

# Cocaine availability increasing in urban centres

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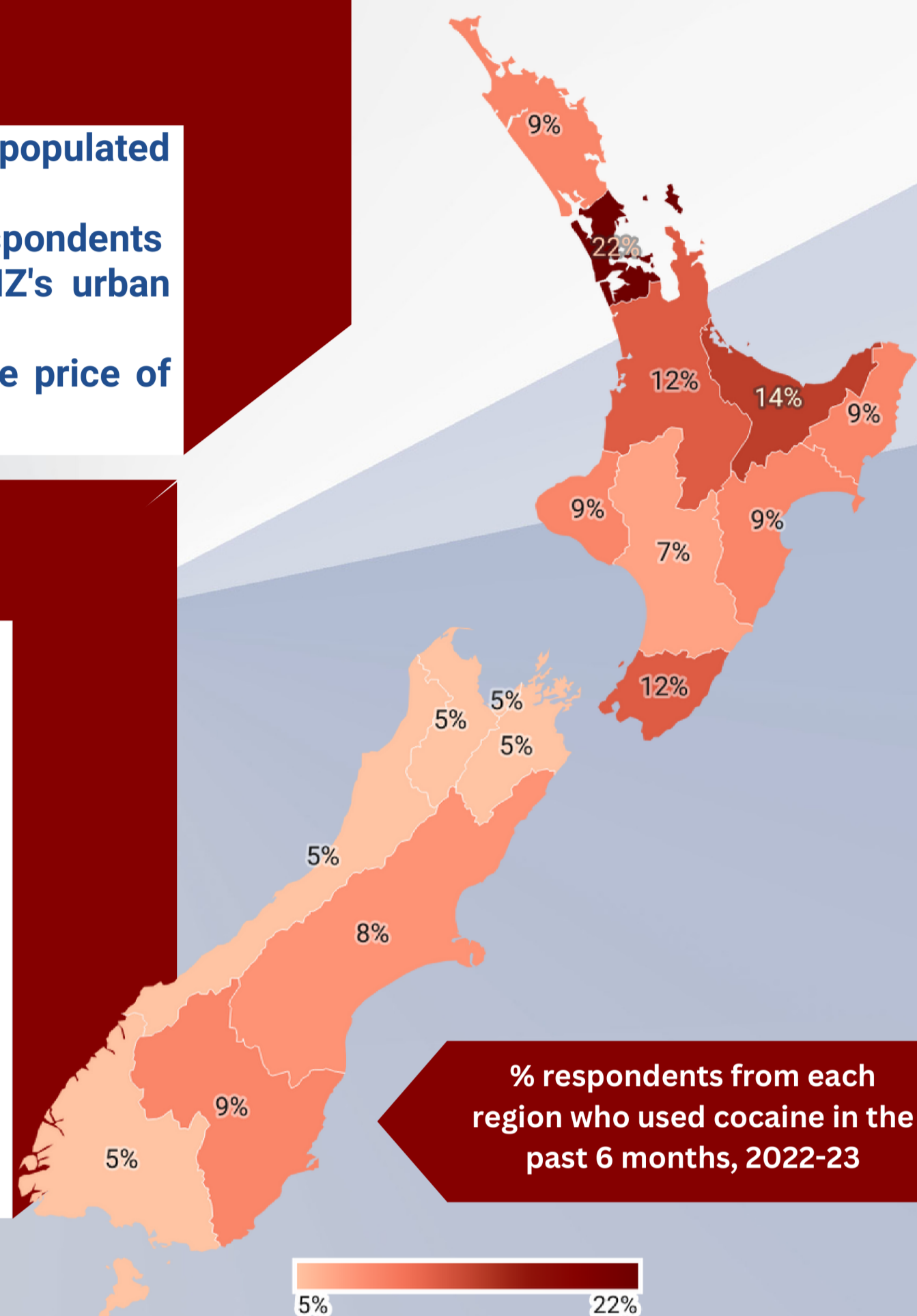
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## Key findings

