

Maximizing Research Participation & Optimizing Incentives

Strategies to deliver best-in-class insights



More Effective Incentives Lead to More Meaningful Market Research

No matter what kind of research you're conducting, getting people—not to mention the **right** people—to participate can be a challenge. Whether you're a panel provider recruiting for a client project, an in-house researcher conducting consumer surveys and focus groups, or simply a marketer collecting customer feedback, you need a representative sample to give you accurate data and reliable, actionable insights.

For most people who conduct any kind of research, incentives are nothing new. What you might not know is just how vital rewards—and the **way** they're executed—are to your recruitment and response rates. BHN partnered with Qualtrics to learn more about how to reach research participants, what kind of studies are most popular and how to optimize your promotion and incentives strategies to make them more effective at attracting the responses you need.



About this Research:

BHN EQ & Qualtrics 2024 Research Best Practices, Feb. 2024, n=2,001, U.S., 18+, must have been compensated for a market research study in the past 12 months

Who We Are



About us:

Blackhawk Network (BHN) is a leader in survey rewards and research incentives. Our evolving portfolio of world-class services and solutions keeps you ahead of the curve and enables you to provide meaningful experiences that drive participation and data collection.

Among our suite of solutions, BHN Rewards is a digital rewards management platform that puts the power of incentives to work for researchers of all kinds. It integrates with more than 25 leading survey, research and engagement platforms, including Qualtrics, to streamline and automate the rewarding process.

To learn more, visit bhnrewards.com



About our partner:

Qualtrics, the leader and creator of the experience management category, is a cloud-native software platform that empowers organizations to deliver exceptional experiences and build deep relationships with their customers and employees. With insights from Qualtrics, organizations can identify and resolve the greatest friction points in their business, retain and engage top talent, and bring the right products and services to market. Nearly 20,000 organizations around the world use Qualtrics' advanced AI to listen, understand and take action. Qualtrics uses its vast universe of experience data to form the largest database of human sentiment in the world. Qualtrics is co-headquartered in Provo, Utah, and Seattle.

To learn more, visit qualtrics.com.

Older Generations Participate in More Research

Reaching Millennials and Generation Z has been notoriously difficult for everyone from marketers to TV networks. According to our study, the same is true for researchers, since younger generations report participating less often. The difference is especially dramatic for surveys, where only 54% of younger participants fill them out daily, compared with 73% of those in older generations.

