

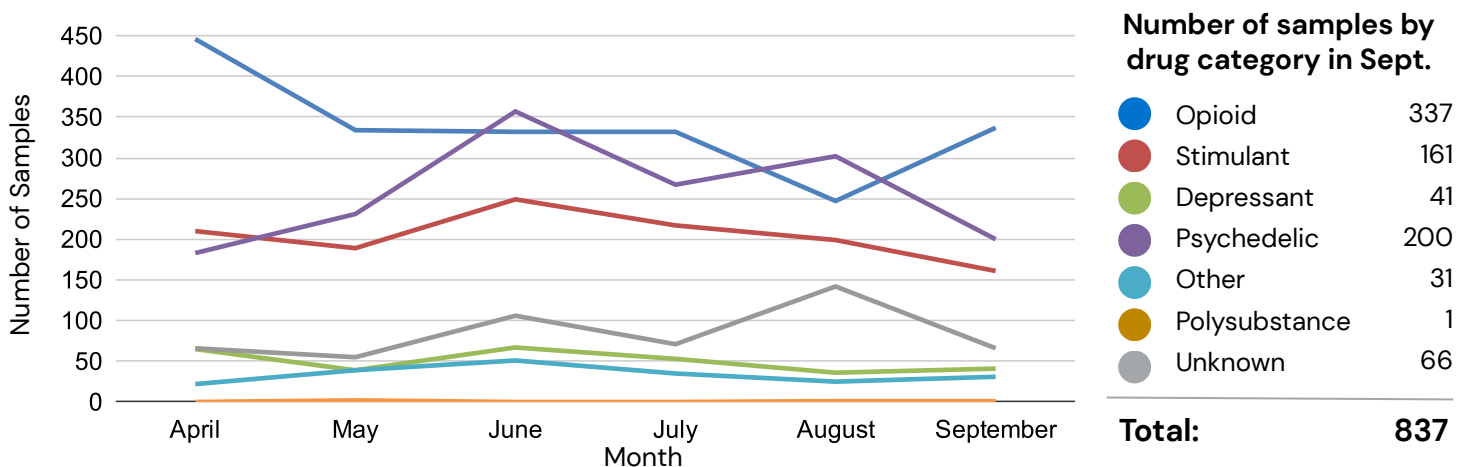


Key findings

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 September, a total of **837** drug checks were performed in the Island Health region: **38** by the CMHA Mid-Island Albert Street site, and **799** by Substance.
- The percentage of all opioids testing positive for benzodiazepines increased to **36.5%**. The true percentage may be higher, as some benzodiazepines (e.g., ethylflualprazolam) may be missed by test strip.
- Ethylbromazolam, a novel benzodiazepine, was the most common benzodiazepine detected in unregulated opioids overall.
- The percentage of unregulated opioids testing positive for medetomidine increased to **20.9%**, nearly double from the previous month.
- Among opioids sent for secondary testing from the CMHA Mid-Island Albert St. site in September (**n=12**), carfentanil was detected in **5** samples, medetomidine in **4** samples, and xylazine in **1** sample.

Number of drug samples checked in the past 6 months



Number of drug checks at each site

BCCSU-Partnered Locations	# of Drugs Checked
CMHA Mid-Island Albert St.	38
Substance (UVic) Locations	# of Drugs Checked
Substance	368
Outreach	304
Comox Valley	52
Port Alberni	34
Campbell River	26
Duncan	14
Port Hardy	1
Total	837

Number of samples with the expected drug detected

Expected Drug	Detected	Not Detected	N/A	Total
Opioid	212	113	12	337
Stimulant	152	6	3	161
Depressant	13	21	7	41
Psychedelic	177	15	8	200
Other	22	3	6	31
Polysubstance	1	0	0	1
Unknown	0	0	66	66
Total	577	158	102	837

