

# Engagement with help services for drug use increasing

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

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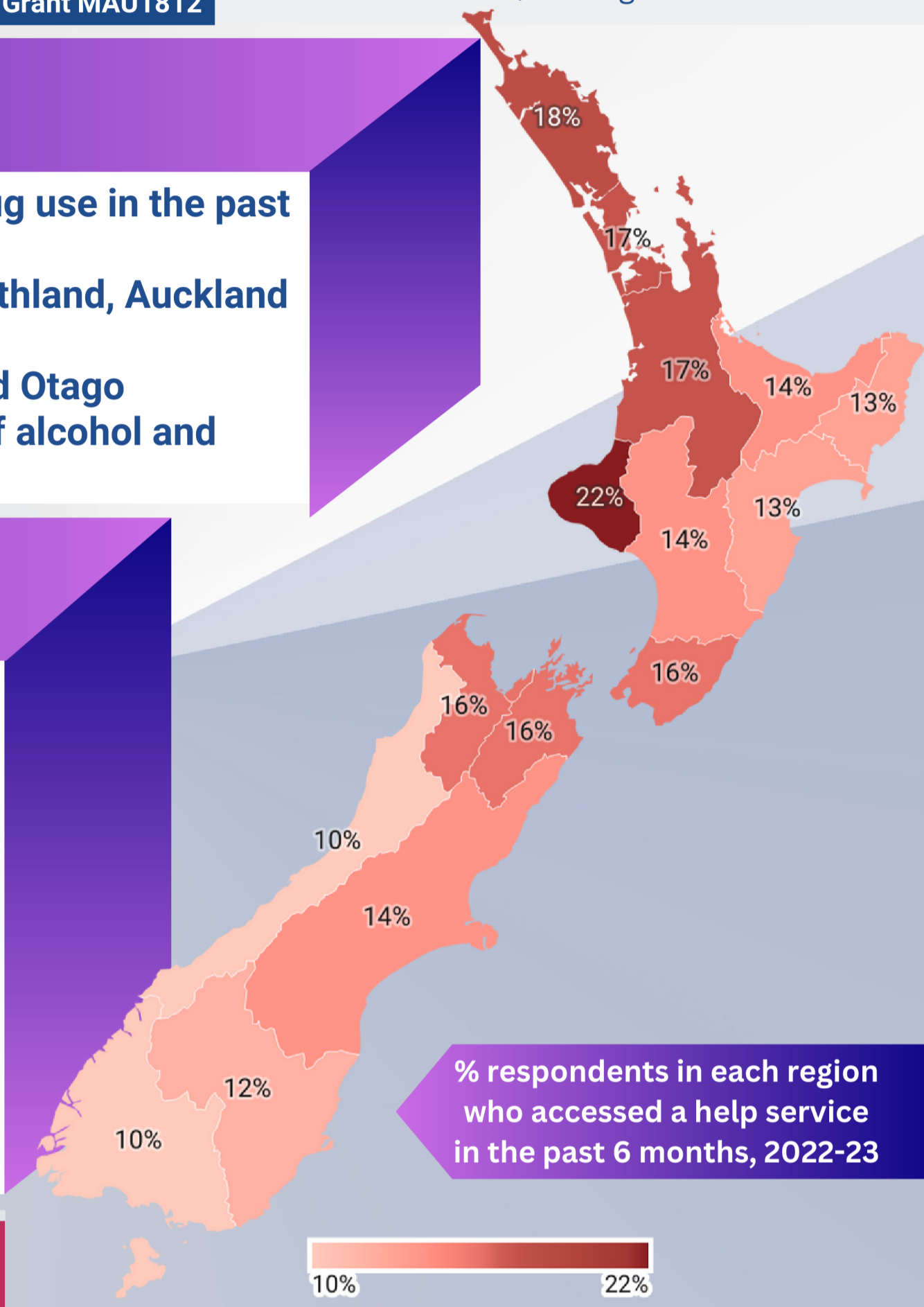
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## Key findings

