

Substance Drug Checking

Preliminary Results for July 2023

The Vancouver Island Drug Checking Project delivers drug checking services in Campbell River, the Comox Valley, Duncan, Port Alberni, and Victoria, BC. Our service has been operating in partnership with SOLID Outreach, AVI Health and Community Services, Port Alberni Shelter Society, Vancouver Island Mental Health Society, Duncan Lookout Housing and Health Society, Vancouver Island University, and the Island Health Authority. This free and confidential service provides information on composition of substances and harm reduction information.

819

Samples Tested
1 - 31 July 2023

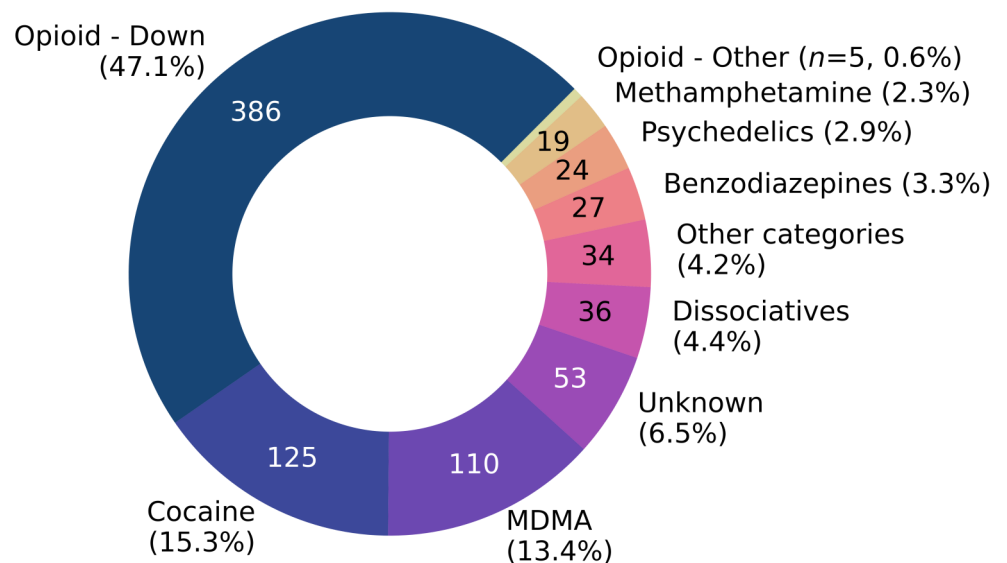
Highlighted findings:

- The median fentanyl concentration found across all drug categories was 9.1%
- Carfentanil was found in 5 samples (4 expected opioid-down, 1 “unknown”) with a median concentration of 0.84% and maximum concentration of 8.76%, the highest concentration we have seen to date
- Benzodiazepines and/or etizolam were found in 50% (192/386) of expected opioid-down samples
- Bromazolam, the most common benzo found within opioid-down, was found in 159 opioid-down samples with a median concentration of 3.5% and maximum concentration of 26.4%
- Xylazine was found in 21 samples (all expected opioid-down) with a median concentration of 0.9% and a maximum concentration of 13.2%

[Read our blog](#) for further interpretations of our July data.

What were people bringing to be checked?

Service users bring us a wide variety of substances that can be grouped into different drug classes. This pie chart aggregates the samples we checked by their “expected” substance (i.e. the drug category reported by the service user). The number of samples checked in each class is included inside each slice and the relative proportion of all samples checked is given in parentheses. These data are separated by collection location/method on the following page.

