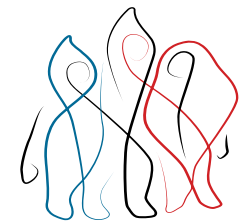




# Preventing Infant mortality & Sudden Infant Death Syndrome In Nunavik

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RÉGIE RÉGIONALE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SERVICES SOCIAUX DU NUNAVIK    NUNAVIK REGIONAL BOARD OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Public Health Department

## Recent article published in Le Devoir

***“The police found 12 lifeless infants in Nunavik last year. Shocked by this number of deaths (...) the chief of the police of the region alerted the office of the coroner of Quebec.***

***Responsible for all these files, coroner Geneviève Thériault believes that there is cause for concern”.***

# Answering your questions



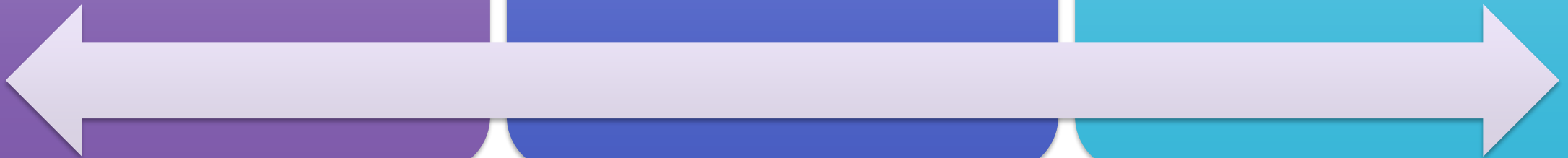
What is the **regional situation** with regards to Infant mortality and Sudden Infant Death Syndrom?

