Title: Alcohol and other drug use of Aboriginal people involved in the NSW criminal justice system

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Introduction:
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are imprisoned at 13 times the rate of other Australians. Alcohol and other drug (AoD) use and associated problematic behaviour is a contributing factor towards this overimprisonment. This Aboriginal led research reports on patterns of AoD use among Aboriginal men and women from the health screening data at entry to custody from the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network of NSW (JH&FMHN). We consider implications for treatment and support needs in prison and after release.

Methods: Comparative analysis of 2018 JH&FMHN clinical screening data of AoD use of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men and women. The short form of the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT-C) was used to assess alcohol consumption.

Key Findings: A higher proportion of Aboriginal men and women had an AUDIT-C score of 4+ than non-Aboriginal men and women. A higher proportion of Aboriginal people also used cannabis on a daily or almost daily basis before prison than non-Aboriginal.

Discussion and Conclusion: Rising prison populations without a matching rise in clinical staff within prisons, puts a strain on treatment services. Opioid replacement therapy has been a longstanding treatment priority within prisons. For Aboriginal people there is also a need for focus on alcohol and cannabis use disorder relapse prevention within prison treatment programs. There may be need for specific support for relapse prevention for Aboriginal men and women leaving prison to help them reduce their AoD use or abstain in the future.