Knowledge and perceptions of alcohol use during pregnancy: what do the French say in 2025?

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EUFASD, 8th European conference

14-16TH SEPTEMBER - AMIENS

French context

Alcohol consumption during pregnancy

- Probably under-reported
- In 2021, among mothers of children aged 5 or under:
  - 93% reported never drinking alcohol during their last pregnancy after learning they were pregnant
  - 6% only on special occasions
  - <1% reported drinking alcohol more than once a month
- Important differences according to the studies but a declining trend
  - A decrease in this behaviour and/or an increase in social desirability bias?

Implemented measures

- Health warnings (text or pictogram – no size restrictions) on alcohol bottles since 2006
- Regular prevention campaigns at national level since 2000's (and regional level) and helpline
- Early antenatal consultation with GP or midwife since 2020

More than 20 years of prevention on this topic: what are the perceptions on alcohol use during pregnancy today?

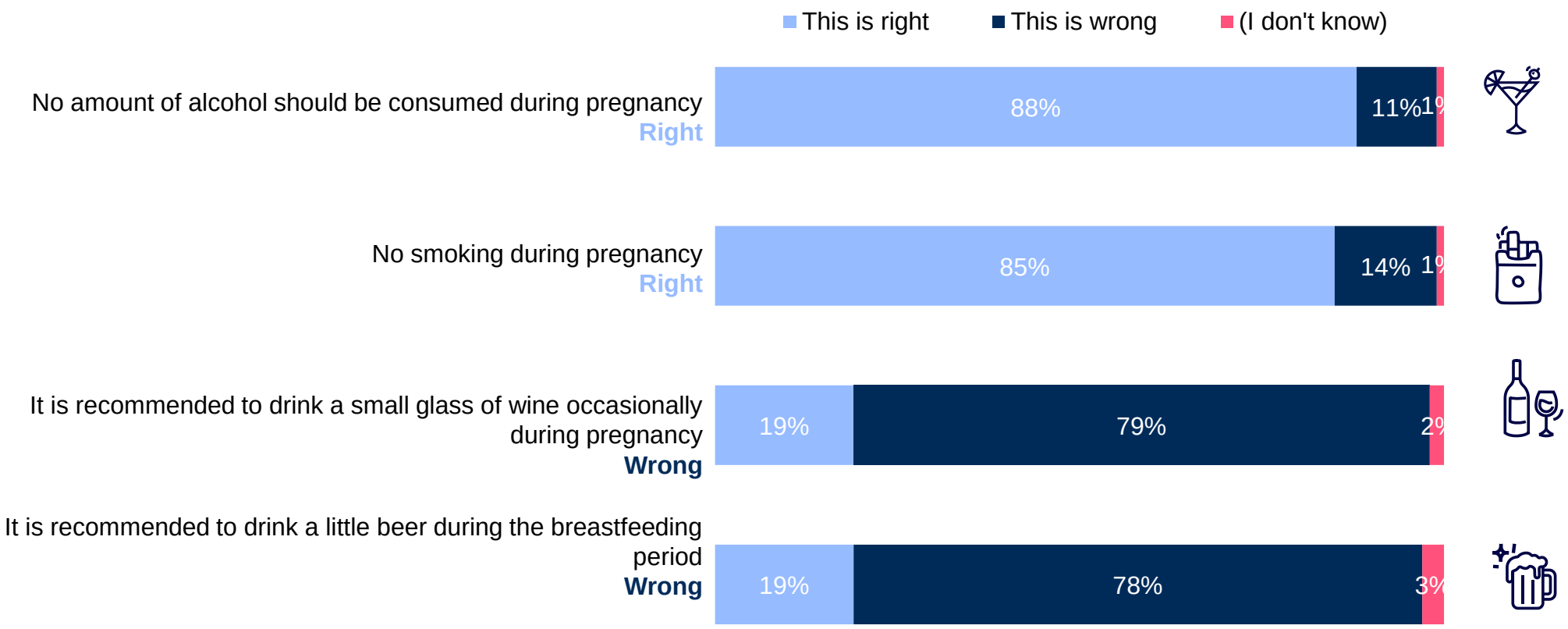
Method

- A cross-sectional phone survey conducted in mainland France in 2025 (16th June to 7th July).
- A quota sample on sex, age, SPC of the household's reference person, region, size of urban unit
- N=1,001 individuals aged 15 and over

