

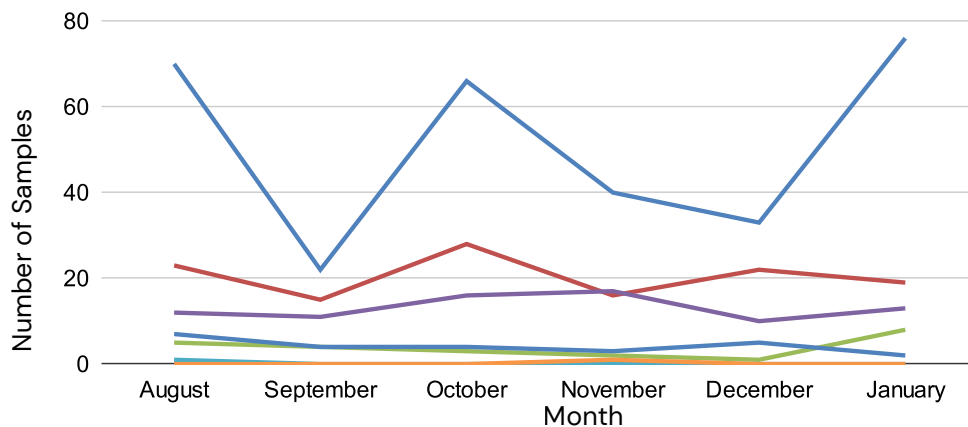


Key findings

We are in the process of including data from Substance (University of Victoria) in this report. In the interim, we provide the number of samples tested at Substance and the BCSCU-partnered CMHA Mid-Island locations to show the total samples tested in the region. The remainder of this report details results only from the CMHA Mid-Island site. For more information on Substance sites, please visit their [website](#).

- In January, a total of **847** drug checks were performed in the Island Health region: **118** by the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street site in Nanaimo, and **729** by Substance (University of Victoria).
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines by FTIR and/or test strip at the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street site decreased to **60.5%**. Of these, desalkylgidazepam was the most common detected by FTIR.
- Novel benzodiazepines continue to be detected in unregulated opioids in BC. In January, ethylflualprazolam was detected by FTIR at the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street site in **one sample**. We note that ethylflualprazolam may not reliably be detected by test strip.
- There has been an increase in medetomidine in the unregulated drug supply, coinciding with an uptick in drug alerts issued in January. Of the total **12 alerts**, **4** were related to medetomidine, including a province-wide alert issued by the BCCDC. Within the Island Health region, **3 alerts** were issued related to increased drug poisoning events.
- Among opioid samples sent for secondary testing in January (**n=19**), carfentanil was detected in **9 samples**, medetomidine in **2 samples**, and xylazine in **1 sample**.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months*



Number of samples by drug category in Jan.

● Opioid	76
● Stimulant	19
● Depressant	8
● Psychedelic	13
● Other	0
● Polysubstance	0
● Unknown	2

Total: 118

*CMHA site data only

Number of drug checks at each site

BCSCU-Partnered Locations	# of Drugs Checked
Albert St. OPS (CMHA Nanaimo)	118
Substance (UVic) Locations	# of Drugs Checked
Substance	373
Outreach	249
Duncan	38
Campbell River	33
Port Alberni	25
Comox Valley	11
Total Island Health Region	847

Number of samples with the expected drug detected*

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Opioid	70	5	1	76
Stimulant	18	1	0	19
Depressant	3	5	0	8
Psychedelic	11	2	0	13
Unknown	0	0	2	2
Total	102	13	3	118

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

*CMHA site data only

Opioids

Number of opioid samples with the expected drug present*

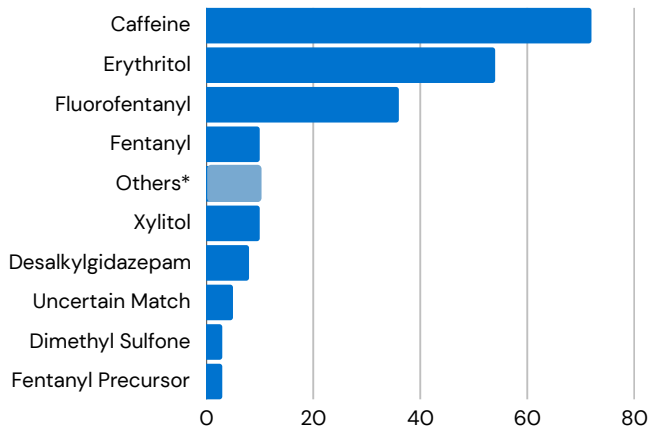
Expected Drug	Present	Not Present	N/A	Total
Fentanyl	1	0	0	1
Heroin	0	3	0	3
Down	69	2	0	71
Pharmaceutical	0	0	1	1
Total	70	5	1	76

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.

