

Medical assistance in dying, 2021

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Medical assistance in dying (MAID) is defined as the administration or prescription of a substance to a person that causes their death, at their request and after having met specific criteria. In Canada, federal legislation was introduced in 2016 to allow individuals who are suffering from a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability to apply for and, if eligible, receive MAID. Today, Statistics Canada is releasing data on MAID requests and on those who received MAID in 2021. Health Canada, the federal department responsible for the monitoring of MAID, has published detailed findings in their *Third Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying, 2021*.

Medically assisted deaths in Canada rose by 35% from 2020 to 2021

The number of medically assisted deaths in Canada has continued to grow since MAID was introduced in 2016. There were 12,689 written requests for MAID in 2021, 31.3% more than the 9,664 written requests in 2020. This resulted in 10,029 medically assisted deaths in Canada in 2021, an increase of 34.7% from the 7,446 deaths in 2020. MAID accounted for 3.3% of all deaths in Canada in 2021, up from 2.4% of all reported deaths in the previous year. In 2021, slightly more than half (52.4%) of those receiving MAID were men, and the small percentage difference between men and women has not changed significantly since 2020.

The rise in medically assisted deaths may partly be explained by a greater awareness of MAID as an end-of-life option in Canada. This increase has led to more demand for medical practitioners (physicians or nurse practitioners) who provide MAID. There was an increase of 17.2% in the number of MAID practitioners in 2021 (1,577) compared with 2020 (1,345).

Nearly four in five written requests resulted in medical assistance in dying

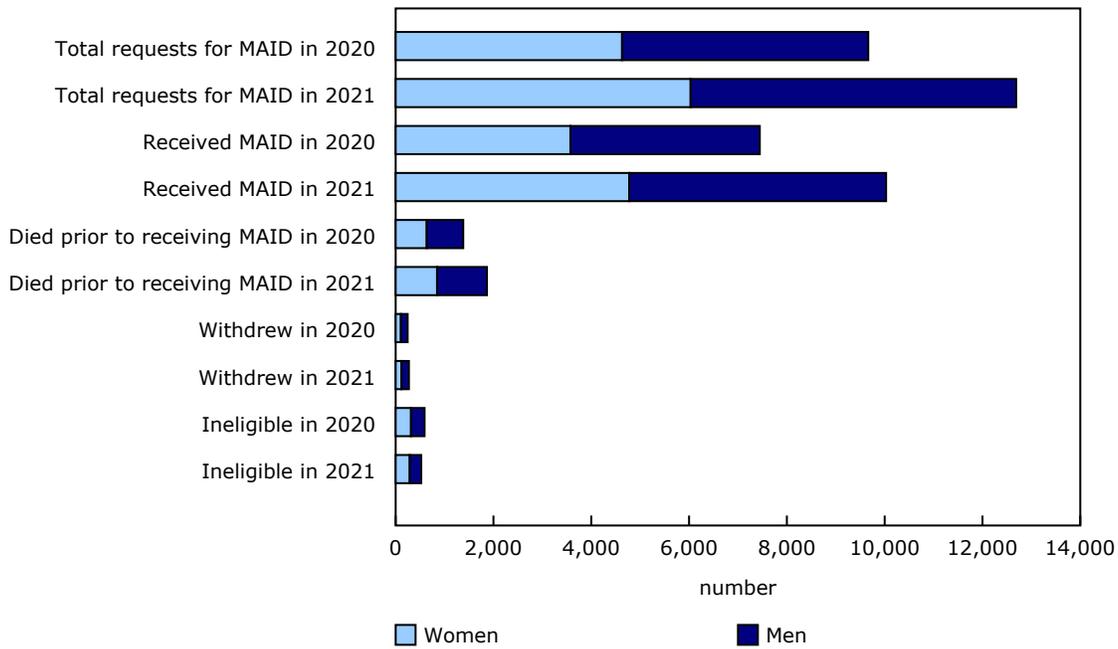
While most (79.0%) written requests in 2021 resulted in the provision of MAID, 21.0% resulted in an outcome other than a medically assisted death. For example, 14.7% resulted in a person dying of another cause prior to receiving MAID. Of the 523 individuals (4.1%) whose requests were deemed to be ineligible for MAID, approximately one-third (32.7%) lacked the capacity to make decisions regarding their health and nearly one-fifth (19.9%) did not meet the criteria of having a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability. Among the small proportion (2.1%) of individuals who withdrew their request in 2021, 70.8% changed their mind, many (41.0%) because they felt that palliative care measures were sufficient.

Data resource access

Approved researchers can access the MAID data in research data centres (RDCs) and in the Federal Research Data Centre. Information on the RDC Program, including the application process and guidelines, is available on the [Research Data Centres](#) webpage.



Chart 1
Medical assistance in dying (MAID) requests by sex



Source(s): Health Canada, Medical Assistance in Dying, 2021 (5273).

Note to readers

Medical assistance in dying (MAID) data are collected by Health Canada, in accordance with the [Regulations for the Monitoring of Medical Assistance in Dying](#). More information on MAID legislation (including recent changes), eligibility criteria, and procedural safeguards are available on the [Health Canada website](#).

The microdata made available by Statistics Canada include written requests for MAID dated from January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2021, and MAID provisions that occurred in 2019, 2020 and 2021. The data include detailed information, such as the underlying medical condition of the applicant, the nature of their suffering, and demographic indicators of the applicant (i.e., age, sex and location), submitted to Health Canada directly, or through a provincial/territorial body, by the physicians and nurse practitioners who assessed and/or provided MAID to the person requesting MAID.

Data for the 2021 calendar year collected under the existing regulations have been used to shed light on requests and provisions of MAID. These data are only collected on written requests and do not capture verbal requests or any requests received by health professionals other than nurse practitioners or physicians.

The [Third Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada, 2021](#), published by Health Canada on the state of MAID in Canada, including aggregate statistics, is available on the [Health Canada website](#).

The total number of MAID deaths in 2019, 2020 and 2021 are tabulated from the microdata on MAID available to Statistics Canada. The following data submissions have been excluded from the microdata:

- pharmacists who dispensed substances for the provision of MAID;
- MAID deaths as a result of self-administration;
- MAID requests that resulted in a referral or transfer of care.

Because the microdata file contains only a subset of all MAID records, the total counts may not match the counts reported by Health Canada or provincial and territorial governments or health authorities. MAID data are subject to revisions by Health Canada.

Annual number of deaths can be found in [Table 13-10-0709-01, Deaths, by age group and sex](#), and [Table 17-10-0006-01, Estimates of deaths, by age and sex, annual](#).

As MAID continues to evolve, and with amendments to the Criminal Code, the monitoring framework for data collection will also change, impacting future analyses beginning in 2023.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5273](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).