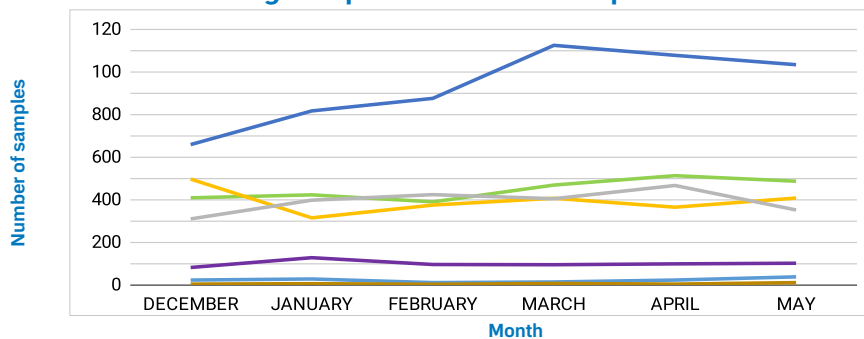


Key Findings

- In May, a total of 2,418 drug checks were performed at community drug checking sites offering FTIR services in BC (36 access points).
- The overall percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines was 51.9% in May (536 of 1032 samples). While rates have decreased in Vancouver Coastal and Fraser Health, large increases in benzo-positivity have occurred in Interior Health, Island Health, and Northern Health.
- Bromazepam was the most frequent benzodiazepine detected by FTIR, found present in 115 opioid samples, followed by desalkylgizapam (16 samples), and etizolam (6 samples).
- Para-fluorofentanyl continues to be increasingly detected in the unregulated opioid supply. In May, over 25% of samples expected to be down/fentanyl were found to contain para-fluorofentanyl by FTIR (259 of 986 samples).
- Xylazine, a veterinary sedative, was detected in 18 of 986 samples expected to be down/fentanyl in May.
- 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



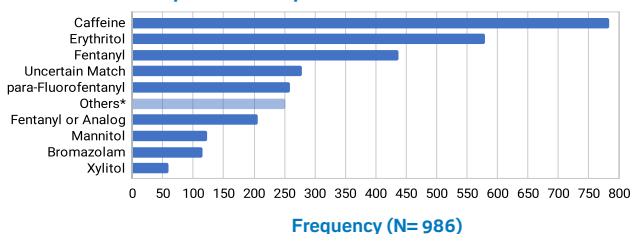
Number of samples by drug category in May

Opioid	1032
Stimulant	485
Depressant	100
Psychedelic	406
Other	36
Polysubstance	9
Unknown	350

