

# Coping with Crisis: Housing Instability, Food Insecurity, and Cannabis Use in Pregnancy

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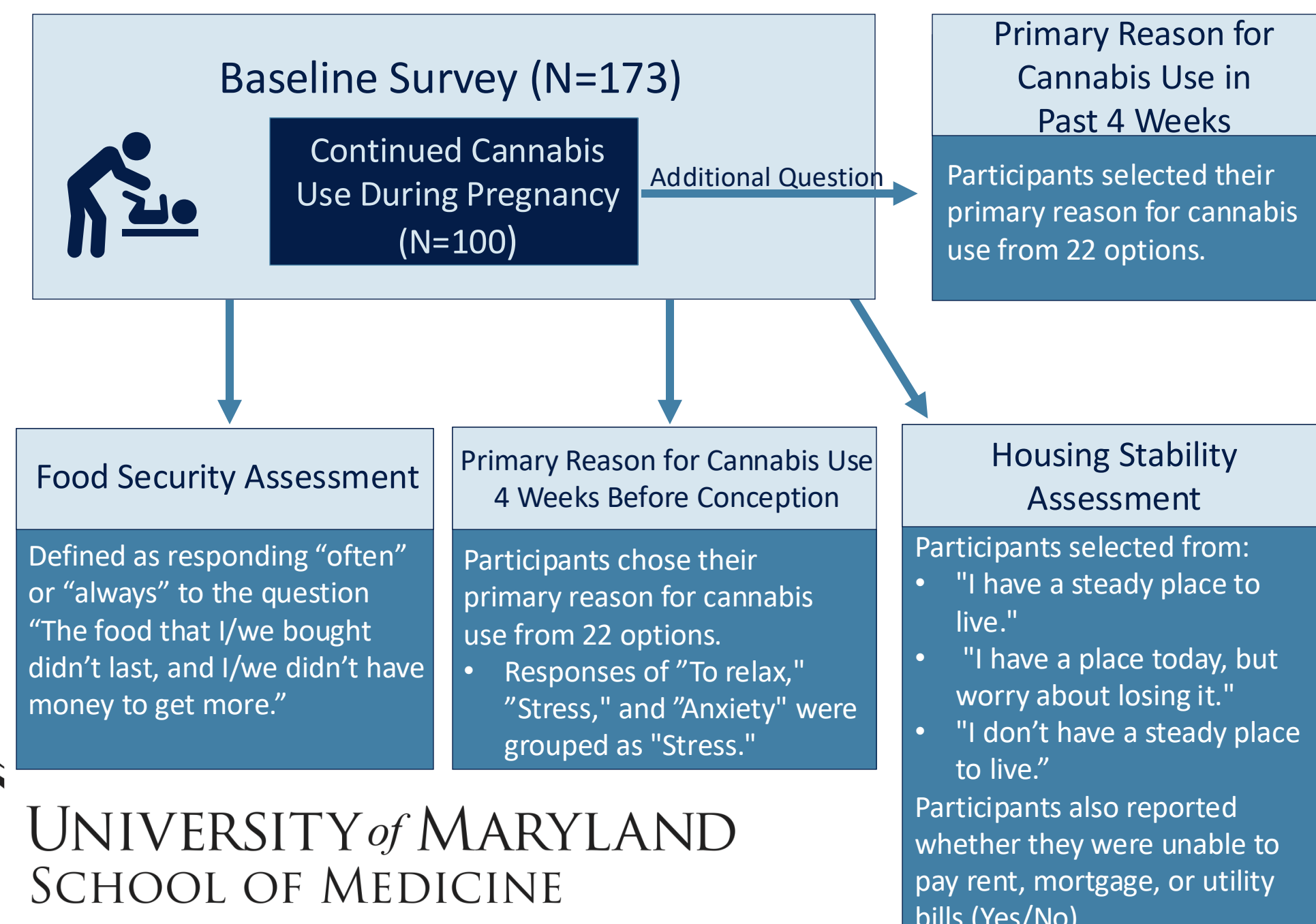
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## INTRODUCTION

- The stress-coping model proposed by Wills & Shiffman suggests substance use as a coping mechanism for life stress.
- Studies show that between 1/3 and 2/3 of people who use cannabis before conception continue at some level during pregnancy, with a majority using it for symptom management.
- Aim:** To assess associations between cannabis use during pregnancy and both housing instability and food insecurity.
- Hypothesis:** Pregnant people may be using cannabis to cope with the stress of housing instability and food insecurity.

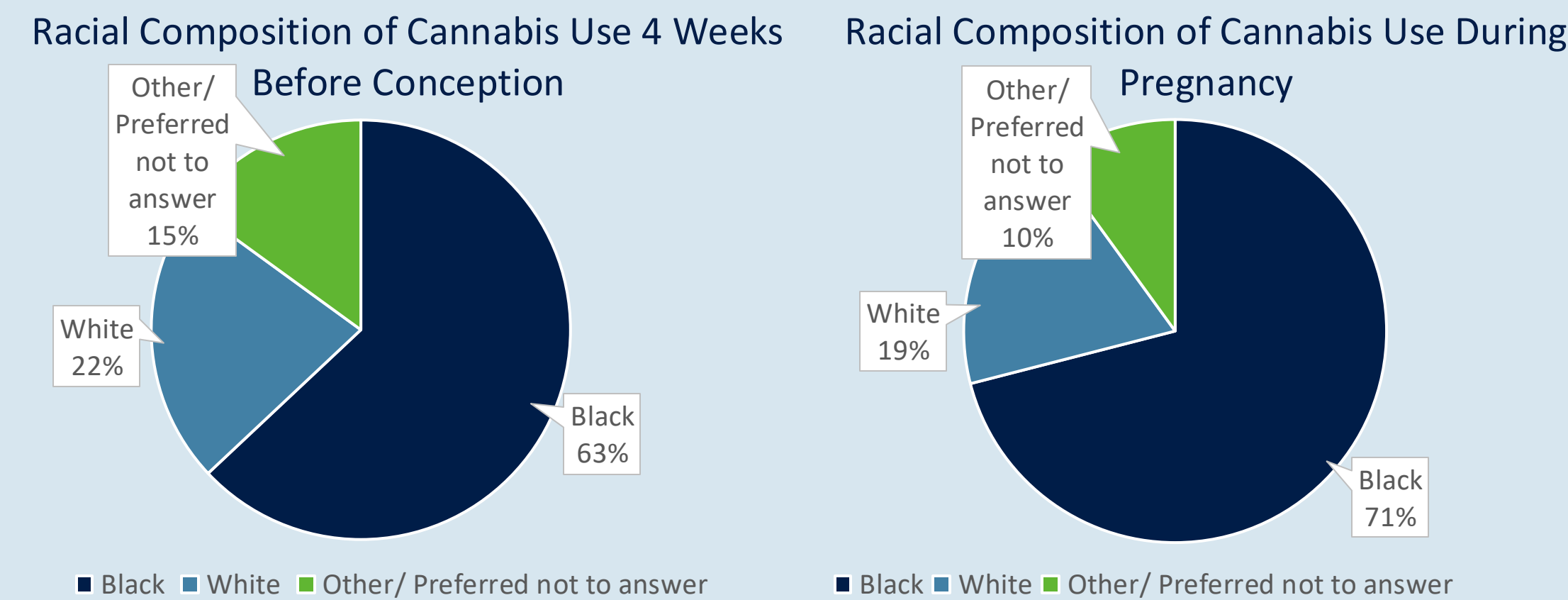
## METHODS

This study involves a subset of participants from the *Trajectories of Cannabis Use in Pregnancy* Study, a prospective longitudinal study examining cannabis use among pregnant individuals in Maryland, California, and Oklahoma. Participants who reported cannabis use within 30 days of conception were selected here.



## RESULTS

Of the 173 participants reporting their experiences in the four weeks before conception, 53% reported using cannabis primarily for stress. Of the 100 participants who reported continued cannabis use, 29% used cannabis primarily for stress, while 71% used it for other reasons.



Race was not significantly associated with the primary reason for cannabis use before conception or during pregnancy ( $p=0.16$ ,  $p=0.5$ ). There was a marginal association between preconception cannabis use for stress and identifying as Black ( $p=0.07$ ).

Food insecurity (4 weeks before conception)	Primarily Use Cannabis for Stress	Primarily Use Cannabis for Other Reasons	Food insecurity (during pregnancy)	Primarily Use Cannabis for Stress	Primarily Use Cannabis for Other Reasons
No (Never, Rarely, Sometimes)	79 (50%)	78 (50%)	No (Never, Rarely, Sometimes)	24 (27%)	66 (73%)
Yes (Often, Always)	11 (79%)	3 (21%)	Yes (Often, Always)	5 (50%)	5 (50%)

More participants who used cannabis for stress before conception reported food insecurity than those who used it for other reasons ( $p=0.05$ ). This association was not significant during pregnancy ( $p=0.287$ ).

Housing Instability (4 weeks before conception)	Primarily Use Cannabis for Stress	Primarily Use Cannabis for Other Reasons	Housing Instability (during pregnancy)	Primarily Use Cannabis for Stress	Primarily Use Cannabis for Other Reasons
"I have a steady place to live."	79 (52%)	72 (48%)	"I have a steady place to live."	26 (30%)	60 (70%)
"I have a place to live today, but worry about losing it."	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	"I have a place to live today, but worry about losing it."	2 (29%)	5 (71%)
"I do not have a steady place to live."	2 (22%)	7 (78%)	"I do not have a steady place to live."	1 (17%)	5 (83%)

## RESULTS (CONT.)

There were no significant differences in difficulty paying household bills or housing insecurity between those using cannabis for stress vs. other reasons before conception (33% vs. 26%,  $p=0.57$ ; 10% vs. 11%,  $p=1.0$ ) or during pregnancy (38% vs. 39%,  $p=0.89$ ; 10% vs. 14%,  $p=0.75$ ).

\*\* Of 173 participants, 171 responses remained for food insecurity and difficulty paying bills after excluding two non-responders. For housing instability, 169 responses remained after excluding four. All 100 participants who continued cannabis use answered all three questions.

## CONCLUSION

- A trend toward an association between using cannabis to cope with stress before conception and self-identifying as Black was noted.
  - This highlights the need to understand cannabis use in marginalized groups.
- We observed an association between food insecurity and cannabis use for stress before conception but not among those who continued to use cannabis during pregnancy.
  - This finding could imply that the drivers of cannabis use shift during pregnancy.
- Future research with larger samples should examine these patterns throughout pregnancy and compare cannabis use to other coping strategies for food insecurity and housing instability.

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