GWI USA:
Research & methodology

GWI.

Your step-by-step guide to how we collect our data in the US

Last updated in October 2024

Key numbers

250M+
internet users represented

4
updates a year

80k
annual sample

40k+
profiling points

700+
psychographics

3k+
brands

GWI USA

Launched in Q2 2020, GWI USA shines a spotlight on the digital behaviors of American internet users aged 16+.

Distinct from the USA component of GWI Core - our harmonized survey of internet users across 50+ markets - GWI USA provides a more detailed focus on American internet users; questionnaire content is tailored to the American market. The GWI USA survey also contains a set of multicultural questions shown only to Hispanic, Black/African American and Asian American respondents.

Updated four times a year, GWI USA has a quarterly sample of 20k (80k annually) and is representative of approximately 250+ million internet users.

GWI USA is a comprehensive study of the behaviors and attitudes of American internet users aged 16+

We work with a number of industry-leading panel providers to interview a diverse range of high-quality respondents from across the US

Respondents

To interview so many internet users, we work with a number of industry-leading panel providers. Panel providers specialize in managing large numbers of respondents, who they typically recruit through online ads, sponsored posts, online messaging and partnerships with websites. After signing up, panellists have to verify their email address and provide some basic demographic information. Most panel providers also ask their members to re-confirm their details periodically.

Each time we launch fieldwork, we share sampling quotas with our panel partners, instructing them on the number of respondents we need from each gender, from each age group, and so on. Then, at the start of all surveys, we ask respondents about their basic demographic information to verify the quotas have been fulfilled.

To qualify for the GWI USA survey, respondents must be internet users who live in one of the 50 states, or DC. We don't include individuals living in off-shore territories or dependencies (e.g. American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico).

Incentives

Our panel partners offer a variety of incentives designed to appeal to respondents of all backgrounds, including wealthier segments who might be most motivated by the chance to help good causes. The most common incentives include:

- ✅ Monetary payments/PayPal credit
- ✅ Loyalty points
- ✅ Vouchers
- ✅ Charity donations
- ✅ Competition/sweepstake entry

Many people also see surveys as a chance to share their views; for some, this can be a bigger motivator than the incentive.

Sample structure

There are two key points to note about the structure of our GWI USA survey:

1. We represent 16+ year olds

GWI USA represents US internet users aged 16+. We don't interview anyone aged 15 or under because parental consent would be needed. In addition, questions would need to be asked in a suitable way for younger respondents. However, we do run a separate study, GWI Kids, which looks specifically at internet users aged 8-15.

2. We represent online populations

Not everyone uses the internet - even in markets like the US. Because we conduct our research online, we represent the internet-using part of the population only. According to our own projections, 95% of the US population aged 16+ are internet users. To ensure our sample accurately reflects the make-up of the US internet population aged 16+, we set quotas on:

- ✔ Age
- ✔ Gender
- ✔ Race/Ethnicity
- ✔ Income
- ✔ Region

The age, gender and race/ethnicity quotas are interlocking, meaning they are broken down into sub-groups such as "Hispanic males 16-24".

For the income quotas, we divide respondents into three groups: under $50k, $50k-$100k, or $100k+. For region, we set quotas on: Northeast; Midwest; Southeast; Southwest; West. To set these quotas, we conduct thorough research across a range of sources including the US Census Bureau and Pew Research Centre.

We set quotas on age, gender, income, region, race and ethnicity to ensure our sample is representative

Race & ethnicity

As part of the GWI USA survey, we ask respondents about their racial identity. Respondents have the choice of selecting any of the following:

- ✔ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ✔ Asian
- ✔ Black/African American
- ✔ Native Hawaiian or other
- ✔ Pacific Islander
- ✔ White/Caucasian
- ✔ Other
- ✔ Prefer not to say

During data processing, respondents who select more than one racial identity are recorded as Mixed Race.

Separate from the racial identity question, we also ask about Hispanic identity. Any respondent is able to identify as Hispanic, regardless of their answer to the racial identity question. Within the Hispanic group, we monitor language preferences to ensure we achieve a good balance of those identifying as Spanish-dominant vs English-dominant.

Universe sizes, quotas & weighting

There are two stages to calculating the universe size for GWI USA:

1. Establish the population of the United States by age, gender, income, race/ethnicity, and region.

For this, we rely on data published by the US Census Bureau, including estimates based on the American Community Survey (a yearly survey of c.3.5m US households) and the 2010 census. The US Census Bureau has published estimates up to 2022; We have forecast these figures to attain estimates for 2024.

