

# Drug Checking in British Columbia

March 2019

This report summarizes key indicators for Fourier Transform Infrared (FT-IR)/fentanyl test strip combination drug checking done in British Columbia in March 2019.

As the FT-IR spectrometer has a detection limit of 3-4% by weight (Sherman et al., 2018), unless otherwise stated, a drug check on any given sample consists of **both** Bruker ALPHA Fourier-Transform Infrared (FT-IR) spectrometer **and** BTNX fentanyl immunoassay test strip testing done in combination. When applicable, BTNX benzodiazepine or lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) immunoassay test strips are also used.

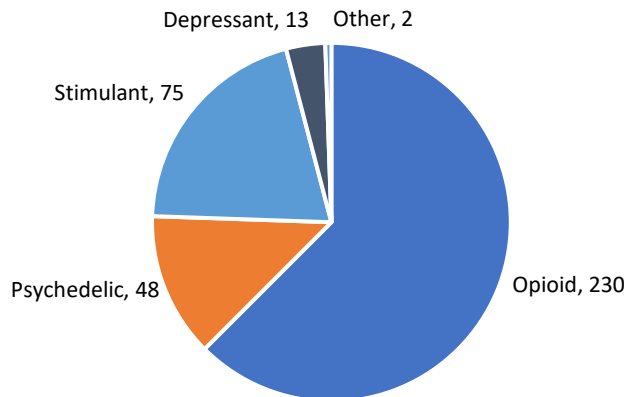
Please note that these data are not finalized and are subject to change.

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*We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following partners:*

- ANKORS
- ASK Wellness Society
- Lookout Society
- Fraser Health
- Interior Health
- Vancouver Coastal Health

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- In March 2019, 391 drug checks were completed on samples in British Columbia
    - 356 drug checks were completed in Vancouver Coastal Health region
    - 26 drug checks were completed in Fraser Health region
    - 9 drug checks were completed in Interior Health Region
  - The majority of samples tested were expected by clients to be either opioids (230 or 58.8%), stimulants (75 or 19.2%), or psychedelics (48 or 12.3%).



**Figure 1.** Number of drug checks performed in BC in March 2019, by expected drug category

<p><b>Depressant</b> may include: benzodiazepines, GHB, zopiclone</p> <p><b>Opioid</b> may include: “down,” heroin, fentanyl, fentanyl analogues, pharmaceutical opioids</p> <p><b>Polysubstance</b> includes: cross-category mixtures</p> <p><b>Psychedelic</b> may include: 2C-family, tryptamines, ketamine, MDMA, LSD, cannabis</p> <p><b>Stimulant</b> may include: “speed”, crystal meth, cocaine, cathinones</p> <p><b>Unknown</b> includes: all samples in which the client could not identify the expected substance</p>
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**Table 1.** Number of samples that matched client expectation using FTIR/test strip drug checking in British Columbia in March 2019, by expected drug category

	Depressant	Opioid	Psychedelic	Stimulant	Other	Unknown	Total
True	11	199	44	74	0	0	328
False	2	31	4	1	0	0	38
N/A	0	0	0	0	0	25	25
Total	13	230	48	75	0	25	391

