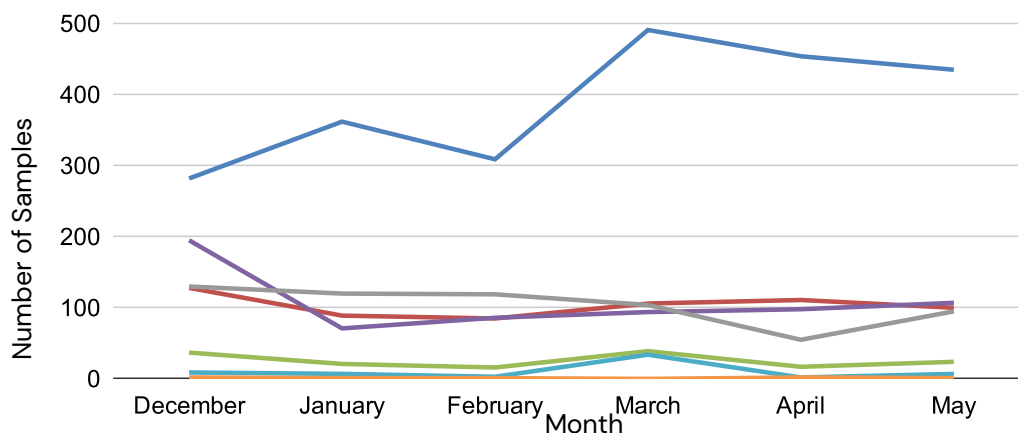




Key findings

- In May, **769** drug checks were performed by community FTIR drug checking sites in the Vancouver Coastal region (**8 access points**).
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines increased to **28.7%**. Of these, desalkylgidazepam was most frequently identified.
- 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 **17.5%**. In response to emergence of medetomidine in the drug supply, Vancouver Coastal has implemented medetomidine test strips at all drug checking sites.
- Among opioids sent for secondary testing in May (**n=3**), medetomidine was detected in **3 samples**.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



Number of samples by drug category in May

Opioid	435
Stimulant	100
Depressant	24
Psychedelic	107
Other	7
Polysubstance	1
Unknown	95

Total: 769

Number of drug checks at each site

Location	# of Drugs Checked
Insite (Vancouver)	741
LIFT Community Services (Powell River)	13
Whistler Community Service Society (Squamish)	15
Total	769

Number of samples with the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Opioid	419	10	6	435
Stimulant	94	6	0	100
Depressant	16	8	0	24
Psychedelic	106	1	0	107
Other	7	0	0	7
Polysubstance	1	0	0	1
Unknown	0	0	95	95
Total	643	25	101	769

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

Opioids

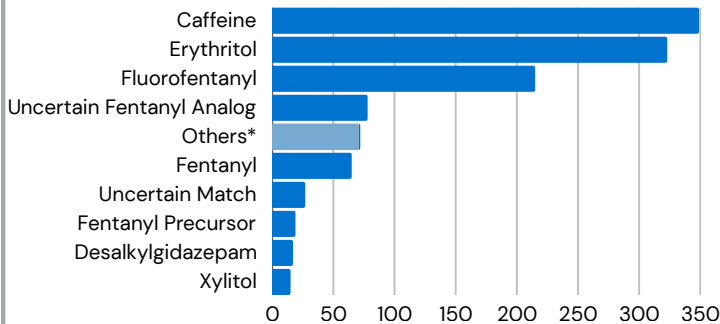
Number of opioid samples with the expected drug present

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Fentanyl	17	3	0	20
Heroin	1	0	0	1
Down	374	4	0	378
Pharmaceutical	25	2	6	33
Opium	2	1	0	3
Total	419	10	6	435

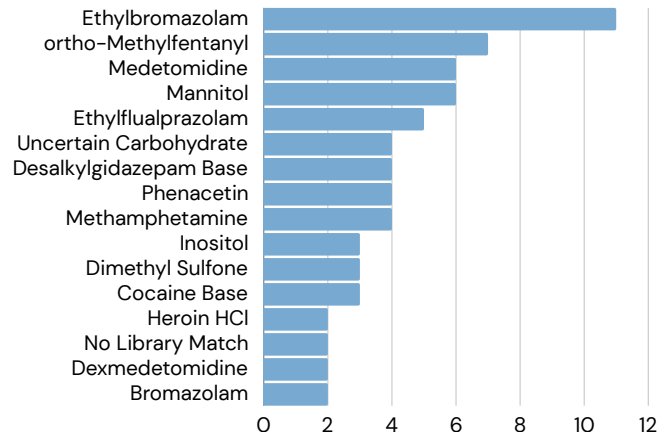
Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents.
'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount.

