

## Results from samples checked by Toronto's drug checking service

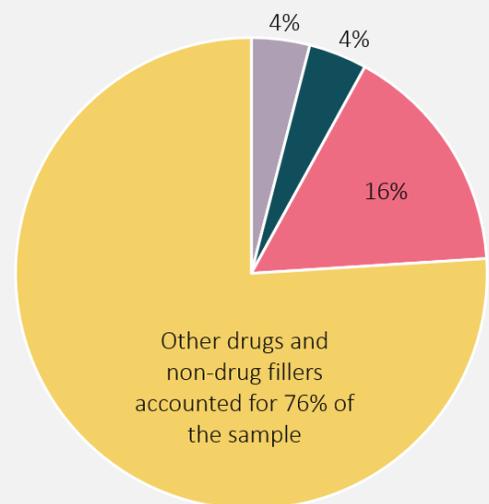
April 23 – May 6, 2022

### Key findings

- 131 samples were checked: 81% were substances<sup>1</sup> and 19% were used equipment<sup>2</sup>
- 66% of the samples checked were expected<sup>3</sup> to be fentanyl, ketamine, or cocaine
- 14% of the expected<sup>3</sup> fentanyl samples checked were known to be associated with an overdose: all contained a high-potency opioid (fentanyl and/or a nitazene opioid) – some also contained other central nervous system and respiratory depressants, like benzodiazepine-related drugs or xylazine
- 38% of the expected<sup>3</sup> fentanyl samples checked contained at least one benzodiazepine-related drug
- 16% of the expected<sup>3</sup> fentanyl samples checked contained xylazine
- 11% of the expected<sup>3</sup> fentanyl samples checked contained at least one nitazene opioid
- **9% (5 of 56) of the expected<sup>3</sup> fentanyl samples checked contained carfentanil – an opioid approximately 100 times stronger than fentanyl:** all contained fentanyl and caffeine, three contained flualprazolam (a benzodiazepine-related drug); three of the five samples were red in colour, one was clear, and the other was yellow/orange. Most were collected in the downtown core. Since carfentanil is so strong, the risk of overdose is increased, and greater than normal doses of naloxone may be required to rouse individuals experiencing an overdose.

### In an average fentanyl substance:

- Fentanyl accounted for 4% of the sample (n=31)
- Etizolam accounted for 4% of the sample (n=1)
- Caffeine accounted for 16% of the sample (n=31)



Toronto's drug checking service reports the amount of fentanyl, carfentanil, etizolam, caffeine, and cocaine found in expected opioid powder substances.<sup>5</sup>

### Expected fentanyl substances

- 83% (30) of expected<sup>3</sup> fentanyl substances checked<sup>4</sup> **contained fentanyl and other drugs**, including:
  - 100% (30) contained caffeine

- 40% (12) contained a benzodiazepine-related drug (!):
  - 20% (6) contained flualprazolam (!)
  - 17% (5) contained bromazolam (!)
  - 7% (2) contained etizolam (!)
- 20% (6) contained despropionyl fentanyl (4-ANPP) (!)
- 10% (3) contained carfentanil (!)
- 7% (2) contained a nitazene opioid (!):
  - 3% (1) contained etodesnitazene (!)
  - 3% (1) contained isotonitazene/protonitazene<sup>6</sup> (!)
  - 3% (1) contained metonitazene (!)
- 7% (2) contained xylazine (!)
- 3% (1) contained furanyl UF-17 (opioid-related) (!)

### Unexpected noteworthy drugs found in other expected substances

- 4% (3) of the remaining substances checked,<sup>4</sup> meaning substances that weren't expected<sup>3</sup> to be fentanyl, **contained an unexpected noteworthy drug**, including:
  - 17% (2) of **expected cocaine substances** contained phenacetin (!)
  - 50% (1) of **expected crack cocaine substances** contained phenacetin (!)

### Notes

**1 | Substances:** Two types of samples are accepted by Toronto's drug checking service: substances and used drug equipment. 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 equipment:** Two types of samples are accepted by Toronto's drug checking service: substances and used drug equipment. Used equipment 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 equipment, drug equipment – 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 equipment 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 noted when we exclude used equipment from this report.

**5 | Average amount of drugs found:** Toronto's drug checking service can 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 include the average (median) amount of fentanyl, cocaine, carfentanil, etizolam, and caffeine found in expected fentanyl substances in our report. 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 service users. Noteworthy drugs are flagged when they are unexpectedly found in checked samples.

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*Toronto's drug checking service is a public health service that aims to reduce the harms associated with substance use and, specifically, to prevent overdose by offering people who use drugs timely and detailed information on the contents of their drugs. Beyond educating individual service users, results for all samples are combined, analyzed, and publicly disseminated every other week to communicate drug market trends and inform care for people who use drugs, advocacy, policy, and research. [Sign up](#) to receive reports, alerts, and other information on Toronto's unregulated drug supply.*

(e) [drugchecking@cdpe.org](mailto:drugchecking@cdpe.org) | (t) [@drugpolicyctr](#) | (f) [facebook.com/centreondrugpolicyevaluation](https://facebook.com/centreondrugpolicyevaluation)