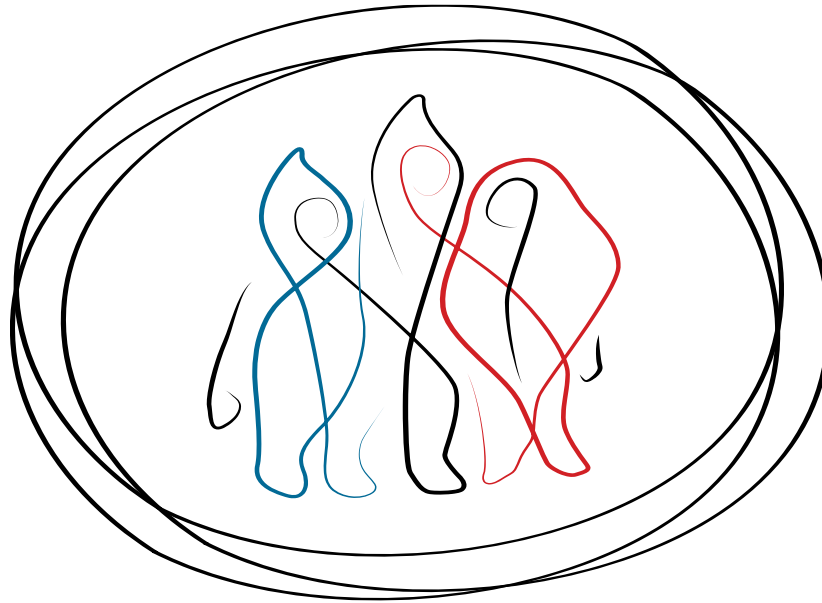


# What are the best clinical practices for prevention of SIDS and how they are applied in the region?



# How can I help support families with young children in Nunavik?





1

**What is  
SIDS?**

**What are the  
stats telling  
us?**

2

**How can  
SIDS be  
prevented?**

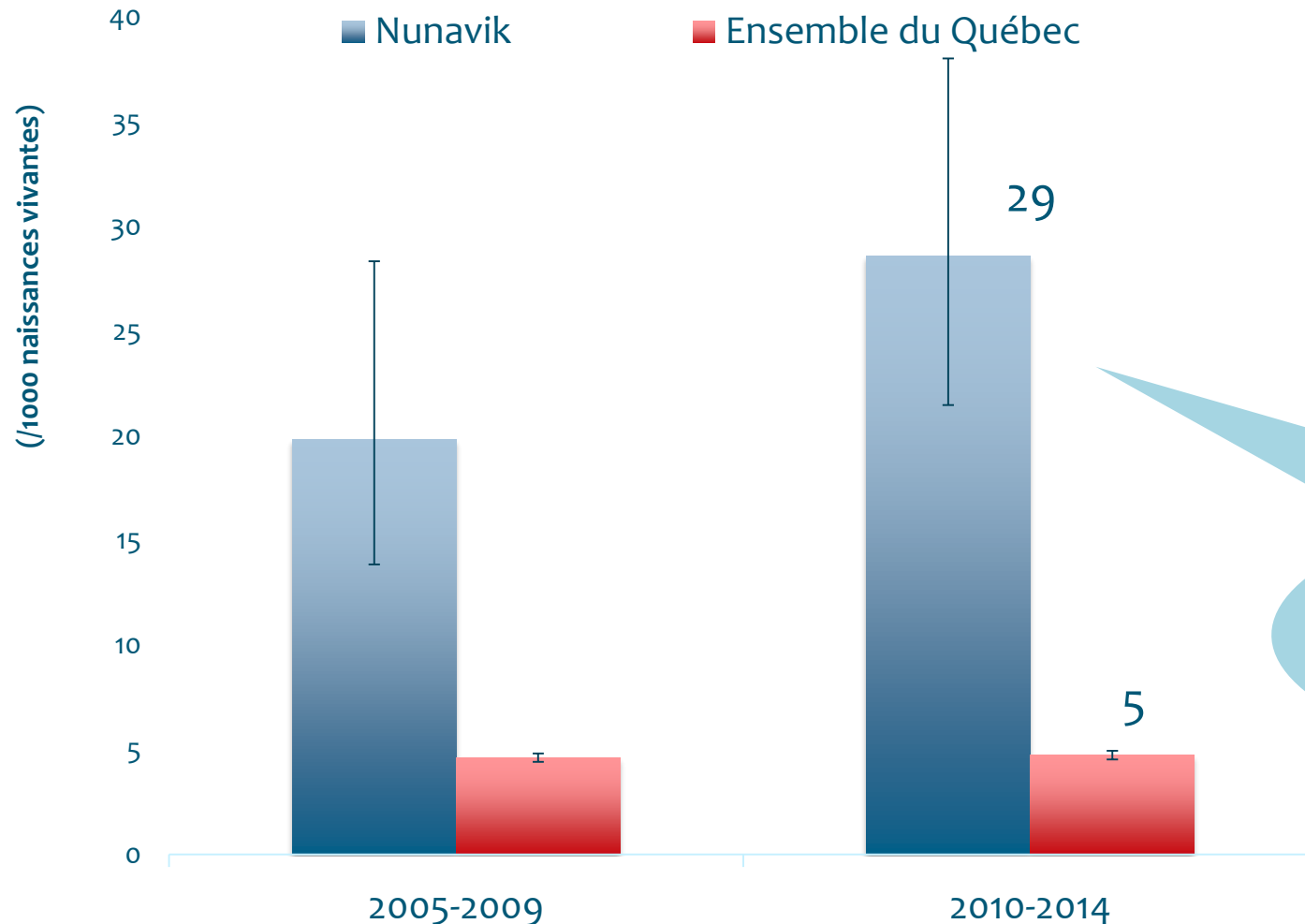
**What is done  
in Nunavik?**

3

**What else  
should be  
done to  
support  
families?**

# What are Infant Mortality Rates?

## Infant mortality rate, 2005 to 2014



## Definition

- # Deaths children (0–11mo)  
# Live births (period)
- Corrected for age and high fertility rate

[chi\\_2015\\_27\\_mortality\\_infant.pdf\(who.int\)](#)

2015-2019  
mean=8 deaths/yr (5 to 12)  
IMR (2019) = 29\*\*

**\*\* CV> 33%**

# What are the main IM causes in Nunavik?

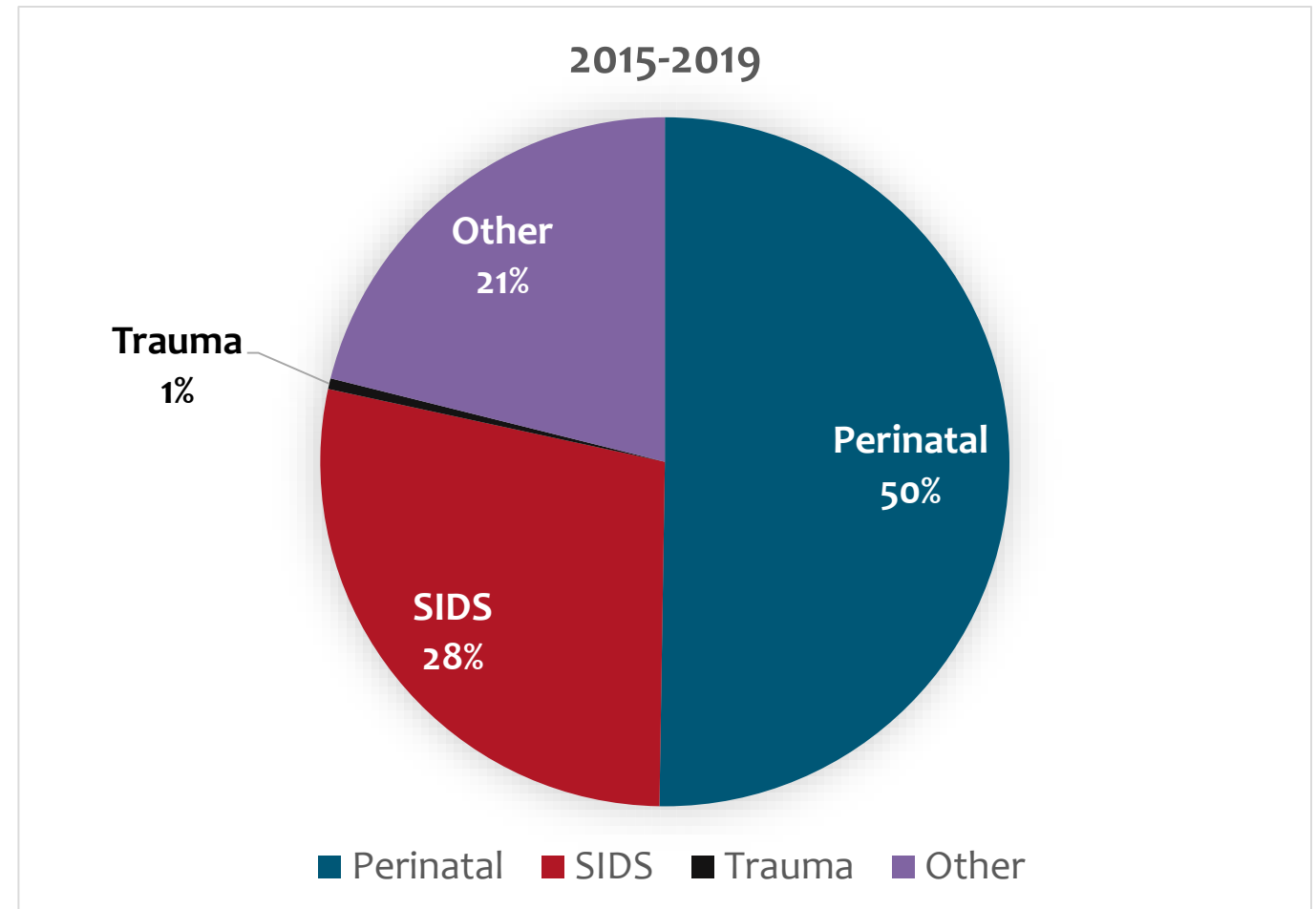
## 1. Perinatal causes (50%)

Birth defects

Pregnancy/delivery complications

## 2. SIDS (30%)

- Remaining 20% mix of infectious, respiratory, nervous system conditions, trauma, etc.
- Injury not a common cause



