Researching Annual WordPress Users: A Comprehensive Stakeholder Analysis Framework

Abstract

WordPress has emerged as the dominant content management system (CMS), powering 43.4% of all websites globally as of 2025, representing more than 541 million websites worldwide (W3Techs, 2025). This paper develops and applies a comprehensive research framework for estimating and analyzing annual WordPress users across multiple stakeholder categories: end users, content creators, website owners, developers, business ecosystem actors, enterprise clients, and community contributors. The framework integrates quantitative and qualitative methods to address the challenges posed by WordPress's open-source and distributed architecture. Findings highlight WordPress's role in generating a global economic impact of nearly $600 billion, supporting millions of professionals across the digital economy. The paper concludes by proposing a replicable framework for annual research and monitoring of WordPress's ecosystem scale and health.

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1. Introduction

WordPress represents one of the most expansive digital ecosystems in existence, with a scope that stretches far beyond traditional content management platforms. Since its inception in 2003, WordPress has grown from a blogging tool into a global CMS supporting billions of end users and millions of creators, developers, and businesses (AIOSEO, 2025). Its distributed, open-source nature—while central to its success—presents significant challenges for researchers seeking to quantify and analyze its user base comprehensively. Unlike centralized platforms with proprietary user data, WordPress operates across thousands of hosting providers, self-hosted installations, and community-driven initiatives.

The research presented here has two primary objectives. First, it seeks to establish a systematic methodology for estimating annual WordPress users across diverse stakeholder categories. Second, it highlights the broader economic, professional, and community significance of the

WordPress ecosystem. In doing so, this study not only addresses gaps in the literature but also contributes a replicable framework for ongoing academic and industry research.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 WordPress Market Position

WordPress maintains an unparalleled position in the CMS market. As of 2025, WordPress powers 43.4% of all websites globally, amounting to more than 541 million active websites (W3Techs, 2025). Within the CMS market specifically, WordPress commands a 60.8% market share, outperforming all competitors combined (AIOSEO, 2025). Growth has remained steady, with approximately 661 new WordPress-powered sites launched daily (InstaWP, 2024). This long-term stability underscores WordPress's entrenched position in the global digital ecosystem.

2.2 Economic Impact and Ecosystem Scale

The WordPress ecosystem is more than a software platform—it is a global economy. Research commissioned by WP Engine (2020) estimated the WordPress economy at $596.7 billion in 2020, with projections surpassing $636 billion by 2021. This economy spans a wide range of activities including hosting, plugin and theme development, enterprise services, freelancing, and content creation. The economic scale also translates into substantial employment opportunities, sustaining hundreds of thousands of jobs globally (Awesem, 2020).

2.3 User Demographics and Global Distribution

WordPress is inherently international, available in more than 208 languages (WordPress Translation Project, 2025). Its user base is concentrated in North America, which accounts for approximately 45% of the hosting market, followed closely by Europe and the Asia-Pacific region (SEOSandWitch, 2025). Professional demographics show that 42.6% of WordPress developers are between the ages of 30 and 39, and 88.8% identify as male (Stack Overflow, 2024). Moreover, 34.4% of WordPress professionals report having over 15 years of professional experience in web development (MediaWiki, 2025).

2.4 Gaps in the Literature

Despite the platform's scale, most research has focused narrowly on market share, technology adoption, or economic value. While valuable, these perspectives often fail to capture the diversity of WordPress stakeholders, ranging from casual end users to enterprise-level clients and community contributors. Few studies systematically integrate these categories into a holistic framework, and fewer still establish replicable methodologies for annual tracking. This study addresses those gaps by proposing a stakeholder analysis framework designed to measure and understand WordPress's global impact comprehensively.

3. Methodology

This study employs a **Comprehensive Stakeholder Analysis Framework** to account for the full diversity of WordPress users. The framework integrates **quantitative**, **qualitative**, and **mixed-methods** approaches, ensuring a holistic perspective on user volume, engagement, and economic contribution.