2. Calculate the internet penetration among each age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, and income group.

We make these calculations drawing on data from the Pew Research Center, cross-checked with other sources.

% Hispanic males who use the internet (2024 GWI est.)

%

Age ▾	
16–24	99
25–34	99
35–44	98
45–54	98
55–64	97
65–74	84
75+	66
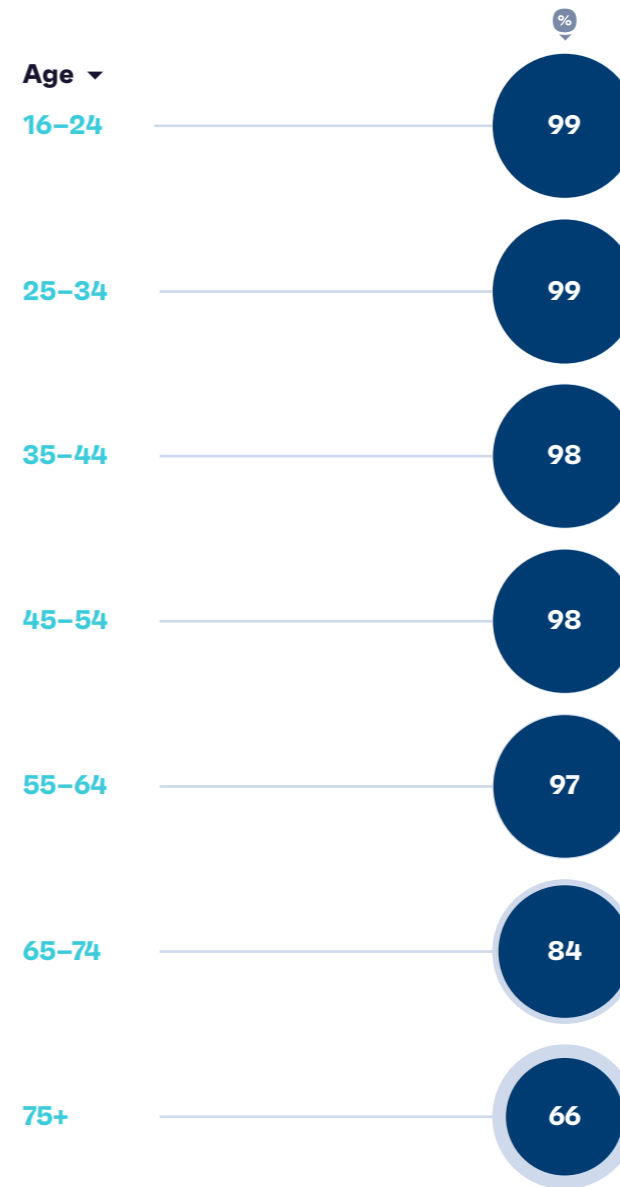
Example:

To understand how this process works, let's look at Hispanic males aged 25-34:

The US Census Bereau estimated that in 2022 there were a total of 5,027,136 Hispanic males (of any race) aged 25-34 in the US; once we project that forward to 2024, we have a figure of 5,054,079.

From Pew, we know the percentage of each group who were internet users in the early 2010s. Once we project these figures forward to 2024, they are as illustrated here.

So, if 99% of Hispanic males 25-34s are internet users, that gives us 5,003,539 Hispanic males aged 25-34 in our universe.

By repeating this process across each age, gender and race/ethnicity group, the number of internet users in the whole of the USA can be determined.

Each respondent is assigned a **'weight'** according to their demographic profile to create final universe figures

Parallel to this, we look at population and internet penetration figures for each income group. When we project these forward to 2023, we can apply these quotas alongside our age, gender and race/ethnicity ones.

Additionally, we take census data for region and state and combine it with data on internet penetration by state from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. From this, we know what the overall sample in each region should be.

During each wave of research, we then assign a "weight" to every respondent based on their age, gender, race/ethnicity and income profile. This allows us to calculate approximately how many people are represented by their responses, and to calculate overall universe sizes accordingly.

For example, we might know that a response from a Hispanic male aged 25-34 represents approximately 12,300 real world internet users. So, each time that respondent answers positively to a question, the corresponding universe size for that question is increased by 12,300.

