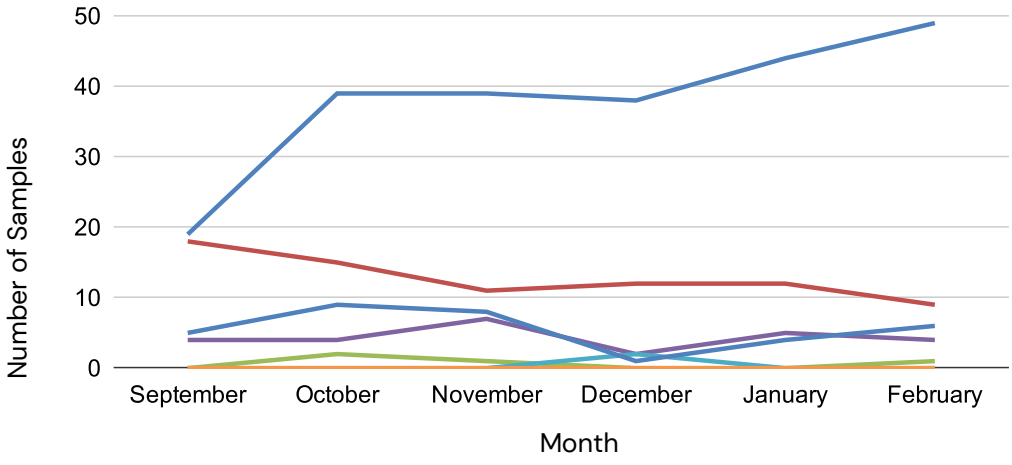
Drug Checking in Northern Health

February 2026

Key findings

- In February, **69** drug checks were performed by services offering FTIR drug checking in the Northern Health region (**5 access points**).
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines by FTIR and/or test strip decreased to **38.8%**.
- We continue to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines in unregulated opioids. In February, ethylbromazolam was detected by FTIR.
- There has been an increase in medetomidine in the unregulated drug supply. Among opioid samples sent for secondary testing in February (**n=26**), medetomidine was detected in **6 samples**. Additionally, carfentanil and xylazine were detected in **1 sample** each.
- Note that trends may be difficult to infer due to the smaller number of samples tested over a large geographic region.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



Number of samples by drug category in Feb.

Opioid	49
Stimulant	9
Depressant	1
Psychedelic	4
Other	0
Polysubstance	0
Unknown	6
Total:	**69**

Number of drug checks at each site

Location	# of Drugs Checked
POUNDS (Prince George)	52
Terrace ICMT (Terrace)	15
Total	**69**

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

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Number of samples with the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Opioid	39	6	4	49
Stimulant	9	0	0	9
Depressant	1	0	0	1
Psychedelic	4	0	0	4
Unknown	0	0	6	6
Total	**53**	**6**	**10**	**69**

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 the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Fentanyl	1	0	0	1
Down	31	2	0	33
Pharmaceutical	3	4	4	11
Opium	4	0	0	4
Total	**39**	**6**	**4**	**49**

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.

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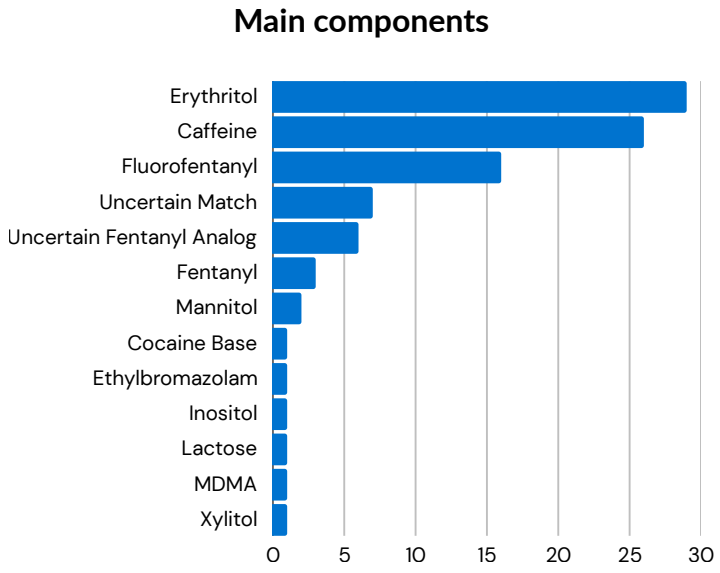
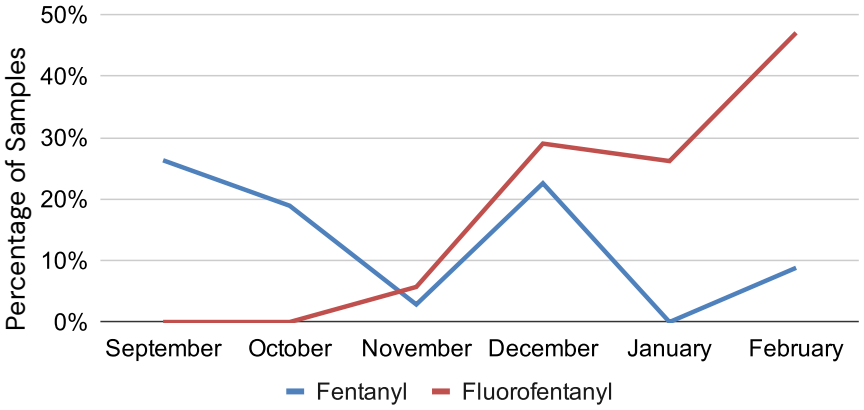
Components detected in unregulated opioids (N=34)



Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



- In February, fluorofentanyl remained the most common opioid detected by FTIR, increasing to **47.0%** of unregulated opioids checked (**16 of 34 samples**). Fentanyl detection also increased, identified in 8.8% (**3 samples**).
- Carfentanil was not detected in the Northern Health region by FTIR this month, but continues to be found in samples sent for secondary testing. Please see the Secondary Testing section of this report for more information.

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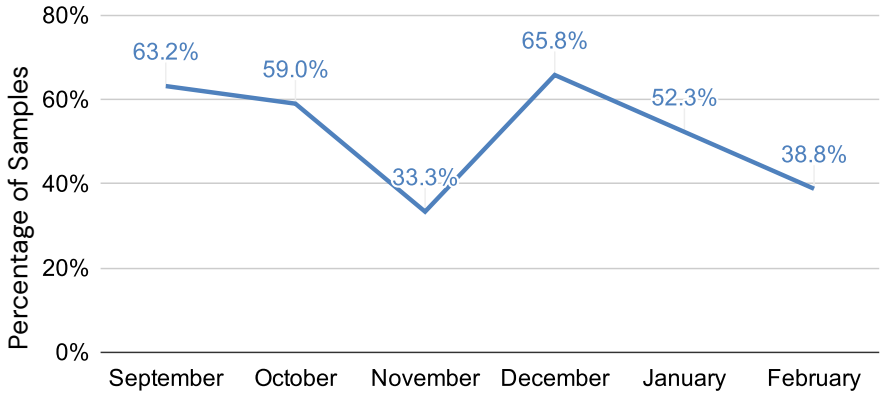
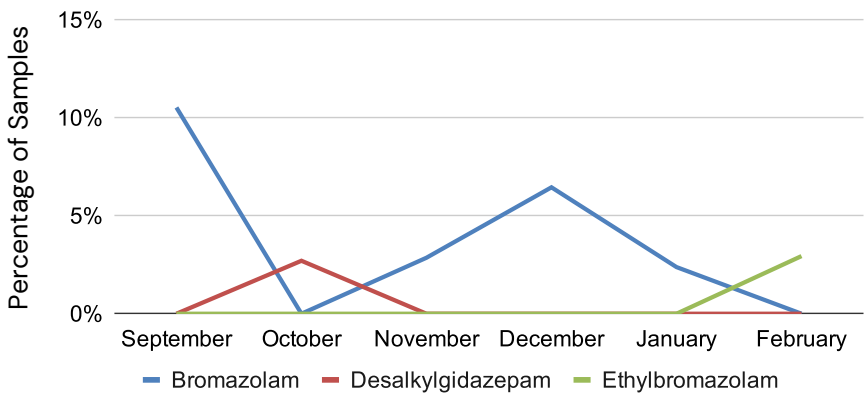
Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines, past 6 months



- During the month of February, **38.8%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines in the Northern Health region (**19 samples of 49 checked**).
- Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. The true prevalence may be higher, as some benzodiazepines (e.g., etizolam, ethylflualprazolam) may be missed by test strip.

