

Recreational Drug Using Behaviour and Legal BZP Party Pills

**Report to the National Drug Policy
Submitted 5th October 2007.**

Kate Bryson and Dr Marc Wilson

**School of Psychology
Victoria University of Wellington
New Zealand**

Table of contents

Research background and rationale.....	3
Study One.....	4
Introduction to study one.....	4
Method.....	4
Analysis.....	5
Results.....	6
Sample demographics.....	6
Sub-group demographics.....	6
Ever used data.....	8
Current user data.....	11
Frequency of use and number of substances used	13
Substances respondents wish to try.....	15
Substances that respondents said they would never use again or try.....	21
Perceived risk of using substances	24
Knowledge of BZP party pill ingredients	27
Implications and summary of findings from study one	27
Study Two.....	29
Introduction to study two.....	29
Method.....	29
Analysis and presentation of results.....	30
Results.....	30
Demographics.....	30
Current use information.....	31
BZP party pill use and alcohol.....	31
BZP party pill use and other drugs.....	33
And after BZP party pills are banned?.....	37
What about methamphetamine (P)?.....	39
Black market BZP?.....	43
What do BZP party pill users think others will do after the ban?.....	47
What about alcohol consumption?.....	49
Implications and summary of findings from study two.....	51
Conclusions.....	53
References.....	55

Recreational Drug Using Behaviour and Legal BZP Party Pills

**Kate Bryson and Dr Marc Wilson
Victoria University of Wellington
School of Psychology**

Research background and rationale

New Zealand is in the unique position of having a legal drug market. The stimulant Benzylpiperazine (BZP) can be purchased over the counter in the form of legal 'Party Pills'. They contain from 80 up to 1000mgs of BZP, usually in conjunction with one or more psychoactive phenylpiperazines such as Trifluoromethylphenylpiperazine (TFMPP) and also vitamins and amino acids. The BZP party pill industry emerged in the year 2000, and BZP was initially sold as an uncontrolled substance. In 2005 the Misuse of Drugs Amendment Act 2005 created a new Part and Schedule to the Misuse of Drugs Act to legally regulate restricted substances. Restricted substances would be subject to legislative controls on the minimum purchase age, free of charge distribution and advertising. Benzylpiperazine was the first substance to be listed as a restricted substance. As a class D substance, BZP can only be sold to people over the age of eighteen, it cannot be given away for free, and advertising is restricted.

Since then debate has raged over whether BZP party pills should remain legal or not. So far, little is known about the impact of legal drug use on illicit drug use and drug consumers, or of the impact of regulation of, or legislation against, currently legal drugs.

If, as the BZP party pill industry claims, currently legal BZP party pills are being used instead of other illegal substances (e.g., methamphetamine/P), then legislation making BZP party pills illegal potentially removes them as a viable alternative. One possible consequence of this might be a shift from BZP party pill use to other (currently illegal) drugs. The result of such a shift would be a considerable increase in use of drugs such as ecstasy, methamphetamine (P), or cocaine, and the harms associated with them.

However, as it is well established that recreational drug users are most frequently poly-drug users, it is likely that legal BZP party pill users do not use BZP party pills exclusively. Therefore, the impact of legislating against the sale of BZP party pills may not be as clear-cut as the party pill industry would have us believe. This project aims to investigate whether BZP party pill users would fill the gap left by legislation against BZP party pills with illicit drugs. Alternatively, users may continue to seek BZP/TFMPP on a black market. Alcohol could be the most likely alternative for BZP party pill users, who may choose to remain drug free on those occasions where BZP party pills would otherwise have been

used. Each of these scenarios will have a different impact on rates of illicit drug use.

Our research is intended to determine which of these scenarios is more likely. The research addresses how legal drug use functions in relation to illicit drug use in New Zealand. It is commonly claimed by BZP party pill industry supporters that BZP party pill users would turn to methamphetamine (P) if BZP party pills were made illegal. There is a real need to investigate whether BZP party pill users consider methamphetamine (P) or any other drugs as viable alternatives to BZP/TFMPP.

Two studies were carried out. The first quantitatively assesses how BZP party pills fit into a broader context of recreational drug use. Seven hundred and ninety six first year Victoria University students were surveyed for this study. The aim of the study is to establish whether BZP party pill use reduces harm associated with illicit substance use in any way. The second study qualitatively looks at the impact of removing BZP party pills from the legal market. Sixty interviews were carried out with regular BZP party pill users from Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. The aim of this study is to identify what alternatives BZP party pill users are likely to consider if BZP party pills are no longer legally available. Study two also clarifies some of the findings from study one.

Study one

Introduction to study one

In order to assess whether BZP party pill use reduces illicit drug related harm, comparisons between illicit substance users who do and do not use BZP/TFMPP show us whether BZP party pill users use fewer illicit substances, or use illicit substances on fewer occasions. In addition we examine whether BZP party pill users are more or less interested in trying illicit substances compared to non-users. We then examine how much risk students perceive around BZP party pill use, and whether BZP party pills are perceived to be safer than other substances. Finally, student's level of ingredient knowledge is checked to see whether BZP party pill users know what they are taking. Taken together, the answers to these questions provide an overall comparison of risk of harm for BZP party pill users and non-users.

Method

For study one a sample of 796 first year university students voluntarily completed an anonymous survey about 16 different legal and illegal substances. The substances included in the survey were tobacco, alcohol, caffeine, inhalants, party pills (BZP), LSD, cocaine, ecstasy, speed, ketamine, cannabis, 'P'

(methamphetamine), nitrous oxide (nos), GHB, heroin, and Ritalin.¹ Surveys asked students whether they had ever used a substance, and if so, how many times they had used it in the previous 6 months. They were also asked to indicate which of the substances they had not used before but would like to try, and which they would never use again or try. Students were then asked to rate the perceived risk of using each substance on a 5-point scale from safe (1) to dangerous (5). Students were asked to state what the most common active ingredients in BZP party pills were, if they knew. Finally, some non-identifying demographic information was collected, the students gender, age, and ethnicity.

Data was collected over four time points in 2006, and entered into SPSS 14.0 software package for analysis. For this sample, only students who completed the survey once are included.

Analysis

All analysis was conducted using the SPSS 14.0 software package, and all results reported were tested at 95% confidence level. Results will be reported for the entire sample first for each question, and then all BZP users will be compared to BZP non-users. The sample is then split further into four sub-groups (see table 1.0) based on their current use or non-use of BZP and illicit substances: Students who currently use neither BZP nor illicit substances (Group 1), students who currently use only BZP and no illicit substances (Group 2), students who currently use both BZP and at least one illicit substance (Group 3), and students who do not currently use BZP but do currently use at least one illicit substance (Group 4). Current use is defined as any use in the previous six months, and users in all groups may use the licit substances alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and inhalants.

Table 1.0: Sample sub-groups

	No current illicit substance use	Current illicit substance use
No current BZP use	Group 1	Group 4
Current BZP use	Group 2	Group 3

¹ For the purpose of this study “street” drug names were used. Students were free to interpret for themselves what these substances were. It should be understood that even though a student may believe they have used a particular substance, the ingredients may be different to what they believe they have taken. For example, ecstasy supposedly contains MDMA, though a pill may predominantly contain amphetamine or some other ingredient. In New Zealand much of the ‘speed’ available is ‘cut down’ methamphetamine (P) rather than amphetamine, and the term ‘Ritalin’ often refers to any prescription medication treatment for ADHD. For this study, it is what the student believes they have used that is important.

Results

Sample demographic information

Of the 796 students who responded, 67.6% were female and 32.4% were male. The mean age of respondents was 20.3 years (range 16 – 59 years). Seventy four point eight percent of the sample was New Zealand European/Pakeha, 5.0% were Maori, 3.1% were Pacific nations, 11.2% were Asian, and 4.9% were from other ethnic groups.

Sub-group demographics

BZP non-users:

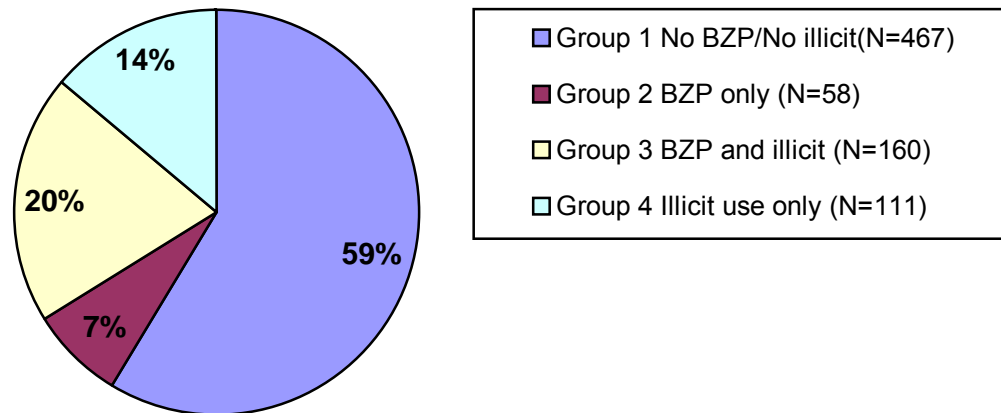
This sub-group of 578 participants do not currently use BZP. Sixty eight point eight percent of BZP non-users were female, 31.2% were male. The mean age of BZP non-users was 20.8 years (range 17 – 59). Seventy two point two percent of BZP non-users were New Zealand European/Pakeha, 5.7% were Maori, 3.2% were Pacific nations, 13.3% were Asian, and 5.7% were from other ethnic groups.

All BZP users:

This sub-group of 218 participants currently use BZP. Sixty four point seven percent of BZP users were female, 35.3% were male. The mean age of BZP using participants was 19.1 years (range 16 – 40). Eighty one point eight percent of BZP users were New Zealand European/Pakeha, 6.5% were Maori, 2.8% were Pacific nations, 5.6% were Asian, and 3.3% were from other ethnic groups.

The sample was split up into four sub-groups based on current use of BZP and illicit substance use, as described above. Figure 1.0 shows what percentage of the entire sample make up each group. The majority of respondents did not use any illicit substances or BZP party pills, while 20% of respondents use both BZP party pills and at least one illicit substance. Nearly three quarters (73.4%) of BZP users are also illicit substance users.

Figure 1.0: Proportion of sample in each sub-group



Group 1:

This sub-group of 476 participants is not currently using any illicit substances or BZP. Seventy one point four percent of this sub-group were female, 28.6% were male. The mean age of participants in group one was 20.9 years (range 17 – 59). Sixty nine point nine percent of group one were New Zealand European/Pakeha, 5.5% were Maori, 3.5% were Pacific nations, 15.4% were Asian, and 5.7% were from other ethnic groups.

Group 2:

This sub-group of 58 participants is not currently using any illicit substances, but do currently use BZP party pills. Sixty nine percent of this sub-group were female, 31% were male. The mean age of participants in group two was 19.8 years (range 16 – 40). Eighty two point five percent of group two were New Zealand European/Pakeha, 5.3% were Maori, 3.5% were Pacific nations, and 8.8% were Asian.

Group 3:

This sub-group of 160 participants is currently using at least one illicit substance, and is also currently using BZP party pills. Sixty three point one percent of this sub-group were female, 36.9% were male. The mean age of participants in group three was 18.9 years (range 17 – 29). Eighty one point five percent of group three were New Zealand European/Pakeha, 7.0% were Maori, 2.5% were Pacific nations, 4.5% were Asian, and 4.5% were from other ethnic groups.

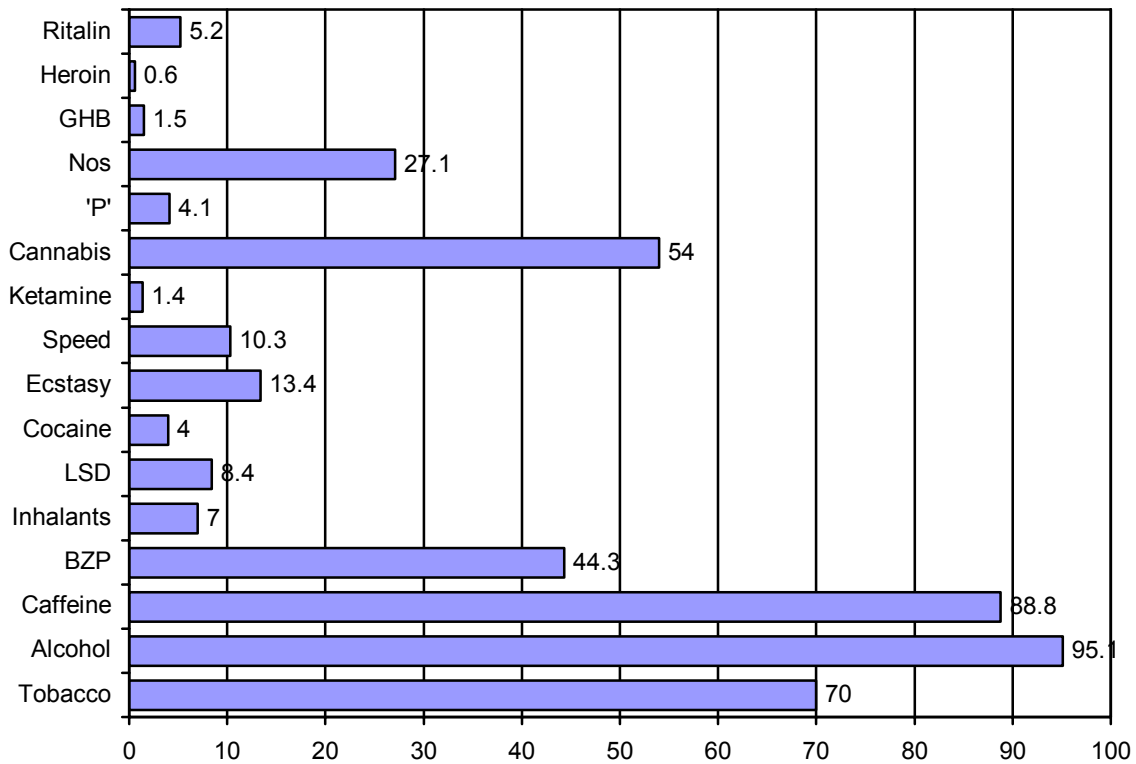
Group 4:

This sub-group of 111 participants is currently using at least one illicit substance, but is not currently using BZP. Fifty seven point eight percent of this sub-group were female, 42.2% were male. The mean age of participants in group four was 20.3 years (range 17 – 39). Eighty two point six percent of group four were New Zealand European/Pakeha, 6.4% were Maori, 1.8% were Pacific nations, 4.6% were Asian, and 4.6% were from other ethnic groups.

