

Increase in the use of nicotine e-liquids

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

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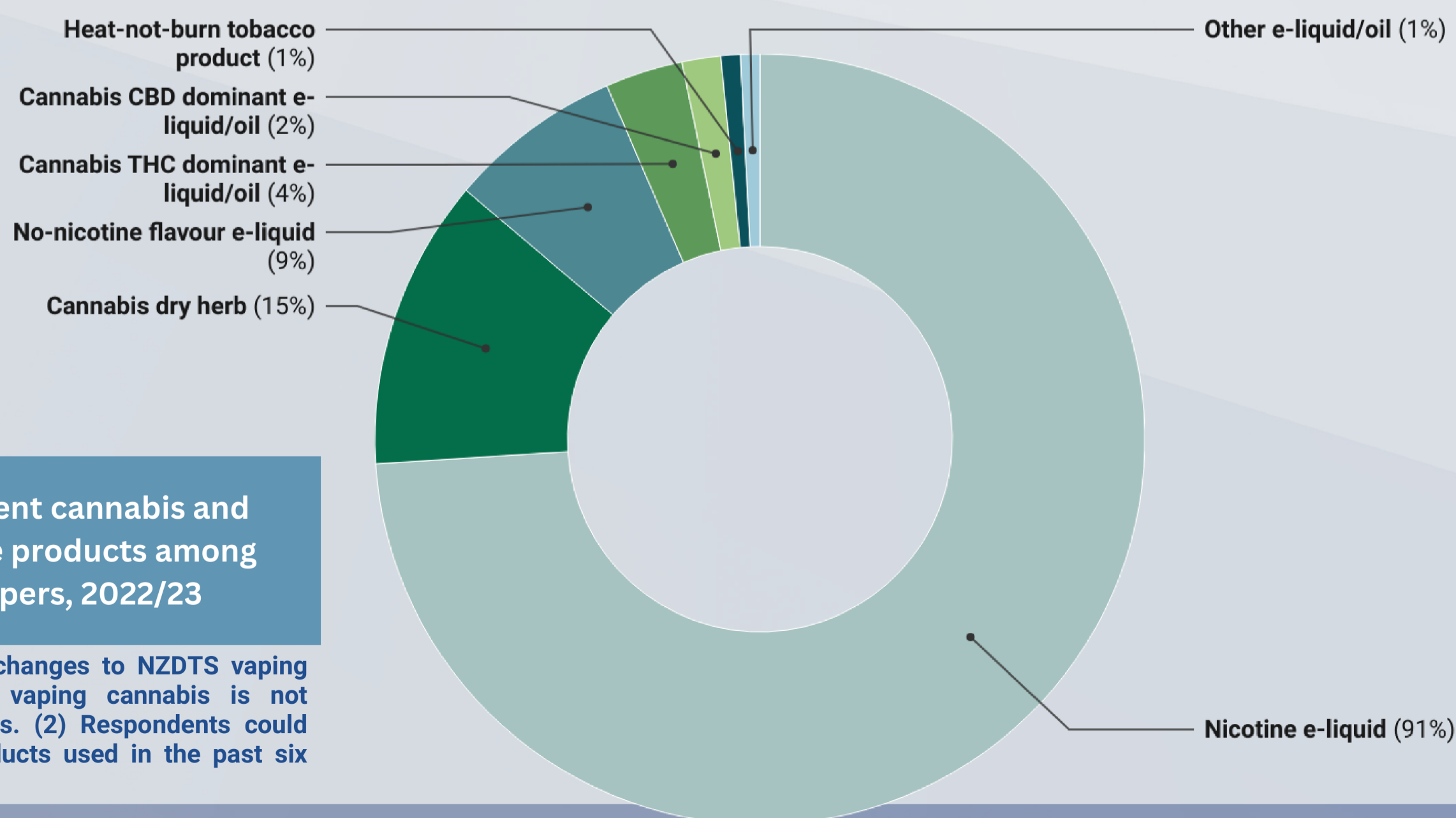
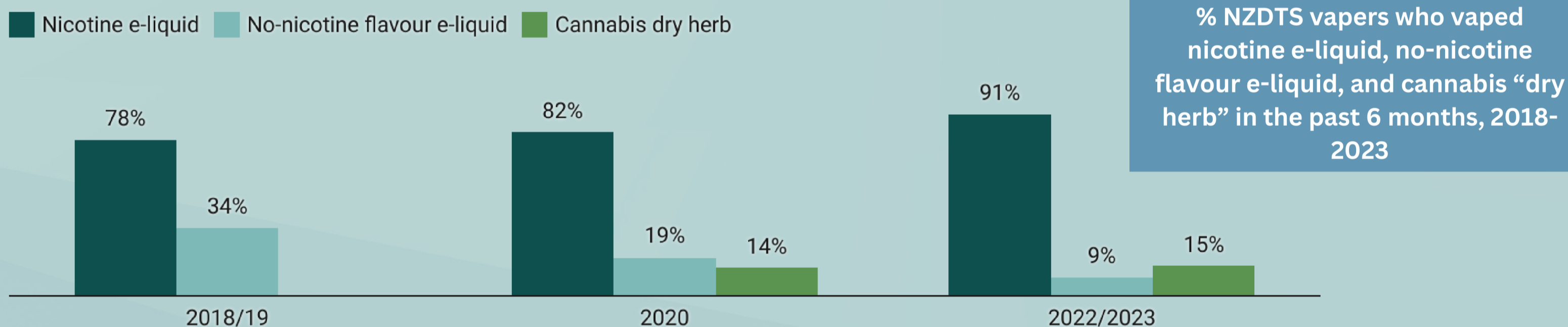
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Key findings