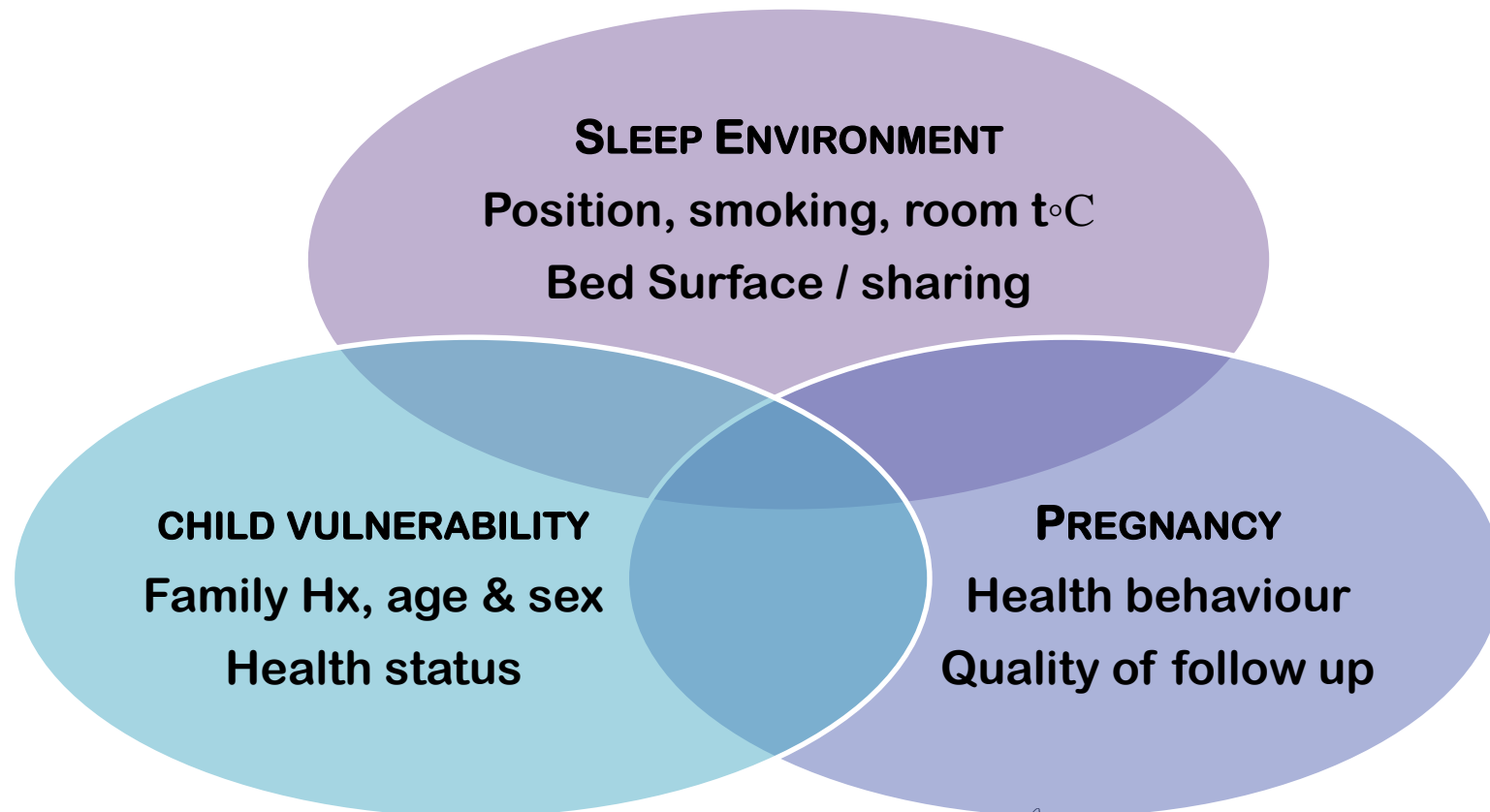


# Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

# Definition?

- “**Unexpected death** of an **infant <1 year** of age, occurring during sleep, remains **unexplained** after a thorough investigation”
- Complete investigation necessary to R/O suffocation or injury

## Cause? Overlap of multiple factors





# Rectifying some misconceptions

« There is a confirmed wave of infant mortality! »

- For 2021, 12 cases « under investigation »
- For now, 6 confirmed SIDS – waiting for others
- According to data available, still cannot say the situation represents a significant increase

« This is a new phenomenon! »

- IMR rate gap between Nunavik and Quebec has been followed for many years
- Supporting families with young children has been a priority of NRBHSS programming for many years

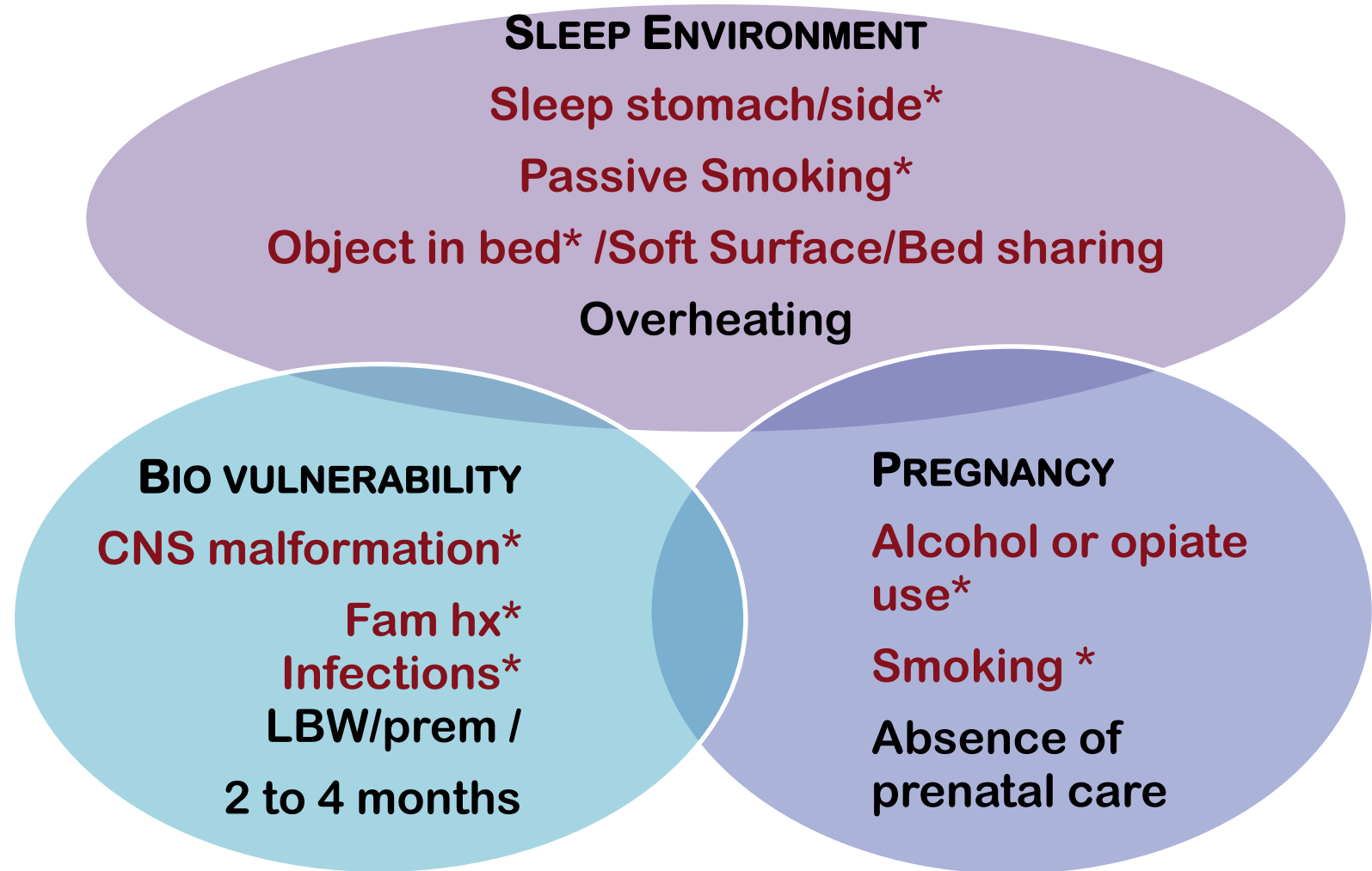
« Nothing is being done! »