The below shows the average number of internet users represented by GWI USA respondents - though this will vary depending on which subgroup they belong to:

12,400   Average number of internet users represented by 1 Non-Hispanic GWI USA respondent (quarterly)

11,900   Average number of internet users represented by 1 Hispanic GWI USA respondent (quarterly)

All questions are mobile-friendly and all respondents see the same version of the survey

Questionnaire content

The GWI USA survey contains questions across the following categories:

Demographics	Attitudes & interests	Sports & exercise	Lifestyle
Professional life & finances	Marketing & brand touchpoints	Retailers & shopping	Food & drink
Health	Online activities and behaviors	Device	Social media
Media	Gaming		

GWI USA has been meticulously designed with no grids or long lists. This means that all questions are mobile-friendly and all respondents see the same version of the survey regardless of whether they're using a mobile, tablet or computer. This is different to GWI Core, where respondents who complete via mobile see a shorter version of the survey.

We employ routing to ensure that respondents don't see any questions which aren't relevant to them. For example, if someone tells us that they don't use a specific social network, we won't ask them any follow-up questions about it. Similarly, we have a set of questions on heritage and language preferences which we only ask to Hispanic, Black/African American and Asian American respondents. Respondents can choose whether they want to complete the survey in English or Latin American Spanish.

We work with an expert translation company to ensure that all text is translated accurately and with appropriate digital context. After translations have been uploaded, they're checked by a minimum of two people in GWI. Once a year, we ask different translators to proofread the entire questionnaire to double-check its accuracy and relevance.

Data checks

All respondents that complete our surveys are pre-screened for quality by their panels. We also run stringent testing both during and after fieldwork to ensure a high-quality and robust sample.

This includes:

✔ **Checking completion times**
We know how long it takes to complete our surveys. If someone gets to the end too fast, we know they're unlikely to have responded accurately, so we remove them.

✔ **Detecting patterned answers and straight-liners**
We monitor response patterns across the whole survey and flag any suspicious answering styles for investigation. Examples of this include: respondents selecting the first answer in multiple questions; respondents who agree with large numbers of statements; or respondents who give answers which appear to be following a pattern (for example, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). These individuals are flagged as "straightliners" – people who might not be answering accurately. If they do this just once, we'll check their response to see if it's plausible (e.g. it could be the case that someone genuinely has used all of the services / platforms within a particular type of list). If they do it more than once, we'll remove them.

✔ **Detecting multiple "None of the above" answers**
In line with standard research practice, most behavioral questions (e.g. "Have you done the following?") include a "none of the above" option at the end. If someone selects this option too frequently, we'll review all their answers to make sure they aren't answering in a superficial manner.

✔ **Including logic traps**
We check whether respondents' answers are consistent across a number of questions where poor-quality respondents could contradict themselves. For instance, if a respondent tells us that they're 16 years old and they have a PhD, we'll review their answers.

✔ **2x rule**
Respondents who are identified as being potentially suspicious on two or more of these criteria are automatically removed without any further consideration.

Typically, we remove between 10% of respondents in the data-cleaning process. During the fieldwork, we over-recruit in each demographic quota to ensure that we can still meet our quarterly sample size commitments once any poor-quality responses have been identified and removed.

Recontact

We use a recontact methodology to cover more topics than one survey would allow.

