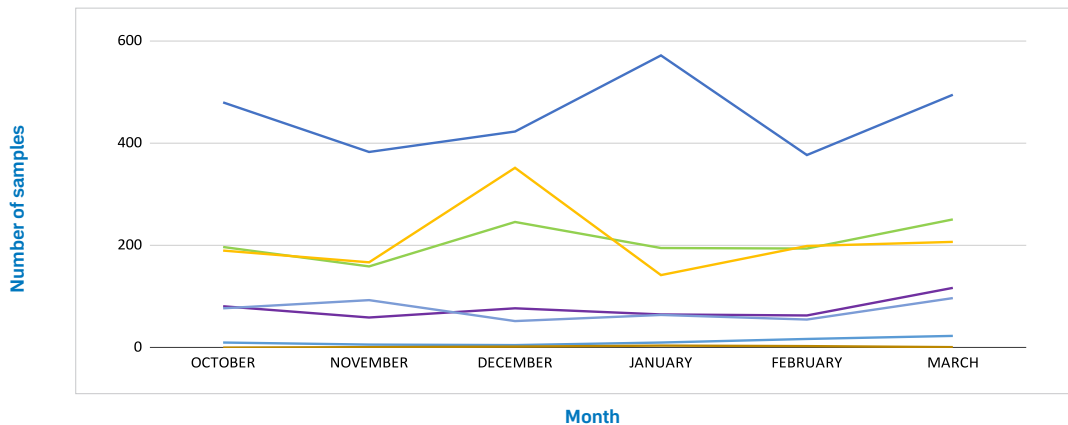


## Key Findings

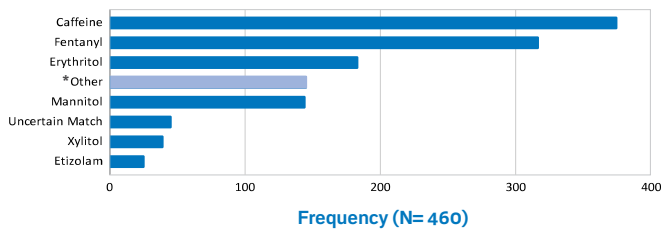
- March 2021 saw the most drug samples ever checked in British Columbia (1,191).
- The percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines (23.5%) has continued on an upward trend since August.
- Etizolam, the predominant benzodiazepine in expected opioids, may be missed by drug checking technologies. This means that the true rate may be higher than reported here. Always complement drug checking with other harm reduction measures like using at an OPS/SCS or with a buddy, doing a tester shot, and having and knowing how to use naloxone.
- Pharmaceutical opioids can be difficult to detect with FTIR because of their small dosage in relation to inert fillers. For that reason, a large portion of pharmaceutical opioids cannot be matched to their expectation.

## Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months

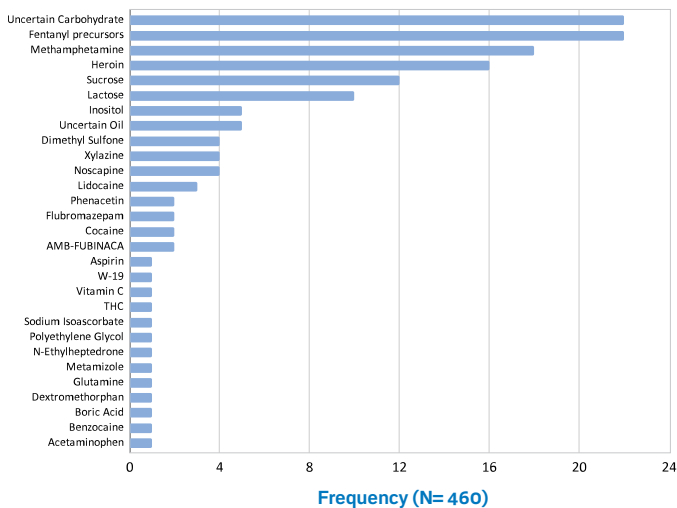


## Components found in drug samples in March

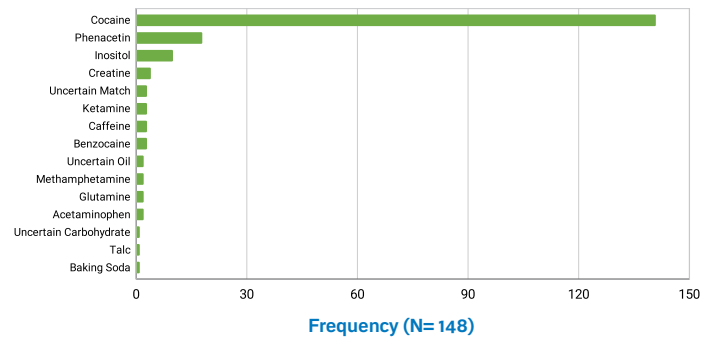
### Components in opioids



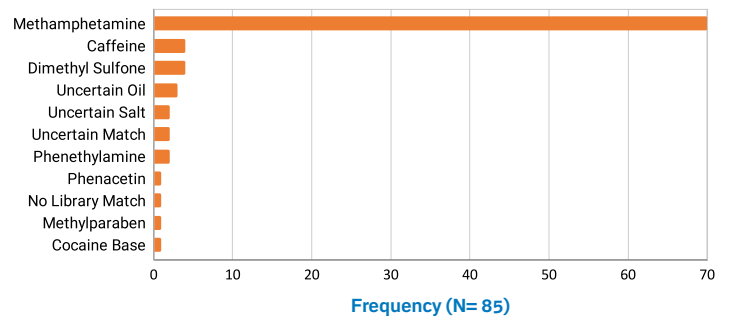
### \* Other components found in opioids



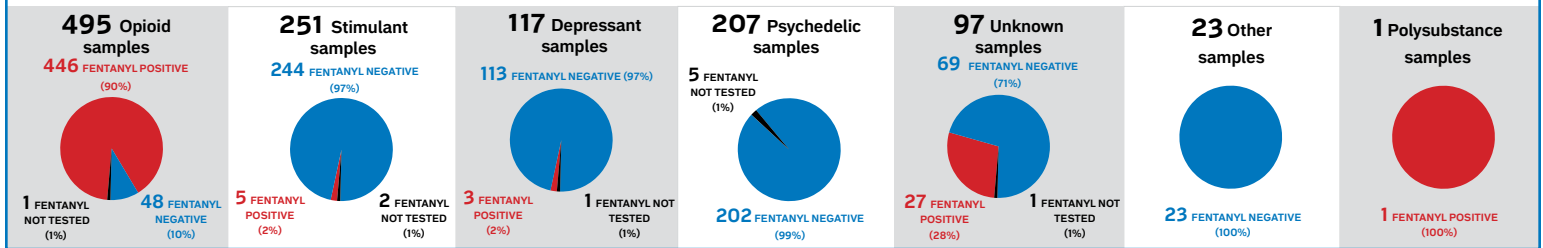
### Components in cocaine



### Components in methamphetamine



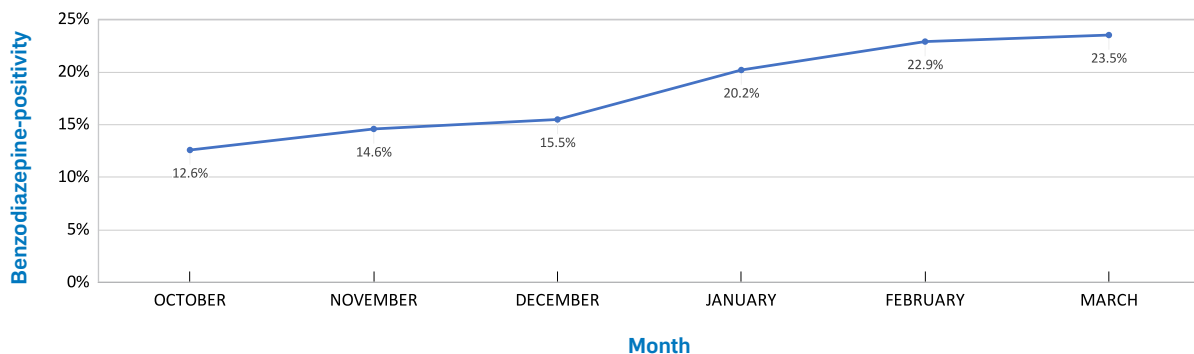
## Number of samples tested with fentanyl present



## PUBLIC HEALTH NOTIFICATIONS

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Drugs Detected	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Area Purchased	Alert Message
31 March 2021- Burdock House, Penticton	Methamphetamine	Methamphetamine, fentanyl	Positive	N/A	Kamloops	Unexpected fentanyl presence can lead to overdose, even when smoking. Fentanyl test strips are effective for detecting fentanyl in stimulants.
10 March 2021- Get Your Drugs Tested, Vancouver	Ketamine	Ketamine, etizolam	Negative	Positive	Unknown	Etizolam is a benzodiazepine that can cause extreme sedation and blackouts, especially when consumed unexpectedly in high amounts. Check your drugs before consuming them.

## Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines in the past 6 months

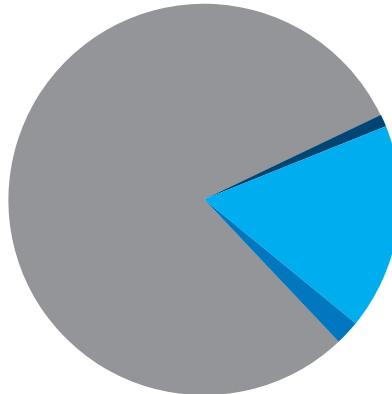


During the month of March, **23.5%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines using test strips in our partner sites around BC (**103 samples of 438 tested**). Opioid samples are tested for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips. The results presented above are presumptive and tentative until confirmed by a laboratory.

