

Cannabis prices decline as availability increases

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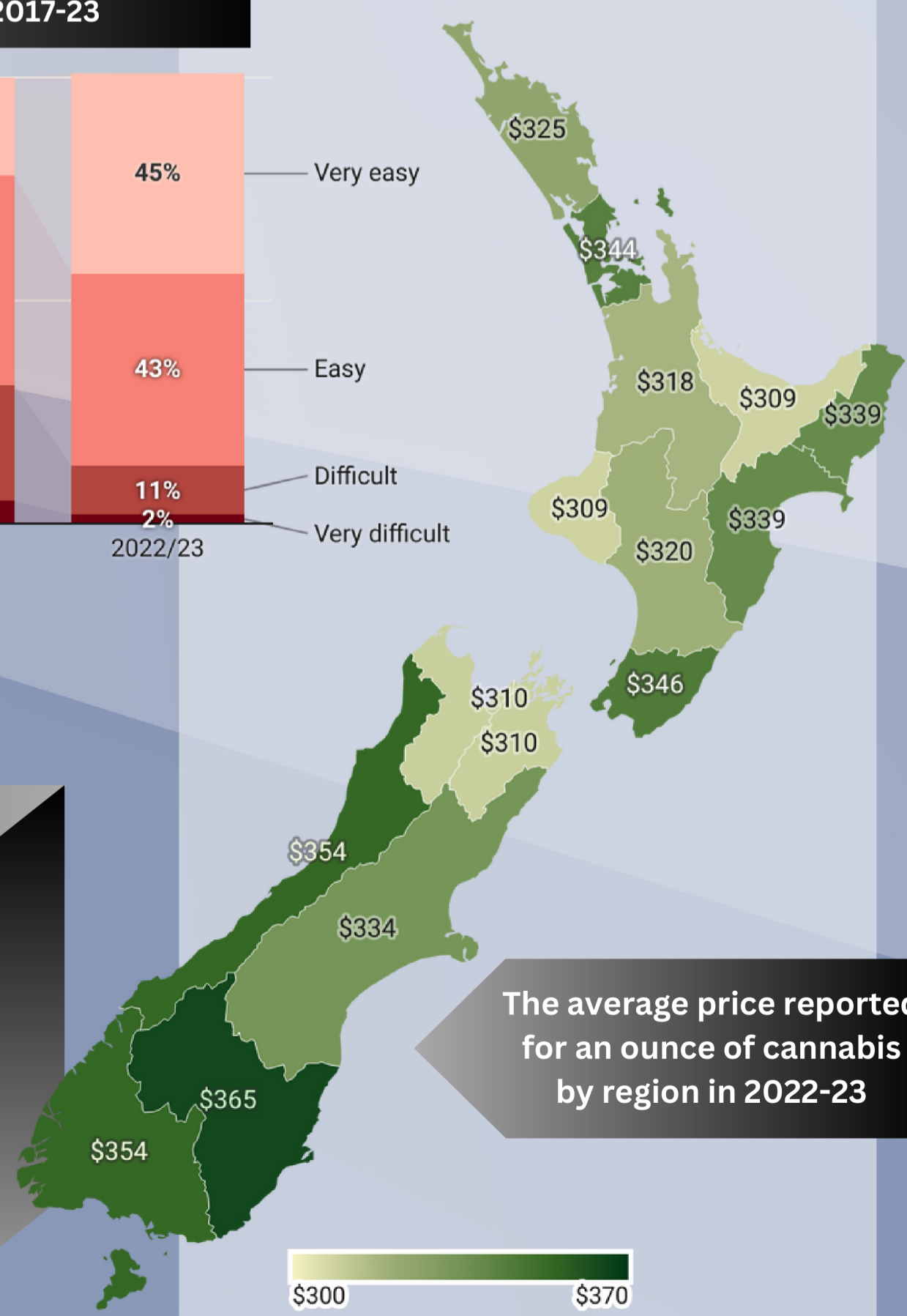
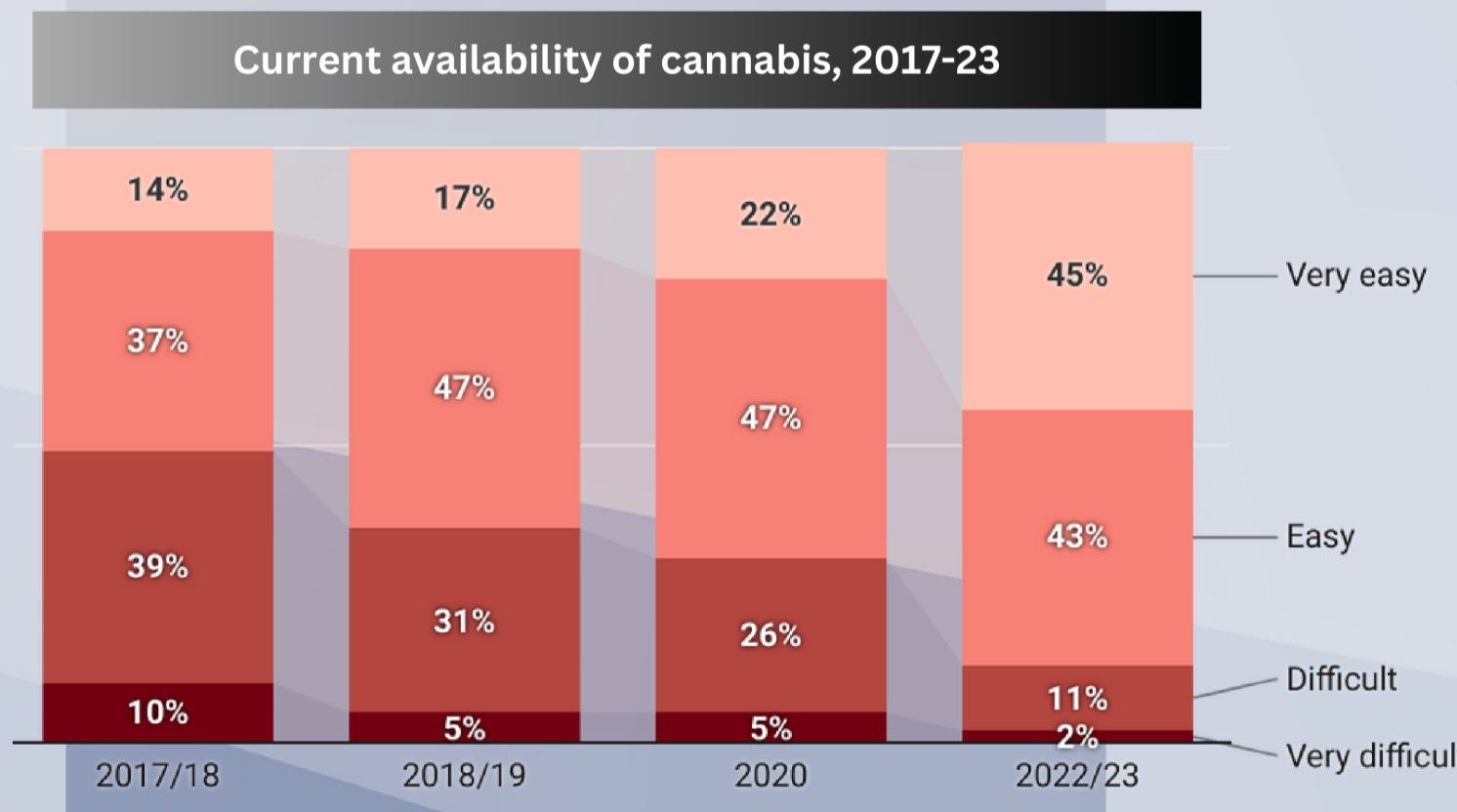
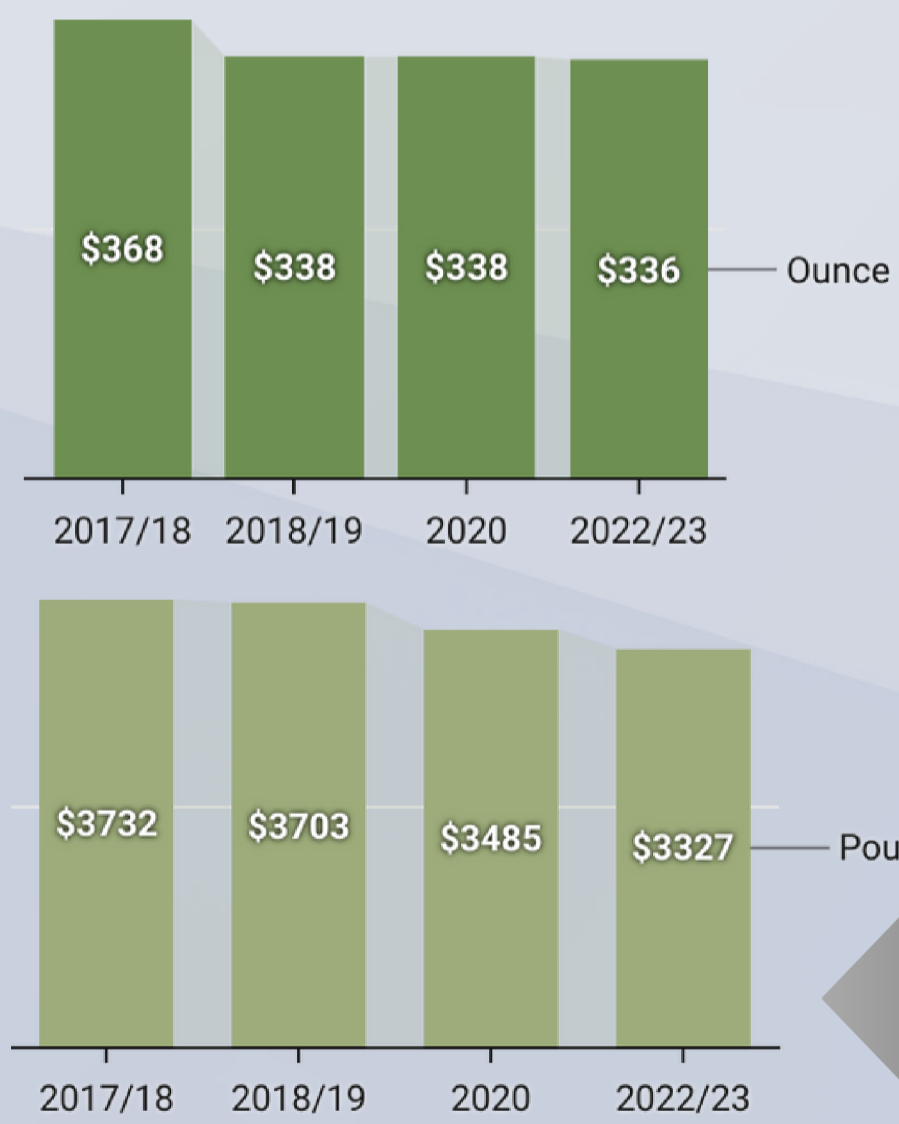
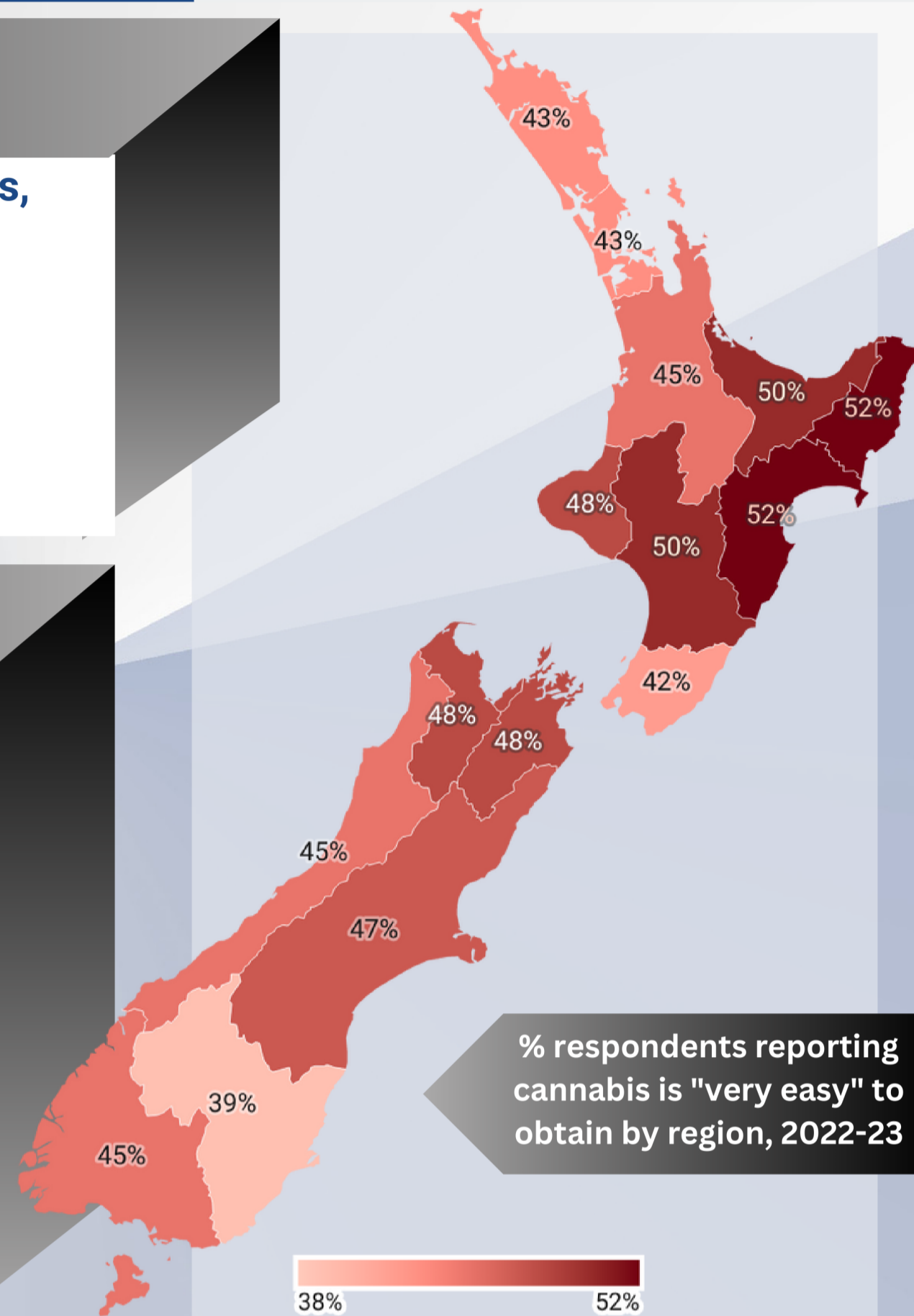
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Key findings