Percentage of Participants Who Do Online Surveys Daily

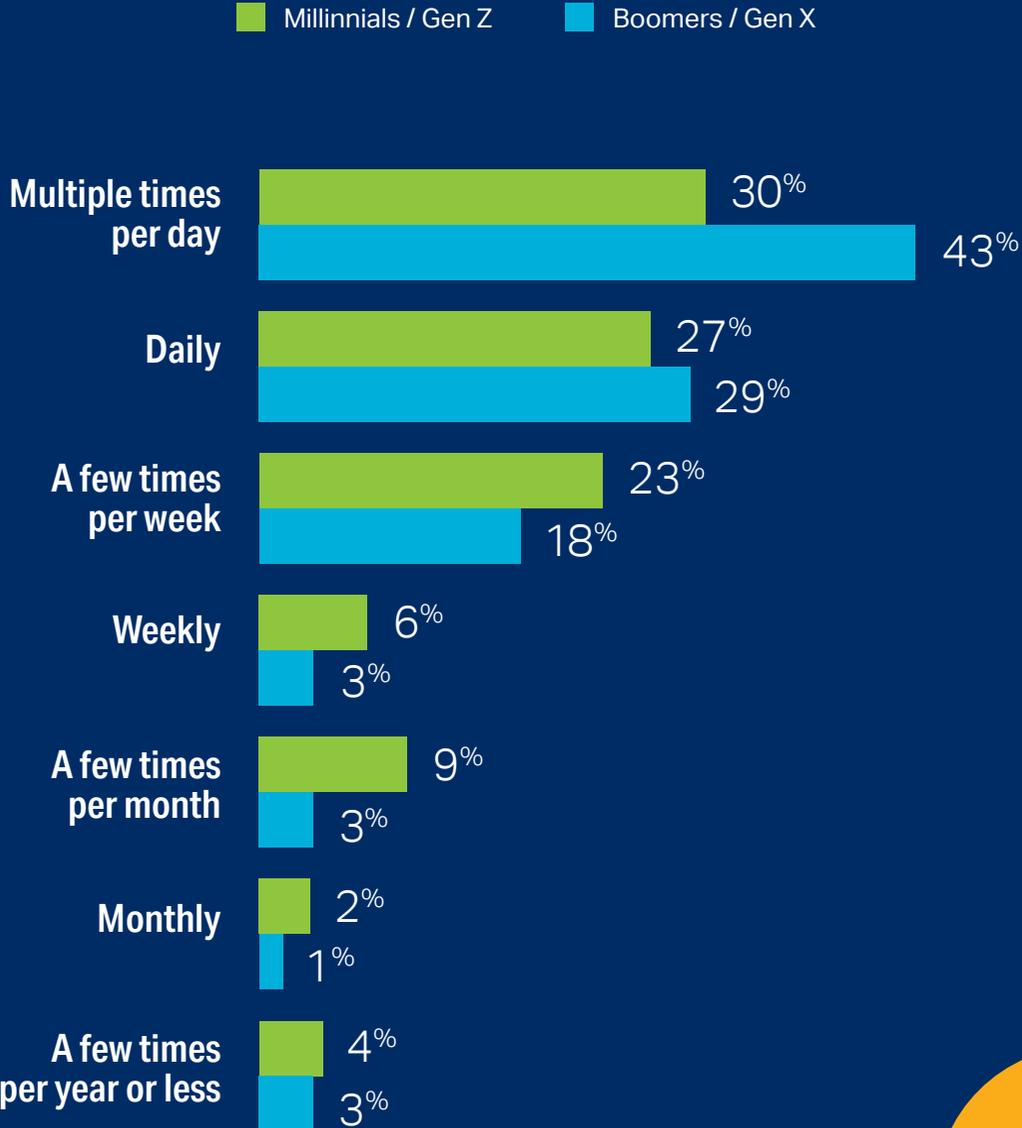


Boomers & Gen X



Millennials & Gen Z

Frequency of Participation in Any Kind of Research



It's Harder to Recruit for Qualitative Studies

Qualitative research presents another struggle for participant recruitment. Not only do such studies take more time and effort, potential participants are likely less familiar with qualitative methods than they are with online surveys. That means you need to optimize your outreach and incentives strategies to get people on board.



of participants do both quantitative and qualitative studies

The Studies Participants Prefer

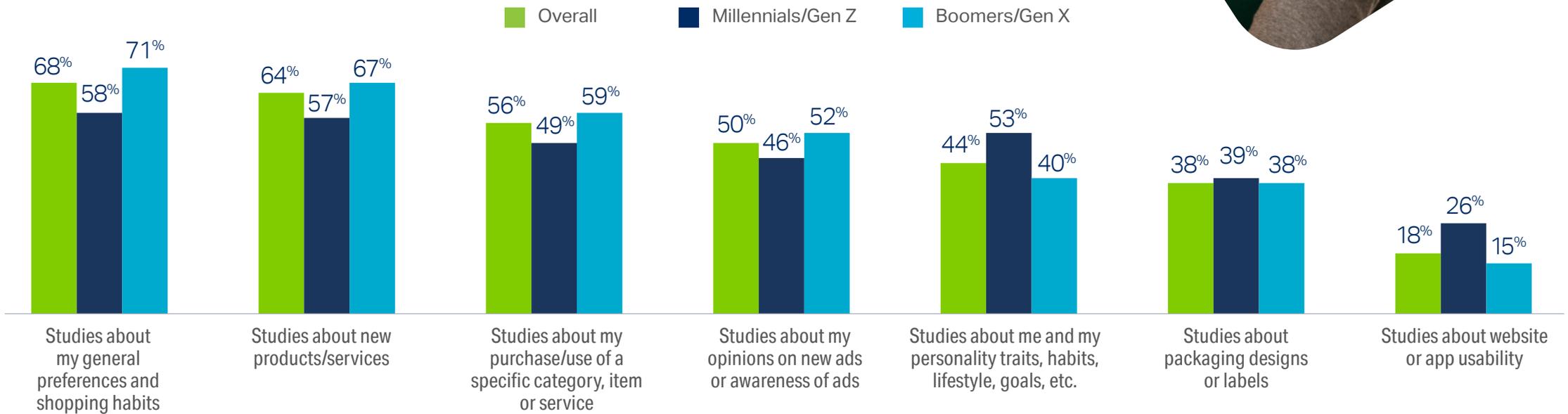
- 54% Online surveys
- 26% In-home product testing
- 5% Remote/online focus groups
- 4% Diary studies
- 4% In-person focus groups
- 2% Company or brand community
- 2% Remote/online 1-on-1 interviews
- 2% In-person 1-on-1 interviews