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

Opioids

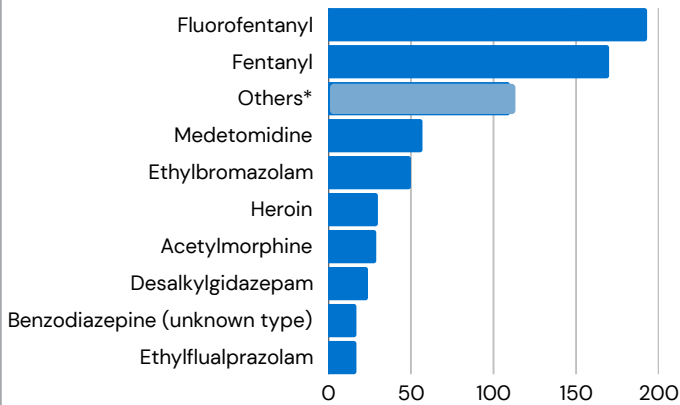
Number of opioid samples with the expected drug present

Expected Drug	Present	Not Present	N/A	Total
Fentanyl	0	1	0	1
Other Opioid	21	3	5	29
Down	189	109	7	305
Pharmaceutical	2	0	0	2
Total	212	113	12	337

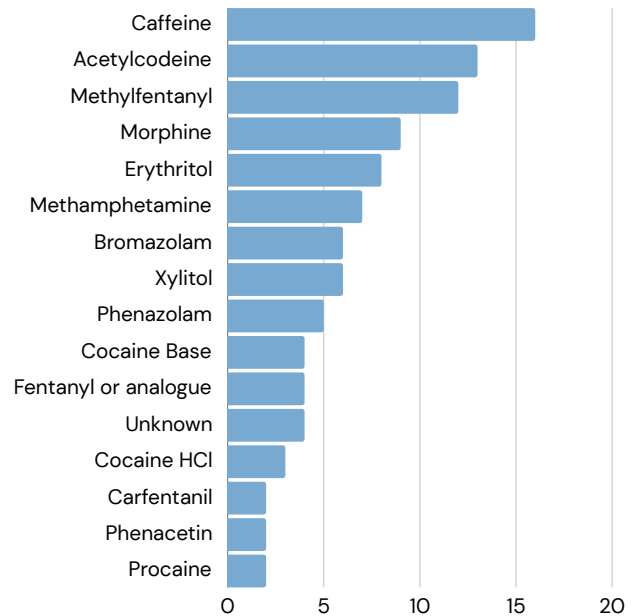
Please note that the presence of the expected substance does not imply purity, as samples frequently contain adulterating cutting agents.
'Down' can refer to any opioid drug present in any amount.

Components detected in unregulated opioids (N=306)

Main components



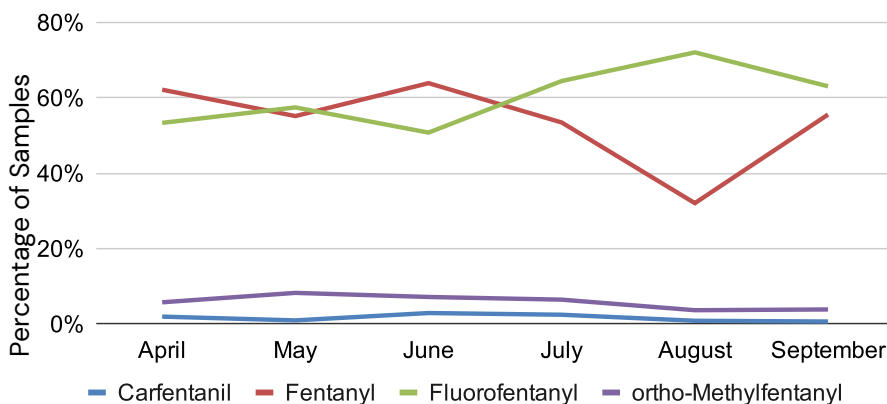
Other components*



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.

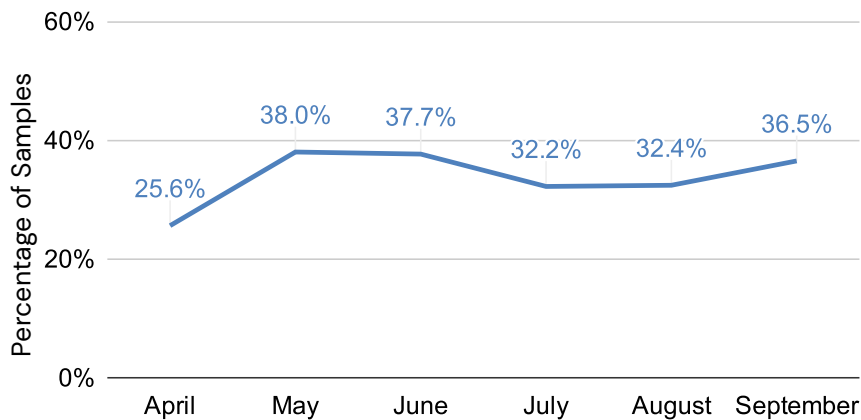
Components detected a single time have been omitted. Substance data can be found on their website, and all CMHA Albert St. site sample data can be found on our dashboard.