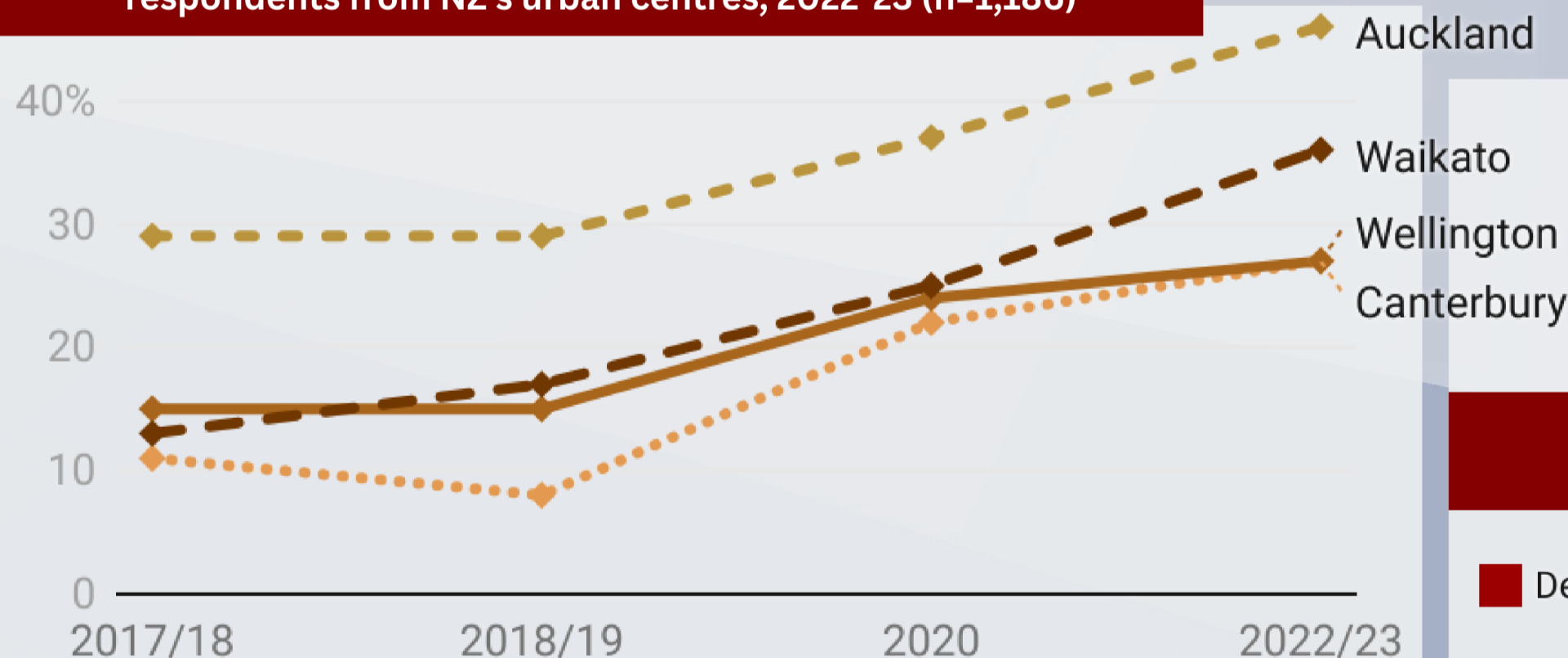
- Cocaine availability has been gradually increasing in more densely populated regions
- Auckland had the highest reported use of cocaine among survey respondents
- In 2022/23, there was a downward trend in respondents from NZ's urban centres reporting cocaine was "difficult" or "very difficult" to get
- In 2022/23, a greater proportion of respondents indicated that the price of cocaine was increasing compared to previous survey samples