SEX	
Man	48%
Woman	52%
AGE	
15-24 y/o	14%
25-34 y/o	14%
35-49 y/o	23%
50-64 y/o	24%
65 y/o and more	25%
SOCIO-PROFESSIONNAL CATEGORY of the respondent (SPC)	
SPC+	**30%**
Farmer, craftsman, retailer, business owner	6%
Executive, senior-level professionnal occupation	10%
Intermediate occupation	14%
SPC-	**32%**
Employee	18%
Manual worker	14%
Without professional activity	**38%**
Retired	27%
Students	7%
Other inactive persons	4%
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	
Less than high school graduate	34%
High school graduate and more	66%
ALCOHOL USE (12 previous months)	
Daily drinker	6%
No use in the 12 previous months	38%
Heavy episode drinking (6 drinks or more in one occasion) at least once a month (HED)	30%

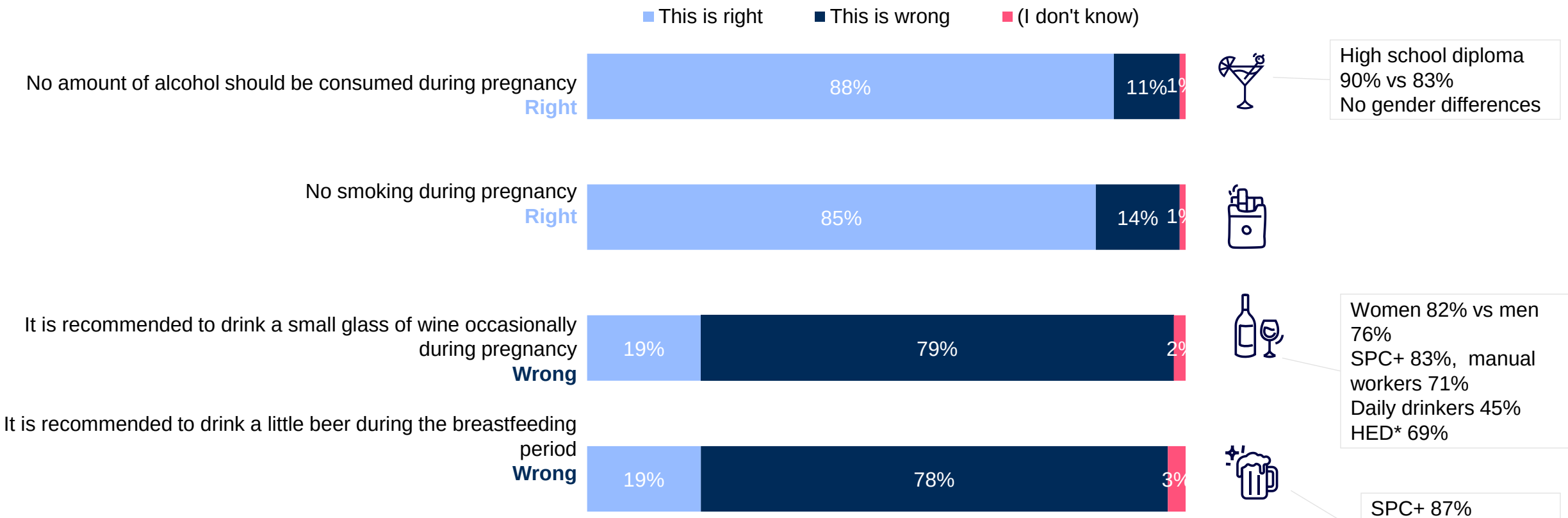
Results (1)

Guidelines knowledge and beliefs



Results (1)

Differences according to sociodemographic characteristics and alcohol use were observed in knowledge indicators



* HED: 6 drinks or more on one occasion, at least once a month

Results (2)