Attract Participants by Asking About Topics They Enjoy

How hard you have to work to recruit participants may also depend on the topics you're researching. Studies about preferences and shopping habits, new products and services, and recent purchases are most enjoyable for participants, particularly those in older generations, but they're less inclined to want to offer opinions on website or app usability and packaging designs. More than half of younger participants also enjoy being involved in studies about their own personalities, traits and lifestyle.



Research Topics Preferred by Participants



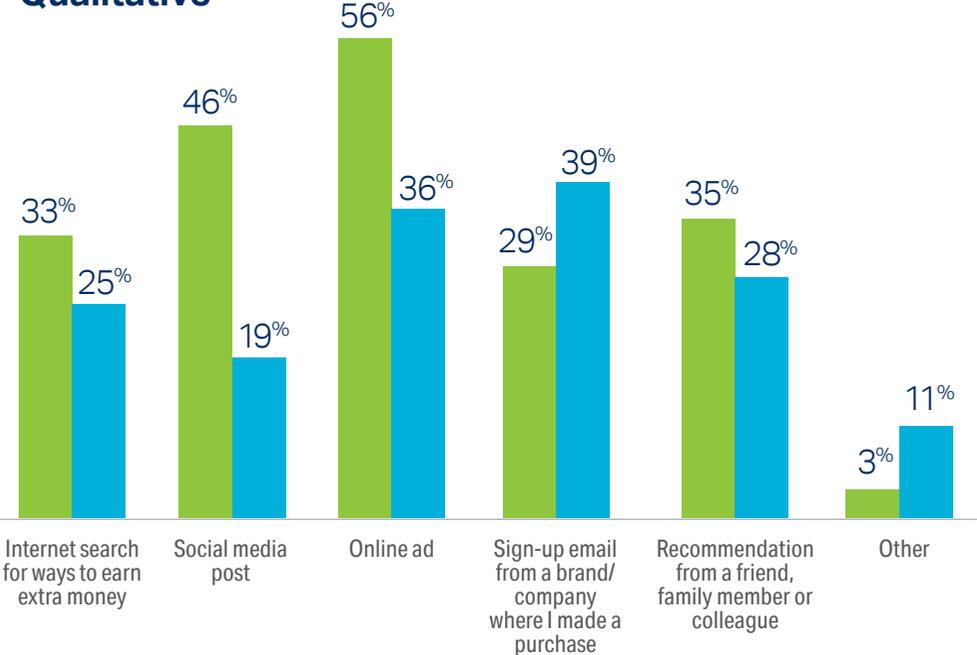
The Right Promotional Channels Are Key to Finding the Right Participants

Regardless of what the research topic or method is, recruiting the right participants starts with where you advertise. The same strategies apply as when you're trying to promote a product or service—you have to meet your target audience where they are. Internet searches and ads are among the top ways that participants of all ages learn about online research opportunities. But if you need those elusive younger generations, consider adding social media to your promotional strategy as well.

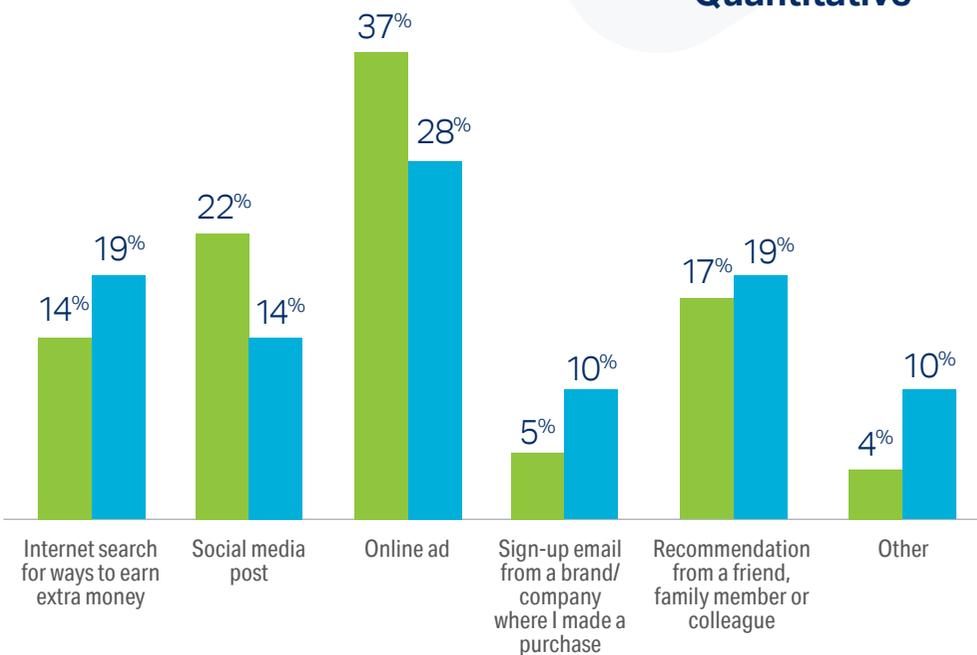
Where Do Participants Learn About Research Opportunities?