Ever used data

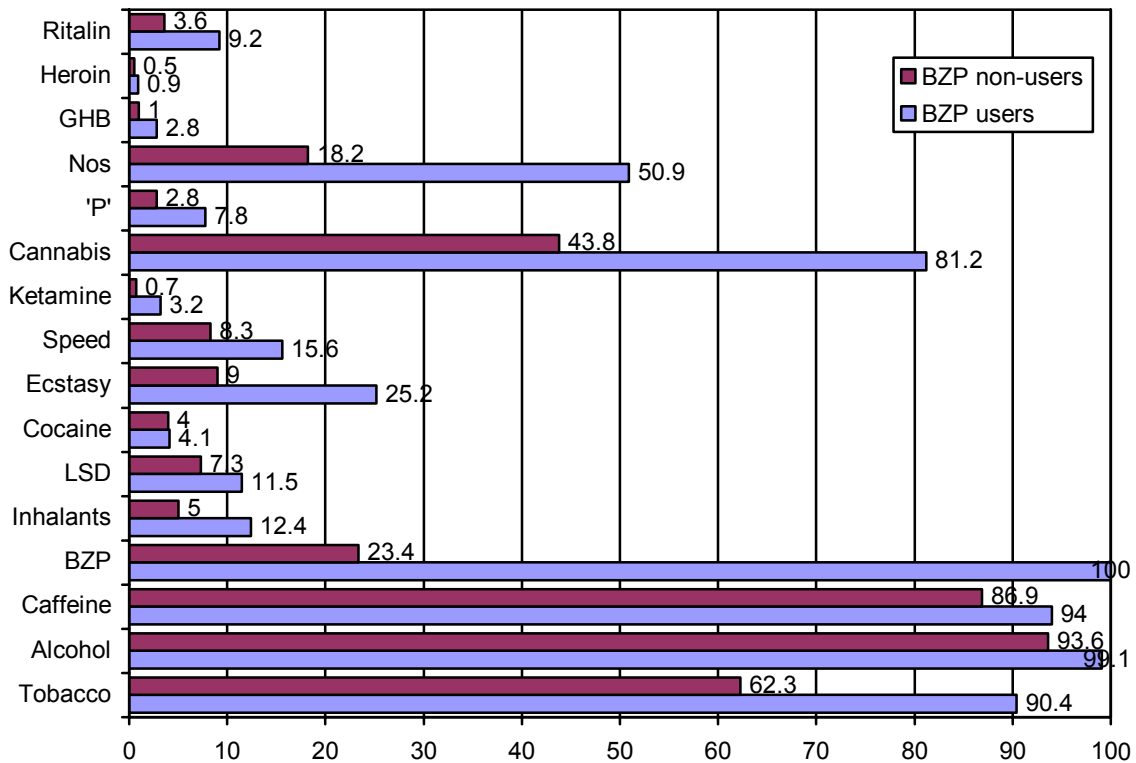
Each participant was asked to indicate whether or not they had ever used any of the 16 substances. Figure 2.0 below shows what percentage of the entire sample has ever used each substance. Alcohol was the most commonly consumed legal substance with 95.1% of the entire sample having ever used it. The most commonly used illicit substance was cannabis with 54.0% of the entire sample having used it in the past. Forty four point three percent of the sample reported having used BZP at least once in the past.

Figure 2.0: Percentage of entire sample that have used substances at least once in the past.



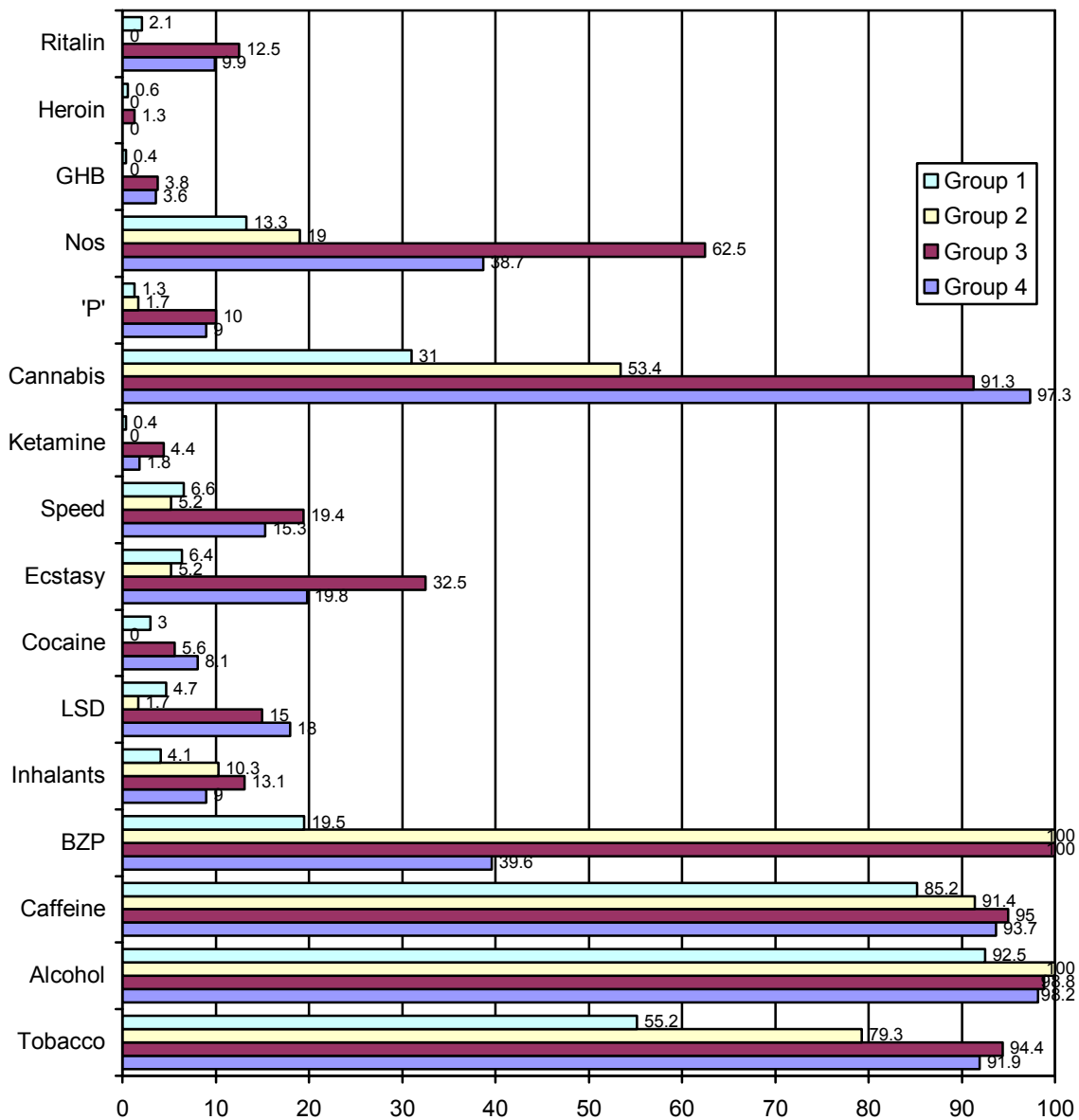
When the sample is split into current BZP users and non-users, differences in the rates of substances ever used can be observed. Figure 2.1 shows that for many substances, current BZP users are significantly more likely to have ever used them. BZP users are significantly more likely to have used all the licit substances investigated (all X^2 's(1,766) > 6.89). BZP users were significantly more likely to have used many of the illicit substances investigated also. The largest differences between BZP users and non-users are seen for cannabis, nos, and ecstasy (all X^2 's(1,776) > 36.75). Ritalin, 'P', speed, and ketamine were also significantly more likely to have been used by current BZP users (all X^2 's(1,747) > 7.74).

Figure 2.1: Percentage of current BZP users and non-users who have used substances at least once in the past.



Differences are also observed when the sample is split further into four sub-groups based on current use and non-use of BZP and illicit substances. Figure 2.2 below shows what percentages of each sub-group have ever used substances. When comparing illicit users who do and do not currently use BZP (groups 3 & 4), those who use BZP are significantly more likely to have ever used ecstasy ($X^2(1,266)=6.07$) and Nos ($X^2(1,266)=15.21$). When comparing the groups who do not currently use illicit substances (groups 1 & 2), current BZP users (group 2) are significantly more likely to have ever used tobacco, cannabis, and inhalants (all X^2 's(1,501)>4.57). There are no instances where a BZP using group is significantly *less* likely to have ever used a substance. Current use of BZP indicates that an individual is *at least equally* likely to have used a substance, and for the substances mentioned above, is *more* likely to have used a substance.

Figure 2.2: Percentage of participants in each sub-group that have used substances at least once in the past.

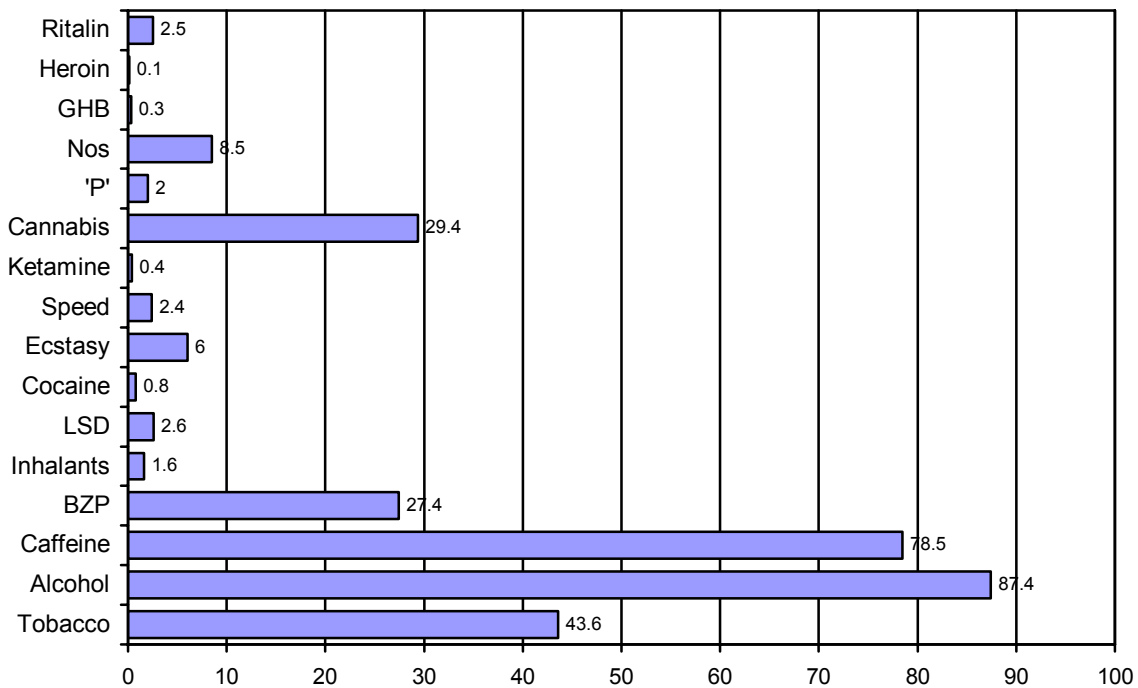


To summarize the findings for this question, current use of BZP does not mean you are any less likely to have used illicit substances in the past, and for those substances mentioned above, being a BZP users means you are more likely to have a history of use.

Current user data

To assess whether BZP party pill use impacts on current substance use, respondents were asked how many times, if at all, they had used a substance in the six months prior to answering the survey. For the purposes of this study, any use in the previous six months was considered current use. Figure 3.0 below shows what percentage of the entire sample has used each substance in the six months prior to answering the survey. Sub-groups were formed based on this current user data. The illicit substance most commonly used currently was cannabis (29.4%). Nos (8.5%) and ecstasy (6.0%) were the next most popular illicit substances in current use. Alcohol is currently used by 87.4% of the sample, and caffeine by 78.5%. BZP is currently used by over a quarter of the sample (27.4%), making it more popular than all illicit substances except cannabis.

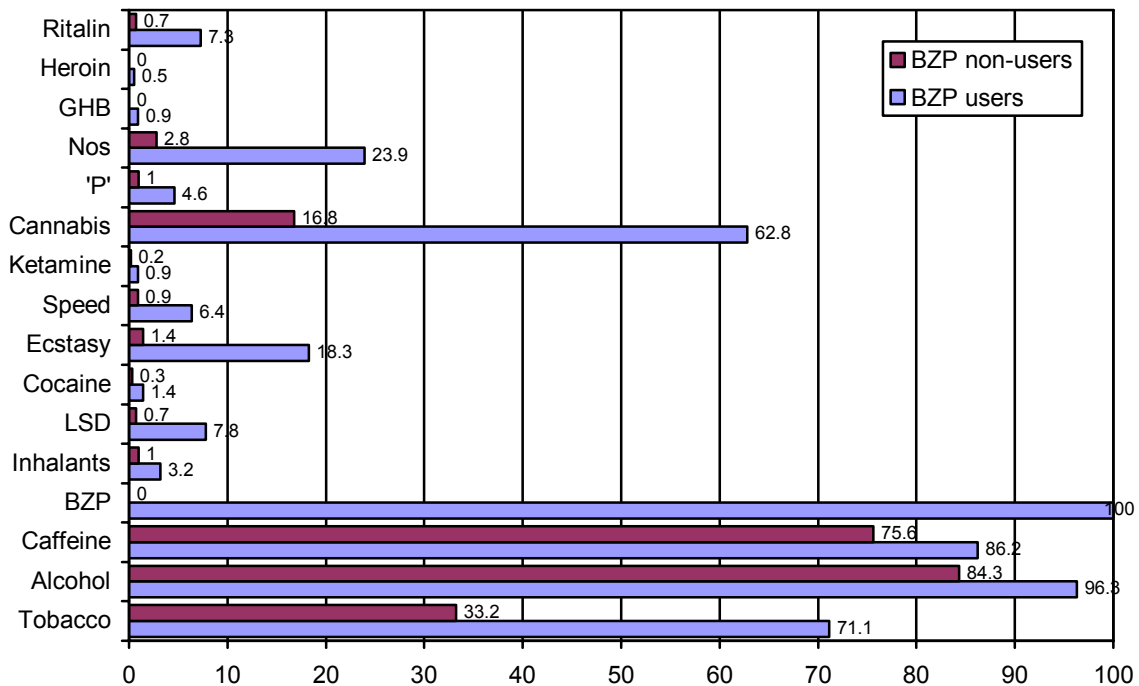
Figure 3.0: Percentage of participants in entire sample who currently use substances.



When respondents who currently use BZP are compared to those who do not, differences in both licit and illicit substance use rates can be seen. Figure 3.1 below graphically demonstrates some substantial differences in use rates between groups. Current BZP users are at least 10 times more likely to be current users of LSD, ecstasy, and Ritalin than BZP non-users. They are also at least seven times more likely to be current users of speed and nos, and at least three times more likely to be current users of cannabis, 'P', and inhalants, when compared to BZP non-users. BZP users are also twice as likely to be current

tobacco users. There are no substances for which current BZP use is associated with less likelihood of use of a substance.

