

# Alcohol, tobacco and cannabis – and their impact on child development

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# Smoking In Pregnancy

- › Risk factor for premature birth, low birth weight, peri-natal death, stillbirth and SIDS
- › Associated with behavioural problems, lower school achievement and early initiation of smoking in the child;
- › Higher risk of vascular disease in adolescents and adults
- › Following the birth, continued smoking by mother and other household members exposes the infant and other children to ETS – asthma, otitis media and other respiratory problems



# Drinking alcohol in pregnancy

- › Alcohol is a potent teratogen
- › Causes varying degrees of harm, from Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder to Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
- › Significant impact on child development
  - Decreased cognitive ability through to severe mental retardation
  - Specific facial features
  - Growth restriction (LBW, with limited catch-up)
  - Childhood behavioural problems
- › Impact related to pattern of drinking, not just average amount
- › May be mediated by other factors: timing in pregnancy & genetics

# Cannabis In Pregnancy

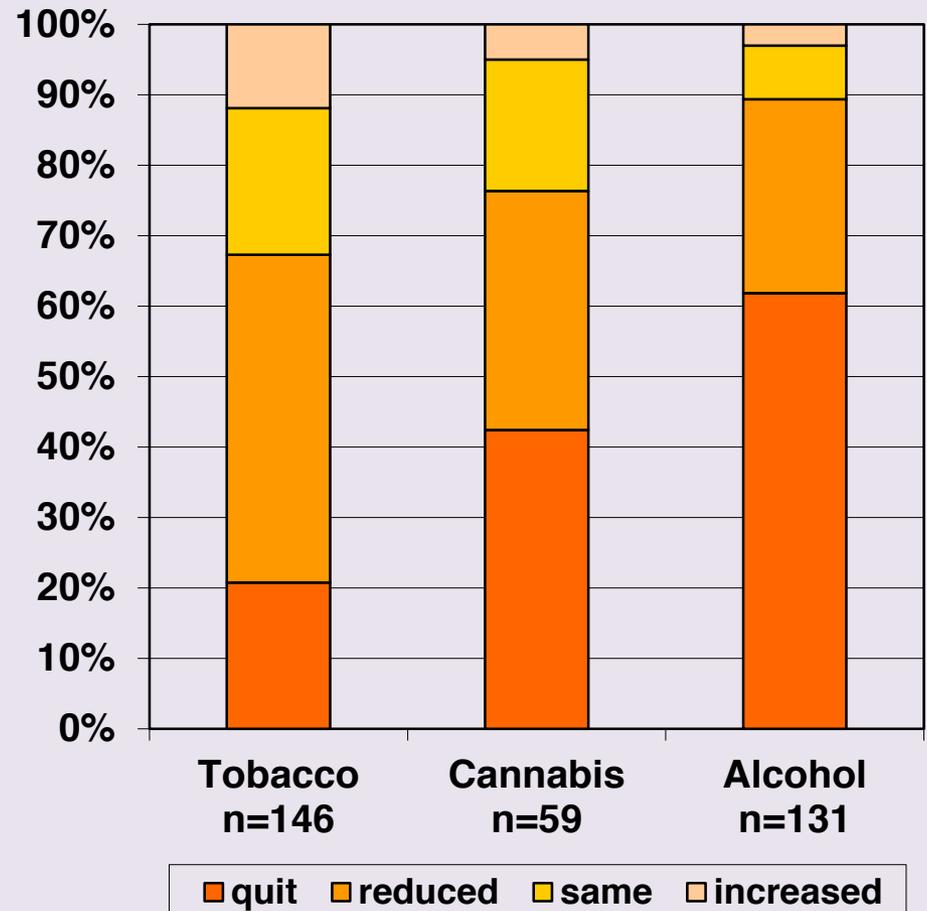
- › Evidence is less clear than for other drugs
- › Regular use is associated with low birth weight
- › Possible cognitive and developmental impacts on the child
- › Effects of tobacco, cannabis and alcohol exposure may be additive