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

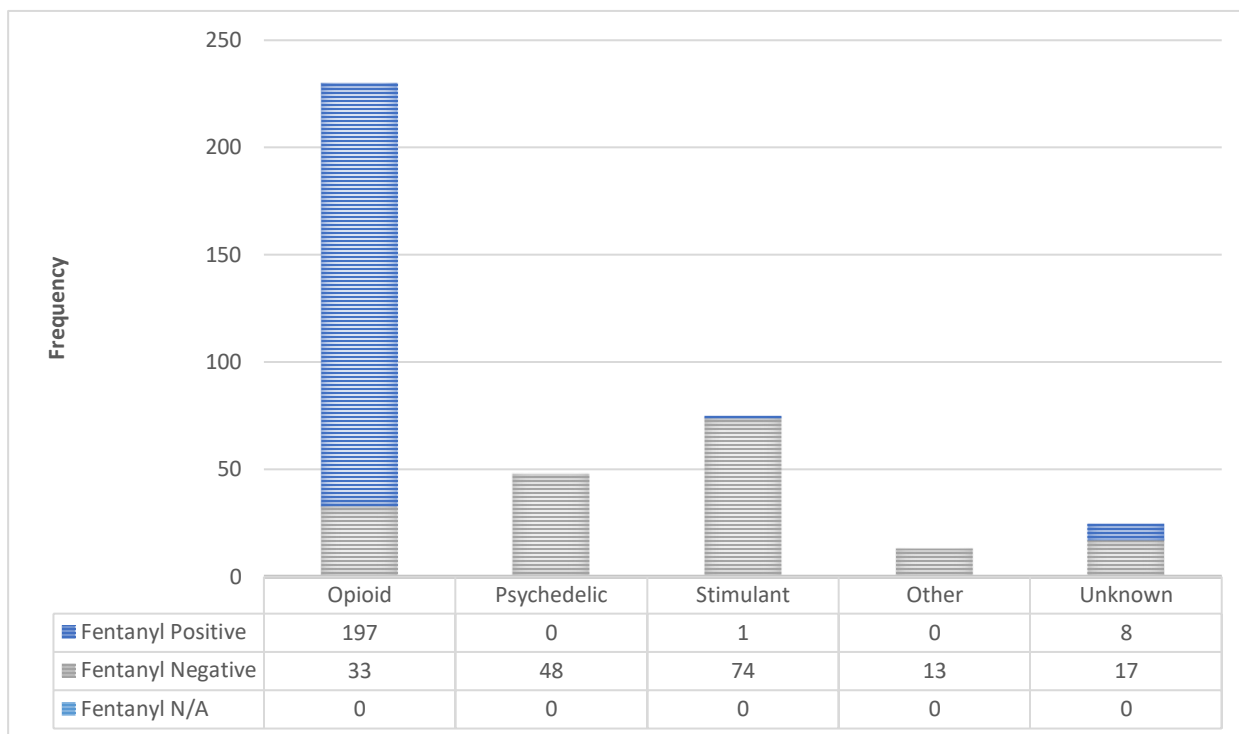
**Table 2.** Number of opioid samples that matched client expectation using FTIR/test strip drug checking in British Columbia in March 2019, by expected drug

	Fentanyl	Heroin	Fentanyl & Heroin	Fentanyl analogue	Opium	Pharmaceutical	'Down'*	Total
True	163	10	13	0	1	0	12	199
False	18	7	4	0	0	1	1	31
N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	181	17	17	0	1	1	13	230

*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*

- 141 opioid samples (61.3%) tested positive for fentanyl using the FT-IR spectrometer
- **The total fentanyl positivity rate in opioid samples was 85.7%**
- Of the 75 stimulant samples, 1 (1.3%) tested positive for fentanyl
- Of the 48 psychedelic samples, 0 (0.0%) tested positive for fentanyl



**Figure 2.** Number of drug checking samples that tested positive and negative for fentanyl in British Columbia, in March 2019, by expected drug category

**Table 3.** Public health notifications of drug checking results in British Columbia in March 2019

Date & Location	Expected Drug	FT-IR Drugs Detected	Fentanyl Strip	Lab Analysis	Outcome
1-Mar 2019 Vancouver	General alert	N/A	Negative	Carfentanil	RADAR alert
4-Mar 2019 SafePoint	“Down”	None (susp carfentanil)	Negative	TBD	RADAR alert
6-Mar 2019 Insite	Fentanyl	None (susp carfentanil)	Negative	Carfentanil	RADAR alert
15-Mar 2019 Insite	Crystal meth caused OD	Crystal meth and unknown	Negative	Crystal meth (pure)	RADAR alert
18-Mar 2019 Insite	Cocaine	Cocaine and fentanyl	Positive	Cocaine and fentanyl	RADAR alert
28-Mar 2019 SafePoint	“Down”	None (susp carfentanil and benzo)	Negative	TBD	RADAR alert

For more immediate notifications of concerning drug checking results, subscribe to VCH’s Real-time Drug Alert and Response System (RADAR) by texting “alert” to (236) 999-DOPE (3673)

