# Community Drug Checking in Washington State

**Ben Biamont, Leif Layman**

**Georgia Phillips**

January 27, 2026

- Only panelists and hosts can share video and audio.
- Please enter your comments and questions in the chat or the Q&A section.
- Be respectful and stay curious.

- The WA **C**ommunity **D**rug **C**hecking **N**etwork overview

- WA CDCN Technician's Perspective

- Recent drug checking results

- Q&A

- Resources

- Partnership of organizations around WA State that provide community-level drug checking and related harm reduction services.

- ADAI provides operational support and technical assistance  in collaboration with Public Health – Seattle & King County.

- UW Work Funded by WA State Health Care Authority.

ADAI
ADDICTIONS, DRUG & ALCOHOL INSTITUTE

W
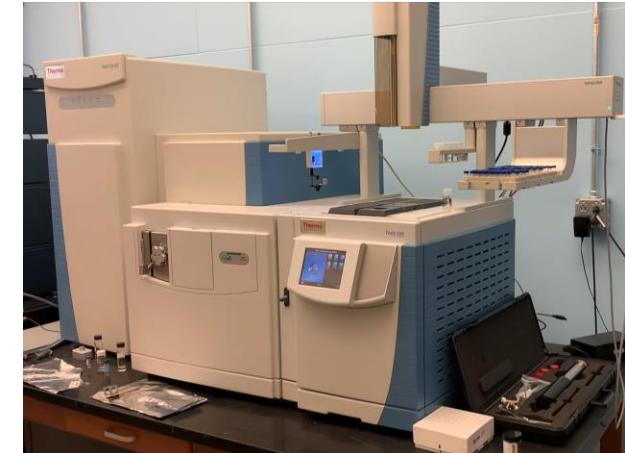
## Fourier-transform Infrared Spectrometer

- Appx. 10 min. per sample
- Appx. 10mg sample
- Detects Cuts/Buffs i.e. sugars,
- Appx. 5% detection limit
- Difficulty w/ Analogs
- Difficulty w/ liquids & plant material

## Immunoassay Test Strips

- Low limit of detection
- Appx. 5mg sample
- Binary results
- Off-label use
- QC concerns
- Cross Reactivity

## GC/MS

- No purity or quantitative results
- Sample preparation
- Results available 2-3 weeks
- Detects trace amounts
- Best for Psychoactive Substances

## DaRT-MS

- Quick process
- Results in appx. 3 days
- Spectra library in progress

**Eight sites** that use:

- Immunoassay test strips

- Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR)

- Secondary lab testing via Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry  (GCMS)  [Most samples]

**Three sites** that use:

- Immunoassay test strips ONLY (no FTIR)

- Secondary lab testing via Direct Analysis in Real Time-Mass Spectrometry (DART-MS)  [Most samples]
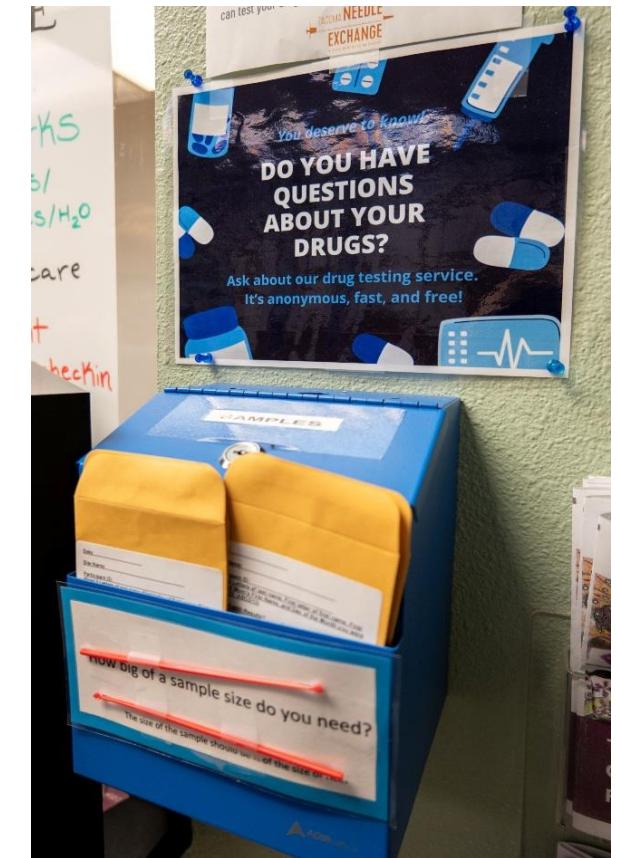
Conversations with trained health educator/technician:

- Drug checking process & results
- Discuss local, recent drug supply
- Safety planning based upon client's results

**We will never tell someone their drugs are safe!**

Voluntary, anonymous information collected from client about drug sample:

- Sold as ____
- Ill effects ____
- Obtained locally

Drug Checking Technician – a trained health educator who specializes in providing drug checking services.

Activities include:

- Collecting samples and related information
- Operating FTIR and Immunoassay strips
- Relaying preliminary & secondary results
- Maintaining up to date knowledge on drugs & drug supply
- Communicating w/ coworkers and local community partners e.g. health providers, EMS, etc.

**What to expect when…**

Someone is getting their <u>meth</u> checked

• Test strips used? FTIR every time?

• What are you looking for?

• Examples of related health education

**What to expect when…**

Someone is getting their <u>fentanyl</u> checked

• Test strips used? FTIR every time?

• What are you looking for?

• Examples of related health education

ADAI
ADDICTIONS, DRUG &
ALCOHOL INSTITUTE

- Client level information provides essential context missing in other drug related data sources. e.g. deaths, police evidence

- Timely, initial results same day, secondary results within weeks. Other data sources often lag many months.

- Participants get information around their own samples

- Information for local and state community about new and changing drug supply issues

Overview of data

- What substance was "sold as"

- Which substances were detected

- Variability in fentanyl supply

ADAI
ADDICTIONS, DRUG &
ALCOHOL INSTITUTE

W
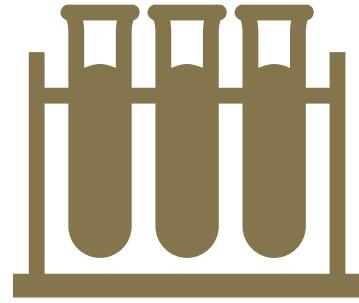
**2820**

**Samples checked**
on-site

**1785**

**Samples sent**
for lab analysis

**186**

**Unique substances**
detected

Samples Checked On-site Only versus those sent for Laboratory Analysis by Sold As Drug

■ On-Site Drug Checking (N = 2820)　　■ Laboratory Drug Checking (N = 1785)



| Sold As Drug | On-Site Drug Checking | Laboratory Drug Checking |
|---|---|---|
| Benzodiazepine | 95 (100%) | 85 (89%) |
| Cocaine | 191 (100%) | 132 (69%) |
| Fentanyls | 1233 (100%) | 890 (72%) |
| Heroin | 75 (100%) | 65 (87%) |
| Ketamine | 94 (100%) | 73 (78%) |
| MDMA | 111 (100%) | 97 (87%) |
| Methamphetamine | 1021 (100%) | 443 (43%) |

ADAI
ADDICTIONS, DRUG & ALCOHOL INSTITUTE

Substances detected in Samples Sold as Methamphetamine
**N = 443**
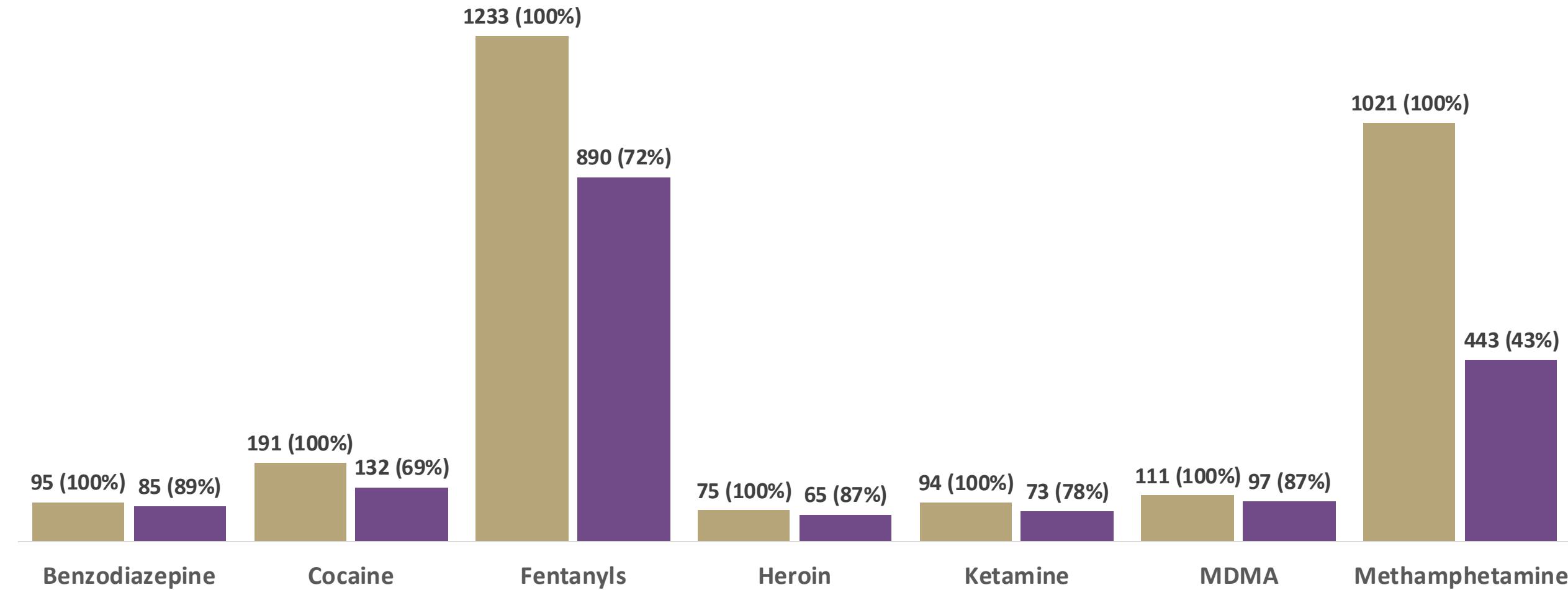
- Almost all samples contain methamphetamine

- Some samples also contain MSM
  (a joint supplement)

- Other psychoactive present = Rare (*may reflect cross-contamination*)

**432 (98%)**

**58 (13%)**

**7 (2%)**

**4 (1%)**

Methamphetamine

MSM
(dimethyl sulfone)

Cocaine

Fentanyls

ADAI
ADDICTIONS, DRUG &
ALCOHOL INSTITUTE
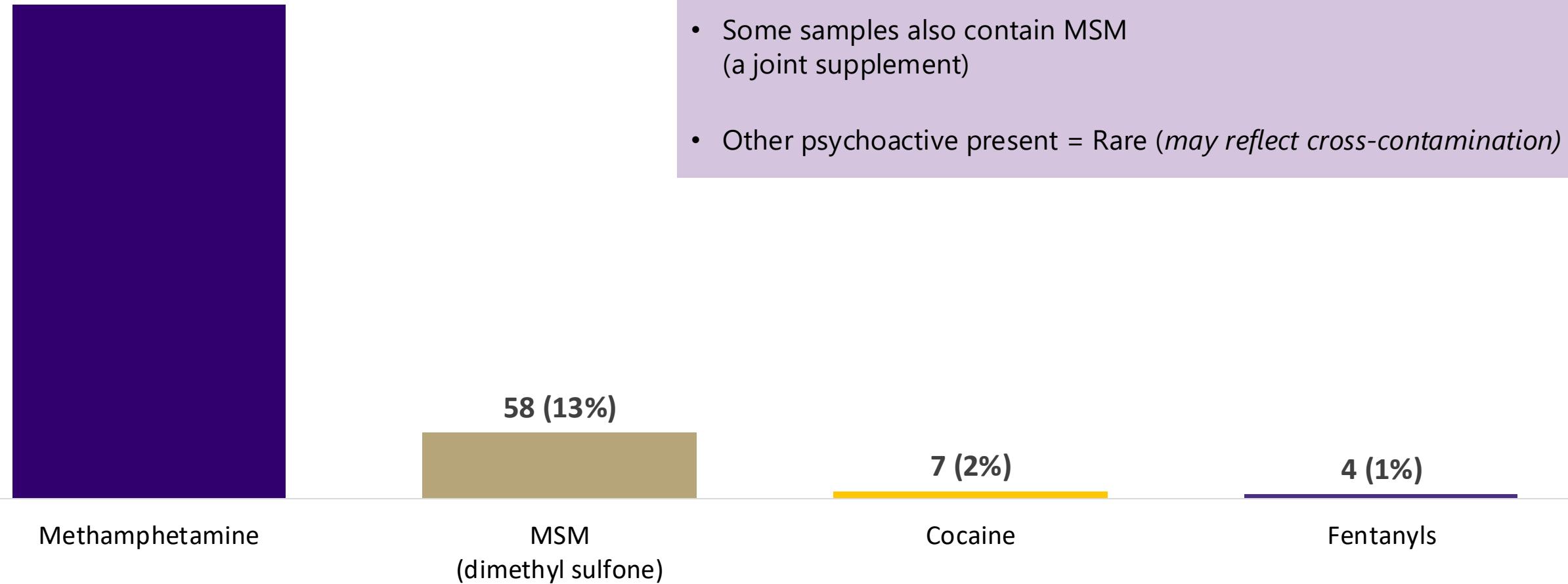
## Substances detected in Samples Sold as Fentanyl Powder/Rock
### N = 783

- Powdered fentanyl is most common sample form
- Most samples contain fentanyl or a fentanyl analogue
- Common fillers include acetaminophen and anesthetic (e.g., lidocaine)
- Adulterants of interest include sedatives/tranquilizers: xylazine and medetomidine

| Substance | Count (%) |
|---|---|
| Fentanyls | 758 (97%) |
| Acetaminophen | 216 (28%) |
| Anesthetics | 185 (24%) |
| BTMPS | 114 (15%) |
| Xylazine | 72 (9%) |
| Medetomidine | 45 (6%) |
| Fentanyl Analogue | 40 (5%) |
| Meth. | 39 (5%) |
| Cocaine | 25 (3%) |



ADAI
ADDICTIONS, DRUG & ALCOHOL INSTITUTE

W

Substances detected in Samples Sold as Fentanyl

**N = 890**
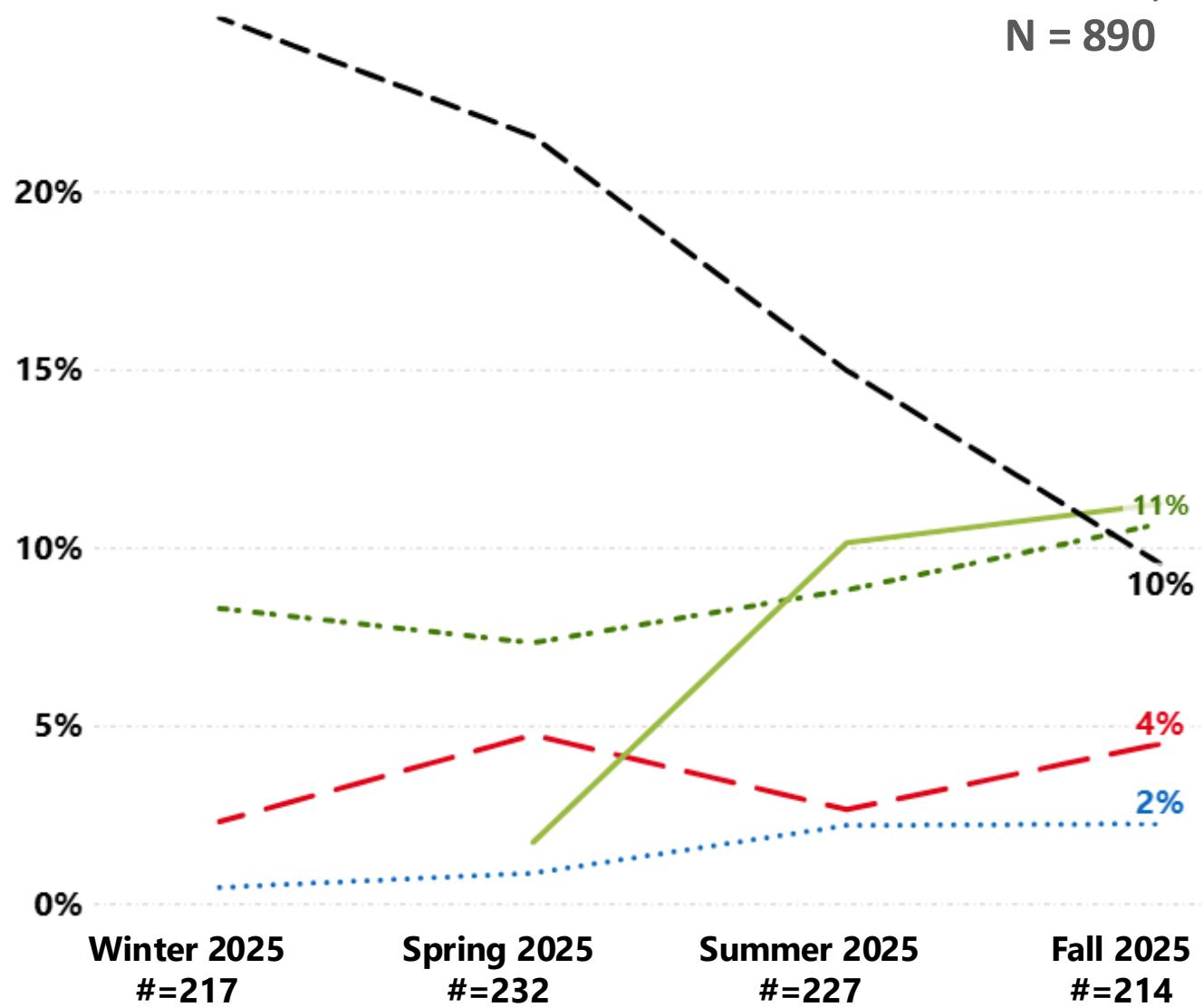


*Not mutually exclusive*

**11% - Medetomidine (Strong sedative)**
First detected in Spring 2025, surpassed xylazine

**11% - Xylazine (Strong sedative)**
Substantial fraction after decrease in Q1-Q2 2025.

**10% - BTMPS (Industrial chem. - effect unknown)**
Substantially decreased

**4% - No fentanyl-type drug**
Few samples, inconsistent.

**2% - Strong fentanyl analogues***
Few samples, low proportion of supply.

*Includes carfentanil and methyl fentanyl*

Winter 2025 #=217    Spring 2025 #=232    Summer 2025 #=227    Fall 2025 #=214

Drug checking provides important information for:

- People who use drugs (PWUD)

- Organizations and people who served PWUD

- Local and state planners, public health, health care providers

Drug checking provides an opportunity to

- <u>engage a broader group of people</u> beyond homeless services or syringe services programs and

- <u>provide important information</u> and services to stay safe

More WA CDCN Data:
- Drug Checking Results in WA State
- Variability in the Fentanyl Supply
- Information on Carfentanil in WA State

Drug Checking Factsheets:
- Summary for general public
- Summary for drug checking participants

Humanizing Images & Education for harm reduction:
- Empathy Lens

Questions about community drug checking operations:
    Ben Biamont: bbiamont@uw.edu

Questions about drug checking data:
    Leif Layman: llayman@uw.edu

Technician specific questions:
    Georgia Phillips: gphillips@kingcounty.gov