

Nearly one-third of Canadians have used opioids: study

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Nearly one in three Canadians (29 percent) have used "some form of opioids" in the past five years, according to data released Tuesday as widespread fentanyl overdoses continue to kill.

Victims of [opioid overdose](#), mainly [fentanyl](#) or carfentanyl—an even more potent narcotic analgesic—have jumped in Canada over the last two years, particularly on the Pacific Coast where the death toll has been the highest.

Nearly 3,000 people died of drug overdoses in 2016, and preliminary figures from coroners suggest that the final figure for last year will be higher, according to Canada's public health agency.

A Statistics Canada survey taken in November and December 2017 found that 77 percent of adult Canadians are either "very or somewhat aware of the opioid issue."

When used properly, prescribed opioids can relieve pain. But "problematic use can cause dependence, [overdose](#) and death," the government statistical agency noted.

The most common opioids are fentanyl, OxyContin, morphine and codeine.

Of the 29 percent of Canadians who reported using opioids in the past five years, more than one-quarter reported having leftover opioids at home. Most said it was for their "own future use."

Canadian health authorities have stepped up efforts to try to curb the number of fentanyl deaths, such as widely distributing naloxone kits to treat overdoses.

It is also considering regulating the popular painkiller tramadol as an [opioid](#) after seeing a spike in prescriptions—up 30 percent from 2012 to 2016, according to an analysis of opioid-prescribing trends released by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI).

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