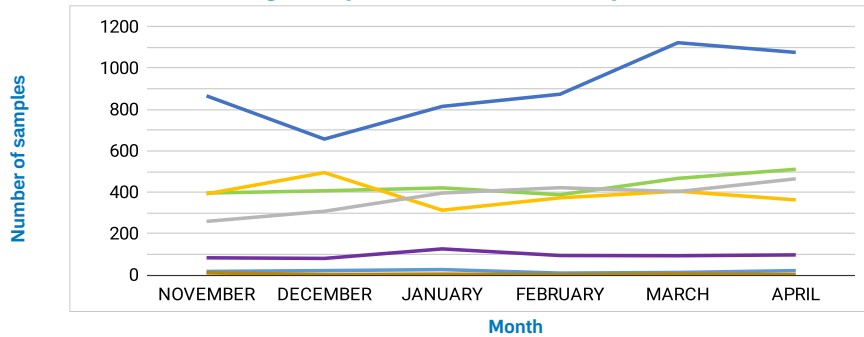


## Key Findings

- In April, a total of 2,535 drug checks were performed at community drug checking sites offering FTIR services in BC (40 access points), a continuing upward trend in drugs checked and expanding number of access points across all 5 health regions.
- The overall percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines is 46.9% in April (505 of 1076 samples). This rate has stayed relatively stable over the past five months at the provincial level, though variations are more pronounced at the regional level.
- Bromazolam was the most frequent benzodiazepine detected by FTIR, found present in 124 opioid samples, followed by desalkylgidazepam (14 samples), and etizolam (8 samples).
- Para-fluorofentanyl continues to be increasingly detected in the unregulated opioid supply. In April, nearly 25% of samples expected to be down/fentanyl were found to contain para-fluorofentanyl by FTIR (250 samples).
- Xylazine was detected in 18 opioid samples. Vancouver Coastal Health issued one alert for the qathet region (Powell River) concerning a down sample in which fentanyl and a high concentration of xylazine were detected by FTIR, with benzodiazepines detected by test strip.
- The median fentanyl concentration of opioids checked was 15.1%, consistent with the previous month. See page 3 for more detailed results.

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



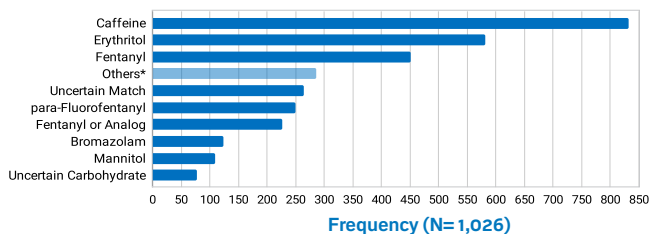
## Number of samples by drug category in April

Opioid	1076
Stimulant	511
Depressant	97
Psychedelic	363
Other	21
Polysubstance	2
Unknown	465

