

Opioid crisis hurting Canadians' life expectancy: official

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An opioid crisis that has claimed thousands of lives across North America has become a drag on the average life expectancy in Canada, the government statistical agency said Thursday.

Life expectancy at birth did not increase from 2016 to 2017 for the first time in four decades, Statistics Canada said in a statement.

"This was largely attributable to the [opioid crisis](#)," it said, noting that women in Canada can now expect to live for an average of 84.0 years and men for 79.9 years, if recently-observed mortality patterns persist.

The agency blamed accidental drug overdoses among young men mostly in British Columbia—the epicenter of the deadly addiction epidemic.

Partially offsetting the decline in the Canadian province were improved treatment outcomes for cancer and circulatory diseases throughout Canada resulting in fewer or later deaths.

More than 10,000 Canadians have died of opioid-related overdoses since 2016. Only a portion of these were captured in the data on life expectancy.

Historically, opioid overdose deaths—mainly from the powerful painkiller fentanyl—were concentrated among [drug addicts](#).

But many victims became addicted to prescribed painkillers before

turning to street drugs and others were experimenting with recreational drugs for the first time.

Earlier this week, Ontario joined British Columbia in suing opioid makers to recover health care costs related to the epidemic.

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