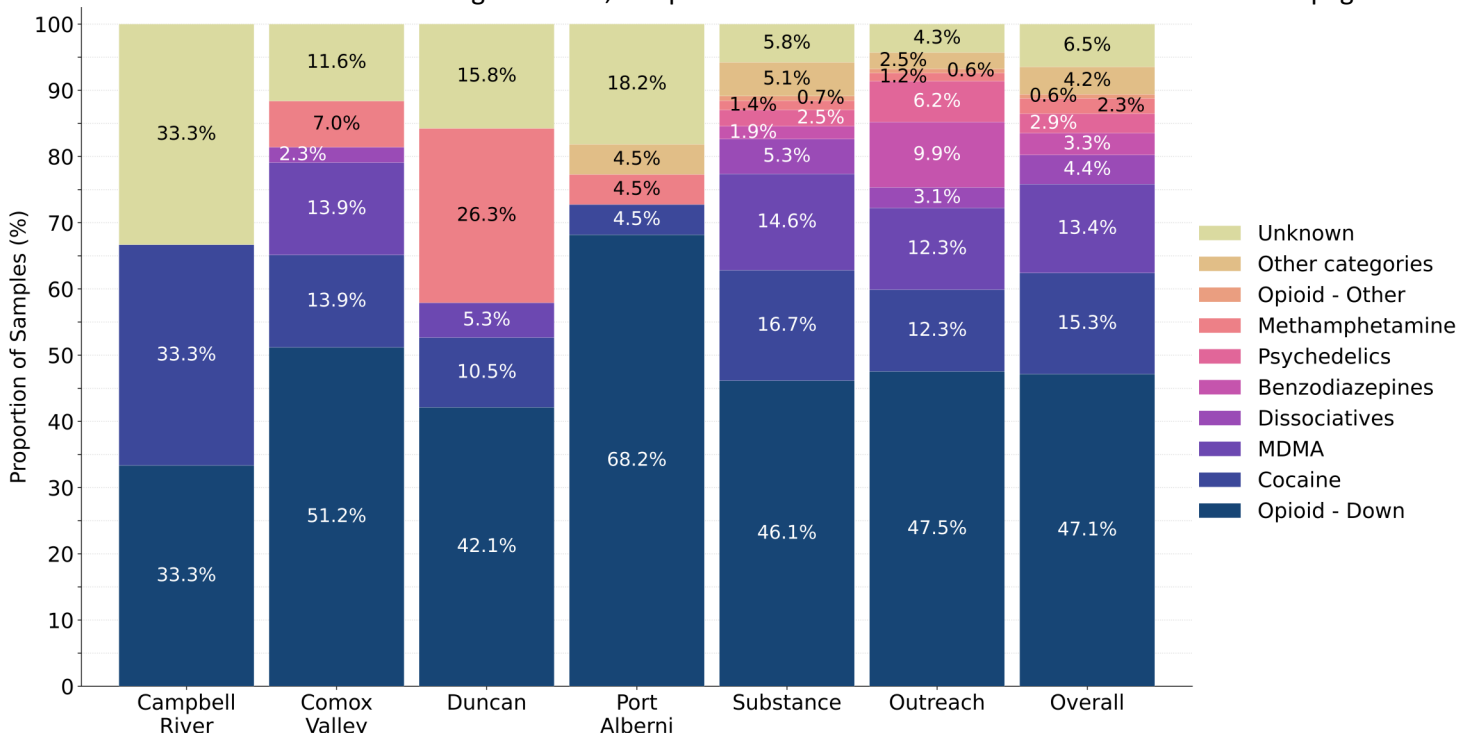


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What were people bringing to be checked by service model?

The “expected substance” data presented on the previous page can be separated by sample collection location/ method, where “Substance” samples are those brought directly to our Victoria storefront, “Campbell River”, “Comox Valley”, “Duncan”, and “Port Alberni” are samples received through our distributed drug checking model, and “Outreach” samples are those collected at supported housing sites, at overdose prevention and supervised consumption locations, and through drop-off envelopes. July’s Outreach data also includes samples checked at the Phillips Backyard Tilt! event series and at Salt Spring Island Pride. The relative proportions of samples checked by expected class and location are shown in the figure below; sample counts are listed in the table at the bottom of this page.



