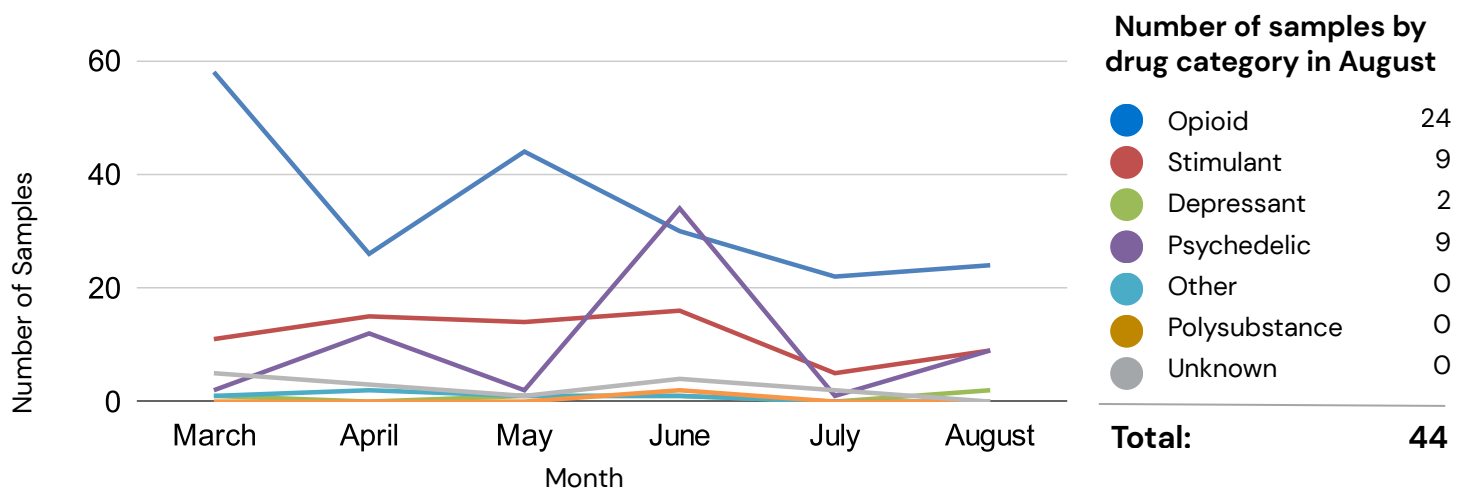




Key findings

- In August, **44** drug checks were performed by services offering FTIR drug checking in the Northern Health region (**5 access points**).
- The percentage of opioid samples testing positive for benzodiazepines by FTIR and/or test strip decreased to **54.2%** in August. The most common benzodiazepine detected was bromazolam.
- We note there has been an uptick in samples containing carfentanil since the beginning of the year. The true number is expected to be higher than what is observed by FTIR, as it is usually found in concentrations below the detection limit (<5%) via secondary testing.
- Among the subset of opioids sent for secondary testing with Paper-Spray Mass Spectrometry (**n=15**), xylazine was detected in **3 samples**, and carfentanil was detected in **1 sample**.
- Note that trends are difficult to infer due to the small number of samples tested over a large geographic region.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



Number of drug checks at each site

Location	# of Drugs Checked
Terrace ICMT (Terrace)	8
POUNDS (Prince George)	30
Total	44

Less than 5 samples were tested at the following location, which has been included in the above total:
Terrace ICMT (Smithers), POUNDS (Dawson Creek), POUNDS (Quesnel).

Number of samples with expected drug present

Expected Drug	Present	Not Present	N/A	Total
Opioid	17	6	1	24
Stimulant	8	1	0	9
Depressant	2	0	0	2
Psychedelic	9	0	0	9
Total	36	7	1	44

