

Head Shops: A study of knowledge and opinion on Head Shops and Legal Highs in Ireland.

Student: Nicola Killeen

Student Number: 1319452

Supervisor: Siobain O'Donnell

Research Project Coordinator: Dr. Bernadette Quinn.

April 2011

Social Science

Dublin Business School

Table of Contents

<u>Contents</u>	1-3
<u>Acknowledgements</u>	4
<u>Title</u>	5
<u>Abstract</u>	6
<u>Introduction</u>	7
<i>Head Shops</i>	7
<i>Legal Highs</i>	7-8
<i>History of Head Shops in Ireland</i>	8-13
<i>Head Shops and Legal Highs Current Position</i>	13-14
<i>Legalization and the War on Drugs</i>	14-15
<i>A Changing Culture?</i>	16
<i>Substance Use in an Irish context</i>	16-18
<i>Conclusion of literature</i>	18
<i>Inspiration for this Study</i>	18-19
<i>Aims of this Study</i>	19-22
<u>Methods</u>	23
<i>Materials</i>	23
<i>Participants</i>	24
<i>Design</i>	25
<i>Procedure</i>	25-26
<i>Data analysis</i>	26
<u>Results</u>	27
<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	27
<i>Hypotheses 1; Age</i>	28-36

<i>Hypotheses 2; Gender</i>	37-42
<u>Discussion</u>	43-49
<u>Conclusion</u>	49-51
<u>Limitations</u>	51-54
<u>Reference List</u>	55-60
<u>Appendix</u>	61-63

Tables

Table 1 Breakdown of participants by Age 27

Table 2 Breakdown of participants by Gender 27

Bar Charts

Hypotheses 1: Age

Bar Chart 1: Are you aware of Head Shops selling Legal Highs in society? 28

Bar Chart 2: Are you aware of Head Shop products such as Legal Highs? 29

Bar Chart 3: Do you consider Head Shop Legal Highs as socially acceptable as alcohol? 30

Bar Chart 4a: Do you consider Legal Highs sold in Head Shops safe? 31

Bar Chart 4b: Are Head Shops bad for society? 32

Bar Chart 5: Would you regard it more acceptable to purchase drugs termed Legal Highs rather than illegal drugs? 33

Bar Chart 6: Would you regard Head Shop products as gateway drugs to illegal drugs? 34

Bar Chart 7: Do you consider access to legal drugs from Head Shops will create a worse drug problem in Ireland? 35

Bar Chart 8: Since the banning of some products are you aware new products have replaced in Head Shops? 36

Hypotheses 2: Gender

<i>Bar Chart 1.2: Would you claim you have much knowledge and understanding of Head Shops?</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Bar Chart 2.2: Do you anyone who has used Head Shops?</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Bar Chart 3.2: Are Head Shops normalizing drugs in society?</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Bar Chart 4.2: Should Head Shop owners be viewed in the same light as illegal drug dealers?</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Bar Chart 5.2: Do you imagine Head Shops helping the Irish war on drugs by taking business away from criminals?</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Bar Chart 6.2: Did you know Head Shop products and banned head shop products are being sold by illegal drug dealers?</i>	<i>42</i>

Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to greatly thank Siobain O'Donnell my supervisor for all her assistance. Siobain provided me with great support and advice for the entire duration of this study. I would also like to thank our project coordinator Dr. Bernadette Quinn for her advice and support. Secondly, I would like to thank my parents for supporting my studies throughout my three years in college, and for making it possible for me to attend Dublin Business School. Thirdly I would like to thank Kate Doyle for all her support during the final year of college but especially with this study

Title

Head Shops: A study of public knowledge and opinion on Head Shops and Legal Highs in Ireland.

Abstract

Context: Recent media attention illustrated Head Shops creating a senseless milestone in drug culture in Ireland. The public can purchase powerful Legal Highs without interference or sanction within society. Popularity by the public proved their disregard for public health warnings against Legal Highs. It is the aim of this study to illustrate public knowledge and opinion on these new phenomena's. It will do so by discovering which categories in society are largely knowledgeable and tolerant towards Head Shops. **METHOD:** A quantitative survey design was used. Data was collected from 200 participants aged between 17 and 53. Participants were divided into separate age and gender groupings. **RESULTS:** Younger participants show less tolerance towards Head Shops with 73% showing they regard Head Shops are bad for society compared to 63% of older participants. Men illustrate most acquaintance with figures showing 71% know someone who has used Head Shops compared to just 48% of women. **CONCLUSION:** Overall the public view Head Shops are harmful for society and will make the Irish drug problem worse. An older age sample and men show a more liberal outlook with younger participants and women viewing Head Shops in a more destructive position in society.

Introduction

Head Shops

Head Shops first came into existence specializing in the trading of paraphernalia (hydroponic equipment, seeds, high powered lights, pipes and bong) applied for recreational drug use (Crosscare, as cited by Drugs.ie). The name Head Shop came from the term 'pot head' from the people who used them for their cannabis consumption (Corigan, 2009). Formally called alternative living shops Head Shops have existed in Ireland for ten years. The first Irish head shop opened in 2000 selling paraphernalia but only began to capture media attention in 2005 and 2006 as regards the selling of legal psychoactive substances such as magic mushrooms and legal highs (Clark, 2007). Legal Highs are intoxicating drugs that are not controlled or prohibited in Ireland under The Misuse of Drugs act 1997 (Ballyfermot Drugs Task Force, 2010). In 2010 over a 100 Head Shops were recorded in Ireland with 12 in the north inner city alone. Some of these Head Shops are open until 4am or even 24 hours a day. (Mc Giobuin, 2010). These shops proved to be yielding great profits from the sale of over 200 different Legal Highs.

Legal Highs

Legal highs are labeled 'not for human consumption' and sold and advertised as bath salts, party pills, plant feeders and incense. These Legal Highs vary from sedatives (downers), stimulants (uppers), hallucinogens (trips) and aphrodisiacs (sexual stimulants). Some are herbal meaning they come from a plant. Others are synthetic, meaning they are man-made from chemicals. Most are a mixture of both herbal and synthetic products. These drugs are all psychoactive substances that mean they alter how you think, feel and behave. Their effect on physical and mental health is unpredictable and there is a risk of becoming addictive. The

contents of these products mimics the effects of illegal substances and they share similar and close chemical combinations which mean they are legal for sale through loop holes within Irish law. The consumption packaging and chemical makeup make it legal to sell and possess these substances in Irish society (Mc Giobuin, 2010).

History of Head Shops and Legal Highs in Ireland:

In 2005 Head Shops first came largely to media attention following a man dying subsequent to falling from a balcony after consuming magic mushrooms which were available in Head Shops (Mc Connell, 2006). This was the first time these products were brought largely to the media scope. Magic mushrooms following this were then made illegal but became on sale again due to legal loop holes. The ban did not extend to 'Amanita' magic mushrooms which did contain toxic properties and are much more hallucinogenic than the mushrooms which were banned. The replacement mushrooms brought about the second bereavement in Ireland by Legal Highs. In 2009 the inquest of the bereaved found he died from liver failure due to an acute toxic reaction to Amatoxin, found in Amanita mushrooms (Bracken, 2009). Head Shops thrived during 2006 to 2009 with the public continuing to experiment with Legal Highs despite publicized concerns caused by them. In 2007, three Head Shop owners reported they were selling between €3,000 and €4,000 worth of BZP a week (Clark, 2007). BZP the chemical in party pills suggested being five times stronger than ecstasy brought about the second wave of media attention regarding harmful substances on sale in Head Shops (Regan, 2006). BZP was linked to health scares such as the near death of a man from Longford after taking six or seven BZP pills

(Murphy, 2008). BZP became illegal in Ireland in 2009 as new more harmful drugs would create an outsized market in Ireland for Head Shops (Irish Examiner.ie, 2009).

Designer Drugs or Legal Highs began to flourish even more approaching 2009 and 2010 with over 200 new substances made available. It was estimated that the legal drug trade received profits of one hundred and sixty eight million euro in 2008 alone (Colin Coyle, as cited in Shorthall, 2009). In 2010 the Gardai reported a growth rate of nearly one new Head Shop opening weekly showing growing demand (RTE news, 2010). Newer Legal Highs were remarkably popular, causing much debate and health scares throughout the country as they were warned to be a health risk (Bracken, 2009). Mephadrone, a Cocaine substitute caused much open interest throughout 2009 and 2010 as it took hold of the Irish legal and illegal drug market (Bracken, 2009). Mephadrone which has been described as worse than Heroin (Cosgrove, 2010) flooded the market after the banning of BZP. It became the most popular recreational drug overtaking Ecstasy and Cocaine because of the price and accessibility during recessionary times (Hough, 2010). Mephadrone and other new Legal Highs would bring about the largest market for Head Shops and Legal Highs in Ireland. More substances were available while also more people were now consuming Legal Highs with Head Shops seeing sales in 2010 skyrocket (Hough, 2010). Head Shops were reeling in astonishing profits proving to have placed themselves in a new found position in Irish society. On assessing the scene of a burned down Head Shop in Dublin city center, fire fighters found 500,00euro in the safe (Cusac & Sheen, 2010). As well as finding Head Shops as part of a new Irish urban landscape, citizens were accessing Head Shops online which is displayed by Ireland having the third highest online usage rate of Legal Highs (O'Keefe, 2009). Irish society established a new essential position for Legal Highs. In Ireland one could not purchase alcohol after ten o' clock but the public had access to Legal Highs 24

hours a day or have them delivered to their home (Hughes, 2010). Dr Chris Luke spoke out against Head Shops addressing not only the fact that not only are Legal Highs health hazards but they are affecting Ireland socially also.

"These shops are creating misery; they must be made to pay for the huge problems they are causing to society" (Hough, 2010).

Head Shops began to create significant social and health concerns throughout the government, media and numerous communities.

"The percentage of victims reacting to them is very worrying and the reactions are very severe – among the worst I have seen." (Dr Chris Luke, as cited in Hough, 2010).

Legal High bath salts, Mephadrone in particular was seeing hefty public cases of horrific reactions and unpleasant hospital cases throughout 2009 and 2010. Because these designer drugs were new found and emerging from laboratories in China, medical professionals did not know how people would respond to ingesting them or how to treat problematic cases (Hough, 2010).

"Because the drugs they appear to contain have never been tested for safety on humans, we have to rely, at present, on user reports. These may not be reliable because people often don't know what exactly they have taken and there is no way of knowing how much has been used. Nor do we know what other drugs might have been taken by users." (Dr Des Corrigan, as cited in Hough, 2010)

Each individual can react differently to bath salt products which was creating a worsening situation for Irish hospitals during 2010, with increasing numbers of citizens seeking help in Hallucinogenic states. Negative effects from these products range from a variety of physical and psychological symptoms these include: delusions, paranoia, anxiety, black outs,

heart palpitations, skin reactions, breathing problems and eye sight failure (Giobuin, 2010). Globally the effects of Mephedrone has proven dangerous, it is unknown globally the number of deaths it has caused. Figures illustrate 37 deaths between Britain and Ireland alone (O’Riordan, 2010) and several teenagers in Sweden (Culliton, 2009). The term ‘legal’ can be misleading in giving the impression that these drugs are less harmful than illegal drugs when this is not the situation. Even with the growing number of ill health cases and connections to deaths the Irish public continued to avail of Legal Highs, ignoring health warnings from organizations illustrating labeling drugs legal does not yield safety. Problems with Legal Highs were portraying illegal drugs as safer to consume because people were more likely to know what they were taking.

“People are taking their life in their own hands, but people are still willing to take these drugs. Really they are walking guinea pigs.” (Dr Cryan, as cited in O’Keefe, 2010).

As Head Shops got more attention various social problems became entangled with health issues concerning people consuming Legal Highs. Head Shops claim they enforce a strict over 18 year old policy which was proven to not be the actual case. Head Shops provide legal drugs for those who otherwise may not be drug users or have connections to drug networks. Adults and children from all social classes were using Head Shops throughout 2009 and 2010. With Head Shops providing drugs as easily accessible as alcohol, the Irish youth are put in a position of not having much regard of the repercussions of these substances, assuming because they are legal within society that they are socially acceptable and becoming causalities to these highs (Cooper, 2010). Children as young as 15 were reported seeking treatment for an addiction to Mephadrone (Hough, 2010).

“The term legal high is misleading and is creating a new market of drug users while also worsening issues with people who are already drug users. 7% of young people attending adolescent addiction services are using legal highs as part of their drug cocktail” (Dr Bobby Smith, cited by Long, 2010).

With a generation of Irish citizens readily availing of highs, Ireland saw a worsening drug problem with the normalization of being high in society.

“There is no doubt that many of those products, legal and otherwise, are gateways to the use of other drugs” (Pat Carey, as cited in O’Regan, 2010).

There were calls for the government to intervene and close Head Shops. These requests were coming from those in power but also from many concerned parents nationally. Communities throughout Ireland regardless of area or social class were being influenced by Head Shops and Legal Highs. Communities came together to form conferences, organizations and to provide information to help worried parents but also to congregate and protest their apprehension to the government (O’Keefe, 2010). Even though many in society are anti Head Shops, the popularity of them proves a large section of Irish society is not. Debate rose about the banning of Head Shops regarding their position in aiding the Irish war on drugs. As harmful as Head Shops are within society, they deeply impact drug dealers by abstracting their business. Banning Head Shop products could create a newer market pushing business back to the hands of criminals within the social order (Hough, 2010). Following much debate and delay on 11th of May, the Irish government moved to control the sale of psychoactive substances under The Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 and 1984, and the newly drafted Criminal Law (Psychoactive Substances) Bill which will prevent the sale of substances created to get around existing laws. As

of 11th May, synthetic Cannabinoids, Benzipiperazine derivatives and 6 named Cathinones are banned (Long, 2010; 15-18). This legislation did not close Head Shops in society like anticipated with 44 still operating in the country (RTE news, July 2nd 2010). Many of the general public now believes Head Shops no longer exist, when in reality the law has just rearranged circumstances involving Head Shops and Legal Highs.

Head shops and Legal Highs current position

Eamon Keenan of the HSE addressed Head Shops current situation “*the drugs will keep coming despite new legislation here*” (As cited in O’Keefe, 2010). Since the ban in May 2010 head shops remain in business with substitute products which are not affected by legislation. These substances include 9 chemicals such as Naphyrone which could be more toxic than the substances previously banned by the government (O’Keefe, 2010). The Advisory Council of the misuse of drugs warns that Naphyrone could be addictive and is advised that it is made a class B drug like in Britain. Because of legal loop holes this chemical is available in different Head Shop products in Ireland (O’Keefe, 2010). A replace Head Shop high called ‘Whack’ caused much public concern when introduced, people were hospitalized suffering severe psychosis which patients may not have recovered from until up to 7 days after ingestion (Feehan, 2010).