Components detected in unregulated opioids (N=399)

Main components

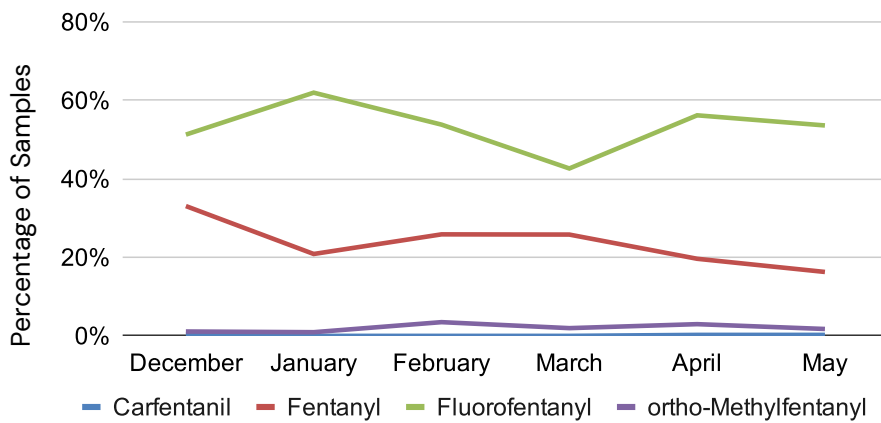


Other components*



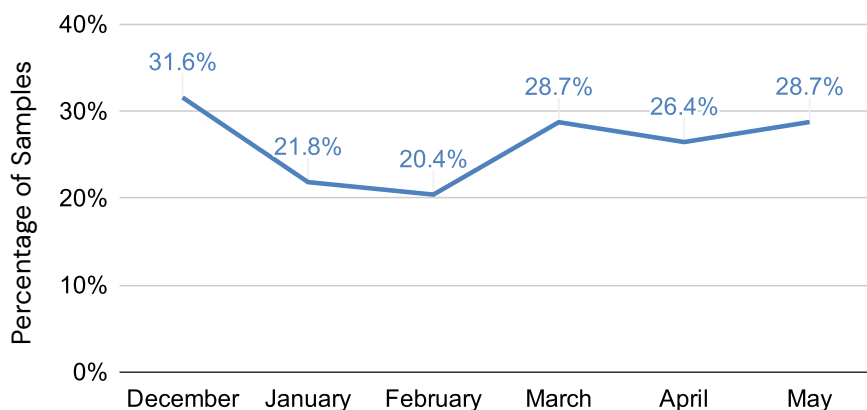
Additional components detected a single time have been omitted from these charts. All sample data can be found on the [BCCSU Drug Sense dashboard](#).

Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



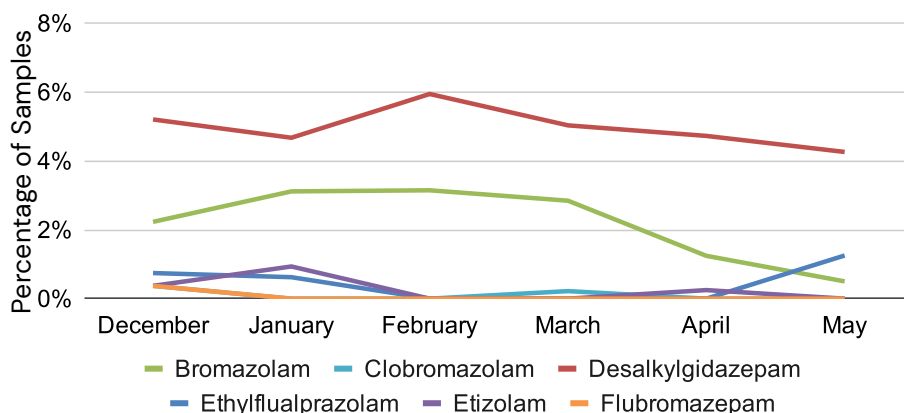
- In May, fluorofentanyl remained the most common fentanyl analog, detected by FTIR in 56.2% of unregulated opioids (215 of 399).
- Conversely, fentanyl was detected in **16.3% (65 samples)**, the lowest level of detection to-date. Declining fentanyl detections may indicate that less is circulating in the unregulated opioid supply, and/or that it is present in concentrations below the FTIR detection limit (<5%).
- Carfentanil was detected by FTIR in **1 sample** 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



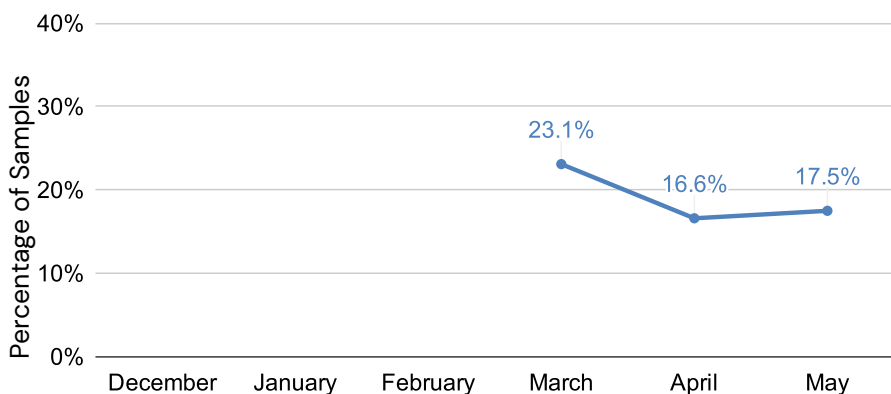
- During the month of May, the percentage of opioid samples testing positive for benzodiazepines increased to **28.7% (125 samples of 435 checked)**.
- Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. The true percentage may be higher, as some benzodiazepines (e.g., etizolam, ethylflualprazolam) may be missed by test strip.