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

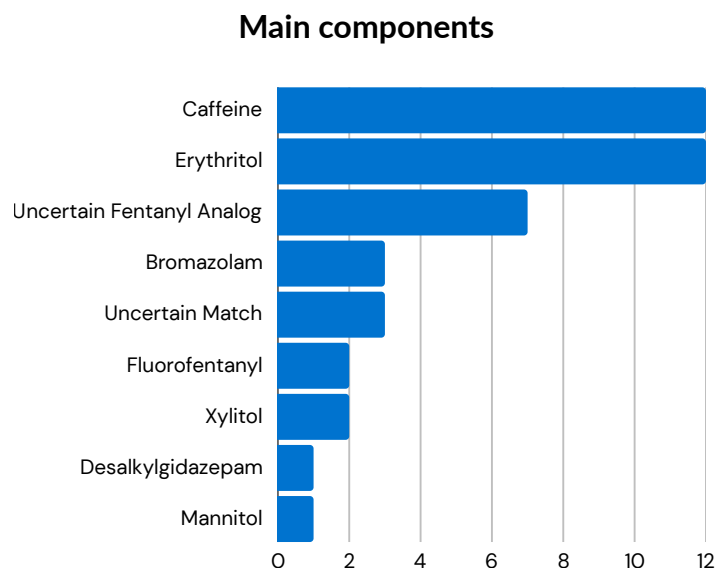
Opioids

Number of opioid samples with expected drug present

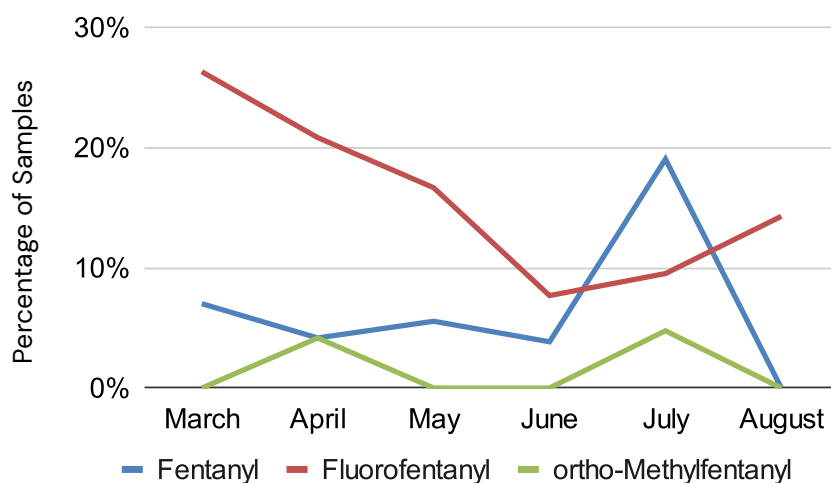
Expected Drug	Present	Not Present	N/A	Total
Fentanyl	2	0	0	2
Down	10	2	0	12
Pharmaceutical	5	4	1	10
Total	17	6	1	24

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.

Components detected in unregulated opioids (N=14)

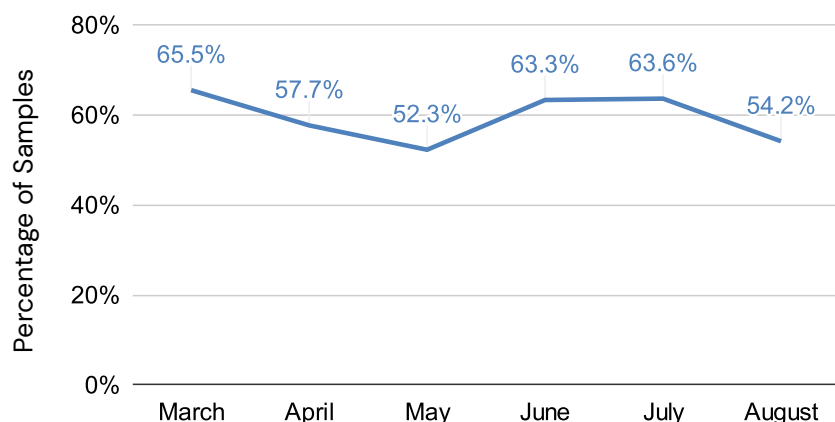


Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



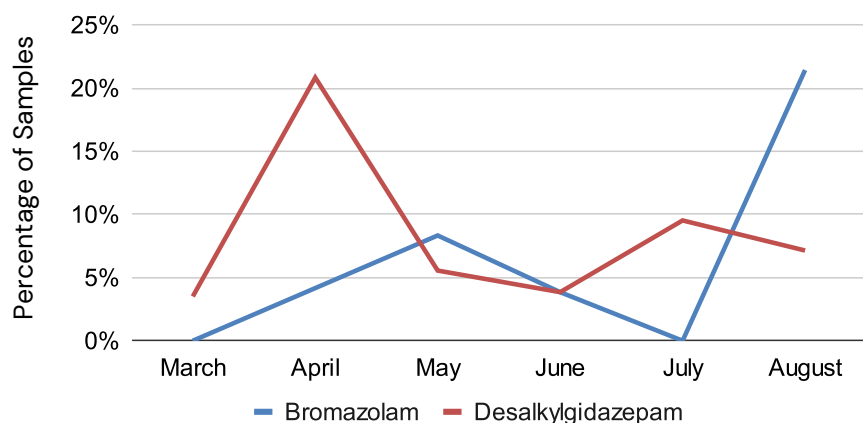
- In August, half of unregulated opioid samples were found to contain an "uncertain fentanyl analog", meaning the specific analog was difficult to determine by FTIR. Of the samples in which an analog could be identified, **14.3% (2 samples)** were found to contain fluorofentanyl.
- We note there has been an uptick in samples containing carfentanyl since the beginning of the year. The true number of samples containing carfentanyl is expected to be higher than what is observed by FTIR, as it is usually contained in concentrations below the detection limit (<5%). Please see the **Secondary Testing** section of this report for more information.

Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines, past 6 months



- During the month of August, **54.2%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines in the Northern Health region (**13 samples of 24 checked**).
- Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer.