GWI USA itself is powered by two surveys. The first is the main survey - everyone completes it and it covers a variety of topics. It takes approx 50 minutes to complete.
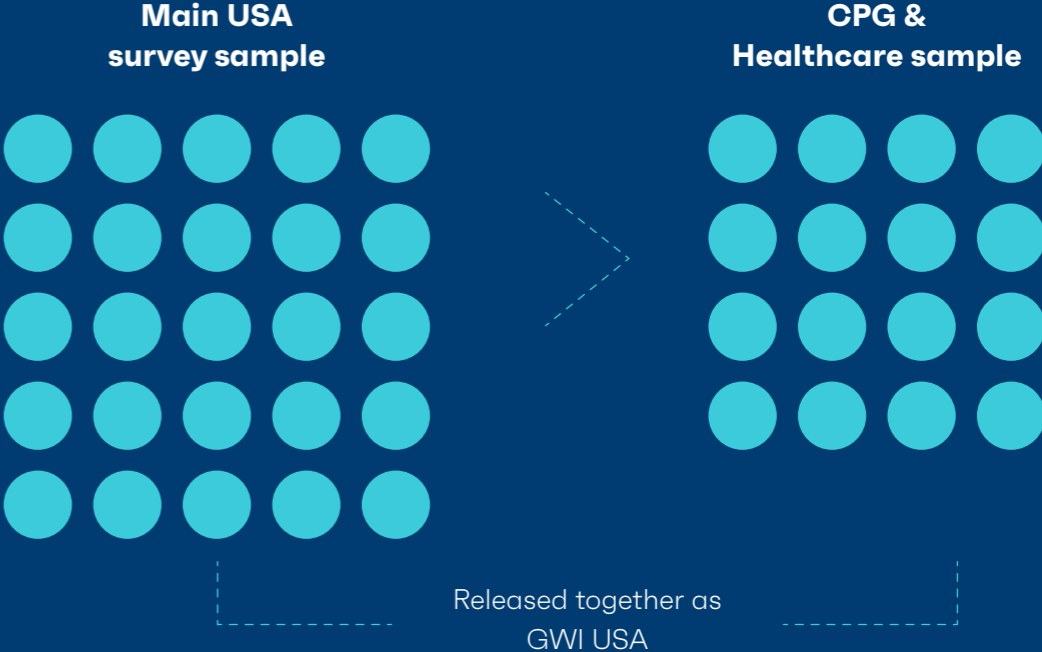
Then there's the CPG and Healthcare module - this is a recontact module completed by approximately half of the main survey sample. After completing the main survey, respondents are invited to complete a shorter follow up survey that focuses primarily on CPG and healthcare. It takes approx 35 minutes to complete.

This approach allows us to include an appropriate privacy and consent notice

on the recontact survey, where we inform respondents that they'll be asked a number of health specific questions. As our surveys are divided into thematic "blocks" of questions that appear in a randomized order, by asking the healthcare questions in a separate survey we ensure that such sensitive questions don't appear at the end of the main survey.

This recontact approach means we're able to give you lots of data without exhausting our respondents with excessively long surveys or compromising the ability to compare questions from one section with another.

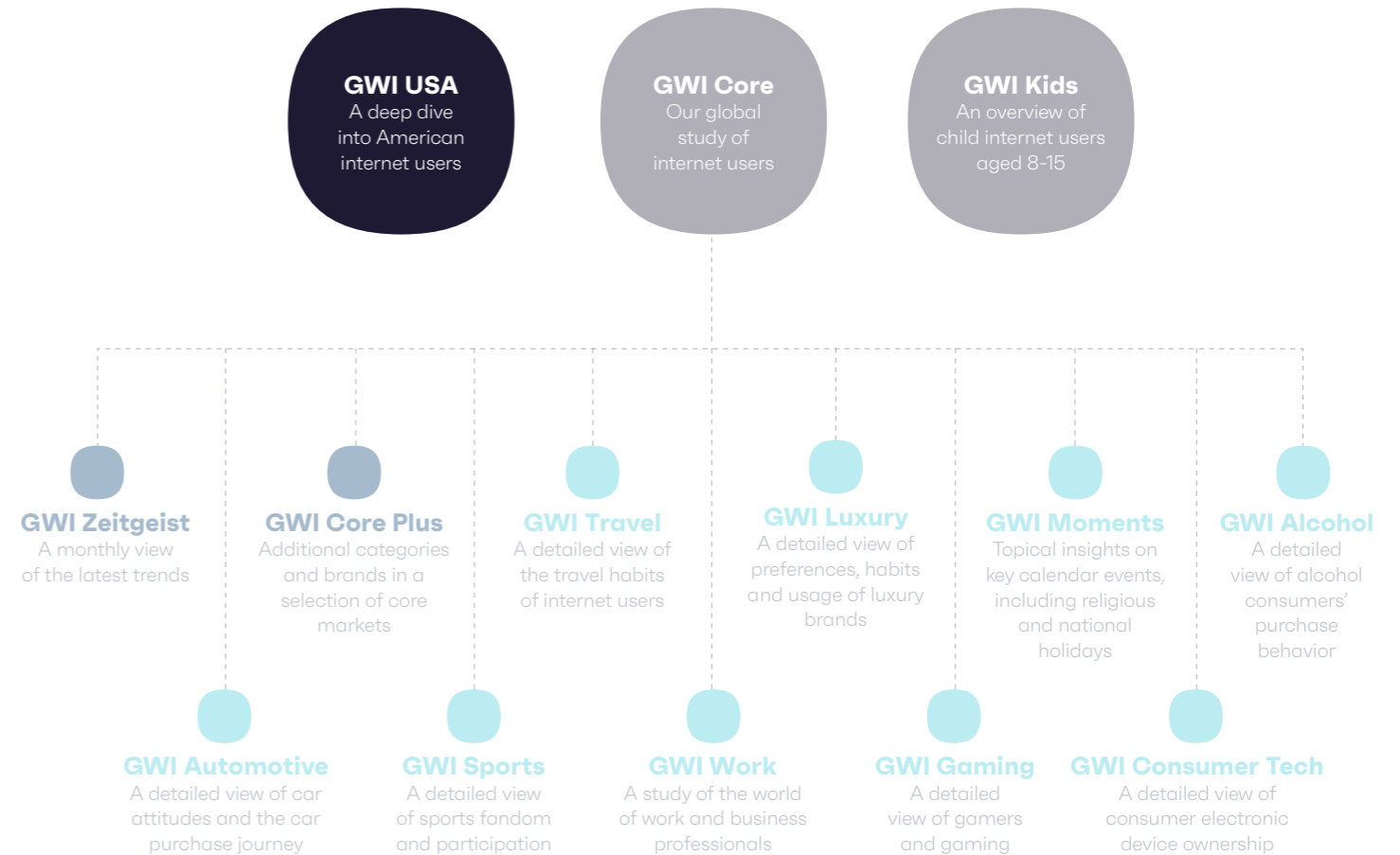*Please note that all questions featured in the CPG and healthcare module are marked with an asterisk in our platform.