TOTAL: 2,418

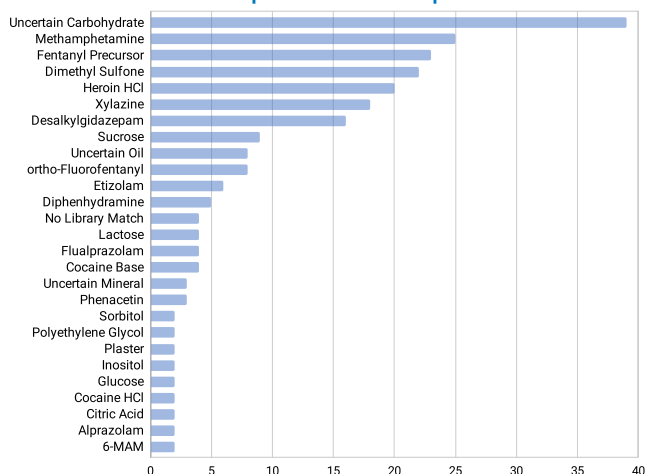
Components found in drug samples in May

Components in opioids

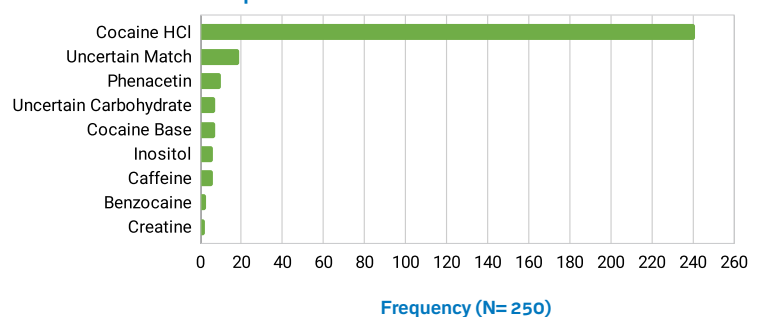


Frequency (N=986)

* Other components found in opioids

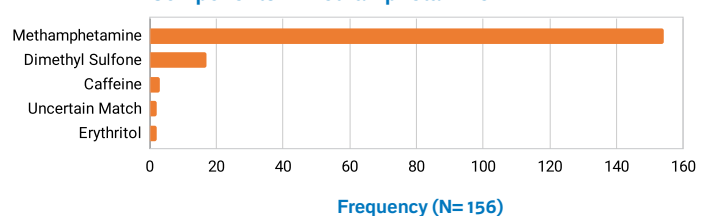


Components in cocaine



Frequency (N=250)

Components in methamphetamine



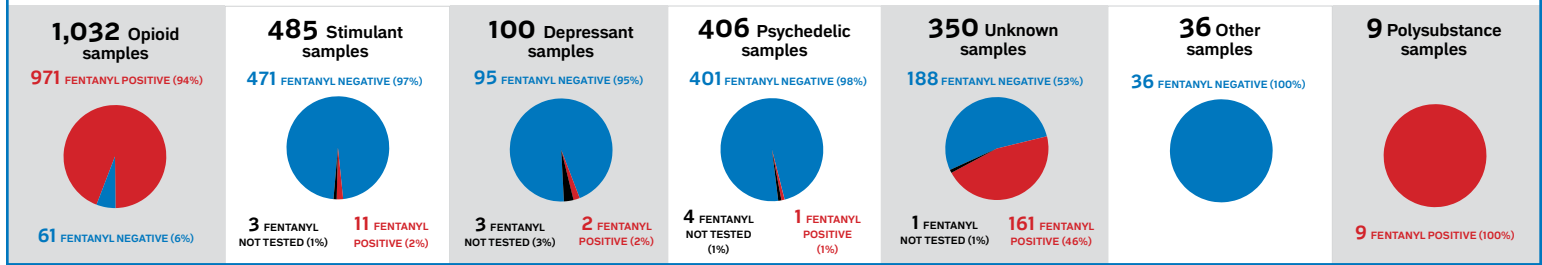
Frequency (N=156)

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/

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Drug Checking in British Columbia

