

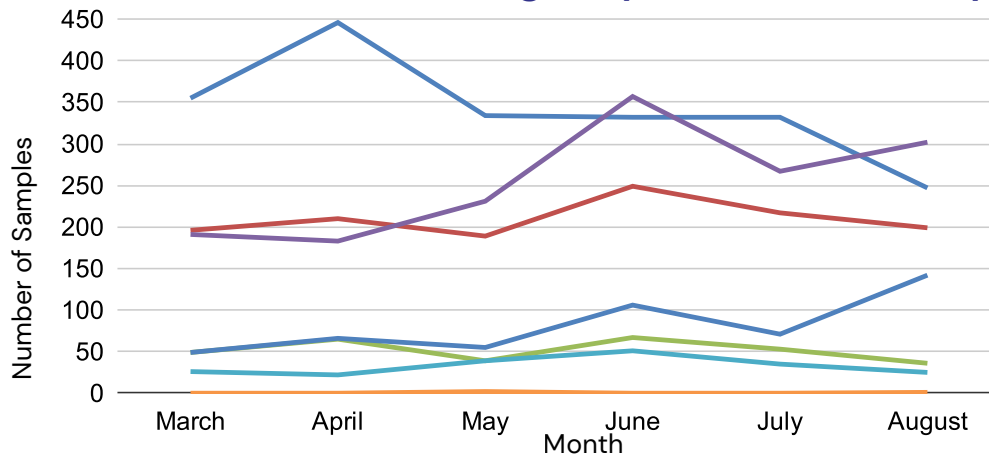


Key findings

As of February, we have integrated data from the BCCSU-partnered CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site and Substance (University of Victoria). The Albert St. site is an FTIR drug checking service and Substance, in addition to FTIR, also utilizes PSMS. For more information, please visit the [Substance website](#).

- In August, a total of **952** drug checks were performed in the Island Health region: **80** by the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street site, and **872** by Substance.
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines was **32.4%**. The true percentage may be higher, as some benzodiazepines (e.g., ethylflualprazolam) may be missed by test strip.
- Ethylflualprazolam, ethylbromazolam, and an unknown benzodiazepine were the most common benzodiazepines detected in unregulated opioids overall. Other novel benzodiazepines detected included phenazolam and meclonazepam.
- The percentage of unregulated opioids testing positive for medetomidine decreased to **10.7%**. In response to emergence of medetomidine in the drug supply, Island Health has implemented medetomidine test strips at all drug checking sites.
- Among opioids sent for secondary testing from the CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site in August (**n=9**), carfentanil was detected in **6** samples, and xylazine in **2** samples.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



Number of samples by drug category in August

● Opioid	247
● Stimulant	199
● Depressant	36
● Psychedelic	302
● Other	25
● Polysubstance	1
● Unknown	142

Total: 952

Number of drug checks at each site

BCCSU-Partnered Locations	# of Drugs Checked
CMHA Mid-Island Albert St.	80
Substance (UVic) Locations	# of Drugs Checked
Substance	347
Outreach	434
Comox Valley	40
Campbell River	20
Port Alberni	24
Duncan	7
Total	952

Number of samples with the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Opioid	129	111	7	247
Stimulant	188	9	2	199
Depressant	21	12	3	36
Psychedelic	288	7	7	302
Other	15	6	4	25
Polysubstance	1	0	0	1
Unknown	0	0	142	142
Total	642	145	165	952

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

Opioids

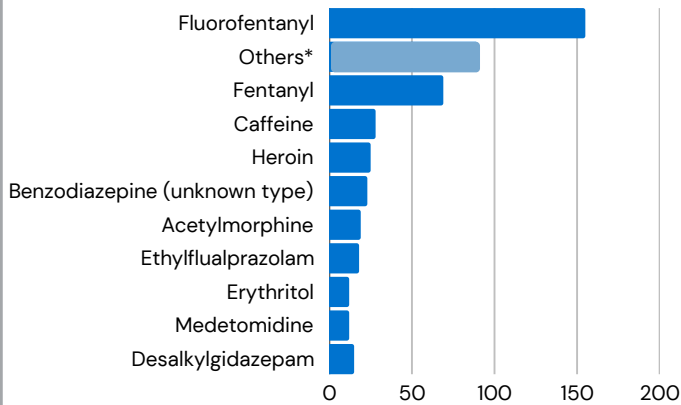
Number of opioid samples with the expected drug present