Types of benzodiazepines detected by FTIR, past 6 months

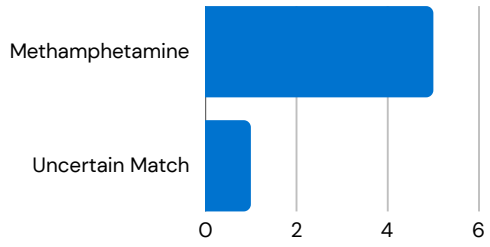


- In February, **2.9%** of unregulated opioids (1 of **34 samples**) contained ethylbromazolam, a novel benzodiazepine at a concentration detectable by FTIR (>5%).

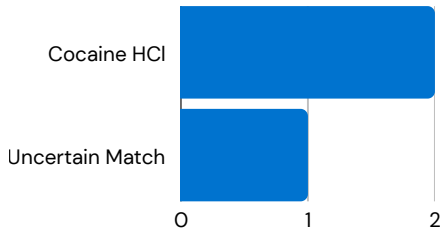
Non-Opioids

Components detected in stimulants

Components in methamphetamine (N=5)



Components in cocaine (N=2)



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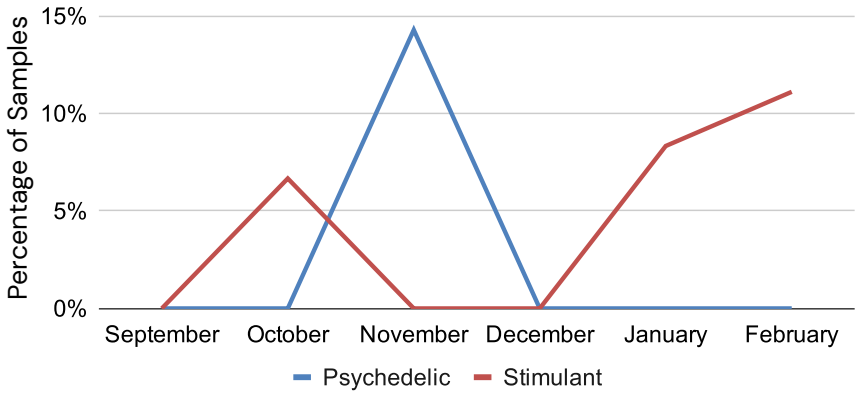
Fentanyl detected in non-opioids, past 6 months

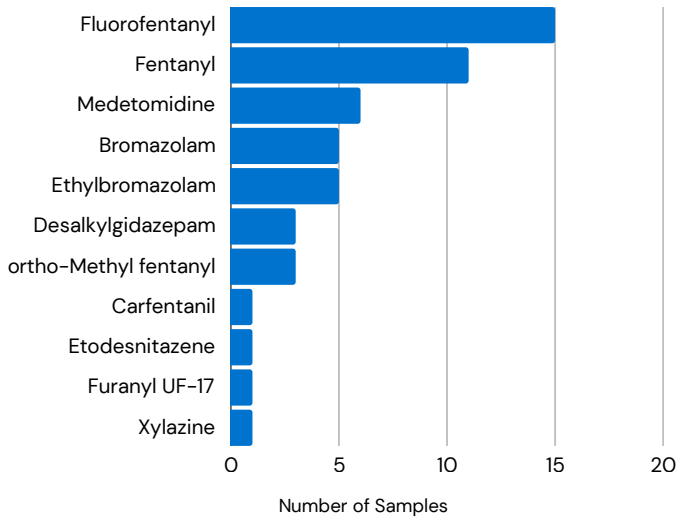


- In February, **1 stimulant sample** (crack cocaine) tested positive for fentanyl by FTIR and/or test strip. This sample was expected to be cross-contaminated by the service user, noting it had been stored with opioids prior to submitting the samples for drug checking.

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 = 26)



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Public Health Notifications

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
February 26, 2026 Prince George	Down	Para-fluorofentanyl	Positive	Negative	Northern Health and First Nations Health have issued a drug alert for the community of Prince George. A green substance sold as "down" has been linked to sudden overdoses with prolonged sedation. Initial test results show high concentrations of para-fluorofentanyl (twice as strong as fentanyl).

All spectrometry results are determined by FTIR, with the exception of the following:
*Results provided by secondary testing partner Substance using Paper Spray Mass Spectrometry

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.

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.