- Many of the EB interventions to prevent IM and SIDS are already in place in the region



# Factors « associated » with SIDS

- **We don't know the "cause of SIDS"**
- Some factors appear to be more frequent in SIDS, but we cannot say they "cause" SIDS



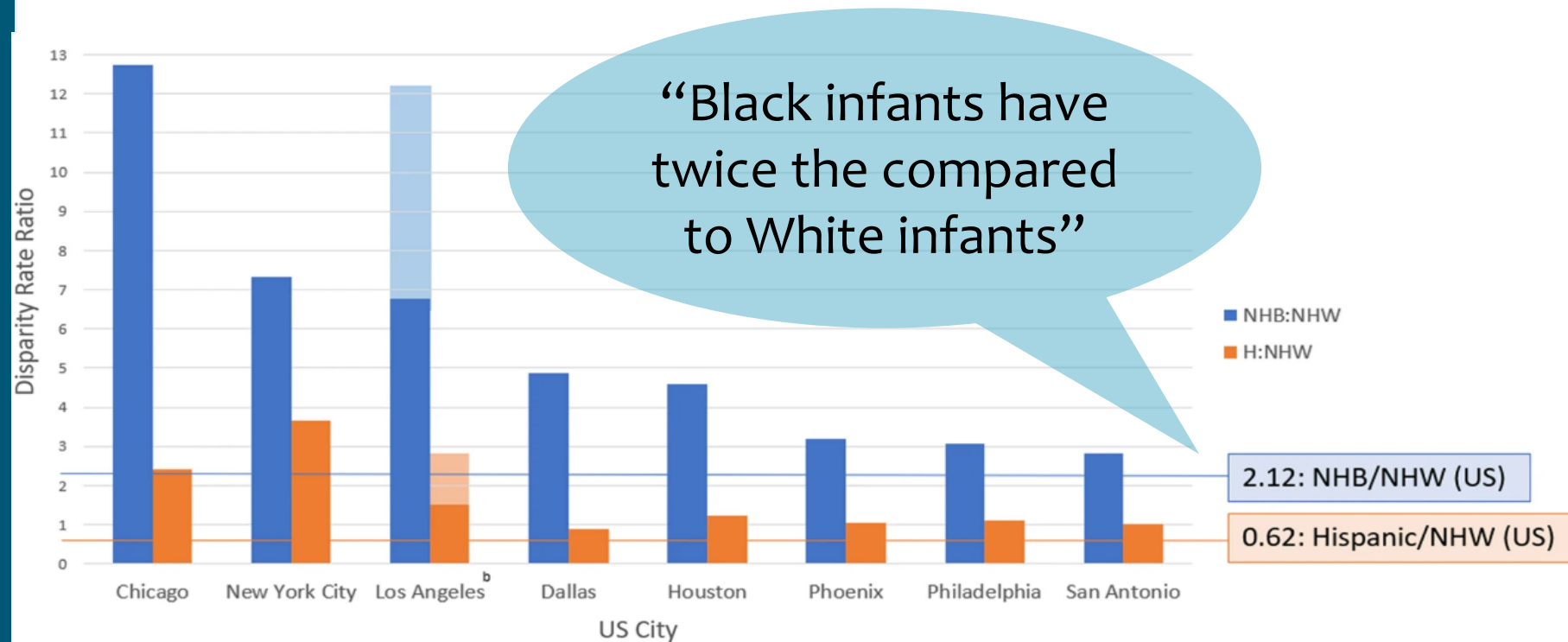
## Well Documented Factors

\* Factors ( $RR \geq 3$ )

The factors contributing to the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (nih.gov)  
Risk and protective factors for sudden infant death syndrome - PubMed (nih.gov)



# SIDS in racialized populations



“Concentrated in areas experiencing racial and economic marginalization, (...) including low access to health care, safe housing, and economic security”

Boyer et al., (2022)

Racial and ethnic disparities of sudden unexpected infant death in large US cities: a descriptive epidemiological study | Injury Epidemiology | (biomedcentral.com)

# SIDS in Indigenous populations

## Higher rates in indigenous peoples around the world

- Australia, New Zealand, North America

## In Australia, factors were:

- LBW / preterm births,
- Maternal health behaviors (smoking, alcohol)
- Low socioeconomic status
- Reduced access to health services

## Western initiatives preventing SIDS

- Conflict with cultural practices (co-sleeping)
- Too costly for families (buying “approved” cots)

