

IQVIA Snapshot

Prevalence and Treatment of Mental Health Disorders

Trends in the use of anxiolytics in Canada, 2019-2023

IQVIA's definition of the therapeutic class, psychotherapeutics (medication treatments for mental health), includes antidepressants, anxiolytics/hypnotics, antipsychotics, and psychostimulants. Anxiety disorders, including insomnia, are the most common of all mental health problems. It is estimated that one in 10 Canadians is affected.¹ Clinical depression is a complex mood disorder that may be caused by genetic predisposition, personality, stress, and neurochemistry. Treatments include psychoeducation, psychotherapy, drug therapy, and brain stimulation therapies.²

This Snapshot presents some highlights derived from the dashboard on the use of anxiolytics (hypnotics) used for the treatment of anxiety disorders and insomnia. The prevalence and demographic characteristics of use in the

general Canadian population are presented for the years 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. Refer to page 7 for the limitations associated with using IQVIA data.

National highlights on the use of anxiolytics/hypnotics

In 2023, the prevalence rate of people who received anxiolytics in community pharmacies in Canada decreased by 1.4% compared to 2019, reaching 8.4%. This downward trend is also observed between these two years for the number of users (-6.5%), the number of prescriptions (-7.6%) and the number of units dispensed (-8.6%).

General statistics on anxiolytic use in Canada and changes, 2019 - 2023

	PREVALENCE	INDIVIDUALS	PRESCRIPTIONS DISPENSED	UNITS DISPENSED*
2019	9.8 %	3,704,803	25,971,158	834,267,412
2020	9.4 %	3,650,550	25,918,750	828,780,859
2021	9.3 %	3,559,936	25,199,645	801,434,591
2022	8.7 %	3,434,510	24,687,657	780,820,827
2023	8.4%	3,411,885 ▼ 6.5%	23,938,001 ▼ 7.6%	757,899,294 ▼ 8.6%

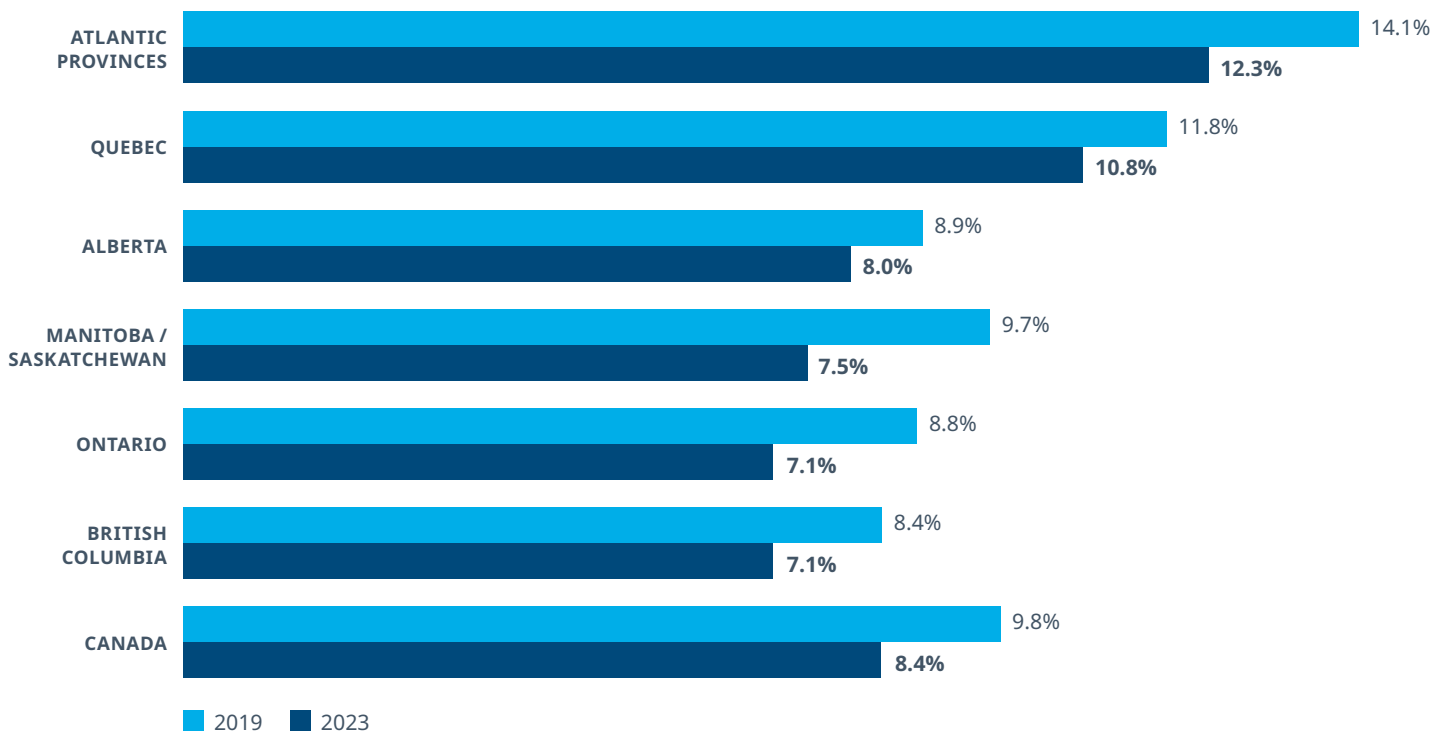
1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/your-health/diseases/mental-health-anxiety-disorders.html>