3.1 Quantitative Approaches

Platform and Web Analytics

- Official WordPress.com statistics provide baseline hosting and content data (Automattic, 2025).
- Independent analytics services such as W3Techs, BuiltWith, and Netcraft estimate total websites and CMS market share (W3Techs, 2025).
- Hosting provider data offers insight into installations, domains, and customer counts (SEOSandWitch, 2025).

Economic and Market Research

- Industry reports and commissioned studies (WP Engine, 2020) provide estimates of the WordPress economy.
- Survey-based research identifies professional demographics and usage patterns (Stack Overflow, 2024).
- Transaction data from plugin and theme marketplaces capture activity among developers and businesses.

Technical Metrics

- WordPress core download statistics track adoption of new versions (Make WordPress, 2024).
- Plugin and theme repository analytics identify trends in developer activity (DeliciousBrains, 2024).
- GitHub and Trac records provide open-source contribution data.

3.2 Qualitative Approaches

User Research

- In-depth interviews with diverse stakeholders capture motivations, challenges, and user journeys (Interaction Design Foundation, 2025).
- Focus groups explore perspectives of targeted groups such as small business owners or enterprise clients.
- Ethnographic studies of WordCamps and local meetups reveal cultural dimensions of WordPress adoption (WordPress Governance Project, 2024).

Community Engagement Analysis

- WordCamp and meetup attendance data measure grassroots participation (WP Governance, 2024).
- Community forum and social media analysis provide insights into user support and collaboration.
- Stakeholder mapping techniques reveal interdependencies within the ecosystem (SimplyStakeholders, 2024).

3.3 Mixed-Methods Approaches

Annual survey programs integrate both quantitative and qualitative measures:

- Comprehensive WordPress developer and user surveys.
- Stakeholder-specific research initiatives (e.g., enterprise case studies).
- Community contribution studies tracking satisfaction, retention, and inclusivity (Make WordPress, 2019).

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4. Stakeholder Framework

WordPress users can be segmented into **seven primary stakeholder groups**, each with unique scales, roles, and measurement methods.

4.1 End Users / Consumers

Definition: Individuals who visit and interact with WordPress-powered websites, often without knowledge of the CMS.
Scale: Billions globally.

- 409+ million monthly visitors to WordPress.com sites (Automattic, 2025).

- 20+ billion monthly page views across WordPress platforms.
  Measurement Methods: Web traffic analytics (Google Analytics, SimilarWeb), WordPress.com statistics, hosting provider aggregated data.

4.2 Content Creators

Definition: Individuals who actively create and publish content on WordPress.
Scale: 50–100 million.

- 70+ million blog posts published monthly (Automattic, 2025).

- Significant share of the 207 million global content creators rely on WordPress (WPBeginner, 2024).
  Measurement Methods: WordPress.com account data, publication statistics, creator economy surveys, engagement metrics.

4.3 Website Owners

Definition: Individuals and organizations who own or operate WordPress websites.
Scale: 10–30 million.

- WordPress powers 541+ million sites, with many owners managing multiple installations (W3Techs, 2025).
  Measurement Methods: Domain registration data, installation tracking, hosting provider records, surveys.

4.4 Developers and Technical Users

Definition: Professionals who customize, extend, or maintain WordPress.
Scale: 1–2 million.

- 59,000+ active plugins in the repository suggest thousands of developers (Make WordPress, 2024).

- 924 individuals contributed to the WordPress 6.8 core release (Community WP Ninja, 2024).
  Measurement Methods: GitHub contributions, repository analytics, developer surveys, training records.

4.5 Business Ecosystem

Definition: Commercial entities offering WordPress-related services (e.g., hosting providers, agencies, freelancers).
Scale: 500,000–1 million.

- Includes both small agencies and multinational hosting firms.
  Measurement Methods: Business directories, industry reports, service provider analytics, economic impact studies.

4.6 Enterprise Users

Definition: Large organizations deploying WordPress for corporate communications, publishing, and web applications.
Scale: 50,000–100,000.