As well as legal loop holes allowing Head Shops to continue retailing in Legal Highs, the formally banned Legal Highs have fallen into the black economy of society meaning Ireland now has a greater variety of drugs in circulation being both illegal and legal in nature (Cosgrave, 2010). These banned Legal Highs are being sold by drug dealers or cut with other drugs such as

Cocaine and Heroin which is creating both physical and mental complications for the user and has resulted in numbers seeking treatment in both medical and psychiatric units (Cosgrave, 2010). With drugs flowing into the black economy, a market of people who once used the substances which are now banned may follow these drugs also (O’Riordan, 2010). Gardai recoveries on separate occasions have sourced over 50,000euros worth of the banned drug Mephadrone illustrating its demand within Irish drug culture (Bracken, 2010) and (O’Keefe, 2010). Mephadrone, once introduced legally to Ireland is proving to rapidly becoming a problematic substance within society.

"Five years ago, cocaine was 100 per cent of the problem, but now it's 50 per cent, with the rest being made up of head-shop drugs such as Methadrone" (Dr Colin O’Gara, as cited in O’Keefe,2010).

Even though these drugs are fueling the Black Economy currently, other social issues are improving because of the substance ban. Gardai announced that with a ban in a wide range of Legal Highs there has been a 75% drop in robberies most of which they directly linked to addicts of Head Shop products (Bryan, Cormac, 2010).

Legalization and the War on drugs

Head Shops have shown a legalized drug market in society, an idea which Ireland has always rejected. In 2007 the Taoiseach spoke against legalized drugs of any nature.

"I am not in favor of legalizing cannabis, or any drug either up the scale or down the scale. I think it's the wrong way to go. There is no evidence anywhere in the world that this has helped to decrease drugs level." (Bertie Ahern, as cited in Hickey, 2007)

Even though the government has not legalized illegal drugs, chemicals which have similar

affects if not stronger are legally sold and easily accessed through Head Shops. This could be a sign of a major development in Irish culture which is accepting a place for drugs in society. This raises the question if legalized drugs should be approved in Irish culture. Previous literature discusses reasons why Ireland should legalize drugs; this includes opinions on the human right perspective and decriminalizing drugs.

“Drug taking is not wrong, evil or harm in and of itself; and that, moreover, the individual has a fundamental human right to privacy and bodily integrity, which in many circumstances encompasses the right to take mood altering substances” (O’Mahony, 2008,-21).

Head Shops in one dimension are granting what O’ Mahony (2008) illustrates as the human rights perspective. People in society are proving a demand for drugs as part of the ingredients fundamental to the design of a fulfilled life (David Richards, as cited in Murphy, 1996,-.25). If the demand for this right is present in society legalizing these measures would mean decriminalizing substances to create a new normalized location for them in Ireland. Murphy (1996) illustrates that harm is far less likely to take place regarding drugs in an environment of legislation where drug policy is based on regulation. He displays that the real drug problem in Ireland is the war on drugs and not the effects of the actual substances. Much harm and social issues occur not because of drug use or misuse but because drugs are criminalized. *“The reduction of the harmful effects of drugs requires a system of legalization”* (Murphy, 1996,-68).If the general public wish to fulfill their human right to be high as put by O’Mahony (2000),Head shops could provide this while aiding the criminal aspects of drug use in Ireland.

A Changing Culture?

Currently Ireland faces economic recession. Head Shops offer drugs which are more economically friendly but also provide extra escapism which alcohol alone cannot provide. Alcohol is an already normalized legal drug greatly used in Ireland. It is Ireland's most commonly known and socially accepted legal drug. Ireland continues to rank among the highest consumers of alcohol in the 26 countries in the enlarged EU. Irish people drink about 20% more than the average European (Alcohol action Ireland). It is unknown if Legal Highs are now seen as socially acceptable as Alcohol which would be welcoming them into Irish culture.

Moments of crisis tend to increase collective drug consumption, which in turn results in an increase of legal prohibitions against the drug. New drugs are almost always introduced for commercial reasons and into a culture in crisis. The spread of drug use is a product of our society and a warning sign about the weakest aspects of our culture (Zoja, 2000). During Ireland's current time of crisis, Legal Highs may be the replacement drugs in society. Head Shops in Irish society may be an indication of defects within Irish society and Irish culture which have society craving escapism and innovative pleasure.

Substance Use in an Irish context:

At a societal level, substance misuse is a male dominated area. Men are more likely than women to drink and misuse drugs (Drugs and alcohol.ie). Findings show 29% of men report a life time use of illegal drugs compared to 19% of women (NACD + DAIRU, 2008, as cited in drugs and alcohol.ie) Even though in Ireland men outnumber women among drug users of illegal drugs, females show a new changing trend in substance use. Surveys of alcohol use in Ireland

found that women's lifetime use of alcohol increased in 3 of the 10 national drugs task forces areas. In addition, recent research has shown that while men are more likely to misuse illegal drugs, women predominate in the misuse of prescription drugs (NACD + DAIRU, 2008, as cited in drugs and alcohol.ie). Changing patterns for young people using substances also suggests a change in traditional gender roles of substance usage.

Young people's drug use poses as a major dilemma for society. Between the ages of 12-21 are described by Walters as the pre drug stage where people experiment with drugs out of boredom (Parker, Aldridge and Measham, 1998). Ireland shows an increased rate of drug and alcohol use among young people. Data from 1999 ESPAD study reveals that Irish teenagers have one of the highest rates of drug and alcohol use seen in Europe. For example 16% of Irish 16 year olds report that they drank more than ten times a month (Smyth, 2004). According to the NACD general population surveys, the proportion of young adults who reported using an illegal drug in the year prior to the survey increased from 10% in 2002/3 to 12% in 2006/7). As well as growing drug issues, alcohol misuse remains the largest issue of substance abuse among the young in Ireland. Changing and worsening trends are shown in a survey of drinking among European 15 and 16-year-olds, more Irish girls (44%) than boys (42%) reported binge-drinking in the last month (ESPAD survey as cited in alcohol Ireland 2007). It is evident that trends are changing regarding substance trends among young people. It is also evident that younger people are becoming more subjected to drugs within society than ever before. *'its not the nature of adolescence which has changed but the nature of the experience of growing up'* (Parker et al, 1998, p. 151).

In conclusion substance use appears to be dominated by young males. Changing trends show females are more likely to abuse legal drugs such as alcohol or prescribed substances. No

figures currently exist to show which categories in society are greater users of Legal Highs but it can be assumed from increasing substance consumption and subjection to Legal Highs that the Irish youth are gaining a new liberal outlook on substance use. Furthermore no studies illustrate if Legal Highs are as accepted in society as alcohol, the most common consumed legal drug.

Conclusion of literature:

Previous literature can conclude that media attention portrays Head Shops in a harmful light. Media concentration in Ireland and globally illustrates that Legal Highs are destructive in society causing both health and social issues while worsening Ireland's drug situation. Following cautions against Legal Highs they proved to be popular to the nation showing contrasting views between the public consuming them and the media, health professionals and government advising against them. Previous literature illustrates Ireland has high levels of substance use which may show a new liberal attitude towards drug attitudes as a nation, but especially as a young male. No previous literature exists to show if the general public has much knowledge or a tolerant opinion regarding Legal Highs. Much literature available on this topic is from the media or organizations informing about health risks attached with Legal Highs. Literature is greatly lacking in this area regarding societal issues surrounding Head Shops in Ireland. No studies exist to display the public opinion regarding Head Shops impact on society taken as a whole.

Inspiration for this Study:

No source has illustrated where the general public position Head Shops in current culture. Head Shops have impacted a senseless land mark in Irish drug culture and changed the Irish drug scene and user groups. Public attention and the impact of Head Shops on the Irish nation

stimulated this study as there is still a great need for literature in this area. Although publicized as harmful, Head Shops proved popular by demand with the public using Head Shops despite health warnings. No literature exists on the public's knowledge or attitude towards this new cultural phenomenon. This study aspires to work from the KAB report, a country wide survey of the public perceptions of attitudes towards aspects of drug issues in Ireland. This study seeks to provide literature in the area of current drug use by investigating public opinion on current drug problems which are Head Shops in Irish culture

Aims of this Study:

The research question of this study is to investigate the public's knowledge and opinion on the situation of Head Shops and Legal Highs in Irish society. It will do so by hypothesizing that younger people will have a greater knowledge and more accepting opinion on Head Shops and Legal Highs. Furthermore it will hypothesize that gender differences will affect the public's knowledge and opinion on this topic so that men are more tolerant towards drugs.

This study will examine Dublin Business School students and divide them into two separate categories regarding age then furthermore by gender. By analyzing these groups this study wants to illustrate which areas of society have more understanding and tolerance towards Legal Highs and issues surrounding them.

In addition, concerning age and gender this study wants to investigate if young men know more about Head Shops as they are seen as problematic drug users in society or will changing trends in substance use influence a greater female existence as regards to Legal Highs. By analyzing these two separate groups this study wants to provide an insight into the views

regarding Head Shops in relation to public knowledge, opinion, illegal drugs, the Irish war on drugs and knowledge on Head Shops current position in society. By addressing these topics this research will gain insight to how people perceive Head Shops in society.

Knowledge:

It is unknown how many people in society are aware of Head Shops and Legal Highs. Recent media attention highlighted this topic, it is unknown if this awareness has influenced the public's knowledge and belief. This study wants to investigate if younger people and men are more informed about this topic, with an assumption that an older age group is not as subjected to Legal Highs and therefore have less understanding.

Opinion:

Literature is absent regarding the public's opinion on Head Shops and if they are accepting to them in a changing culture. Figures from the KAB Report show 77% of people believe that illegal drugs are bad for your health and feel our society is tolerant towards drug users (Bryan et al, 2000,-31). No literature or studies show findings on the public's opinion on current drug issues such as Head Shops. This study aspires to provide literature in this area by investigating public opinion on social issues and the position of Head Shops in a changing Irish culture. It will do so by assessing if less young people and men find Legal Highs Harmful, socially accepted, a product of the recession or normalizing drugs in society. Opinion is assumed to be more tolerant by a younger group and men, this study will examine this. On gaining opinions this study will illustrate Head Shops social presence and address if they are now accepted in society and by what groups.

Illegal drugs and Legal Highs:

It is unknown if the public have an accepting attitude towards legal drugs in society or do they see them equally as harmful as illegal drugs. It is assumed that people will feel it is more acceptable to consume Legal Highs over illegal drugs because of the term 'legal'. This study wants to observe if people see Legal High users and suppliers in the same category as those who use and sell illegal drugs. By gaining an insight on this it will show what categories in society are more tolerant on legal and illegal drug comparisons.

Drug situation in Ireland.

Previous literature by O'Mahony (2008) and Murphy (1996) illustrate that decriminalizing drugs will help the Irish war on drugs. No literature is relevant if the public see Legal Highs as a solution to the Irish war on drugs. This study will illustrate which people in society witness Head Shops having a positive role by helping the war on drugs and which group feels they create more harm by pushing people into the black economy. This study aspires to provide public opinion on this, to see if they perceive Head Shops from a positive approach or do they feel Head Shops are making Ireland's drug problem worse.

Head Shops current position.

Many in society are unaware that Head Shops still exist since the banning of many substances. This study wants to investigate if people are aware that Head Shops are still supplying Legal Highs. As well as addressing this issue this study wants to establish if the public

know a shift in the drug market has occurred and that drug dealers are now supplying banned Legal Highs. On addressing gender and age issues regarding this topic this study wants to see which groups in society are presently in touch with current drug circumstances and issues.

Methodology

Materials/apparatus

The apparatus employed in this study consisted of a self completion questionnaire. A self completion questionnaire is a simple way to collect straightforward data where needed. Often the data available is not the right kind, amount or accessible. This means that one needs to collect their own. For many people, surveys are synonymous with using quantitative methods (Burnett, 2009). The questionnaire in this study was customized for this study regarding Head Shops and Legal Highs. Previous questionnaires completed regarding drug research did not suit this particular study involving question choice as this topic is relatively new. 25 questions were designed for this study to gain an insight on the recent area of Legal Highs in Irish society. This questionnaire was made easy to follow with simple yes no questions. It minimizes the risk that a respondent will fail to follow filter questions or inadvertently omit a question. This questionnaire allows a more rapid means of gaining insight while also a greater understanding with no interviewer variability. A self completion questionnaire was selected for this research because of the nature of the topic. Research summarized by Touranjean and Smith (1996) strongly suggests that respondents tend to report more drug use and alcohol consumption and a higher number of sexual partners and of abortions in self completion questionnaires than in structured interviews. (cited in Bryman, 2008). This style of questionnaire would therefore mean participants would respond truthfully regarding their knowledge and opinion on Head Shops and Legal Highs.

Participants.

The participants in this study were chosen as a representative sample. Representative samples allow the researcher to take the information obtained from the small sample and generalize it back to the entire population (Ruane, 2005). This study wants to test if contrasting age groups within Ireland have diverse attitudes and knowledge on Head Shops in society. This study required two separate age groups to investigate this. This study required college students who would range from 18-25 who it is assumed that would be greatly impacted by new substances within society at a young age. This would be contrasted to an older age group from mid twenties upwards who may be less subjected to newer phases and substances. The larger the group involved in the sample will help get a greater insight. As sample size increases sampling error decreases. The bigger the more representative it is likely to be (Ruane, 2005). 100 people were sampled from each of the two groups to gain a generalization on the greater population. The two groups were obtained using convenience sampling and sourced within Dublin Business School. On sourcing the participants within Dublin Business School, the study gained access to fulltime students aged 18-25 and mature part time students aged 25+. Students were chosen from classes insuring that students were not sampled from courses such as addictions as this may alter their opinion and response to the questions. The participants involved in this study were both male and female so that this study could group participants into gender categories also.

Quota sample is involved in this study. Quota samples are where the researcher selects sample members on the basis of key traits assumed to characterize. Sampling is done to fill set quotes for their traits (Ruane, 2005). The traits required in this study that the participant had to fit a certain age description which was over 17 and not a student of addiction studies.

Design.

The design for this questionnaire was straightforward to gain a clear outcome. When designing questionnaires one needs to make sure that the audience in mind. Jargon, sophisticated phrasing and overly complicated questions should be avoided (Ruane, 2005). This study used a Quantitative survey design which was basic regarding the layout and language. This survey contains 25 uncomplicated questions with closed answered questions which were yes no answers. This meant it was easy and quicker to complete and is simpler to process answers. The question design in this study avoided general questions and technical terms. An event based design was used. This uses cohort analysis to display the change in events regarding legal drugs available within society to suspect a change in a specific sub population which may differ to the general population. This is the case for a younger generation who as new participants in society are subjected to Legal Highs versus that of an older generation.