Types of benzodiazepines detected by FTIR, past 6 months



- In May, **8.8%** of unregulated opioids (**35 of 399**) contained benzodiazepines at concentrations detectable by FTIR (>5%). Of these, desalkylgidazepam remained the most common (**4.7%; 19 samples**).
- Detection of bromazolam and ethylbromazolam, a novel benzodiazepine, were nearly on par (**1.2% vs. 1.0%**, respectively). This reflects a shift from previous months, with bromazolam detections declining as ethylbromazolam continues to increase.

Percentage of opioids testing positive for medetomidine, past 6 months

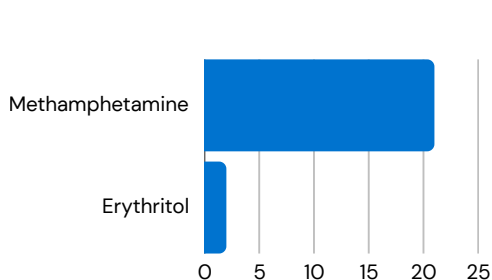


- During the month of May, the percentage of unregulated opioids testing positive for medetomidine increased to **17.5% (70 of 399)**. Of these, **31 samples** were also positive for benzodiazepines.
- Unregulated opioids are checked for medetomidine-positivity using BTNX test strips and the FTIR spectrometer. 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%).

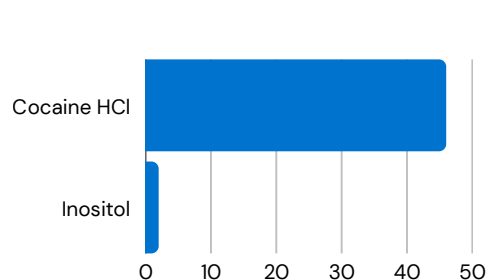
Non-Opioids

Components detected in stimulants

Components in methamphetamine (N=25)

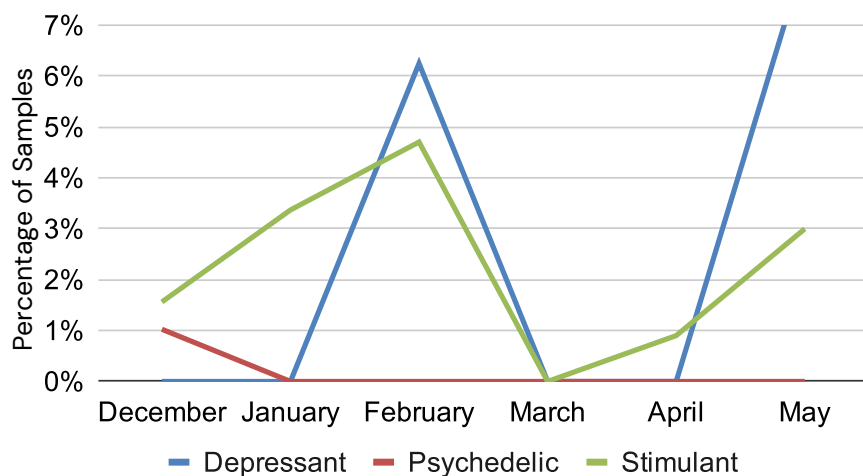


Components in cocaine (N=48)



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

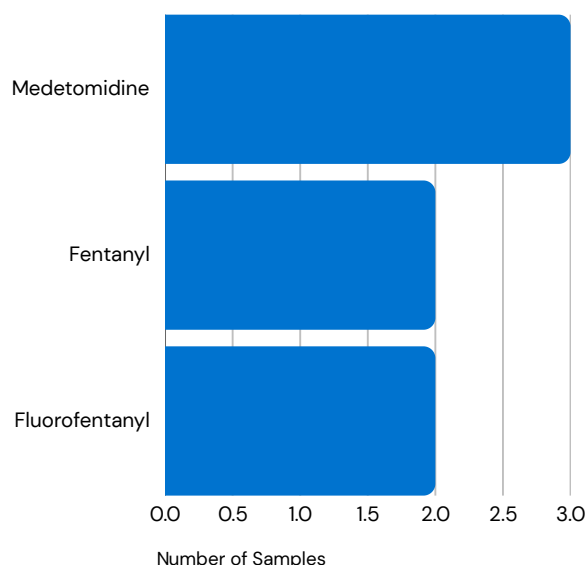


- In May, **8.3%** of all depressants (**2 unknown benzodiazepine samples**), and **3.0%** of all stimulants (**1 methamphetamine, 1 crack cocaine, and 1 cocaine HCl sample**) tested positive for fentanyl by FTIR/test strip.
- Of these, **1 sample** was expected to be cross-contaminated by the service user due to sample storage with opioids.

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 = 3)



Public Health Notifications

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Alert Message
In May, there were no alerts issued within the Vancouver Coastal 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.
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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](#).