

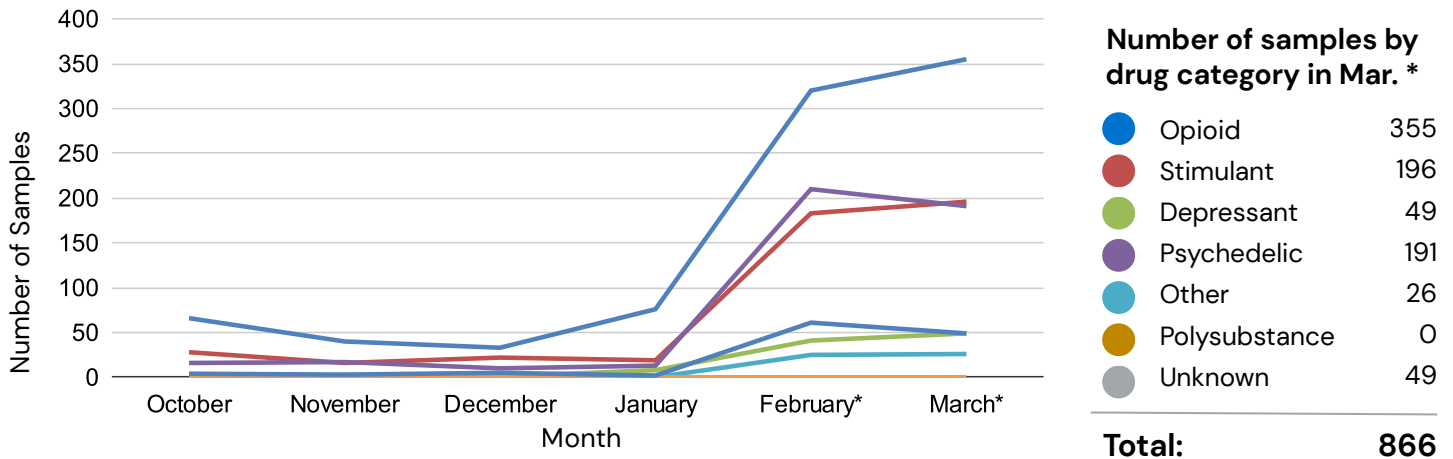


Key findings

As of February, we have integrated data from the BCCSU-partnered CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site and from Substance (University of Victoria). For more information on Substance, please visit their [website](#).

- In March, a total of **866** drug checks were performed in the Island Health region: **68** by the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street site in Nanaimo, and **798** by Substance.
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines by test strip, FTIR, and/or PSMS was **34.5%**. Of these, bromazolam was most common.
- We continue to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines in unregulated opioids. In March this included ethylbromazolam, phenazolam (clobromazolam), 3-HO-desalkylgizepam, and an unknown benzodiazepine.
- There has been an increase in medetomidine in the unregulated drug supply in BC. Of the unregulated opioids tested at Substance in March, **16.0%** were determined to contain medetomidine by PSMS.
- Among opioids sent for secondary testing in March from the CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site (n=20), carfentanil was detected in **6 samples**, xylazine in **6 samples**, and medetomidine in **3 samples**.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



*February and March 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.	68
Substance (UVic) Locations	# of Drugs Checked
Substance	366
Outreach	336
Campbell River	31
Comox Valley	22
Port Alberni	20
Port Hardy	13
Total	866

Number of samples with the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Opioid	241	102	12	355
Stimulant	176	12	8	196
Depressant	19	26	4	49
Psychedelic	174	13	4	191
Other	12	5	9	26
Unknown	0	0	49	49
Total	622	158	86	866

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

Opioids

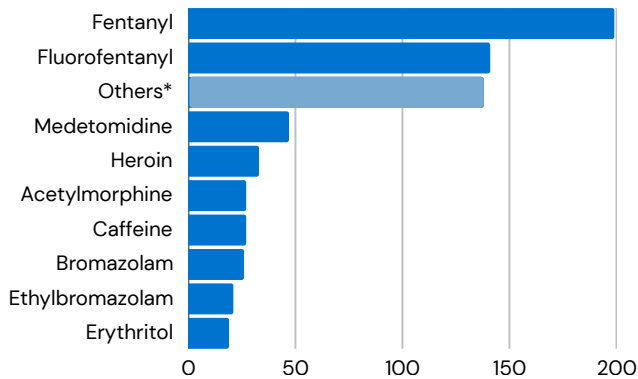
Number of opioid samples with the expected drug present

