

## BACKGROUND

- In June 2022, **federal abortion** protection in the US was **withdrawn** with the **overturning of Roe v. Wade**<sup>1</sup>
- Individuals with limited access and facing barriers commonly see self managed abortion as an option<sup>2-5</sup>
- This study **assessed the availability and legitimacy of online options** for those seeking out abortion medication

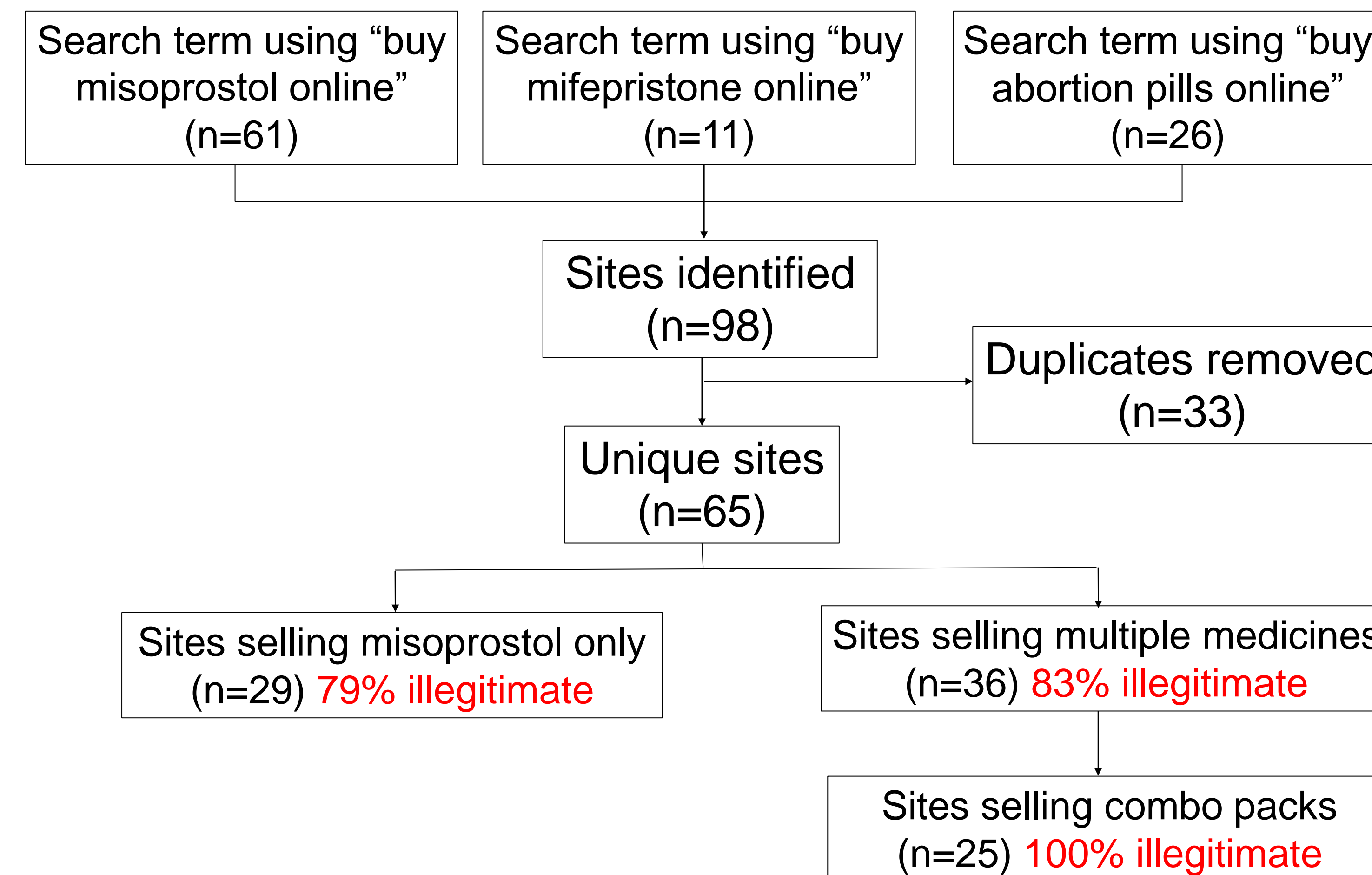
## METHODS

- A cross-sectional study **assessed websites selling mifepristone** and/or **misoprostol** between June 2022 and September 2022
- Data from the results from the first 10 pages of **3 search engines** (Google, DuckDuckGo, Bing) were collected
- Sites were included if they were active, published in English, free to access (or required free sign up via email or SMS), sold targeted medication, and shipped to at least 1 state in the US
- Identified **online pharmacies** were **categorized** as legitimate, certified, rogue, unapproved or unclassified as defined by LegitScript

## KEY FINDINGS

- Across 3 search engines, 65 unique sites were identified for selling mifepristone, misoprostol, and combo packs, **82% being unapproved sites**
- Only 1 online clinic shipped to every US state; shipping could take up to 3 weeks**
- Legitimate online pharmacies only sold misoprostol**
- It was more difficult and expensive to buy from legitimate websites
- Without legitimate options, individuals may be pushed to choose unregulated sources for abortion medications**

Figure 1: Online Pharmacies Identified



## RESULTS

Table 2: Marketing Characteristics of Online Pharmacies

	Rogue & Unapproved Online Pharmacies	Unclassified Online Pharmacies & Forums	Legitimate and Certified Online Pharmacies	All Online Pharmacies	Online Clinics
Purchase the combo pack medication	\$293.33 (\$44.63 - \$430)	\$219.86 (\$135 - \$265)	N/A	\$271.90 (\$44.63 - \$430)	N/A
Purchase both medications separately from the same site	\$531.60 (\$350 - \$769)	\$400.83 (\$260 - \$530)	N/A	\$482.56 (\$260 - \$769)	N/A
Purchase both medications with healthcare provider consultation and prescription	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$254.83 (\$105 - \$400)

Note: This includes the cost to purchase misoprostol and mifepristone for medication abortion including shipping. The lowest medicine price listed and the lowest shipping price available was used for each site.