# Use among pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

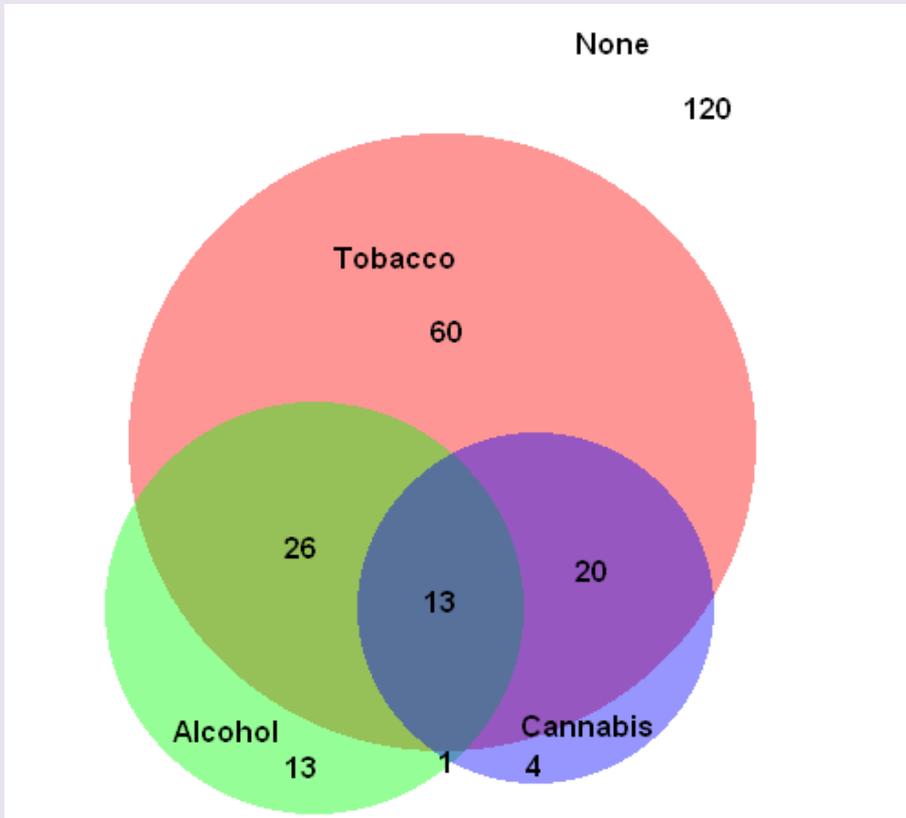
- › Tobacco: approximately 50% nationally
- › Alcohol: 21 – 38% from studies in WA, Qld, NSW, NT
- › Cannabis: 9 – 15% from studies in WA, Qld, NSW, NT

Preliminary data, 257 women, NT & NSW



# Self-reported use of tobacco, alcohol and cannabis

Preliminary data, 257 women, NSW and NT



- › Nearly half the women reported no substances
- › Current tobacco smokers had higher odds of alcohol consumption and cannabis use
- › Women who reported drinking alcohol also had higher odds of reporting cannabis use

# Characteristics associated with currently using 0, 1 or 2-3 substances

Preliminary analysis, 257 women from NT and NSW

Women using fewer substances were:

- › More likely to be from the NT than NSW
- › Had more years of schooling
- › More likely to have some post-secondary education (TAFE or University)
- › Less likely to have started to use any substance before 15 years of age

- › High rates of use of tobacco, alcohol and cannabis, with significant consequences for foetal and child development, and ongoing impacts in adulthood
- › Majority of women are trying to reduce the harms by quitting or cutting down
- › Interactions between use of tobacco, alcohol and cannabis so all need to be considered in both prevention and cessation efforts
- › Social determinants are predictors of use
- › Early initiation of any substance associated with ongoing use => need to focus on prevention



THANK YOU

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