- 14.7% of the top 100 websites use WordPress (Kinsta, 2024).

- Examples include CNN, Microsoft, and Bloomberg.
  Measurement Methods: Enterprise technology adoption surveys, case studies, corporate website analysis, vendor reports.

4.7 Community Contributors

Definition: Volunteers contributing to WordPress's open-source development and community initiatives.
Scale: 100,000–500,000.

- 1,236 WordCamps held across 65 countries (WordPress.org, 2025).

- Extensive volunteer efforts in translation, documentation, and support.
  Measurement Methods: Contributor tracking systems (Trac, GitHub), event records, community analytics.

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5. Findings and Results

This section synthesizes data from platform statistics, user engagement, developer activity, and the global economy surrounding WordPress. Together, these findings provide a multi-dimensional understanding of the scale and scope of the ecosystem.

5.1 Platform Statistics (2025)

WordPress maintains dominance across the web landscape.

- Over **541 million websites** are powered by WordPress (W3Techs, 2025).
- WordPress commands **43.4% of all websites globally** and **60.8% of the identifiable CMS market share** (AIOSEO, 2025).
- Growth is steady, with approximately **661 new WordPress sites launched daily** (InstaWP, 2024).

These statistics demonstrate WordPress's sustained expansion as a global publishing platform.

5.2 User Engagement Metrics

Engagement metrics illustrate the active role of WordPress users and creators:

- **409+ million monthly visitors** to WordPress.com alone (Automattic, 2025).
- **20+ billion monthly page views** across WordPress platforms.
- **70+ million blog posts** and **77 million comments** published monthly (Automattic, 2025).

These figures emphasize WordPress's central role in content creation, audience engagement, and global publishing.

5.3 Developer Ecosystem

The developer ecosystem underpins the innovation and flexibility of WordPress.

- Over **59,000 free plugins** and **70,000 total plugins** are available (DeliciousBrains, 2024).
- More than **30,000 themes** are in circulation (Kinsta, 2024).
- **924 contributors** were involved in the development of WordPress 6.8 (Community WP Ninja, 2024).
- WordPress 6.6 was downloaded over **97 million times** (Make WordPress, 2024).

These metrics reflect the vibrancy of the open-source developer community and the extensive ecosystem of tools supporting site customization.

5.4 Economic Impact

The WordPress economy has become a significant force within the broader digital economy.

- Valued at **$596.7 billion in 2020**, with projections exceeding **$636 billion in 2021** (WP Engine, 2020).
- Revenue streams include **hosting, plugin and theme sales, professional services, enterprise deployment, and freelance development** (Awesem, 2020).
- The ecosystem supports **hundreds of thousands of jobs globally**, ranging from independent freelancers to large-scale enterprises (WPBeginner, 2024).

The scale of WordPress's economy makes it comparable to the GDP of mid-sized nations, underscoring its systemic importance in the global digital infrastructure.

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6. Discussion

The findings highlight WordPress's unparalleled scale as both a digital platform and an economic ecosystem. However, they also reveal unique challenges in systematically quantifying its user base due to its distributed, open-source architecture. This section discusses key implications, methodological challenges, and areas for future inquiry.

6.1 Interpreting WordPress's Scale

WordPress serves billions of end users and supports millions of stakeholders across multiple categories. The platform's 43.4% share of the global web illustrates its entrenched dominance (W3Techs, 2025). However, user categories often overlap—for instance, a developer may simultaneously operate as a content creator, business owner, and community contributor. While this complicates measurement, it also underscores WordPress's role as a multi-functional ecosystem rather than a single-purpose platform.

6.2 Open-Source Challenges

The open-source nature of WordPress presents both strengths and research obstacles. Unlike centralized platforms such as Facebook or Shopify, WordPress lacks a unified database of users. This decentralization enables freedom and flexibility but limits centralized tracking (WordPress Governance Project, 2024). Researchers must therefore triangulate across multiple data sources, including hosting providers, analytics services, and survey-based insights, to arrive at reliable estimates.