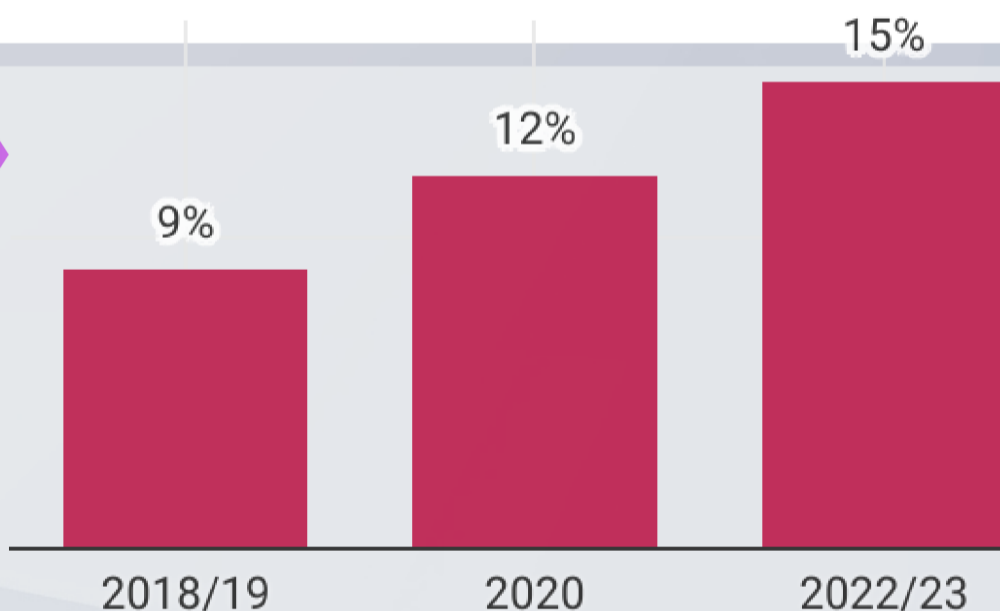
- The percentage of respondents accessing a help service for their drug use in the past six months has increased since 2018
- Past six month access to a help service was highest in Taranaki, Northland, Auckland and the Waikato
- Access to a help service was lowest in the Southland/West Coast and Otago
- Respondents most often reported needing help to reduce their use of alcohol and cannabis

## Methods

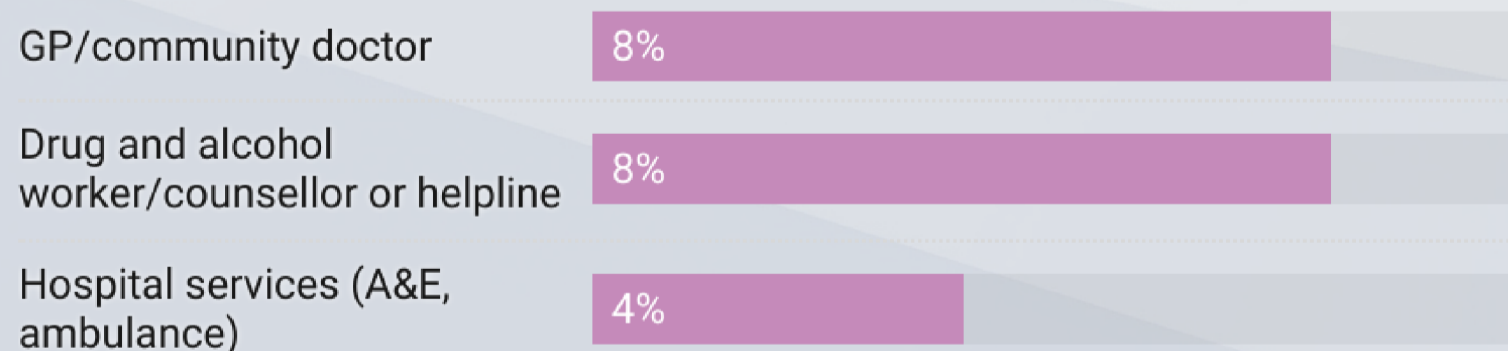
The New Zealand Drug Trends Survey (NZDTS) is an anonymous online convenience survey designed to provide an annual snapshot of drug market trends in Aotearoa New Zealand. It surveys a very large number of people with recent experience and knowledge of drug use and drug markets across the country (i.e.,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