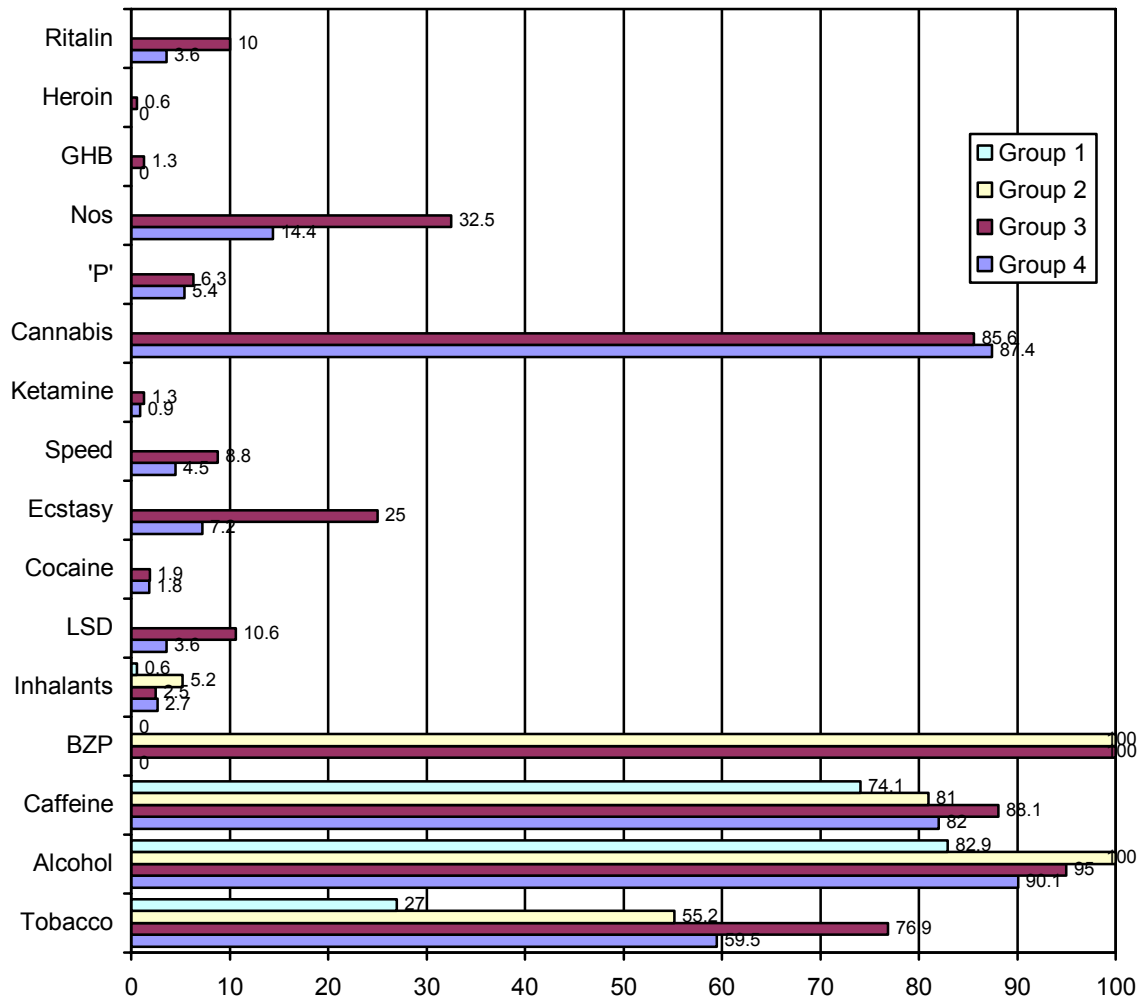
Figure 3.1: Percentage of current BZP users and non-users who currently use other substances.



When the sample is further divided into four sub-groups, differences in current use rates depending on current use or non-use of illicit substances can be seen. There is no current illicit use for groups one and two, as by definition, they do not currently use illicit substances. Differences can be noted for these two groups for licit substances however. Group two BZP users are more than twice as likely to be current users of tobacco, compared to their BZP non-using counterparts from group one. Also worth noting, is that 100% of respondents in group two are current users of alcohol.

Some considerable differences between the two current illicit user groups are also apparent. Current BZP and illicit users (group 3) are at least three times as likely to be current users of ecstasy compared to current illicit users with no BZP use (group 4). Members of group three are also at least twice as likely to be current users of Ritalin, nos, and LSD. The only illicit substance more likely to be used by group four was cannabis, however this difference is small at only 1.8%.

Figure 3.2: Percentage participants in each sub-group who currently use substances (note: sub-groups 1 and 2 have no current illicit substance use.)



In terms of reducing harm by reducing illicit substance use, BZP party pills are not fulfilling their purpose. Benzylpiperazine party pill users are indeed more likely to currently use many illicit substances, despite making use of BZP. This would suggest that BZP party pills are being used in addition to, rather than instead of, illicit substances. Increasing the number of substances used by an individual increases the risk of harm.

Frequency of use and number of substances used

In order to examine whether BZP party pill use reduced the frequency and variety of drugs used, current users were asked how many times they had used each substance in the last six months. For tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine respondents were asked to state the number of *days* they had used in the previous six months, and for all other substances they were asked to stipulate the number of

times they had used them. Table 2.0 describes how frequently current users from the entire sample used each substance, in the six months prior to answering the survey.

There was only one significant difference between sub-groups in relation to frequency of use of substances. Groups one and four used alcohol significantly less often than groups two and three ($F(3)=16.52$), indicating that BZP users consume alcohol more often than BZP non-users, regardless of whether they use illicit substances or not. Other than the difference for alcohol consumption, there were no significant differences between sub-groups three and four in the frequency with which illicit substances were used.

Again, BZP party pills do not appear to reduce illicit substance related harm. Students who use BZP party pills and illicit substances use illicit substances equally as often as illicit users who do not use BZP party pills. Further, BZP party pill users are at higher risk of alcohol related harm, as both BZP using groups used alcohol more often than the BZP non-using groups.

Table 2.0: Frequency of use over six months for entire sample

Substance	No. of current users	Mean number of times/days used (SD)	Range for no. of times/days used	Current users who use at least weekly	
				N	%
Tobacco	347	57.8 (73.5) days	1 – 182	140	40.3%
Alcohol	696	32.2 (33.6) days	1 – 182	303	43.5%
Caffeine	625	81.3 (70.0) days	1 – 182	417	66.7%
BZP	218	4.2 (8.1)	1 – 82	4	1.8%
Inhalants	13	37.5 (64.7)	1 – 180	3	23.1%
LSD	21	2.2 (1.9)	1 – 9	0	0.0%
Cocaine	6	16.5 (16.5)	1 – 40	2	33.3%
Ecstasy	48	3.0 (3.4)	1 – 20	0	0.0%
Speed	19	2.0 (1.2)	1 – 6	0	0.0%
Ketamine	3	5.0 (4.6)	1 – 10	0	0.0%
Cannabis	234	17.1 (36.2)	1 – 182	28	12.0%
'P'	16	2.4 (3.7)	1 – 15	0	0.0%
Nos	68	4.8 (10.5)	1 – 75	2	2.9%
GHB	2	3.0 (2.8)	1 – 5	0	0.0%
Heroin	1	8.0 (8.0)	8 – 8	0	0.0%
Ritalin	20	1.7 (1.6)	1 – 8	0	0.0%

There were significant differences in the number of licit and illicit substances used by the four sub-groups. Table 2.1 details the number of substances used by the different subgroups. Groups one and four use significantly fewer licit substances than groups two and three ($F(3)=210.7$) indicating that BZP users use a wider variety of licit substances than non-users. For illicit substances, group three used significantly more substances than group four ($F(3)=396.6$), indicating that BZP users who use illicit substances use a wider variety of substances than illicit users who do not use BZP.

Table 2.1: Number of different substances used by sub-groups.

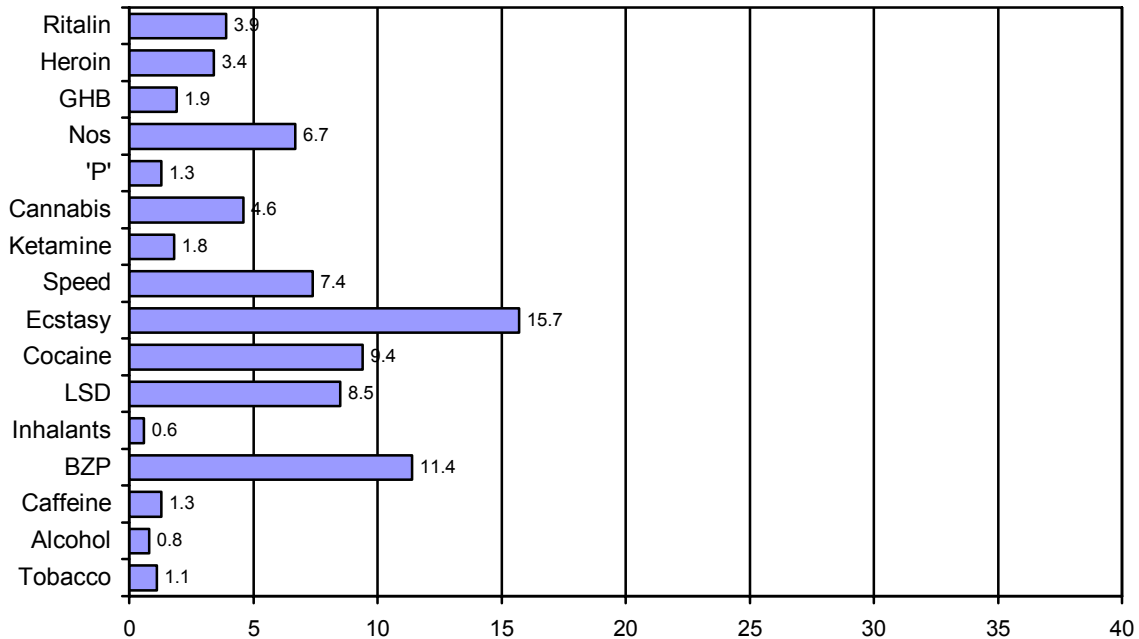
	Mean number of licit substances used (SD)	Range of licit substances used	Mean number of illicit substances used (SD)	Range of illicit substances used
Group 1	1.8 (0.9)	0 – 4	0.0 (0.0)	0 – 0
Group 2	3.4 (0.7)	2 – 5	0.0 (0.0)	0 – 0
Group 3	3.6 (0.7)	1 – 5	1.8 (1.3)	1 – 7
Group 4	2.3 (0.8)	0 – 4	1.3 (1.0)	1 – 7

The finding that BZP party pill users from group three use a wider variety of substances compared to illicit substance users from group four, would again indicate that BZP party pill users are at increased risk of substance related harm. Not only do BZP party pill users who use illicit substances use them equally as often, but they also use a wider variety of substances compared to students who used illicit substances but not BZP party pills. Benzylpiperazine party pill users are indeed poly-drug users.

Substances respondents wish to try

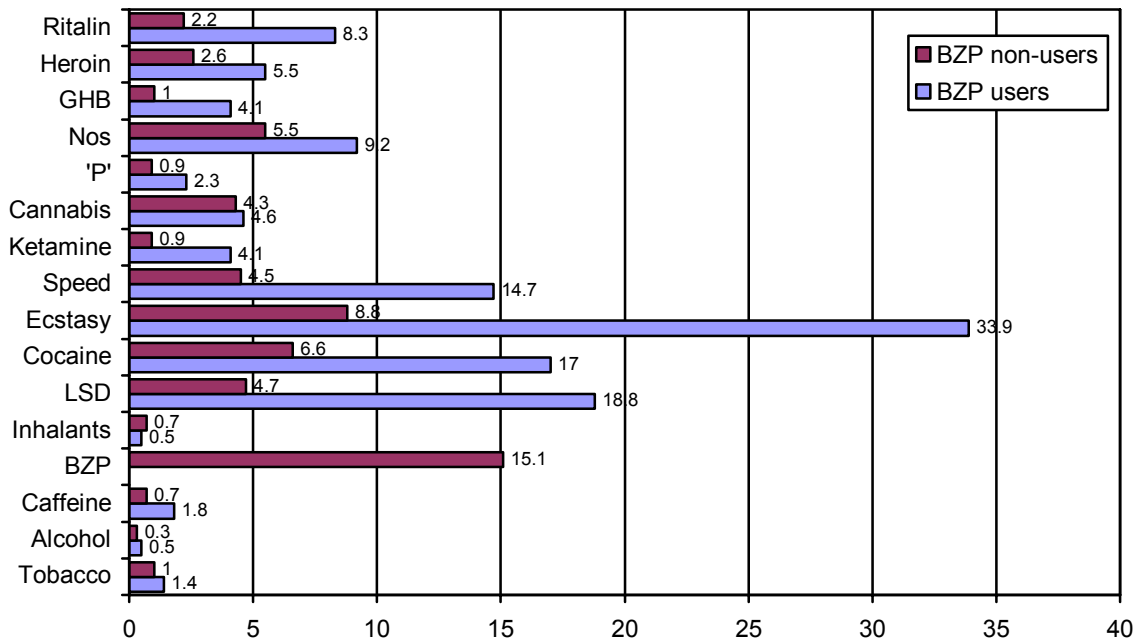
To test whether BZP party pill use reduced user's interest in illicit substance use, respondents were also asked to indicate which of the substances they had not used but would like to try in the future. Results from the entire sample are shown in figure 5.0, and the most popular substance respondents wished to try was ecstasy (15.7%), followed by BZP (11.4%), and cocaine (9.4%). Inhalants (0.6%) were the least popular substance, followed by caffeine (1.3%), tobacco (1.1%), and alcohol (0.8%). However, the unpopularity of caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol is explained by the fact that a high proportion of respondents had already used these substances. The illicit substance that respondents expressed the least interest in trying was 'P' (1.3%).

Figure 4.0: Percentage of respondents from entire sample who said they wished to try substances they had not yet used.



When the sample is split into BZP users and non-users it is evident that BZP users are more likely to want to try substances. Looking at figure 5.1, most noticeable is the proportion of BZP users who wish to try ecstasy (33.9%). BZP users are significantly more likely to want to try ecstasy, LSD, speed, cocaine, nos, Ritalin, ketamine, GHB, cannabis, and heroin (all $X^2_{s(1,791)} > 4.1$) compared to BZP non-users. The substance the BZP non-users were most likely to want to try was BZP (15.1%), indicating that a substantial proportion of BZP non-users would consider using BZP in the future.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of current BZP users and non-users who said they wished to try substances they had not yet used.



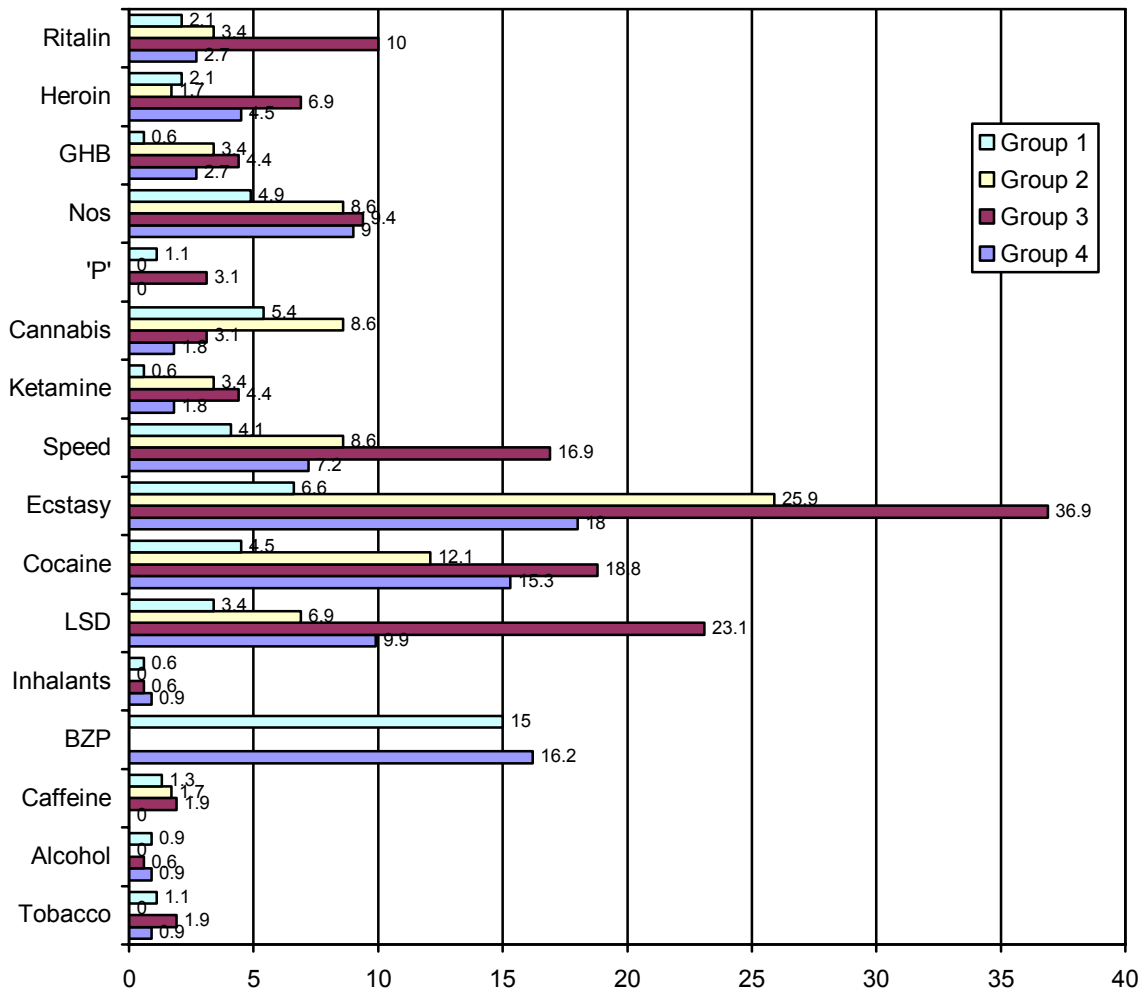
There are significant differences between sub-groups for substances respondents wish to try. Figure 5.2 shows what proportion of each sub-group want to try each substance. Again, ecstasy stands out as the substance most popular with both BZP using groups (groups 2 & 3). Current BZP and illicit substance users (group 3) are significantly more likely to want to try ecstasy than any other group ($X^2(1,689)=128.9$). This means that group three users are more likely to want to try ecstasy despite also having the largest proportion of users who have *already* used ecstasy. Another significant difference exists between the two BZP using groups (groups 2 & 3). Not only are BZP users who also use illicit substances (group 3) more inclined to want to try ecstasy, they are also significantly more likely to want to try LSD ($X^2(1,193)=9.3$).

There were also significant differences between sub-groups for cocaine, speed, nos, Ritalin, ketamine, GHB, and heroin (all X^2 's(1,791)>9.2). These differences can be seen in figure 5.2. For many of the substances, the most obvious difference in proportion of respondents wishing to try a substance is between group three and the other sub-groups. Comparing groups three and four, BZP and illicit users are significantly more likely to want to try ecstasy, LSD, speed, and Ritalin (all X^2 's(1,197)>5.0). Respondents who use BZP and illicit substances are more inclined to want to try substances they have not used, even compared to illicit users who do not use BZP.

BZP was the most popular substance for both BZP non-using groups. Not one respondent from groups two or four said they would like to try 'P', while a small,

but not significant proportion of groups one and three said they would like to try 'P'.

Figure 4.2: Percentage of respondents from each sub-group who had not yet used a substance and would like to try it



Despite the use of party pills, BZP users showed more desire to use illicit substances they had not tried than non-users. Ecstasy emerged as the substance most likely to be used by BZP party pill users who had not yet used it. This finding indicates that BZP party pills do not appear to reduce user's interest in illicit drug use, that is, BZP party pills alone do not satisfy user's substance appetite.

Figures 5.3 and 5.4 below illustrate the *potential* proportion of BZP party pill and illicit substance users (groups 3 & 4) that could use each substance. Adding the percentage of respondents who have not used but wish to try a given substance, to the percentage who have already used that substance gives an indication of what proportion of each group could potentially have used a substance in the

future. Comparing figures 5.3 and 5.4 it can be seen that potential ever use rates for respondents in group three are at least twice the rate for group four for LSD, ecstasy, speed, and ketamine, and are three times the rate for Ritalin.

It is clear that respondents from group three who use both BZP party pills and illicit substances are not only more likely to be users of some illicit substances, but are also more likely to want to try illicit substances if they do not already use them. This indicates potentially high future rates of use for this specific group of users for some substances, especially ecstasy, with a potential use rate of 61.9% for BZP and illicit users (group 3).

Figure 4.3: Percentage of respondents from group three who already use each substance and the percentage who have not yet used, but want to try each substance.

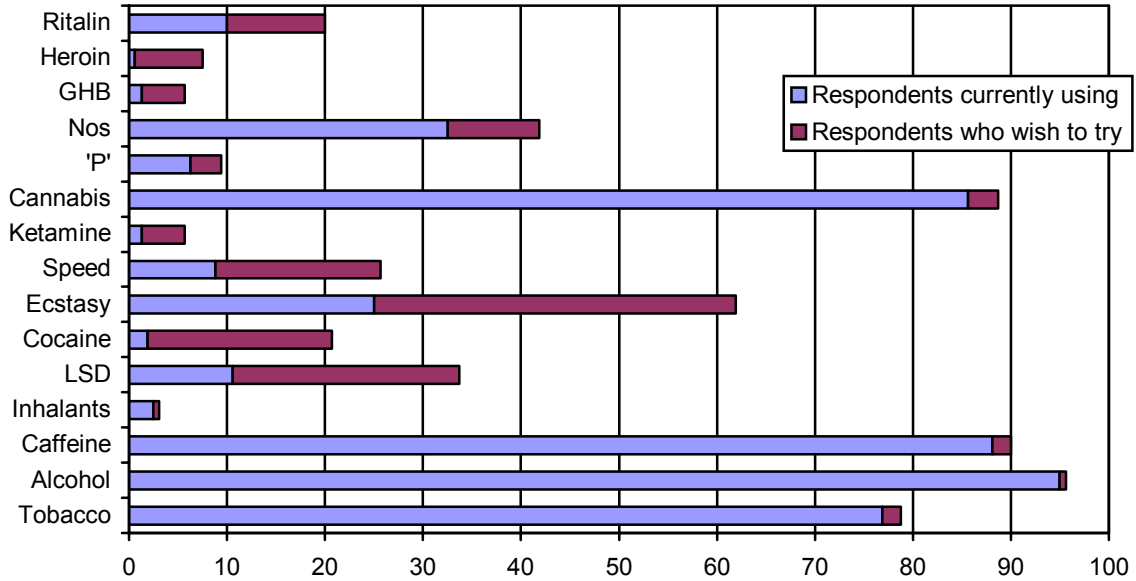
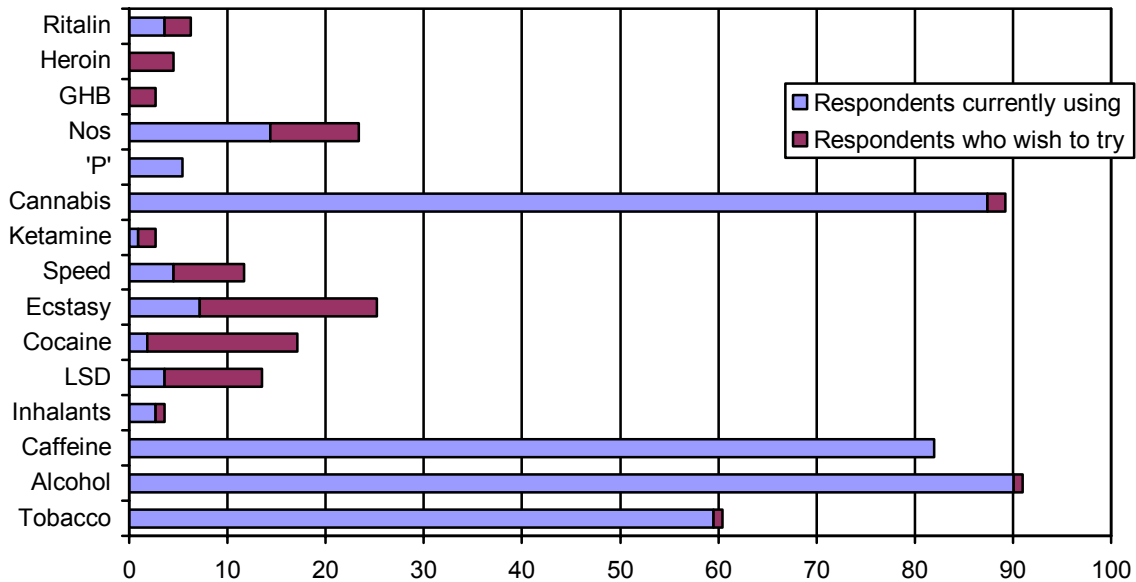


Figure 4.4: Percentage of respondents from group four who already use substances and the percentage who have not yet used, but want to try each substance.



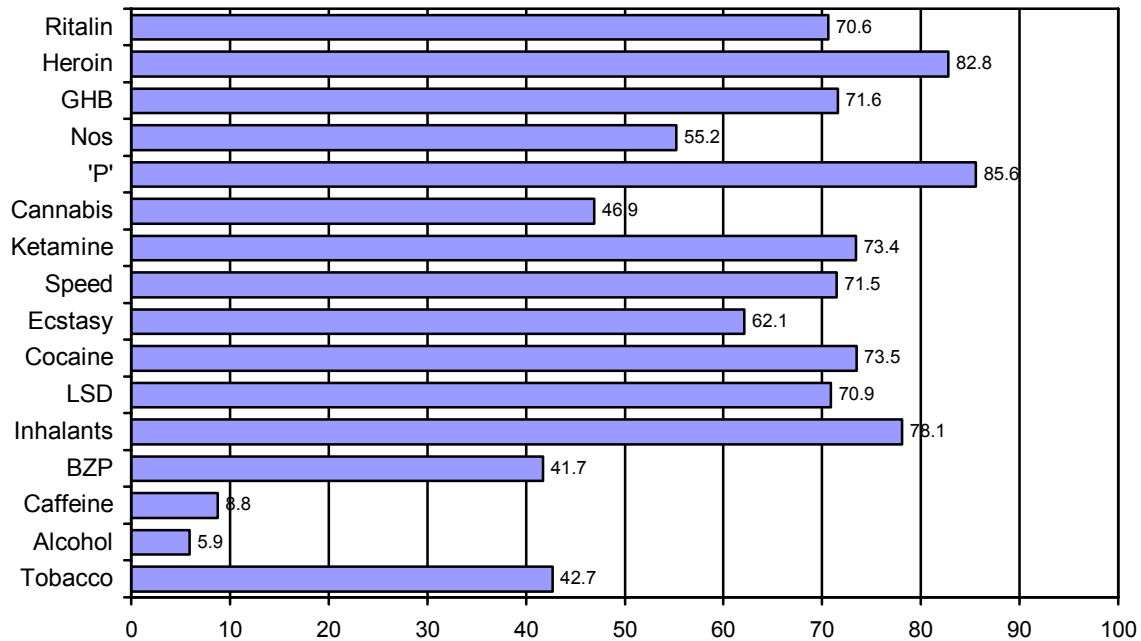
Again, there is no evidence that BZP party pill users are at a reduced risk of substance related harm compared to illicit substance users who do not use BZP party pills. On the contrary, BZP party pill users are more likely to want to try

many illicit substances, and are potentially at an increased risk of harm from future substance use.

Substances that respondents said they would never use again or try

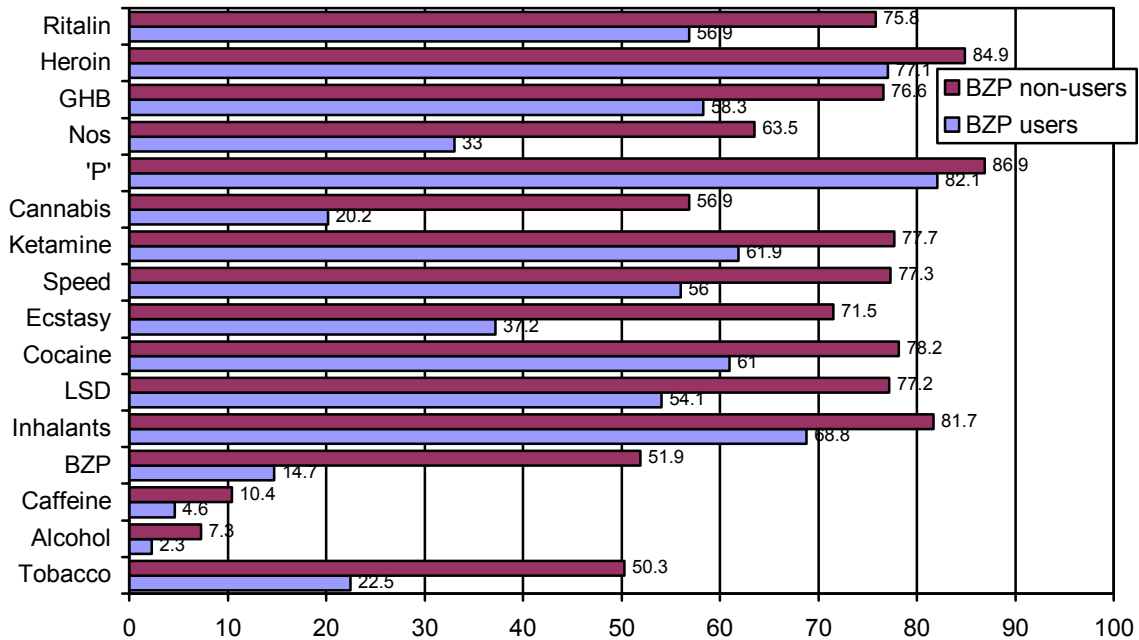
In contrast to the previous question, respondents were asked to indicate which substances they would never use again or try, regardless of whether they had ever used it or not. This question was asked in order to identify which substances were unpopular with BZP party pill users and non-users. Figure 6.0 shows what proportion of the entire sample indicated they would never use again or try substances. The most unpopular substances were 'P' (85.6%) and heroin (82.8%). Forty one point seven percent of the sample indicated they would never use BZP.

Figure 5.0: Percentage of entire sample that said they would never try or use a substance again.



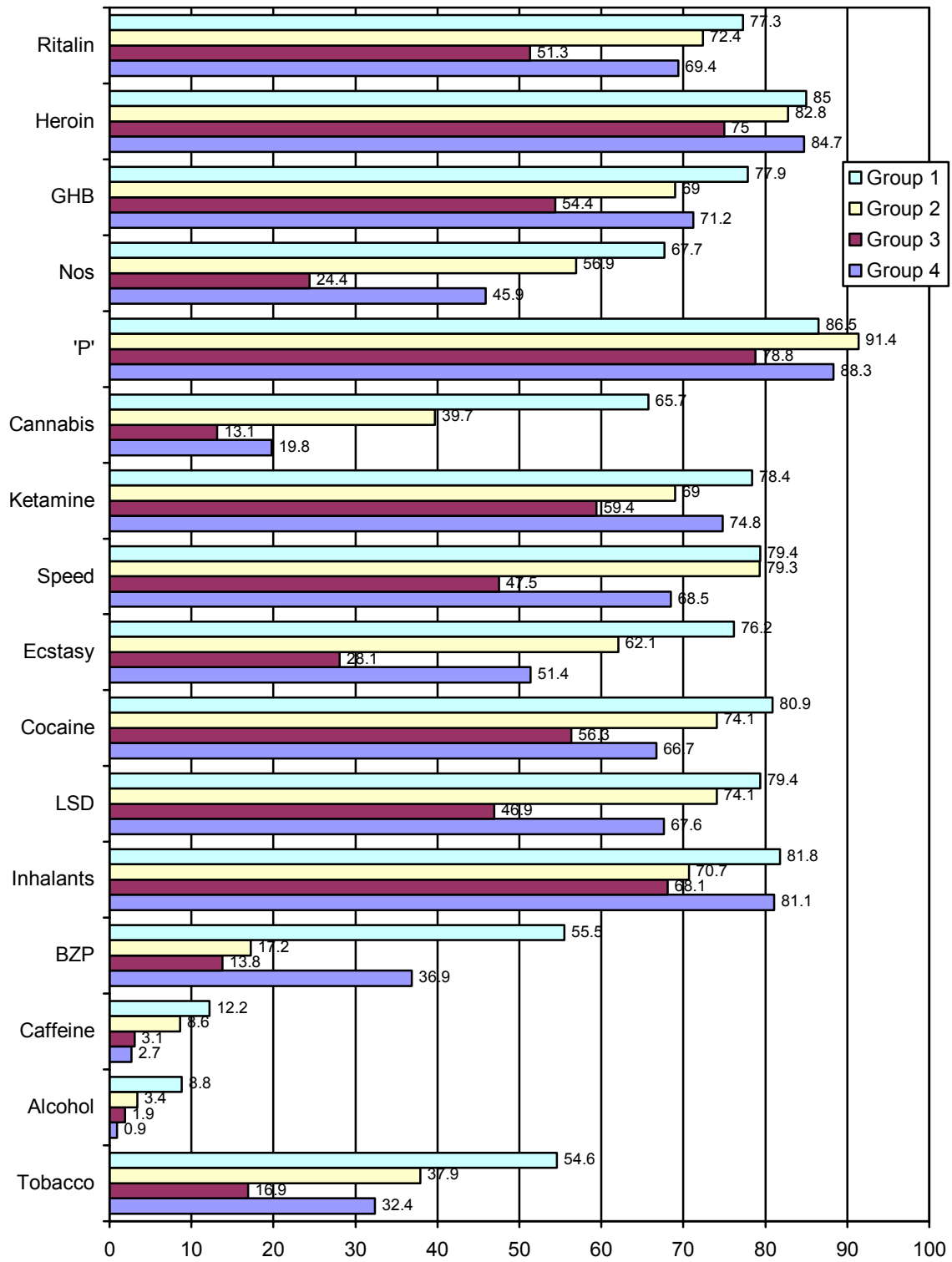
When BZP users and non-users are compared, BZP users are significantly less likely to indicate their intention to never use BZP, cannabis, ecstasy, nos, tobacco, LSD, speed, Ritalin, GHB, cocaine, ketamine, inhalants, alcohol, heroin, and caffeine (all $X^2_s(1,796) > 6.6$). In fact, the *only* substance that BZP users and non-users were equally likely to never try was 'P'. For 'P', BZP users and non-users were equally opposed to ever using it again or trying it.

Figure 5.1: Percentage of BZP users and non-users who said they would never try or use a substance again.



There are significant differences between the four sub-groups for all the substances investigated (all X^2 's(1,796)>8.6). Figure 6.1 shows what proportion of each sub-group said they would never try each substance. BZP and illicit substance users (group 3) are less likely than the illicit users with no current BZP use (group 4) to say they would never use BZP, ecstasy, nos, speed, LSD, tobacco, Ritalin, GHB, ketamine, inhalants, and 'P' (all X^2 's(1,271)>4.2). Comparing the two BZP using groups (groups 2 & 3) there are significant differences between BZP users who do and do not use illicit substances. Using both BZP and illicit substances makes the respondents significantly less likely to say they would never use ecstasy, cannabis, speed, LSD, tobacco, Ritalin, cocaine, and 'P' (all X^2 's(1,218)>4.6).

Figure 5.2: Percentage of respondents in each sub-group who said they would never try or use a substance again.

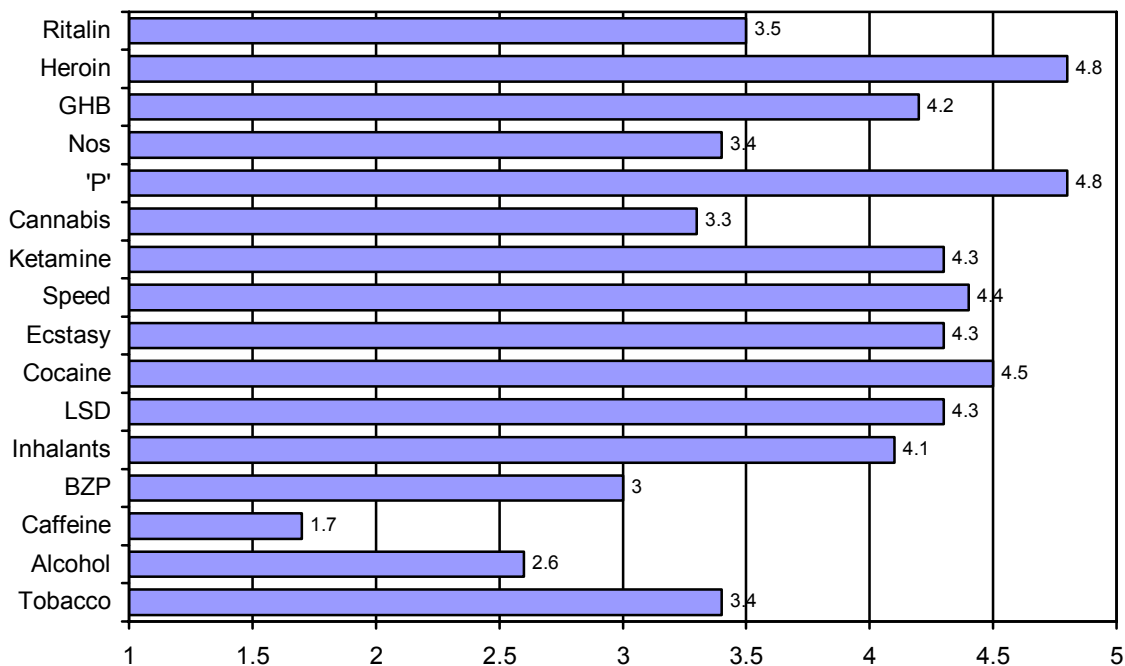


The findings from this question show that BZP party pill users are less inclined to say they wouldn't use a substance again. Benzylpiperazine party pill users seem to have more of a 'never say never' attitude towards using illicit substances compared to non-users. Benzylpiperazine party pill users in general were just as likely to say they would never use methamphetamine (P) as non-users. However, once BZP party pill users were split into illicit substance using and non-using sub-groups, BZP party pill users who used illicit substances were less likely to commit to never using P, compared to all three other groups.

Perceived risk of using substances

To check how risky BZP party pill use was perceived to be, compared to other substances, respondents were asked to rate how safe or dangerous they felt each substance was on a five-point scale. One was safe, and five was dangerous. Figure 7.0 shows how the entire sample rated each substance. The substances that were perceived to be most dangerous were 'P' and heroin, both scoring an average of four point eight. The illicit substance perceived to be least dangerous was cannabis, scoring an average of three point three. BZP was perceived to be neither safe nor dangerous, with an average score of three.

Figure 6.0: Mean ratings of risk of using substances for entire sample.

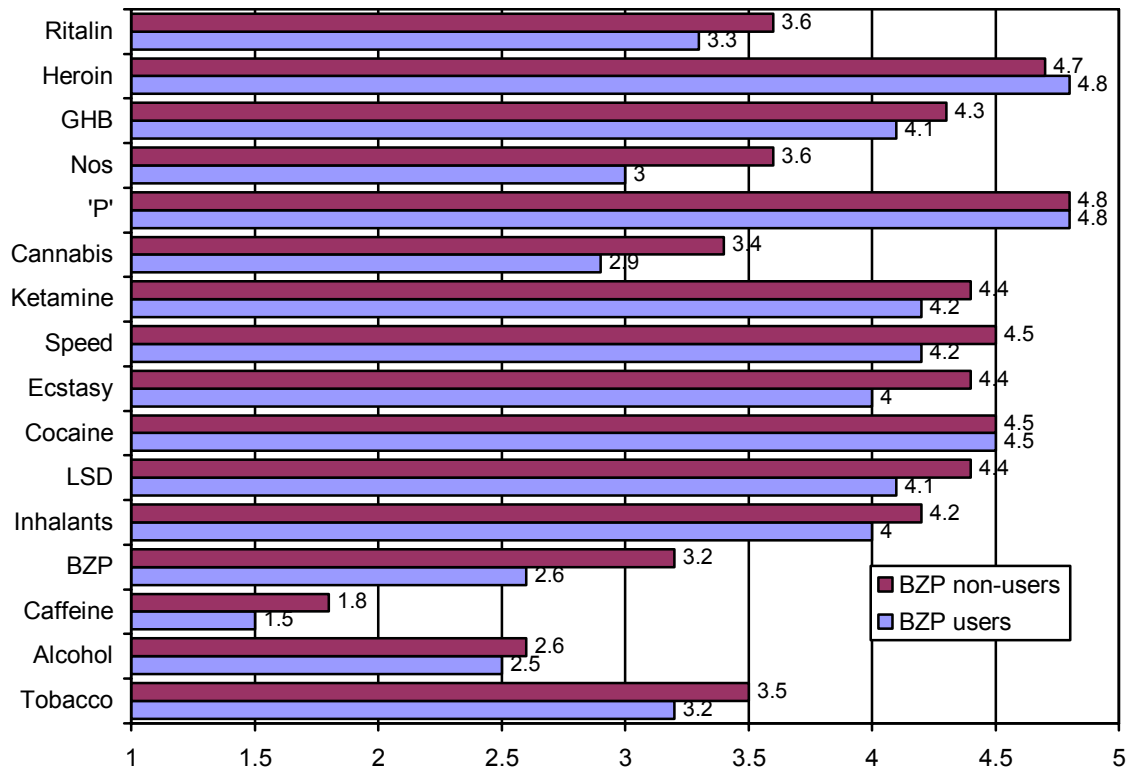


BZP users and non-users rated risk of substance use differently. When perception of risk across all substances is compared for BZP users and non-

user, BZP users rate substance use as significantly less risky than BZP non-users ($F(15)=6.5$).

When individual substances are examined BZP users rated BZP, cannabis, ecstasy, nos, caffeine, LSD, speed, tobacco, and Ritalin as significantly safer than BZP non-users did (all t 's(719) >3.3 , $p<0.003$ for bonferoni correction). BZP users perceive substance use to be less dangerous than respondents who do not use BZP. Figure 7.1 shows these differences below.

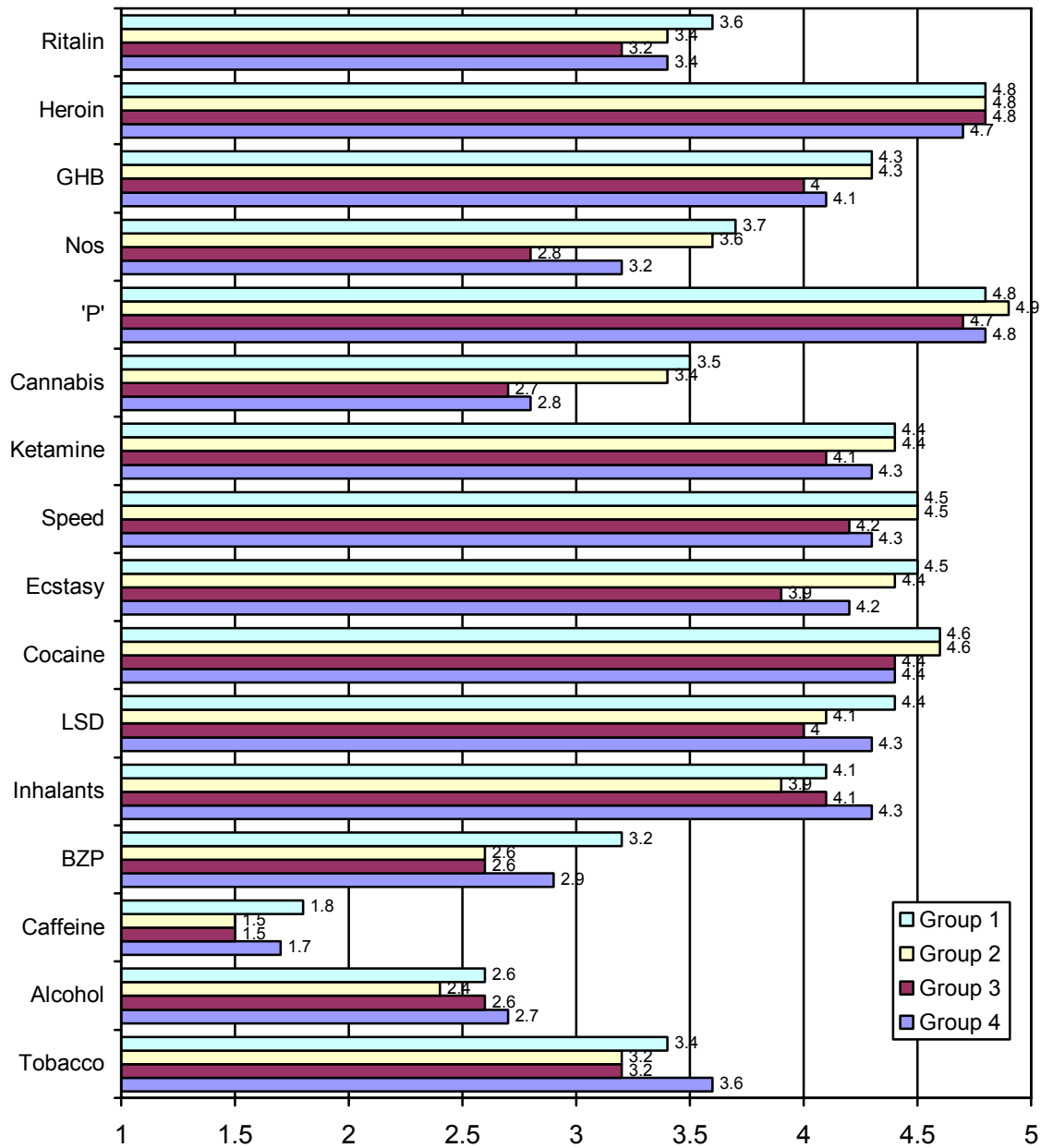
Figure 6.1: Mean ratings of risk of using substances for current BZP users and non-users.



When risk perception ratings for the four sub-groups are examined, users of BZP and illicit substances (group 3) perceive the risk of substance use in general, as significantly safer than the other three groups ($F(45)=4.7$).

Looking at ratings of individual substances, group three rated cannabis, nos, BZP, ecstasy, Ritalin, caffeine, speed, tobacco, LSD, GHB, and ketamine significantly safer than at least one other group (all F 's (3) >3.7). These differences can be seen in figure 7.2 below.

Figure 6.2: Mean ratings of risk of using substances for participants in each sub-group.



Benzylpiperazine party pill users perceive less risk involvement for substance use than non-users. This puts them at more risk of substance related harm, as they are more likely to underestimate the negative effects of substance use. BZP was perceived to be safer than all the illicit substances. This could be an artifact of its legal status, or because it is the only substance where the user can be assured of its ingredients.

Knowledge of BZP party pill ingredients

This question aimed to check whether BZP users were aware of what was in the party pills they were using. Respondents were asked to name the active ingredients in party pills if they knew what they were. Of all BZP users almost one in five (19.9%) knew that benzylpiperazine or BZP was the primary active ingredient in party pills. Only one user (0.5%) named trifluoromethylphenylpiperazine (TFMPP) as an active ingredient. Over two thirds (69.3%) of BZP party pill users did not attempt to answer the question at all. Caffeine was named as an ingredient by 1.5% of BZP users, and 1.4% thought horse tranquilizer was a primary ingredient in BZP party pills. The remainder of BZP users (7.4%) named a number of incorrect ingredients such as ecstasy, speed, and rat poison. Some of these respondents named made up chemicals that resembled BZP, such as BCP or LZP.

Responses to this question indicate that the majority of BZP users have poor knowledge of the ingredients in the party pills they are using. The vast majority of users made no attempt to answer the question, suggesting they had no knowledge of party pill ingredients. A significant proportion did know that BZP was the primary ingredient, and a small number believed the party pills they were taking contained illegal or poisonous ingredients.

Implications and summary of findings from study one

There is no evidence to suggest that BZP party pills are reducing substance use related harm. The majority of BZP party pill users use illicit substances, and use them equally as often as illicit substance users who do not use BZP party pills. They also use a wider variety of substances compared to illicit users who do not use BZP party pills. Benzylpiperazine party pill users demonstrated a desire to try many illicit substances, especially ecstasy. They were also less likely to say they would never use illicit substances. When asked to assess the risk of using substances, BZP party pill users thought substance use was safer than non-users. And finally, BZP party pill users have poor knowledge of the ingredients in party pills.

Based on the results of this study, there is no justification on the basis of harm reduction, for maintaining a legal BZP party pill market in New Zealand. Benzylpiperazine party pills are not being used as an alternative to illicit substances, rather they are being used as well as illicit substances.

Benzylpiperazine party pills do not cause these behaviours or attitudes, rather BZP party pill users are a self-selecting group of high risk, poly-drug users. BZP is simply another substance on the poly-drug users menu. Removal of BZP from the legal market place would reduce harm by reducing the number of substances legally available to these users. However the impact of a ban on BZP must also

be considered. And although only a quarter of BZP users used party pills and no illicit substances, the outcome of a ban for these users must also be investigated. Study two examines what this impact will be.

Study Two

Introduction to study two

The results from study one justify the removal of BZP from the legal market place on the basis that BZP party pills are not serving any purpose in terms of reducing substance use related harm. It is important to understand the consequences of banning a substance however, in order to prepare for possible outcomes.

The BZP party pill industry claims that banning BZP party pills will lead to an increase in illegal drug use, especially methamphetamine (P). This study aims to identify what alternatives BZP party pill users would consider if BZP party pills were no longer legally available. It will also clarify some of the findings from study one, so participants will be asked about how they currently use BZP party pills in relation to other substances.

This study uses qualitative interviews with regular BZP party pill users from the general population. Qualitative research provides rich data, allowing participants to fully explain their responses. This method of research was chosen for this study as participant's reasons for choosing their BZP party pill alternatives are just as important as the choice itself. It is important to keep in mind when interpreting the findings in this study, that these participants are a self-selecting group, and there is no way to ensure that they are representative of the BZP party pill using population as a whole.

Method

For study two, 60 regular BZP party pill users were interviewed either face-to-face or over the phone. Participants were recruited using A4 posters and business card sized fliers that were distributed through BZP party pill retail outlets and university campuses in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. Some participants also contacted the researcher after another participant posted the research information on a popular dance party website. Potential participants contacted the researcher by calling, texting, or emailing her on a dedicated phone number and email address.

Potential participants were screened at first contact. Confidentiality was explained, and participants were required to be at least 18 years old, to have used BZP party pills in the last six months, and be from Auckland, Wellington, or Christchurch.

Twenty Wellington interviews were conducted face-to-face in Dr Wilson's laboratory at Victoria University, all other interviews were conducted over the phone.

At the start of each interview confidentiality was again explained, and consent for the interview and its recording was gained verbally and recorded. Participants were given a movie ticket voucher or \$20 supermarket voucher to thank them for participating in the research.

Analysis and presentation of results

The interviews in this study collected qualitative data about participant's BZP party pill use and how they expect to respond to a ban of BZP. Where possible, responses have been quantified to give an indication of the frequency of specific answers. The data will also be analysed using a qualitative method called Thematic Analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Briefly, themes are identified in the data by coding individual responses, and then organising this coded data into relevant themes. Results will be presented for this study both quantitatively and qualitatively. Frequency of specific responses will be reported, then the themes identified for that question will be described and specific examples of responses from each theme will be given. The aim is to provide the reader with as vivid a picture of the data as possible. Please note that although some responses are being quantified, this information is simply descriptive. Participants were free to give as many or as few responses to each question as they wished. Therefore it would be erroneous to attempt to statistically analyse any of the quantified results, and many tables will not equal 100%.

Results

Demographics

Thirty four participants were female and 26 were male. Thirty four were from Wellington (interviewees 1 – 34), 16 were from Christchurch (interviewees 35 – 50), and 10 were from Auckland (interviewees 51 – 60). The mean age was 24.3 years (range 18 – 49 years, median 20 years). Fifty two were Pakeha, four were Maori, two were British, one was Pacific Island Nations, and one did not disclose ethnicity.

Current use information

Participants were asked how often they used BZP party pills and how long they had been using BZP party pills for.

How often?		How long?	
Daily	4	< 6 months	6
2+ a week	14	6 – 11 months	5
1 x a week	6	1 year	13
3 x a month	4	2 years	13
1 x a fortnight	14	3 years	10
1 x a month	9	4 years	1
< 1 x a month	9	5+ years	7

This information shows that the BZP party pill users in this sample are diverse in their use patterns. Frequency of use ranges from daily to less than monthly and duration of use ranges from less than six months to over five years.

Benzylpiperazine party pill use and alcohol

Participants were asked whether they ever drink alcohol while using BZP party pills, and if so, how the amount of alcohol they consume while using BZP party pills is effected.

Drink alcohol with BZP party pills?		Amount of alcohol consumed?	
Yes	39	Drink more	18
No	18	Drink less	19
Rarely	3	Drink the same	4

The majority of participants said they drink alcohol while using BZP party pills. Over half of those who drink and take BZP party pills drink the same amount or more alcohol than when just drinking alone.

Several themes were identified in the responses to these questions about drinking and taking BZP party pills. Respondents who said they tended to drink more alcohol when using BZP party pills explained that they could drink a lot more because the BZP party pills masked the effects of the alcohol.

K Yep, cool. Now how do you think banning party pills would affect your drinking habits?

IE Ha ha ((laughs)) you can drink like a fish. You can drink so much alcohol it's ridiculous, but not feel drunk. Like party pills don't you don't feel it until the next day, like, yeah you can just drink so much but you're still going cos you're on this party pill, you're just drinking like tons and then suddenly you just realize how much you've drunk, and then probably by the end of the night you're feeling really sick, and then the next day you're feeling really bad.

Interviewee 56.

K cool and how is the amount you drink affected by taking party pills?

IE um as I said like I don't usually drink as much but then sometimes um I end up kind of drinking like a fish because you don't realize

K yep

IE and see because you know like I always keep up the water and orange juice because it actually enhances the the feelings and stuff

K okay

IE but if there's a bottle of wine in front of you I don't actually realize that I've drunk that bottle of wine ((laughs))

Interviewee 4.

Participants who said they drank less alcohol when using BZP party pills expressed that once the BZP party pills started to take effect they no longer felt like drinking alcohol.

K Ok, and how is the amount of alcohol you drink effected by the party pills do you think?

IE I don't want to drink when I'm on them.

K So you would drink less?

IE Yeah. I might start off with a few but then, when they kick in I don't really think about it anymore, like I don't feel the need to go and get a drink.

Interviewee 18.

IE I can't really drink after I've had them, so um, basically my alcohol intake just stops. So I'll drink all night, so I'll just have a few drinks, and when I do have a party pill that's basically when I stop drinking, cos my body just, I just can't take it for some reason and I start drinking water, and then yeah, so.

Interviewee 23.

Benzyloperazine party pill use and other drugs

Participants were asked if they ever used other drugs *with* BZP party pills. Over a third (21) of the participants had used illegal drugs and BZP party pills together, the remaining 39 had not.

The 21 participants who had used illegal drugs and BZP party pills were then asked what illegal drugs they had used with BZP party pills. The table below shows how many participants said they have used each substance with BZP party pills.

Illegal drug used with BZP party pills	Number of participants who've used
Cannabis	16
Ecstasy	14
Speed	6
Methamphetamine (P)	6
LSD	5
GHB	2
Magic mushrooms ²	1
Ritalin	1
Ketamine	1
Methalone	1
Cactus	1

Most participants who had used illegal drugs and BZP party pills together had done so with more than one substance, most often cannabis and one or more others, or ecstasy and one or more others.

Participants were then asked if they had *ever* used any illegal substances. Only nine participants had no history of illicit drug use, 18 had only used cannabis, and 33 had a history of illicit drug use.

² The term "Magic" has been added here, and from here on, to make clear that interviewees were referring to hallucinogenic mushrooms for recreational use. Interviewees did not however use the term 'magic mushrooms', they talked about 'mushrooms' in the context of drug use.

Participants were asked to name the substances that they have used in the past. The table below shows how many participants said they had used each substance.

Substance	Number of participants who've used
Cannabis	39
Ecstasy	24
LSD	16
Speed	11
Methamphetamine (P)	11
Magic mushrooms	11
Cocaine	9
Ketamine	5
Heroin	3
Morphine	2
Mescaline	2
Prescription drugs (for recreational use)	2
Ritalin	1
DXM/LSA	1
Homebake	1
Rohypnol	1
GHB	1
Opiates in general	1
"Pinkies" (chemical name unavailable)	1

Participants who responded to the questions about illegal drug use had a diverse drug use history. Apart from the cannabis only users, participants with illicit drug histories were generally poly-drug users, the majority listing more than two.

*K So which illegal drugs have you used before? Now you've said ecstasy
IE Ecstasy, speed, coke, (laughs) [whispers:] I'm not a druggie (laughter).
This is really bad, Ketamine, um, magic mushrooms, um, and acid, I was
in the UK so, yeah. Um, and marijuana, yeah, and alcohol, I guess that's
a drug, yeah, and, think that's it, yeah that's it.*

Interviewee 23.

K *Yep cool. Now remember that this is confidential, what other illegal drugs have you used?*
 IE *Ah most of them*
 K *Can you list off maybe you know like your top five or some thing like that?*
 IE *Ok, cocaine, ecstasy, speed, LSD um, Ketamine.*
 K *Cool, ok, are there any others that spring to mind that you can think of?*
 IE *Um, mushrooms, marijuana, ah pretty much it.*

Interviewee 55.

A predominant theme was the clustering of ecstasy, speed, LSD, and cannabis use. These substances were most frequently mentioned together by participants.

K *Ok, so what illegal drugs have you used?*
 IE *(laughs)*
 K *It's alright, don't forget this is all confidential.*
 IE *Ok, umm, I've used E, speed, trips, pot*

Interviewee 1.

K *Now what illegal drugs have you used before?*
 IE *um ah um marijuana and ecstasy and speed.*

Interviewee 14.

Participants with illicit drug use histories were then asked what illegal drugs they thought BZP party pills were a good substitute for. The table below shows how many participants said BZP party pills were a good substitute for each substance.

Substance	Number of participants who think party pills are a good substitute
Ecstasy	21
Speed	15
Methamphetamine (P)	11
None/Can't compare	5
LSD	3
Cocaine	2
Alcohol	1
Magic mushrooms	1
Cannabis	1
Ritalin	1
All drugs	1

The main theme identified for this question was that ecstasy and speed were frequently mentioned. Central to this theme was that similarity of effect was the most common explanation for whether BZP party pills were a good substitute for a drug or not.

*K Yep. Ok, umm, which illegal drugs are party pills a good substitute for?
[Pause]*

IE Hmm, illegal drugs. Everything really, [yeah?] I reckon yeah everything. Because you get the same effect. [Yep] I reckon.

K Ok, so=

IE =like E and speed and trips [Yep] party pills give you the euphoric feeling that you get from them

Interviewee 1.

K okay cool. Um which illegal drugs are party pills a good substitute for?

IE um E and speed and cocaine and anything that's energizing really.

Interviewee 14.

K Yeah, I guess ah, I guess what I mean is which um, which illegal drugs could party pills easily just take the place of for some users?

IE Ah, I think quite a lot of them, I mean certainly those ones that speed you up, you know, like speed or P or Ice or whatever, they could certainly take the place of, you know, in the sense that is has similar effects. Um, yeah.

Interviewee 21.

Another less prominent theme was that you cannot compare BZP party pills with any illegal drugs. Responses that formed this theme contradicted responses from the previous theme.

K Yeah, which drug do you think is most similar to party pills?

IE Um it it it you can't compare them

K Ok

IE Yeah it's you know like trying to compare a bottle of champagne with a beer.

Interviewee 46.

K Yep, cool, ok. Now which illegal drugs do you think party pills are a good substitute for?

IE Um, none

K Ah, really?

IE Yeah. You can't compare them, they're completely different aye.

Interviewee 25.

And after BZP party pills are banned...?

Benzylpiperazine party pill users were asked a series of questions about how they anticipated they would respond to a ban on BZP party pills. The first question asked was would they use anything else if BZP party pills were banned completely. The table below shows what substances users identified they would use after BZP party pills were made illegal. Responses from participants with illicit drug history are on the left, and responses from participants with cannabis only or no illicit drug history are on the right.

Participants with illicit drug history		Participants with cannabis only or no illicit drug history	
Substance	No. of times mentioned	Substance	No. of times mentioned
Ecstasy	20	Ecstasy	6
Speed	9	Not sure	5
Black market BZP	4	Nothing	5
Methamphetamine (P)	4	New legal party pills	3
Nothing	3	Cannabis	3
Not sure	2	Any legal alternative	2
LSD	2	Alcohol	2
Cannabis	2	Black market BZP	1
Legal energy pills	1	Speed	1
Alcohol	1	LSD	1
Magic mushrooms	1	Prescription drugs for recreational use medicines	1
Poppy seed tea	1		
Illegal pure BZP	1		

A theme identified in responses to this question was that participants who have already used illegal substances are more inclined to consider illegal alternatives once BZP party pills are banned. Ecstasy was by far the most popular alternative for these participants.

- K *Now if party pills are banned completely, would you use anything else instead?*
- IE *If they were banned completely, um, I would revert back to normal drugs. Illegal drugs, more. Well, I don't even know if it would be more, well I guess it would be cos now you're suddenly short of something to take.*
- K *Yep, and what do you think would be the drug you would most likely use instead of party pills?*
- IE *Um, speed or E*

Interviewee 56.

IE *Well, if party pills are banned completely I'm not gonna be going to find them on you know the black market or whatever. I'll be more likely to go and find the real deal.*

K *Yeah, what do you think*

IE *Illegal drugs*

K *Yeah what do you think you would use instead?*

IE *Probably ecstasy, and more likely to use P*

Interviewee 28.

K *If party pills were banned completely, would you use anything else instead?*

IE *Yes I would.*

K *What would you be looking to use?*

IE *I'd use ecstasy, acid, mushrooms, anything I could get my hands on.*

Interviewee 44.

Ecstasy was also a popular alternative to BZP party pills for participants with only cannabis or no illicit drug history. These responses indicate that a number of BZP party pill users who have not yet used class A or B substances are willing to move on to harder drugs in the absence of BZP party pills.

K *Ok, so if party pills were banned completely, would you use anything else instead?*

IE *Yep, I would take E and I would try illegal drugs, definitely.*

Interviewee 51. (No illicit drug history)

K *Now if party pills were banned completely, would you use anything else instead?*

IE *Um, if well I I think that if they're banned they'll still be available. But if they weren't I think I would have no choice but to use alternatives.*

K *Ok, what do you think would be your first option as an alternative to BZP?*

IE *MDMA, I would I would try E, cos everybody says that it's better. Um and you get a very similar results in terms of the good side of things.*

Interviewee 59. (Cannabis only history)

Although some 'drug naïve' participants were willing to consider illegal alternatives, the predominant theme for these participants was avoidance of illegal alternatives, though no specific legal alternative emerged. Many weren't sure if they'd use anything else instead or weren't sure what their alternative would be.

K *Yep, sure, ok. Um, if party pills were banned completely, would you use anything else instead, whether it's legal or illegal?*

IE *Um, I might, but I wouldn't use illegal, I'd only use legal.*

K *Ok, and is there any legal substances you can think of that you might use instead of party pills?*

IE *No.*

Interviewee 24.

K *Now if party pills were banned completely, would you use anything else instead, illegal or legal?*

IE *Um if there was a ah ah ah if there was another a legal lega-, cant say that word properly, if there was a you know a legal um substance that was the same as party pills then yes but I wouldn't use anything illegal.*

Interviewee 43.

K *Now if party pills were banned completely would you use anything else instead?*

IE *Mm, no, I think they'll just bring out some other drug. They'll find something else and just put that in pills and sell that instead.*

K *Oh ok, so you reckon there'll be some legal um, another new legal party pill that will come out with a different substance in it?*

IE *Yeah, just mess round with like that particular cow de-wormer and find out you know something that's slightly different but does the same thing and then boom! Might be under the law so they'll be under the door.*

Interviewee 49.

Overall, ecstasy is the alternative to BZP party pills mentioned most frequently by both groups of participants, indicating that it is the substance most likely to be sought by BZP party pill users once the ban takes effect.

What about methamphetamine (P)?

"Crack is not my thing." Interviewee 56.

Only four participants mentioned methamphetamine (P) when asked about alternatives to BZP party pills in the previous question, despite 'P' being suggested as the main alternative to BZP party pills by the BZP party pill industry. To check the likelihood of an increase in methamphetamine (P) use after the BZP party pill ban, participants were asked directly whether they would

consider using methamphetamine or P as an alternative to BZP party pills after the ban. The table below shows how participants responded to this question.

Participants with illicit drug history		Participants with cannabis only or no illicit drug history	
Response	No. of participants	Response	No. of participants
Yes	9	Yes	1
No	23	No	24

For both groups there was a theme of extremely aversive responses to the suggestion that methamphetamine or P could be an alternative to BZP party pills. For many other questions simple 'Yes/No' responses were given, but for this question participants expressed strong negative reactions, often elaborating unprompted.

K *Yep, ok. Now would you consider using something like methamphetamine or P instead of party pills if they are banned?*

IE *Oh no way! I wouldn't touch that stuff! I've seen it and I've seen what it's done. People get this false thing about being alright, but they're not. You know, especially ones with children and that. Danger aye.*

Interviewee 31.

K *Okay, cool. Um, would you consider using um methamphetamine or P if party pills were banned?*

IE *((laughs)) No! No, no, oh no.*

K *((laughs)) Okay, can you tell me why that's not an option for you?*

IE *Ah well I mean I've never taken it, but I've talked to lots of people who have and I've seen, once again its probably bad public- media publicity but my, my eldest son, um he's dabbled and he's, he's totally against it. He goes 'its just for losers'. I've just heard too many people say it's such a bad thing, I'm exac- I don't even take grass! ((laughs)) do you think I'm going to try and take something else that bad?*

K *Yep.*

IE *But I just heard that its so addictive and it, you see so many people get addicted and it drags them down and turns their life upside down I think its more then anything.*

Interviewee 38.

Participants were asked why or why not methamphetamine (P) was an option for them. Many themes were identified in these responses, and most people had multiple reasons for not considering methamphetamine (P) as an alternative. The first was the amount of negative media attention on methamphetamine (P) in recent years.

K Cool. Um now would you ever consider using methamphetamine or P instead of party pills?

IE No! No! shit no! no.

K Now why not?

IE Because that has very bad um ah med- you know, news media.

K Yep.

IE Yeah.

K Okay.

IE People just loose it on that.

Interviewee 39.

K Ok, cool. And would you consider trying methamphetamine on P instead of party pills if they are banned?

IE Um, no, I might say no right now, I've managed to not go down that road.

K Cool, and why, what is it that puts you off trying that?

IE Um, partly negative media coverage, really bad negative media coverage, and um, personal experience seeing um people, completely spin out, and also just associating with people I don't want to associate with.

Interviewee 48.

Another theme was witnessing the adverse experiences of friends who had used methamphetamine (P), and a theme closely related to this was the perceived addictive potential of methamphetamine (P).

K Cool, ok. So that, my next question then was would you consider using methamphetamine or ice or P instead of party pills if they were banned?

IE No I wouldn't, definitely would not use P, yeah.

K And can you explain why it's not an option for you?

IE Um, I've had friends who have become heavy P users, and um, I've had my house broken into, which I'm pretty sure was by the person who was using it, and I've just had friends, I've got, well and old friend has been in jail for it, for dealing. And just, one of my really good friends um, has become a regular user, well actually two of my friends, and um, in terms of they had a massive inheritance and blew the whole lot. So, and also I just, can't see anything good of that drug. It's just not even, it's just such a nasty, yeah, it just would, yeah, I mean going overseas as well and coming back and seeing how much worse it's become it's just made me think oh god, I wouldn't even go there, so yeah.

Interviewee 23.

K *Yep, no that's cool. Um, would you consider using methamphetamine or P instead of party pills when they're banned?*

IE *No, no*

K *And why not?*

IE *Ah, because P junkies scare me, it's too intense.*

K *Ok*

IE *I wouldn't, I just wouldn't aye*

K *Yep, cool, is that, is that just based on what you've seen or?*

IE *It's based on what I've seen amongst some of my friends, and just, I don't know, it's too much, it's too much. It's up there with heroine really aye.*

Interviewee 27.

K *Okay, cool. Um, would you consider using um methamphetamine or P if party pills were banned?*

IE *(laughs) No! No, no, oh no.*

K *(laughs) Okay, can you tell me why that's not an option for you?*

IE *Ah well I mean I've never taken it, but I've talked to lots of people who have and I've seen, once gain its probably bad public- media publicity but my, my eldest son, um he's dabbled and he's, he's totally against it. He goes 'its just for losers'. I've just heard too many people say its such a bad thing, I'm exac- I don't even take grass! (laughs) do you think I'm going to try and take something else that bad?*

K *Yep.*

IE *But I just heard that its so addictive and it, you see so many people get addicted and it drags them down and turns their life upside down I think its more then anything.*

Interviewee 38.

K *Ok. What about methamphetamine or P? Would you ever consider using that as an alternative to party pills if they were banned?*

IE *I don't think I'd ever consider using it in the first place, um, but no.*

K *Ok, why is that, why is that a substance you would not consider?*

IE *Um, just because of the amount of media attention it's got, and how how much it's been bashed and that, um, but the main thing would be because of it's addictive potential. Like of all the things that I've tried, I've pretty much stayed away from everything that can be physically addictive, um, and you know P can be very addictive.*

Interviewee 17.

Some participants with a history of drug use said they would use methamphetamine (P) as an alternative to BZP party pills, though most were unhappy that they were being 'forced' to go back to it.

K *Yep, ok, cool. Um, and do you think, you've said you've used ice before, do you think you would consider using methamphetamine instead of party pills if they were banned?*

IE *Probably, yeah.*

K *Yep? And why would you consider that, what would be the um reasoning behind doing that?*

IE *Well it would just be availability. If I couldn't get the safer cheaper alternative, if that wasn't as readily available and I still wanted to um, go out and have fun in the way that I like to have fun, then I would probably go to that. I mean I would a little bit annoyed that I had to do it because I know that it probably wouldn't be, you know, best practice, so to speak, but yeah.*

Interviewee 21.

Responses to this question indicate that methamphetamine (P) is unlikely to be an alternative to BZP party pills for the majority of participants. Those who do consider it after the ban are most likely to be those with previous experience of methamphetamine (P) or other class A and B substance use. Indeed, the number of participants suggesting they were prepared to use methamphetamine (P) instead of BZP party pills was fewer than the number who have already used methamphetamine (P) in the past. The majority of participants considered methamphetamine (P) use completely out of the question, and had multiple reasons for avoiding its use.

Black market BZP?

"Yes Mr Anderton, I would increase the black market." Interviewee 57.

To check whether there would be a demand for black market BZP party pills after the ban takes effect, participants were asked whether they would try and obtain illegal BZP party pills. Thirty four participants said they would actively seek illegal BZP party pills after they were banned. Twenty six said they would not look for illegal BZP party pills.

Participants were then asked how much they would be prepared to pay for illegal BZP party pills if they were offered some. The table below shows how much participants were prepared to pay for illegal BZP party pills compared to their current legal price.

Amount prepared to pay for illegal BZP party pills	Number of participants prepared to pay
Double current cost	20
Same as current cost	11
Free/Nothing/Wouldn't pay	10
Less than current cost	6
More, but less than cost of ecstasy	5
A bit more than current cost	4
50% more than current cost	2
Illegal market value	1
Ten times current cost	1

The majority of participants were happy to pay a substantial amount more for illegal BZP party pills than they do now for legal ones. Many of the participants who said they would not seek illegal BZP party pills were still prepared to pay for them if they happened to be available.

The dominant theme for this question was that most participants were prepared to pay more for illegal BZP party pills. However several other themes were identified that are relevant to the demand for black market BZP party pills. Some participants said that their decision to purchase illegal BZP party pills was dependant on the source and quality of the pills on offer.

K Ok. If someone offered them to you illegally, how much would you be prepared to pay for them?

IE It would depend on if it was a brand I recognized cos if I was offered something that was like home made or whatever I wouldn't even go there. But um, if it was a brand I was comfortable with I'd probably pay around thirty... oh I'd probably split it with a friends actually. So yeah just whatever, whatever for like six or whatever, we'd just split it up between us. Probably spend up to about twenty bucks though.

K Ok, so would that be more or less than what you currently pay for them?

IE Umm, I think it would probably be the same actually, yeah.

K So you wouldn't be prepared to pay more for illegal BZP?

IE Umm, nah.

Interviewee 19.

- K Cool. If party pills were banned completely, would you attempt to get them illegally?*
- IE Um, depends like where you get them from, like if I knew the person, I think I would, but I wouldn't go into like, people I don't know and try and get them off like gangs anything. I don't like them that much!*
- Interviewee 22.

Another theme identified was that for some participants, the price of illegal BZP party pills would be dependant on the price of ecstasy. Illegal BZP party pills must cost less than ecstasy to be worth purchasing.

- K Cool, ok. If someone offered you some, um, illegally, how much would you be prepared to pay for an illegal party pill?*
- IE Um, probably at the most forty dollars, but I s'pose when they become illegal the demand goes up so it's probably price goes up, but I wouldn't pay the same amount as you'd pay for an E because obviously they're not as good, so [laughs]*
- K Ok, so, but you would be prepared to pay a little bit more than what they are now?*
- IE Yeah, yeah, because they'd, if they're illegal then obviously then it's you probably want to have it more, so yeah.*
- Interviewee 23.

- K Ok, cool. Um, now if party pills were banned completely would you try and get them illegally?*
- IE Yeah, maybe, it depends on the price*
- K Ok, cool, that's good cos my next question is how much would you pay for illegal BZP?*
- IE Let's think. If E's about sixty dollars, then maybe (.) thirty dollars for BZP. But once it gets close enough to E in price, then I'll just switch to E. It's sort of a trade off.*
- K Ok. So um, would you be prepared to pay more for it when it's illegal?*
- IE A bit more, but relative to other drugs*
- K So how much more? Ok cool, so you base what you would pay for it on what other drugs are worth in comparison?*
- IE Yeah cos once they're both illegal they are both illegal, yeah.*
- Interviewee 51.

