

Psychoactive substances act (United Kingdom 2016)

Description

The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 (PSA) is a controversial law in the United Kingdom intended to restrict the production, sale and supply of psychoactive substances. The bill was passed given Royal Assent on 28 January 2016, and came into force on 26 May 2016 across the entire United Kingdom. Legal scholars and human rights activists have criticized the legal PSA on legal and moral grounds and researchers have argued that the classification specified in the PSA is not evidence based and therefore scientifically invalid.
ukpga_20160002_en

See also: cognitivelibertyuk.wordpress.com



Further References

Nutt, D. J., King, L. A., & Phillips, L. D.. (2010). Drug harms in the UK: A multicriteria decision analysis. The Lancet

Plain numerical DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61462-6
DOI URL
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“Background: proper assessment of the harms caused by the misuse of drugs can inform policy makers in health, policing, and social care. we aimed to apply multicriteria decision analysis (mcda) modelling to a range of drug harms in the uk. method: members of the independent scientific committee on drugs, including two invited specialists, met in a 1-day interactive workshop to score 20

drugs on 16 criteria: nine related to the harms that a drug produces in the individual and seven to the harms to others. drugs were scored out of 100 points, and the criteria were weighted to indicate their relative importance. findings: mcda modelling showed that heroin, crack cocaine, and metamfetamine were the most harmful drugs to individuals (part scores 34, 37, and 32, respectively), whereas alcohol, heroin, and crack cocaine were the most harmful to others (46, 21, and 17, respectively). overall, alcohol was the most harmful drug (overall harm score 72), with heroin (55) and crack cocaine (54) in second and third places. interpretation: these findings lend support to previous work assessing drug harms, and show how the improved scoring and weighting approach of mcda increases the differentiation between the most and least harmful drugs. however, the findings correlate poorly with present uk drug classification, which is not based simply on considerations of harm. funding: centre for crime and justice studies (uk). © 2010 elsevier ltd."
van Amsterdam, J., Nutt, D., Phillips, L., & van den Brink, W.. (2015). European rating of drug harms. Journal of Psychopharmacology, 29(6), 655–660.

Plain numerical DOI: 10.1177/0269881115581980
DOI URL
directSciHub download

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"BACKGROUND: the present paper describes the results of a rating study performed by a group of european union (eu) drug experts using the multi-criteria decision analysis model for evaluating drug harms. methods: forty drug experts from throughout the eu scored 20 drugs on 16 harm criteria. the expert group also assessed criteria weights that would apply, on average, across the eu. weighted averages of the scores provided a single, overall weighted harm score (range: 0-100) for each drug. results: alcohol, heroin and crack emerged as the most harmful drugs (overall weighted harm score 72, 55 and 50, respectively). the remaining drugs had an overall weighted harm score of 38 or less, making them much less harmful than alcohol. the overall weighted harm scores of the eu experts correlated well with those previously given by the uk panel. conclusion: the outcome of this study shows that the previous national rankings based on the relative harms of different drugs are endorsed throughout the eu. the results indicates that eu and national drug policy measures should focus on drugs with the highest overall harm, including alcohol and tobacco, whereas drugs such as cannabis and ecstasy should be given lower priority including a lower legal classification."
Beharry, S., & Gibbons, S.. (2016). An overview of emerging and new psychoactive substances in the United Kingdom. Forensic Science International

Plain numerical DOI: 10.1016/j.forsciint.2016.08.013
DOI URL
directSciHub download

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"The purpose of this review is to identify emerging or new psychoactive substances (nps) by undertaking an online survey of the uk nps market and to gather any data from online drug forums and published literature. drugs from four main classes of nps were identified: psychostimulants, dissociative anaesthetics, hallucinogens (phenylalkylamine-based and lysergamide-based materials) and finally benzodiazepines. for inclusion in the review, the 'user reviewers' on drugs forums were selected based on whether or not the particular nps of interest

was used alone or in combination. nps that were used alone were considered. each of the classes contained drugs that are modelled on existing illegal materials and will be covered by the uk new psychoactive substances bill in 2016."
Liechti, M.. (2015). Novel psychoactive substances (designer drugs): overview and pharmacology of modulators of monoamine signaling. Swiss Medical Weekly

Plain numerical DOI: 10.4414/smw.2015.14043
DOI URL
directSciHub download

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"Novel psychoactive substances are newly used designer drugs ('internet drugs', 'research chemicals', 'legal highs') potentially posing similar health risks to classic illicit substances. chemically, many novel psychoactive substances can be classified as phenethylamines, amphetamines, synthetic cathinones, piperazines, pipradrols/piperidines, aminoindanes benzofurans, and tryptamines. pharmacologically, these substances interact with various monoaminergic targets. typically, stimulants inhibit the transport of dopamine and noradrenaline (pipradrols, pyrovalerone cathinones) or induce the release of these monoamines (amphetamines and methamphetamine-like cathinones), entactogens predominantly enhance serotonin release (phenylpiperazines, aminoindanes, para-substituted amphetamines, and mdma-like cathinones) similar to mdma (ecstasy), and hallucinogens (tryptamines, hallucinogenic phenethylamines) are direct agonists at serotonergic 5-ht2a receptors. synthetic cannabinoids are another group of novel substances which all act as agonists at the cannabinoid cb1 receptor similar to thc but are chemically diverse. in particular, the relative serotonergic vs dopaminergic activity (determined by the dopamine/serotonin transporter inhibition ratio in vitro) can be helpful to predict the desired psychotropic but also the toxic effects of novel substances as well as their potential for addiction. although the use of novel psychoactive substances mostly produces minor or moderate poisonings, serious complications occur. serotonergic drugs (entactogens and hallucinogens) are associated with acute serotonin syndrome, hyperthermia, seizures, and hyponatremia. dopaminergic drugs are highly addictive and acute toxicity includes prolonged stimulation, insomnia, agitation, and psychosis. agitation, anxiety, paranoia, hypertension, and rarely myocardial infarction and renal failure are seen with synthetic cannabinoids. treatment is supportive."
Reuter, P., & Pardo, B.. (2017). Can new psychoactive substances be regulated effectively? An assessment of the British Psychoactive Substances Bill. Addiction, 112(1), 25–31.

Plain numerical DOI: 10.1111/add.13439
DOI URL
directSciHub download

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"The regulation of new psychoactive substances (nps) has confounded governments throughout the western world. in 2014 the uk government convened an nps review expert panel to consider a range of approaches. ultimately the panel recommended that the government ban all new psychoactive drugs and allow only psychoactive substances specifically exempted, such as alcohol, tobacco and those allowed as medicines. the government introduced the psychoactive substances bill (psb) in response to that recommendation. passed in 2016, the bill has attracted a torrent of criticism from scientists and experts. the bill could be improved with revision, but the problems of the total ban, as envisioned by the psb, with respect to the nps, may be inherent: (1) defining psychoactivity is conceptually fraught, with great consequence for the scope of the prohibition; (2) operationalizing psychoactivity as a usable concept for legal control purposes is extremely difficult, perhaps

impossible; and (3) the detachment of penalties for violating a total ban from establishing the harmfulness of a substance is normatively troubling. given the uncertainties about the effects of a total ban, it is appropriate at this time for other governments to assess more fully the nature of the nps problem, and the potential control approaches.”

Category

1. Legal

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Date Created
November 2018
Author
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