

The pros and cons of using administrative health data to understand substance use in the perinatal period

Dr Claudia Bull

Research Fellow – Psychiatric Epidemiology

Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research

The University of Queensland

Perinatal substance use in administrative health data sets

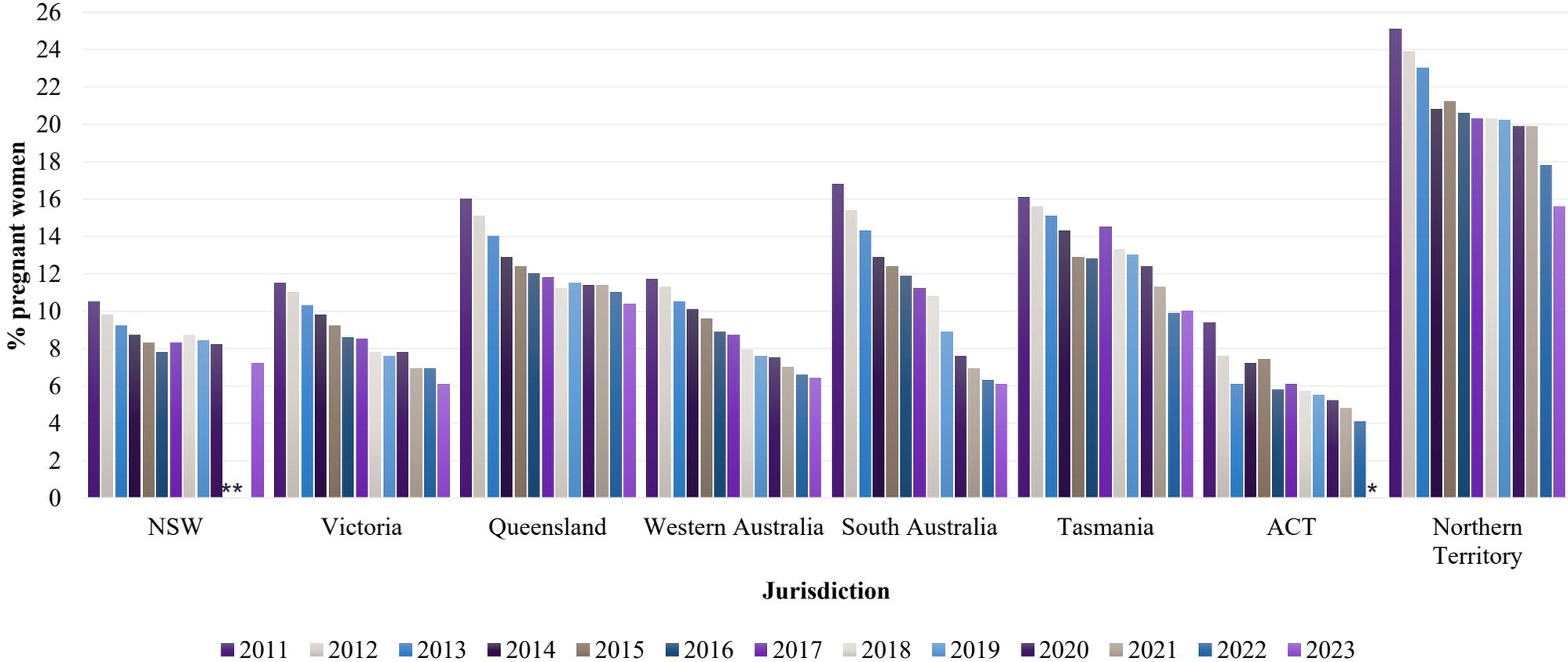
- Administrative health data is collected to support the administration, regulation and funding of health services
- Not specifically designed for research or surveillance purposes – doesn't stop us from trying!
- Data is collected at the state/territory level and publicly reported at the national level by AIHW as part of the *Mothers & babies* report
- Currently only data on smoking and alcohol consumption are “routinely” collected
- Encourage you to have a look at: [National Perinatal Data Collection data availability resource](#)



Who collects and reports what (as of 2023)?