## Methods

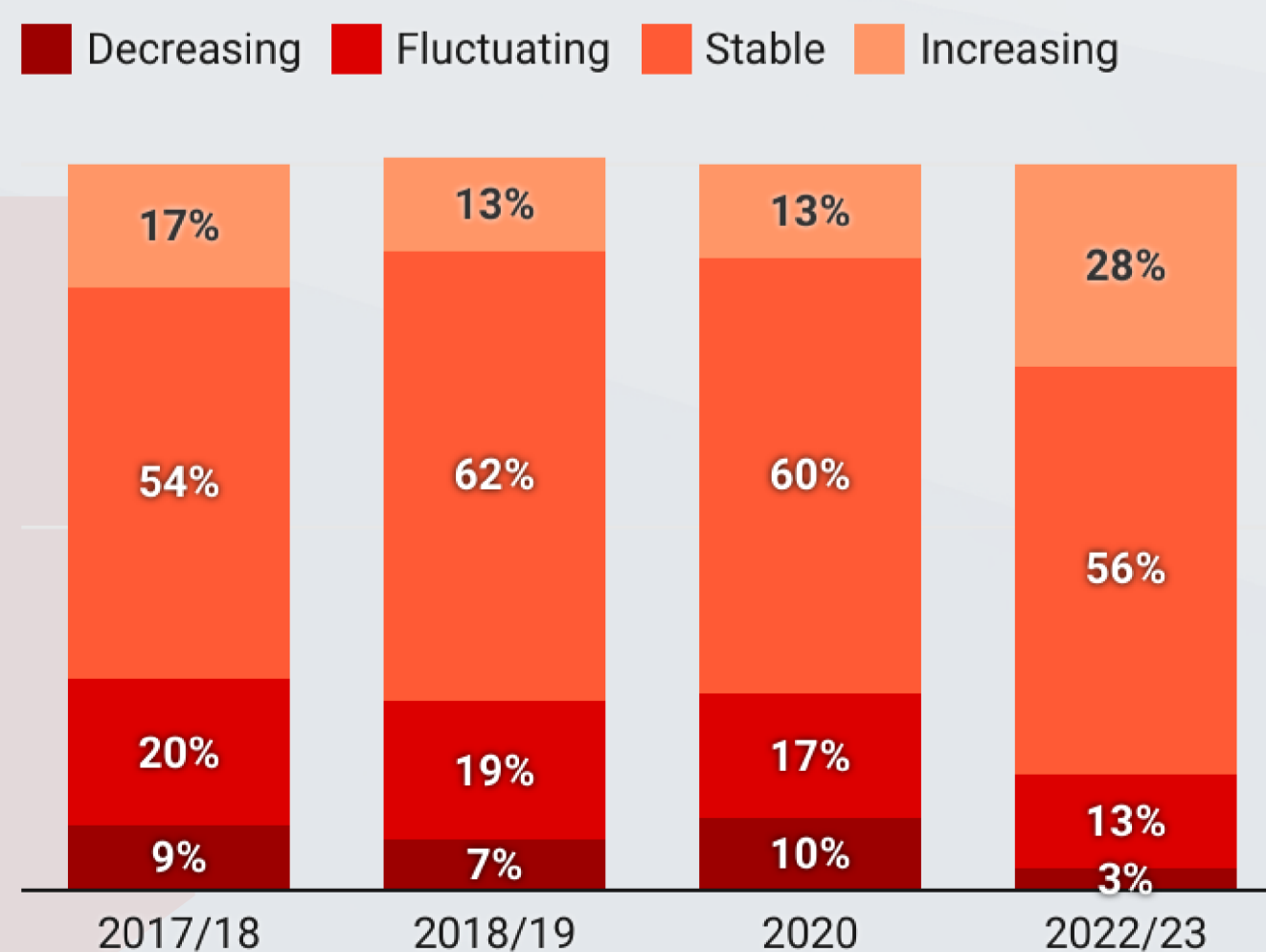
The New Zealand Drug Trends Survey (NZDTS) is an anonymous online convenience survey designed to provide an annual snapshot of drug market trends in Aotearoa New Zealand. It surveys a very large number of people with recent experience and knowledge of drug use and drug markets across the country (i.e., 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.



Perceptions of cocaine as "easy" or "very easy" to obtain among respondents from NZ's urban centres, 2022-23 (n=1,186)



% respondents indicating the price of cocaine is "increasing" or "decreasing" over time, 2017-23



## Discussion

Survey respondents' perceptions of increasing availability of cocaine in New Zealand's urban centres are consistent with elevated levels of cocaine use detected by wastewater testing in quarter 4 (October-December) of 2022. Wastewater testing results indicated that Auckland is New Zealand's largest consumer of cocaine by a considerable margin. The rising price of cocaine may indicate increasing demand in the face of still relatively constrained supply. Globally, a surge in cocaine production from 2015 onwards may have been a factor in the spread of cocaine to more geographically isolated drug markets, such as New Zealand and Australia. This trend is supported by larger cocaine seizures made by NZ Customs and Police in recent years. However, most respondents still report cocaine is difficult to access, particularly in regions outside of the main centres.