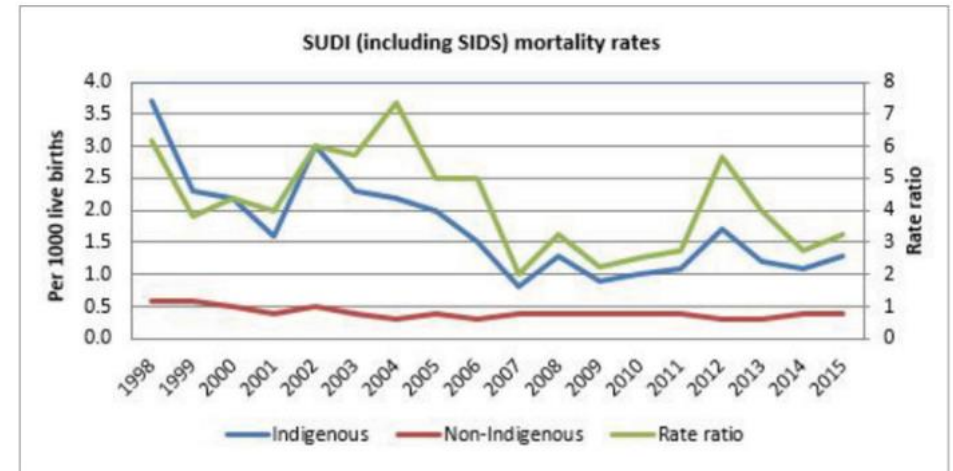
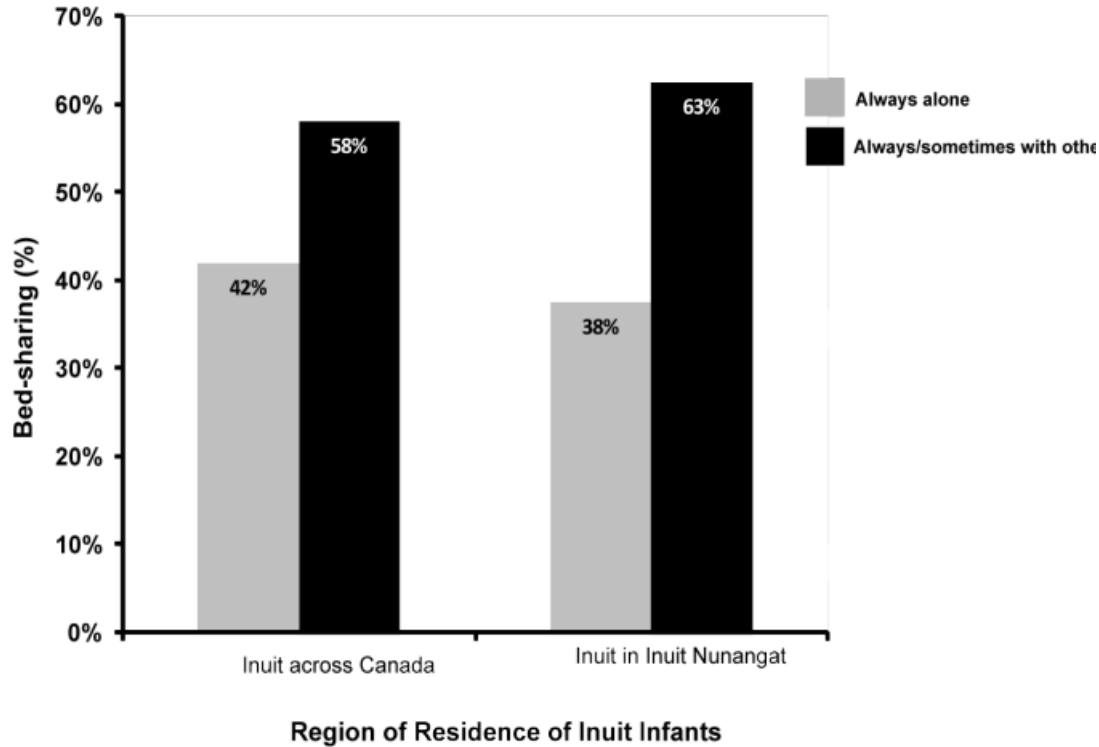
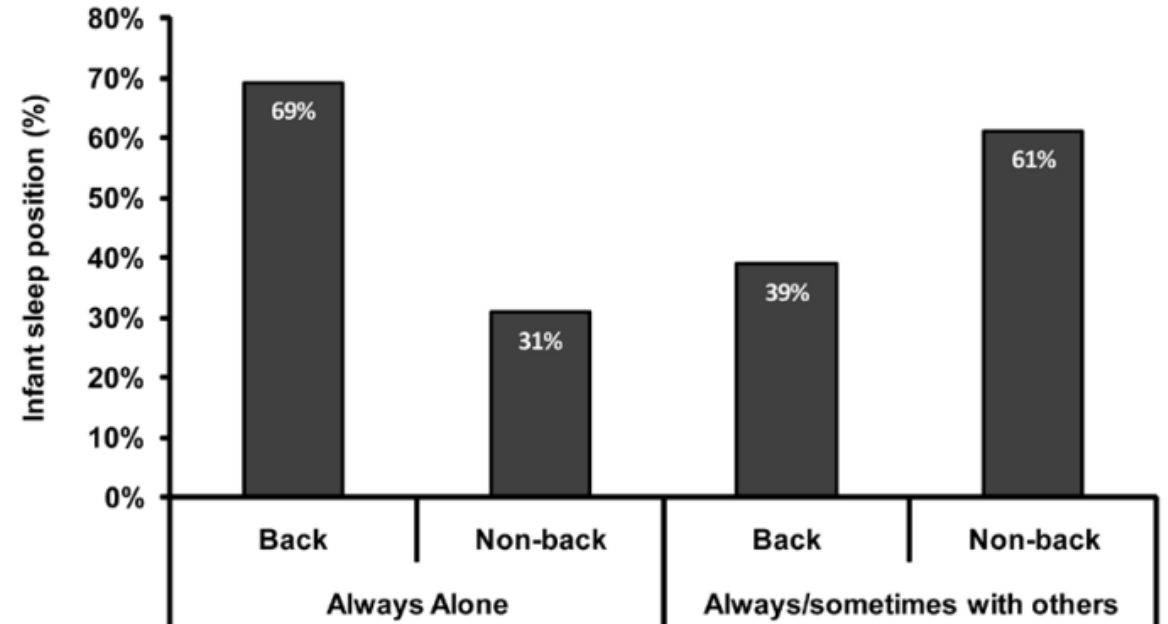


Figure 16.5: SUDI mortality rates in Indigenous populations 1998-2015. (Source: (44). Licensed from the Commonwealth of Australia under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia Licence.)

