs at once: guest-facing marketing and promotions, and internal operational use across locations. The lesson is that mature programs treat QR as shared infrastructure, not a one-off campaign tool.

A national education ministry — a public-sector textbook program. A government education ministry runs a national textbook QR program generating well over 100,000 scans per month. Printed learning materials link to digital resources at country scale. This is a long-horizon, high-trust deployment where durability, accessibility, and clear source identity matter far more than campaign cleverness.

A national education publisher — single-domain phygital textbooks. A large education publisher drives 200,000+ scans per month through a clean, single-domain program that connects printed textbooks to digital companions. It is a textbook example (literally) of QR as a durable bridge between physical product and ongoing digital content.

A heritage and arts venue — a full visitor journey. A cultural and heritage venue uses QR across the entire visitor experience — tickets, guided tours, audiovisual content, and feedback — generating 150,000+ scans per month. The destination is not one page; it is a sequence of context-specific pages that follow the visitor through the estate.

A retail accessories brand — high scans per code on-pack. A consumer retail brand achieves unusually high scans-per-code on product packaging, with a dynamic code per pack routed by brand and retailer. It demonstrates connected packaging in practice: one durable on-pack code carrying an updatable destination.

A consumer-electronics maker — onboarding at scale. A consumer-electronics segment pattern shows 250,000+ scans per month generated by only a handful of codes used for product onboarding and setup. It is a reminder that a small number of well-placed, high-context codes can outproduce thousands of low-context ones.

QRStuff as a production tool — print and packaging at volume. A separate pattern appears among accounts that have created hundreds of thousands to several million codes over many years: event-ticketing operators, commercial printers, and packaging producers using QRStuff as a code

factory for physical print and variable-data packaging. The single largest such account has created close to four million codes gross, and the two biggest live estates each exceed one million codes. For these accounts, the story is production scale rather than scans, because many of the codes are static and printed directly onto physical items.

These patterns exclude any account flagged for integrity reasons. They are offered as directional illustrations of how high-maturity QR programs behave; the named case-study collection at qrstuff.com/scan-report/case-studies/ documents the underlying accounts in full.

Connected Packaging, GS1 Digital Link, and DPP Readiness

Connected packaging is one of the most important long-term QR use cases because the package is both a media surface and a product interface. A printed package cannot hold every instruction, sustainability claim, certification, promotion, safety update, warranty flow, recycling rule, or localization variant. A QR destination can.

GS1 Digital Link matters because it connects this idea to standards. GS1 says Digital Link can encode identifiers such as GTINs, GLNs, batch numbers, serial numbers, and expiry dates while also connecting to online information.[1] It is not merely "put a URL in a QR code." It is a way to make existing product identifiers usable across retail, supply chain, brand, and consumer contexts.

The EU Digital Product Passport adds a regulatory readiness lens. GS1 describes DPP data as product-specific information related to sustainability and circularity, accessible through a standardized data carrier, and cites February 2027 for the first prioritized products.[2] This should be stated precisely: the only legally fixed 18 February 2027 deadline is the EU Battery passport. Broader product passports under the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation arrive sector by sector through delegated acts that have not yet been dated, with most expectations falling between 2028 and 2030. Not every QRStuff customer is affected directly, but the direction is relevant: product-linked information is becoming more structured, persistent, and regulated.

For product and packaging teams, the practical questions are:

- Can the code support both today's campaign and tomorrow's product-information need?
- Is the destination controlled by the brand or a durable governance process?
- Can content be updated without reprinting?
- Is the experience localized, accessible, and fast?
- Are analytics and consent designed into the journey?

[1] GS1, "GS1 Digital Link." https://www.gs1.org/standards/gs1-digital-link

[2] GS1, "GS1 Digital Product Passport Provisional Standard." GS1 states the first EU prioritised-product DPPs will be operational by February 2027. Note: the only legally fixed Feb 18, 2027 deadline is the EU Battery passport (Regulation (EU) 2023/1542); broader DPPs under the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (EU 2024/1781) are set per sector via delegated acts not yet dated. https://www.gs1.org/standards/standards-emerging-regulations/DPP

What High-Maturity QR Programs Do Differently

High-maturity QR programs do not treat QR as a last-minute asset. They manage it across the full lifecycle.