2. <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/generalized-anxiety-disorder>

* Since prescription durations vary from province to province (e.g. 30 or 90 days), units represent a relevant comparative indicator.

From 2019 to 2023, all Canadian provinces show a decrease in the prevalence rate of anxiolytic use. In 2023, the Atlantic provinces had the highest rate in Canada at 12.3% and Ontario and British Columbia had the lowest at 7.1%.

Prevalence of anxiolytic dispensing by province



IQVIA has recently developed new indicators to enrich the reports, by integrating data on health regions from various Canadian provinces. Among these, Ontario is subdivided into 26 regions and Quebec has 15. The following table presents some examples. For more information, do not hesitate to contact us.

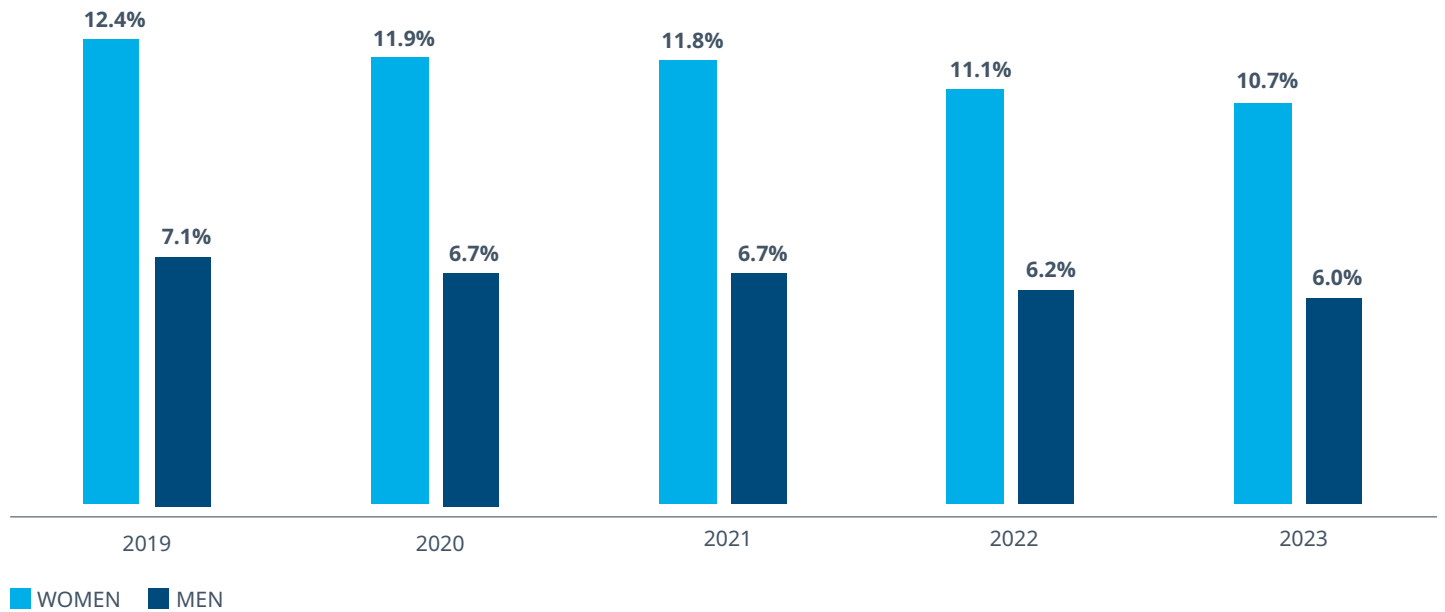
PREVALENCE OF ANXIOLITICS DISPENSING BY SELECTED PROVINCIAL HEALTH REGION		
	2019	2023
INTERIOR HEALTH (BC)	11.2%	9.3%
SOUTH (AB)	11.7%	10.9%
WINDSOR-ESSEX (ON)	14.9%	12.8%
NEW BRUNSWICK (ATL)	18.6%	16.7%
GASPÉSIE-ÎLE-DE-LA-MADELEINE (QC)	26.4%	27.0%

