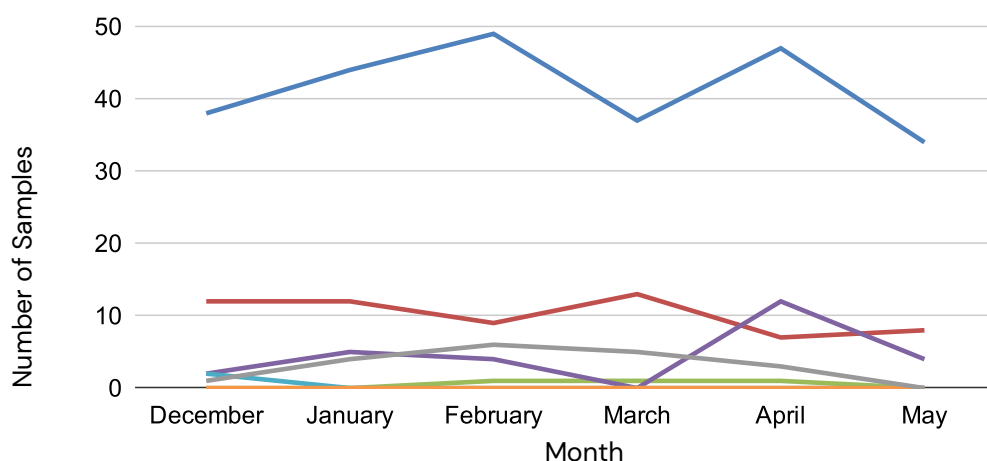




Key findings

- In May, **46** drug checks were performed by community FTIR drug checking sites in the Northern Health region (**3 access points**).
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines decreased to **47.1%**.
- We continue to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines in unregulated opioids, which included ethylbromazolam in May.
- The percentage of unregulated opioids testing positive for medetomidine increased to **72.7%**. In response to emergence of medetomidine in the drug supply, Northern Health has implemented medetomidine test strips at all drug checking sites.
- Among opioids sent for secondary testing in May (**n=27**), medetomidine was detected in **19 samples**, and carfentanil in **1 sample**.
- 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 May

● Opioid	34
● Stimulant	8
● Depressant	0
● Psychedelic	4
● Other	0
● Polysubstance	0
● Unknown	0

Total: 46

Number of drug checks at each site

Location	# of Drugs Checked
POUNDS (Prince George)	39
Terrace ICMT (Terrace)	7
Total	46

Number of samples with the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Opioid	32	1	1	34
Stimulant	8	0	0	8
Psychedelic	4	0	0	4
Total	44	1	1	46

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

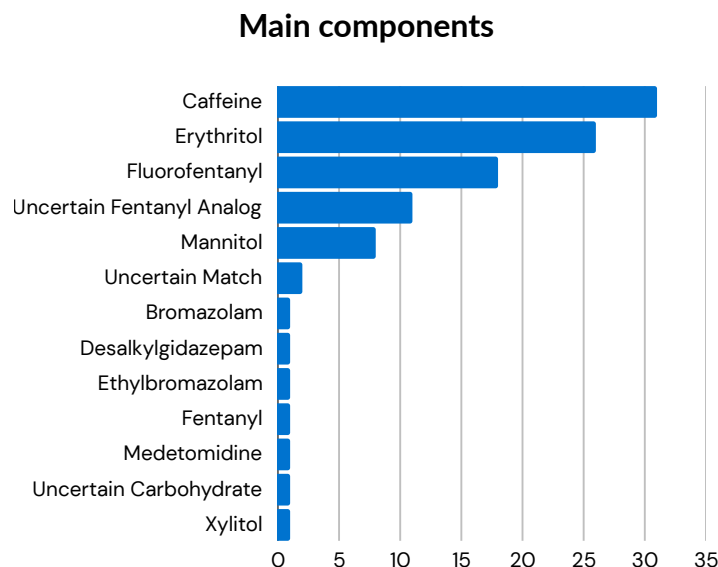
Opioids

Number of opioid samples with the expected drug detected

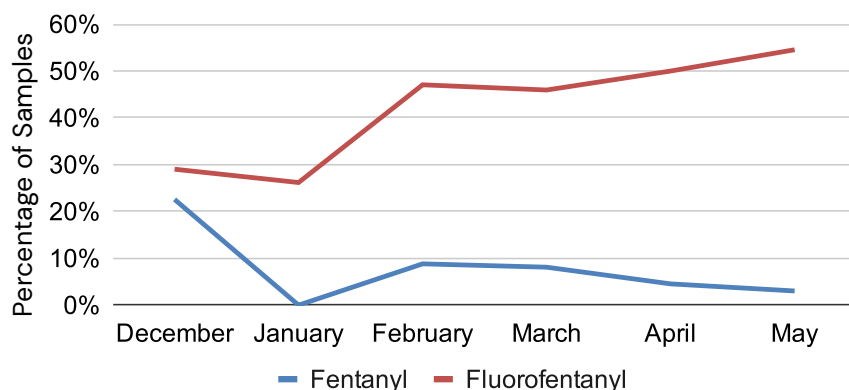
Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Fentanyl	3	0	0	3
Down	29	1	0	30
Pharmaceutical	0	0	1	1
Total	32	1	1	34