Procedure.

Lecturers were sourced throughout the college by the online college time table. Lecturers were contacted by email with requests about gaining access to their students. Additionally, permission was granted by lecturers within Dublin Business School to hand out the questionnaires within their classes.

Firstly the students were given a brief piece of dialog to inform them about the research and questionnaire. Following this, the lecturers dispatched the surveys which took pressure off the respondents by the researcher being absent. 100 questionnaires were given to a lecturer of part time business students; this was also carried out regarding full time students. Surveys can produce a significant non response. Different methods used for different kinds on audiences will

increase or decrease the chance of a good response rate (Ruane, 2005). The environment in this study creates a good response rate as in their class environment they are more likely to fill out the survey and hand it up. Students were given a time limit and all had to be handed up when finished. Characteristics of interviewers may affect the answers that people give (Ruane, 2005). Participants were required to complete the questionnaire including their filling in their age and gender. For anonymity .Participants were asked not to write their name anywhere on the questionnaire. To further ensure privacy, questionnaires were kept sealed in an envelope.

Data analysis

The data was entered into a data set using SPSS. Age required being made into two separate age groups. On doing this the frequencies were found for both age and gender on the 25 questions implied. Following this a Univariate analysis was done with the individual variables. This study then created graphs by percentages to display the percentage of respondents who answered yes and no to the questions. This was carried out separately for both the age and gender variables.

Results

Descriptive statistics

200 participants were questioned in this study. The participants were divided into two separate age groups with 100 in a younger age group (17-25) and an older age group (26-53).

Table 1

	Frequency	Percent
younger_age	100	50.0
older_age	100	50.0
Total	200	100.0

Within this sample 102 (51%) of the participants were men and 98 (49%) were women.

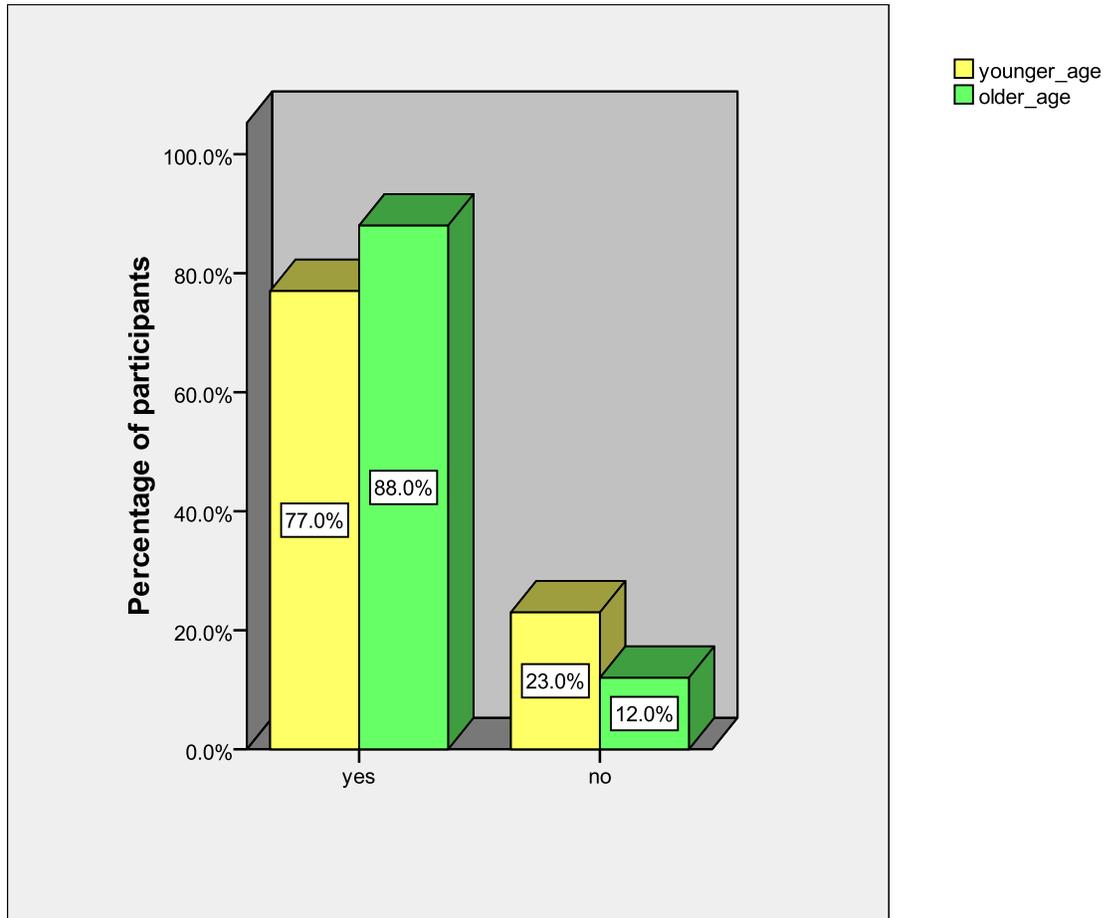
Table 2

	Frequency	Percent
Male	102	51.0
Female	98	49.0
Total	200	100.0

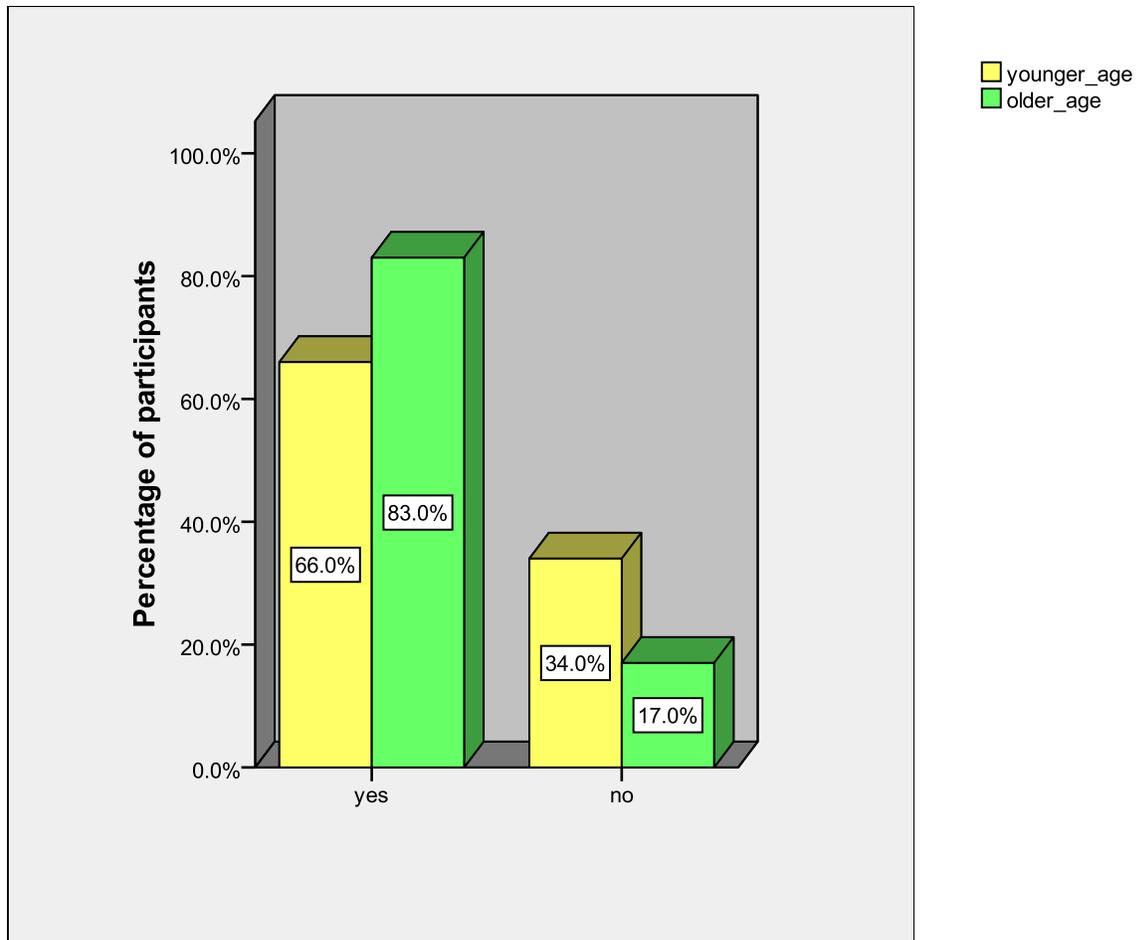
Hypothesis 1: Age

Theme knowledge:

Bar Chart 1: Are you aware of Head Shops selling Legal Highs in society?



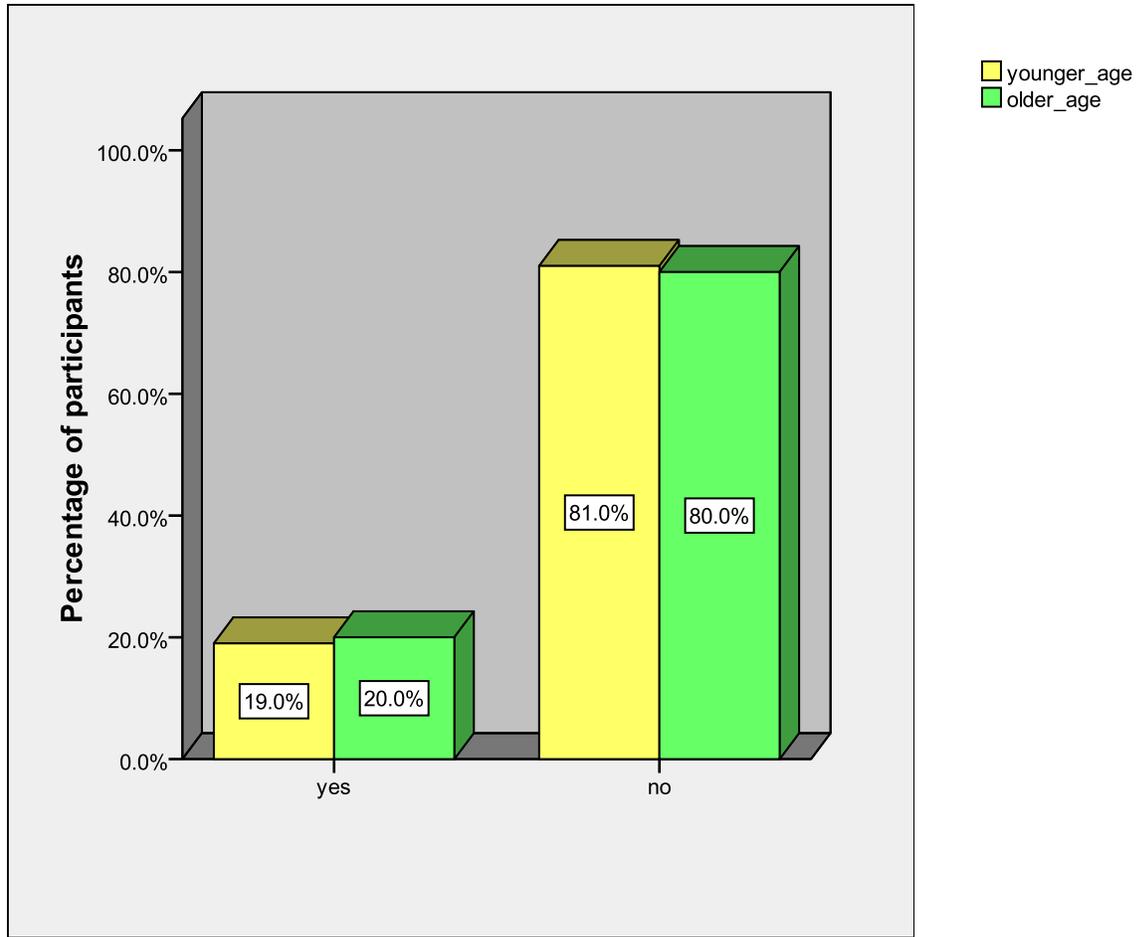
- The first question in this study asked ‘Are you aware of Head Shops selling Legal Highs in society?’ 88% of the older age group said yes to this compared to 77% of the younger age group.
- 23% of young participants are not aware of Head Shops in society compared to just 12% of the older age group. 10% of younger people display less awareness by 11% in Ireland than an older age group

Theme: knowledge**Bar Chart 2: Are you aware of Head Shop products such as Legal Highs?**

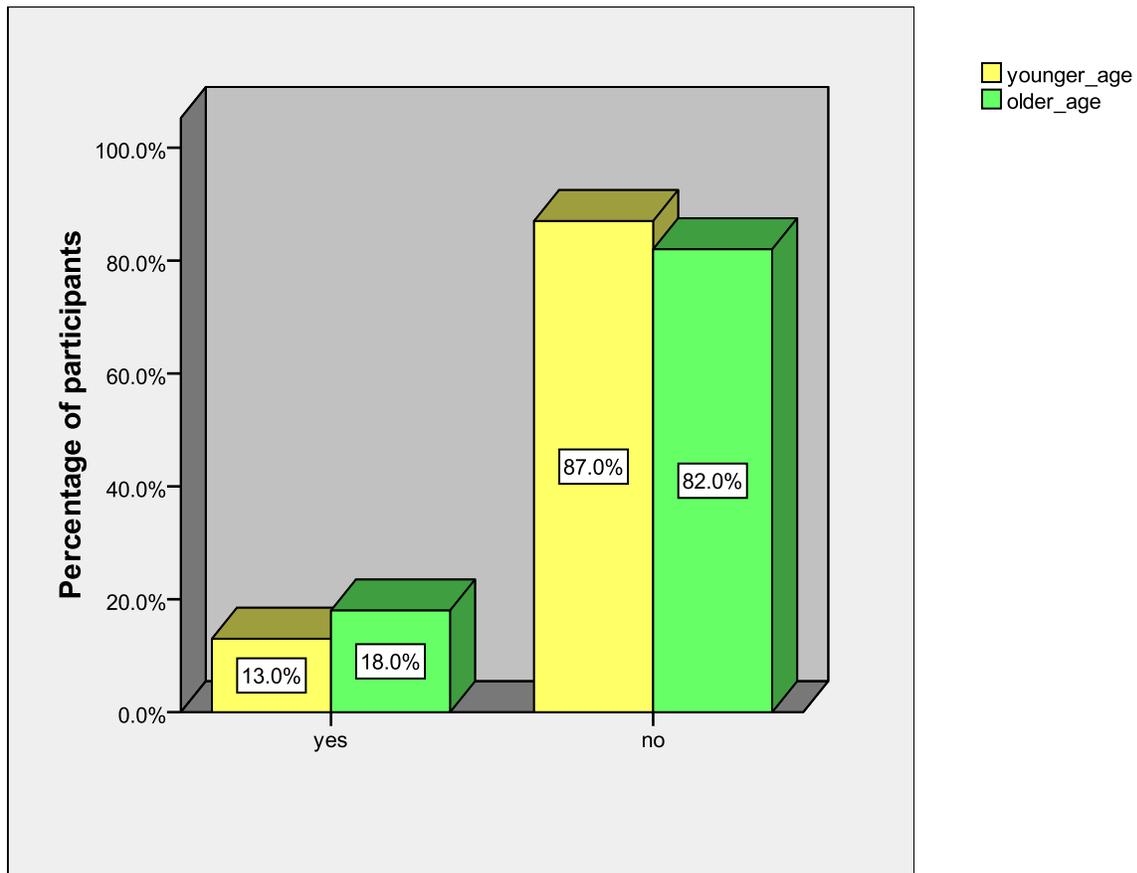
- The older age group continues to show greater awareness regarding Legal Highs as shown in Bar Chart 2. 83% of the older age group answered yes to the question ‘Are you aware of Head Shop products such as Legal Highs?’ compared to 66% of the younger age group.
- A 17% difference is shown in Bar Chart 2 between age groups awareness of Legal Highs.
- 17% of the older age group is lacking awareness of Legal Highs this is compared to a higher percent of 34% regarding the younger category. Bar chart 2 clearly illustrates that a younger age group are less aware of legal highs by 17% compared to an older category.