Fentanyl analogs detected in unregulated opioids, past 6 months



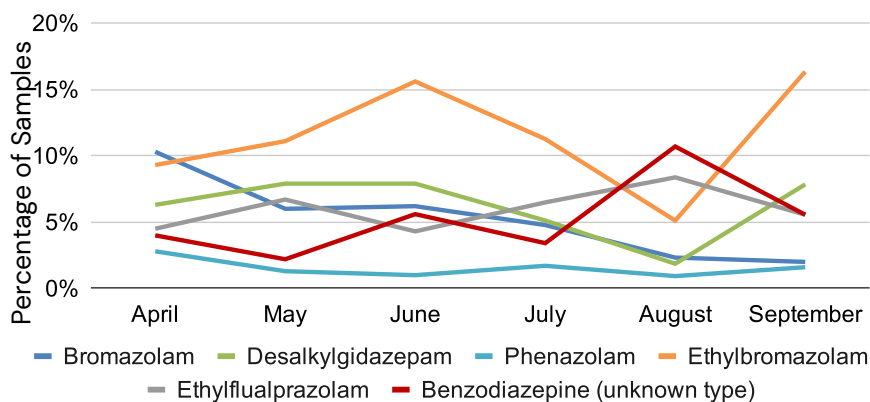
- In September, fluorofentanyl remained the most common fentanyl analog detected in unregulated opioids, though detections by FTIR/PSMS decreased to **63.1%** of samples checked (**193** of **306**).
- Conversely, fentanyl detections rose to **55.6%** of unregulated opioids checked (**69** samples).
- Carfentanil was detected by PSMS in **2** samples 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



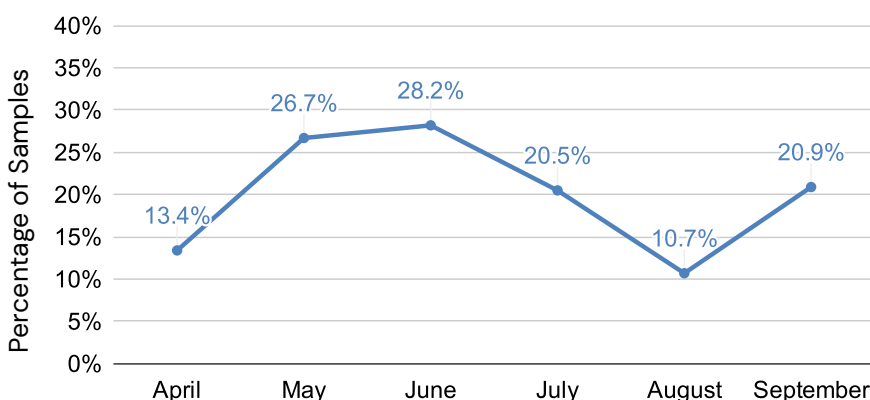
- During the month of September, the percentage of opioid samples testing positive for benzodiazepines increased to **36.5%** (123 samples of 337 checked).
- Opioid samples are checked for benzodiazepine-positivity using BTNX test strips, FTIR spectrometer, and/or PSMS. The true percentage may be higher, as some benzodiazepines (e.g., etizolam, ethylflualprazolam) may be missed by test strip.

Types of benzodiazepines detected, past 6 months



- In September, ethylbromazolam was the most common benzodiazepine detected in unregulated opioids (**16.3%**; 50 samples), followed by desalkylgidazepam, which increased to **7.8%** of samples checked (24 samples).
- Ethylflualprazolam and an unknown benzodiazepine were the next most frequently detected benzodiazepines (**5.6%**; 17 samples each).
- There has been an increase in novel benzodiazepines over the past several months. Alongside ethylflualprazolam and ethylbromazolam, 3-HO-desalkylgidazepam and phenazolam were also detected in September.