6.3 Stakeholder Overlap and Complexity

Stakeholder overlap complicates classification. For example, community contributors are often also developers or business owners. Similarly, many enterprises rely on freelance developers and agencies, blurring categorical boundaries. This complexity requires methodological nuance—rigid classification risks underestimating actual engagement, while double-counting may overstate totals. A mixed-methods approach, combining surveys with behavioral analytics, provides the most balanced results.

6.4 Geographic Diversity

WordPress adoption spans more than 208 languages and every global region (WordPress Translation Project, 2025). This geographic diversity adds richness to the community but complicates measurement. For instance, regional hosting providers may not contribute data to global research, and cultural differences shape how WordPress is used (e.g., enterprise adoption in North America vs. community-driven use in Asia). Multi-regional sampling and partnerships with localized hosting providers are therefore essential to accurate research.

6.5 Economic Significance

The WordPress economy's valuation of nearly $600 billion (WP Engine, 2020) demonstrates its systemic role in the digital economy. Unlike proprietary platforms, WordPress's economic contributions are widely distributed, benefiting hosting providers, developers, freelancers, agencies, and enterprises. This decentralization also enhances resilience—growth in one sector (e.g., plugins) often stimulates activity in others (e.g., enterprise deployment). Future research should examine how this decentralized economy compares with centralized competitors in terms of stability, innovation, and inclusivity.

6.6 Methodological Limitations

Several limitations shape the interpretation of this study:

- **Data Fragmentation:** WordPress's open-source model prevents centralized data collection.
- **Privacy Considerations:** Ethical research practices restrict user-level tracking, especially in regions with strict data protection laws.
- **Temporal Variations:** User engagement fluctuates seasonally (e.g., academic calendars, business cycles).

- **Sampling Challenges:** Representative global sampling is difficult due to uneven adoption across regions.

Despite these limitations, the framework developed here provides a scalable methodology that can be refined annually.

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7. Implementation Framework

The findings of this study highlight the need for a structured, repeatable process for measuring annual WordPress users and ecosystem activity. The proposed **Annual Research Program Framework** consists of four sequential phases supported by specific organizational strategies, technological infrastructure, and ethical considerations.

7.1 Annual Research Program Structure

Phase 1: Quantitative Baseline (Months 1–3)

- Aggregate platform statistics from WordPress.com, hosting providers, and analytics firms.
- Analyze domain registration trends and web traffic data.
- Establish baseline metrics for each stakeholder category.

Phase 2: Stakeholder Surveys (Months 4–8)

- Conduct targeted surveys of end users, developers, businesses, and enterprises.
- Implement sampling strategies to ensure representation across demographics and regions.

- Gather data on satisfaction, usage, and ecosystem participation.

Phase 3: Qualitative Research (Months 6–10)

- Carry out in-depth interviews and focus groups with representatives from each stakeholder category.
- Document community participation at WordCamps, meetups, and online forums.
- Map user journeys to understand motivations, challenges, and outcomes.

Phase 4: Analysis and Reporting (Months 9–12)

- Synthesize quantitative and qualitative findings.
- Estimate total annual WordPress users by stakeholder category.
- Identify emerging trends, growth areas, and pain points.
- Publish a comprehensive annual report for academic, industry, and community use.

7.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The success of the program will be measured through key performance indicators across three domains:

User Volume Metrics

- Total unique users across all categories.
- Annual growth rates per stakeholder group.
- Geographic distribution and penetration levels.

Engagement Metrics

- Volume of content creation (posts, comments, pages).
- Community participation (meetups, WordCamps, contributor activity).
- Retention and platform adoption rates.

Ecosystem Health Indicators

- Growth of the developer ecosystem (plugins, themes, core contributions).
- Expansion of business ecosystem and associated revenues.
- Community diversity, inclusivity, and sustainability.
- Rate of innovation (new features, technologies, and adoption trends).

7.3 Organizational Structure

Research Team

- Multidisciplinary team including economists, UX researchers, technologists, and data scientists.