Expected Drug	Present	Not Present	N/A	Total
Other Opioid	12	15	5	32
Down	229	87	6	322
Pharmaceutical	0	0	1	1
Total	241	102	12	355

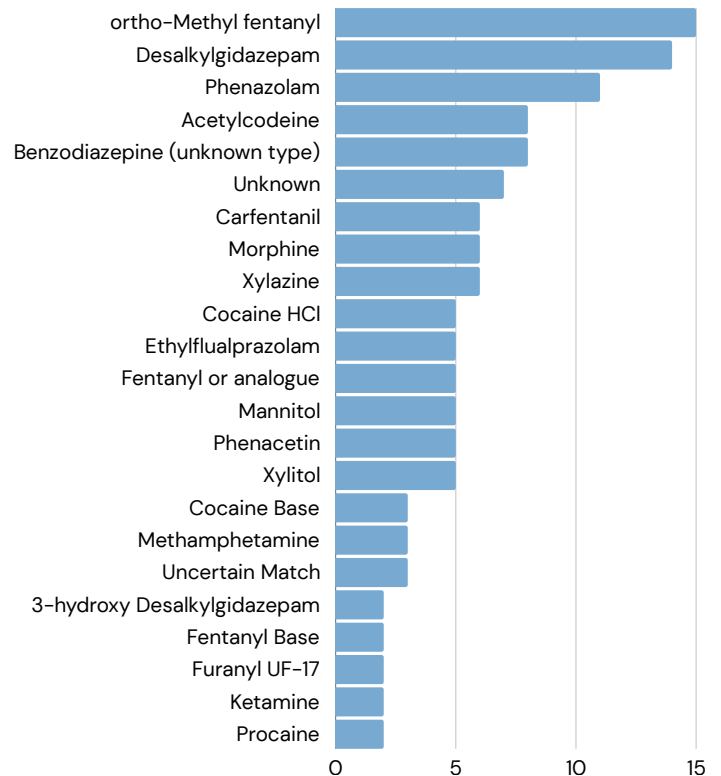
Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents.
 'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount.

Components detected in unregulated opioids (N=276)

Main components



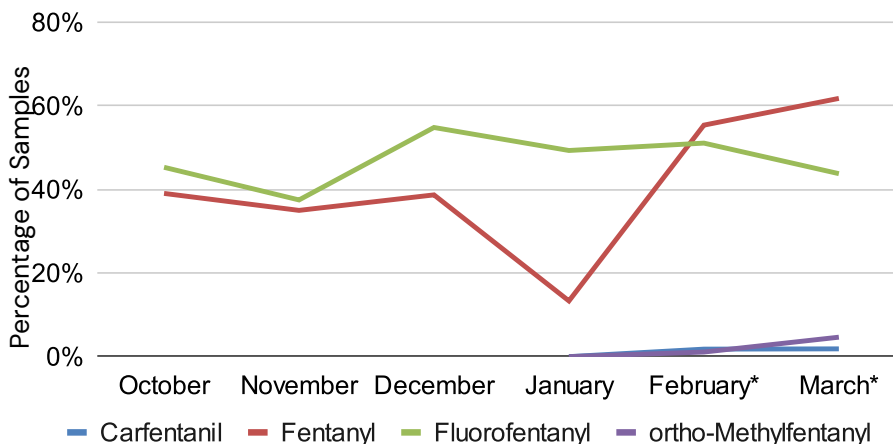
Other components*



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.