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=34)

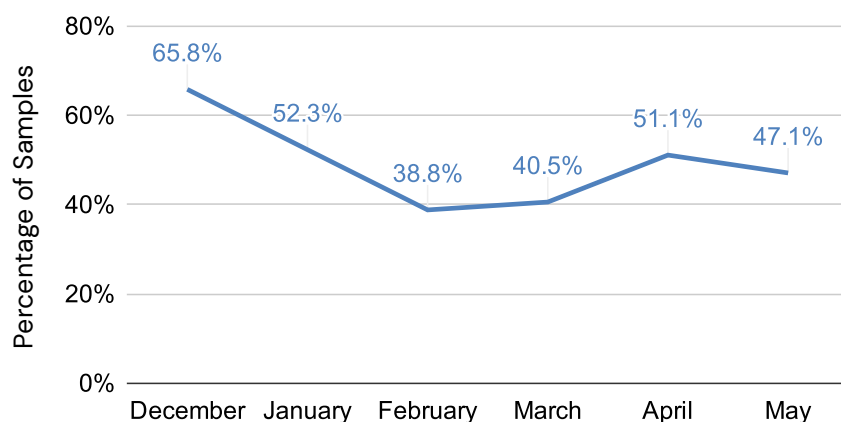


Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



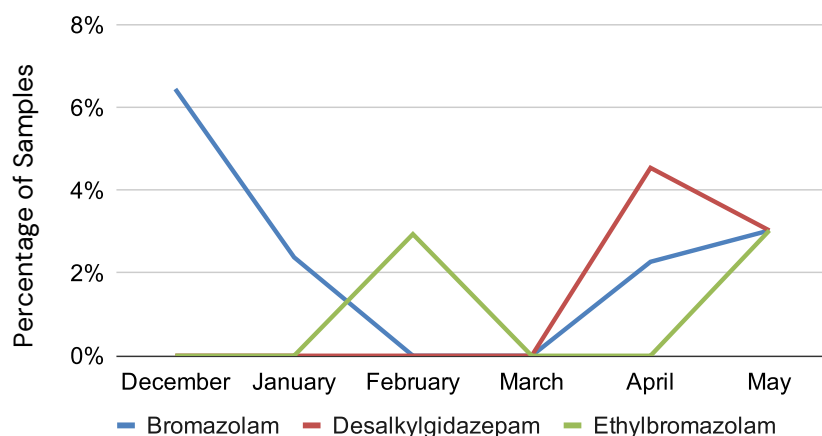
- In May, fluorofentanyl remained the most common fentanyl analog, detected by FTIR in **54.5%** of unregulated opioids (**18 of 33**).
- Conversely, fentanyl was detected in **3.0%** (**1 sample**). Declining fentanyl detections may indicate that less is circulating in the unregulated opioid supply, and/or that it is present in concentrations below the FTIR detection limit (<5%).
- Carfentanil not detected by FTIR this month. The true number is expected to be higher, as carfentanil is usually contained in concentrations below the FTIR detection limit (<5%). See the **Secondary Testing section** for more information.

Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines, past 6 months



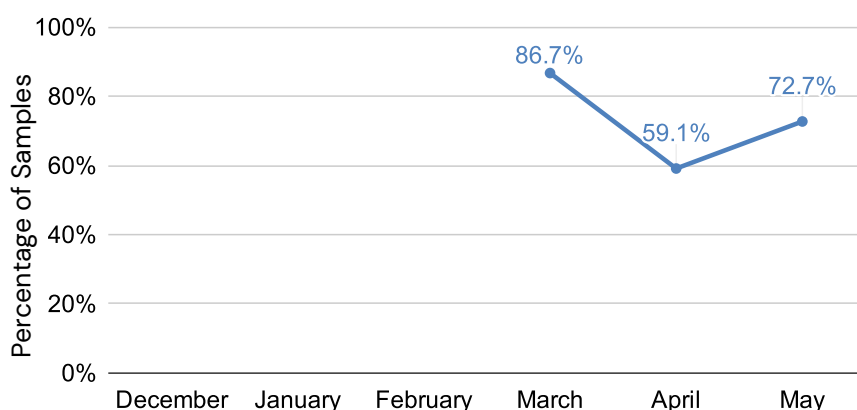
- During the month of May, the percentage of opioid samples testing positive for benzodiazepines decreased to **47.1% (16 samples of 34 checked)**.
- Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. The true percentage may be higher, as some benzodiazepines (e.g., etizolam, ethylflualprazolam) may be missed by test strip.