Industry Partnerships

- Collaborations with hosting providers, analytics companies, and WordPress-related businesses.

Community Engagement

- Integration with WordPress community leadership and volunteer groups.
- Leveraging WordCamp events and community forums for data collection.

Academic Collaboration

- Partnerships with universities to ensure methodological rigor and peer review.

7.4 Technology Infrastructure

- **Data Collection Systems:** Automated tools for aggregating WordPress usage statistics.
- **Survey Platforms:** Scalable solutions for conducting multilingual global surveys.
- **Analytics Infrastructure:** Advanced platforms for processing large-scale data sets.
- **Reporting Tools:** Visualization and distribution systems to share results widely.

7.5 Ethical Considerations

The framework emphasizes strict adherence to ethical research standards:

- **Privacy Protection:** Compliance with GDPR, CCPA, and other privacy regulations.
- **Informed Consent:** Ensuring that survey participants and contributors are fully informed.
- **Anonymization:** Removal of personally identifiable information in all datasets.
- **Transparency:** Clear disclosure of methodologies, limitations, and potential biases.

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8. Conclusion

This paper has developed a comprehensive framework for researching annual WordPress users across diverse stakeholder categories. By integrating quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches, the study addresses the methodological challenges posed by WordPress's open-source and decentralized structure.

The findings confirm that WordPress powers over 541 million websites, serving billions of end users and supporting millions of content creators, developers, businesses, enterprises, and community contributors. The platform's economic footprint, valued at nearly $600 billion, positions it as one of the most significant open-source ecosystems in the world.

While data fragmentation, privacy considerations, and stakeholder overlaps complicate precise measurement, the proposed annual research program provides a scalable and replicable methodology. By combining platform statistics, hosting data, surveys, and community engagement analysis, researchers can generate reliable annual estimates that reflect the platform's true global impact.

Future research should prioritize:

- **Enhanced regional analysis** to capture geographic diversity.
- **Longitudinal studies** to assess ecosystem evolution over time.
- **Comparative analyses** with other open-source and proprietary platforms.
- **Collaborative efforts** between academia, industry, and the WordPress community to refine measurement tools.

Ultimately, WordPress is not merely a CMS but a digital infrastructure shaping the modern web. Understanding its users is therefore essential not only for technical and business stakeholders but also for policymakers, educators, and researchers seeking to map the digital economy of the future.

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Shahmir Khan has been working in the WordPress ecosystem since 2019, building scalable solutions across the full spectrum of applications, from hosting infrastructure and enterprise tools to startup products and SMB websites. He combines hands-on development expertise with leadership experience, supported by a deep professional network in open-source communities and digital product development.

Over the course of his career, Shahmir has contributed to more than 150 WordPress-based solutions, including enterprise-scale deployments, high-traffic websites, and open-source tools. His track record includes:

- **Intern – Full Stack (2 years):** Learned PHP while working with WordPress core, in addition to Python and JavaScript. Built a custom WordPress-based solution for the elevator industry with 250+ modules, later adopted by Mitsubishi and Otis teams, and ultimately acqui-hired (founder only) by Schindler.

- **Team Lead:** Directed a team of five in modernizing a high-traffic U.S.-based real estate auctions site built on WordPress.

- **CTO, WordPress Consulting:** Led a team of 15+ developers, delivering 75+ solutions and generating more than $5 million in client revenue through KPIs and delivery mechanisms.

- **Head of Product:** Oversaw the transition of a WordPress legacy platform into TypeScript for *Dalile.com* and its associated ventures.

- **Founder, Pixelabs:** Created 30+ open-source plugins (available at GitHub), generating $60,000 in sales and delivering 150+ solutions through freelance and direct client channels.

- **Head of Product (Enterprise WP Agency):** Joined to streamline KPIs, delivery frameworks, and enterprise-grade WordPress projects.

Through these roles, Shahmir has developed expertise in product leadership, open-source innovation, and scalable system design, positioning him as a key voice in the study of WordPress ecosystems and digital economies.