

Increasing darknet purchasing from domestic vendors

Chris Wilkins, Marta Rychert, Robin van der Sanden, Jose S. Romeo & Thomas Graydon Guy

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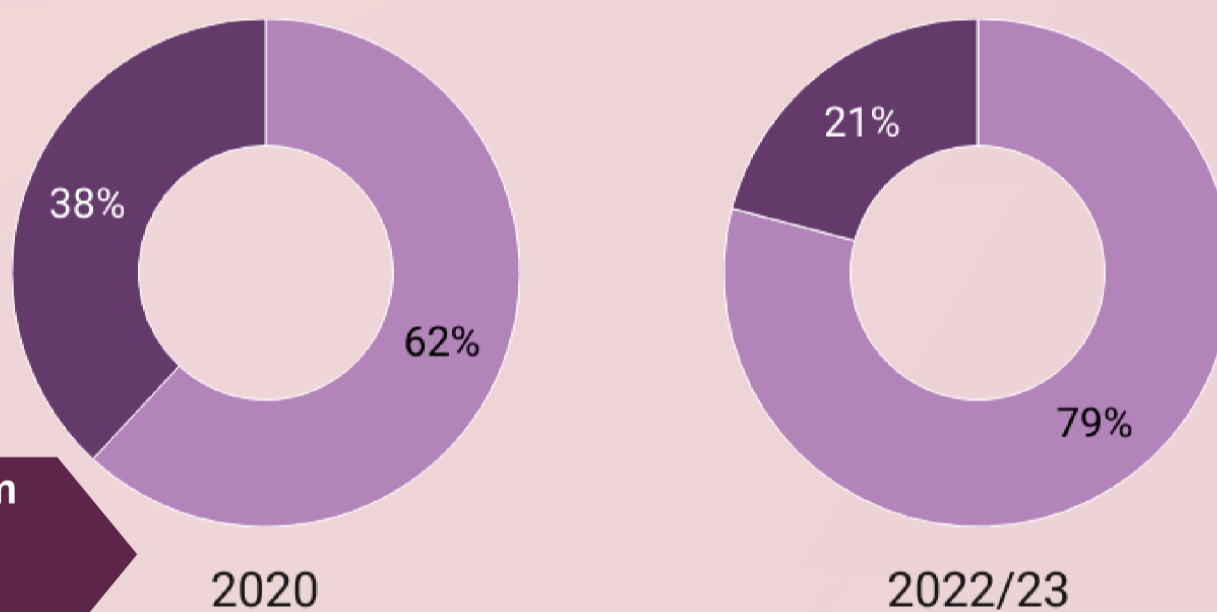
Key findings

- In 2022/23, 2% of respondents had purchased drugs from the darknet in the past 6 months, the same proportion as in 2020
- There was a significant decline in the number of respondents reporting buying drugs from international vendors on the darknet compared to 2020
- Just under half of darknet purchasers had bought LSD/psychedelics from the darknet in the previous six months, followed by MDMA/ecstasy and cannabis
- Only a small minority had purchased meth from the darknet in the past 6 months

