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PROFILING DRUG IMPORTERS:  
A National Survey of US Adults

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*Sponsored by PhRMA*

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## KEY FINDINGS

### PROFILE OF DRUG IMPORTERS

- Around 5.4 million adults – or 2.5 percent of the American adult population – have recently purchased prescription drugs from another country, such as Canada or Mexico.
- The demographic profile of importers is similar to that of non-importers. A few important differences: importers are more likely to be under the age of 35 than non-importers; importers are more likely to be Hispanic and live in a southern border state.
- The average annual household income of importers and non-importers is similar. However, one in five importers earn more than \$100,000 annually (which is significantly higher than non-importers) and nearly all are above the poverty line.
- On average, importers typically spend more out-of-pocket money on prescription drugs over a 12 month period than non-importers – even though both importers and non-importers take about the same number of prescription drugs and 85 percent of importers have insurance with prescription drug coverage.

### PRESCRIPTION DRUG IMPORTATION BEHAVIORS

- Canada is the single, leading country where importers obtain prescription drugs outside the United States. Fewer than half of all importers, however, purchased their drugs in Canada; the majority of importers bought their drugs from another country, such as Mexico or somewhere else, or were unsure where their purchase originated.
- The prescription drugs most likely to be imported from other countries include medicine for: Infections that require antibiotics, pain relief, allergies, hypertension, digestive disorders and high cholesterol.

### REASONS FOR IMPORTING PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

- The top reason for deciding to buy prescription drugs in another country is the desire to get the best price for medicines (86% say that is a *very* or *somewhat* important reason). About one-half decided to buy their drugs in another country because they did not have a doctor's prescription for medicines they wanted. Among those with medical coverage, insufficient drug coverage is also important reasons (71% say it is a *very* or *somewhat* important reason).

*Additional findings about the characteristics, attitudes and behaviors of prescription drug importers can be found in the complete summary of findings.*

## METHODOLOGY

The findings reported in this release are from a telephone survey conducted for the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA). The poll was conducted between January 11 and 23, 2007. The study included a survey of US adults (n=14,156) from which incidence of importation was calculated. The complete survey was administered among a base sample of adults who are responsible for filling prescription drugs for themselves or other household members (n=405) and an over-sample among those who also have filled a prescription drug in Canada, Mexico or another country in the past six months (n=357).

The scientific sample was drawn using random digit dial, so as to provide a sample frame that is representative of the entire US population. Households were selected in accordance with a probability sample design that gives all telephone numbers (both listed and unlisted) an equal chance of selection. One adult, 18 years or over, from each household, selected by a systematic procedure to provide a balance of demographic characteristics, was screened for qualification in the survey.

The sampling error for the results of the survey of adults (n=14,156) is  $\pm 0.8$  percentage points for percentages near 50 percent at a confidence level of 95 percent. The sampling error for the results of the survey of prescription decision-makers (n=405) is  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points and the over-sample survey of drug importers (n=357) is  $\pm 5.2$  percentage points for percentages near 50 percent at a confidence level of 95 percent. The sampling error diminishes slightly for questions whose results are at the extremes and the sampling error increases as the number of interviews for a particular sub-group within the sample declines.