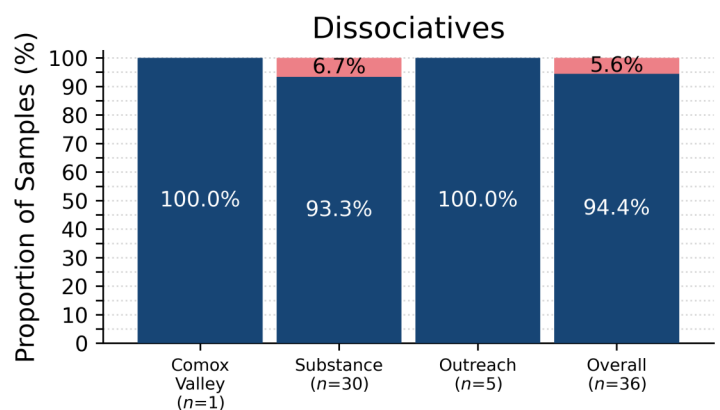
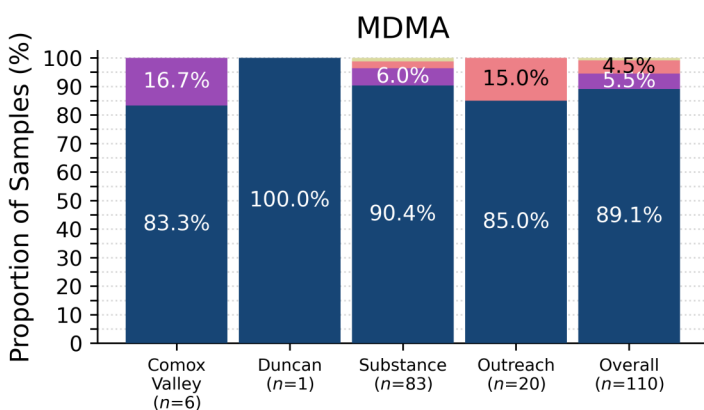
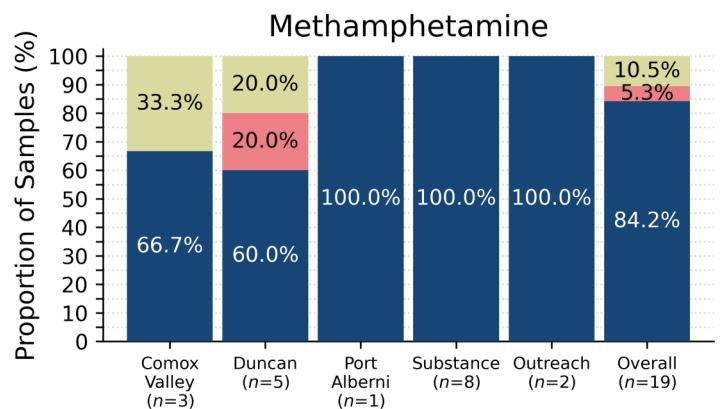
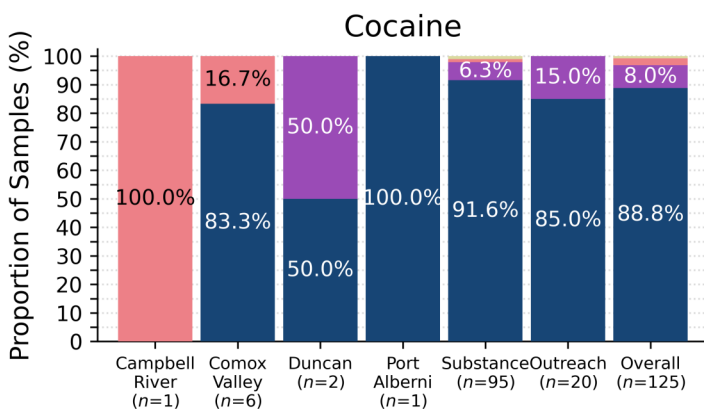
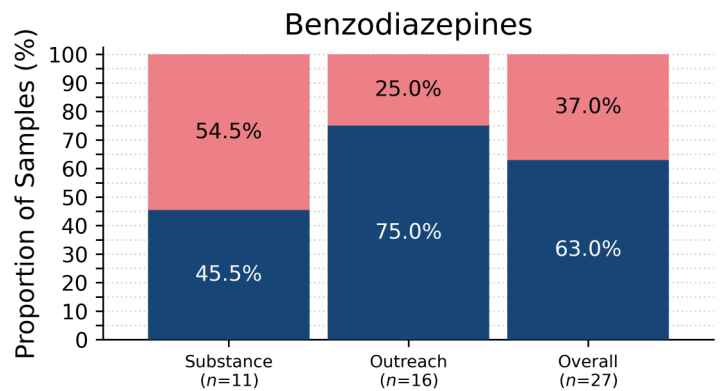
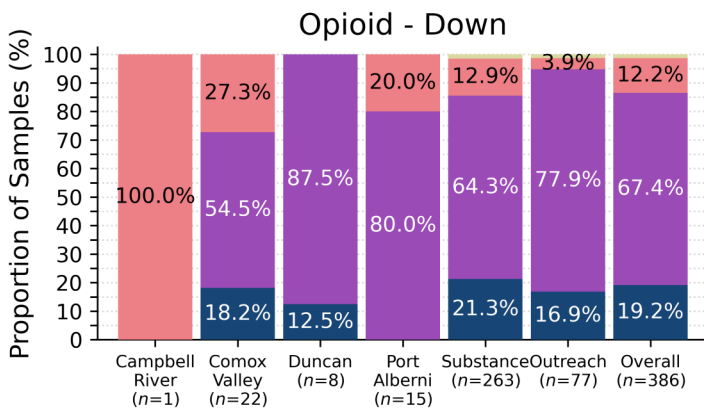
Expected substance	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Duncan	Port Alberni	Substance	Outreach	Overall
Opioid Down (fentanyl and/or heroin)	1	22	8	15	263	77	386
Cocaine (HCl or Base)	1	6	2	1	95	20	125
MDMA		6	1		83	20	110
Dissociative (ketamine)		1			30	5	36
Benzodiazepines					11	16	27
Psychedelics (2C-B, DMT, LSD)					14	10	24
Methamphetamine		3	5	1	8	2	19
Other Opioids (Dilaudid, oxycodone)					4	1	5
Other (cannabis, GHB, steroids, etc.)					1	29	34
Unknown/Missing	1	5	3	4	33	7	53
Total samples checked	3	43	19	22	570	162	819