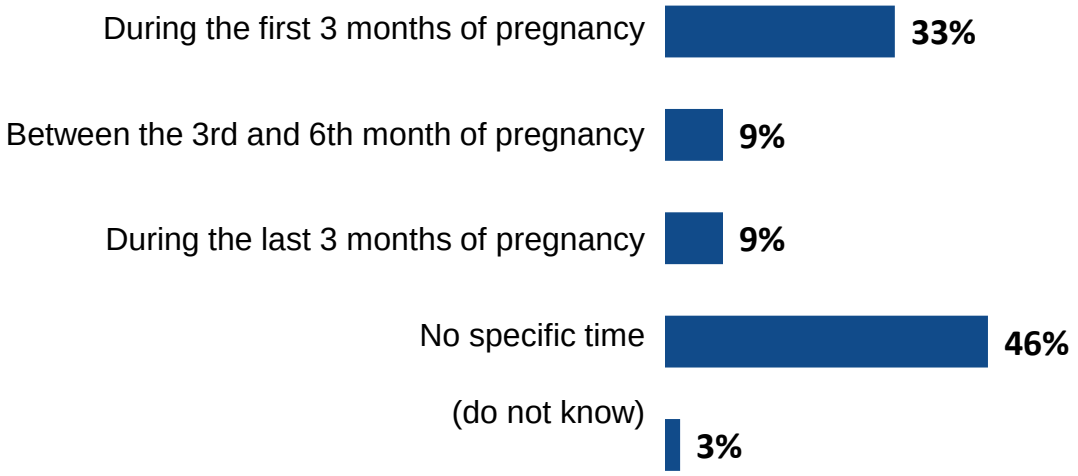
Risk perceptions and perceived norms during pregnancy

Women 56% vs men 46%
Daily drinker 36%
HED 42%

- 51% believed there is a risk from the first drink during pregnancy (spontaneously cited)
- 23% declared having a drink on special occasions is not risky

- 46% thought the risk is the same at any stage of pregnancy

Women 49% vs men 42%
High school diploma 49% vs 40%
HED 36%



SPC+ 77%
<high school diploma 67%
Daily drinkers 58%

- Beer and wine were perceived as less harmful than spirits by 26% of respondents vs 73% equally dangerous
- 76% of respondents found it shocking to see a pregnant woman drinking alcohol

Daily drinkers 50%
HED 62%

Results (3)

Santé publique France

Health warnings

- 71% had noticed the pictogram on bottles
- 86% supported making it more visible (less support among daily drinkers and HED)
- Only 5% thought it could have a bad influence on the image of wine producers (whereas 28% positive image, 64% no influence)
- 86% declared that alcohol producers and manufacturers demonstrate responsibility by displaying this symbol prominently on alcohol bottles

Information

The main sources of information on recommendations relating to pregnancy:

- relatives (61%)
- media (38%)
- healthcare professionals (32% ; 45% among women)

Social support

- 75% of respondents believe that the people around pregnant women (partner (30%), relatives (21%), wider social circle (55%)) should get involved to help them avoid drinking during pregnancy
- 45% believe that not drinking in front of a pregnant woman can help her avoid drinking (49% men vs 42% women)

Discussion

- Common misconceptions and a gap remain between awareness of the “zero alcohol during pregnancy” guideline and perceptions of risk levels for low alcohol consumption, with differences according to sociodemographic characteristics and alcohol use.

  ✓ Next prevention campaign message: “during pregnancy, there is no such thing as a *'small* glass' of alcohol”

- Comparison with previous survey waves showed positive trends over the decades
  - Zero alcohol guidelines knowledge: 82% in 2004 vs 88% in 2025
  - “A glass of wine occasionally is recommended during pregnancy”: 33% in 2004 vs 19% in 2025
  - “A risk from the first drink”: 25% in 2004 vs 51% in 2025
  - “No risk of having a drink on special occasions”: 48% in 2004 vs 23% in 2025
  - “It’s shocking to see a pregnant woman drinking alcohol”: 68% in 2015 vs 76% in 2025

- Social adhesion for improving the visibility of the health warning on alcohol bottles.

Discussion

- Relatives are the first source of information, providers of advice and norms, and of behaviors? → a target for prevention campaigns
- Relatives as a support to help women during pregnancy? → not a coercitive social environment but rather a supportive one

“ During pregnancy, let’s all show solidarity and support the ‘zero alcohol’ ”

- Last guidelines from Heath Authorities and the French Society of Alcohol and Addiction : to encourage women and men to avoid alcohol from the moment they start planning to have a child → exploratory studies show an interest for the message and a way for involving men

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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References:

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