

***National Consumer Survey: More Americans than Ever Are Buying Prescription Medication Online Despite a Lack of Awareness of the Dangers They Pose***

WASHINGTON, DC — Dec. 6, 2023 — Newly released survey data commissioned by the [Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies \(ASOP Global\) Foundation](#) shows more Americans are buying prescription medication online than ever. That number is rising, driven by cost and convenience, accelerated by the pandemic, and fueled by drug shortages and changes in access. When Americans use online pharmacies, most become regular customers and use them consistently. However, most consumers make dangerous, false assumptions about the safety, oversight, and compliance of online drug sellers and the serious health risks posed by medications purchased through illegal sources online.

“Americans increasingly conflate prescription medication with other consumer products, which is a big risk to healthcare and patient safety,” said Libby Baney, partner at Faegre Drinker LLP and senior advisor to ASOP Global. “We need comprehensive legislative and regulatory policy solutions and increased education efforts like ASOP Global Foundation’s [Bad Meds](#) campaign to help consumers stay safe when they buy medication online.”

To better understand this rapidly changing landscape and its impact on the prevalence and patterns of online pharmacy usage, consumer awareness of associated risks, and other trends, ASOP Global Foundation commissioned [Abacus Data](#) to survey 1,500 Americans regarding exposure to online pharmacies and the factors influencing their buying decisions. This is the third such survey undertaken by the ASOP Global Foundation in the past four years.

Key findings from the 2023 survey include:

**More people buy medications online now than ever before, and that number is rising quickly.**

- 52% of American consumers have purchased medications from an online pharmacy for themselves or someone in their care, up ten percentage points from 2021 and outpacing the rate of new prescription drug usage.
- 71% of respondents report they started using online pharmacies in the last 1-3 years, with 85% of Americans who have used an online pharmacy currently using an online pharmacy to fill one or more medications.
- 85% of Americans who have used an online pharmacy currently use an online pharmacy to fill one or more medications.

**Most Americans who use online pharmacies make dangerous assumptions about the general safety, oversight, and compliance of the prescription medicine sellers they encounter online.**

- 44% of Americans falsely believe that online pharmacies do not need a prescription from a healthcare provider to dispense the medication for certain prescription medicines. This number jumps to (53%) among those who have previously purchased prescription medicines online.
- 54% of Americans—up from 45% in [2021](#)—falsely believe all websites offering healthcare services/prescription medications to Americans via the Internet have been approved by the FDA or state regulators. This misperception is even higher (68%) among those who have previously purchased prescription medicines online, up from 59% in [2021](#).
- 47% of Americans falsely believe that only safe, verified websites selling prescription medications appear on the first page of search engine results. Again, this misconception is higher (61%) among previous online purchasers.

**Demand for convenience and cost-savings is driving consumers to purchase medication online, with recent drug shortages and changes in access likely to fuel a continued rise.**

- 60% of Americans who have used online pharmacies would be open to purchasing prescription medicines from an online source not approved by a U.S. regulator *if it made ordering medicines more **convenient***.
- 55% of Americans who have used online pharmacies would be open to purchasing prescription medicines from an online source not approved by a U.S. regulator *if it offered more **cost-savings***.
- 47% of Americans who have used online pharmacies would be open to purchasing prescription medicines from an online source not approved by a U.S. regulator *if it gave **access** to medicines they couldn't otherwise access*.

### **SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

The ASOP Global Foundation commissioned Abacus Data to conduct this survey to gain perspective into Americans' experience with and perceptions of online pharmacies. The questions asked of respondents were similar to those asked in surveys conducted in 2020 and 2021 to observe trends over time. Consistent with surveys conducted in 2020 and 2021, Abacus Data surveyed a random sampler of 1,500 American adults from September 7 to 10, 2023. The data was then weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched America's population. The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is +/- 2.53%, 19 times out of 20.

### **ABOUT ASOP GLOBAL AND ASOP GLOBAL FOUNDATION**

The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP Global), a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., with activities in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Latin America, and Asia, is dedicated to protecting consumers around the world, ensuring safe access to medications, and combating illegal online drug sellers. The ASOP Global Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable, nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the growing public health threat of illegal online drug sellers, concentrating its activities on research and education to inform consumers and policymakers.