Types of benzodiazepines detected by FTIR, past 6 months



- In May, **9.1%** of unregulated opioids (**3 of 33 samples**) contained benzodiazepines at concentrations detectable by FTIR (>5%). Desalkylgidazepam, bromazolam, and ethylbromazolam were detected in 1 sample each.
- We are continuing to monitor the emergence of novel benzodiazepines. In addition to ethylbromazolam, others were detected via secondary testing.

Percentage of opioids testing positive for medetomidine, past 6 months

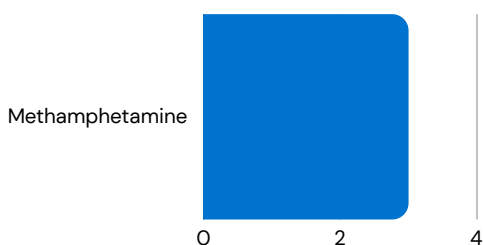


- During the month of May, the percentage of unregulated opioids testing positive for medetomidine increased to **72.7% (23 of 33)**. Of these, **9 samples** were also positive for benzodiazepines.
- Unregulated opioids are checked for medetomidine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. As of March, test strips have been implemented at all drug checking sites in response to the emergence of medetomidine, as it is typically present in concentrations below the FTIR detection limit (<5%).

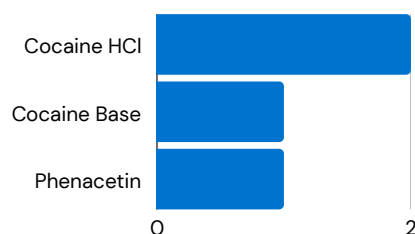
Non-Opioids

Components detected in stimulants

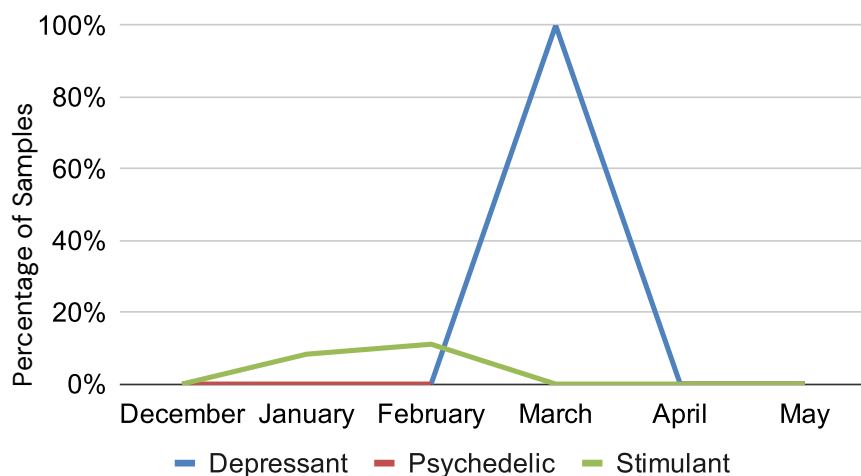
Components in methamphetamine (N=3)



Components in cocaine (N=3)



Fentanyl detected in non-opioids, past 6 months

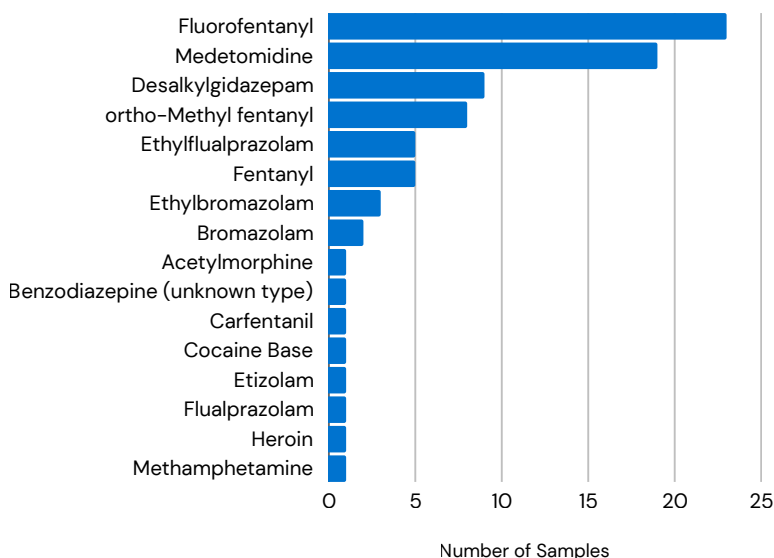


- There were no instances of non-opioids testing positive for fentanyl in May.

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 = 27)



Public Health Notifications

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
In May, there were no alerts issued within the Northern 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 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](#).