

Results from samples checked by Toronto's drug checking service

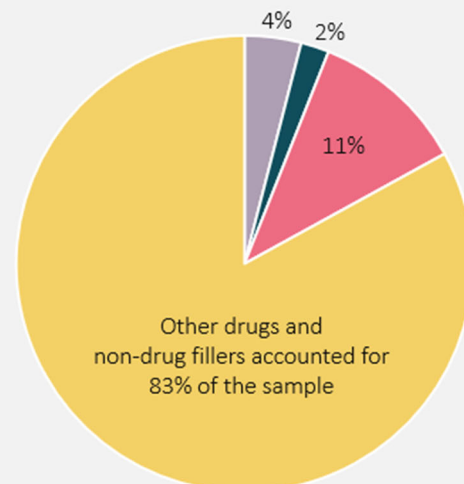
November 20 - December 3, 2021

Key findings

- 98 samples were checked: 63% were substances¹ and 37% were used paraphernalia²
- 69% of the samples checked were expected³ to be fentanyl, cocaine, or MDMA
- 20% of the expected³ fentanyl samples checked were known to be associated with an overdose: almost all contained caffeine, fentanyl, and at least one benzodiazepine-related drug; nearly half contained a nitazene opioid
- 60% of the expected³ fentanyl samples checked contained at least one benzodiazepine-related drug
- 16% of the expected³ fentanyl samples checked contained at least one nitazene opioid
- [Yellow fentanyl samples](#) collected in Toronto's downtown east and associated with severe overdoses were found to contain combinations of fentanyl and flualprazolam (high-potency benzodiazepine-related drug) or flualprazolam and etonitazepine (nitazene opioid considered to be 10 times stronger than fentanyl)

In an average fentanyl substance:

- Fentanyl accounted for 4% of the sample (n=14)
- Etizolam accounted for 2% of the sample (n=2)
- Caffeine accounted for 11% of the sample (n=11)



Toronto's drug checking service now reports the amount of fentanyl, carfentanil, etizolam, caffeine, and cocaine found in expected opioid powder substances.³

Expected fentanyl substances

- 72% (13) of expected³ fentanyl substances checked⁴ **contained fentanyl and other drugs**, including:
 - 92% (12) contained caffeine
 - 31% (4) contained a benzodiazepine-related drug (!):
 - 23% (3) contained etizolam (!)
 - 8% (1) contained flualprazolam (!)

- 15% (2) contained despropionyl fentanyl (4-ANPP) (!)

Unexpected noteworthy drugs found in other expected substances

- 16% (7) of the remaining substances checked,⁴ meaning substances that weren't expected³ to be fentanyl, **contained an unexpected noteworthy drug**, including:
 - 25% (3) of **expected cocaine** substances contained phenacetin (!)
 - 8% (1) of **expected cocaine** substances contained levamisole (!)
 - 100% (2) of **expected crack cocaine** substances contained phenacetin (!)
 - 100% (1) of **expected heroin** substances contained fentanyl (!)
 - 100% (1) of **expected heroin** substances contained phenacetin (!)

Notes

1 | Substances: Two types of samples are accepted by Toronto's drug checking service: substances and used paraphernalia. Substances could be a small amount of powder, crystals, or rocks, a crushed bit of a pill, blotter, or a small amount of liquid.

2 | Used paraphernalia: Two types of samples are accepted by Toronto's drug checking service: substances and used paraphernalia. Used paraphernalia could be a used cooker or filter, or leftover liquid from a syringe.

3 | Expected (drug): When a sample is submitted to be checked, the drug that sample was bought or got as is recorded. We call it the "expected drug". Knowing the expected drug helps us tailor our harm reduction advice. It also helps us understand contamination to drugs rather than combinations of drugs (e.g., fentanyl was found in a cocaine sample rather than fentanyl and cocaine were found together).

4 | Reason for reporting only substance samples: While Toronto's drug checking service checks both substances and used paraphernalia, we're sharing findings from substances only. Paraphernalia, like cookers, are often re-used. The mass spectrometry technologies used for this drug checking service are so sensitive that very trace amounts of drugs may be found. This means that when paraphernalia is re-used, drugs from past use may present in the results for the sample that is being checked. This can interfere with up-to-date drug supply monitoring, so we've excluded used paraphernalia from this report.

5 | Average amount of drugs found: Toronto's drug checking service can now report the amount of fentanyl, cocaine, carfentanil, etizolam, and caffeine found as a proportion of the total sample submitted for expected opioid, cocaine, crack cocaine and some other powder substance samples. Every other week, we will publicly report the average (median) amount of fentanyl, cocaine, carfentanil, etizolam, and caffeine found in expected fentanyl substances. More information is available on our website.

6 | Isotonitazene/protonitazene: Because isotonitazene and protonitazene have a very similar chemical structure, it is not currently possible for Toronto's drug checking service to differentiate between the two. For this reason, we report the two drugs together.

(!) | Unexpected noteworthy drug: "Noteworthy drugs" are drugs that (i) are linked to overdose or other adverse effects, (ii) are highly potent or related to highly potent drugs, or (iii) may not be desired by some clients. Noteworthy drugs are flagged when they are unexpectedly found in checked samples.

Toronto's drug checking service offers people who use drugs timely and detailed information on the contents of their drugs using the most sophisticated lab-based technologies. Interact with our drug checking data [online](#) – it's updated every other week. [Sign up](#) to receive reports, alerts, and other information on Toronto's unregulated drug supply.

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