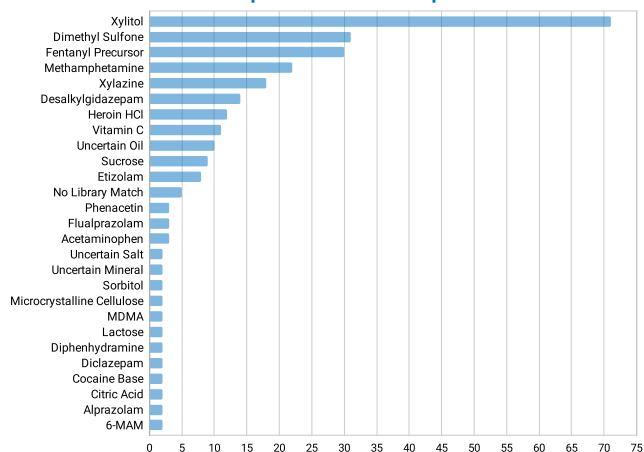
**TOTAL: 2,535**

## Components found in drug samples in April

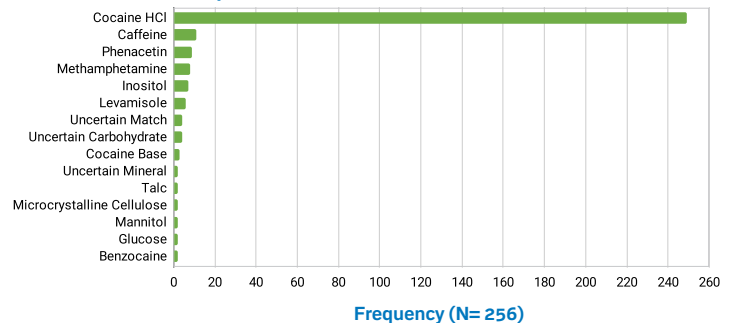
### Components in opioids



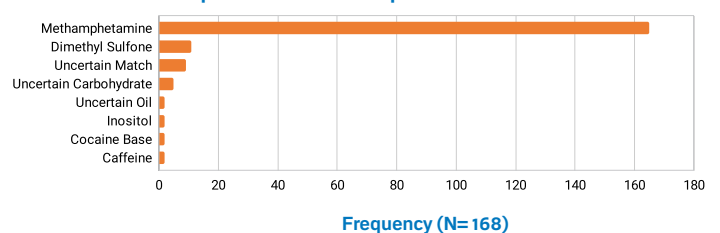
### \*Other components found in opioids



### Components in cocaine

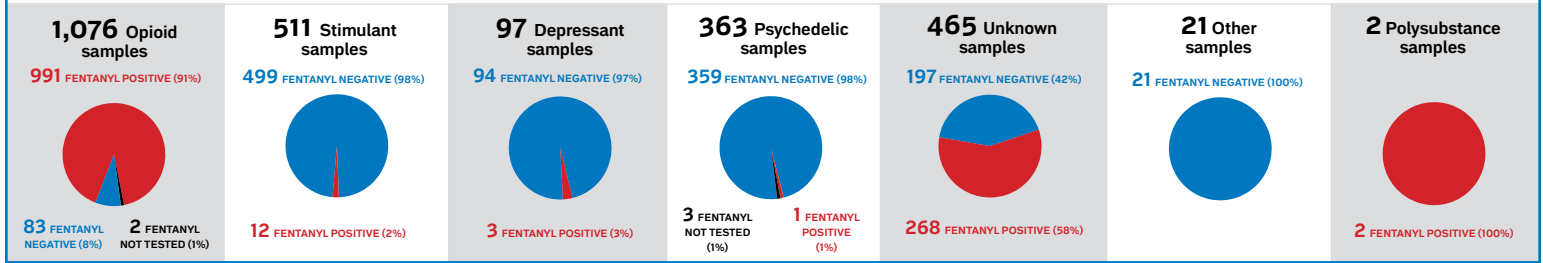


### Components in methamphetamine



There were additional compounds detected a single time each. To save space, they have been omitted from these charts. For the full list of compounds detected, visit our data dashboard at [www.drugcheckingbc.ca/dashboard/](http://www.drugcheckingbc.ca/dashboard/)