# SIDS in Inuit populations



**Figure 4: Bed-Sharing.**

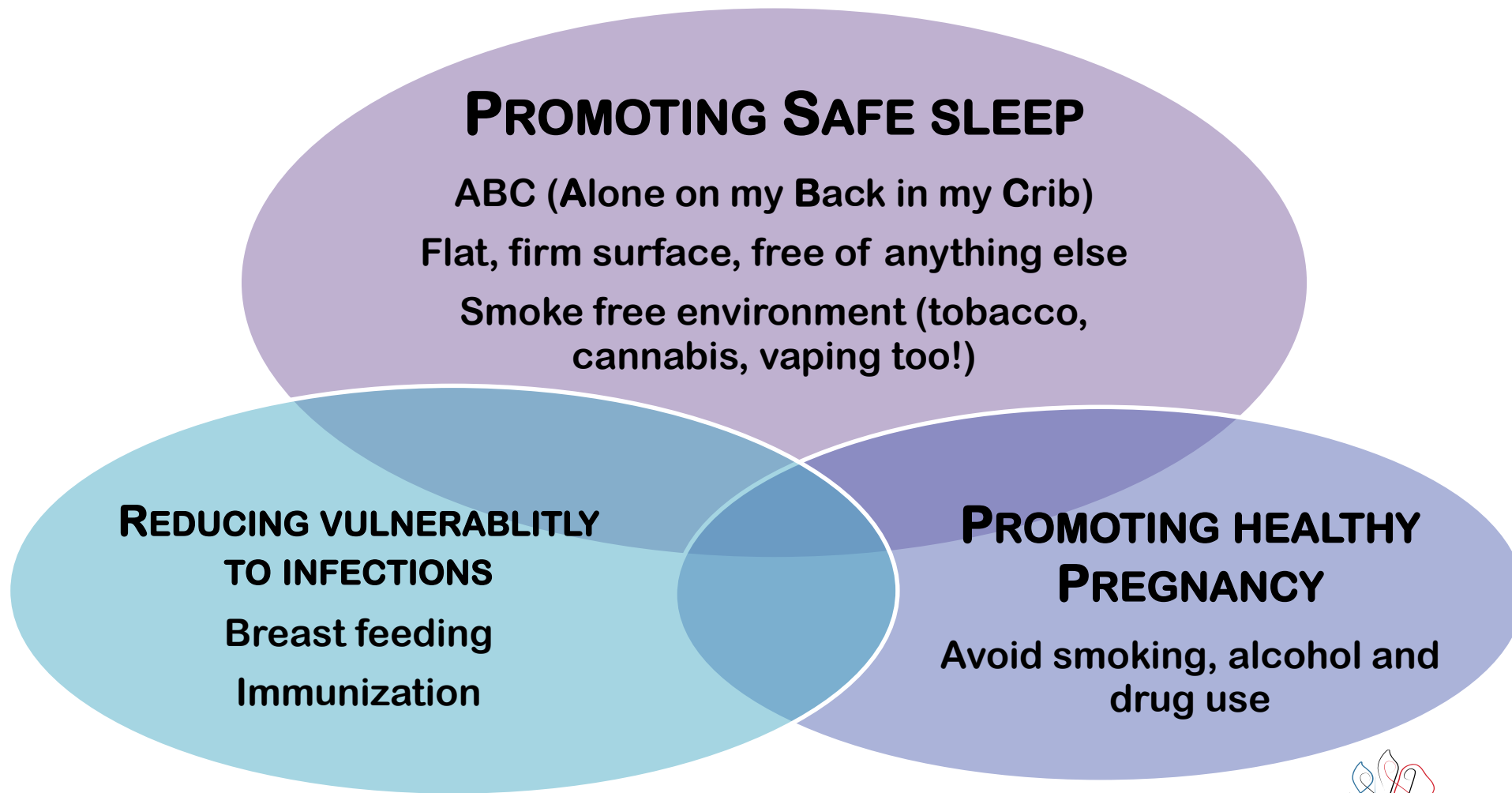


**Figure 5: Sleep position of Inuit Infants based on bed-sharing.**

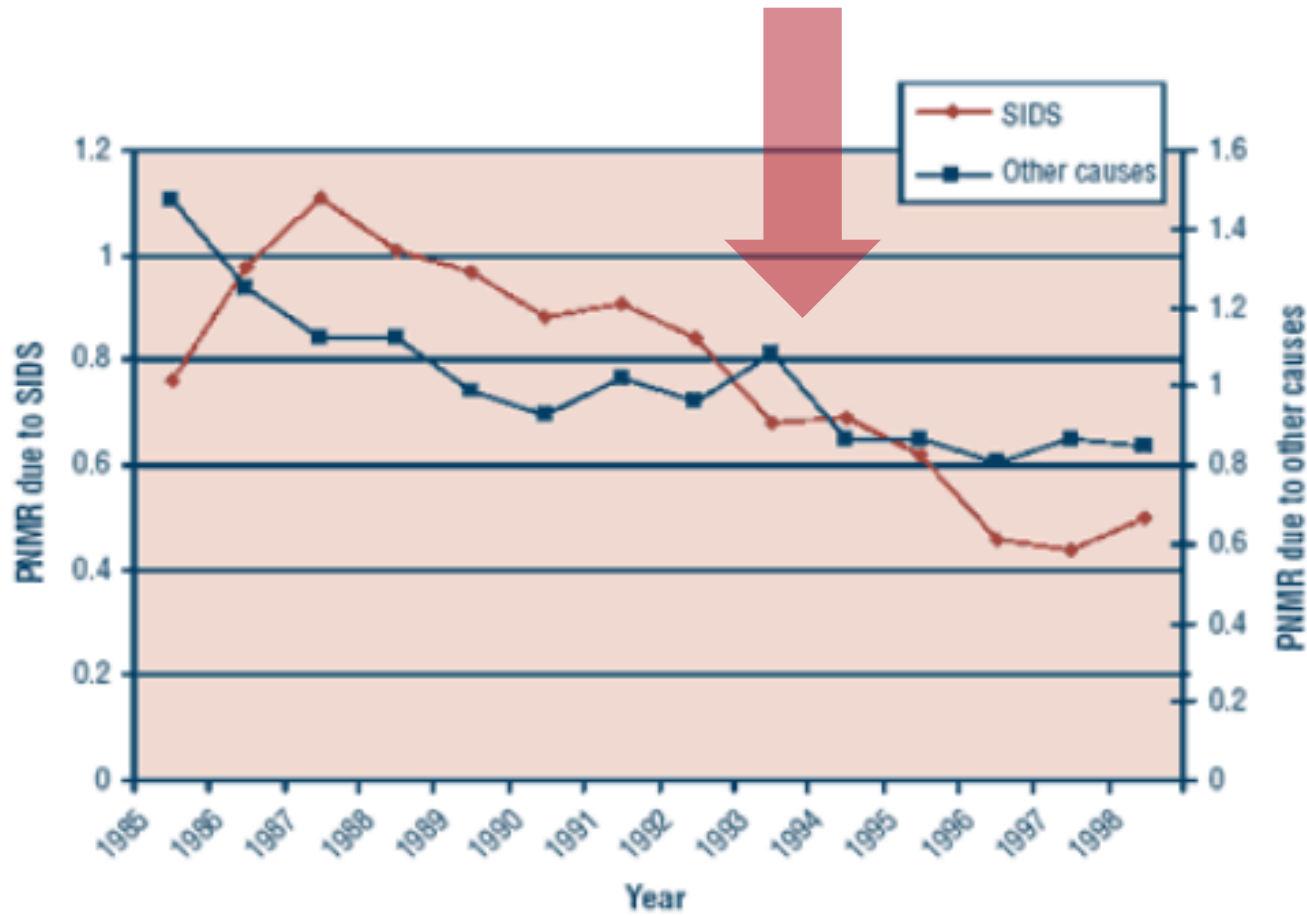
**figure 3: Sleep position of Inuit infants.**