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What did we find?

We checked each sample to determine what active compounds and cutting agents were present. While a majority of samples contained the expected active drug, we also detected a number of other notable compounds that may cause unexpected effects. The figures below illustrate the proportions and numbers of samples checked in each drug category, separated by collection location/method, colour coded by their composition. **Dark Blue** bars group samples that were “as expected” with no other notable compounds detected, **Magenta** bars show samples that contained the expected drug *and* other unexpected active(s), **Salmon** groups samples that only contained unexpected active(s) (the expected drug was not found), and **Lime** displays samples where no active compounds were detected.



■ Expected Active Only ■ Unexpected Active Only
■ Expected + Unexpected Actives ■ No Actives Found

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What did we find?

Expanding on the figures shown on the previous page, for each drug category and collection location/model, we list the number of samples that contained the expected active and/or other notable components. Samples where no detected actives have been excluded for brevity.

Expected Opioid - Down data continued on next page

Opioid Down	Comox Valley	Duncan	Port Alberni	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	4	1		56	13
Fentanyl	4	1		56	13
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)	12	7	12	169	60
Fentanyl*	12	7	12	168	57
Heroin*				7	11
Acetylcodeine				6	11
Acetylfentanyl					3
Acetylmorphine				7	10
Benzodiazepine (Undifferentiated) ¹	3		2	14	4
Bromazolam	9	7	10	84	30
Carfentanil			3		
Cocaine HCl (powder)				1	1
Etizolam	1			1	5
Flualprazolam		1		3	
Flubromazepam			3	1	1
Flubromazolam				3	
Fluorofentanyl	5	5	4	129	25
Lidocaine					2
Methamphetamine					2
Norfentanyl				1	
Procaine		1			
Xylazine	5		1	10	1

