For 35 years and as each generation of wireless became an integral part of our lives and economy, CTIA has been surveying U.S. wireless providers to tell the story of this dynamic industry. 2020’s CTIA Annual Survey looks back on a year of growth and groundwork as providers lit up their initial 5G networks while supporting record consumer demand for everything wireless.
Let’s start with the foundation of the wireless industry’s work to provide Americans with world-leading mobile connectivity: investment. Providers have invested over $286B in America’s wireless networks since the start of 2010. This year’s investment of $29.1B is equal to $89 per capita. By contrast, China invests $21.85 per capita.
This non-stop investment cycle differentiates our industry—and pays real dividends as providers continue building the next generation of wireless. By the end of year, three nationwide 5G networks will be available across the U.S. Our investment also fuels our growth and economic contribution as an industry. Today, the U.S. wireless industry is now larger than the insurance, hotels and restaurants, and transportation industries.

**U.S. Wireless Industry is a Capex Leader.**

The U.S. represents only 4.5% of the world population... while its $29B in investment accounts for 18% of the world’s total mobile capex.

60% of Americans already covered by initial 5G networks.
Wireless investment also meant providers were prepared to handle the unprecedented, nearly overnight surges in mobile voice and data use due to COVID-19. COVID-19 presented the ultimate test for wireless performance and America’s networks passed with flying colors.

**CHANGE IN AVERAGE MOBILE DOWNLOAD SPEED OVER COUNTRY’S FIRST EIGHT WEEKS OF SHUTDOWN**

SOURCE: Ookla® Speedtest®

- **U.S.**: +4.3%
- **Russia**: -5.1%
- **China**: -23.5%
- **Philippines**: -26.2%
- **U.K.**: -1.3%
- **Peru**: -12.2%
- **Spain**: -6.9%
- **France**: -6.0%
- **Australia**: -8.4%
- **Italy**: -14.5%
- **India**: -3.5%
- **China**: -23.5%
- **Philippines**: -26.2%
- **U.K.**: -1.3%
- **Peru**: -12.2%
- **Spain**: -6.9%
- **France**: -6.0%
- **Australia**: -8.4%
- **Italy**: -14.5%
- **India**: -3.5%

**Handling COVID-Driven Wireless Increases.**

Wireless investment also meant providers were prepared to handle the unprecedented, nearly overnight surges in mobile voice and data use due to COVID-19. COVID-19 presented the ultimate test for wireless performance and America’s networks passed with flying colors.
Much of this investment has been in 5G-ready cell sites and antennas. There are now 395,562 active sites across the country, many of which support multiple base stations. Thanks to new federal and state policies that streamline their zoning and permitting, the industry built more cell sites last year than the previous three years combined.
Investment in network capacity means the wireless industry is ready to meet growing demand for mobile data. Last year, subscribers used more than 37.06 trillion MBs of data - 30% growth year over year. The additional 8.5 trillion MBs added in the last year is 43% more than the industry’s first four years of data traffic combined.
Americans continue to connect more wireless devices, with notable increases in laptops, tablets, and data-only devices, as Internet of Things products grow in availability and adoption.
Wireless Use is up Across All Metrics.

Americans continue to use their wireless devices more and more—with the increase in data consumption outpacing the number of new devices added. Last year, the average smartphone user consumed 6.6 GB per month. This year that number is up to 9.2 GB per month. And it’s not just data use that’s up—voice minutes and text messages also increased year-over-year.