Benzodiazepines detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months

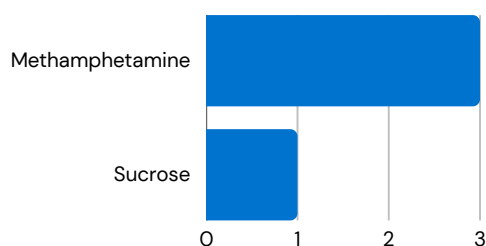


- In August, **28.6%** of unregulated opioid samples (**4 of 14 samples**) contained benzodiazepines in concentrations high enough to be detectable by FTIR (>5%). Of these, bromazolam was most frequently identified (**3 samples**).

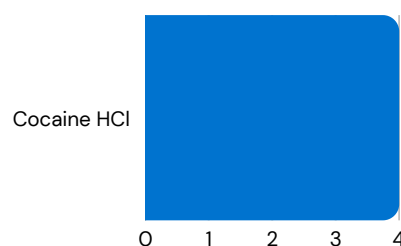
Non-Opioids

Components detected in stimulants

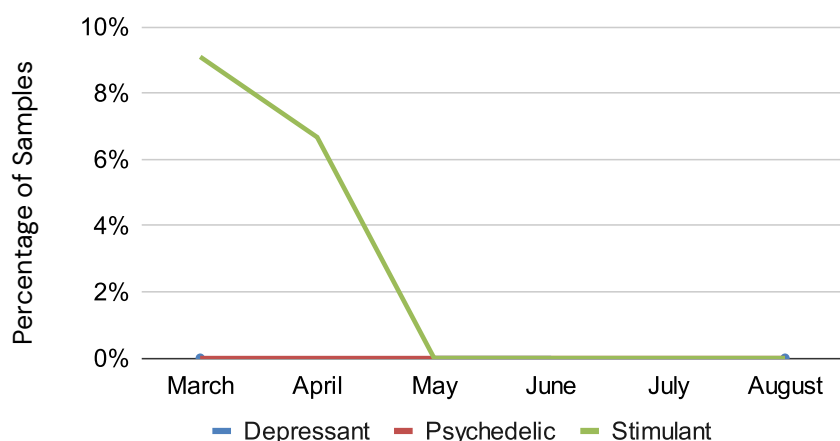
Components in methamphetamine (N=4)



Components in cocaine (N=4)



Fentanyl detected in non-opioids, past 6 months

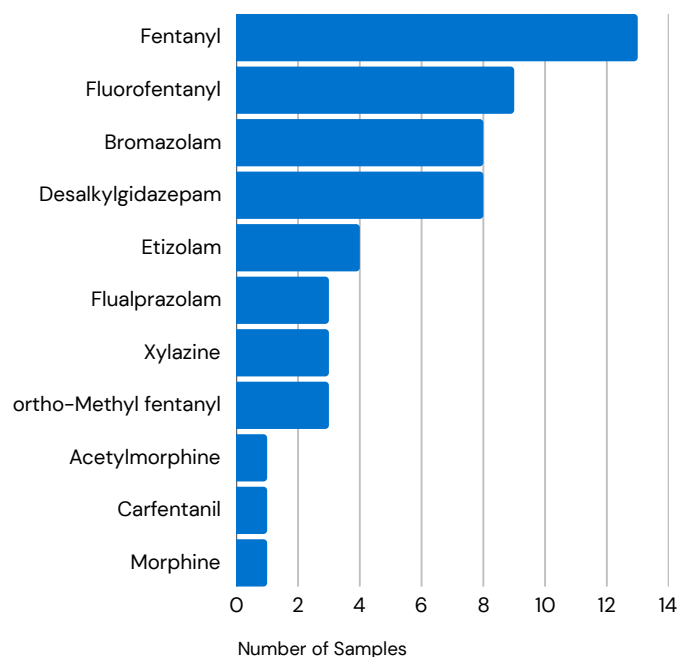


- There were no instances of non-opioid samples testing positive for fentanyl by FTIR and/or test strip in August.

PSMS Secondary Testing Results Summary

A subset of samples were sent for secondary testing provided by Substance at the University of Victoria, using Paper-Spray Mass Spectrometry (PSMS). PSMS is a highly sensitive technology, and can detect components in samples below the detection limit of the FTIR (<5%). Below is a summary of all active components detected in opioid samples sent in confirmatory testing. For more information about Substance please visit their [website](#).

Active components in opioids submitted (N = 15)



Public Health Notifications

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
No alerts for Northern Health this month.					

To subscribe to the provincial drug alert and response system, text the word JOIN to 253787 (ALERTS).

About this data

Data represented in this report is collected from our partner sites across the province using Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) spectrometry in combination with BTNX fentanyl test strips and benzodiazepine test strips when applicable. We note the FTIR spectrometer has a detection limit of approximately 5% concentration (McCrae, 2019).

Depressant includes:
benzodiazepines,
etizolam, GHB, hypnotics

Opioid includes:
"down", heroin, fentanyl
(unregulated opioids), and
pharmaceutical opioids

Polysubstance includes:
cross-category mixtures

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

Stimulant includes:
methamphetamine,
"speed," cocaine and
crack cocaine,
cathinones

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

We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of [our partners](#) to collect this data.

To find drug checking services in your area please visit our [site locator](#).