*Data are preliminary. There were missing data for some samples. Instruments may not be able to detect all ingredients and certainty of interpretations may vary. Multiple substances may be present in one sample and substances may be present in trace concentrations. *Expected active component. ¹Fentanyl or analogue and Benzodiazepine (undifferentiated) results are based on a positive benzo strip test and are unconfirmed by paper spray.*

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Opioid Down (continued)	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Port Alberni	Substance	Outreach
Unexpected Active(s) Only	1	6	3	34	3
Acetylcodeine				1	1
Acetylmorphine					1
Benzodiazepine (Undifferentiated) ¹			2		
Bromazolam	1	2	1	15	
Carfentanil				1	
Cocaine HCl (powder)		1			1
Etizolam		1			
Fentanyl	1	2			
Fentanyl or analogue ¹		2			
Flualprazolam		1			
Fluorofentanyl		1	3	31	1
Heroin				1	1
Ketamine				1	
Methamphetamine		3			
Morphine					1
Phenacetin					1
Xylazine		2		2	

MDMA	Comox Valley	Duncan	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	5	1	75	17
MDA			3	2
MDMA	5	1	72	14
MDPM				1
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)	1		5	
MDMA* + MDA			4	
MDMA* + MDEA	1		1	
Unexpected Active(s) Only			2	3
4F-PHP (MDPM expected)				1
MDA (MDMA expected)			2	2

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Cocaine (HCl or Base)	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Duncan	Port Alberni	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only		5	1	1	87	17
Cocaine Base (hard/rock/crack)				1	13	7
Cocaine HCl (powder)		5	1		74	10
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)			1		6	3
Cocaine Base (hard/rock/crack)*			1		2	2
Cocaine HCl (powder)*					4	1
Benzocaine					1	
Levamisole					1	2
Phenacetin			1		3	1
Procaine					1	
Unexpected Active(s) Only	1	1			1	
Ketamine		1			1	
Methamphetamine	1					

Methamphetamine	Comox Valley	Duncan	Port Alberni	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	2	3	1	8	2
Methamphetamine	2	3	1	8	2
Unexpected Active(s) Only		1			
Ketamine		1			

Opioid Other	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	4	
Hydromorphone (Dilaudid, Dillies)	1	
Morphine	1	
Opium	1	
Oxycodone + Acetaminophen	2	
Unexpected Active(s) Only		1
Metonitazene		1

Dissociatives	Comox Valley	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	1	28	5
Ketamine	1	28	5
Unexpected Active(s) Only		2	
Fluorexetamine (FXE)		1	
Methamphetamine		1	

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Benzodiazepines	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	5	12
Alprazolam (Xanax)		6
Bromazolam		1
Clonazepam (Klonopin)		3
Diazepam (Valium)	1	
Etizolam		1
Flualprazolam	2	1
Lorazepam (Ativan)	1	
Pyrazolam	1	
Unexpected Active(s) Only	6	4
Bromazolam (<i>Alprazolam expected</i>)		1
Desalkylgidazepam (<i>Pyrazolam expected</i>)	1	
Diclazepam (<i>Diazepam expected</i>)		1
Flualprazolam (<i>Alprazolam expected</i>)	4	2
N-Desalkylflurazepam	1	

Psychedelics	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	13	4
2C-B	6	2
4-AcO-DMT		1
DMT		1
LSD	7	
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)	1	
2C-B* + Dimethylpentylone	1	
Unexpected Active(s) Only		6
5-MeO-DMT (<i>DMT expected</i>)		4
Dimethylpentylone + Ketamine + MDA + MDMA (<i>2C-B expected</i>)		1
Ketamine + MDMA (<i>2C-B expected</i>)		2

Other	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	15	3
3-MMC	3	
4-MMC	2	
4F-MPH	1	
Amitriptyline	1	
Bupropion	1	
GBL		1
GHB	2	2
Gabapentin	1	
Metoclopramide	1	
Modafinil	1	
Trazodone	1	
Zopiclone	1	
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)	1	
GHB* + GBL	1	
Unexpected Active(s) Only	3	1
3-MMC (<i>4-MMC expected</i>)	1	
Dimethylpentylone (<i>4-MMC expected</i>)	1	1
Methamphetamine (<i>Amphetamine/Adderall expected</i>)	1	

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Unknown/Missing	Comox Valley	Duncan	Port Alberni	Substance	Outreach
Unexpected Active(s) Only	4	1	3	24	6
2C-B	1				
5F-ADB	1				
Acetaminophen (Paracetamol, Tylenol)				3	
Acetylcodeine					2
Acetylmorphine					2
Benzodiazepine (Undifferentiated) ¹				1	
Bromazolam	2		3	1	
Carfentanil					1
Cathinone (Undifferentiated)					1
Cocaine Base (hard/rock/crack)		1			
Cocaine HCl (powder)				5	
Etizolam					1
Fentanyl	1		2	4	1
Fentanyl or analogue ¹	1	1			
Fluorofentanyl			2	1	1
GBL				1	
GHB				1	
Heroin					2
Hydrocodone				2	
Ketamine				2	
LSD [acid]				1	
MDA					2
MDMA				4	
Methamphetamine				2	
Naproxen				1	
Oxycodone				1	
Phenacetin		1			
Procaine					1
Sildenafil				1	
THC					1
Tadalafil				2	

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Quantification

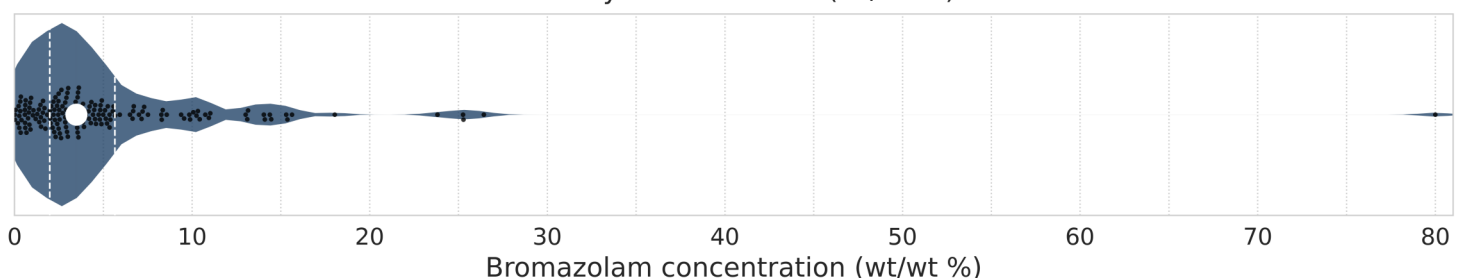
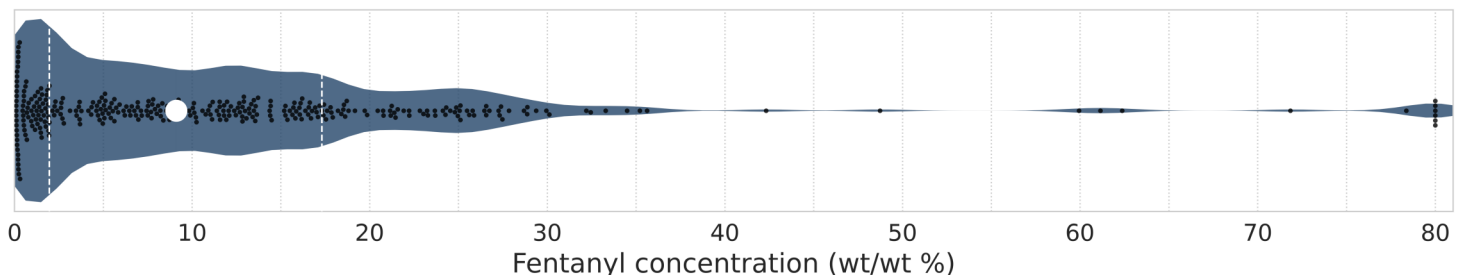
Using paper spray mass spectrometry (PS-MS) data, we were able to quantify low concentration compounds. These aggregate values are *inclusive to all expected drug categories* in which the active drugs are found. Weight percentage is reported below. "IQR" is the interquartile range: the concentration range that contains half of the quantified samples.

Compound	# Quant.	Median	Min	Max	IQR
Fentanyl	333	9.1%	0.1%	>80%*	2.0% - 17.3%
Fluorofentanyl	206	7.6%	0.2%	>80%*	2.2% - 14.5%
Bromazolam	165	3.5%	0.1%	>80%*	2.0% - 5.7%
Xylazine	21	0.9%	0.1%	13.2%	0.4% - 3.5%
Acetylmorphine	20	1.6%	0.1%	18.8%	0.8% - 2.6%
Heroin	20	13.1%	0.1%	>80%*	1.5% - 40.2%
Flualprazolam	14	0.4%	0.1%	0.8%	0.3% - 0.5%
Etizolam	10	2.9%	0.2%	23.1%	0.4% - 16.9%
Phenacetin	7	8.4%	0.1%	64.3%	3.0% - 39.5%
Carfentanil	5	0.84%	0.08%	8.76%	0.24% - 2.02%
Levamisole	3	5.4%	0.2%	5.9%	-

*There is a maximum concentration limit that the PS-MS can quantify for each compound of interest. If a sample contains a higher percentage of a compound than the PS-MS's limits, then only the upper limit will be reported. For example, the upper limit of reporting for fentanyl on the PS-MS is 80% - any sample containing more than 80% fentanyl will be flagged as ">80%".

Distribution of Fentanyl and Bromazolam Concentrations

The concentrations of fentanyl and bromazolam for every sample quantified across *all expected drug categories and service models* are illustrated below to highlight the variability in the unregulated drug market. **Black Dots** are individual samples, the large **White Dot** marks the median concentration, the **Dashed White Lines** bound half of the quantified samples (IQR), and the **width** of the coloured region is proportional to the number of samples in a concentration range.



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Opioid - Down Quantification by Service Model

Here we examine the regional variability in the unregulated market. The table below expands on the data presented on the previous page (*inclusive to all expected drug categories*) and focuses only on fentanyl, fluorofentanyl, carfentanil, bromazolam, and xylazine quantified within *expected opioid-down samples*, separated by collection location/model. Weight percentage is reported; “IQR” is the interquartile range: the range that contains half of the quantified samples.

Service Model	Compound	# Quant.	Median	Min	Max	IQR
Campbell River						
1 total down sample	<i>Quantitative data is not available for these samples as no samples were sent for quantitative analysis via mass spectrometry. Benzo-positivity is based on immunoassay strip tests</i>					
100% (1/1) benzo-positive						
Comox Valley 22 total down samples 64% (14/22) benzo-positive	Bromazolam	11	1.6%	0.6%	7.2%	1.1% - 4.3%
	Fentanyl	16	8.9%	2.8%	>80%*	4.8% - 13.0%
	Fluorofentanyl	6	0.8%	0.3%	1.6%	0.7% - 1.4%
	Xylazine	7	0.5%	0.2%	4.3%	0.3% - 1.0%
Duncan 8 total down samples	Bromazolam	7	2.5%	0.8%	23.8%	1.7% - 4.7%
	Fentanyl	7	4.8%	0.1%	35.2%	0.8% - 23.0%
	Fluorofentanyl	5	10.1%	2.3%	14.4%	5.5% - 11.0%
Port Alberni 15 total down samples 100% (15/15) benzo-positive	Bromazolam	11	7.3%	0.3%	25.2%	0.7% - 14.2%
	Carfentanil	3	0.84%	0.24%	2.02%	-
	Fentanyl	13	7.8%	2.2%	17.2%	3.7% - 9.2%
	Fluorofentanyl	6	4.8%	0.2%	31.4%	1.1% - 18.9%
Substance 263 total down samples 45% (118/263) benzo-positive	Xylazine	2	-	0.5%	4.2%	-
	Bromazolam	99	3.4%	0.1%	25.3%	2.0% - 5.3%
	Carfentanil	1	-	-	8.76%	-
	Fentanyl	221	8.4%	0.1%	>80%*	1.8% - 17.8%
	Fluorofentanyl	160	8.7%	0.2%	>80%*	2.9% - 15.3%
Outreach 77 total down samples 48% (37/77) benzo-positive	Xylazine	12	1.2%	0.1%	13.2%	0.5% - 5.2%
	Bromazolam	30	4.0%	0.4%	26.4%	2.7% - 5.6%
	Fentanyl	69	12.2%	0.1%	>80%*	5.1% - 17.3%
	Fluorofentanyl	25	4.4%	0.2%	>80%*	1.4% - 10.6%
	Xylazine	1	-	-	0.8%	-

*There is a maximum concentration limit that the PS-MS can quantify for each compound of interest. If a sample contains a higher percentage of a compound than the PS-MS's limits, then only the upper limit will be reported. For example, the upper limit of reporting for fentanyl on the PS-MS is 80% - any sample containing more than 80% fentanyl will be flagged as ">80%". Not all samples can be quantified.

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Substance Drug Checking is based out of the University of Victoria and operates community-wide drug checking services within Campbell River, the Comox Valley, Duncan, Port Alberni, and Victoria, BC. We are continuing to offer drug checking services in response to the dual public health emergencies, and exploring new ways to better reach those who may benefit from this service. We have partnered with Dr. Chris Gill and the team at Vancouver Island University to improve detection and reporting using their methods for the paper spray - mass spectrometer.

See the blog portion of our website to view our more detailed interpretations of our reports.

Our project works on Indigenous land. We provide drug checking, harm reduction education and support across many territories on what is colonially known as 'Vancouver Island.' We also act as a resource for these services across the province colonially known as 'British Columbia.' We honour and offer respect to many nations for their stewardship, care and leadership on these lands.

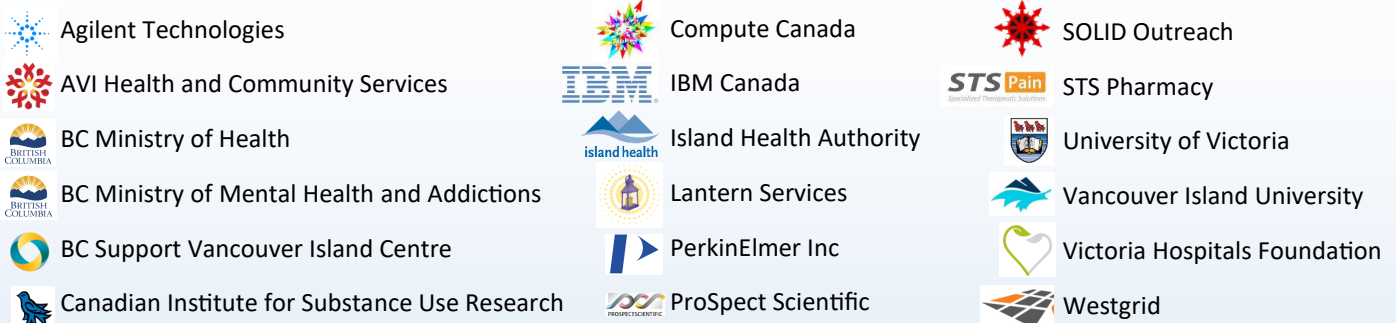
Our project originated on the territories of the lək̓ʷəŋən speaking peoples, including the Songhees and Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) Nations, and the WSÁNEĆ (Saanich) Nations on whose land the University of Victoria is located. Some of the territories we are honoured to work across specifically include: Halalt, Lyackson, Meluxulh (Malahat), Punelux-utth', Quw'utsun, Stz-uminus, and Ts'uubaa-asatx; Hupačasath and Tseshaht; K'ómoks; and Laich-kwil-tach.

We acknowledge the inextricable links between research, colonization and racism against Indigenous peoples, which continue to this date. Ending the violence faced by people who use drugs cannot be achieved without actively working on decolonization.

For more information please visit: substance.uvic.ca

We gratefully acknowledge our partners and funders on this project

Our Partners



Our Funders