Expected Drug	Present	Not Present	N/A	Total
Fentanyl	2	1	0	3
Other Opioid	19	8	3	30
Down	107	102	3	212
Pharmaceutical	1	0	1	2
Total	129	111	7	247

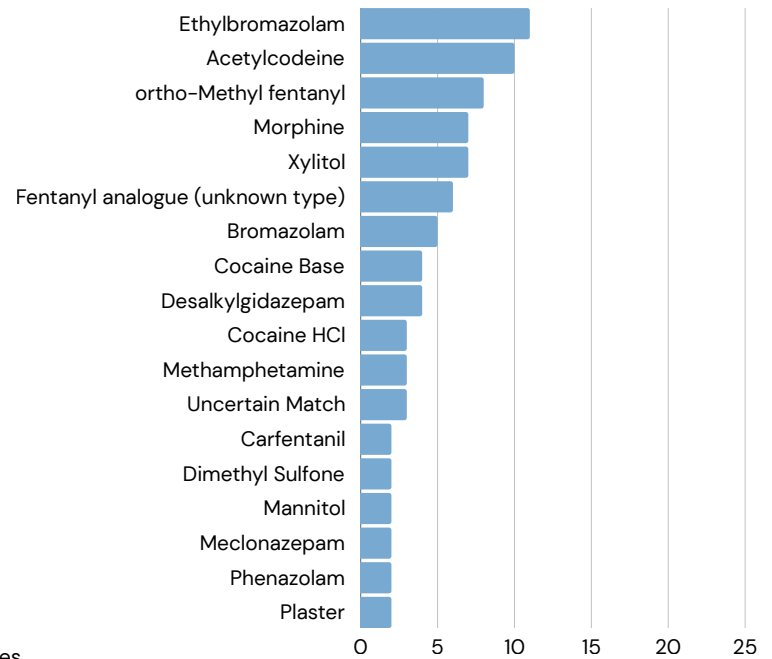
Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents.
'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount.

Components detected in unregulated opioids (N=215)

Main components



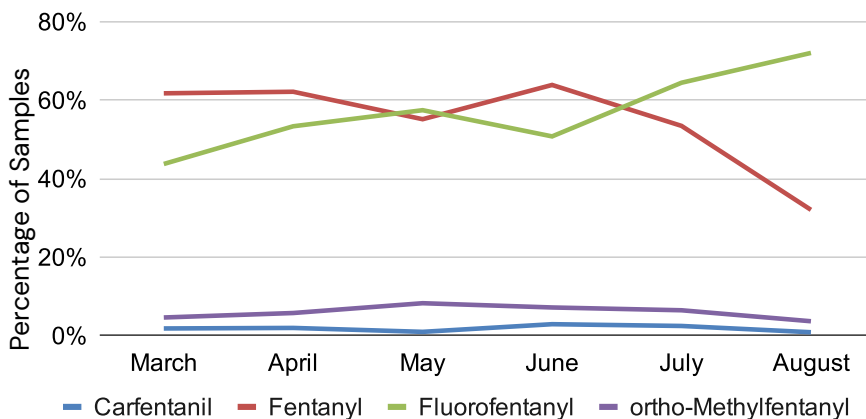
Other components*



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.

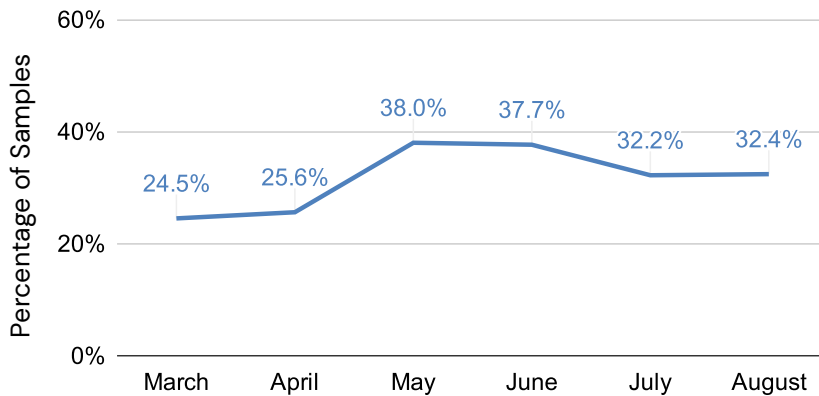
Components detected a single time have been omitted. Substance data can be found on their website, and all CMHA Albert St. site sample data can be found on our dashboard.

Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



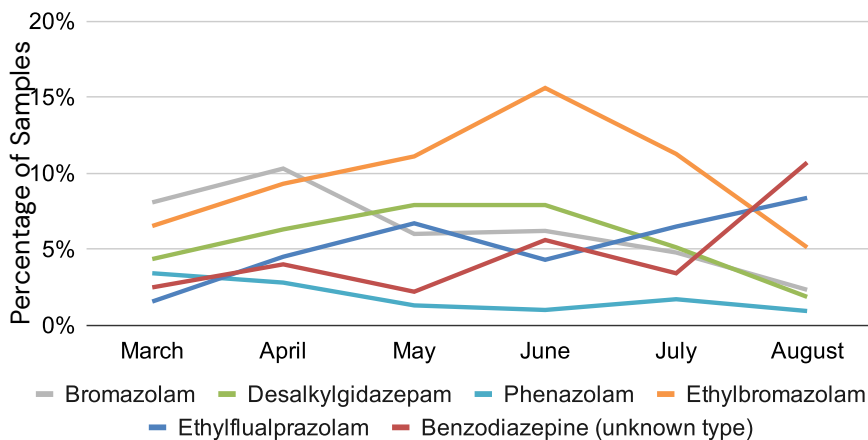
- In August, fluorofentanyl remained the most common fentanyl analog detected in unregulated opioids, identified by FTIR/PSMS in **72.1%** of samples checked (**155** of **215**). Conversely, fentanyl detections declined to **32.1%** (**69** samples).
- Carfentanil was detected in **0.9%** (**2** samples) by PSMS 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 of this report for more information.

Percentage of opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines, past 6 months



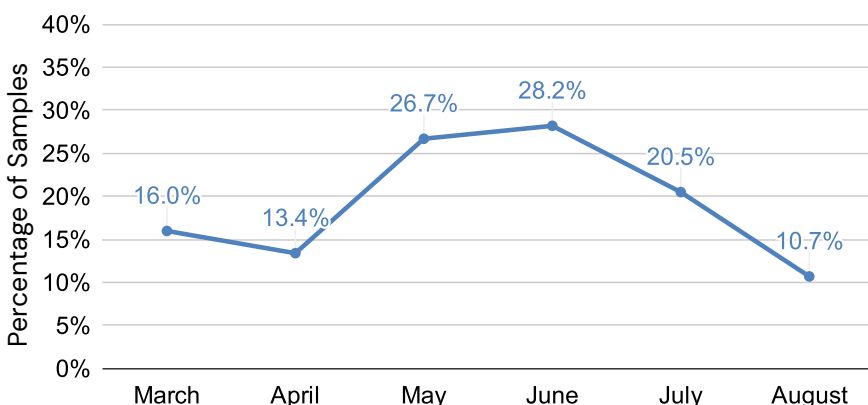
- During the month of August, the percentage of opioid samples testing positive for benzodiazepines was **32.4%** (80 samples of 247 checked).
- Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips, FTIR spectrometer, and/or PSMS. The true percentage may be higher, as some benzodiazepines (e.g., etizolam, ethylflualprazolam) may be missed by test strip.

Types of benzodiazepines detected, past 6 months



- In August, the number of unregulated opioids containing an unknown benzodiazepine increased to **10.7%** (23 of 215 samples).
- Ethylflualprazolam was the next most frequently detected benzodiazepine (**8.4%**; 18 samples), followed by ethylbromazolam (**5.1%**; 5 samples).
- The increase in novel benzodiazepines marks a shift over the past several months, with desalkylgidazepam and bromazolam no longer being the predominant benzodiazepines in the region.

