

U.S. doctors still writing too many opioid prescriptions

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(HealthDay)—More than one out of three average Americans used a

prescription opioid in 2015, despite growing concerns these medicines are promoting widespread addiction and overdose deaths, according to a study published online Aug. 1 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health is a door-to-door [survey](#) that allows participants to log answers directly into a computer, providing anonymity that promotes honest responses, study coauthor Wilson Compton, M.D., deputy director of the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse, told *HealthDay*. About 51,200 people completed the survey interview for 2015. Nearly 92 million U.S. adults, or 37.8 percent of the population, took a legitimately prescribed opioid in 2015, according to the results.

The survey found that 11.5 million people, or 4.7 percent of the population, misused [prescription opioids](#) they'd obtained through illicit means. Of those who misused prescription opioids, 40.8 percent got the medications from family or friends. Overall, 59.9 percent of misuse involved taking opioids without a prescription. About 1.9 million Americans (0.8 percent) reported full-fledged [opioid](#) addiction. Two-thirds (63.4 percent) of those who misused opioids said they were motivated by relief from physical pain, while only 10.8 percent said they misused opioids to relax or get high.

Overall, the results indicate that the medical profession is doing a poor job of appropriately prescribing opioids, Compton said. Previous studies have found "there's still four times the rate of prescribing there was 15 years ago," he added. "Even though the rates have leveled off, we have a long way to go in improving medical care so these are not as overprescribed as they are currently."

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