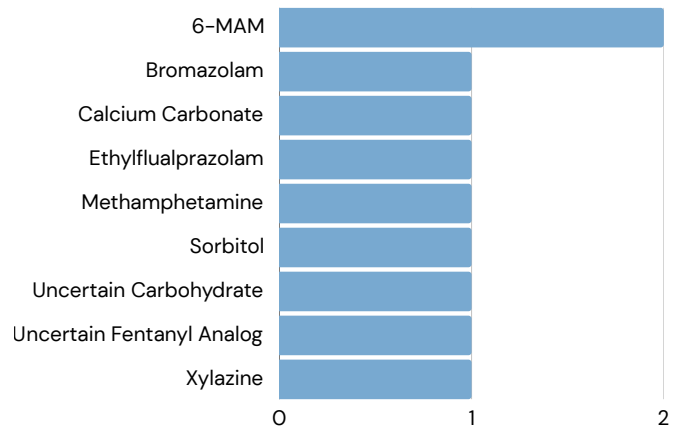
*CMHA site data only

Components detected in unregulated opioids (N=75)*

Main components

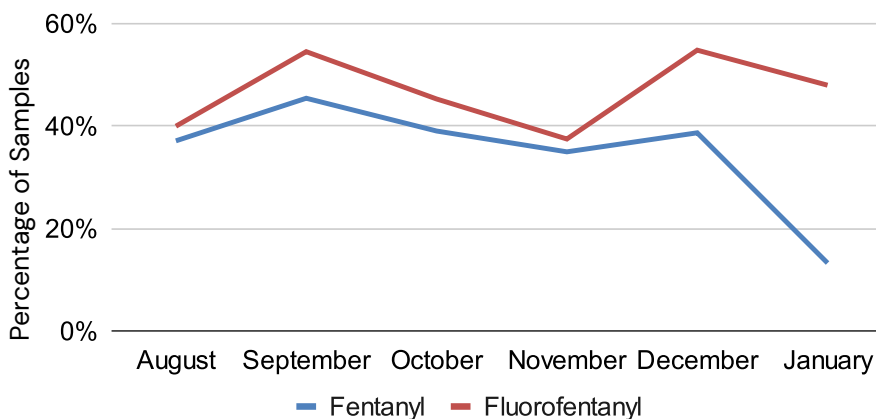


Other components*



*CMHA site data only

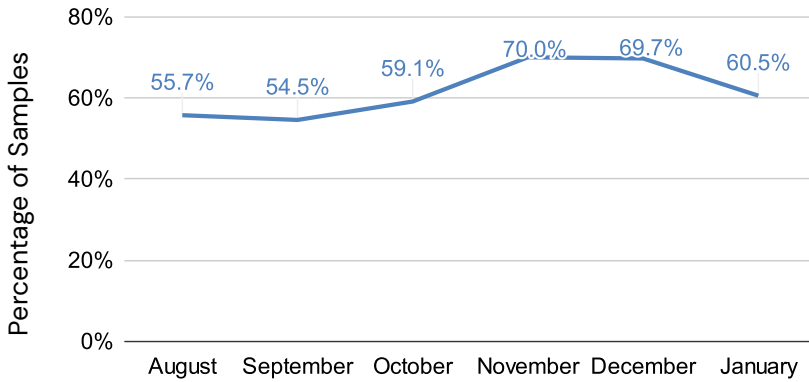
Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months*



- In January, fluorofentanyl detection by FTIR decreased to **48.0%** of unregulated opioids (**36 of 75 samples**), while fentanyl detection by FTIR decreased to **13.3%** (**10 samples**).
- We note that 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.

*CMHA site data only

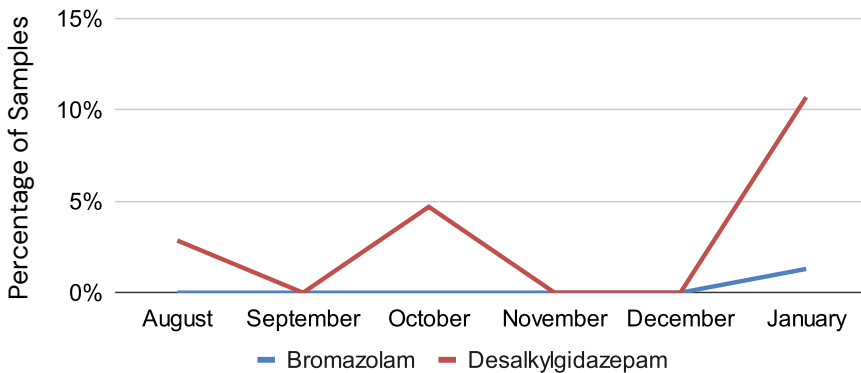
Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines, past 6 months*



*CMHA site data only

- In January, **60.5%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines at the CMHA Nanaimo Albert St. OPS (**46 samples of 76 checked**).
- Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. The true number may be higher, as some benzodiazepines may be missed by test strip.