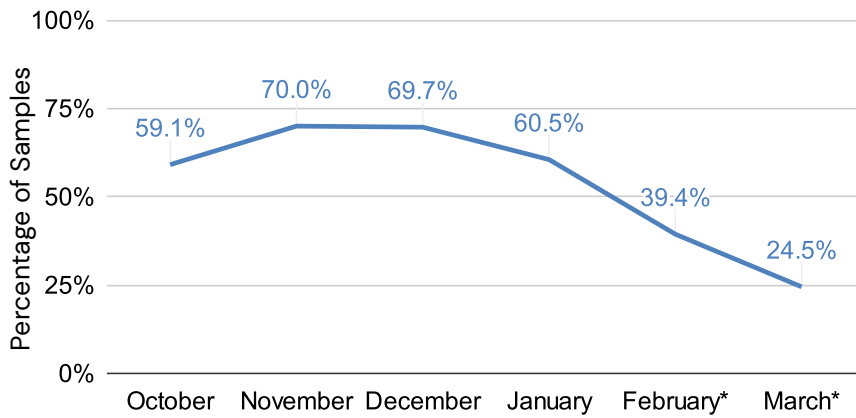
Components detected a single time have been omitted. Substance data can be found on their website, and all CMHA Albert St. site sample data can be found on our dashboard.

Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



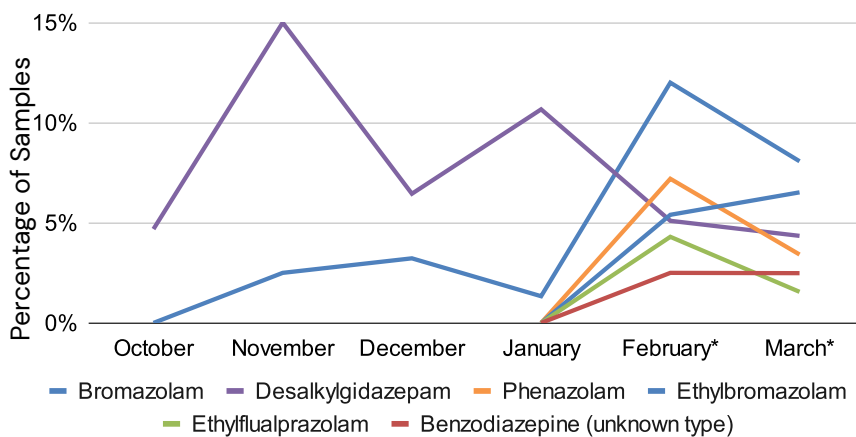
- In March, fentanyl was the most common opioid detected by FTIR/PSMS, found in **61.8%** of unregulated opioids checked (**199 of 322 samples**). Fluorofentanyl was identified in **43.8%** (**141 samples**).
- Carfentanil was detected in **1.9%** of opioids tested (**6 samples**) by PSMS. The true number 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%). See the Secondary Testing section of this report for more information.
- *February and March results combine samples tested at the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street and Substance sites. Previous months include only samples tested at the Albert Street site.

Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines, past 6 months



- In March, **24.5%** of expected opioid samples tested positive for benzodiazepines (**87 samples of 355 checked**).
- Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepines using BTNX test strips, FTIR spectrometer, and/or PSMS. The true prevalence may be higher, as some benzodiazepines (e.g., etizolam, ethylflualprazolam) may be missed by test strip.
- *February and March results combine samples tested at the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street and Substance sites. Previous months include only samples tested at the Albert Street site.

Types of benzodiazepines detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



- *February and March results combine samples tested at the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street and Substance sites. Previous months include only samples tested at the Albert Street site.
- In March, bromazolam was the most common benzodiazepine identified (**8.1%; 26 of 322 samples**), followed by ethylbromazolam (**6.5%; 21 samples**), and desalkylgizapam (**4.3%; 14 samples**).
- We are continuing to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines. Alongside ethylbromazolam, in March this included phenazolam (**11 samples**), an unknown benzodiazepine (**8 samples**), and 3-HO-desalkylgizapam (**2 samples**).

