

# How consumers shop online for doctors

## Article

**The news:** Doctor loyalty is fading fast.

- **77% of patients [search online for doctors](#)**, either often or sometimes, per **Patient Pop's 4th Annual Benchmark Report on Patient Perspectives**.
- The November 2022 online survey tallied responses from 1,221 adults, 94% of whom were in the US.

**Yes, but:** It's not really news that consumers turn to the internet for healthcare-related questions and answers.

- But the data from Patient Pop's recent study reveals a **strong correlation between consumers' online searches for goods and for healthcare providers.**

**Digging into the data on doctor searches:** Don't underestimate the value of patient reviews, the survey says.

- **Online reviews were at least somewhat important to 93% of this year's respondents—an all-time high.**
- **62% of Gen Z and 54% of baby boomer respondents said they wouldn't consider using a provider with very few or no reviews online.**
- **Millennials cared the least (43%) about seeing online reviews, even fewer than the Silent Generation (47%).**

**Google is still the go-to source for reviews, social media not so much:**

- **58% of all patients started their quest with Google's search engine.** Millennials (68%), Gen Z (64%), and Gen X (62%) reported turning there first to find patient reviews. Just 43% of boomers and 28% of Silents checked Google.
- **34% of all patients checked a practice's website for reviews, ranging from 36% of Gen Z to 31% of Silents.**
- **31% went to WebMD, although Gen X (37%) was the biggest audience for that site.** Gen Z (23%) and Silents (25%) were least likely to go there.
- **Facebook (16% of all respondents) and Yelp (14% of all) were low on the list of online resources for patient reviews, although you can probably guess that the younger generations—Gen Z and millennials—found those sites more useful.**

**Patient turn-offs:** Not all reviews are created equal, Patient Pop noted. The generations have different priorities when reading what others said about providers.

- **Gen Z places the strongest emphasis on a provider's average star rating (49%), while older generations see less importance—down to just 31% of boomers and 22% of Silents.**

- **Boomers, Gen X, and Silents (each about 45%)** said the recency of the reviews mattered a good deal, while Gen Z (32%) wasn't as concerned.

**The total number of reviews wasn't an issue** for any generation, but the numbers made positive or negative impressions.

- **Patients read an average of 6 to 10 before making a decision** about the provider.
- About one-third needed to read between 1 and 10 reviews before they trusted the provider.
- Another one-third looked at 11 to 20 reviews to find an acceptable level of trust.
- **26% of patients moved on after reading 3 bad reviews.**

**Our take:** When consumers have a specific need for information, they go online and pose queries like “Best Mexican restaurant near me,” “Best dancing shoes with a bunion,” or “Broke my tooth and need a dentist now.”

They're well versed in parsing at least the first page of search results and use the same criteria for healthcare searches that they've learned from years of online shopping searches.

- **More than half (56%) won't consider an average star rating of less than 4.0 for a healthcare provider.**

*Dig deeper into what makes a good online customer experience with [How to improve the CX in 5 charts](#).*