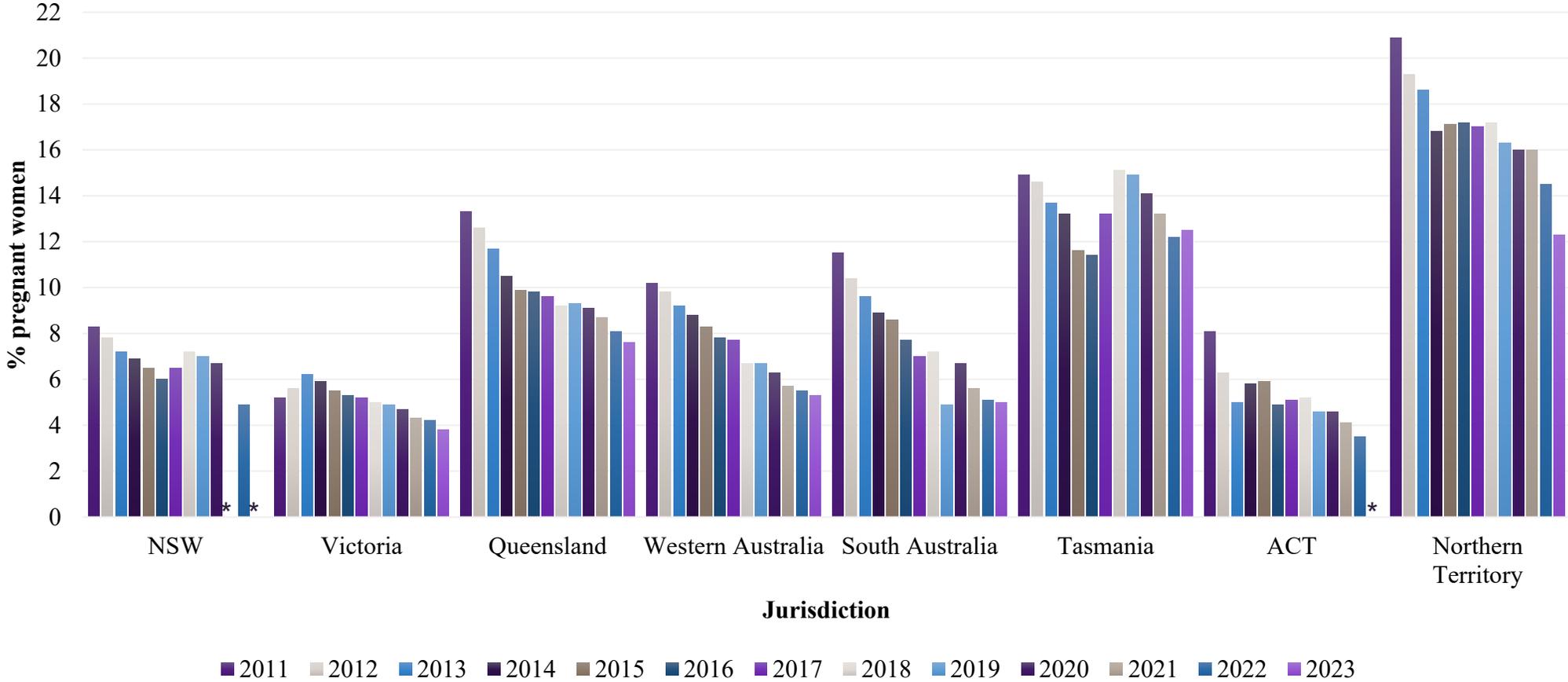
Key data item	National (AIHW)	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT
Smoking status (yes/no) BEFORE 20 weeks' gestation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Smoking status (yes/no) AFTER 20 weeks' gestation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Smoking quantity BEFORE 20 weeks' gestation	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Smoking quantity AFTER 20 weeks' gestation	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alcohol consumption (yes/no) BEFORE 20 weeks' gestation	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alcohol consumption (yes/no) AFTER 20 weeks' gestation	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Alcohol consumption quantity BEFORE 20 weeks' gestation	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Alcohol consumption quantity AFTER 20 weeks' gestation	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Alcohol consumption frequency BEFORE 20 weeks' gestation	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Alcohol consumption frequency AFTER 20 weeks' gestation	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X

Proportion of pregnant women smoking BEFORE 20 weeks' gestation, all Australian jurisdictions, 2011-2023