- The proportion of NZDTS respondents who reported vaping in the past six months increased from 56% in 2018 to 69% in 2022/23
- Vaping of nicotine e-liquid has increased over the past three years, while vaping of no-nicotine e-liquid has declined steadily
- Vaping of “dry herb” cannabis remains stable
- One third of respondents indicated that they had “stopped smoking” cigarettes by vaping nicotine e-liquids, and one in five indicated that vaping helped them smoke “a lot less”
- 1 in 5 respondents who vaped nicotine said they had “never smoked” prior to vaping
- Respondents who vaped nicotine reported much higher daily frequencies of vaping compared to those who vaped 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. A total of 69% (n=6,685) of the survey sample had vaped cannabis or nicotine in the past 6 months. The following analysis presents data from this subgroup. 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 Rychert et al. (2023) “Exploring differences in daily vaping of Nicotine and Cannabis among people who use drugs in New Zealand.” *Substance Use and Misuse*. 58(11), 1388-1398.

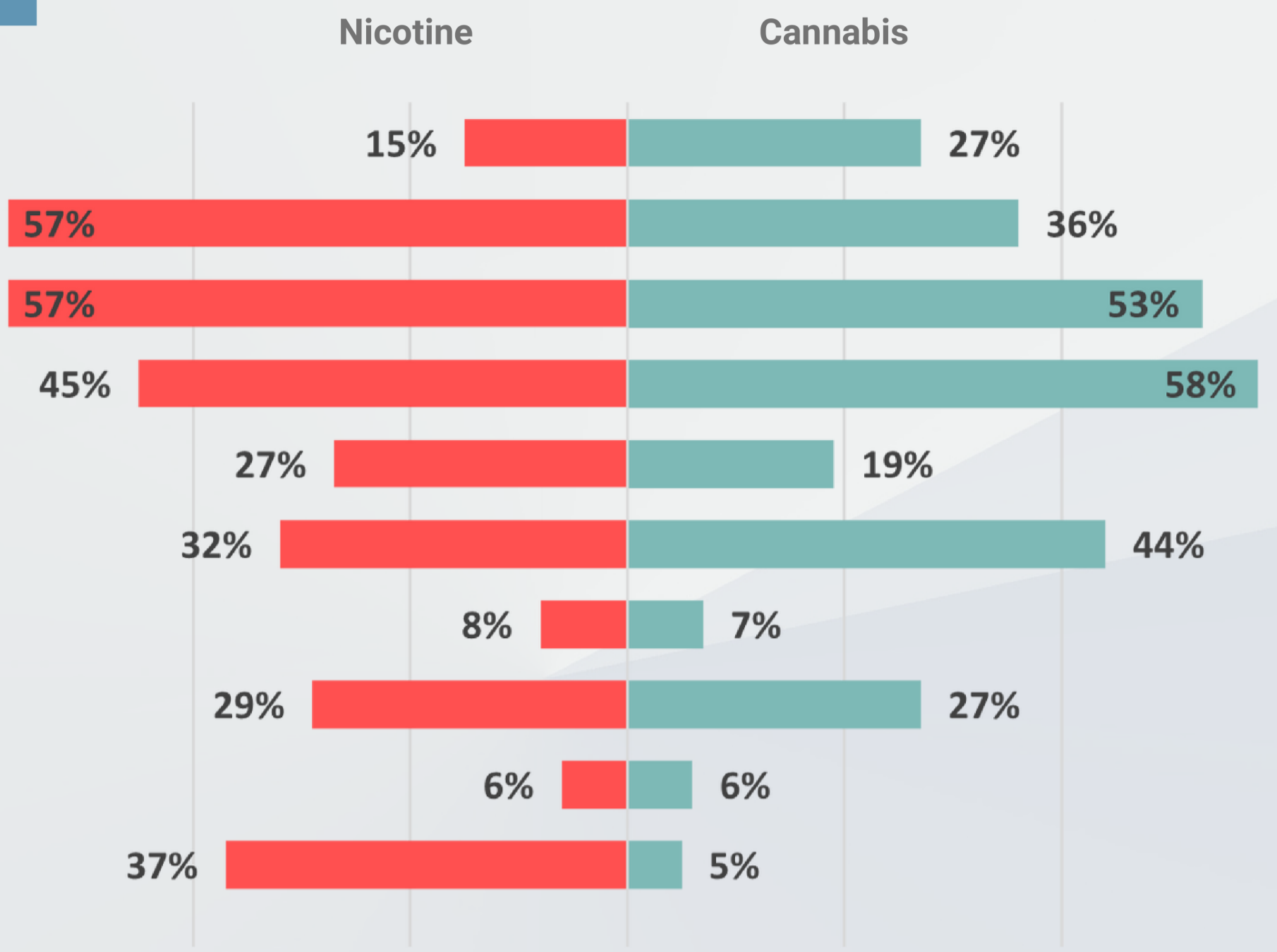


Use of different cannabis and nicotine vape products among NZDTS vapers, 2022/23

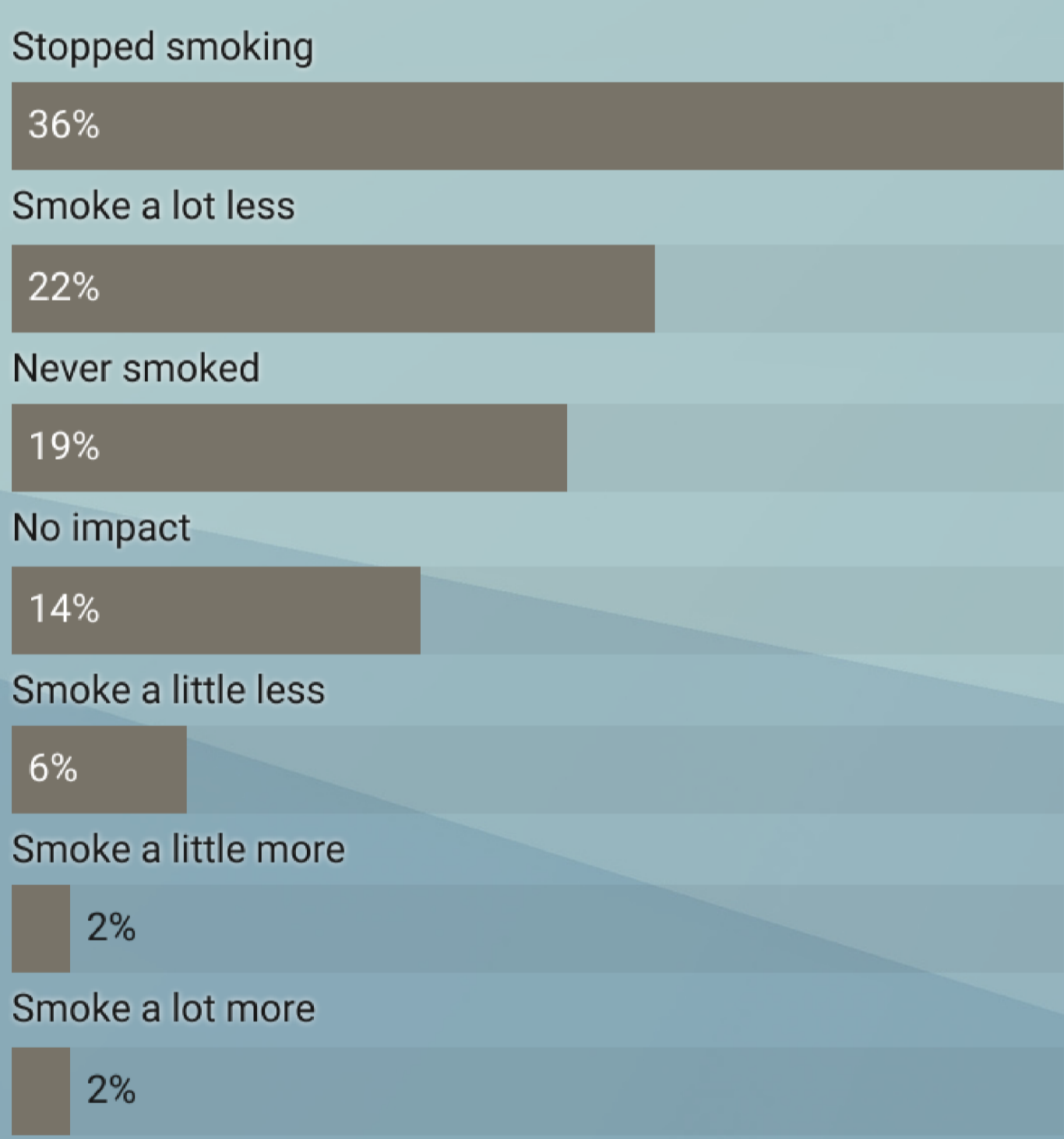
Notes on presented data: (1) Due to changes to NZDTS vaping questions, 2018/19 survey data on vaping cannabis is not comparable to data from later surveys. (2) Respondents could choose multiple options for vape products used in the past six months.

Reasons for vaping cannabis and nicotine among NZDTS vapers, 2022/23 (n=7,277)

