Holiday Shortcuts Open the Door to Scams, Norton Warns

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With 62% of Americans admitting they'd buy a deal on impulse, scammers are betting on shoppers' shortcuts this season.

TEMPE, Ariz. and PRAGUE, Oct. 16, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Holiday shortcuts are putting shoppers in scammers' crosshairs. According to the 2025 Norton Cyber Safety Insights Report: Holiday shopping, money-saving shortcuts, urgency-driven decisions, and overconfidence online are leaving millions vulnerable. Despite concern over AI-powered scams and shady sellers, nearly two-thirds (62%) of Americans say they're likely to jump on a holiday deal the moment they see it, and often without vetting the source. In fact, more than half (54%) of Americans have made holiday purchases through social media ads, up 10 points from last year.

To help consumers prepare for the peak of the holiday shopping rush, Norton is once again designating November 30 as Cyber Safety Sunday — the day before Cyber Monday — encouraging shoppers to pause, secure their devices, and adopt safer, smarter online habits.

Holiday Helpers or Hustler Havens? How Social Media and AI are Fueling Risky Shopping

Today's shoppers are increasingly turning to platforms and tools that promise speed and simplicity. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are becoming digital gift guides for 50% of holiday shoppers. Unfortunately, according to a recent Gen Threat Report, these same platforms are ripe for scams: fake online shops and ads make up over 50% of all scams detected on social media.

Meanwhile, artificial intelligence is emerging as a new holiday shopping assistant. Over two in five (38%) of Americans plan to use tools like ChatGPT to generate gift ideas this year, especially millennials (55%). But trust hasn't caught up with usage: nearly two-thirds (62%) say they're worried about falling for an AI-generated shopping scam.

"From AI tools to social media ad clicks, people are leaning into convenience," said Leyla Bilge, Director of Scam Research at Norton. "But scammers are leaning in too — just like hiding a spare key under the doormat, the habits people underestimate are the very ones that make them most vulnerable."

More Than You Bargained For: Holiday Deals Can Come at a High Price

The holidays heighten urgency, and cybercriminals know it. With 62% of Americans saying they're likely to buy something immediately when they see a holiday deal online, that "act now" mindset explains why 35% of Americans admit they take more risks during the holiday season versus other times of year.

Younger generations are especially vulnerable: 70% of millennials are willing to take unconventional and risky steps to get high-demand gifts, from clicking questionable social ads (42%) and buying from strangers on social media (28%), to clicking on unknown sellers or suspicious links (21%) or even

purchasing counterfeits (16%). However, these actions can lead to serious consequences. Nearly a third of Americans (31%) say they've been targeted by a holiday shopping scam before, and over half (51%) of those targeted actually fell victim.

"Scammers thrive on pressure, distraction, and emotional decision-making, and the holiday season delivers all three in spades," Bilge added. "Scammers aren't waiting for you to slip up. They're counting on you to be busy, stressed, and in a rush. The moment you let your guard down, they're ready. And with the sophistication of scams nowadays, even if your guard is up, they're ready."

The 2025 Norton Cyber Safety Insights Report: Holiday reveals a clear trend: while technology is transforming holiday shopping for the better, it's also expanding the attack surface for scammers. From AI tools to social influence to lightning-fast deal culture, vigilance is more important than ever.

Norton 360 with AI-powered Scam Detection, Norton VPN, and Norton Mobile Security help protect shoppers by blocking fake websites and ads, spotting phishing attempts, and keeping personal and payment information safe this holiday season. For tips to help you and your loved ones shop smarter this holiday season, visit our blog on Norton.com and read the full report here: https://newsroom.gendigital.com/image/NCSIRHolidayGlobalReport2025.pdf

About the 2025 Norton Cyber Safety Insights Report: Holiday

The study was conducted online within the United States by Dynata on behalf of Gen from July 24 to August 11, 2025 among 1,000 adults ages 18 and older. Data are weighted where necessary by age, gender, and region, to be nationally representative.

About the Gen Threat Labs

Gen Threat Labs is the Cyber Safety research team within Gen, focused on uncovering and analyzing the latest digital threats and scams worldwide. Rooted in data, research, and technical expertise, the team identifies patterns and risks that shape the evolving cyber landscape. Their insights power the security technologies that protect people across Gen's portfolio of trusted brands, including Norton, Avast, LifeLock, and others.

About Norton

Norton is a leader in Cyber Safety, and part of Gen (NASDAQ: GEN), a global company dedicated to powering Digital Freedom with a family of trusted consumer brands. Norton empowers millions of individuals and families with award-winning protection for their devices, online privacy, and identity. Norton products and services are certified by independent testing organizations including AV-TEST, AV-Comparatives, and SE Labs. Norton is a founding member of the Coalition Against Stalkerware. Learn more at https://us.norton.com.

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