Millennials/Gen Z Boomers/Gen X

Qualitative



Quantitative



Show Them the Money

Once your target audience learns about your research, the major question is: What will make them participate? For both quantitative and qualitative opportunities, the overwhelming majority say that proper compensation is the key reason they choose to get involved.

Incentives Are the Top Reason for Participating

Why do you participate in **qualitative** studies?



Why do you participate in **quantitative** studies?



Qualitative Studies Are Incentivized Less Often Than Surveys

The power of incentives is clear, and researchers who regularly conduct online surveys seem to have gotten the message: In our study, 98% of survey respondents report being compensated when they participate.

However, incentives are less universal for qualitative research studies—where appropriate compensation is even more important, considering the larger commitment of time and effort. Make sure you're offering rewards for participants of panels, product testing, focus groups and in-depth interviews, with a value that fits the level of effort.



If you have a long-term study or need to combat screener fatigue, consider using a points-to-rewards structure for your incentives.

How Often Does Each Type of Study Use Incentives?



In-House Researchers and CX Teams Need Incentives, Too

Incentives for online surveys are a tried-and-true strategy with established research firms, of course, but full-time researchers aren't the only ones who can benefit from incentives. Don't count out their effectiveness even for one-off surveys about your brand or product, such as those seeking feedback on recent purchases or customer experiences. Such questionnaires aren't incentivized nearly as often—but they should be. Stand out in the barrage of survey requests by compensating customers for providing feedback.

Plus, without incentives, responses can suffer from "squeaky-wheel syndrome," meaning that unhappy customers are more likely to give feedback and therefore skew your results. It's important to get a range of data from customers across the satisfaction spectrum.