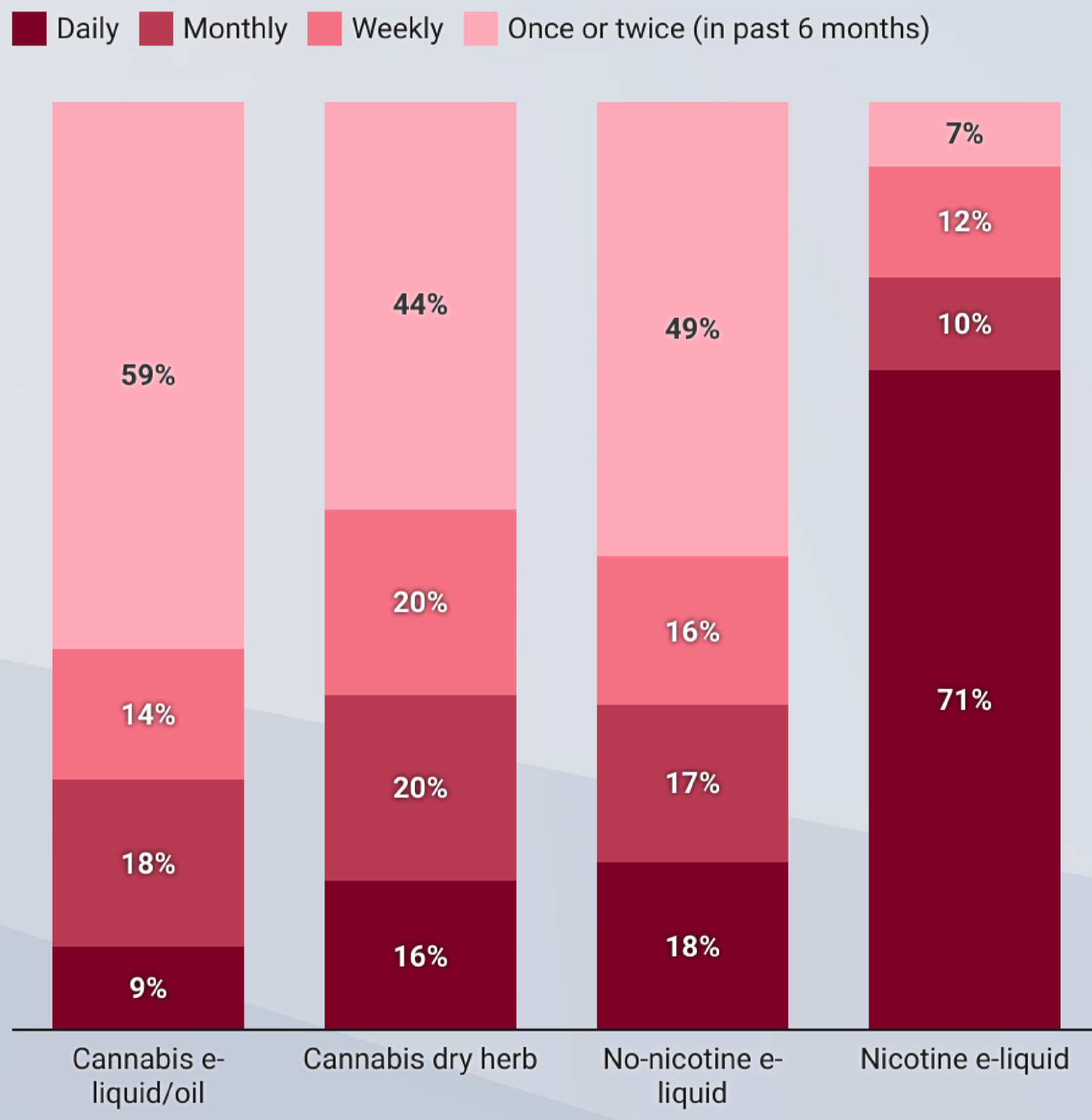
- It gives me a better high
- It tastes better than smoking
- Less smell contamination of car/house, etc
- More discreet than smoking
- It's healthier for the people around me
- It's healthier than smoking cigarettes or cannabis
- It's cool
- It's fun
- Helps me quit smoking cannabis
- Helps me quit smoking tobacco



Impact of vaping nicotine e-liquid on smoking tobacco among NZDTS vapers, 2022/23 (n=5,975)



Vaping frequency among NZDTS respondents, 2022/23



Discussion

NZDTS survey respondents who used a vaporising device in the past 6 months vaped a range of products. The use of nicotine e-liquids by NZDTS survey respondents has increased steadily since 2018, while the use of no-nicotine e-liquids has declined. Vaping of cannabis "dry herb" has remained stable. Vaping cannabis was more common in the form of vaporised "dry herb" cannabis than in the form of cannabis e-liquid. This may be due to the fact that dry herb flower is the dominant form of cannabis available on the illegal market in New Zealand. Also, dry herb cannabis flower for vaporising can be accessed legally through prescriptions under the Medicinal Cannabis scheme (2020). Patterns of vaping nicotine and cannabis products differed. While most participants who vaped nicotine did so daily, cannabis and non-nicotine e-liquid vapers vaped much less frequently. Vaping nicotine was often motivated by the desire to quit smoking cigarettes and high proportions reported successfully quitting or cutting down with vaping. In contrast, the benefit of quitting cannabis smoking was rarely reported by cannabis vapers. Participants who vaped cannabis mainly used vaping to consume cannabis in a more discreet manner and to reduce the health risks of smoking cannabis.