K *Ok, now if party pills were banned completely would you try and get them illegally?*

IE *Yeah, I would.*

K *Cool, and how much would you be prepared to pay for illegal BZP?*

IE *Hmm, I spose it depends on the quality of the party pills and how strong it is and stuff like that. It's illegal so I'd expect to pay a little bit more than I do now.*

K *Yep, so you'd be happy to pay a bit more?*

IE *Yeah a little bit more. As long as it's you know, cheaper than E sorta thing I'd probably go for it.*

K *Ok, so it's price compared to other illegal drugs would be important?*

IE *Yes, obviously*

K *Ok, so you wouldn't be, does that mean you wouldn't be prepared to pay as much for BZP as you would for say ecstasy?*

IE *Um, yeah I'd prefer to buy E for the same price as party pills sorta thing, I'd go for E over party pills but if it's a little bit cheaper I'd you know say, depending on like how long the effects would last sorta thing, versus price, um, I'd probably go for say party pills if it was you know, ten dollars cheaper sorta thing.*

Interviewee 58.

Only a few participants mentioned that they would stock up on BZP party pills in preparation for the ban, however one participant discussed access to large quantities of BZP in anticipation of supplying black market BZP party pills.

K *Ok, now um, if party pills were banned completely would you try and get them illegally?*

IE *Absolutely.*

K *Now how much would you be prepared to pay for illegal BZP?*

IE *Well I think they'll be cheaper. I've already been offered three and a half thousand BZP tablets for two thousand dollars, that works out at fifty six cents each or something, and currently they're ten dollars each so, I think that if they're made illegal they'll be a lot cheaper rather than more expensive.*

K *Ok, so you've been offered, sorry how many?*

IE *Um three thousand two hundred and fifty plus two kilos, or or um yeah two kilos for two thousand dollars.*

K *So um, was this offer made from someone within the industry?*

IE *Yes*

K *Right. Ok, so that would indicate that there's likely to be a black market?*

IE *Oh absolutely. There's a black market in anything that's illegal but desirable.*

K *Yep ok. So you would be, you would actually not be prepared to more you would pay less for illegal party pills?*

IE *I think I would pay less, yeah.*

K *Yeah, ok.*

IE // yeah absolutely.

Interviewee 59.

If this participant's comments are to be taken seriously, it would indicate that there is indeed supply ready to meet the demand for illegal BZP party pills. Considering the prices that users say they are prepared to pay for illegal BZP party pills and the apparent cost to suppliers, black market BZP could prove to be a lucrative option for drug dealers.

Responses to the questions about illegal BZP party pills indicate that after the ban there will be a demand for black market BZP party pills, and there is some evidence that there will be a supply to fill this demand.

What do BZP party pill users think others will do after the ban?

To get a picture of what users are expecting to happen after the ban, participants were asked what they think other BZP party pill users will use instead of BZP party pills. The table below shows which substances participants mentioned in response to this question, and the number of participants who talked about each substance. Some participants mentioned substances that they specifically thought would *not* be used as an alternative to BZP party pills. These are listed at the bottom of the table.

Substance	No. of participants who mentioned
Ecstasy	29
Methamphetamine (P)	17
Speed	15
Black market BZP	9
Alcohol	8
LSD	5
Cannabis	4
Caffeine	3
Nothing	3
Ritalin	2
Illegal drugs in general	2
Not methamphetamine (P)	7
Not ecstasy	2

The main theme identified for responses to this question is that a variety of alternatives are expected to take the place of BZP party pills. As with previous questions, ecstasy is mentioned most often, but usually as one of several alternatives.

K Ok, now what do you think most other party pill users will use instead of party pills if they're banned?

IE Hmm, I think there'll be some that stop using party pills and you know drugs altogether, but um, I think the most logical choice will be going onto ecstasy.

Interviewee 58.

K What do you think most other party pill users will use instead of party pills if they are banned?

IE I don't know, just easily obtainable, um, drugs like speed and E and LSD.

Interviewee 25.

K Wow, ok, cool. Now what do you think most other party pill users are going to use instead of party pills if they're banned?

IE Ah, ecstasy, and the ah party pills that the gangs are ready to provide now.

Interviewee 32.

Despite participant's negative responses to using methamphetamine (P) themselves, there was a perception that *other* people are likely to use methamphetamine (P) as an alternative to BZP party pills.

K Now what do you think most other party pill users will use instead of party pills if they are banned?

IE Um, ecstasy's always the big one in in, sorta the clubs and gigs. I've got a nasty feeling that you know, the P epidemic might reignite. I don't know if it ever particularly, you know it's been a big problem over here, but I can see that getting worse. Um, yeah they they would be the two that I would see being you know, pretty dominant.

Interviewee 55.

K Cool, ok. Now what do you think most other party pill users will use instead of party pills if they ban them?

IE Ah well, [inaudible] go on alcohol, and ah probably some of them would actually try P. Cos they've been told that P is a lot like party pills, keeps you alert and everything, yeah, but. Total malfunction for that you know, that P, it's, it's chronic.

Interviewee 31.

As participant 31 points out, BZP party pill users have been exposed to various messages in the media and BZP party pill marketing material that suggest BZP party pills are similar in effect to methamphetamine (P). Although participants were personally against the use of methamphetamine (P), responses to this question indicate that some have accepted the message from industry supporters that BZP party pill users will use methamphetamine (P) if BZP party pills are banned. It is important to note, that the perception that BZP party pill users will use methamphetamine (P) instead of BZP party pills, is not supported by participants responses to questions about what they personally will and will not use.

What about alcohol consumption?

Participants were asked how banning BZP party pills would affect their drinking habits. Twenty nine participants said that they would drink more alcohol if BZP party pills were banned, 27 said banning BZP party pills would have no effect on the amount of alcohol they drink, and three participants said they would drink less alcohol if BZP party pills were banned.

For participants who said they would drink more alcohol it was usually a case of using alcohol socially on the occasions they would otherwise have used BZP party pills.

K Now how do you think banning party pills would effect your drinking habits?

IE Oh well I really don't want to go back to drinking. But I would probably drink until I found something else, you know, for when I'm out. Because I wouldn't wanna be completely you know straight and feeling really out of place because every one else is drinking, so I probably would drink again until I found something else.

Interviewee 47.

K Yep ok, cool. Now how do you think banning party pills would affect you drinking habits?

IE Don't know. I'd be more likely to drink (.) to go out.

K Yep

IE You know so I'd go back to using alcohol as a social lubricant more than I do party pills.

K Yep, so your drinking would increase?

IE Yeah it would, well the quantity I would drink would also increase as well.

Interviewee 58.

K Um, how do you think banning party pills would affect your drinking habits?
IE Um, I'd drink a lot more. Um, which probably wouldn't be that good actually. I guess if there was a dance party on or something happening on the weekend um, I'd just get drunk instead of taking a party pill.
Interviewee 17.

Many of the participants who said that banning BZP party pills would have no effect on their drinking habits didn't drink alcohol at all anyway, and didn't intend to start.

K Ok, cool. Now how do you think banning party pills would affect your drinking habits?
IE Well for me, I don't drink, and I will continue to not drink so that won't affect mine at all.
Interviewee 33.

K Yeah? Cool. Ok how do you think banning party pills would affect your drinking habits? Do you reckon you'd drink more alcohol or maybe less? Or the same or?
IE I don't drink at all.
K Cool ok so you wouldn't start drinking alcohol if they banned party pills?
IE No.
Interviewee 35.

Some participants who said that banning BZP party pills would have no effect on their drinking habits already drank while using BZP party pills, and said they would continue to drink at the same rate.

K Um, how do you think banning party pills would affect your drinking habits?
IE I drink too much already so ((laughs))
K ((laughs)) yep
IE I work at a bar ((laughs))
K yep, so you don't think it would um increase any more than it already is?
IE ((laughs)) I don't think it would be possible.
Interviewee 4.

K Now how do you think banning party pills would affect your drinking habits?
IE Um, it won't change it at all I don't think, I'll still drink heaps.
Interviewee 29.

The majority of participants combined the use of alcohol and BZP party pills, and this accounts for the number of participants whose drinking habits will be unchanged by a ban of BZP party pills. They will continue to drink alcohol on those occasions that they would usually be using alcohol and BZP party pills.

Implications and summary of findings from study two

The sample of participants for study two represents a diverse range of BZP party pill users. Participants are varied in their use of BZP party pills and other substances.

The results show that contrary to manufacturer recommendations, the majority of BZP party pill users consume alcohol while using BZP party pills. For many of these users the combination of BZP party pills and alcohol leads to an increase in alcohol consumption.

Also contrary to manufacturer recommendations, a considerable number of participants used illicit substances while using BZP party pills. The substances most commonly used with BZP party pills were cannabis and ecstasy.

The majority of participants in the study had a history of illicit drug use. Cannabis was the most commonly used substance, followed by ecstasy. The main theme around participant's illicit drug histories was poly-drug use. With the exception of cannabis, rarely had a participant only used one illicit substance. Most frequently they had a history of using three or more substances.

Benzylpiperazine party pills were most suitable substitutes for ecstasy and speed, and ecstasy was the illicit substance most likely to be used instead of BZP party pills after the ban. However, a wide variety of alternatives to BZP party pills were suggested. Participants with a history of illicit substance use were more inclined to talk about illegal alternatives, where participants with cannabis only or no illicit drug history seemed to be looking for legal alternatives, though they were not sure what.

Methamphetamine (P) was an unpopular alternative to BZP party pills for the majority of participants. Participants responded extremely negatively to the suggestion of methamphetamine (P) use, and supplied multiple reasons for avoiding it as an alternative to BZP party pills. Interestingly, when asked what they thought *other* BZP party pill users would use instead of BZP party pills, methamphetamine (P) was mentioned more frequently. This phenomenon could be explained as participant's acceptance of messages in the media and from the BZP party pill industry, suggesting that methamphetamine (P) is the logical alternative to BZP party pills. Participants are sure that they personally would not use methamphetamine (P), however they are willing to believe that others would. Ecstasy was however, the most frequently mentioned alternative to BZP party pills for other users.

The majority of participants said that they would attempt to access illegal BZP party pills after they were banned. When asked how much they'd be willing to pay for illegal BZP party pills the majority would pay more than they pay now for

legal BZP party pills. According to participants in this study, there would appear to be a demand for black market BZP party pills, and some evidence that there will be supply to meet that demand.

Finally, for some participants a BZP party pill ban will result in an increase in alcohol consumption. For others there will be little effect on their drinking. For those participants who use BZP party pills and alcohol together, the removal of BZP party pills from the situation will reduce their risk of substance related harm.

The overall finding from study two is that there is no single alternative to BZP party pills for participants in this study. Ecstasy is the illicit substance most frequently mentioned in all the questions about illicit substance use. Of all the illicit substances mentioned, BZP party pill users are most likely to have already used ecstasy (with the exception of cannabis), they think that BZP party pills are a good substitute for ecstasy, they are most likely to use ecstasy instead of BZP party pills once they are banned, and they think ecstasy is the substance other BZP party pill users are likely to turn to. However, participants talked about many other alternatives. Speed was often mentioned along with ecstasy, but methamphetamine (P) was an unpopular alternative to BZP party pills for most participants. There is a demand for black market BZP party pills, and if a supply emerges, this could potentially be the primary alternative for BZP party pill users. Alcohol is also likely to be used instead of BZP party pills. Participants were unlikely to select one alternative to fill the gap left by legal BZP party pills. A combination of illicit substance use, black market BZP party pills, and alcohol will be the likely alternative to legal BZP party pill use.

Conclusions

In the absence of any evidence that BZP party pills reduce substance related harm, there is little justification for continuing a legal BZP party pill market in New Zealand. However, with over a quarter of the BZP party pill industry's target market currently using BZP party pills, there will be a considerable gap left behind if BZP party pills are banned. The findings from study two suggest that this gap will be filled with a mixture of alternatives including illicit substances, black market BZP, and alcohol.

Ecstasy and other stimulant use will likely increase among BZP party pill users after BZP is banned. Methamphetamine (P) is unlikely to be used as an alternative, and those users who do use methamphetamine (P) are likely to have an existing history of methamphetamine (P) use.

There is strong evidence that there will be a demand for black market BZP after BZP party pills are banned. The likelihood of a black market depends on availability of supply, and there is some suggestion that there will be suppliers ready to meet the demand.

Although alcohol is likely to be used as an alternative to BZP party pills, the rates of mixing alcohol and BZP are high. Removing BZP party pills from the equation provides users with a safer drinking environment.

What must be weighed up is the lack of harm reducing benefits offered by BZP party pills and the potential increase in substance related harm following a ban. Does the initial impact of a ban justify maintaining the legal BZP party pill market in New Zealand? Add to this that there is anecdotal and research evidence that BZP party pills themselves pose a moderate risk of harm (for examples see Austin & Monasterio, 2004; Gee & Fountain, 2007; Gee, Richardson, Woltersdorf, & Moore, 2005; Nicholson, 2006; and The Dominion Post, June 29, 2007), and it becomes very difficult to defend the existence of a legal BZP party pill market.

This means that legislators must be prepared for the outcomes associated with a ban of BZP. Law enforcement agencies need to be aware that there will be an increased demand for some illicit substances, especially ecstasy, and it is likely that suppliers are already anticipating this demand. Measures will also need to be put in place to minimize existing stocks of BZP party pills to avoid stockpiling for supply to a black market. A way to manage this could be to ban manufacture some time prior to banning the sale of BZP, allowing the supply to run out legally.

Finally, there will be a number of BZP party pill users who have depended on BZP for various reasons. Support must be available to these users, who may have dependency issues they feel BZP party pills have helped with. Increased

advertising for existing support services is recommended, and should be targeted directly at BZP party pill users.

It is unclear how long the impact of a ban on BZP will last. It would be remiss for legislators to ignore the possible negative consequences of a ban, especially given that they have advanced warning of the likely outcomes. Banning BZP party pills with the intention of reducing substance related harm, means legislators must also be responsible for minimizing potential increases in harm as a result of a ban. If negative impacts of a ban can be minimized, the effect of a ban on BZP party pills would be a substantial reduction in overall substance related harm.

References

- Austin H, and Monasterio E, (2004). Acute psychosis following ingestion of 'Rapture'. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 12, 406 – 408.
- Braun V, and Clarke V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77 – 101.
- Gee P, and Fountain J, (2007). Party on? BZP party pills in New Zealand. *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 120, No 1249.
- Gee P, Richardson S, Woltersdorf W, and Moore G, (2005). Toxic effects of BZP-based herbal party pills in humans: a prospective study in Christchurch, New Zealand. *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 118, No 1227.
- Nicholson TC, (2006). Prevalence of use, epidemiology and toxicity of 'herbal party pills' among those presenting to the emergency department. *Emergency Medicine Australasia*, 18, 180 – 184.
- Crewdson P. Party Pill ban good news for DJ's mum. *The Dominion Post*, 29 June 2007.