**Percentage of all
online surveys that are
compensated:**

98%

**Percentage of one-off
company or brand surveys
that are compensated:**

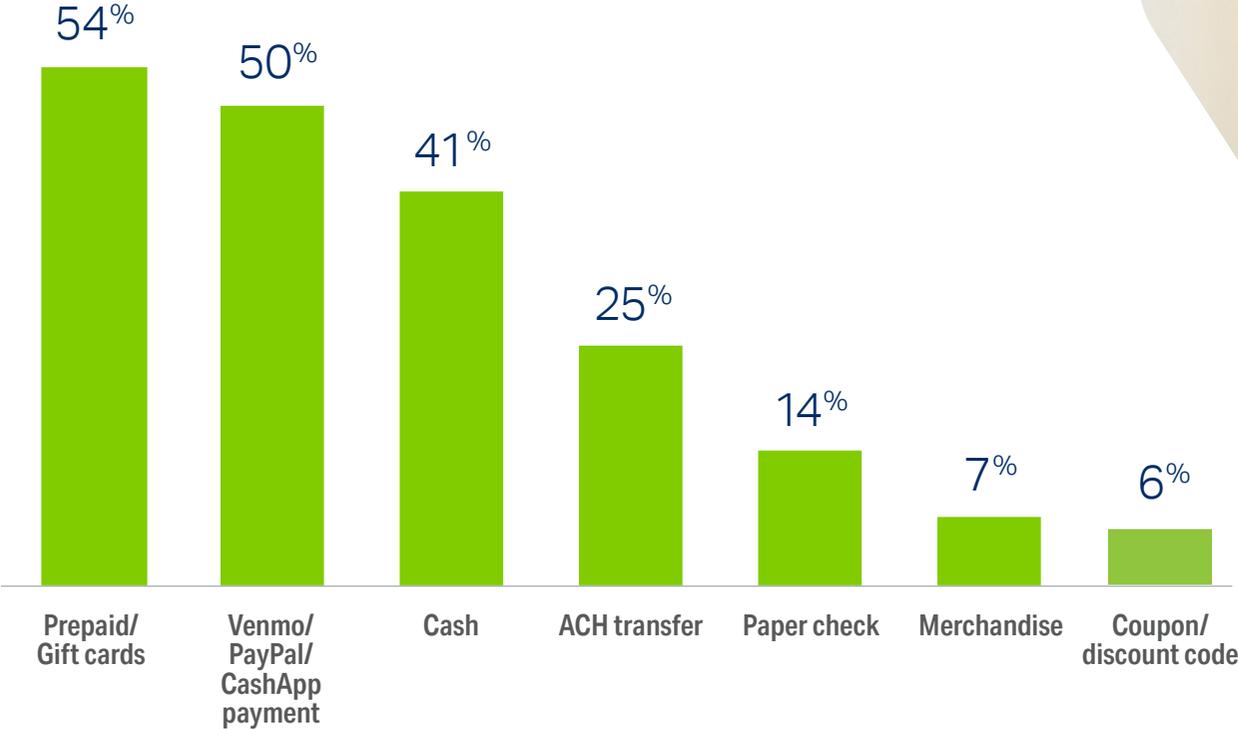
38%



Prepaid and Gift Cards Are the Preferred Type of Incentive

Optimizing the type of incentives you offer and the way you deliver them can also impact response rates and recruitment. When asked what kind of compensation they would prefer to receive, the most chosen option was gift cards and prepaid cards, such as Mastercard® and Visa®.