Percentage of opioids testing positive for medetomidine, past 6 months

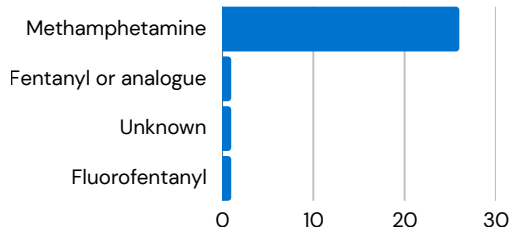


- Among opioid samples tested in March, **16.0%** were positive for medetomidine (**47 of 294 samples**).
- There has been an increase in medetomidine in the unregulated drug supply. In the Island Health region, both PSMS and medetomidine test strips are used to detect medetomidine, as it is typically present in concentrations below the detection limit of the FTIR (<5%).

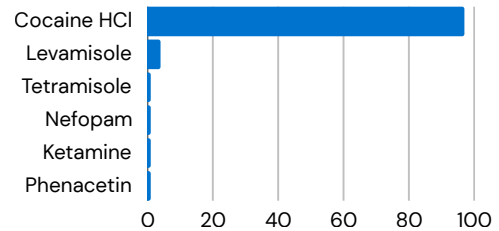
Non-Opioids

Components detected in stimulants

Components in methamphetamine (N=27)



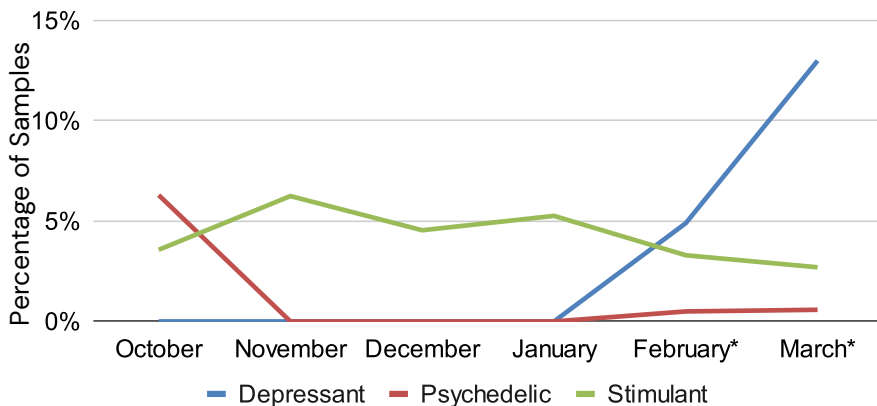
Components in cocaine (N=130)



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



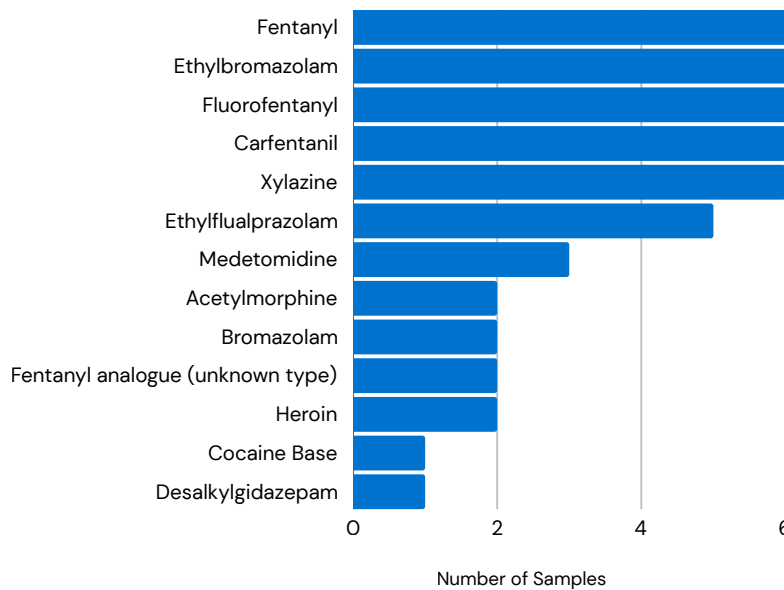
- In March, **6 depressant samples** (benzodiazepines), **4 stimulant samples** (2 cocaine, 2 methamphetamine), and **1 psychedelic sample** (MDMA) tested positive for fentanyl by test strip and/or FTIR/PSMS.

- *February and March results combine samples tested at the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street and Substance sites. Previous months include only samples tested at the Albert Street site.

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=20)



Public Health Notifications

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

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](#).