Table 1: Patient Safety and Marketing Characteristics of Online Pharmacies\*

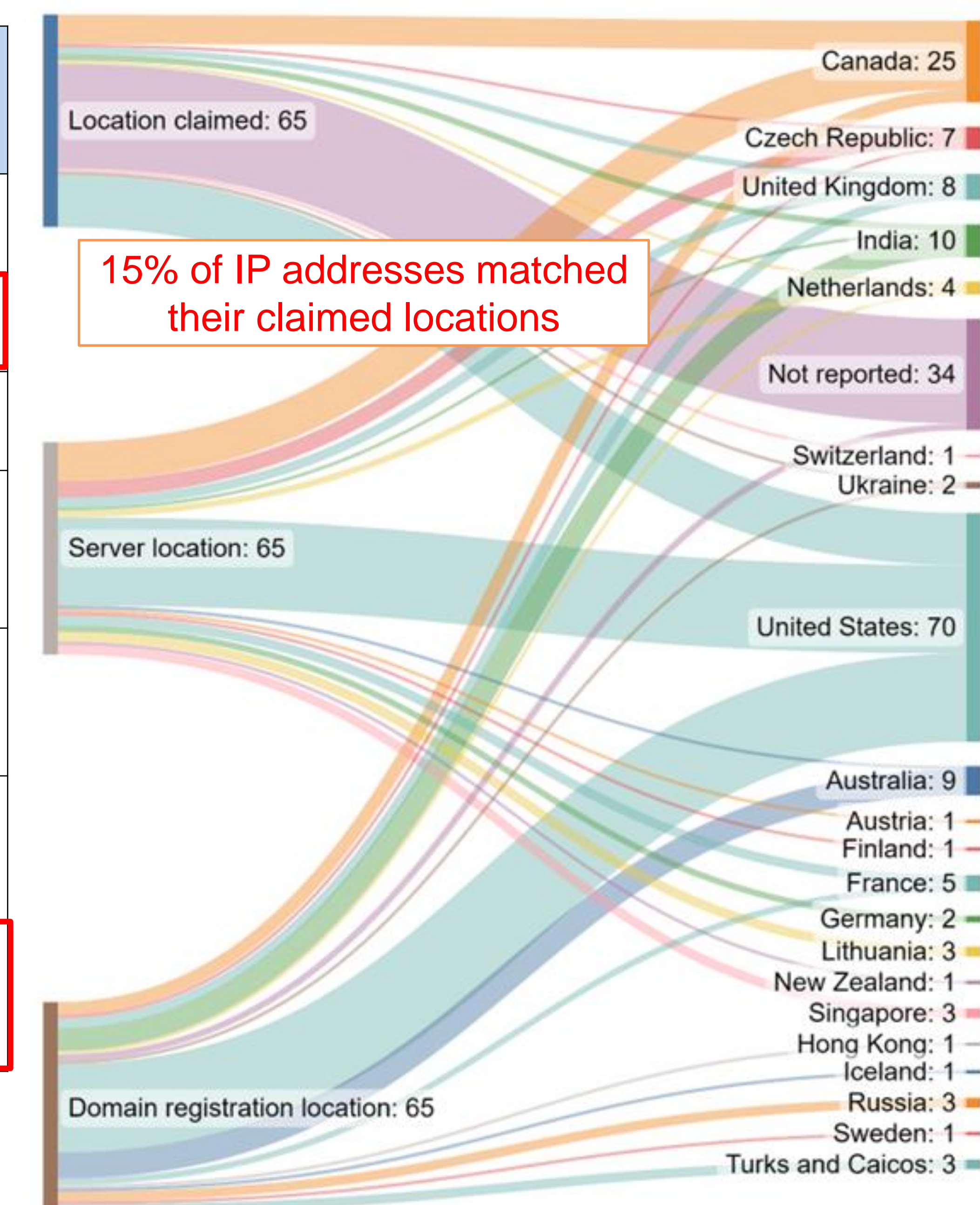
	Rogue, N (%) N=26	Unapproved, N (%) N=5	Unclassified, N (%) N=18	Forum Posts, N (%) N=4	Legitimate/Certified, N (%) N=6	Online Clinics, N (%) N=6
Mentions abortion	18 (69)	4 (80)	11 (61)	3 (75)	3 (50)	6 (100)
Prescription required	6 (23)	2 (40)	3 (17)	0 (0)	6 (100)	6 (100)
Questionnaire required	1 (4)	1 (20)	2 (11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (100)
Recommendation to seek physician advice	6 (23)	2 (40)	8 (44)	1 (25)	2 (33)	6 (100)
Healthcare provider consultation	1 (4)	0 (0)	4 (22)	0 (0)	1 (17)	6 (100)
Drug administration instructions	15 (58)	2 (40)	10 (56)	0 (0)	3 (50)	5 (83)
Shipping restricted to some US states	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (83)

\*Analysis on patient safety and marketing characteristics was conducted across unique websites (n=65)

## CONCLUSIONS

- There is limited access to abortion medications for patients through certified and legitimate sources
- Expansion of access to legitimate online clinics and pharmacies is needed to provide patients with safe and reliable avenues for medication abortions to promote public health**
- Healthcare professionals must work to increase the general education of legitimate online options and improve awareness surrounding the utilization and safety of medications sold through illegitimate sites

Figure 2: Reported Locations



## REFERENCES

- Sobel Let al. The Intersection of State and Federal Policies on Access to Medication Abortion Via Telehealth. 2022;https://www.kff.org/
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