Percentage of opioids testing positive for medetomidine, past 6 months

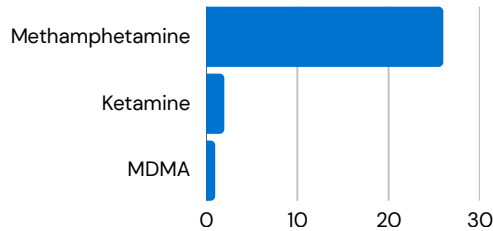


- In September, the percentage of unregulated opioids testing positive for medetomidine nearly doubled from the previous month, detected in **20.9%** of samples checked (64 of 306).
- Unregulated opioids are checked for medetomidine-positivity using BTNX test strips, FTIR spectrometer, and/or PSMS. As 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%).

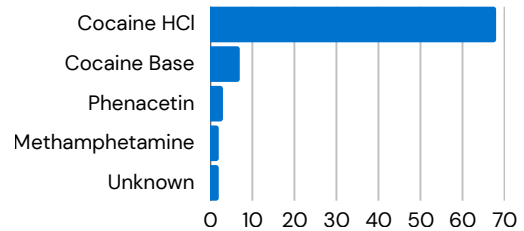
Non-Opioids

Components detected in stimulants

Components in methamphetamine (N=30)



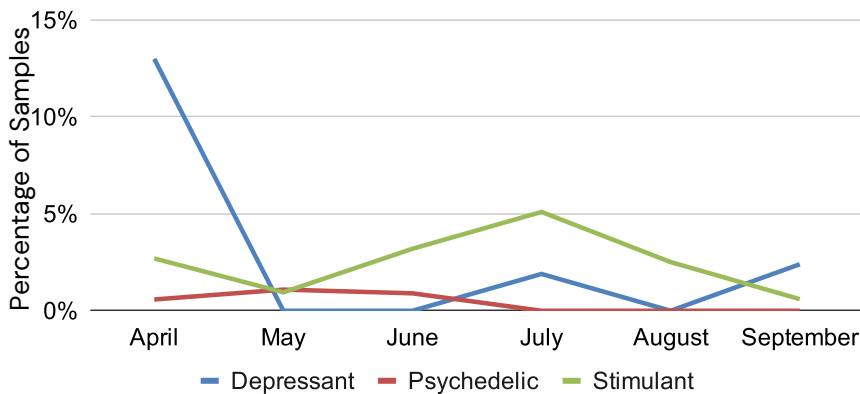
Components in cocaine (N=76)



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

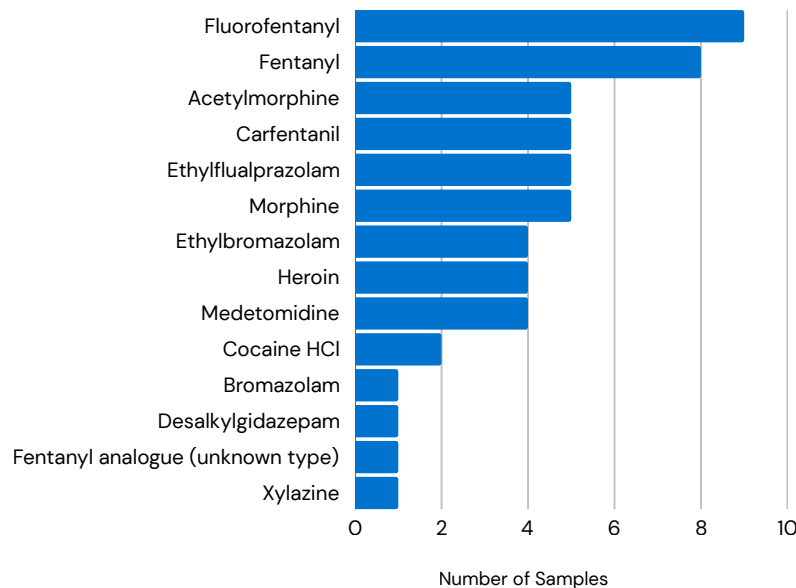


- In September, **2.4%** of all depressants (1 benzodiazepine sample), and **0.6%** of all stimulants (1 cocaine sample) tested positive for fentanyl by test strip and/or FTIR/PSMS.

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=12)



Public Health Notifications

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