Main USA survey sample

CPG & Healthcare sample

Released together as GWI USA

Providing a 360-degree view

GWI USA
A deep dive into American internet users

GWI Core
Our global study of internet users

GWI Kids
An overview of child internet users aged 8-15

Get an even deeper look into consumers with our Core add-ons

GWI USA is only part of our data ecosystem. Since 2019 we have launched a number of additional add-ons which use our flagship Core study at their foundation, but delves into particular subjects areas in greater depth. It also means we can give these areas the attention and detail they deserve.

GWI Zeitgeist
A monthly view of the latest trends

GWI Core Plus
Additional categories and brands in a selection of core markets

GWI Travel
A detailed view of the travel habits of internet users

GWI Luxury
A detailed view of preferences, habits and usage of luxury brands

GWI Moments
Topical insights on key calendar events, including religious and national holidays

GWI Alcohol
A detailed view of alcohol consumers' purchase behavior

GWI Automotive
A detailed view of car attitudes and the car purchase journey

GWI Sports
A detailed view of sports fandom and participation

GWI Work
A study of the world of work and business professionals

GWI Gaming
A detailed view of gamers and gaming

GWI Consumer Tech
A detailed view of consumer electronic device ownership

GWI Core represents internet users aged 16-64 across 50+ markets. In some markets, it includes 16+ with no upper age cap. **GWI Core Plus, GWI Zeitgeist, GWI Travel, GWI Luxury,** and **GWI Consumer Tech** represent the same universe of internet users as Core. **GWI Work, GWI Gaming, GWI Sports, GWI Alcohol,** and **GWI Automotive** represent specific groups (e.g., business professionals, gamers, sports fans, etc.). To represent these audiences, we recontact respondents based on their Core survey information.

Click on the dots to learn more about our data sets

GWI Custom: Going bespoke to get the exact insights you need

Our recontact methodology allows us to interview GWI USA respondents again, providing two significant benefits:

✅ We can pre-target even difficult to reach audiences based on 40k+ profiling data points

✅ We can synchronize the Custom and GWI USA data sets giving you access to a huge amount of data

For example, we can recontact GWI USA respondents that are planning to invest in cryptocurrency to better understand their motivations through a custom study . Utilizing both data sets, you can understand what motivates them to invest (recontact), as well as their professional & educational background and personal interests (GWI USA).

Measuring digital impact

We can combine the benefits of active and passive data collection. Thanks to our tagged online content we can help you measure the impact of digital advertising and website visits including:

✅ Measuring the effectiveness of online campaigns

✅ Incorporating Opportunity To See (OTS) modelling for cross-platform campaigns

✅ Evaluating online campaign targeting using 30k data points from our GWI USA study

✅ Understanding the profile of a website's visitation audience with GWI USA data points

For more information on any of the above please contact your account manager

GWI.