Theme opinion

Bar Chart 3: Do you consider Head Shops Legal Highs as socially acceptable as alcohol?



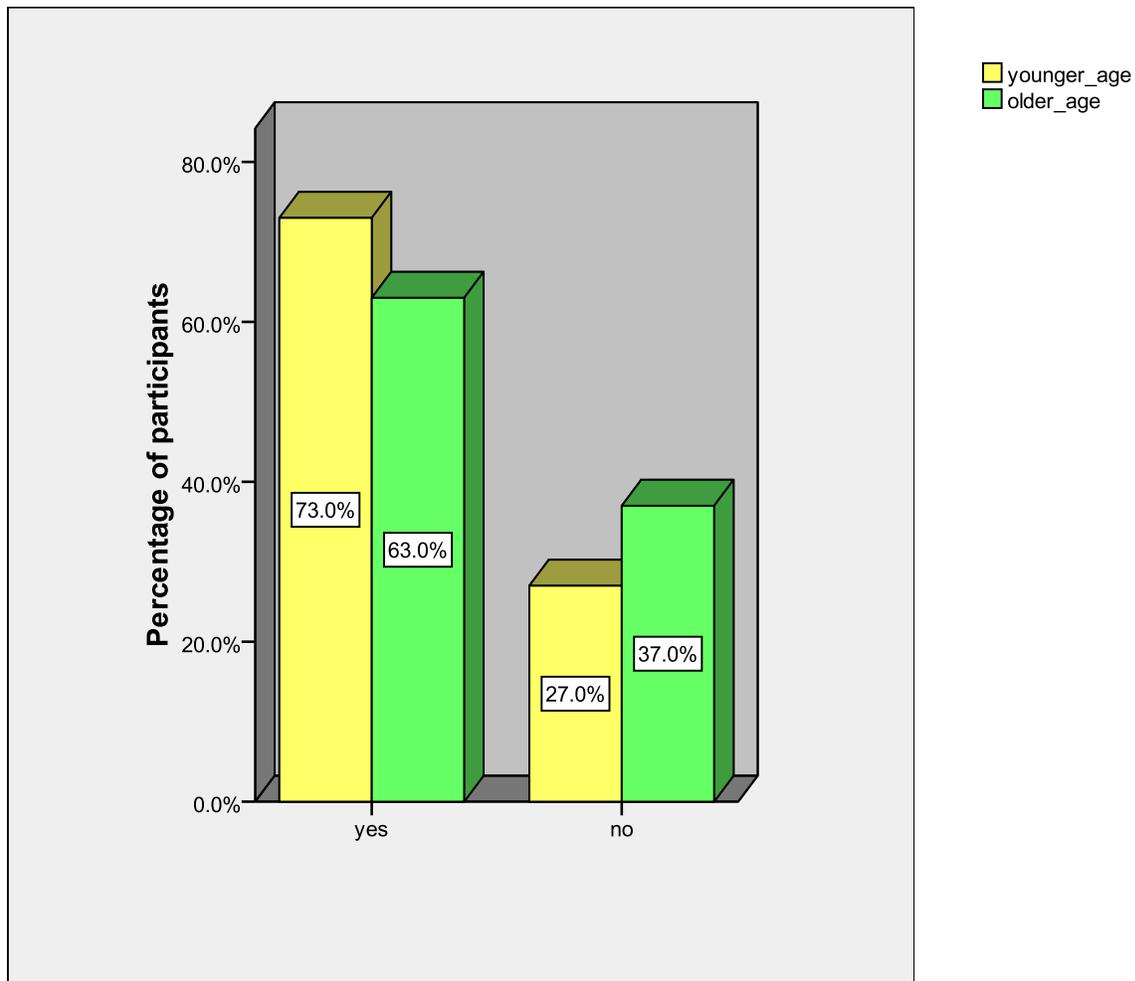
- Bar Chart 3 displays an overall opinion that Head Shops are not as socially acceptable as alcohol.
- High levels for both categories said no to this question with just minute 1% difference.
- By 1% the younger age group (81%) feels stronger than the older age group (80%) that Legal Highs are not as socially acceptable as alcohol
- 19% of young people and 20% of the older category feel Legal Highs are as socially acceptable as alcohol.

Theme: Opinion**Bar Chart 4A: Do you consider Legal Highs sold in Head Shops safe?**

- Bar Chart 4A illustrates how the public in general perceive Legal Highs as unsafe
- Slight differences in Bar Chart 4A show difference in opinion by age.
- This is displayed by 87% of younger people and 82% of older people answering no Legal Highs are not safe.
- Low levels find them safe from both age groups.
- 5% more of the older group (18%) find Legal Highs safe compared to the younger category (13%).
- This illustrates that 5% more younger people find Legal Highs unsafe than older participants.

Theme: Opinion

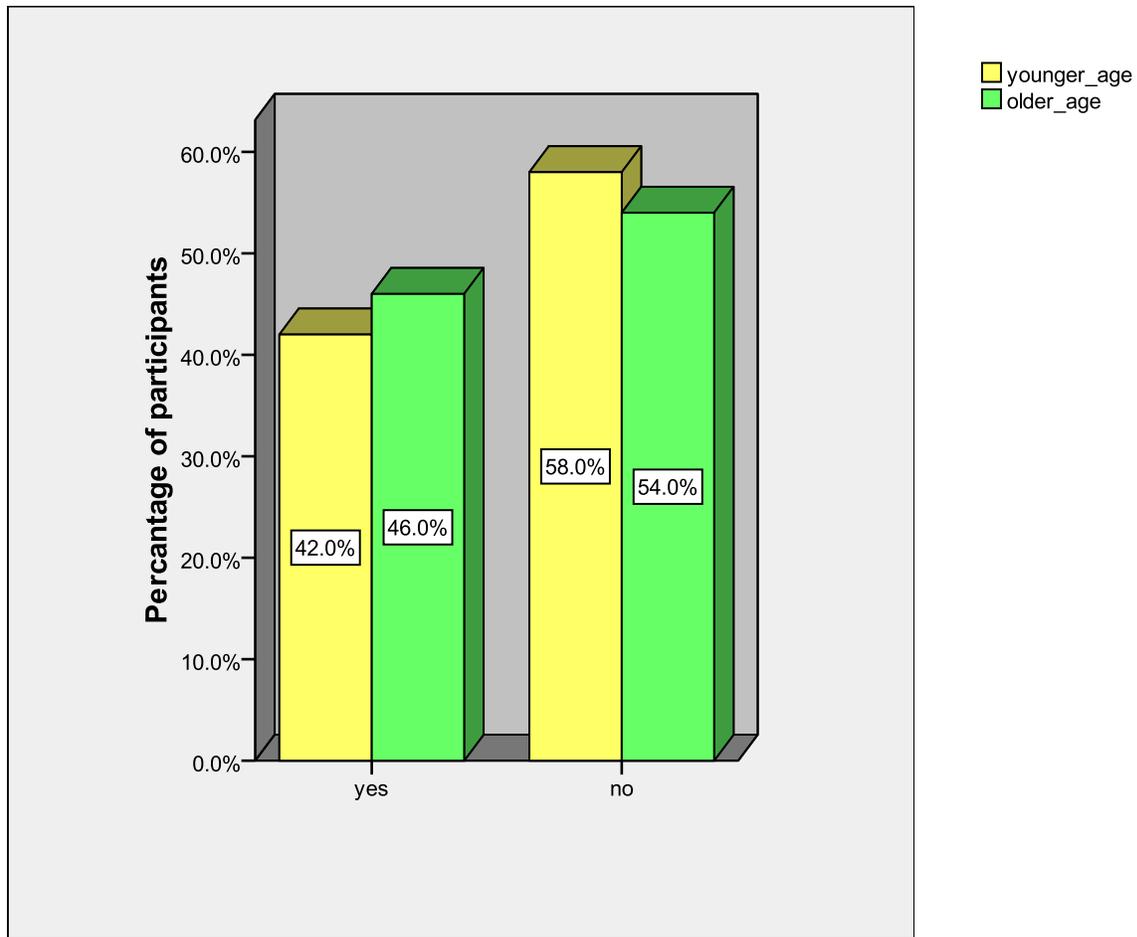
Bar Chart 4B: Are Head Shops bad for society?



- Overall the general response to this question was yes Head Shops are bad for society.
- Younger people showed a greater number answering yes with 73% stating they find Head Shops bad for society compared to 63% of the older age group. This shows a divide in opinion by age groups with the 10% more of the younger age group feeling Head Shops are bad for society.
- There was also a 10% age difference as regards to answering no with older participants responding 37% compared to the younger group answering 27%.
- There was a much larger divide within the younger categories yes no answers. A large gap of 46 on contrasting yes no answers by the younger group compared to a divide of 26 for the older group as shown in Bar Chart 15.

Theme: Legal Highs and illegal drugs

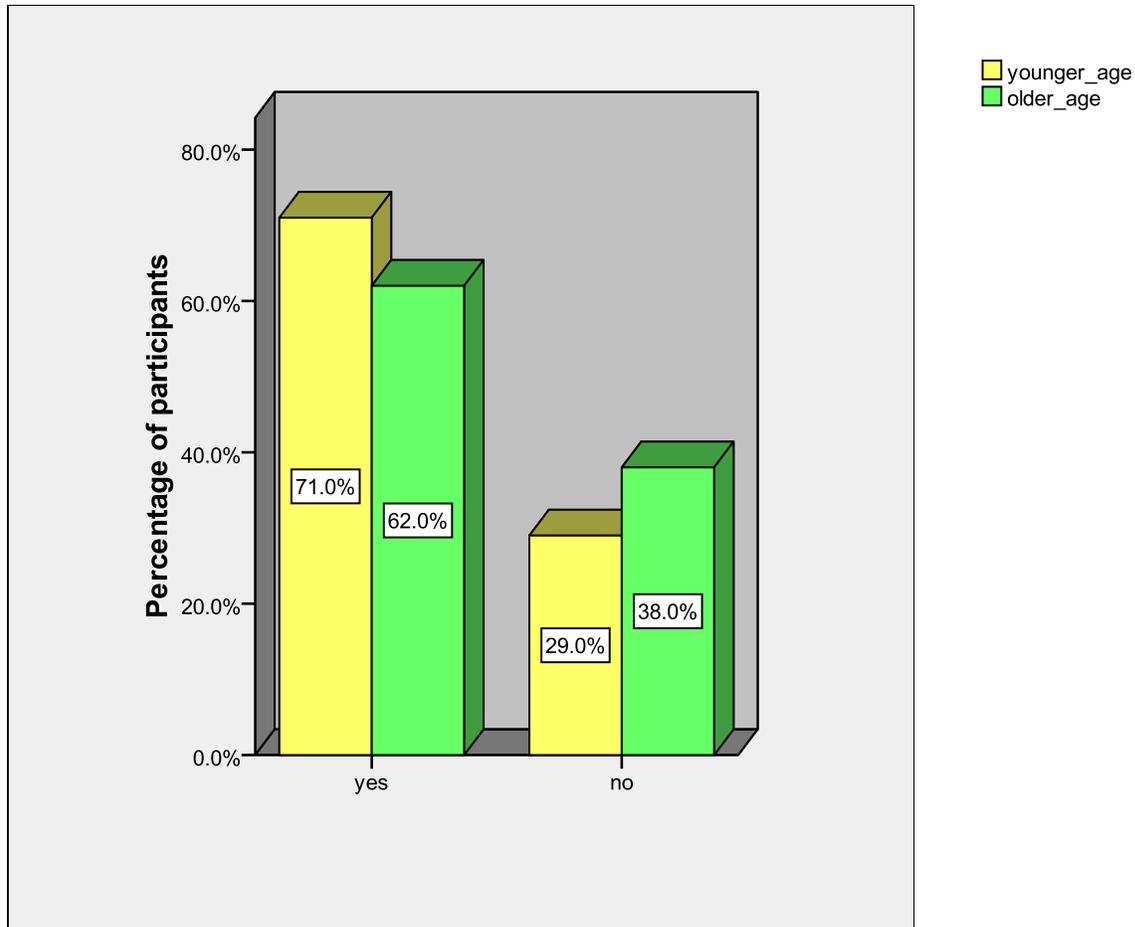
Bar Chart 5: Would you regard it more acceptable to purchase drugs termed Legal Highs rather than illegal drugs?