They begin with the physical moment. The call to action, placement, visual design, and destination all reflect where the scanner is and what they likely need.

They use dynamic destinations where the code may live longer than the campaign. Packaging, signage, manuals, labels, and printed collateral can stay in circulation for months or years. Dynamic management reduces the risk of stale destinations.

They send scanners to the next best action. The destination is not generic. It is a page, form, file, media asset, product journey, or support flow that fits the context.

They earn trust before asking for data. The code is branded or clearly explained, the domain feels legitimate, the page loads quickly, and data collection is transparent.

They measure beyond scans. Mature teams tag destinations where appropriate, connect scans to analytics goals, monitor post-scan behavior, and report outcomes rather than activity alone.

They review live codes. A QR code can keep working long after the campaign owner has moved on. High-maturity teams audit destination health, redirects, mobile performance, and content freshness.

Customer and Marketer Survey Findings

QRStuff is fielding a customer and marketer survey; results will be published in the next update of this report. The survey is designed to answer questions that platform data cannot:

- Why do customers create QR codes: awareness, utility, compliance, service, lead capture, support, payments, or retention?
- Which channels use QR most often: packaging, print, direct mail, signage, events, retail, restaurants, education, healthcare, or real estate?
- Which metrics do teams track: scans, clicks, form fills, purchases, reviews, downloads, registrations, repeat scans, revenue, or customer support deflection?
- What prevents better measurement: fragmented ownership, lack of analytics setup, offline attribution difficulty, tool limits, privacy concerns, or unclear goals?
- What trust practices are in place: branded domains, CTAs, consent language, security reviews, mobile QA, and accessibility checks?

The survey results will sit beside the platform analysis rather than replace it. Platform data shows behavior; survey data explains intent, constraints, and operating maturity.

Case Studies: QR in Practice

The following five organisations represent landmark deployments on the QRStuff platform — accounts whose scan volumes, code-creation scale, or governance models place them in a category of their own. Each case study is drawn from first-party platform data, supplemented by public research on the organisation. The full named profiles are published in the online case-study collection at qrstuff.com/scan-report/case-studies/; the summaries below describe the same deployments at segment level.

The five previews below are drawn from the most-scanned accounts in the January 2025 measurement window. They span five countries, three industry verticals, and a combined monthly scan volume of more than 750,000 scans — in January, the platform's seasonally quietest month (index 0.80). Together, they represent what QR maturity looks like when it is treated as infrastructure rather than a campaign.

Landmark Deployments

National education publisher, Southeast Asia. One of the region's largest educational publishers has embedded QR codes into its printed textbook catalogue as part of the product specification — not as a marketing add-on. Its estate of thousands of dynamic codes is governed through a single publisher-owned destination domain, giving the editorial team control over every code in every book in the channel. In the platform's quietest month (January 2025), this account recorded 200,000+ scans — a figure consistent with daily, classroom-led scanning across a national school system. The per-code scan volume sits far above the platform's top-decile benchmark (98+ first-year scans), and the estate has sustained this performance across multiple school years, consistent with the selection effect visible in the platform-wide durability data: committed, governed programmes choose dynamic codes and keep them alive.

UNESCO-recognised heritage and arts centre, East Asia. A major cultural venue operating inside a cluster of Declared Monuments — buildings that cannot be permanently altered — has built one of the most complete QR-native visitor journeys on the platform. Dynamic URL codes, in use since 2021, handle the full visitor lifecycle: pre-visit ticketing, in-gallery 3D-tour and AV content, wayfinding, audience research, and social. Because the codes are dynamic, the physical signage stays fixed while the experience behind it changes with every exhibition season. In January 2025, this account posted 150,000+ scans — placing it in the platform's top 10 out of 12,751 active clients. A single cultural venue operating at the volume tier of national-scale deployments.