There was a decrease in the number of units (tablets/capsules) of anxiolytics dispensed between 2019 and 2023 in all provinces. Manitoba and Saskatchewan had a 23% reduction. In 2023, benzodiazepines accounted for 68% of units dispensed, Z-drugs (non-benzodiazepines) 30% and DORA “Dual orexin receptor antagonist” 2%.

UNITS OF ANXIOLYTICS DISPENSED BY PROVINCE AND CHANGE BETWEEN 2019 AND 2023		
ONTARIO	234,830,314	▼ -9%
QUEBEC	233,041,246	▼ -7%
ATLANTIC PROVINCES	104,008,356	▼ -5%
ALBERTA	74,298,398	▼ -6%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	58,350,736	▼ -15%
MANITOBA / SASKATCHEWAN	53,370,244	▼ -23%
CANADA	757,899,294	▼ -9%

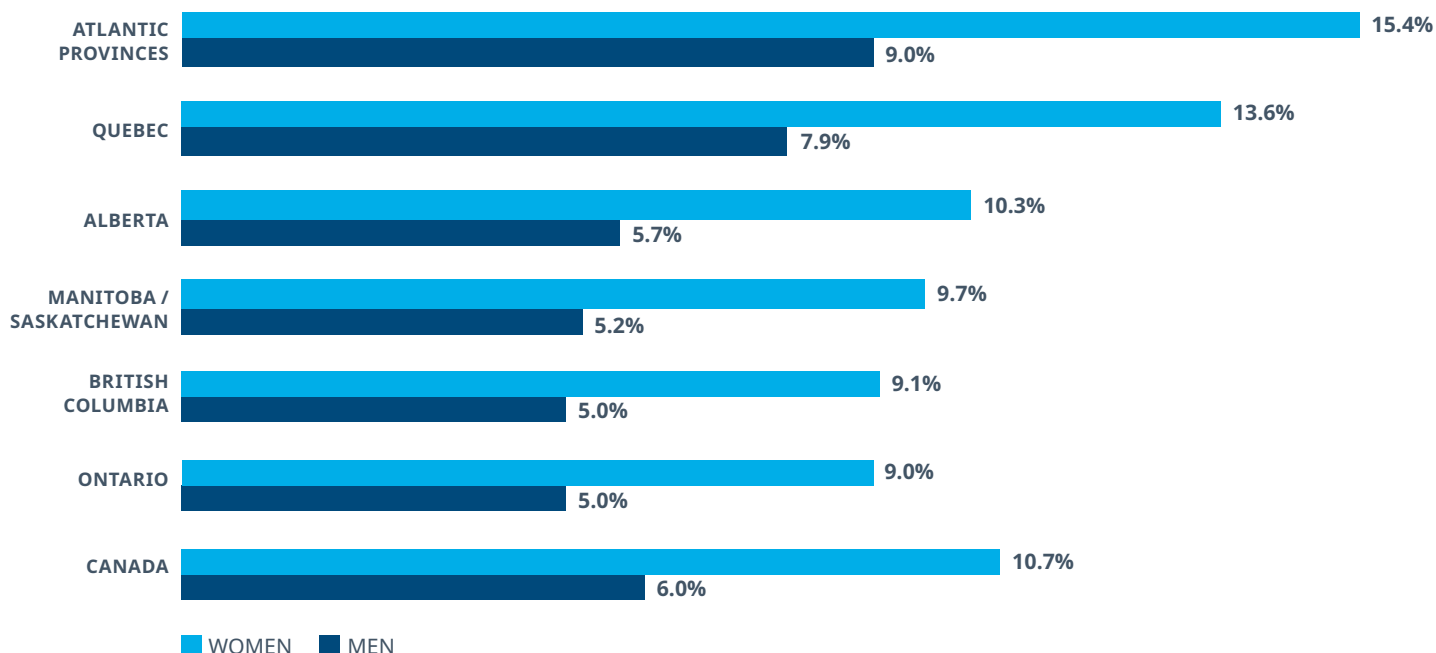
Over the five years observed, women had a higher prevalence rate of anxiolytic use than men although overall trends have been consistently downward since 2019.

Prevalence of anxiolytic dispensing by gender, Canada



In 2023, the prevalence rate for anti-anxiety medication use among women was still higher than that of men in all provinces, with a peak in the Atlantic provinces at 15.4%.

Prevalence of anxiolytic dispensing by gender and province, 2023



