

Fatal opioid overdoses on the rise in Canada

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Fatal opioid overdoses jumped in Canada last year, especially in British Columbia, where the potent sedative fentanyl was detected in eight of 10 overdose deaths, according to preliminary figures released Wednesday.

British Columbia is the epicenter of a national [public health](#) crisis in which 1,156 fentanyl [overdose deaths](#) were reported last year, up 73 percent from 2016, according to a coroner's report.

In all, just over 3,000 people in Canada died from opioid overdoses last year.

In British Columbia, most of the victims were men, and aged 30 to 39.

Public health services noted last fall that many of the fatal overdoses occurred within days of victims receiving a monthly government stipend, suggesting that Canada's poorest are being hardest hit.

In just six years, the proportion of overdose deaths in which fentanyl was detected in British Columbia rose from just four percent in 2012 to 81 percent in 2017, said the coroner's report.

Fentanyl, which has also soared in the United States, where overdose deaths are blamed for a dip in the average US [life expectancy](#), killed 12 people in British Columbia in 2012, 152 in 2015 and 670 in 2016.

Carfentanyl, which is nearly 100 times more potent than fentanyl, is also responsible for about 50 fatal overdoses in British Columbia.

Nearly one year ago, Ottawa announced Can\$75 million (\$57.3 million) to try to curb the number of overdoses and to strengthen emergency responses.

Several provinces also distributed naloxone kits to treat overdoses.

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