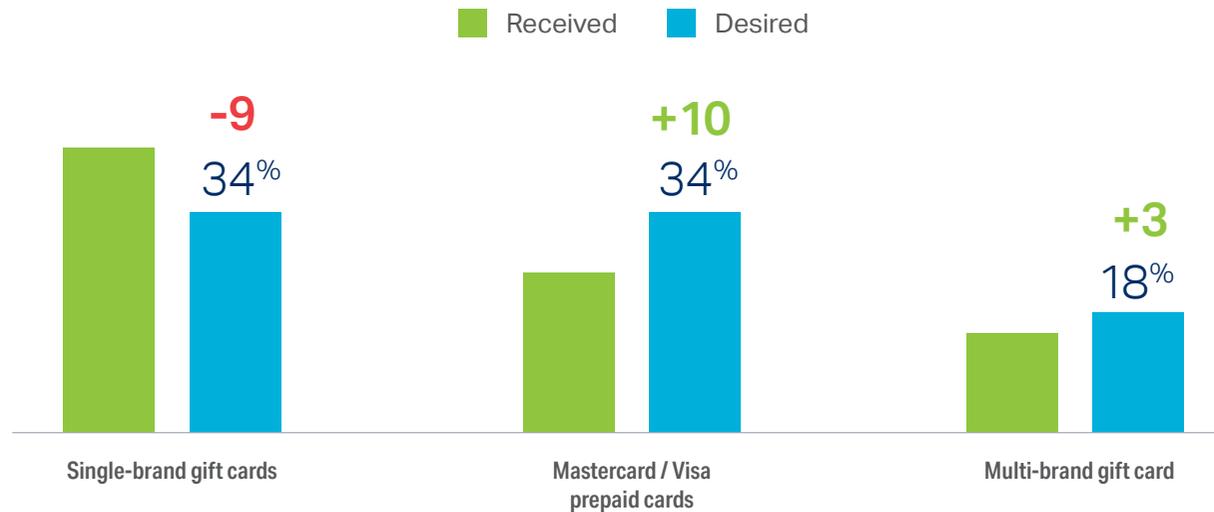
Most Desired Types of Research Rewards



Research Participants, Like All Gift Card Recipients, Want Flexibility

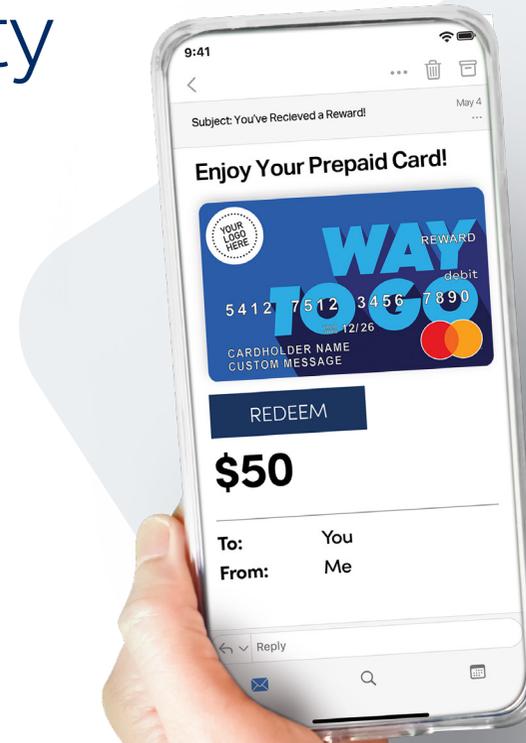
54% of participants prefer prepaid and gift cards desire for incentives that offer flexibility—in fact, they want more flexibility than they’re getting. Our research shows a disconnect in the types of rewards received and preferred, with the biggest gap being for prepaid cards like Mastercard® and Visa® prepaid cards.

Research Participants' Favorite Reward Cards



54%

of participants prefer prepaid and gift cards



Distribute incentives with a rewards management platform that allows you to offer a choice of prepaid and gift cards to your recipients, so everyone gets what they want.

Incentive Value Is a Big Influence

Since the offer of an incentive is the top reason our respondents cited for participating in research, it shouldn't come as a surprise that the value of that incentive is one of the most important drivers of their decision. There are a number of factors to take into account when trying to determine the ideal amount, but ultimately, it may take some trial and error for each study.



Incentive Value Is a Top Factor for:



of qualitative
research
participants



of quantitative
research
participants



of Boomer/Gen X
participants



of Millennial/Gen Z
participants

The Amount Must Reflect the Level of Effort

It's easy to understand that in-person focus groups should be offered more compensation than those giving the same feedback online, and a 20-minute survey should be worth more than a five-minute one. But how much more? Here are some general guidelines based on our research, assuming that you're delivering virtual Mastercard® or Visa® prepaid card incentives within one business day.



Remember to consider the value of your specific audience's time as well. For instance, a survey meant for executives requires a larger incentive than one for students.



For an Online Survey



For an In-Person Focus Group



The Faster, the Better— and Cheaper

Another factor affecting your incentive value is the speed of delivery. Of course research participants want to receive their incentives quickly, but there's even more to the story than that: They're also willing to complete the same study for a lower-value reward if it arrives faster.

For example...

For a survey that takes **16-20 minutes** to complete, participants would accept

\$3 less

if they received the payment **within one business day** instead of 5-7 days.

For an in-person focus group lasting **90-120 minutes**, participants would accept

\$60 less

if the incentive arrived **within one business day** instead of 8-10 days.



An incentives provider that integrates with survey and research platforms like Qualtrics can help you automate reward delivery, making it faster without extra administrative burden on your team.

Digital Incentives Are a Win-Win

With the importance of delivery speed, it's a smart move to opt for digital incentives. Surveys and now qualitative research methods have moved largely online, so why not your rewards? Sending them digitally saves your team time and money, and even older participants are increasingly embracing digital prepaid and gift cards over physical ones. Plus, our previous research showed recipients' strong desire to download such rewards to a digital wallet.

In some circumstances, though, it makes sense to be flexible and have both digital and physical rewards available. A clinical study of all senior citizens, for instance, may benefit from a traditional prepaid or gift card. It's always important to tailor your reward experience to your audience.



Digital rewards are particularly beneficial for global research, since they can be sent all over the world for free via email or SMS.



want digital gift/prepaid
cards as incentives

Millennials/Gen Z 83%

Boomers/Gen X 76%



want to download
to digital wallet*

Millennials/Gen Z 85%

Boomers/Gen X 58%

*BHN EQ, Global State of the Union Insights, March 2022, n=2,165, U.S., 18+



Talk to BHN Rewards

Are you ready to make your research and incentives more effective and efficient? Learn how our wide reward selection and incentive management solutions can help you streamline processes, grow participation rates and improve your insights.



[BHNRewards.com](https://www.bhnrewards.com)