## Number of samples tested with fentanyl present

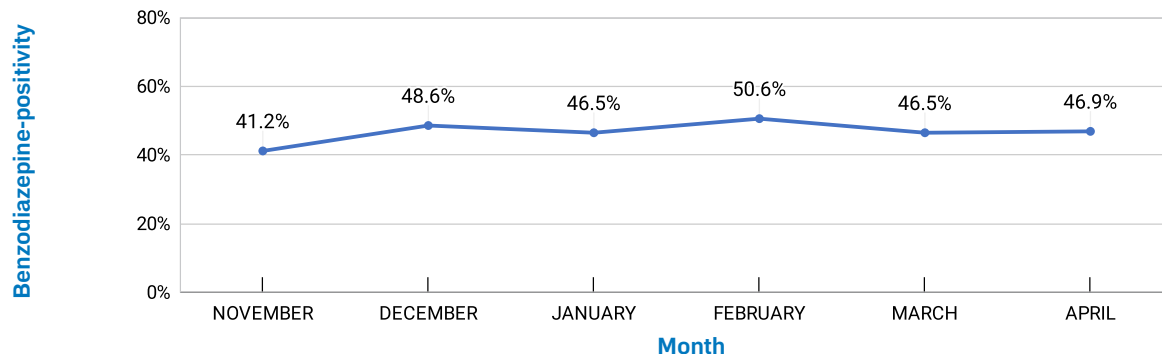


## PUBLIC HEALTH NOTIFICATIONS

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Drugs Detected	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Area Purchased	Alert Message
April 3, 2023 White Rock	MDA	MDMA	Positive	Positive	White Rock	Light purple crystals sold in capsules tested positive for fentanyl and benzodiazepines.
April 6, 2023 Kelowna	Down/Fentanyl	Fentanyl, Caffeine, Bromazolam	Positive	Positive	Kelowna	High concentrations of fentanyl and bromazolam (benzodiazepine) poses high risk of OD that may not respond to naloxone.
April 11, 2023 Vancouver DTES	Acetaminophen and Oxycodone (Percocet)	Caffeine, Mannitol, Fentanyl, Bromazolam	Positive	Positive	Vancouver DTES	White chunks sold as Percocet tested positive for fentanyl and bromazolam, a benzo analog.
April 20, 2023 South Okanagan	Down	Caffeine, Xylazine, Fentanyl, Erythritol, Bromazolam	Positive	Positive	South Okanagan	Two samples (bright green chunks and grey chunks) sold as down posing high risk of OD that may not respond to naloxone.
April 21, 2023 Prince George	Down	Erythritol, Caffeine, Fentanyl or Analogue, Bromazolam	Positive	Positive	Prince George	Increased OD events for Prince George, some linked to red down with high levels of fentanyl and bromazolam (benzodiazepine).
April 24, 2023 Qathet Region	Down	Erythritol, Caffeine, Fentanyl, Xylazine	Positive	Positive	Qathet Region	Orange chunks causing heavy sedation tested positive for fentanyl, xylazine, and benzos.
April 25, 2023 Vancouver	Down	Caffeine, Etizolam, Fentanyl, Erythritol	Positive	Positive	Vancouver	Pink powder sold as down tested positive for fentanyl and etizolam, a benzo analogue.
April 26, 2023 Vancouver	Crack Cocaine	Caffeine, Erythritol, Para-Fluorofentanyl	Positive	Negative	Vancouver	White chunks sold as crack cocaine tested positive for para-fluorofentanyl and negative for cocaine. Substance has caused OD.

Health authorities and community organizations issue further toxic drug alerts from sources other than drug checking. See their respective websites or social media accounts for more alerts.

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

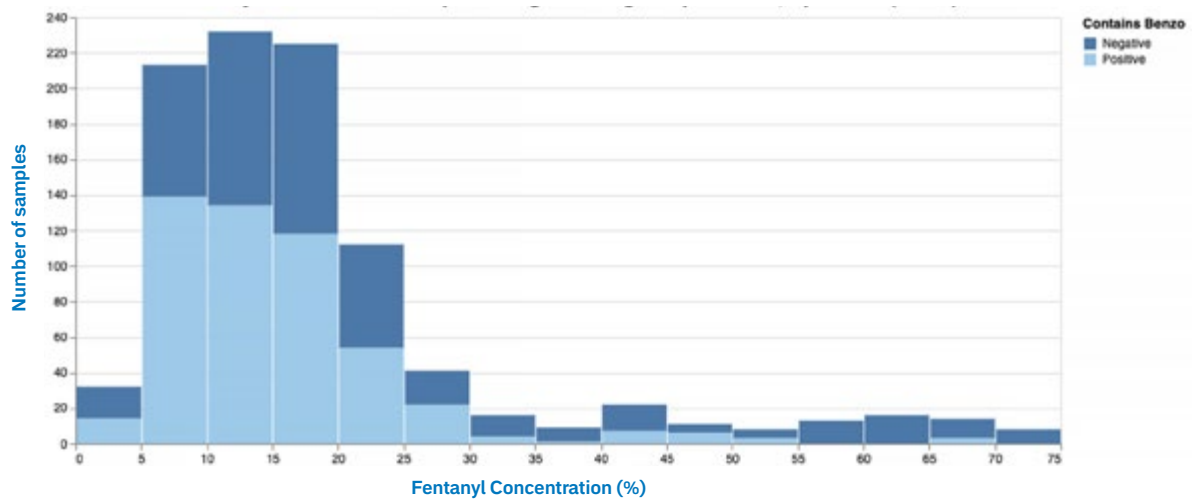


During the month of April, **46.9%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines in our partner sites around BC (**505 samples of 1076 checked**). Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. The results presented here are derived from both of these technologies and are presumptive until confirmed by a laboratory.

## Fentanyl Quantification

The charts below summarize fentanyl concentrations of fentanyl-positive opioid samples brought for drug checking in British Columbia. Fentanyl concentrations were determined using FTIR and a calibrated fentanyl quantification model. Technicians at point-of-care may provide an estimated fentanyl quantification, generally an approximate range of fentanyl percentage in a mixture, but these results were calculated separately (post hoc) using the model for the purpose of this report.

