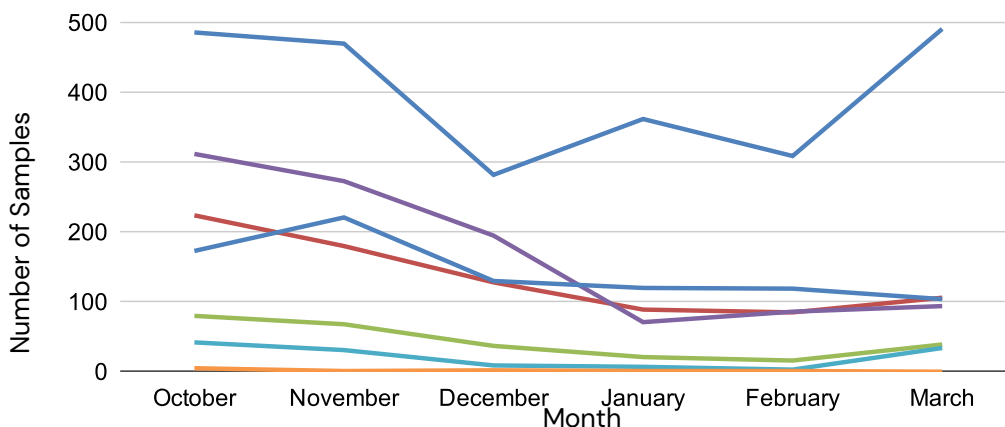




Key findings

- In March, **868** drug checks were performed by services offering FTIR drug checking in the Vancouver Coastal Health region (**6 access points**).
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines by FTIR and/or test strip increased to **28.7%**. Of these, desalkylgizapam was the most common detected by FTIR.
- We continue to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines in unregulated opioids. In March, ethylbromazolam and clobromazolam were detected by FTIR, and others were detected via secondary testing.
- Drug checking services in the VCH region are now using medetomidine test strips in response to the increase of medetomidine in the unregulated drug supply. Among opioid samples tested in March, **23.1%** were positive for medetomidine.
- Among opioids sent for **secondary testing** in March (n=7), medetomidine was detected in **5 samples**, and carfentanil in **1 sample**.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



● Opioid	491
● Stimulant	106
● Depressant	39
● Psychedelic	94
● Other	34
● Polysubstance	0
● Unknown	104
Total:	868

Number of drug checks at each site

Location	# of Drugs Checked
Insite (Vancouver)	834
Vancouver Coastal Health (Powell River)	14
Whistler Community Service Society (Squamish)	16
Total	868

Less than 5 samples were tested at the following locations, which have been included in the total: WCSS (Whistler).

Number of samples with the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Opioid	461	23	7	491
Stimulant	103	3	0	106
Depressant	35	4	0	39
Psychedelic	89	4	1	94
Other	20	6	8	34
Polysubstance	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	104	104
Total	708	40	120	868

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

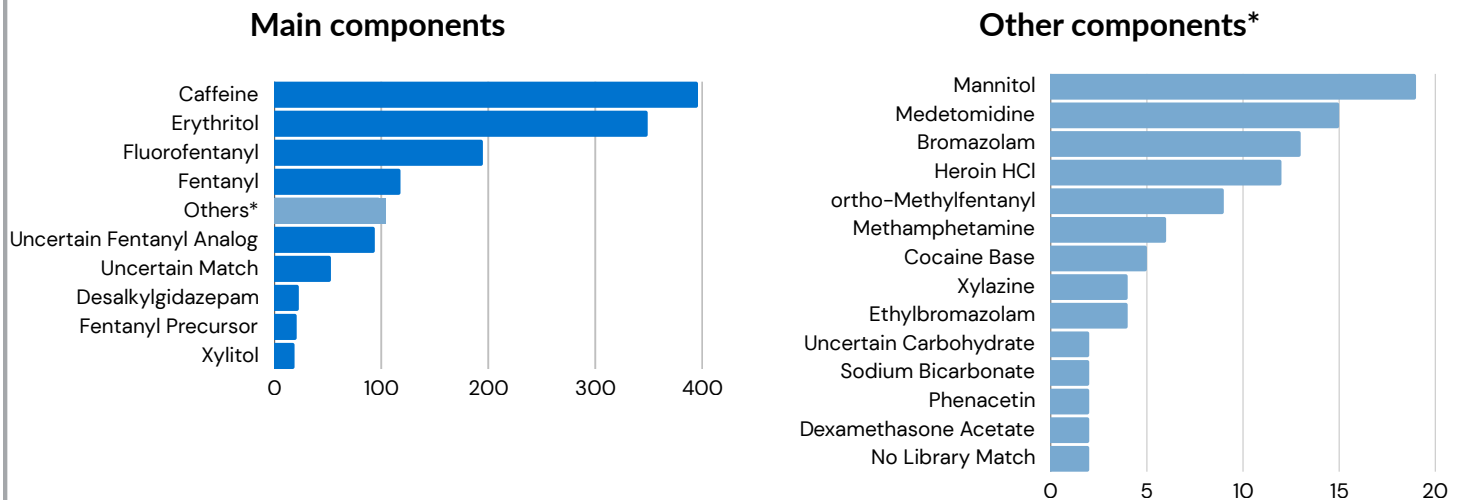
Opioids

Number of opioid samples with the expected drug present

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Fentanyl	14	1	0	15
Heroin	8	0	0	8
Down	421	13	0	434
Pharmaceutical	16	8	7	31
Opium	2	1	0	3
Total	461	23	7	491

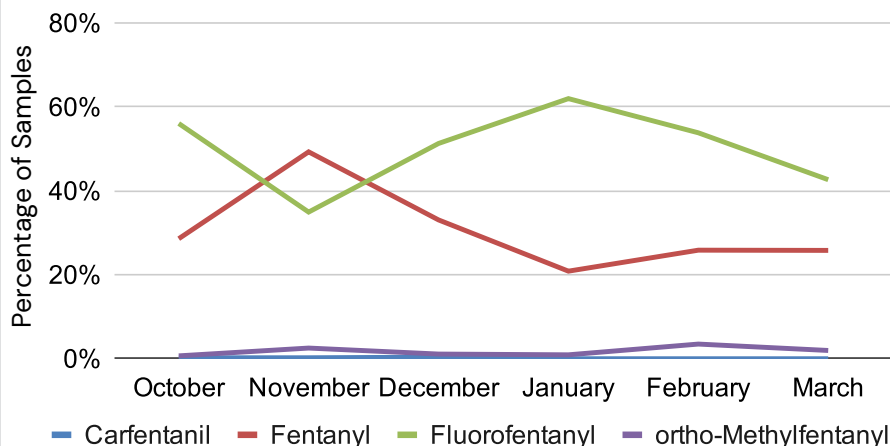
Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents.
'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount.

Components detected in unregulated opioids (N=457)



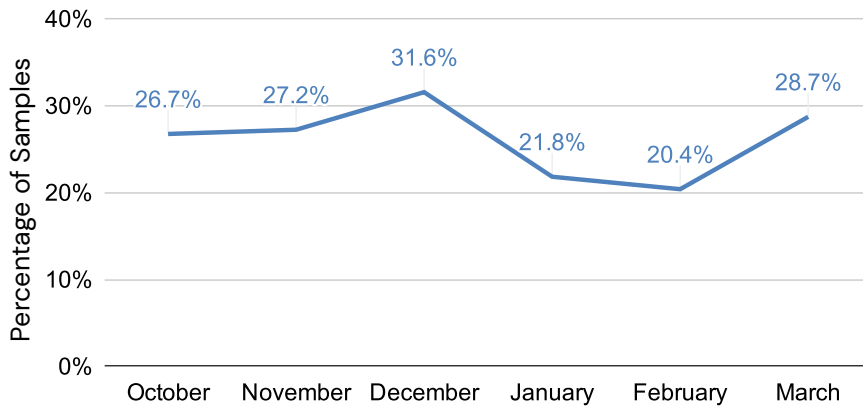
Additional components detected a single time have been omitted from these charts. All sample data can be found on the [BCCSU Drug Sense dashboard](#).

Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



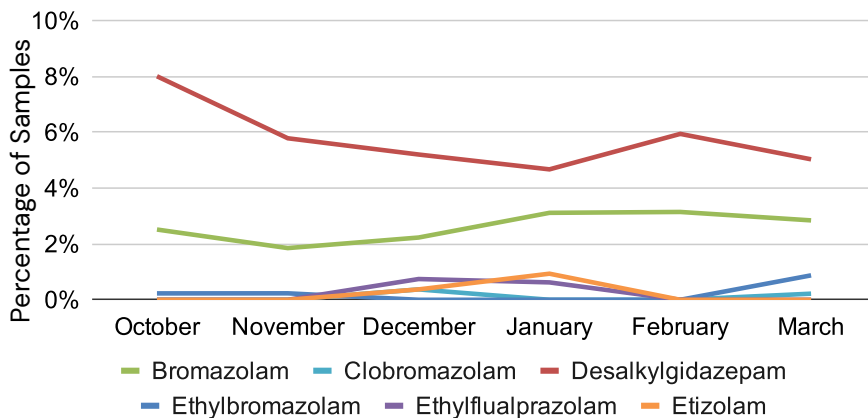
- In March, fluorofentanyl remained the most common opioid detected, though detection by FTIR decreased to **53.8%** of unregulated opioids checked (**195 of 457 samples**). Meanwhile, fentanyl detection remained consistent with the previous month, identified in **25.8%** of opioids checked (**118 samples**).
- Carfentanil was not detected in the Vancouver Coastal region by FTIR this month. The true number is expected to be higher, as it is usually present in concentrations below the FTIR 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 March, **28.7%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines in the Vancouver Coastal Health region (**141 samples of 491 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 March, **9.0%** of unregulated opioids (**41 of 457 samples**) contained benzodiazepines in concentrations detectable by FTIR (>5%).
- Desalkylgidazepam remained the most common benzodiazepine detection, though detection decreased to **5.0%** of unregulated opioids checked (**23 samples**).
- We are continuing to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines. In March, this included ethylbromazolam (**4 samples**), and clobromazolam (**1 sample**).

Percentage of opioids testing positive for medetomidine, past 6 months

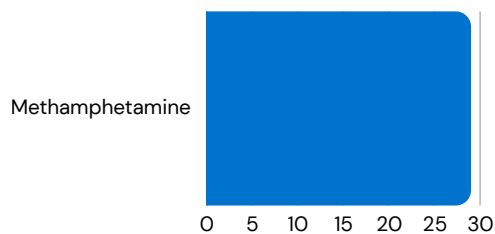


- Among opioid samples tested with medetomidine test strips in March, **23.1%** were positive for medetomidine (**42 of 183 samples**).
- There has been an increase in medetomidine in the unregulated drug supply. In the Vancouver Coastal Health region, medetomidine test strips are now being used at drug checking sites, as medetomidine is typically present in concentrations below the detection limit of the FTIR (<5%).

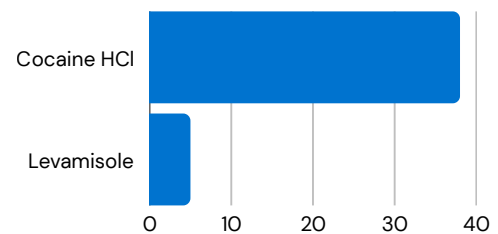
Non-Opioids

Components detected in stimulants

Components in methamphetamine (N=30)

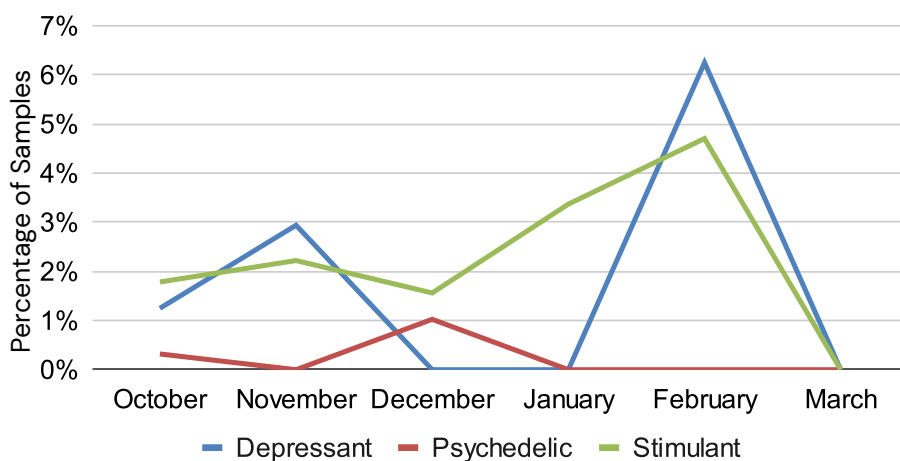


Components in cocaine (N=39)



Additional components detected a single time have been omitted from these charts. All sample data can be found on the [BCCSU Drug Sense dashboard](#).

Fentanyl detected in non-opioids, past 6 months

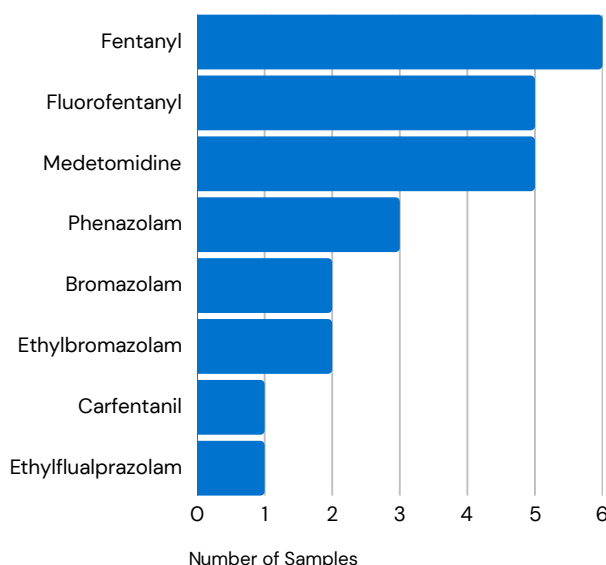


- In March, fentanyl was not detected in any non-opioid samples.

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 = 7)



Public Health Notifications

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
March 27, 2026 Vancouver	Down	Caffeine, Fentanyl, and Erythritol	Positive	Negative	Light purple chunk sold as down in the DTES of Vancouver tested positive for fentanyl and medetomidine, a non-opioid tranquilizer. Substance caused overdose.
March 27, 2026 Vancouver	Down	Medetomidine, Uncertain Match	Positive	Negative	White powder and light pink powder sold as down in South Vancouver tested positive for fentanyl and medetomidine, a non-opioid tranquilizer.

Public Health Notifications Cont'd.

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
March 31, 2026 Vancouver	Down	Fentanyl, Fluorofentanyl, Medetomidine, Benzodiazepines*	N/A	N/A	Multiple samples (red or green chunks, beige granules) sold as down in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver tested positive for fentanyl and/or fluorofentanyl and medetomidine, a non-opioid tranquilizer. Beige granules also tested positive for multiple benzos. May cause low heart rate and prolonged sedation.

All spectrometry results are determined by FTIR, with the exception of the following:
 * Results provided by complementary 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.
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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](#).