# Preventing SIDS

## Reinforcing protective factors



# Impact of these recommendations on SIDS mortality rates in Canada

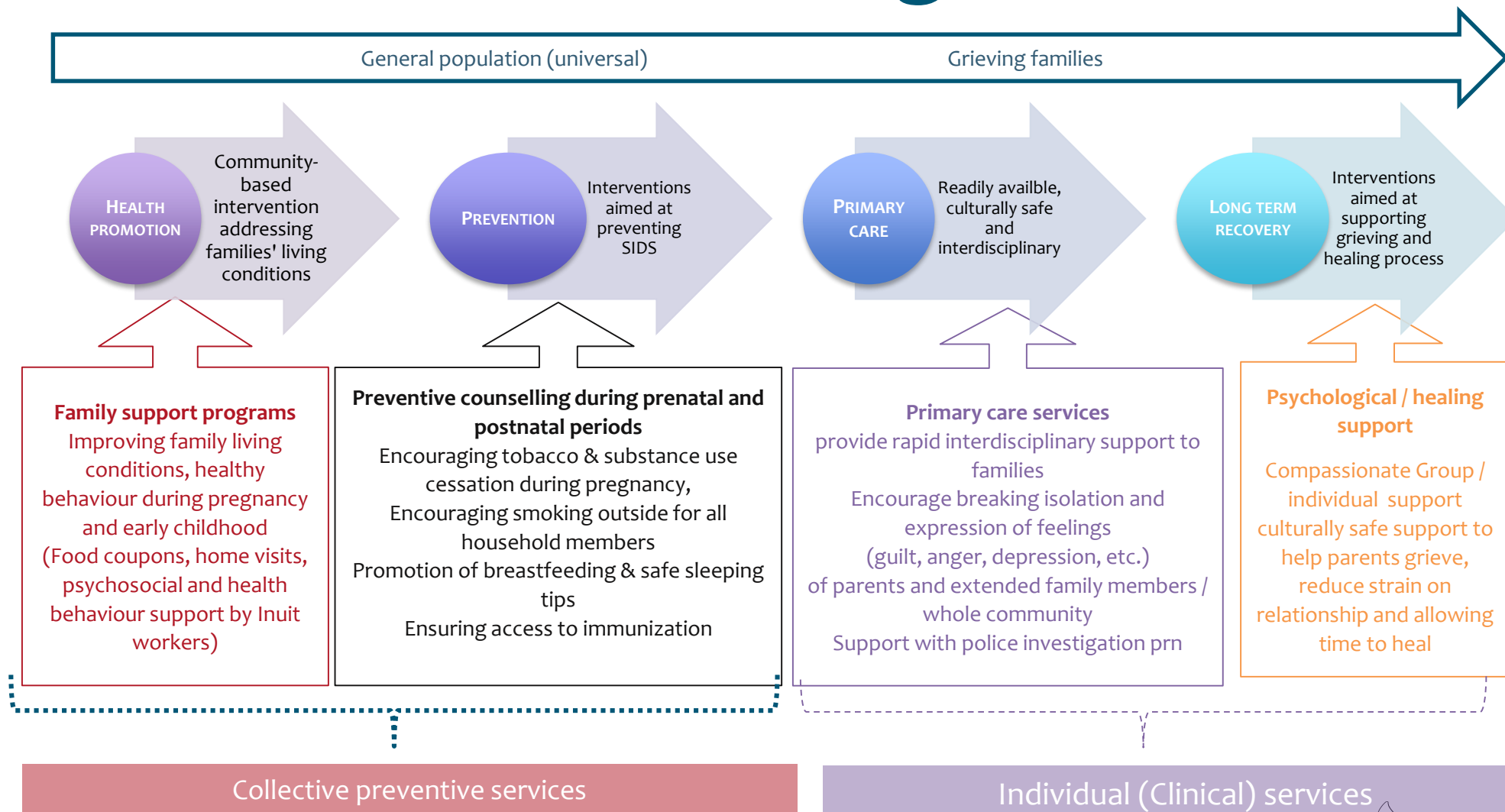


- **1993, publication of recommendations**
- Decrease began years before
- Decline “steepened” after 1993
- **Similar trends in other countries**
- Decline mostly due to decrease in infant sleeping position





# What is being done?



# Culturally safe counselling

- Collaboration

- A partnership is established where it is recognized that the client is also an expert on themselves, their histories and their prior efforts at change.

- Evocation

- The goal is to draw out from the clients their reasons and potential methods for change and to offer ideas, as appropriate, for clients' consideration.