Percentage of opioids testing positive for medetomidine, past 6 months

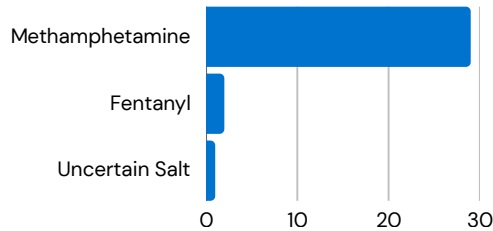


- In August, the percentage of unregulated opioids testing positive for medetomidine decreased to **10.7%** (23 of 215).
- BTNX medetomidine test strips are used in combination with FTIR. Medetomidine is typically present in low concentrations and may be missed by FTIR.

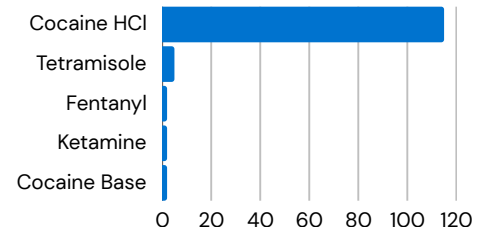
Non-Opioids

Components detected in stimulants

Components in methamphetamine (N=32)



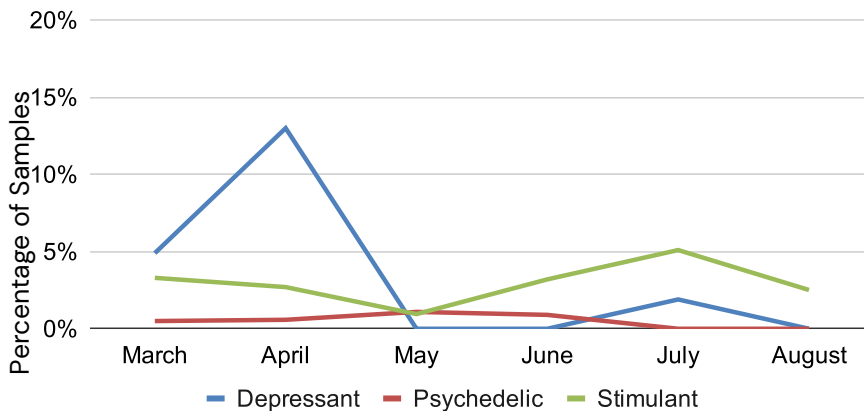
Components in cocaine (N=119)



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

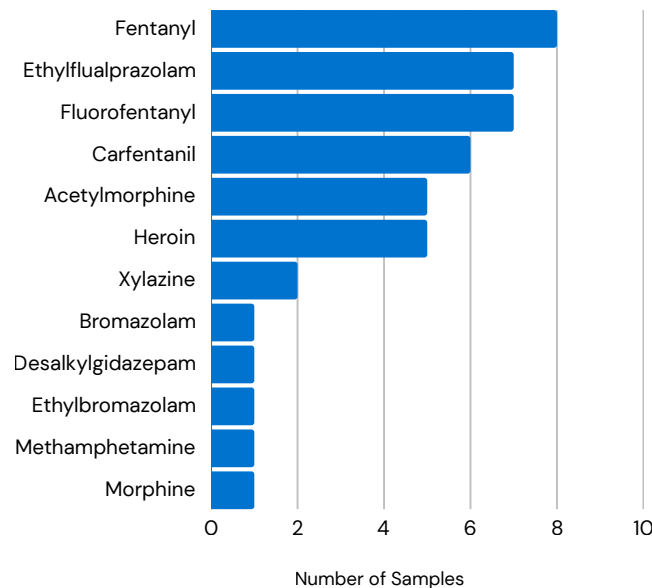


- In August, **2.5%** of all stimulants (**3** cocaine, **2** methamphetamine samples) tested positive for fentanyl by test strip and/or FTIR/PSMS.

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=9)



Public Health Notifications

Date & Location	Expected Drug	Spectrometry Results	Fentanyl Strip	Benzo Strip	Alert Message
In August, 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](#).