

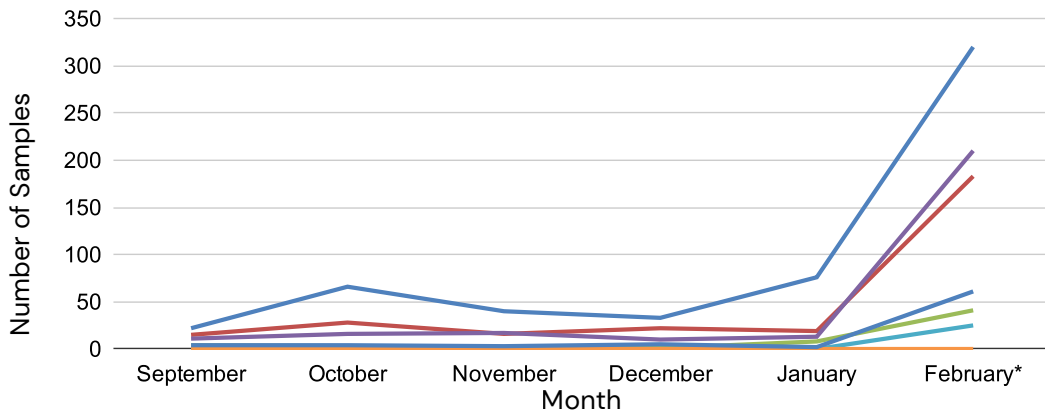


Key findings

In this month's report, we have integrated data from the BCCSU-partnered CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site and from Substance (University of Victoria). Integration of these data may affect the trends in data included below from previous months. For more information on Substance, please visit their [website](#).

- In February, a total of **840** drug checks were performed in the Island Health region: **77** by the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street site in Nanaimo, and **763** by Substance.
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines by FTIR and/or test strip was **39.4%**. Of these, bromazolam was most common.
- We continue to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines in unregulated opioids. In February this included phenazolam (clobromazolam), ethylbromazolam, ethylflualprazolam, 3-HO-desalkylgidazepam, and a novel benzodiazepine that could not be qualified.
- There has been an increase in medetomidine in the unregulated drug supply in BC. Of the opioid samples tested at Substance in February, **6.9%** were determined to contain medetomidine by PSMS.
- There were no instances of medetomidine, carfentanil, or xylazine detected among opioid samples sent from the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street for secondary testing. We note, however, that only **3 samples** were submitted this month.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



Number of samples by drug category in Feb. *	
● Opioid	320
● Stimulant	183
● Depressant	41
● Psychedelic	210
● Other	25
● Polysubstance	0
● Unknown	61
Total:	840

*February combines results from the CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site, as well as Substance sites. Previous months only include samples tested at the Albert St. site.

Number of drug checks at each site

BCCSU-Partnered Locations	# of Drugs Checked
CMHA Mid-Island Albert St.	77
Substance (UVic) Locations	# of Drugs Checked
Outreach	366
Substance	311
Comox Valley	25
Duncan	22
Campbell River	20
Port Alberni	19
Total	763

Number of samples with the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Opioid	222	81	17	320
Stimulant	165	14	4	183
Depressant	26	14	1	41
Psychedelic	195	11	4	210
Other	15	4	6	25
Unknown	0	0	61	61
Total	623	124	93	840

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

Opioids

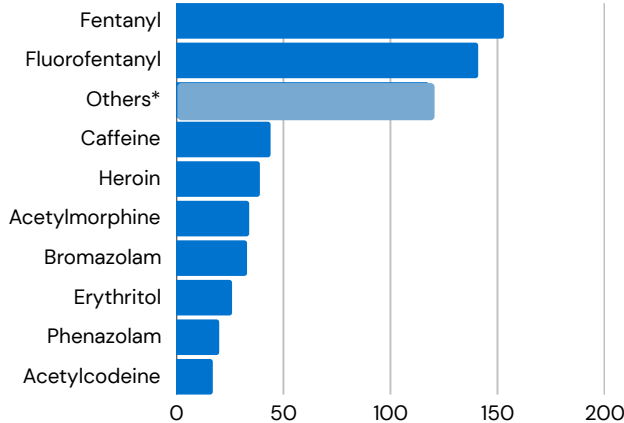
Number of opioid samples with the expected drug present

Expected Drug	Present	Not Present	N/A	Total
Other Opioid	27	3	9	39
Down	195	77	4	276
Pharmaceutical	0	1	4	5
Total	222	81	17	320

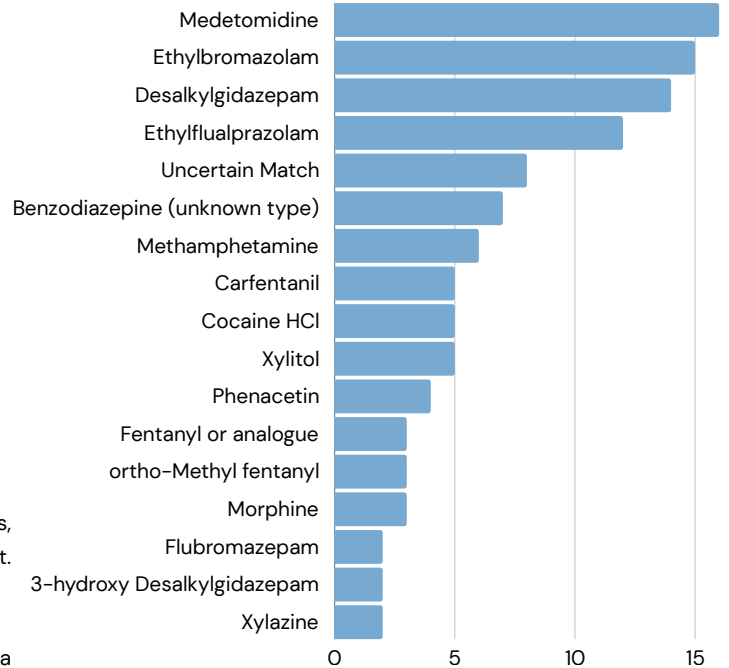
Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents.
 'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount.

Components detected in unregulated opioids (N=276)

Main components



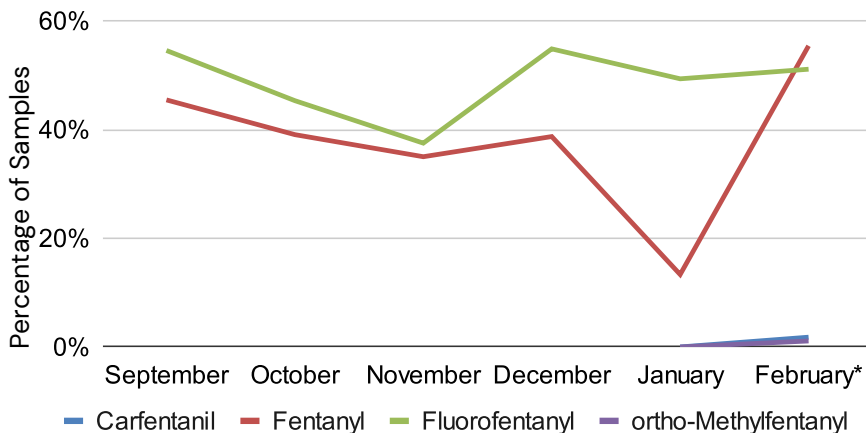
Other components*



Please note that components are detected with different technologies, which have been combined in these charts. The CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site uses FTIR, and Substance uses PSMS, which is more sensitive.

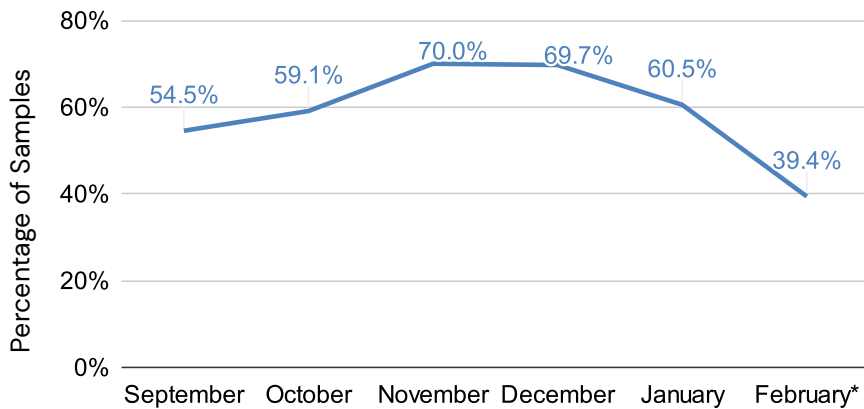
Components detected a single time have been omitted. Substance data can be found on their website, and all CMHA Albert St. site sample data can be found on our dashboard.

Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



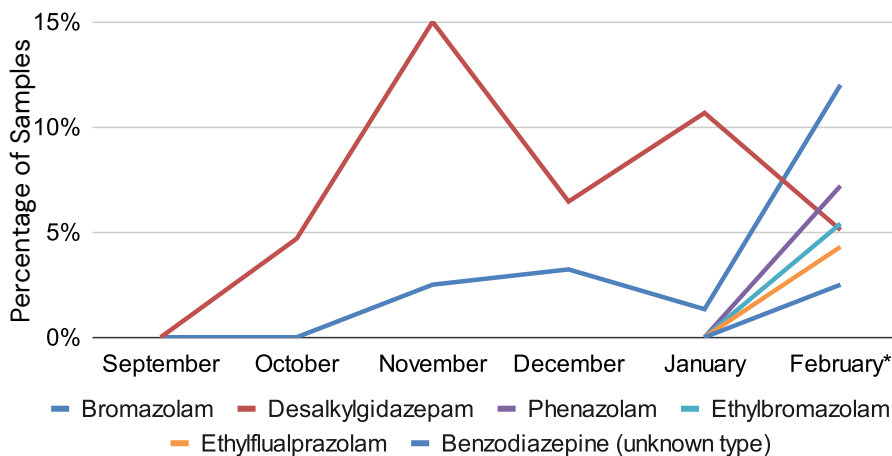
- *February combines results from the CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site, as well as Substance sites. Previous months only include samples tested at the Albert St. site. As a result, there are changes in the trend of fentanyl and analogue detection.
- In February, fentanyl was the most common opioid detected by FTIR/PSMS, found in **55.4%** of unregulated opioids checked (**153 of 276 samples**). Fluorofentanyl was identified in **51.1%** (**141 samples**).
- Carfentanil was detected in **1.8%** of unregulated opioids tested (**5 samples**), all by PSMS. The true number is expected to be higher as carfentanil can be missed by FTIR at the Albert St. site if present 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



- *February combines results from the CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site, as well as Substance sites. Previous months only include samples tested at the Albert St. site.
- In February, **39.4%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines in the Island Health region (**126 samples of 320 checked**).
- Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips, as well as FTIR spectrometer, and/or PSMS. The true prevalence may be higher, as some benzodiazepines (e.g., etizolam, ethylflualprazolam) may be missed by test strip.

Types of benzodiazepines detected, past 6 months

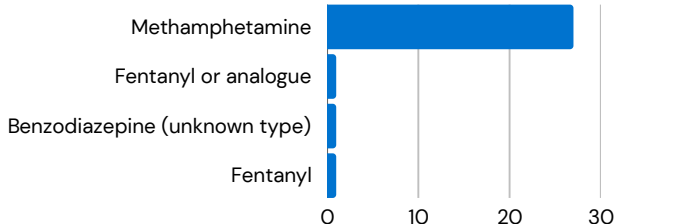


- *February combines results from the CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site, as well as Substance sites. Previous months only include samples tested at the Albert St. site.
- In February, bromazolam was the most common benzodiazepine identified, found in **12.0%** of unregulated opioids checked (**33 samples**), followed by phenazolam, detected in **7.2%** (**20 samples**).
- We are continuing to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines. Alongside phenazolam, in February this included ethylbromazolam (**15 samples**), ethylflualprazolam (**12 samples**), a novel benzodiazepine that could not be qualified (**7 samples**), and 3-HO-desalkylgidazepam (**2 samples**).

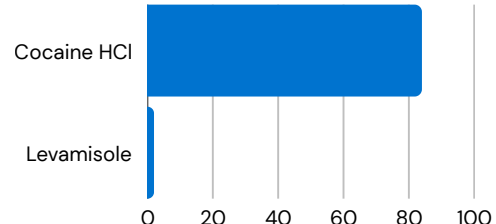
Non-Opioids

Components detected in stimulants

Components in methamphetamine (N=28)



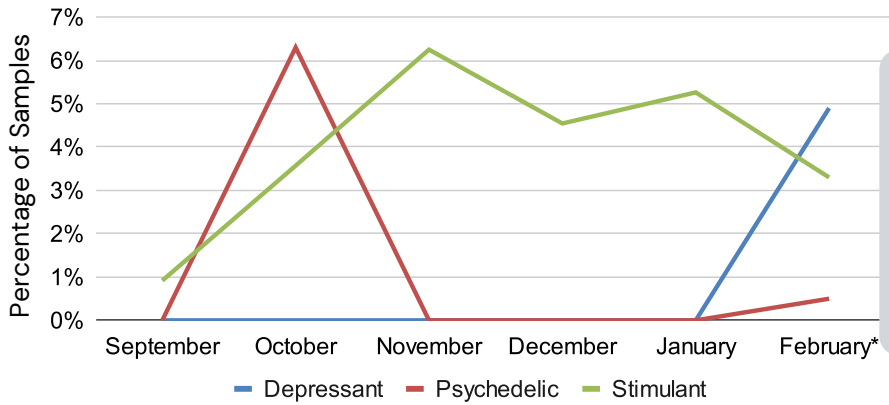
Components in cocaine (N=84)



Please note that components are detected with different technologies, which have been combined in these charts. The CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site uses FTIR, and Substance uses PSMS, which is more sensitive.

Components detected a single time have been omitted. Substance data can be found on their website, and all CMHA Albert St. site sample data can be found on our dashboard.

Fentanyl detected in non-opioids, past 6 months

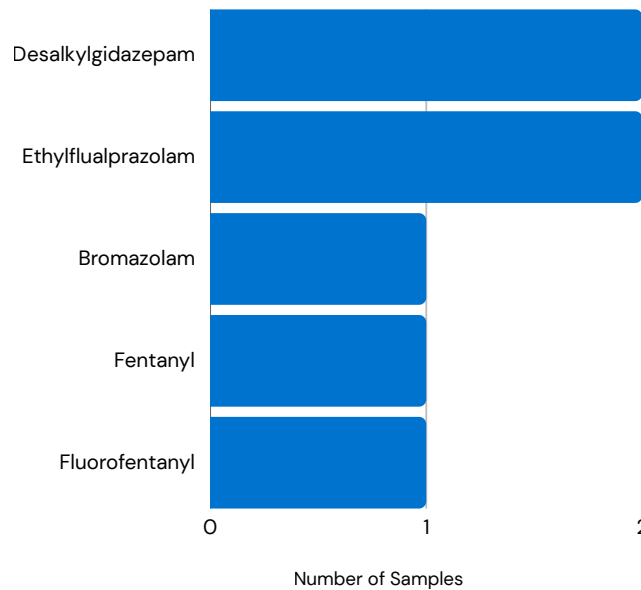


- *February combines results from the CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site, as well as Substance sites. Previous months only include samples tested at the Albert St. site.
- In February, **9 non-opioids samples** (6 stimulants, 2 depressants, 1 psychedelic) tested positive for fentanyl by test strip and/or FTIR/PSMS.

PSMS Secondary Testing Results Summary

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

Active components in opioids submitted (N=3)



Public Health Notifications

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
<p>In February, 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 partnered CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site and Substance at the University of Victoria. Both services utilize Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) spectrometry in combination with BTNX fentanyl test strips, and benzodiazepine test strips when applicable. In addition, Substance utilizes Paper Spray Mass Spectrometry, which is highly sensitive, and can detect components in concentrations in below the FTIR detection limit. We note the FTIR spectrometer has a detection limit of approximately 5% concentration (McCrae, 2019). For more information on Substance, please visit their [website](#).

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.
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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](#).