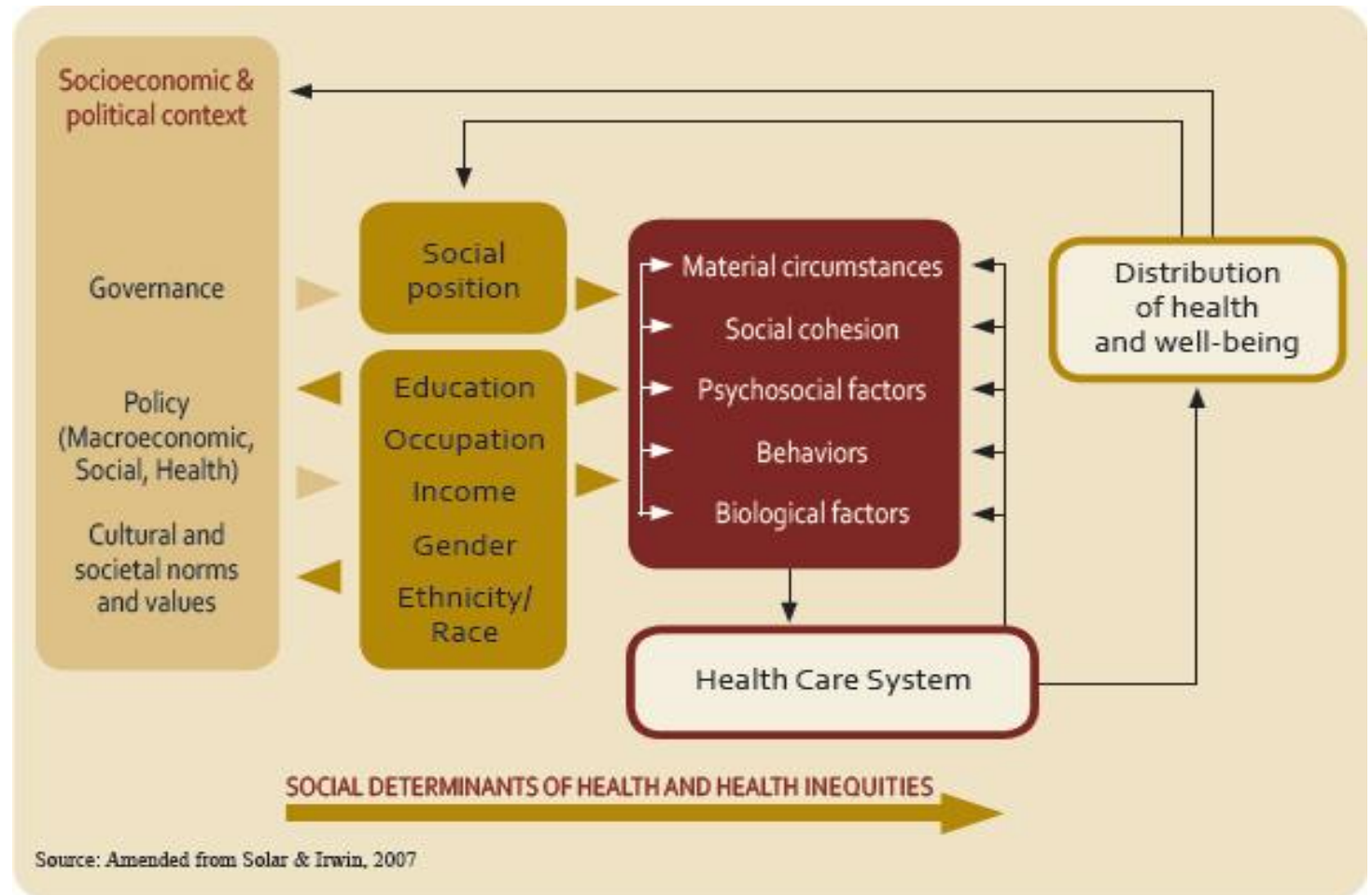
- Autonomy

- Never forget that the final decision making is left to the client. They must eventually argue for their own change.

Fostering trust is key  
&  
It goes both ways

# Respect & empathy means having reasonable expectations

- If they have limited income, can they really afford a crib?
- If their house is overcrowded, is there room for a crib?
- If they live with many other people, can they really impose a « no smoking indoors » to everyone?
- Prioritizing with them
- Celebrating (even small) successes



# Inuit Traditional practices

“after the baby was born, the child assumed its place on the family sleeping platform next to the mother. We were told to put the baby on top of us.

You never breastfed the baby while the baby was lying on the bed. This was the advice of the grandmothers and mothers”

# Safe bed-sharing guidelines

- Place Baby on their back on Firm, flat surface
- No loose bedding / toys
- Do not overdress / overheat
- Do not use alcohol or drugs

# SIDS and grief

- SIDS is not the parent's or family's fault. Parents should not blame themselves
- The cause of SIDS is unknown. SIDS risk factors 'associated' with, but are NOT the actual cause of SIDS.
- It is normal for parents to feel sad, confused, or angry. They must be reassured that they are not alone.

## Important points to remember :

- SIDS is not caused by suffocation, vomiting or choking, bottle-feeding, immunizations, nor child abuse or neglect
- SIDS is not contagious
- SIDS does not cause pain or suffering to the infant

# Some (of many) available resources

- [Atii! Reduce Second-Hand Smoke - Pauktuutit](#)
  - ◆ [Poster](#), [Brochure](#), [Facilitator's Guide](#), [Client's Handbook](#)

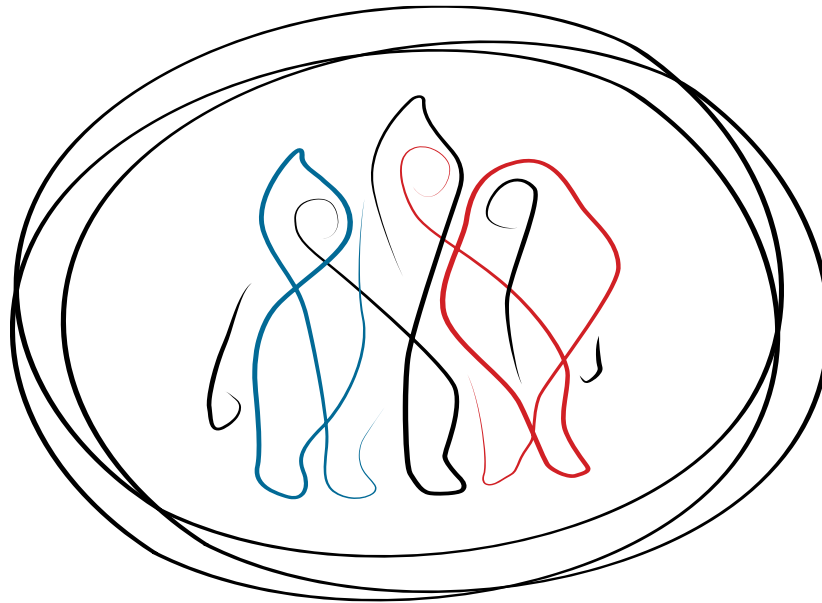


- [Safe sleep tips pdf \(canada.ca\)](#)



- [Reducing risk in the circle of life \(First Nation\) video](#)





**Thank you!**