Fentanyl Concentration of Opioid Drug Checking Samples in BC, April 2023



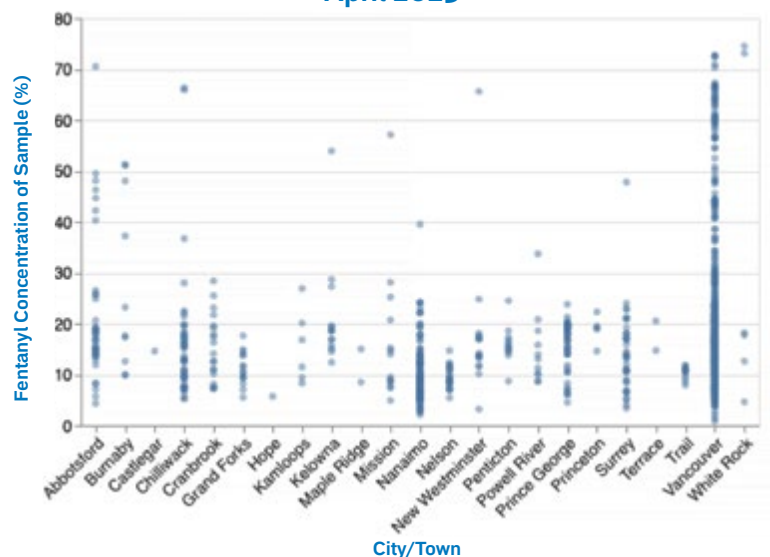
While most of fentanyl-positive opioids checked have a concentration of fentanyl between 10% and 20%, there remain many samples above 20% fentanyl-by-weight, and concentrations can approach 75% of the mixture. The median fentanyl concentration of all samples remained consistent with the previous month at 15.1%. When purchasing fentanyl from an unregulated drug supply, it is often impossible to know what the fentanyl concentration of the drugs is. Drug checking can help, but point-of-care quantification results are provided in a range since it is not possible to be precise with the available technologies. For example, a technician might say, “This sample contains caffeine, mannitol, and between 5% and 10% fentanyl.”

Drug supplies vary by location in the province. While samples from smaller communities appear to be more consistent, it is important to remember that this is a small number of drugs checked in each city or town. It is also important to note that these locations include only those participating in the BCCSU Drug Checking Project that provide data from FTIR spectroscopy. These numbers may not represent the broader supply or the supply in other settings.

It is very important to remember that the results presented here are fentanyl, not fentanyl analogues like carfentanyl. Carfentanyl is a potent opioid that is often present below the detection limit of the spectrometer and is therefore missed by point-of-care drug checking technologies. Your drug checking technician can explain the limitations in detail when you get your drugs checked, but always take additional harm reduction precautions, like using at an OPS if available, because potent opioids may be presented and go undetected.

If you have any questions about the results, please email us at [drugchecking@bccsu.ubc.ca](mailto:drugchecking@bccsu.ubc.ca).

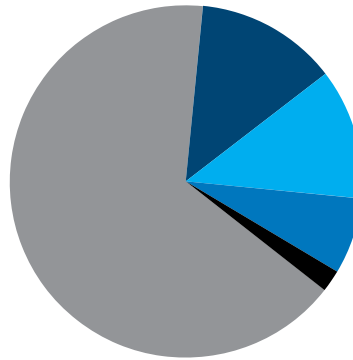
Fentanyl Concentration of Opioid Samples by City/Town, April 2023



## Number of samples tested by region:

Total #: 2,535

1,690: Vancouver Coastal  
Health region (66%)



323: Fraser Health region (13%)

271: Interior Health region (12%)

184: Vancouver Island  
Health Region (7%)

67: Northern Health region (2%)

## Number of samples that matched expectation

using FTIR/test strip drug checking

EXPECTED DRUG	Matched	Did Not Match	Match Not Determined	Samples Tested
Opioid	1,021	37	18	1,076
Stimulant	489	21	1	511
Depressant	76	19	2	97
Psychedelic	333	26	4	363
Other	14	1	6	21
Polysubstance	2			2
Unknown			465	465
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,935</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>2,535</b>

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

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

**Opioids include:**  
"down," heroin, fentanyl,  
pharmaceutical opioids

**Polysubstance includes:**  
cross-category mixtures

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

**Stimulant 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	Matched	Did Not Match	Match Not Determined	Samples Tested
Fentanyl	333	11		344
Heroin	6	4		10
Other Opioid	0	1		1
Down	657	13	2	672
Pharmaceutical	19	8	16	43
Opium	6			6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,021</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1,076</b>

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:

