

Substance Drug Checking

Preliminary Results for August 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.

Highlighted findings:

- The median fentanyl concentration found across all drug categories was 10.9%
- Carfentanil was not found in any samples
- Benzodiazepines and/or etizolam were found in 50% (165/333) of expected opioid-down samples
- Bromazolam, the most common benzo found within opioid-down, was found in 134 opioid-down samples with a median concentration of 3.9% and maximum concentration of 57.8%
- Xylazine was found in 29 samples (x27 expected opioid-down, x2 expected alprazolam) with a median concentration of 1.8% and a maximum concentration above 80% in an expected opioid-down sample

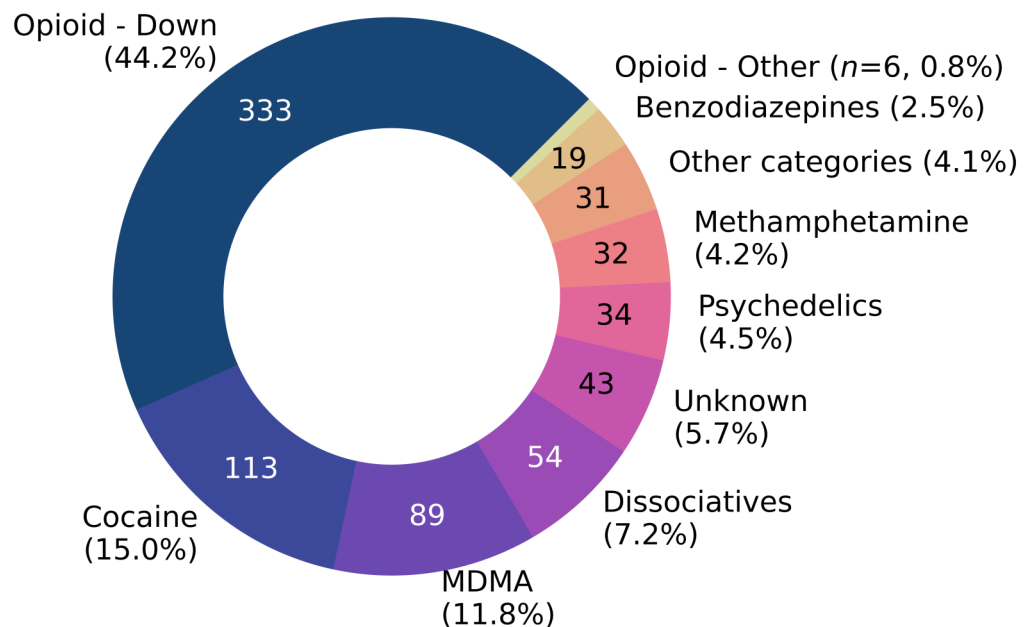
754

Samples Tested
1 - 31 August
2023

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

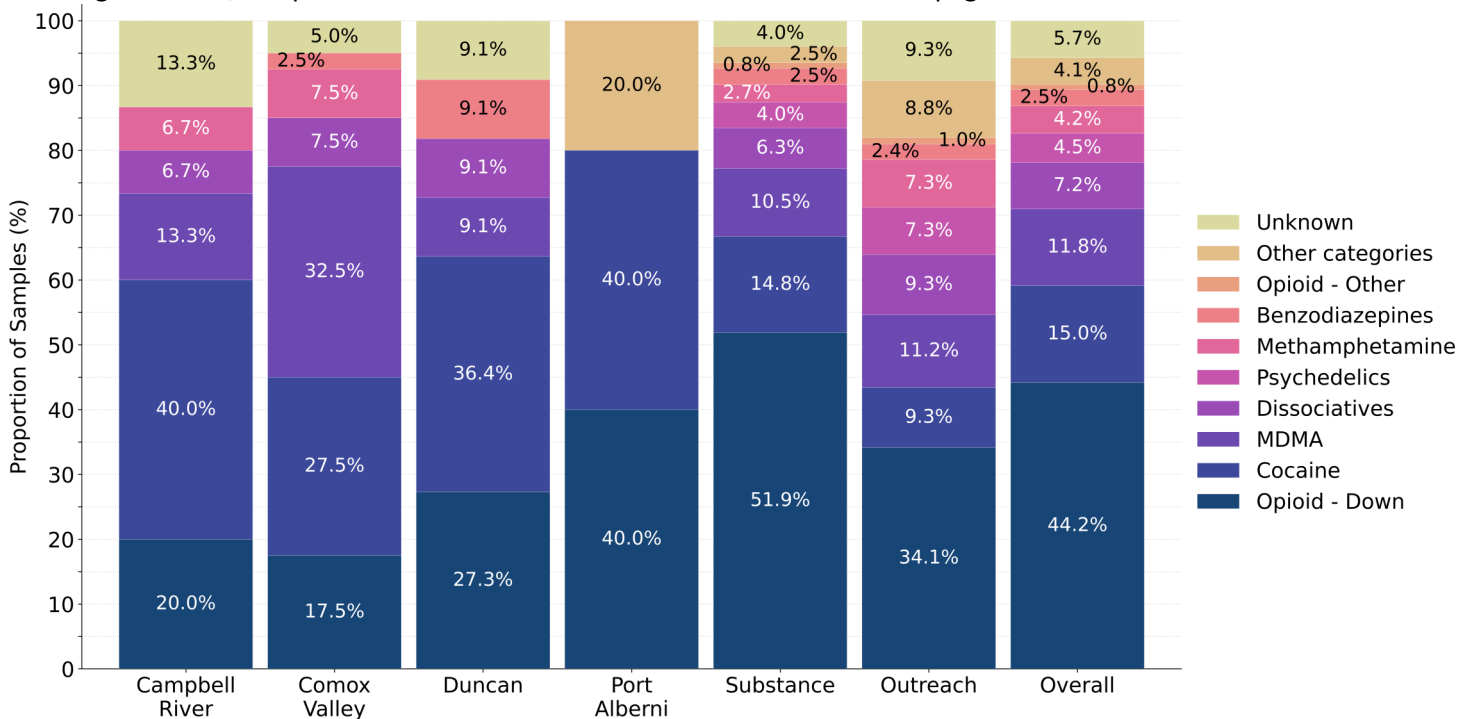


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What were people bringing to be checked by service model?

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. August’s Outreach data also includes samples checked at the Phillips Backyard REVERB event series, at the Samsara music festival, and through pop-up drug checking on International Overdose Awareness Day. 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.



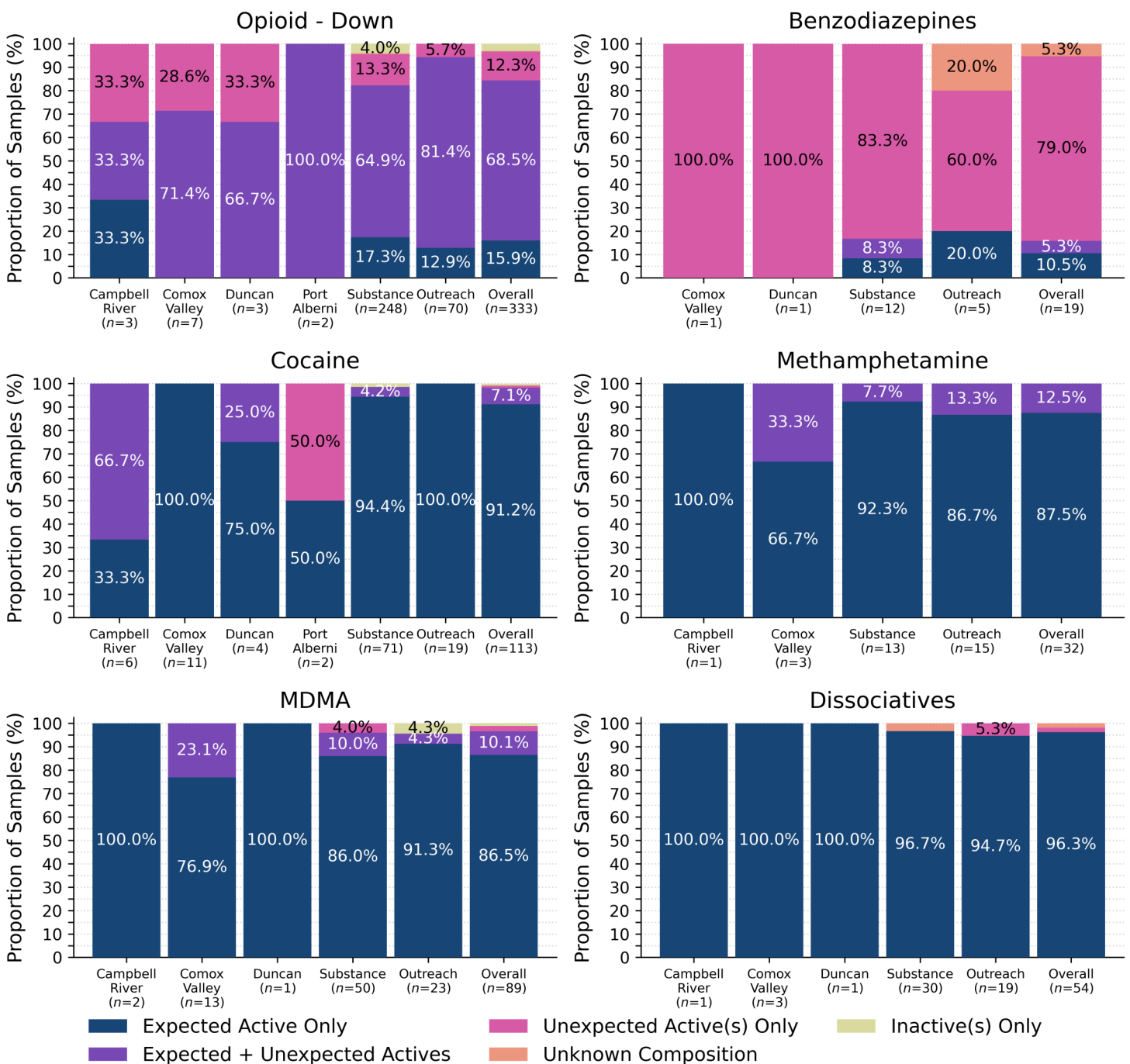
Expected substance	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Duncan	Port Alberni	Substance	Outreach	Overall
Opioid Down (fentanyl and/or heroin)	3	7	3	2	248	70	333
Cocaine (HCl or Base)	6	11	4	2	71	19	113
MDMA / MDA	2	13	1		50	23	89
Dissociative (ketamine)	1	3	1		30	19	54
Psychedelics (2C-B, DMT, LSD)					19	15	34
Methamphetamine	1	3			13	15	32
Benzodiazepines		1	1		12	5	19
Other Opioids (Dilaudid, oxycodone)					4	2	6
Other (cannabis, GHB, steroids, etc.)						18	31
Unknown/Missing	2	2	1		19	19	43
Total samples checked	15	40	11	5	478	205	754

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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** groups samples that were “as expected” with no other notable compounds *detected*, **Purple** groups samples that contained the expected drug *and* other unexpected active(s), **Magenta** groups samples that only contained unexpected active(s) (the expected drug was not found), **Salmon** groups samples where we were unable to determine the composition, and **Lime** displays samples where no active compounds were detected.



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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	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Duncan	Port Alberni	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	1				43	9
Fentanyl	1				43	9
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)	1	5	2	2	161	57
Fentanyl*	1	5	2	2	158	50
Heroin*					6	10
Acetylcodeine					4	9
Acetylfentanyl						1
Acetylmorphine					3	8
Benzodiazepine (Undifferentiated) ¹				1	20	5
Bromazolam	1	5	2	1	75	18
Cocaine HCl					2	
Desalkylgidazepam						2
Etizolam					4	1
Etodesnitazene						1
Flubromazepam				1	4	1
Fluorofentanyl		4		1	132	35
Furanyl UF-17						1
Lidocaine						1
Methamphetamine					1	1
Metonitazene						1
Morphine					1	3
Xylazine		3			12	7

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	Duncan	Substance	Outreach
Unexpected Active(s) Only	1	2	1	33	4
Acetylcodeine				2	
Acetylmorphine				2	
Benzodiazepine (Undifferentiated) ¹	1				
Bromazolam		2	1	27	2
Fentanyl		2			
Fentanyl or analogue ¹					1
Fluorofentanyl	1	1	1	31	3
Heroin				2	
Xylazine			1	4	
Unknown Composition				1	
Unknown				1	

Cocaine (HCl or Base)	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Duncan	Port Alberni	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	2	11	3	1	67	19
Cocaine Base (crack, rock, hard)	1		2		13	3
Cocaine HCl (powder)	1	11	1	1	54	16
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)	4		1		3	
Cocaine Base* + Phenacetin	3		1			
Cocaine HCl* + Benzocaine					1	
Cocaine HCl* + Benzodiazepine (Undifferentiated) ¹	1					
Cocaine HCl* + Phenacetin					2	
Unexpected Active(s) Only				1		
Methamphetamine				1		

Dissociatives	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Duncan	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	1	3	1	29	18
3-F-PCP					1
Ketamine	1	3	1	29	17
Unexpected Active(s) Only					1
MDMA (Ketamine expected)					1
Unknown Composition				1	
Unknown (Ketamine expected)				1	

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Methamphetamine	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	1	2	12	13
Methamphetamine	1	2	12	13
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)		1	1	2
Methamphetamine* + 2C-B				1
Methamphetamine* + Benzodiazepine (Undifferentiated) ¹		1		
Methamphetamine* + Benzodiazepine (Undifferentiated) ¹ + Fentanyl or analogue ¹			1	
Methamphetamine* + Fentanyl or analogue ¹				1

MDA / MDMA	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Duncan	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	2	10	1	43	21
MDA				2	2
MDMA	2	10	1	41	19
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)		3		5	1
MDA* + Ketamine		1			
MDA* + MDMA		1			
MDMA* + Cathinone (Undifferentiated)					1
MDMA* + Cocaine HCl		1			
MDMA* + MDA				5	
Unexpected Active(s) Only				2	
Cocaine HCl (MDMA expected)				1	
MDA (MDMA expected)				1	

Opioid - Other	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only	4	1
Hydromorphone (Dilaudid, Dillies)	1	
Oxycodone (Oxycontin)	2	
Percocet (Oxycodone + Acetaminophen)	1	1
Unexpected Active(s) Only		1
Metonitazene (Oxycodone expected)		1

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Benzodiazepines	Comox Valley	Duncan	Substance	Outreach
Expected Active Only			1	1
Alprazolam (Xanax)				1
Flualprazolam			1	
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)			1	
Bromazolam* + Fentanyl			1	
Unexpected Active(s) Only			1	3
Benzodiazepine (Undifferentiated) ¹			1	2
Bromazolam			1	4
Fentanyl or analogue ¹			1	
Flualprazolam			1	1
Flubromazolam			1	
Methamphetamine				1
Xylazine			2	
Unknown Composition				1
Unknown (Bretazenil expected)				1

Psychedelics	Substance	Outreach		
Expected Active Only			14	13
2C-B			3	
4-HO-MiPT				1
5-MeO-DiPT			1	
ALD-52				3
Allylescaline				1
DOM			1	
DPT				1
Ibogaine			1	
LSD			8	6
Mescaline				1
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)			1	2
2C-B* + 2C-H				1
2C-B* + Cocaine HCl + Phenacetin			1	
Allylescaline* + Methallylescaline				1
Unexpected Active(s) Only			2	
Tryptamine (Undifferentiated) (5-MeO-DiPT expected)			2	

Other categories	Substance	Outreach		
Expected Active Only			7	8
3-MMC			2	1
4F-MPH				1
6-APB				1
Amphetamine			3	
GHB				3
Methaqualone (Quaaludes)				1
Phenibut			1	
Tadalafil				1
Zopiclone			1	

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Expected "Other" data continued on next page

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Other categories (continued)	Port Alberni	Substance	Outreach
Expected* + Unexpected Active(s)	1	4	3
Amphetamine* + Unknown component			1
GHB* + GBL	1	4	2
Unknown Composition			4
Unknown (BPC-157 expected)			1
Unknown (Gaboxadol expected)			1
Unknown (Methylmethaqualone expected)			1
Unknown (Rilmazafone expected)			1

Unknown / Missing	Campbell River	Comox Valley	Duncan	Substance	Outreach
Unexpected Active(s) Only	2	2	1	11	17
Acetylcodeine				1	
Acetylmorphine				1	
Benzodiazepine (Undifferentiated) ¹	1		1		
Bromazolam	1				1
Cocaine Base				1	1
Cocaine HCl				2	3
DMT					1
Fentanyl	1		1	1	1
Flualprazolam				1	
Fluorofentanyl	2				1
Heroin			1	1	
Ketamine				3	5
MDA		1			2
MDMA		1		1	3
Methamphetamine				1	
Sildenafil				1	1
Tadalafil					1
Unknown Composition				3	
Unknown				3	

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Quantification

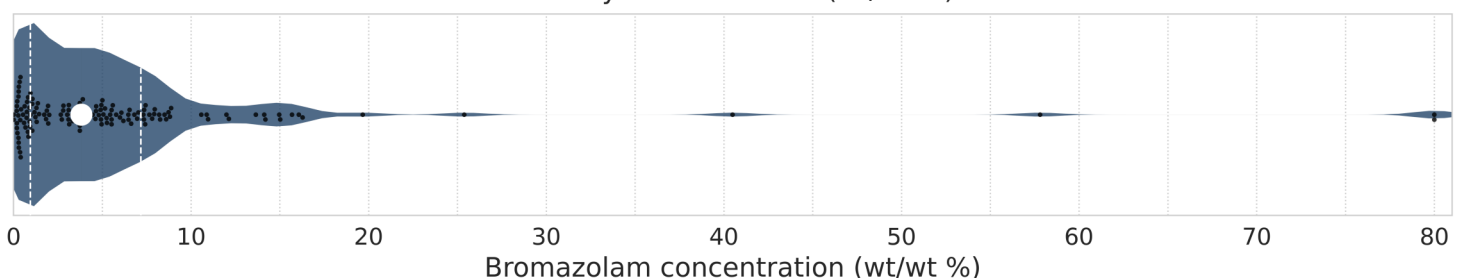
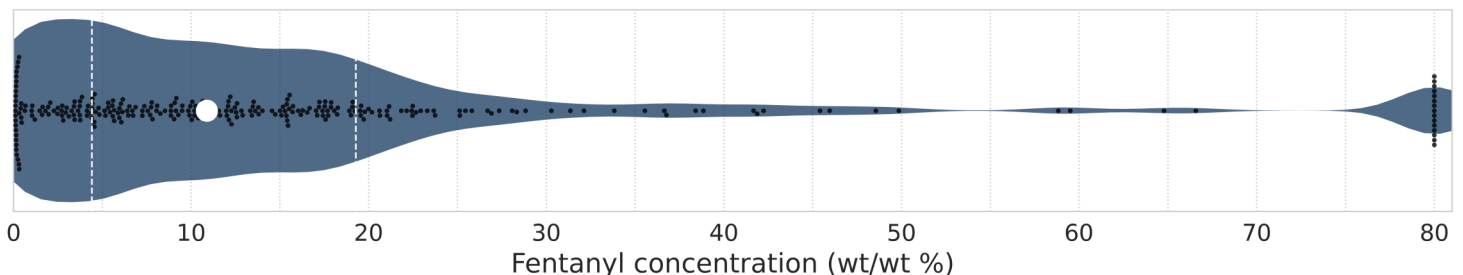
Using paper spray mass spectrometry (PS-MS) data, we were able to quantify low concentration compounds. These aggregate values are *inclusive to all expected drug categories* in which the active drugs are found. Weight percentage is reported below. "IQR" is the interquartile range: the concentration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

Compound	# Quant.	Median	Min	Max	IQR
Fentanyl	272	10.9%	0.1%	>80%*	4.4% - 19.3%
Fluorofentanyl	209	5.1%	0.2%	>80%*	2.1% - 12.7%
Bromazolam	139	3.8%	0.1%	>80%*	1.0% - 7.2%
Xylazine	29	1.8%	0.2%	>80%*	0.8% - 6.6%
Heroin	18	>80%*	1.9%	>80%*	8.7% - >80%*
Acetylcodeine	16	7.2%	0.3%	11.9%	5.5% - 9.1%
Acetylmorphine	14	2.6%	1.3%	10.3%	1.7% - 3.9%
Flubromazepam	6	1.5%	1.0%	2.8%	1.1% - 2.5%
Flualprazolam	6	0.5%	0.2%	1.5%	0.3% - 0.5%
Etizolam	5	4.1%	0.2%	23.4%	1.0% - 6.4%
Phenacetin	2	-	3.3%	>80%*	-

*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						
3 total down samples 67% (2/3) benzo-positive		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				
Comox Valley 7 total down samples 100% (7/7) benzo-positive	Bromazolam	7	15.7%	7.4%	40.5%	11.4% - 20.8%
	Fentanyl	7	14.7%	0.2%	45.4%	5.4% - 31.7%
	Fluorofentanyl	5	5.3%	0.3%	21.0%	1.3% - 10.6%
	Xylazine	3	7.7%	1.3%	13.8%	-
Duncan 3 total down samples 100% (3/3) benzo-positive	Bromazolam	2	-	3.6%	5.0%	-
	Fentanyl	1	-	-	20.0%	-
	Fluorofentanyl	1	-	-	2.0%	-
	Xylazine	1	-	-	6.6%	-
Port Alberni 2 total down samples 100% (2/2) benzo-positive	Bromazolam	1	-	-	1.2%	-
	Fentanyl	2	-	1.2%	17.6%	-
	Fluorofentanyl	1	-	-	22.5%	-
Substance 248 total down samples 50% (123/248) benzo-positive	Bromazolam	102	3.8%	0.1%	57.8%	1.1% - 6.5%
	Fentanyl	200	12.1%	0.1%	>80%*	4.8% - 19.7%
	Fluorofentanyl	163	4.7%	0.2%	>80%*	1.8% - 13.6%
	Xylazine	16	1.7%	0.2%	13.1%	0.9% - 5.2%
Outreach 70 total down samples 40% (28/70) benzo-positive	Bromazolam	20	3.2%	0.1%	14.1%	0.3% - 6.6%
	Fentanyl	59	8.3%	0.2%	48.5%	3.4% - 15.6%
	Fluorofentanyl	38	6.5%	0.3%	44.0%	3.7% - 10.9%
	Xylazine	7	2.2%	0.3%	>80%*	0.9% - 4.7%

*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.

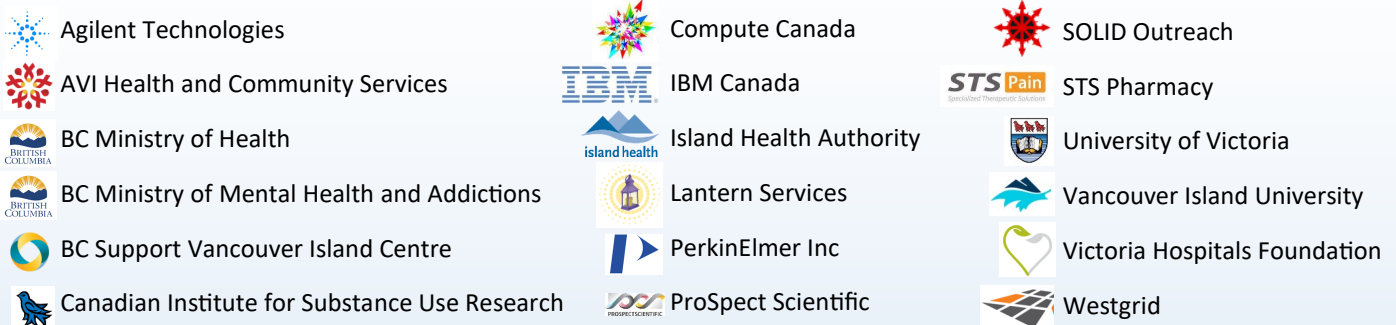
Our project originated on the territories of the lək̓ʷəŋən speaking peoples, including the Songhees and Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) Nations, and the WSÁNEĆ (Saanich) Nations on whose land the University of Victoria is located. Some of the territories we are honoured to work across specifically include: Halalt, 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