Number of samples tested with fentanyl present

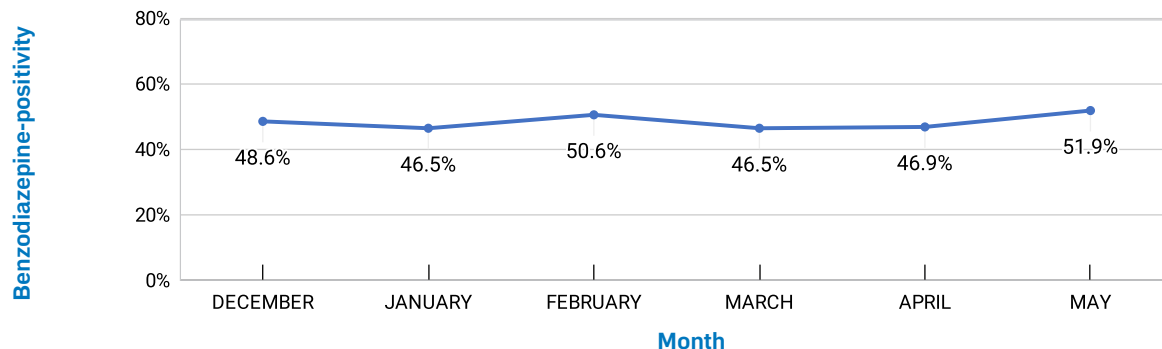


PUBLIC HEALTH NOTIFICATIONS

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Drugs Detected	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Area Purchased	Alert Message
May 1, 2023 Vancouver	Down	Fentanyl, Caffeine, Diclazepam	Positive	Positive	Vancouver	Pink granules sold as down tested positive for fentanyl and diclazepam, a benzo analogue.
May 1, 2023 Vancouver	Down	Para-Fluorofentanyl, Caffeine	Positive	Positive	Vancouver	Blue granules sold as down in Vancouver tested positive for para-fluorofentanyl and benzos. Substance has caused OD.
May 1, 2023 Vancouver	Down	Para-fluorofentanyl, Caffeine, Methamphetamine	Positive	Positive	Vancouver	Red/orange granules sold as down in Vancouver tested positive for para-fluorofentanyl, methamphetamine, and benzos.
May 4, 2023 Cranbrook	Down	Caffeine, Erythritol, Fentanyl, Bromazolam	Positive	Positive	Cranbrook	A substance sold as down tested positive for fentanyl, fentanyl analogues, and bromazolam in Cranbrook.
May 5, 2023 Vancouver	Fentanyl	Caffeine, Erythritol, Fentanyl, Desalkylgizapam	Positive	Positive	Vancouver	Lime green pebbles sold as fentanyl tested positive for fentanyl and desalkylgizapam, a benzo analogue. Substance has caused OD.
May 11, 2023 Vancouver	Unknown	Microcrystalline Cellulose, Fentanyl	Positive	Negative	Vancouver	Light blue tablet with imprint "30" sold in Vancouver tested positive for fentanyl.
May 12, 2023 Penticton	Down	Fentanyl, Bromazolam, Caffeine	Positive	Positive	Penticton	Light blue chunks sold as down tested positive for fentanyl and bromazolam in Penticton.
May 25, 2023 Kelowna	Down	Caffeine, Fentanyl, Bromazolam	Positive	Positive	Kelowna	Black chunks sold as down tested positive for fentanyl and bromazolam in Kelowna.
May 29, 2023 Penticton	Methamphetamine	Fentanyl	Positive	Negative	Penticton	White crystals and powder sold as methamphetamine tested positive for fentanyl in Penticton.