- Cannabis has been increasing in availability over the past four years, with a sharp increase in the past year
- Availability of cannabis was highest in Gisborne/Hawke's Bay, Manawatu-Wanganui, and Bay of Plenty
- The price of cannabis has declined slightly in recent years
- The price of cannabis was lowest in Tasman/Nelson/Marlborough, Taranaki and Bay of Plenty

Methods

The New Zealand Drug Trends Survey (NZDTS) is an anonymous online convenience survey designed to provide an annual snapshot of drug market trends in Aotearoa New Zealand. It surveys a very large number of people with recent experience and knowledge of drug use and drug markets across the country (i.e., key experts). The NZDTS is promoted via a targeted Facebook advertising campaign over a period of several months. Completed surveys are audited based on the extent and quality of completion. The 2022/23 survey ran from August 2022 to February 2023, and achieved a final sample of 13,026. While the NZDTS is not intended to be a representative survey, it has a sample that broadly represents the demographic profile and regional population distribution of NZ (see Bulletin 6 for details). However, related to the aims of the survey, the NZDTS sample reports much higher levels of drug use (see Bulletin 7) and is younger than the general population. For more details on methods see, Wilkins et al. (2020) Determinants of the retail price of illegal drugs in New Zealand. *International Journal of Drug Policy*. 79, 1-10.



Discussion

The steady increase in availability and decline in the price of cannabis in New Zealand may reflect the reprioritisation of drug enforcement away from cannabis cultivation towards methamphetamine manufacture and trafficking. It may also reflect growing social acceptance of cannabis use, including recognition of medicinal benefits, and recent public debates around recreational cannabis law reform. It will be interesting to see how these trends develop in the wake of the scaling back of cannabis crop eradication operations, and the ongoing implementation of the Medicinal Cannabis Scheme (2020) and Misuse of Drugs Amendment Act (2019).