National ministry of education, Middle East. A government education ministry has embedded QR codes into the national textbook programme as deliberate infrastructure under a long-term digital-transformation strategy, with roughly 2,000 codes routing to official government portals. The account has been active since 2019, predating the pandemic-era QR surge — and in January 2025 recorded 125,000+ scans, the largest government deployment in the cohort. The destination standard is official policy: every code resolves to a verified government domain, and dynamic routing means printed textbooks do not become obsolete when digital resources are updated. The country accounts

for 2.2% of all geolocated scans in QRStuff's full-year 2025 geography extract — remarkable for a population of approximately five million, and largely attributable to curriculum-embedded scanning in the national school system.

Consumer electronics accessories licensee, North America. A manufacturer that ships dozens of SKUs under multiple iconic licensed brand identities into the world's largest retail channels faced a routing problem: each pack needs to take the buyer somewhere different — a brand's setup flow, a retailer's product page, a support portal — without reprinting packaging per route. Its solution is a small estate of dynamic codes, each printed on-pack, dynamically steered by the server at the moment of scan. The account was created in 2024 and reached the platform's top-5 scan tier within months — evidence that the codes were built into packaging from the start. In January 2025, this account recorded 80,000+ scans from a handful of codes: among the highest scans-per-code ratios in the cohort, and consistent with on-pack codes printed on high-velocity retail units.

National textbook programme and digital-infrastructure operator, South Asia / Pacific. A second national-scale education QR deployment, this one operated by a country's ministry of education in a large emerging-market economy, reached the platform's top-10 scan tier through a programme that links printed curriculum materials to government-managed digital resources. Dynamic routing preserves the utility of printed textbooks across annual curriculum cycles. Scan volumes track the school calendar, consistent with classroom-led use rather than campaign activity.

> **Note**
>
> The full named case-study collection — including Denny's, Tai Kwun, the Ministry of Education (Oman), Intan Pariwara, JEM Global, ValetTickets.com, CZEview, Pagemaker, Gutenberg Print Pack, BAT Nigeria, and Coca-Cola — is published at qrstuff.com/scan-report/case-studies/. Each organisation may review its case study and request corrections at research@qrstuff.com.

Recommendations for Marketers, Operators, and Product Teams

For marketers

Treat QR as an intent signal, not a print decoration. The scanner has taken an active step, so the destination should be more focused than a general awareness landing page. Use QR-specific campaign parameters where appropriate, define the conversion event before launch, and compare performance by placement, creative, and destination.

For operators

Use QR to remove friction in service moments. Menus, forms, WiFi, check-ins, review requests, support documents, and instructions should be fast, mobile-first, and resilient. Audit live codes regularly. A code that still scans but points to outdated content is an operational risk.

For product and packaging teams

Plan for persistence. Packaging and product-linked QR codes may need to support instructions, compliance, product data, support, sustainability, loyalty, and recalls over time. Align early with GS1 Digital Link and DPP requirements where relevant. Avoid one-off destinations that cannot be governed after launch.

For analytics and data teams

Do not stop at scan counts. Build a measurement model that connects physical placement, scan metadata, destination behavior, and business outcomes. Use visible campaign parameters when they make sense, but also consider redirect analytics, event tracking, CRM fields, and privacy-preserving aggregation.

For trust and security teams

Make the destination feel official before the user arrives. Use clear CTAs, recognizable domains, HTTPS, mobile QA, and transparent data collection. Monitor for broken redirects, destination drift, and spoofing risks around high-visibility placements.

Methodology, Privacy, Limitations, and Data Quality

This report is based on QRStuff aggregate platform data and external public market sources. QRStuff data comes from the `phase1-20250602` report build and the reviewed/public outputs listed in the appendix.

Basis for the "longest-running" claim. QRStuff has operated continuously since 2008, with dynamic scan logging from 2009. The scan record in this report begins with 5,813 dynamic scans in 2009 and runs unbroken through 88.2 million in 2025 — a 16-year continuously-operated, single-platform, first-party series. To our knowledge no longer continuous first-party QR scan dataset has been published: Uniqode/Beaconstac's published data begins around 2013, QR Tiger publishes aggregate statistics without a longitudinal series, and Bitly's QR tracking dates from around 2020. The claim is scoped to span, not size, and has not been independently verified by a third party; corrections are invited at research@qrstuff.com. Convention note: we describe the 2009–2025 scan record as 16 years (elapsed); creation-cohort analyses span 17 calendar-year cohorts (2009–2025), and the creation log reaches back to 2008.