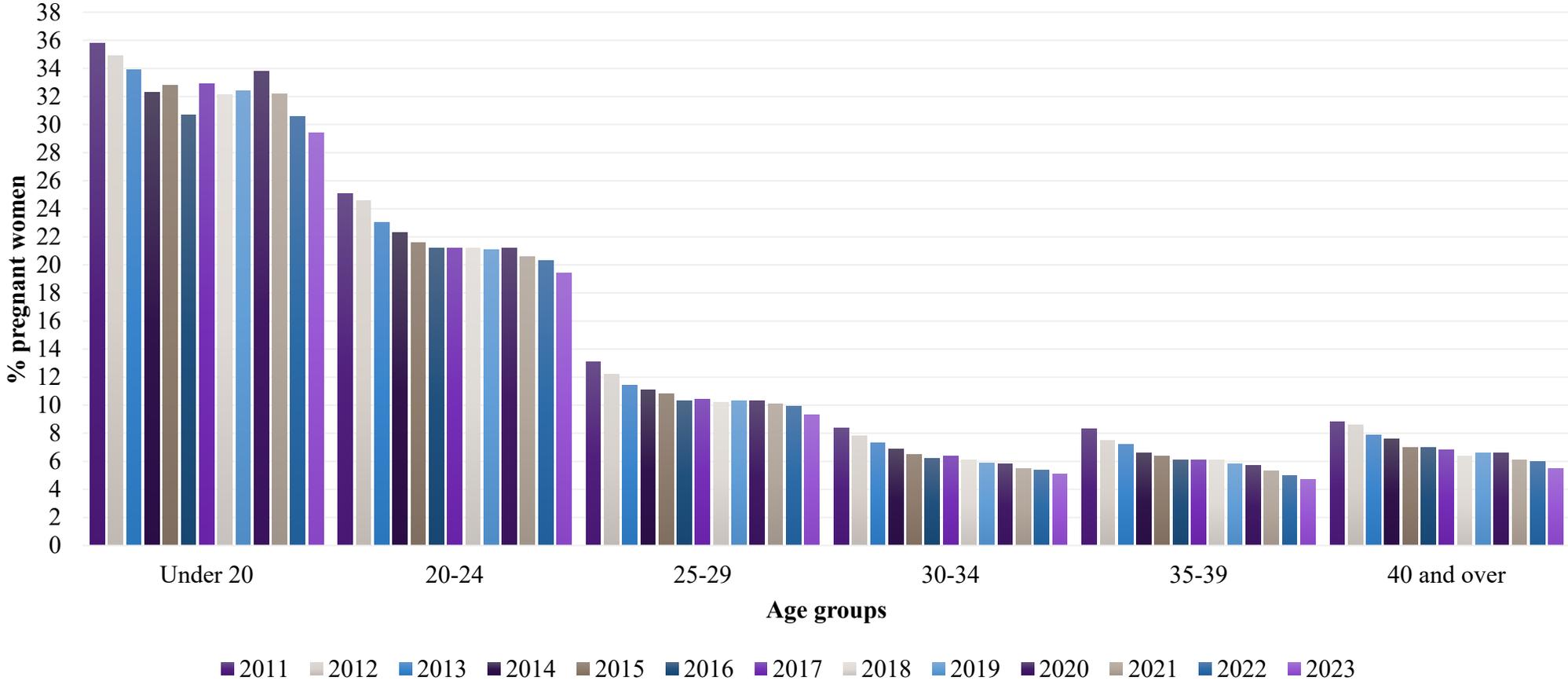
*Data not available

Proportion of pregnant women smoking AFTER 20 weeks' gestation, all Australian jurisdictions, 2011-2023



*Data not available

Proportion of Australian women who smoked at ANY TIME during pregnancy by maternal age



What is missing?

- The Perinatal National Minimum Data Set only mandates the collection of smoking before and after 20-weeks gestation ([Perinatal NMDS 2025-26 specifications](#)) – this likely plays a big role
- Vaping/ e-cigarettes
 - 2022–2023 National Drug Strategy Household Survey showed that the proportion of people using e-cigarettes daily in Australia increased from 0.5% in 2016 to 3.5% in 2022–2023
 - Use of e-cigarettes is particularly high among younger people, with 9.3% of people aged 18–24 and 6.5% of people aged 25–29 using them daily in 2022–2023. These are key reproductive years.
 - AIHW note that *“The National Perinatal Data Collection does not currently collect data on the use of e-cigarettes during pregnancy, however the AIHW is working with states and territories, through the [National Perinatal Data Development Committee](#), to change this.”*
- Illicit drug use
- Polysubstance use
- Strengths-based reporting – First Nations women continue to be compared to non-First Nations women, reinforcing stigmatising narratives

Questions?

Happy to connect!

claudia.bull@uq.edu.au



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/claudia-bull-859533168/>