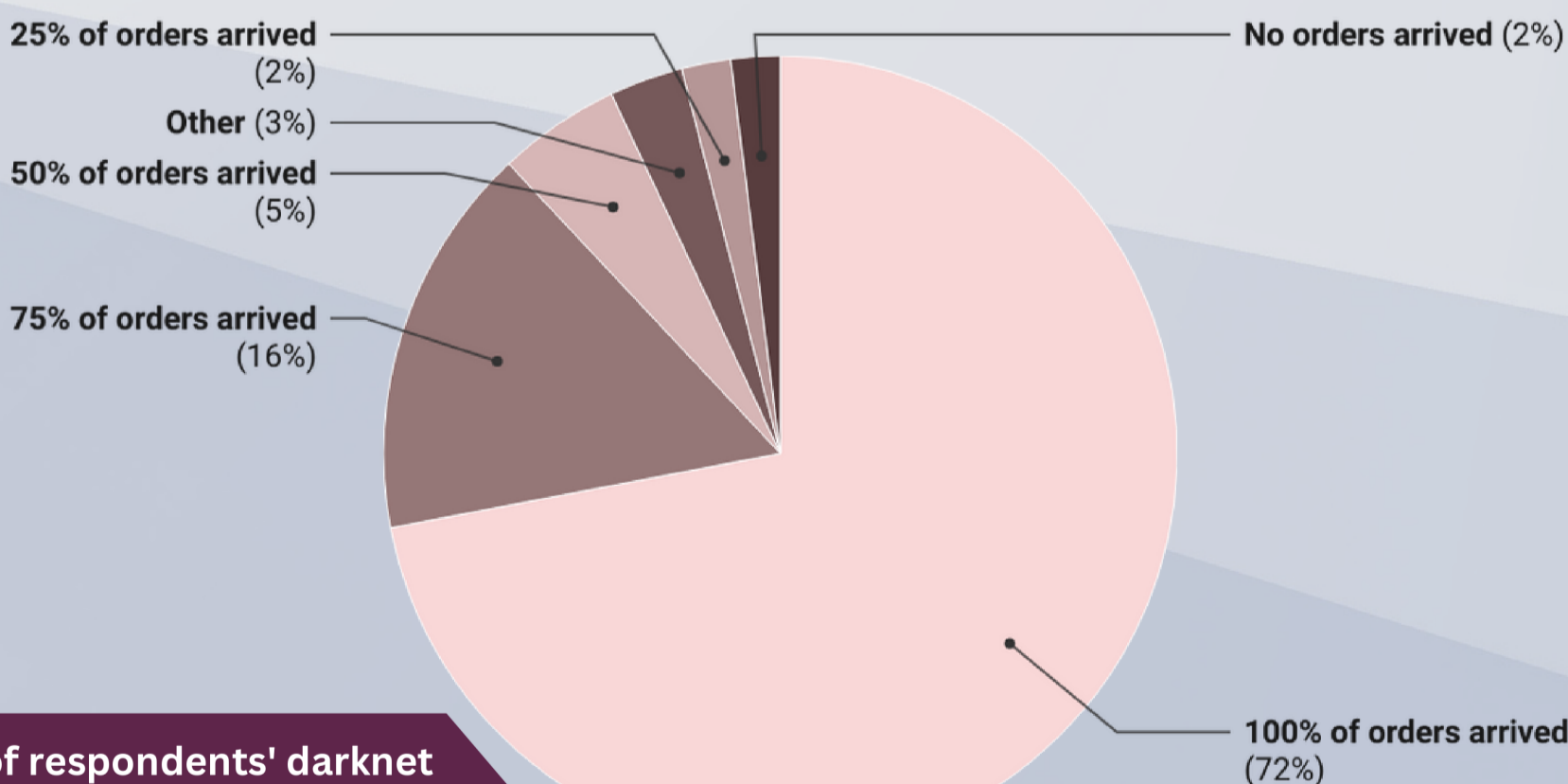
Methods

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.

