



Public Summary

Information is based on data from eight provinces—Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia—and one federal program administered by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch.

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Prescribed drug spending: Slowest growth in years

Prescribed Drug Spending in Canada, 2012: A Focus on Public Drug Programs

Millions of Canadians buy prescription drugs; we spent a record \$30 billion in 2013. But the annual rate of growth that year—2.3%—was one of the lowest in more than two decades. This is due in part to an increase in the use of less-expensive generic drugs as well as government policies that help keep prices low.

Key findings

- More than 40% of prescribed drug spending was paid for by the public sector, totalling more than \$12 billion. In the public sector, payers include provincial and federal drug programs and social security funds (such as workers' compensation boards).
- Generic drugs account for almost three-quarters of use but less than half of spending in public drug programs.
- The number of Canadians who are taking more than \$10,000 worth of prescription drugs every year is on the rise, because public drug programs are spending more on high-cost drugs.
 - In 2012, high-cost beneficiaries accounted for about 25% of public drug spending, compared with only 15% in 2007.
 - Almost half of these people were taking a high-cost drug used to treat conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease and macular degeneration.