Visualead-linked accounts are excluded from main code-creation and destination cohorts. Google acquisition attribution is treated as a channel-tagging field and is not excluded from scan aggregates. Internal and test accounts are excluded from case-study outreach.

Scan totals are aggregate hits. A one-day user-agent diagnostic for 2025-01-01 found 97.0% likely human or unknown traffic, 2.9% bot or crawler traffic, and 0.1% link preview or prefetch traffic. The bot/prefetch methodology (user-agent keyword matching plus zero-device-count signal) was approved on 2026-06-12; scan totals are confirmed.

Destination samples classify final destination characteristics without publishing raw URLs. Page-shape, category, campaign-parameter, HTTPS, and deep-page use-case labels are deterministic and should continue to receive QA as the report evolves.

Geography is reported from comparable full-year 2024 and 2025 geolocated scan extracts (bi-weekly chunked windows from shorturl_log; 2025: 101.9M scans across 239 countries) — superseding the prior 30-day April–May 2024 census for publication. k-anonymity threshold: 100 scans (25 countries suppressed). No Visualead exclusion applied (cohort <0.01% of total). Region labels are editorial macro-regions, and small-volume countries are aggregated in the suppressed full distribution. Creation-year type mix and dynamic/static splits use ex-Visualead qrcode cohorts (2008–2025). Destination treemap scope: combined 2025 quarterly 10k samples (n=26,808 external URLs). Industry metadata also remains thin, so this edition uses industry spotlights rather than QRStuff-wide industry rankings.

The lifecycle analyses in The Lives of a QR Code come from the `signature-20260612` build and its anonymous-inclusive companion. Three methodology points apply throughout. First, the **registered-versus-anonymous scope axis**: anonymous/guest creations are roughly seven in ten dynamic codes, so registered-scope and platform-wide numbers can differ materially; both are published, and every lifecycle claim carries its scope wording. The durability trend exists only in the registered scope —

claims about it must never be read platform-wide, and the contrast is selection, not causation. Second, two cohort annotations: the January 2020 cohort is distorted by COVID-19 lockdowns, and the January 2022 cohort's all-codes half-life is mechanically inflated by a ~98k bulk-PDF batch from 226 clients (the URL-only figure is the honest read for that cohort). Third, suppression and restraint rules: monthly cells and content types below 100 codes are suppressed, benchmark distributions are reported as percentiles only, and 99th-percentile figures are not quoted for content types with fewer than ~1,000 codes.

Legal sign-off on the legitimate-interests lawful basis was given on 2026-06-12. The published output is anonymized, aggregated industry analysis with suppression rules and no customer-identifying detail.

Appendix: Chart Inputs, Definitions, Classification Rules, Footnotes

Chart inputs

Figure	Public input
Long-term scan history	resources/scan-report/data/scan_trend_long_term.json
2024 vs 2025 scan trend	resources/scan-report/data/scan_trend_2024_2025.json
2024 vs 2025 code creation	resources/scan-report/data/code_creation_trend_2024_2025_ex_visualead.json
Content types	resources/scan-report/data/content_type_creation_2025_01_ex_visualead.json
External page shape	resources/scan-report/data/destination_external_page_shape_2025_q1_100k.json
External categories	resources/scan-report/data/destination_external_categories_2025_q1_100k.json
Campaign parameters	resources/scan-report/data/destination_external_campaign_params_2025_q1_100k.json
Scan-weighted page shape	resources/scan-report/data/destination_scan_weighted_page_shape_2025_01_top1000.json
Deep-page use cases	resources/scan-report/data/deep_page_use_case_period_comparison_2025.json
Country scan data (2025 full year)	resources/scan-report/data/geography_country_top30_2025_full_year.json
Region scan data (2025 full year)	resources/scan-report/data/geography_region_summary_2025_full_year.json
Country scan data (2024 full year)	resources/scan-report/data/geography_country_top30_2024_full_year.json
Region scan data (2024 full year)	resources/scan-report/data/geography_region_summary_2024_full_year.json
Country rank change (2024 vs 2025)	resources/scan-report/data/geography_country_top30_2024_full_year.json, resources/scan-report/data/geography_country_top30_2025_full_year.json
Destination treemap	resources/scan-report/data/destination_treemap_2025.json