In each province, the prevalence rate for anxiolytic use did not fluctuate much between 2019 and 2023 in the different age groups presented, except for those aged 65 and over, where a notable decrease of 7% to 10% was observed. In 2023, the highest prevalence rate was among those aged 65 and over in all provinces, with a peak in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec reaching nearly 23%.

PREVALENCE OF ANXIOLYTICS DISPENSING BY PROVINCE AND AGE GROUP, 2019 AND 2023

PROVINCES	18 - 24		25 - 44		45 - 64		65+	
	2019	2023	2019	2023	2019	2023	2019	2023
ATLANTIC PROVINCES	3.4%	4.3%	11.2%	10.8%	14.9%	14.1%	33.0%	22.9%
QUEBEC	2.0%	3.6%	7.5%	8.5%	12.8%	13.2%	32.9%	22.8%
ALBERTA	2.2%	3.4%	7.2%	7.3%	12.2%	10.9%	27.2%	18.3%
MANITOBA / SASKATCHEWAN	2.4%	3.0%	8.4%	6.7%	12.6%	10.2%	25.4%	16.5%
ONTARIO	2.1%	2.6%	6.6%	6.0%	10.4%	8.9%	23.1%	14.9%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	2.2%	2.9%	6.5%	6.2%	9.4%	8.5%	20.3%	13.5%
CANADA	2.2%	3.1%	7.3%	7.0%	11.5%	10.5%	26.3%	17.6%

In 2023, there was a higher prevalence rate for anxiolytic use among women than men in all Canadian provinces, regardless of age. The Atlantic Provinces and Quebec had the highest prevalence rates at 27% among those aged 65 and over. It is notable that women aged 18 to 24 had a prevalence rate twice that of men in all provinces.

PREVALENCE OF ANXIOLYTIC DISPENSING BY PROVINCE, GENDER AND AGE GROUP, 2023					
	SEXE	18 - 24	25 - 44	45 - 64	65+
ATLANTIC PROVINCES	W	6.2%	13.9%	17.5%	27.3%
	M	2.5%	7.6%	10.5%	17.7%
QUEBEC	W	5.0%	11.1%	16.3%	27.0%
	M	2.2%	6.0%	10.0%	17.7%
ALBERTA	W	4.8%	9.7%	13.8%	22.1%
	M	2.1%	5.0%	7.9%	14.1%
MANITOBA / SASKATCHEWAN	W	4.2%	9.0%	13.0%	19.8%
	M	1.8%	4.4%	7.3%	12.6%
ONTARIO	W	3.6%	7.7%	11.2%	17.8%
	M	1.7%	4.2%	6.5%	11.3%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	W	4.3%	8.4%	10.7%	16.4%
	M	1.7%	4.0%	6.2%	10.2%
CANADA	W	4.3%	9.2%	13.1%	21.1%
	M	1.9%	4.9%	7.7%	13.5%

In Canada, for the five years observed, prescriptions for anxiolytics were written mainly by general practitioners (~80%) and psychiatrists (~15%). Similar proportions were observed at the prescriber level in the six provinces covered by this report.

Data Sources and Methodology

The statistics are generated from [fully anonymized] prescriptions for psychotherapeutic medications dispensed by a panel of community pharmacies during 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, and correspond to approximately 80% of all prescriptions dispensed in Canada (new Rx and refills). Estimation algorithms were used to assess the missing 20%, thus obtaining a complete picture of the dispensing of these drugs and allowing a representative analysis. Population data from Statistics Canada³ was used to calculate proportions and per capita rates.

This report is based on the following IQVIA data services: IQVIA Geographic Prescription Monitoring (GPM), IQVIA Longitudinal Prescription data, and IQVIA Prescriber-level data.

List of molecules included in this study:

ANXIOLYTICS / HYPNOTICS		
Benzodiazepines	DORA	Z Drugs
Alprazolam	Lemborexant	Eszopiclone
Bromazepam	Suvorexant	Zaleplon
Chlordiazepoxide		Zopiclone
Clobazam		Zolpidem
Clonazepam		
Clorazepate		
Diazepam		
Flurazepam		
Lorazepam		
Midazolam		
Nitrazepam		
Oxazepam		
Temazepam		
Triazolam		

3. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dt-td/Index-eng.cfm?Lang=E&SUB=98P1001&SR=0&RPP=10&SORT=date>

Limitations

There are limitations to the use of IQVIA data, which does not include information on:

- Prescriptions written but never dispensed
- Prescriptions dispensed in hospitals and prisons
- Medications that were not consumed by patients
- Diagnoses for which prescriptions were dispensed
- Clinical indication or morbidity

This report is produced independently by IQVIA Canada as a public service, without industry or government funding. IQVIA complies with all laws regarding the protection of personal health information and IQVIA does not collect or use any prescription drug data that could identify a patient.

About IQVIA

IQVIA is a leading global provider of advanced analytics, technology solutions, and clinical research services to the life sciences industry. IQVIA creates intelligent connections across all aspects of healthcare through its analytics, transformative technology, metadata resources and extensive domain expertise. IQVIA Connected Intelligence™ delivers relevant insights with speed and agility—enabling its customers to accelerate the clinical development and commercialization of innovative medication treatments that improve healthcare outcomes for patients. With approximately 87,000 employees, IQVIA conducts operations in more than 100 countries.

Established in Canada since the 1960s with over 1,600 employees, IQVIA is a leading provider of evidence-based health information services to the Canadian medical and pharmaceutical industry. Its excellent reputation is based on its ability to forge partnerships with various stakeholders in the public and private sectors who share the same goal: to constantly improve the quality of health care in a more connected ecosystem.

Offering the world's largest source of healthcare data, IQVIA provides Canada-wide data for both the public and private sectors. IQVIA's insights and execution capabilities help biotech, medical device, and pharmaceutical companies, medical researchers, government agencies, payers, and other healthcare stakeholders tap into a deeper understanding of disease, human behaviour, and scientific advances to improve patient health.



CONTACT US
iqvia.com/canada