■ NZ vendor
■ International

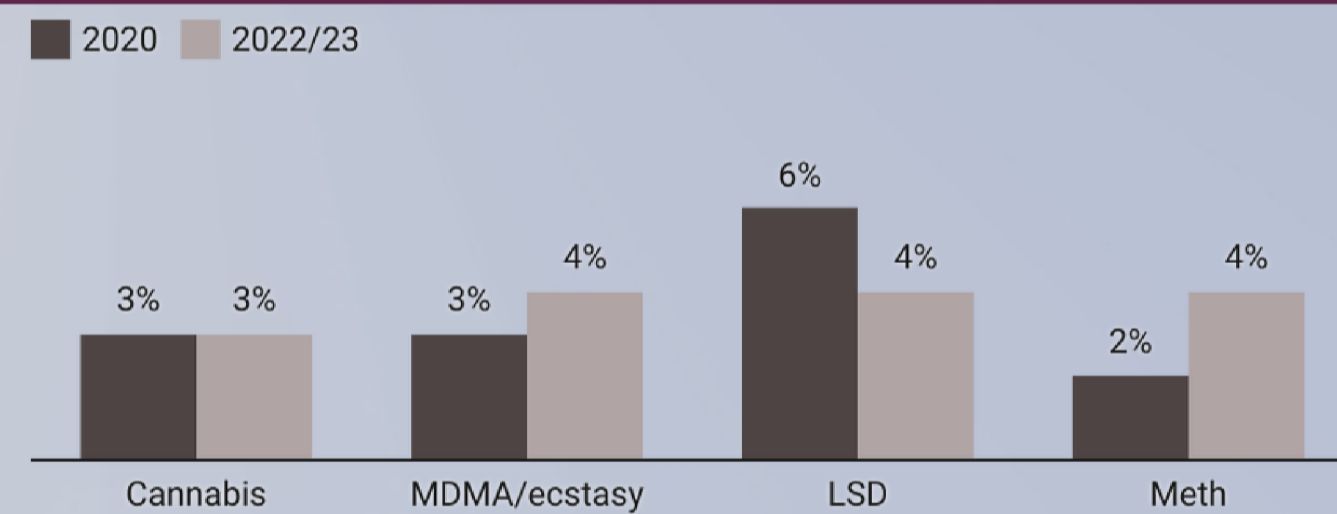


Rates of purchasing from local and international vendors, 2020-23

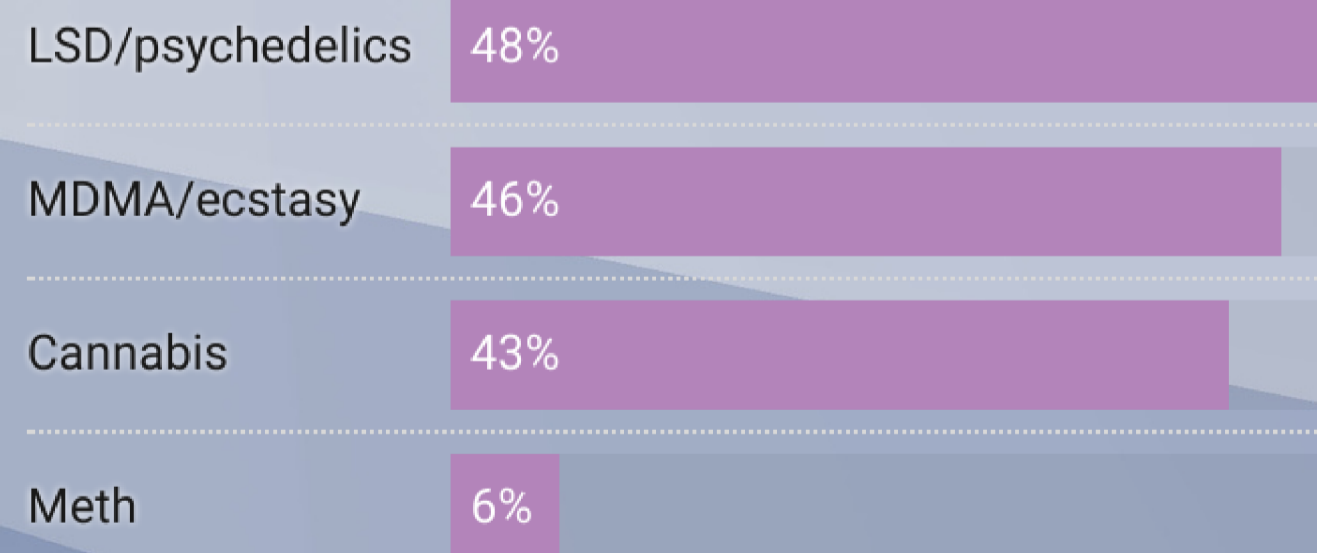


% of respondents' darknet orders that arrived successfully, 2022-23

% of drug purchasers who used the darknet to buy a drug type in the past 6 months, 2020-23



Drug types most often purchased from the darknet among darknet buyers, 2022-23 (n=312)



Note: The NZDTS survey only asks about drug purchasing specifically in relation to the above drug types. This means purchasing of other drug types via the darknet (e.g., ketamine, cocaine, NPS) is not captured in this survey design.

Discussion

Darknets appear to play a boutique drug supply role in the New Zealand drug market, mirroring the international situation. Drug types like MDMA and LSD, which are typically manufactured in distant countries, are commonly purchased from darknets, and are increasing resold in local markets. The emergence of NZ's own darknet market "Tor Market" has likely facilitated more purchasing from domestic, rather than international, darknet vendors, hereby reducing the risk of packages being seized by customs. Darknets may therefore be having a subtle but significant impact on the drug types available and drug preferences in New Zealand over the longer term. Tor Market recently announced it would close temporarily to allow work on an enhanced site and it will be interesting to see whether it does indeed open again and what impact its ("temporary") closure may have on drug purchasing in NZ.