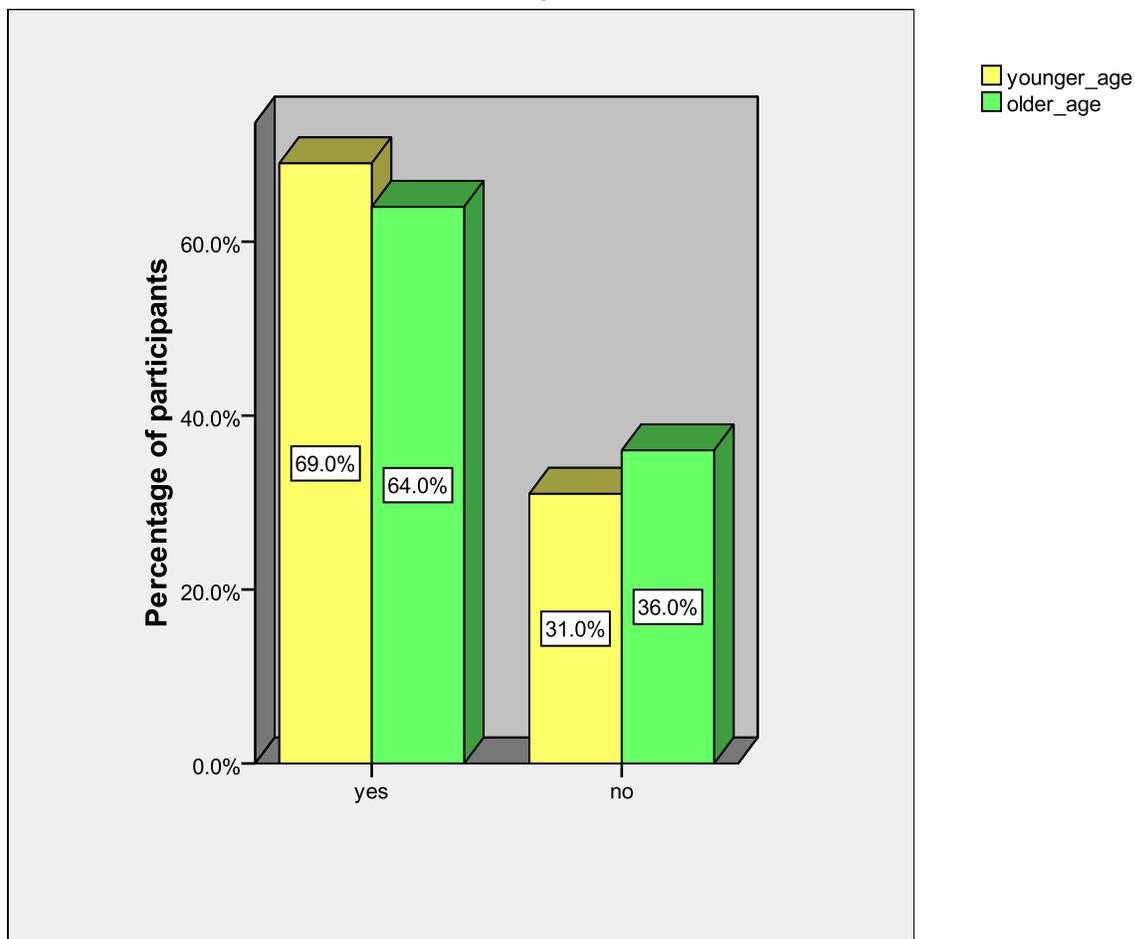
- Overall both age groups feel it is not more as acceptable to purchase Legal Highs rather than illegal drugs.
- An 8% difference exists between the overall older responses compared to a 16% difference between the younger yes and no responses. This shows a close relationship between yes and no responses in general.
- There was a 4% gap between age groups responding no with 54% of older people answering no compared to 58% of younger people.
- 4% of older people perceive it more acceptable to take legal highs rather than illegal drugs compared to 4% of the younger group who do not.

Theme: Legal Highs and illegal drugs:

Bar Chart 6: Would you regard Head Shop products as gateway drugs to illegal drugs?



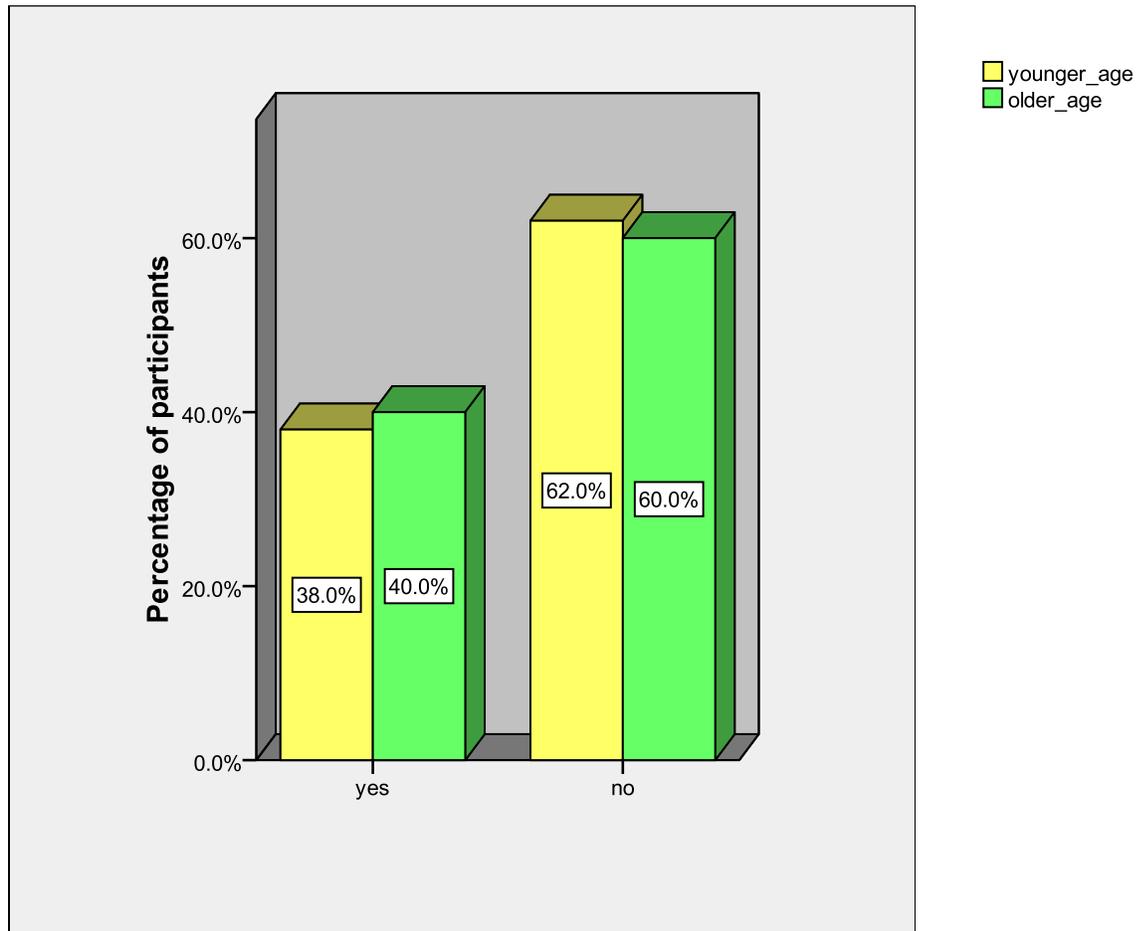
- Bar Chart 6 depicts overall participants regard Head Shop products as gateway drugs to illegal drugs.
- A 9% gap exists between age groups on both yes and no answers.
- 71% of younger participants responded yes they thought they were gateway drugs compared to 62% belonging to the older group.
- 38% of the older respondents said they did not see Head Shop products as gateway drugs contrasting to 29% of the younger category who did. This shows that by 9% the older group do not feel they are gateway drugs whereas 9% more of the younger group feel they are gateway drugs to illegal drugs.

Theme: Drug situation in Ireland:**Bar Chart 7: Do you consider access to legal drugs from Head Shops will create a worse drug problem in Ireland?**

- When participants were asked if they felt head shops will create a worse drug problem in Ireland the general response was yes.
- Answers showed a slight variation in outcomes from contrasting age groups.
- 69% of younger people answered yes compared to 5% less of the older age group (64%).
- 36% of the older group felt Head Shops would not create a worse problem which is 5% higher than the younger age group who responded 31%. This shows younger people by 5% think Head Shops will create a worse drug problem in Ireland.

Theme: Head Shop current position

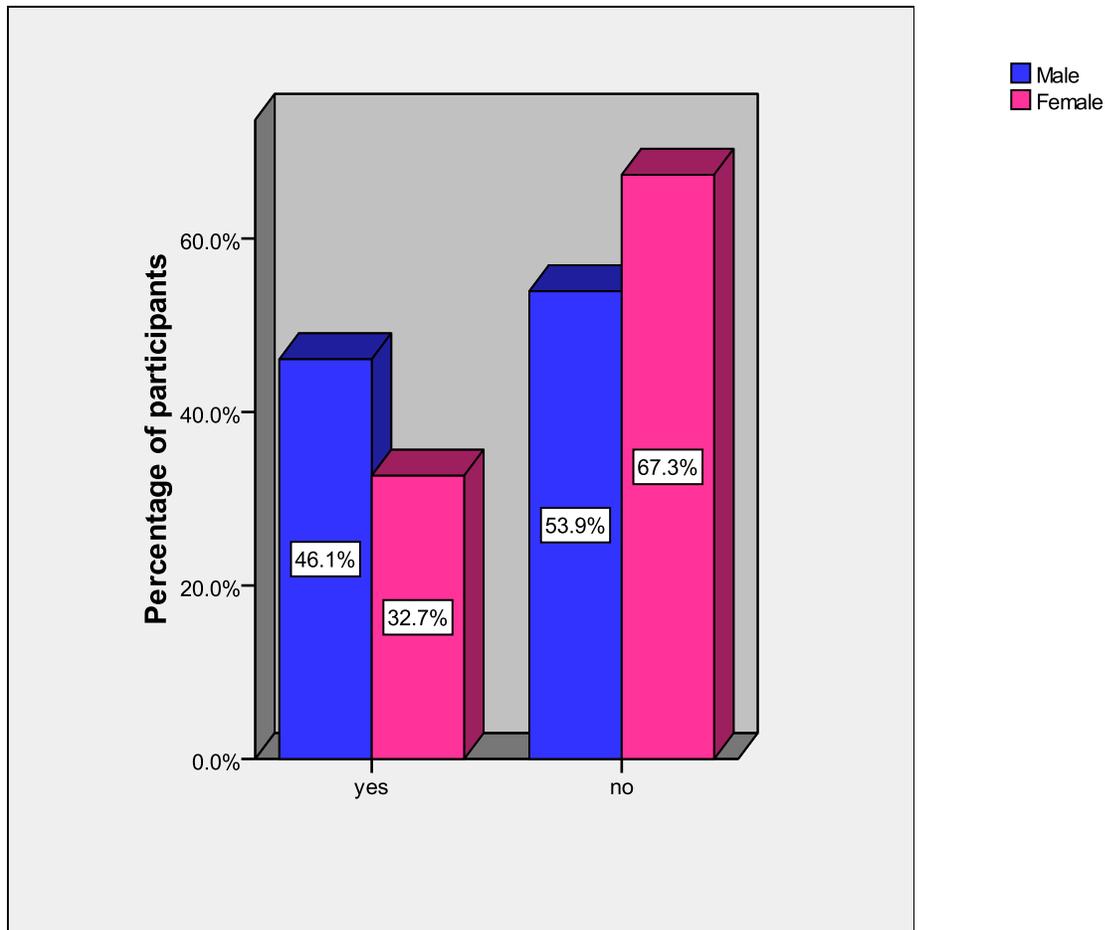
Bar Chart 8: Since the banning of some products, are you aware new products have replaced them being sold in Head Shops?



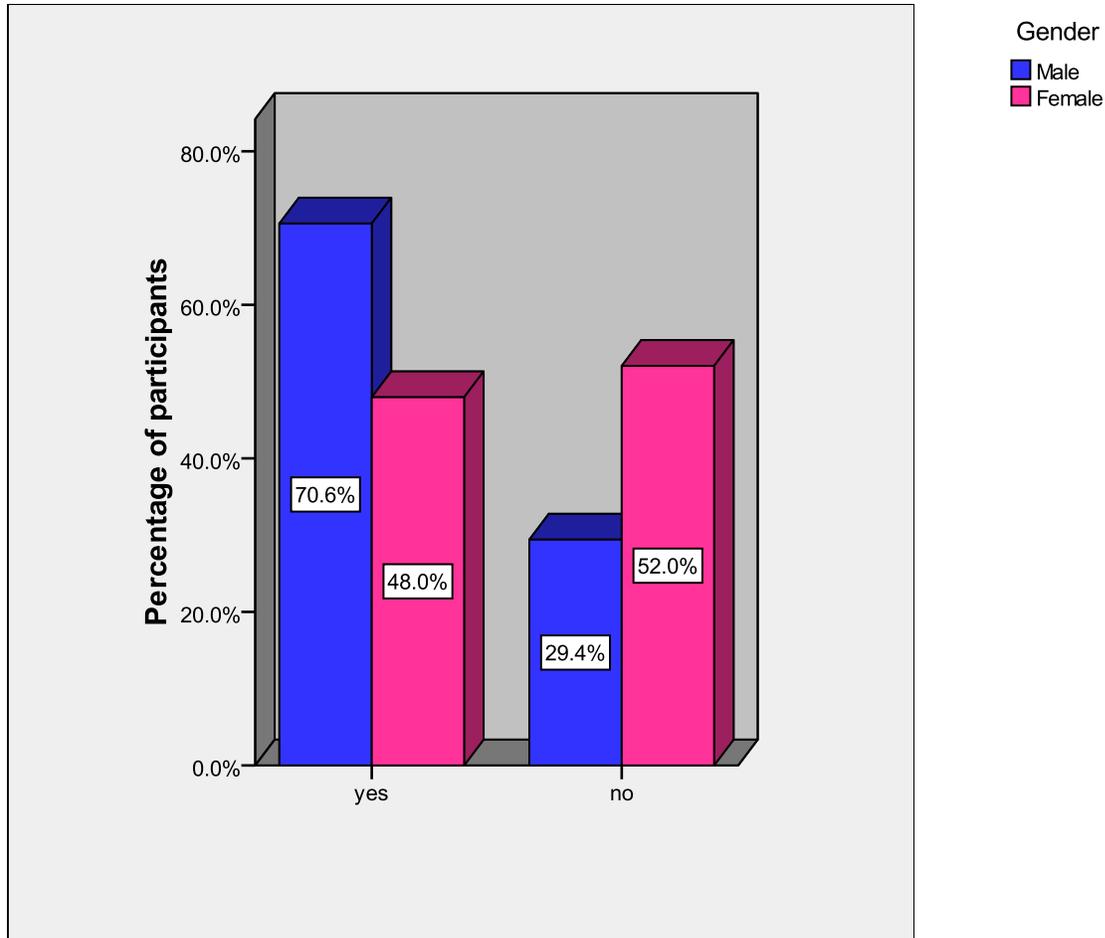
- Bar Chart 8 shows a minute 2% difference between the knowledge of age groups.
- Higher knowledge is displayed on Head Shops current position by the older age group who responded with 40% compared to just 38% of the younger age group. This illustrates a 2% difference.
- This 2% gap displays the younger age category showing less knowledge on current positions by 62% answering no they did not know new products are being sold in Head Shops compared to 60% of the older age category.

Hypothesis 2: Gender:Theme: Knowledge

Bar Chart 1.2 : Would you claim you have much knowledge and understanding on Head Shops?