Types of benzodiazepines detected by FTIR, past 6 months*



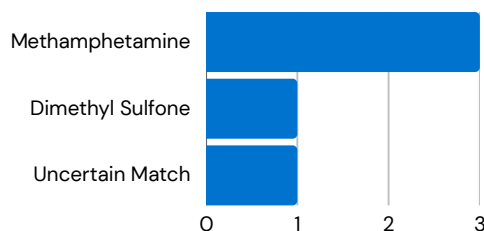
*CMHA site data only

- In January, **13.3%** of unregulated opioids (**10 of 31 samples**) contained benzodiazepines in concentrations high enough to be detectable by FTIR (>5%).
- Desalkylgidazepam remained the most common, with detection increasing to **10.7%** of unregulated opioids tested (**8 samples**).
- We are continuing to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines. In January, this included ethylflualprazolam (**1 sample**). We note that ethylflualprazolam may not reliably be detected by test strip.

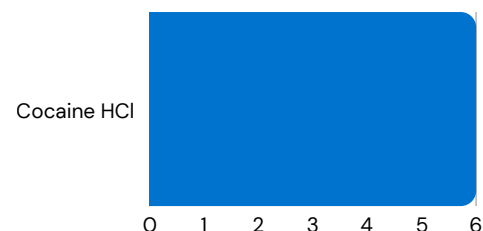
Non-Opioids

Components detected in stimulants*

Components in methamphetamine (N=3)

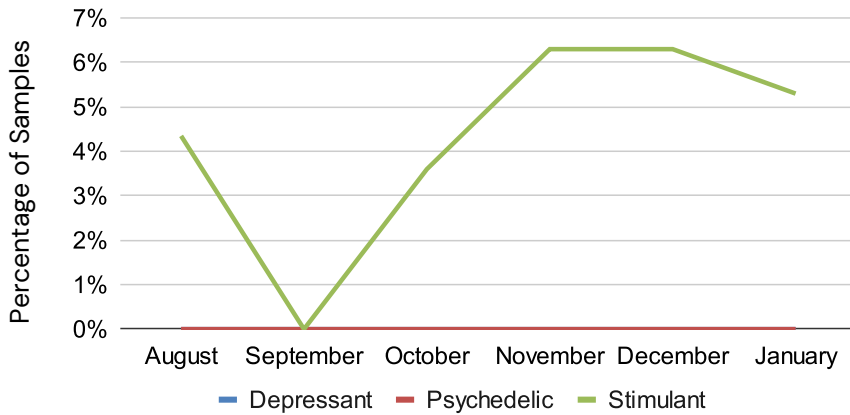


Components in cocaine (N=6)



*CMHA site data only

Fentanyl detected in non-opioids, past 6 months*



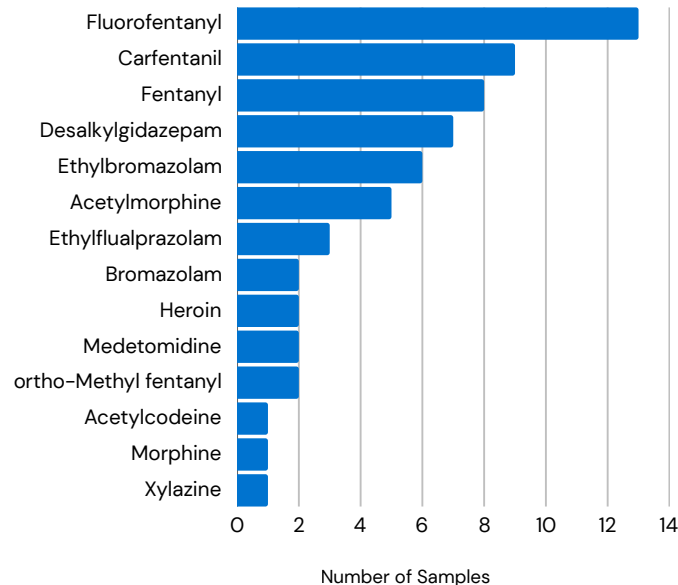
- In January, 1 stimulant sample (crack cocaine) tested positive for fentanyl by FTIR/test strip.

*CMHA site data only

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=19)



Public Health Notifications

There has been an increase in medetomidine in the unregulated drug supply, coinciding with an uptick in alerts issued in January. Out of the total 12 alerts, 4 were related to medetomidine, including a province-wide alert issued by the BCCDC. Within the Island Health region, 3 alerts were issued related to increased drug poisoning events.

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
<p>In January, there were no alerts issued within the Island Health region pertaining to samples submitted for drug checking.</p>					

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](#).