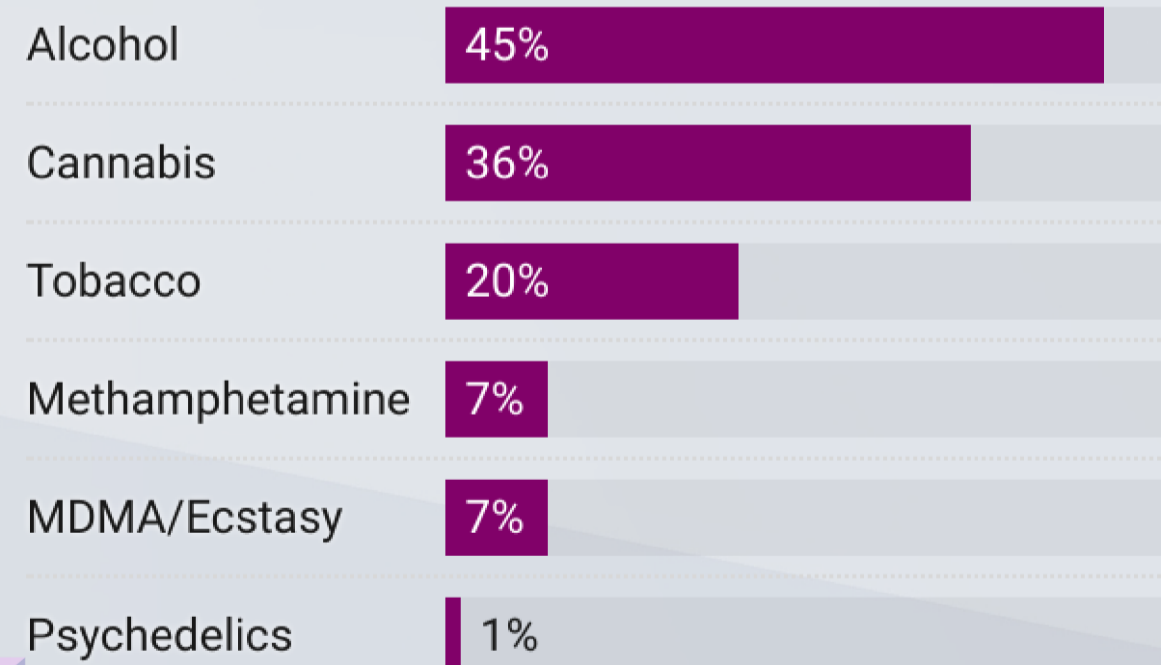
% NZDTS respondents who accessed a help service in the past 6 months, 2018-23



Types of help service accessed by NZDTS respondents, 2022-23



% respondents indicating they need help to reduce their use of different drug types, 2022-23



Note: Respondents could choose multiple options

## Discussion

Alcohol, cannabis and tobacco remain the drug types NZDTS respondents have most commonly wanted help for over recent years. Increasing rates of help-seeking for alcohol and drug problems reported among respondents may reflect more positive public perceptions and openness about seeking help for substance use, addiction, and mental illness. However, official wait times for treatment still vary significantly between regions, with long wait times in the West Coast, Nelson and Marlborough, and Tairāwhiti. Drug treatment and related health services can play an important part in reducing the demand for drugs by supporting people who want to reduce or quit their drug use. People who want to quit are often heavy daily users and consequently their exit from the market can cause a disproportionately large reduction in drug demand. The NZDTS also shows declining proportions of respondents seeking help to reduce tobacco use and this may be due to declining tobacco smoking among younger cohorts, and perhaps the greater availability of vaping as a means of smoking cessation or smoking harm reduction.

Help needed for different drug types over time, 2018-23