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

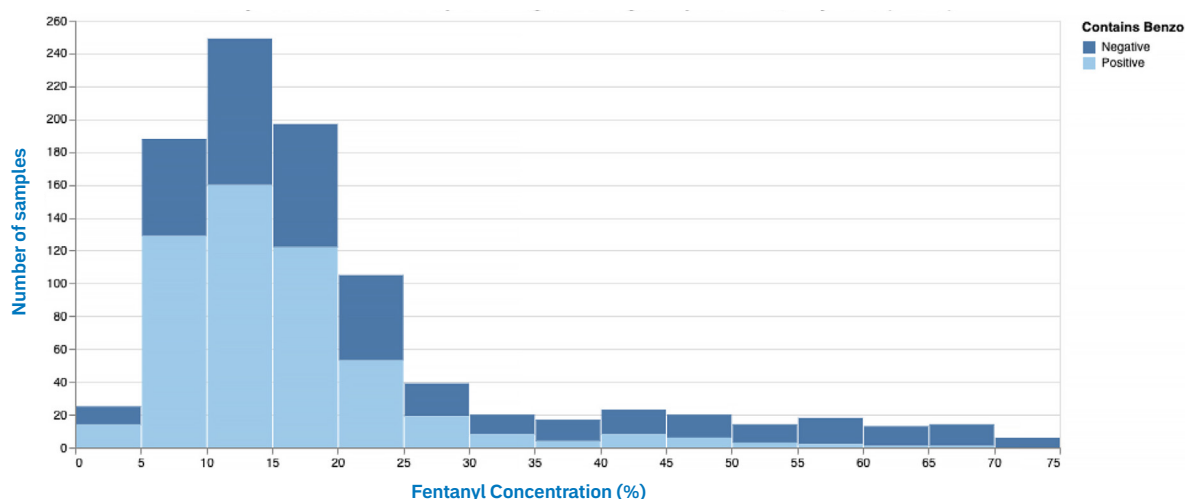


During the month of May, **51.9%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines in our partner sites around BC (**536 samples of 1032 checked**). Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. The results presented here are 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, May 2023



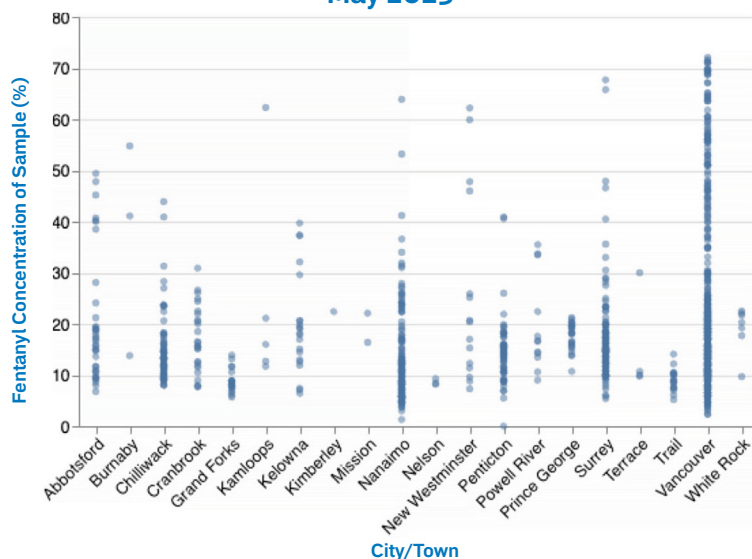
While most of fentanyl-positive opioids checked have a concentration of fentanyl between 10% and 20%, there remain many samples above 20% fentanyl-by-weight, and concentrations can approach 75% of the mixture. The median fentanyl concentration of all samples remained consistent with the previous month 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.

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



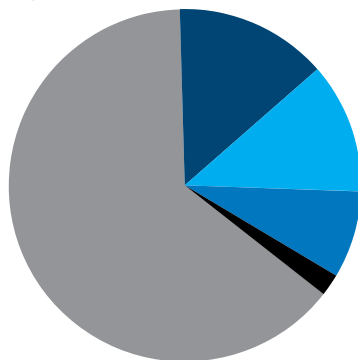
May
2023

Drug Checking in British Columbia

Number of samples tested by region:

Total #: 2,418

1,544: Vancouver Coastal
Health region (64%)



353: Fraser Health region (14%)

286: Interior Health region (12%)

190: Vancouver Island
Health Region (8%)

45: 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	<div><div></div></div>	988	34	10	1032
Stimulant	<div><div></div></div>	471	13	1	485
Depressant	<div><div></div></div>	78	19	3	100
Psychedelic	<div><div></div></div>	374	30	2	406
Other	<div><div></div></div>	24	2	10	36
Polysubstance	<div><div></div></div>	9			9
Unknown	<div><div></div></div>			350	350
Total	<div><div></div></div>	1944	98	376	2418

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.

May
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Drug Checking in British Columbia

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		243	3	1	247
Heroin		11	4		15
Other Opioid		1	4		5
Down		710	14		724
Pharmaceutical		16	9	9	34
Opium		7			7
Total		988	34	10	1032

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:



Health
Canada

Santé
Canada



fraserhealth



Interior Health



Canadian Mental
Health Association