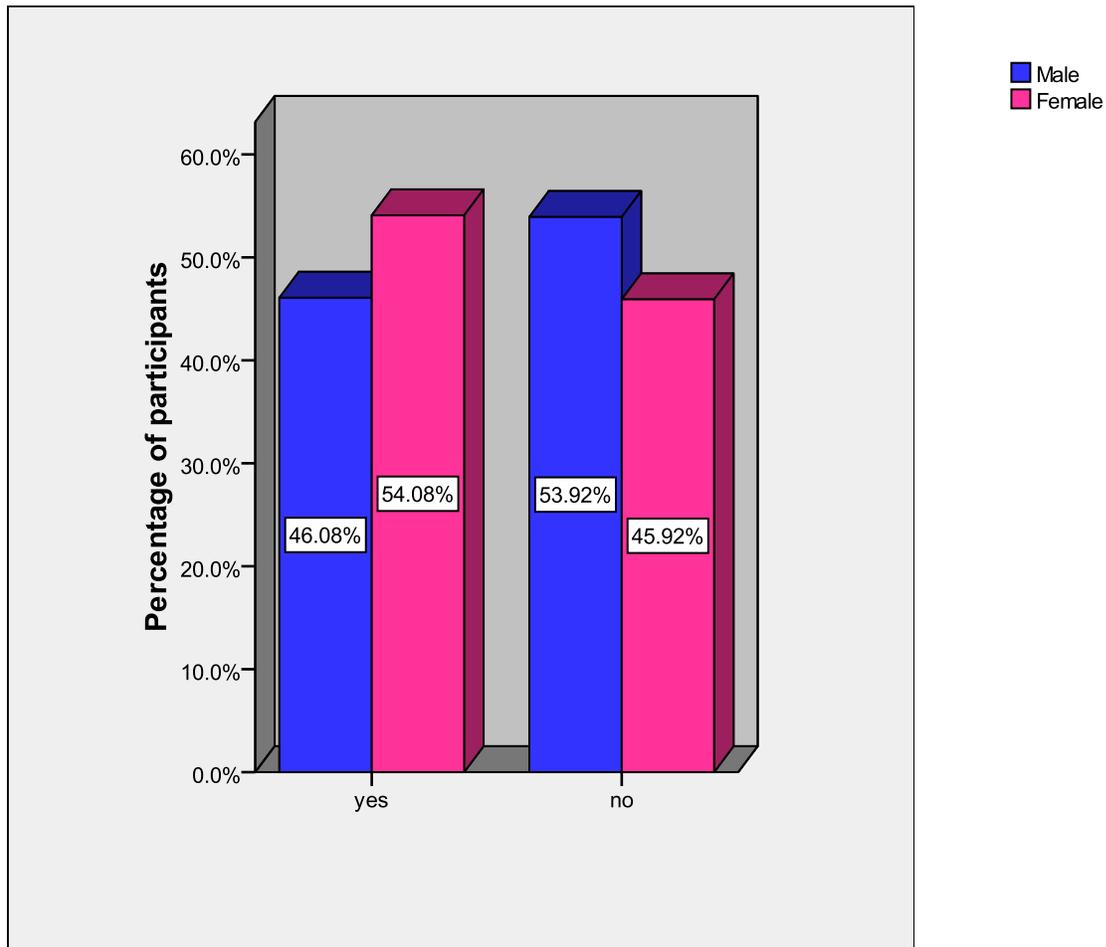
- When asked on the topic of knowledge and understanding on Head Shops the general outcome was no as both age groups show a larger percent responding no.
- Just over half of men at 54% responded that they do not have much knowledge on this topic compared to a larger portion of women at 67% claiming they do not have much knowledge and understanding regarding Head Shops.
- Even though overall both ages show a high percentage of no answers gender differences are apparent as illustrated in Bar Chart 1.2
- Men (46.1%) display that they have more knowledge than women (33%).
- Overall women by 13% claim they have less knowledge and understanding on Head Shops and Legal Highs.

Theme:knowledge:**Bar Chart 2.2: Do you know anyone who has used Head Shops?**

- Greater gender differences continued to occur as shown in Bar Chart 2.2.
- A large number of men at 71% responded yes they do know somebody who has used Head Shops.
- This shows a gender difference in response to this question with less than half of women (48%) claiming they know a person who has used a Head Shop.
- This illustrates 23% more men than women know someone who has used Head Shops.
- Bar chart 2.2 displays 52% of women do not know anyone who has used Head Shops compared to just 29% of men.
- A large gap exists for males between there yes and no answers showing a 41% gap compared to a minute 4% gap between female yes and no answers.

Theme: Opinion

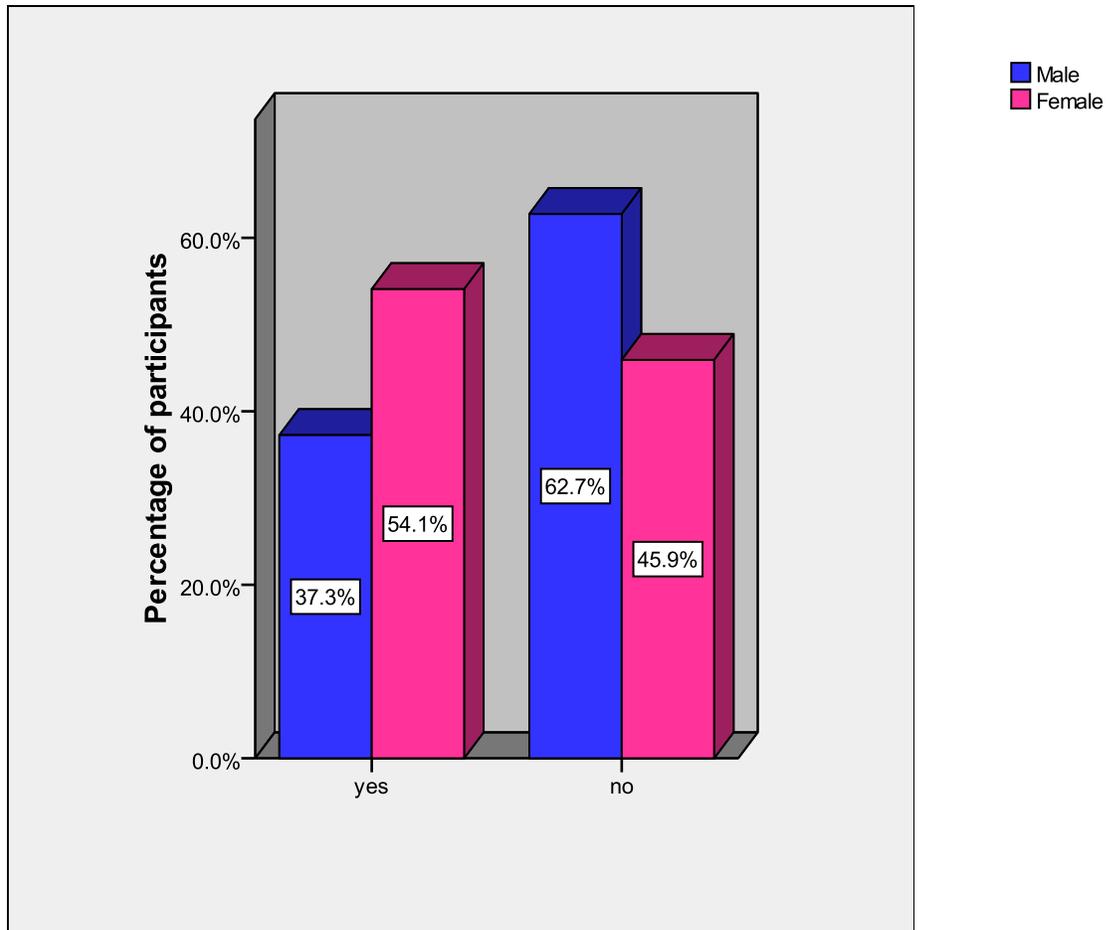
Bar Chart 3.2: Are Head Shops normalizing drugs in Irish society?



- Both age groups agree that Head Shops are normalizing drugs in Irish society.
- Close relations illustrate a gender difference by respondents.
- Women answered higher as regards to yes as displayed in Bar Chart 3.2 with a finding of 55% compared to 47% of men.
- Over half of men with 54% feel they are not normalizing drugs in society which is equal to the same amount of women who feel they are.
- This displays an 8% gap. 8% more women feel they are normalizing drugs in society compared to 8% of men who feel they are not.

Theme: Legal Highs and illegal drugs:

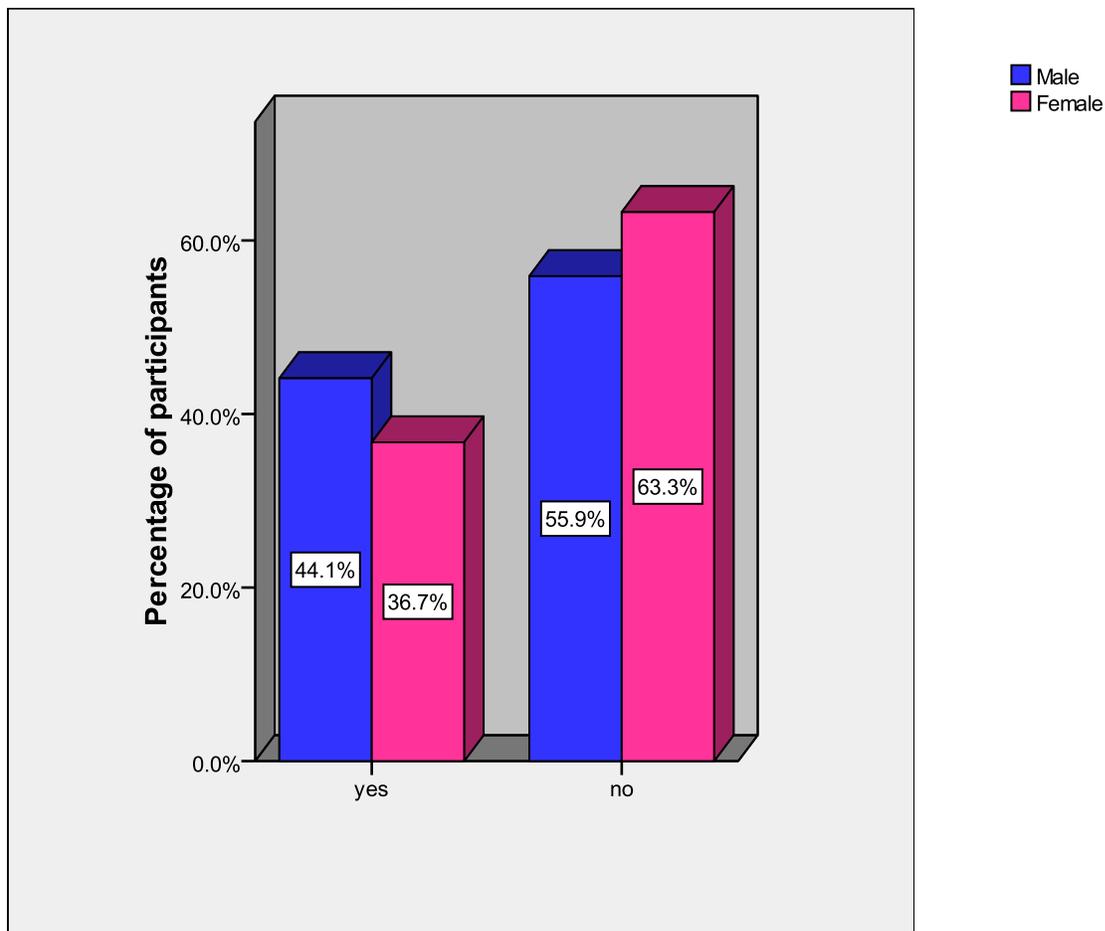
Bar Chart 4.2: Should Head Shop owners be viewed in the same light as illegal drug dealers?



- Overall Bar Chart 4.2 illustrates a no response to the question ‘should Head Shop owners be viewed in the same light as illegal drug dealers.
- Even with a general outlook gender differences occur on both yes and no answers.
- 17% more women answered they feel Head Shop owners should be viewed the same as illegal drug dealers responding with 54% compared to men with 38%.
- 63% of men answered no to this question compared to 46% of women.
- This illustrates that 17% more men feel Head Shop owners should not be viewed in the same light as illegal drug dealers.

Theme: Drug situation

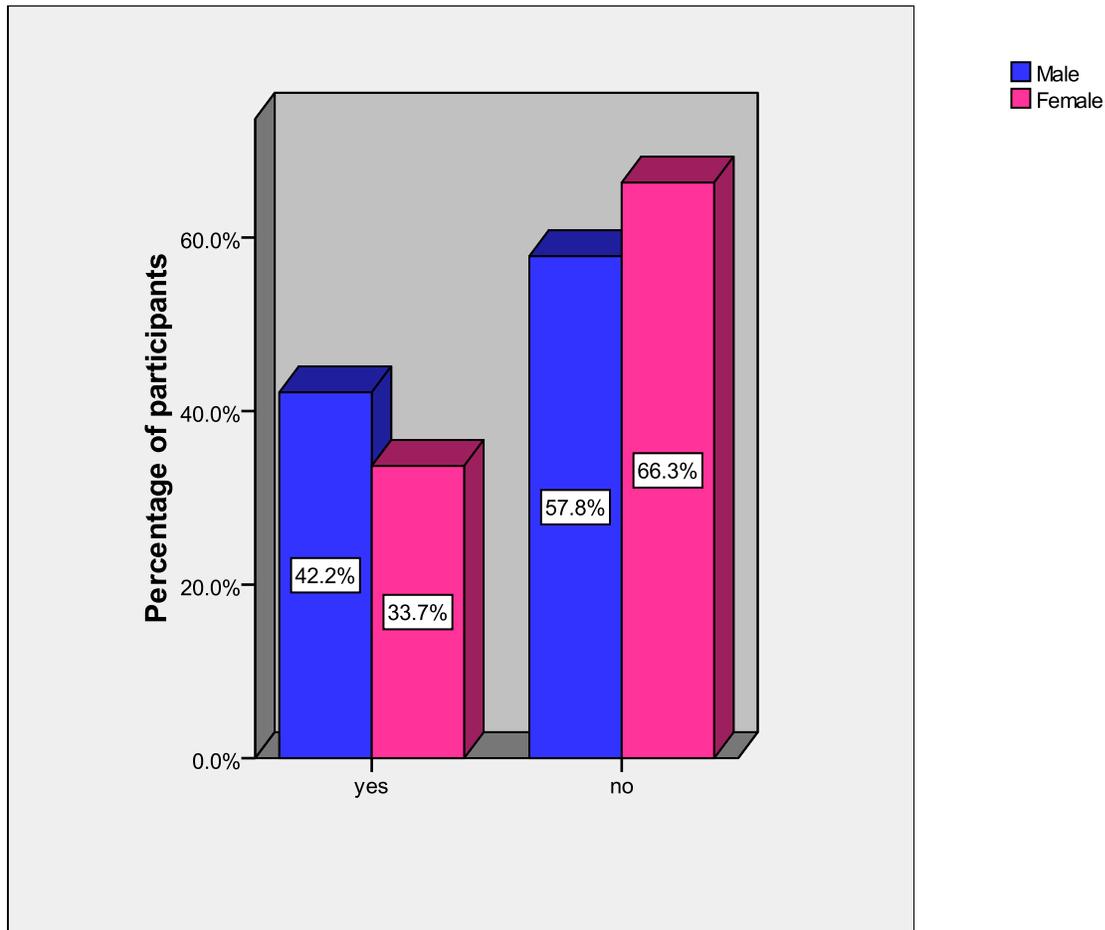
Bar Chart 5.2: Do you imagine Head Shops helping the Irish war on drugs by taking business away from criminals?



- Bar chart 5.2 illustrates an overall no response to the question ‘Do you imagine Head Shops helping the Irish war on drugs by taking business away from criminals?’
- A gender difference is apparent in Bar chart 5.2 with 9% more males selecting yes (45%) they imagine Head Shops will help the war on drugs in Ireland compared to women (36%).
- 62% of women feel Head Shops will not help the war on drugs contrasting to 57% of men.
- 26% exists between females yes and no answer showing a large divide between female respondents compared to a minute gap of 12% between male responses.

Theme: Head Shops current position:

Bar Chart 6.2: Did you know Head shop products and banned Head Shop products are now being sold by illegal drug dealers?



- Over all the majority of men and women did not know Head Shop products and banned Legal Highs are now being sold by drug dealers. Bar Chart 6.2 illustrates more men than women have knowledge on Legal Highs current position.
- 66% of women answered no they did not know Drug dealers were now selling Head Shop products and Legal Highs compared to 58% of men who said no. This shows women are less informed on this current situation by 8% less than men.
- Less than half of men answering with 42% that they are aware that drug dealers are now selling Legal highs showing 4% more knowledge on this circumstance than woman.

Discussion

The aim of this research project is to illustrate the public's knowledge and opinion regarding Head Shops and Legal Highs. In addition, this project aims to investigate if a younger generation has a more accepting opinion and a greater knowledge of Head Shops and Legal Highs. Furthermore, this project aims to test if gender will also influence the public's understanding and opinion regarding this topic. By finding out knowledge and opinion as regards four categories in society this project aspires to examine social issues surrounding the current position of Head Shops. By finding understanding and outlooks on societal issues this project wants to discover an overall opinion of Head Shops in present day Ireland.

Knowledge:

The general public largely has great awareness of Head Shops and Legal Highs in society as illustrated by Bar Chart 1 and Bar chart 2. These findings show that an older category in society display more awareness of both Head Shops and Legal Highs than a younger proportion. 11% more of the older group are aware of Head Shops in society and an even greater 17% of that age group are aware of Legal Highs compared to the younger age samples.

Media attention in recent times did not influence this knowledge in society as 121 out of the 200 samples answered that they were not informed about Head Shops for the first time by 2010 media coverage. The older age category appeared most informed by recent media attention with a large 49% claiming they were made aware of Head Shops for the first time by 2010 media concentration. This shows a large number of people have known Head Shops exist for longer than recent publicized times but also a section of society have not.

Even though a general awareness exists regarding this topic understanding is absent. All four categories responded with high responses to no on the question 'Would you claim you have much knowledge and understanding on Head Shops?' Bar Chart 1.2 illustrates male and female responses. Males by 15% respond higher to this question. The younger group also answered higher by 11% on this showing that they are, alongside men, the groups in society with most knowledge and understanding as regards to Head Shops.

Both the younger age group and men continued to respond higher on knowledge regarding the issues of general information concerning Head Shops. A significant 72% of men know a person who has used Head Shops compared to just 47% of women as shown in Bar Chart 2.2. This shows 23% more males know users of Head Shops displaying they may be more subjected to this new drug use culture. This finding is not as diverse regarding age groups with 62% of younger participants and 57% of the older participants answering yes to this. A small 5% difference displays the youth know more people availing of Head Shops but overall both age groups display great knowledge of users. By large these findings reveal all four categories largely know a person who has availed of Head Shops showing there diversity and popularity in society. The overall findings regarding knowledge and awareness of this study displaying an older age group are more aware but not as knowledgeable on the topic or users. An overall awareness but lack of understanding is relevant from this research with younger respondents and males claiming to be the most informed groups of the public.

Opinion:

This study illustrates Legal Highs have not been accepted into current culture as shown in Bar Chart 3. Both age groups do not feel Legal Highs are as socially acceptable as alcohol

another legal drug. 1% more young people feel they agree to this than older people. This 1% is also relevant for gender responses to this question showing all areas of society questioned feel Legal Highs are not as socially accepted.

All categories continue to agree with large no responses to the question 'do you consider Legal Highs safe' as shown in Bar Chart 4A. 5% more of the younger age samples feel Legal Highs are not safe than the older portion of samples. The results of this study also show the younger age category responding more strongly in opinion as regards to Head Shops normalizing drugs in society. The younger age category answered 12% higher to this compared to the older group. Findings also present that younger people who responded a substantial 71% yes feel that Head Shops create a market in society for customers who otherwise would not consume drugs. This result is 8% higher than that of the older age category.

As shown in Bar Chart 3.2 women also answered higher illustrating that they feel Head Shops are normalizing drugs by 8% greater than men. These findings show males and the older section do not see Legal Highs bringing a normalized position for drugs to Irish society.

These findings display intolerant opinions by both females and the younger category on Head Shops in society. Both women and the younger section feel more strongly that Head Shops are bad for society; this may be because they feel they are creating a normalizing position for drug use. Bar Chart 4B displays the younger sample by 10% more than the older sample feeling that Head Shops are bad for society.

Overall as shown by these results the public feel Head Shops are not accepted into Irish culture as they are viewed as unsafe and not as socially acceptable as alcohol. Women and the younger age category appear to have a stronger opinion concerning Head Shops with men and an

older section showing more tolerance. In all, the public feel Head Shops are bad for society as shown in Bar Chart 4B.

Legal Highs and Illegal Drugs:

People observe Legal Highs in an equal position to illegal drugs as shown in Bar Chart 5. High levels of both age groups do not consider it is more acceptable to purchase drugs termed 'Legal Highs' rather than illegal drugs. 58% of the younger age category responded yes to this showing they feel more strongly about this by 4% more than the older age category. This shows less tolerance by younger people on substance use in society.

This research, as shown in Bar Chart 6 illustrates that in society the public view Legal Highs as gateway drugs to illegal drugs. 71% of the younger age group and 62% of the older age group stated yes to this. Younger people prove to see Legal Highs in a more serious position by 9% greater than the older participants. The younger group also sees users of Legal Highs in the same category as illegal drug users by 64% agreeing to this. This result is 10% higher than the older age groups response. These results show the younger portion rather than the older portion seeing all drugs and drug users equal in society regardless of the substance being legal or illegal.

Men demonstrate more lenience towards Legal Highs social position compared to illegal drugs showing they do not see Head Shop owners in the same light as illegal drug dealers by 17% less than women as, displayed in Bar Chart 4.2. This shows men do not see Head Shops acting in a role as drug dealers to society. This sees men separating the Legal and illegal drug markets with more acceptances towards Legal Highs.

Even though men show a separation of drug markets, 60% of men see Legal Highs as gateway drugs to illegal drugs and understanding that Head Shop products are as addictive as illegal drugs with 69% responding yes. These figures are still lower than female responses by 14% and 19%, but both genders agree on Legal Highs position compared with illegal substances. It may be assumed from male's high knowledge of users that men have experiences with Legal and illegal substances which may have influenced this opinion on Legal Highs position as regards illegal drugs.

Drug situation in Ireland.

This study presents that the public feel Head Shops will create a worse drug problem in Ireland. All four groups have high responses to yes on the question 'Do you consider access to legal drugs from Head Shops will create a worse drug problem for Ireland?' Bar Chart 7 illustrates age differences on this. 69% of young people believe Head Shops will make the Irish drug problem worse; this is 5% higher than the older sample. This may be because the youth feel Legal Highs with the ban of substances will push a new market into the hands of illegal drug dealers. 79% of the young sample feels this which is higher than the older sample by 2% also. Therefore, young people feel crime will increase because of Head Shop products in society, with 11% more young samples stating this compared to older participants.

A general opinion is held in society that Head Shops will not be helping the Irish war on drugs by taking business away from criminals. Women responded more strongly against the question 'Do you imagine Head Shops helping the Irish war on drugs by taking business away from criminals?' as shown in Bar Chart 5.2. Women do not perceive Head Shops aiding social

problems in Ireland but agree strongly alongside the younger age group that crime will increase because of Head Shop products in society by answering yes by 11% higher than men.

All categories sampled in this study illustrate that they consider Head Shops in Irish society will not help the drug situation but in fact will make it worse by pushing customers to drug dealers and not away from them while also causing more crime. These results state that women and the younger age group show they agree largely that Head Shops do not aid the Irish drug situation.

Head Shops current position:

Both age groups agree that the government should have banned the products it did in 2010 with both age groups responding yes by 75% and 74%. Bar Chart 8 illustrates the two separate age samples responded 62% and 60% no to the question 'Since the banning of some products, are you aware new products have replaced them being sold in Head Shops?' this shows younger people by 2% know less on the current situation regarding Head Shops. Over all this research illustrates these two age samples are not informed on the new Legal Highs available in society with a small majority stating yes to this question.

Furthermore in regards to the current positions of Head Shops, all categories in this study are uninformed. Both age categories did not know Head Shop products and banned Head Shop products are now being sold by illegal drug users. Bar Chart 6.2 shows gender differences on this question, displaying men are 8% more knowledgeable on current issues. Both categories are largely unaware of this with younger and older participants answering 60% and 64% no also.

Over all a general lack of knowledge exists in this research regarding the current situation of Head Shops in society. The most informed sections of society by the results of this study show men and older participants are most informed on Head Shop and Legal Highs current position.

Conclusion:

Firstly this research concludes that hypothesis one has failed. Although the younger sample in this study claims they are more knowledgeable, they are lacking in knowledge on Head Shops current position in society. This study shows younger participants are not as knowledgeable as assumed but do display a user knowledge concerning Head Shops. Also this age group is lacking in a more tolerant and accepting attitude towards Legal Highs in society as assumed they would have. This study has shown that an older sample is more aware and tolerant towards Head Shops and Legal Highs in society than predicted. The older sample involved in this study have shown a more liberal attitude towards this topic than the younger participants involved.

Secondly this study illustrates hypothesis two was correct and gender differences have occurred in this study. It is relevant by the findings of this study that one's gender will alter ones knowledge and opinion of Head Shops and Legal Highs in society. Despite claims that gendered substance use is changing in society, this study shows that men know more about Head Shopd and know more users of Legal Highs in society. On analyzing age and gender from this research it is apparent that men and older participants in particular are the most knowledgeable category in society regarding Head Shops. Furthermore on assessing this study it is apparent that men and an older age group have a more tolerant opinion on Head Shops and Legal Highs in Ireland. This

study displays women and a younger age group to feel more strongly against Head Shops and Legal Highs.

This research by illustrating knowledge and opinion by means of age and gender shows which categories in society are most informed and which category feel more accepting towards Head Shops. As well as doing this, this study overall addresses general opinion on social issues regarding the themes of knowledge, opinion, illegal comparisons, the Irish war on drugs and Head Shops current position.

This study has found that in general people are aware of Head Shops and Legal Highs with an older age group showing more awareness. This study shows a large number (49%) of the older category were first made conscious about Head Shops by 2010 media coverage. This study illustrates that people are lacking in knowledge in the general area of understanding Head Shops but men and young people claim to be the most informed in society while also show large user knowledge also. This may mean men or young participants themselves have consumed Legal Highs or that younger people and males may know more drug connections in present day society.

Results depict that all four categories in this study feel Head Shops are bad for society with younger people feeling stronger concerning this alongside women. The public, young people and women especially do not see Head Shops as socially accepted into Irish culture and view Legal Highs as unsafe while also feel that they are normalizing drugs in society.

All four categories showed similar results in the comparison of Legal Highs with illegal drugs. Men agreed by 1% more than women that they consider users of Legal Highs in the same category as illegal drug users. They also greatly agreed that Head Shop products are gateway

drugs to illegal drugs. These findings illustrate a common opinion of all substances in Ireland whether they are termed legal or illegal; people perceive the use of them in the same context.

The public on a whole feel the presence of Head Shops in Society will create a worse drug problem and also increase crime. Head Shops provided Ireland with a legalized drug market. Views by O'Mahony (2000) claim a legalized drug market will aid Ireland's war on drugs. The general public greatly disagrees that Head Shops will help Ireland's drug problems. The public see in contrast, and the results of this study show that the general public feel Head Shops will not help the Irish war on drugs by taking business away from criminals but will in fact be the case of more crime Ireland.

Concluding the results regarding knowledge of this topic all categories are greatly lacking in knowledge on the current position of Head Shops. Although all categories answered highly as regards to no on the issue of Head Shops now selling replacement Legal Highs men and the older age category are the people by minute percents proved more well informed on Head Shops and Legal Highs current positions. These findings regarding men may be a result of the fact they know more users as proven by this research.

Limitations of this study:

This study proved to contain some limitations in its research. This study was carried out by means of a simple quantitative research questionnaire which consisted of yes no responses. Some participants left questions blank and wrote their own personal opinion or 'maybe' beside

questions, this meant that that questionnaire could not be used and thus these samples prolonged the data collection procedure.

Concerns regarding the questions meant that the questions could not directly ask samples if they had ever tried Legal Highs or Head Shop products. This may have greatly impacted the participant's knowledge and opinion on this topic. For example, Younger people maintain that they have knowledge and user knowledge; this may have altered their opinions as to have a less tolerant view. It was hypothesized that younger people's opinion would be more accepting towards Legal Highs in society but this study has shown that younger people feel more strongly against Legal Highs in society, finding them unsafe and normalizing drugs. It is unknown if younger people used in this study have had user experience of the harm which Legal Highs have already caused. Firsthand experience may have altered the younger participant's perceptions of this topic as so that younger people are strongly against Head Shops. If this study was interviewing participants at a more personal level it could establish if it is user experiences and why do younger people feel so strongly against Head Shops. This is also the case for men in this study. Men display a high user knowledge but also a high response rate as regards Legal Highs being gateway drugs to illegal drugs. This study as a survey could not ask further questions or relate the two aspects with one's personal experiences.

This study could also not ask if the participant had used illegal drugs as this would also give a different outlook on Legal Highs. The findings of this study do not illustrate if participants are current drug users or member of particular sub cultures where drug use may be already normalized. Normalization theory can be linked to subcultures in society (Aldridge and Measham, 1998,-152).If a participant is subjected to drug use regularly or if they belong to a particular sub culture like the dance music scene for example the participant will have a different

outlook on Head Shops then a member of the general public in mainstream society. Findings show that one in two eighteen to 24 year olds are regular clubbers (Finch, 1999, as cited in Measham, Aldridge, and Parker, 2001, p. 4). Several studies indicate that clubbers are far more drugs experienced than the general young adult population in Britain (Measham et al, 2001, p. 8). It is unknown if factors such as subcultures influenced the outcome of the younger participants in this study meaning they have had user experience of Legal Highs or illegal drugs. If future studies specialized in examining subcultures the outcome of knowledge and opinion may be more interesting and diverse. Alongside analyzing this, following studies should evaluate social class regarding customers of Legal Highs. This study does not include external factors in the participant's life such as social class or the area in which they live.

. Potential research should analyze social classes to gain a more in dept insight on user knowledge, opinion and user experience if any. A diverse split throughout society from problem drug users to experimental youth may display different knowledge and opinion on Head Shops and Legal Highs. Based on the knowledge of this study that Head Shops are bad for society and will create a worse drug problem forthcoming research should inspect who is using Legal Highs, where they use them, why they use them, and how they use them.

This study displayed that the public feel legal drugs are gateway drugs to illegal drugs while also perceive Head Shops pushing a market of drug users into the hands of drugs dealers. As a questionnaire, this study could not look into this concept in more details. Working from the information portrayed in this study, potential studies should examine how problematic the transformation is regarding the new market created by Legal Highs. It would be interesting for a continuing study to examine just how many people who first used Legal Highs then progressed to consuming illegal drugs and with this, the situation and class involved in that samples

circumstances. Studies should explore what drugs Legal Highs lead onto and does it become problematic for the user as illegal drugs are not as cheap or easily available as Legal Highs.

This study demonstrates that the public see Head Shops as a negative aspect within society and will make the Irish war on drugs worse but this study cannot actually present if they public are correct in viewing this. Continuing studies should analyze this by examining the profits of Head Shops and examine social issues such as drug findings and drug related crime to examine if Head Shops are actually helping the Irish war on drugs or are participants correct in this study by believing Head Shops are making drug issues worse in society.

Furthermore research in the future should gain an insight into public opinion and knowledge on different Head Shop Products. Not all of the products available in Head Shops are equally as popular or as damaging. This study categories all Legal Highs in the same category which does not allow scope for participants to rank different harms and opinions with different substances. On further assessments on public opinion studies should allow more scope for participant input also. This study only required yes no responses which left no other option for the person to provide a greater input.

References:

- Bryan, A, Moran, R, Farrell, E, O'Brien, M (2000). *Drug-related knowledge, attitudes and beliefs in Ireland: report of a nation-wide survey*. Ireland: Health Research Board.
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods*. (3rd Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burnett, J. (2009). *Doing your social sciences dissertation*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bracken, A., (Oct 31, 2010). *Gardai seize 50,000 worth of former legal high*: Sunday Tribune.ie. Retrieved 20 February, 2011, from <http://www.tribune.ie/news/home-news/article/2010/oct/31/gardai-seize-50000-worth-of-former-legal-high/>
- Bracken, A., (Oct 18, 2009). *Designer Drug Meph floods market despite warnings*: Tribune News.ie. Retrieved 5 January, 2011, from <http://www.tribune.ie/news/home-news/article/2009/oct/18/designer-drug-meph-floods-market-despite-warnings/>
- Culliton, G., (2009). *Research needed into legal high drug*: Medical times. Retrieved 15 February, 2011, from <http://www.imt.ie/news/research-and-education/2009/05/research-needed-into-legal-high-drug.html>
- Cusack, J & Sheen, M (Feb 14, 2010). *Firefighters find 500,000 in 'head shop' safe*: Sunday Independent. retrieved 15 february, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/mcdaid-head-shops-ban-will-only-benefit-drug-dealers-111368.html>
- Clark, S., (Dec 16, 2007). *Rise of head shops*: The Post.ie. Retrieved 20 February, 2011, from <http://www.thepost.ie/archives/2007/1216/rise-of-the-head-shops-28951.html>

- Cosgrove, T., (2010). *Docs warn head shop ban has little effect*: Independent. i.e. Retrieved 12 January, 2011, from <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/docs-warn-headshop-ban-has-little-effect-2297957.html>
- Cooper, M., (March 5, 2010). *Head shops should be regulated just like your local off license*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 5 January, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/opinion/columnists/matt-cooper/head-shops-should-be-regulated-just-like-your-local-off-licence-113670.html>
- Feehan, C., (2010). *Head shop drugs causing psychosis*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 15 February 2011, from <http://www.herald.ie/national-news/new-head-shop-drug-causing-psychosis-2219951.html>
- *Harney announces ban on stimulant BZP* (Tuesday March 21, 2009). Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 16 February, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/breaking/ireland/eyaueyidqlql/>
- Hough, J., (May 11, 2010). *legal highs linked to referral of 20 youths to treatment center*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 13 January, 2011, from <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/legal-highs-linked-to-referral-of-20-youths-to-treatment-centre-119436.html>
- Hough, J., (Jan 11, 2010). *Sale of legal drugs that mimic cocaine skyrocket*: Irish examiner.com. Retrieved 22 February, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/sales-of-legal-drugs-that-mimic-cocaine-skyrocket-109428.html>
- Hough, J., (Jan26, 2010). *Health workers to make appeal over legal drug dangers*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 15 January, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/health-workers-to-make-appeal-over-legal-drug-dangers-110591.html>
- Hough, J., (Feb 5, 2010). *Mc Deid: Head shops ban will only benefit drug dealers*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 5 January, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/mcdaid-head-shops-ban-will-only-benefit-drug-dealers-111368.html>

- Hough, J., (Jan 13, 2009). 'Legal high' drugs causing psychiatric illness epidemic says A&E doctor: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 16 January, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/legal-high-drugs-causing-psychiatric-illness-epidemic-says-ae-doctor-109592.html>
- Hickey, D., (March 2, 2007). *Taoiseach totally opposed to legalizing drugs*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 10 April, 2011, from <http://www.irishexaminer.com/archives/2007/0302/ireland/taoiseach-totally-opposed-to-legalising-drugs-26729.html>
- Hughes, A., (Feb 7, 2010). 'Head shops' booming as row rages over legal highs: The Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 5 January, 2011, from <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/head-shops-booming-as-row-rages-over-legal-highs-2052072.html>
- Long, J., (2010). *Head Shop Drugs across Europe: data from the EMCDDA: In the National Regional Drugs Task Force 'Legal Highs' conference* 26 January 2010, Mullingar Ireland.
- Long, J & Mongan, D (2010). *Alcohol and drug use among young people in Ireland*. Drugnet Ireland, Issue 33, spring 2010 p. 3-7.
- Long, J., (2010). *Update on psychoactive substances sold in head shops and online*. Drugsnet Ireland, Issue 34, summer 2010 p 15-18.
- *Legal highs & Head Shops: some basic facts* (2010). Ballyfermot Drugs Task Force, Dublin. Retrieved 3 February, 2011, from http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/12941/1/Legal_highs_%26_headshops_leaflet.pdf
- Murphy, C., (21 Aug, 2008). *The party is over as legal high stimulant pills put three in hospital*: The Herald.ie. Retrieved 5 January, 2011, from <http://www.herald.ie/national-news/the-partys-over-as-legal-stimulant-pills-put-three-in-hospital-1460540.html>
- McGiobuin, M., (3 June, 2010). Not for human consumption. Updated presentation. In: Head shops "Not for human consumption": information seminar, Blackhall Place, Dublin.

- Mc Connell, D., (2006). *How Tragedy led family to crusade for ban on magic mushrooms*: Independent.ie. Retrieved 5 January, 2011, from <http://www.independent.ie/opinion/analysis/how-tragedy-led-family-to-crusade-for-ban-on-magic-mushrooms-126322.html>
- O'Mahony, P. (2008). *The Irish war on drugs: the seductive folly of prohibition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Measham, F., Aldridge, J. and Parker, H. (2001) *Dancing on drugs risk: health and hedonism in the British club scene*. United Kingdom: Free Association Books.
- O'Riordan, A., (October 31, 2010). *'Snow' left at doors to entice a new breed of addicts*: Independent.ie. Retrieved 13 January, 2011, from <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/snow-left-at-doors-to-entice-a-new-breed-of-addicts-2401378.html>
- O'Keefe, C., (July 30, 2010). *Authorities seize 52,000 worth of banned head shop drug*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved February 10, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/authorities-seize-52000-worth-of-banned-head-shop-drug-126549.html>
- O'Keefe, C., (Nov 6, 2009). *Ireland's third largest designer drug seller on net*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 2 February, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/archives/2009/1106/ireland/ireland-third-largest-designer-drug-seller-on-net-104995.html>
- O'Keefe, C (June 3, 2010). *Head shop customers are walking guinea pigs*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 10 January, 2011, from <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/head-shop-customers-are-walking-guinea-pigs-121424.html>
- O'Keefe, C., (March 22, 2010). *Protestors against head shops to picket outside the Dail*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 20 February, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/protestors-against-head-shops-to-picket-outside-dail-115171.html>

- O'Keefe, C., (July 26, 2010). *Fears 'mysterious' head shop drugs are toxic*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 15 February, from <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/warning-second-wave-of-legal-highs-on-the-way-124441.html>
- O'Keefe, C., (July 08, 2010). *Warning second wave of legal highs on the way*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 6 January, 2011, from <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/warning-second-wave-of-legal-highs-on-the-way-124441.html>
- O'Regan, M., (April 2, 2010). *Carey to introduce measures to prevent head shop trading*: Drugs and Alcohol.ie. Retrieved 20 February, 2011, from <http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/12982/>
- Overview of alcohol related harm, (2010). *facts and statistics*: Alcohol Ireland.ie. Retrieved 5 April, 2011, from <http://alcoholireland.ie/alcohol-facts/alcohol-related-harm-facts-and-statistics/>
- Parker, H., Aldridge, J. and Measham, F. (1998). *Illegal leisure the normalization of adolescent recreational drug use*. United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Reegan, M., (Oct 16, 2006). *Legal high: the party pills stronger than ecstasy*: Irish Examiner.com. Retrieved 6 January, 2010, from <http://www.irishexaminer.com/archives/2006/1016/ireland/legal-high-the-party-pills-stronger-than-ecstasy-15868.html>
- *44 head shops now generating in Ireland*, (July 2, 2010). RTE news: RTE.ie. Retrieved 15 February, from <http://www.rte.ie/news/2010/0702/headshops.html>
- Ring, E., (April 26, 2010). *Pharmacists call for closure of head shops over health risks*: Irish Examiner. Retrieved 20 February, 2011, from <http://www.examiner.ie/ireland/pharmacists-call-for-closure-of-head-shops-over-health-risks-118197.html>

- Reilly, J., (30 May, 2010). *Head Shop drugs blamed for huge up surge in teen violent muggings*: Independent.ie. Retrieved 6 January, 2011, from <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/headshop-drugs-blamed-for-huge-upsurge-in-teen-violence-and-muggings-2200540.html>
- Ruane, J.M. (2005) *Essentials of research methods: a guide to social science research*. London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Smith, B (19th October 2004). *Adolescent Substance Misuse in Ireland: From an Ireland of craic to an Island of crack?* The Drug Treatment Centre Board. Retrieved 20 March, 2011, from [http://www.addictionireland.ie/fileupload/publications/Dr Bobby Smith Speaker Paper.pdf](http://www.addictionireland.ie/fileupload/publications/Dr_Bobby_Smith_Speaker_Paper.pdf)
- Shorthall, E., (Dec 20, 2009). *The legal drug trade is pulling in high profits*: The Sunday Times. Retrieved 10 February, 2011, from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/ireland/article6962759.ece>
- *Women and substance misuse in Ireland*, (2009). The women's Health Council: Drugs and alcohol.ie. Retrieved 4 April, 2011, from <http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/12439/1/womenSubstanceOverview.pdf>

Appendix

Social science final year project.

This study is a social science final year project on public knowledge and opinion of Head Shops in society. Please fill out all 25 questions below by circling the yes or no provided. You are not required to fill your name out anywhere on this survey. You are required to fill in your age and gender. Your questionnaires remain confidential. I would like to thank you in advance for your time.

Age:

Gender:

1. Are you aware of head shops selling Legal Highs in society? Yes No
2. Were you made aware for the first time about head shops by 2010 media coverage?
Yes No
3. Would you claim you have much knowledge and understanding on Head Shops? Yes
No
4. Are you aware of Head Shop products such as Legal Highs? Yes No
5. Do you know anyone who has used Head Shops? Yes No
6. Would you believe Head Shops enforce a strict over 18s policy? Yes No
7. Do you consider Legal Highs sold in Head Shops are safe? Yes No
8. Are products sold on Head Shops less harmful than illegal drugs? Yes No
9. Would you believe that Head Shops create a market of customers who otherwise would not consume drugs but do so because they are legal in society? Yes No
10. Would you regard it more acceptable to purchase drugs termed Legal Highs rather than illegal drugs? Yes No

11. Do you consider Head Shops Legal Highs as socially acceptable as alcohol? Yes No
12. Are Head Shops normalizing drugs in Irish society? Yes No
13. Would you regard Head Shop products as gateway drugs to illegal drugs? Yes No
14. Are products available in Head Shops as addictive as illegal drugs? Yes No
15. Would you consider users of Legal Highs in the same category as illegal drug users?
Yes No
16. Are Head Shops providing economically cheap drugs during the recession for those who can no longer afford illegal substances? Yes No
17. Do you imagine Head Shops helping the Irish war on drugs by taking business away from criminals? Yes No
18. Will crime increase because of Head Shop products in society? Yes No
19. Do you consider access to legal drugs from Head Shops will create a worse drug problem in Ireland? Yes No
20. Should the government have banned the 200 substances which it did in 2010? Yes No
21. Since the banning of some products, are you aware new products have replaced them being sold in Head Shops? Yes No
22. Did you know Head Shop products and banned Head Shop products are now being sold by illegal drug dealers? Yes No
23. Is the banning of some Legal Highs going to push a new market into the hands of illegal drug dealers? Yes No

24. Should Head Shops owners be viewed in the same light as illegal drug dealers? Yes No

25. Are Head Shops bad for society? Yes No

If you require issues regarding Legal Highs or want more information, information is available about head shops and legal highs at: <http://drugs.ie/> and at the HSE drugs helpline 1800459459.