## Number of samples tested by region:

Total #: 1,191

953: Vancouver Coastal  
Health region (80%)



11: Fraser Health region (1%)

201: Interior Health region (17%)

26: Vancouver Island  
Health Region (2%)

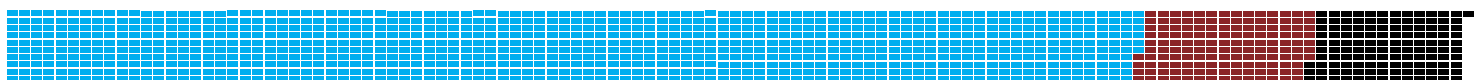
## Number of samples that matched expectation

using FTIR/test strip drug checking

<p>EXPECTED DRUG: <b>Depressant</b> 117 Samples Tested</p> <p>Matched: 72 Did not match: 43 Match not determined: 2</p>	<p>EXPECTED DRUG: <b>Psychedelic</b> 207 Samples Tested</p> <p>Matched: 173 Did not match: 32 Match not determined: 2</p>	<p>EXPECTED DRUG: <b>Stimulant</b> 251 Samples Tested</p> <p>Matched: 232 Did not match: 18 Match not determined: 1</p>	<p>EXPECTED DRUG: <b>Other</b> 23 Samples Tested</p> <p>Matched: 11 Did not match: 5 Match not determined: 7</p>
<p>EXPECTED DRUG: <b>Unknown</b> 97 Samples Tested</p> <p>Match not determined: 97</p>	<p>EXPECTED DRUG: <b>Opioid</b> 495 Samples Tested</p> <p>Matched: 437 Did not match: 43 Match not determined: 15</p>		<p>EXPECTED DRUG: <b>Polysubstance</b> 1 Samples Tested</p> <p>Matched: 1</p>

### Total

1,191 Samples Tested



Matched: 926  
Did not match: 141  
Match not determined: 124

Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents

**Depressant may include:**  
benzodiazepines, etizolam,  
GHB, hypnotics

**Opioid may include:**  
"down," heroin, fentanyl,  
pharmaceutical opioids

**Polysubstance includes:**  
cross-category mixtures

**Psychedelic may include:**  
MDMA and related,  
2C-family, tryptamines,  
ketamine, LSD

**Stimulant may include:**  
methamphetamine,  
"speed," cocaine and crack  
cocaine, cathinones

**Unknown includes:**  
samples where the individual  
was unable to identify an  
expected substance - this  
includes found samples.

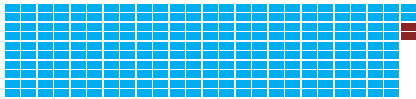
## Number of opioid samples that matched expectation

using FTIR/test strip drug checking

EXPECTED DRUG:

**Fentanyl**

244 Samples Tested



Matched: 242  
Did not match: 2

EXPECTED DRUG:

**Heroin**

24 Samples Tested



Matched: 11  
Did not match: 11  
Match not determined: 2

EXPECTED DRUG:

**Fentanyl and Heroin**

3 Samples Tested

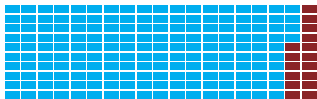


Matched: 1  
Did not match: 2

EXPECTED DRUG:

**Down**

190 Samples Tested



Matched: 174  
Did not match: 16

EXPECTED DRUG:

**Pharmaceutical**

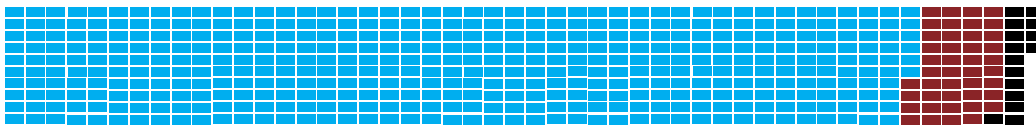
33 Samples Tested



Matched: 8  
Did not match: 12  
Match not determined: 13

### Total

494 Samples Tested



Matched: 436  
Did not match: 43  
Match not determined: 15

Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents. 'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount.

Data represented here are collected from our partner sites across the province. Drug samples are tested using the Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) spectrometer in combination with fentanyl test strips and benzodiazepine test strips.

There is 5% fentanyl detection limit on the FTIR spectrometer (McCrae, 2019), and a drug check on any given sample consists of both the FTIR and BTNX fentanyl immunoassay test strip testing done in combination. When applicable, BTNX benzodiazepine immunoassay test strips are also used.

BCCSU gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following partners:

