

# Opioids killed nearly 4,000 in Canada last year: official

June 19 2018

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

The opioid crisis claimed nearly 4,000 lives in Canada last year, mainly from overdoses of the powerful painkiller fentanyl, the public health agency said Tuesday, warning of a worsening situation.

The [death toll](#) was 34 percent higher than the previous year, with most of the fatal overdoses involving men aged 30 to 39 who obtained fentanyl illegally from narcotics traffickers on the street.

Almost 90 percent of the 3,987 deaths in 2017 were concentrated in just three provinces: Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario.

"Canada continues to experience a serious and growing opioid crisis," the public health agency said in a report.

Fentanyl is considered 30 to 50 times more powerful than heroin and 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine.

Health Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor said "[high rates](#) of opioid prescriptions" are also a "contributing factor in the crisis."

"As minister, I am calling on industry to act now and stop their marketing activities associated with these products in Canada," she said.

The health ministry explained that while [prescription opioids](#) "can help Canadians who need them to manage pain," marketing the drugs can unduly influence doctors and lead to "over-prescription."

According to [public health agency](#) figures, opioid prescriptions actually fell last year for the first time since 2012, to 21.3 million.

In response to the crisis, Ottawa has poured tens of millions of dollars into strengthening [emergency services](#) and distributing the overdose antidote naloxone.

© 2018 AFP

Citation: Opioids killed nearly 4,000 in Canada last year: official (2018, June 19) retrieved 11

May 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-06-opioids-canada-year.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.