Figure	Public input
Data type mix by creation year	resources/scan-report/data/data_type_mix_by_year.json
Dynamic vs static by creation year	resources/scan-report/data/dynamic_static_split_by_year.json
Geography milestone years	resources/scan-report/data/geography_country_top15_{2012,2016,2020,2022,2025}_full_year.json
Cohort maturity by year	resources/scan-report/data/cohort_maturity_by_year.json
Monthly seasonality	resources/scan-report/data/monthly_seasonality_2024_2025.json
Day-of-week seasonality	resources/scan-report/data/dayofweek_seasonality_2024_2025.json
Client scan concentration	resources/scan-report/data/client_scan_concentration_topn_2025_q1.json
Scan longevity cohort	resources/scan-report/data/scan_longevity_cohort_2024_01.json
Survival curves (registered)	resources/scan-report/data/cohort_survival_curves.json
Survival curves (platform-wide)	resources/scan-report/data/cohort_survival_curves_incl_anon.json
Half-life by cohort (registered)	resources/scan-report/data/cohort_half_life_summary.json
Half-life by cohort (platform-wide)	resources/scan-report/data/cohort_half_life_summary_incl_anon.json
Lifecycle archetypes (registered)	resources/scan-report/data/lifecycle_archetypes_centroids.json
Lifecycle archetypes (platform-wide)	resources/scan-report/data/lifecycle_archetypes_centroids_incl_anon.json
Archetype mix by content type	resources/scan-report/data/lifecycle_archetype_by_content_type.json
Scan benchmarks (registered)	resources/scan-report/data/scan_benchmarks_by_content_type.json
Scan benchmarks (platform-wide)	resources/scan-report/data/scan_benchmarks_by_content_type_incl_anon.json
Bot/prefetch diagnostic	resources/scan-report/data/user_agent_traffic_buckets_2025_01_01.json
Derived analytical callouts	resources/scan-report/data/report_ready_analytical_findings.json
Derived robust statistics	resources/scan-report/data/report_ready_additional_findings.json

Definitions

Dynamic scans: Aggregate recorded scan hits for QRStuff dynamic short URLs. Bot/prefetch methodology approved 2026-06-12; scan counts are confirmed.

Newly created codes: QR codes created during the period in the reviewed cohort. In code-creation analyses, Visualead-linked accounts are excluded.

Deep page: An external destination classified as a specific page beyond the root/homepage experience.

Homepage: An external destination classified as a root or near-root website destination.

Direct file: A destination that appears to open a file resource directly.

Campaign tracking parameters: Visible query parameters such as UTM parameters or common ad click identifiers. This is not a complete measure of all analytics implementations.

HTTPS adoption: Share of reviewed external destinations whose final destination used HTTPS.

Registered users / platform-wide: "Registered users" covers codes created by signed-in accounts, excluding the anonymous/guest creation bucket and internal accounts. "Platform-wide" includes anonymous creations. Anonymous creations are roughly seven in ten dynamic codes, so the two scopes can differ materially; lifecycle claims always state their scope.

Half-life (cohort): The first month after creation in which the share of still-active codes (ever-scanned base) falls below 50% of the month-one share. Sensitive to the month-one level, hence the URL-only sensitivity column.

Evergreen workhorse / lifecycle archetypes: Editorial labels for k-means clusters of shape-normalized first-year monthly scan vectors. "Evergreen" codes spread scans across all twelve months; "one-month wonders" concentrate ~94% of scans in the creation month.

External source notes

External market, consumer, and regulatory sources cited in this report are listed in the footnotes below.