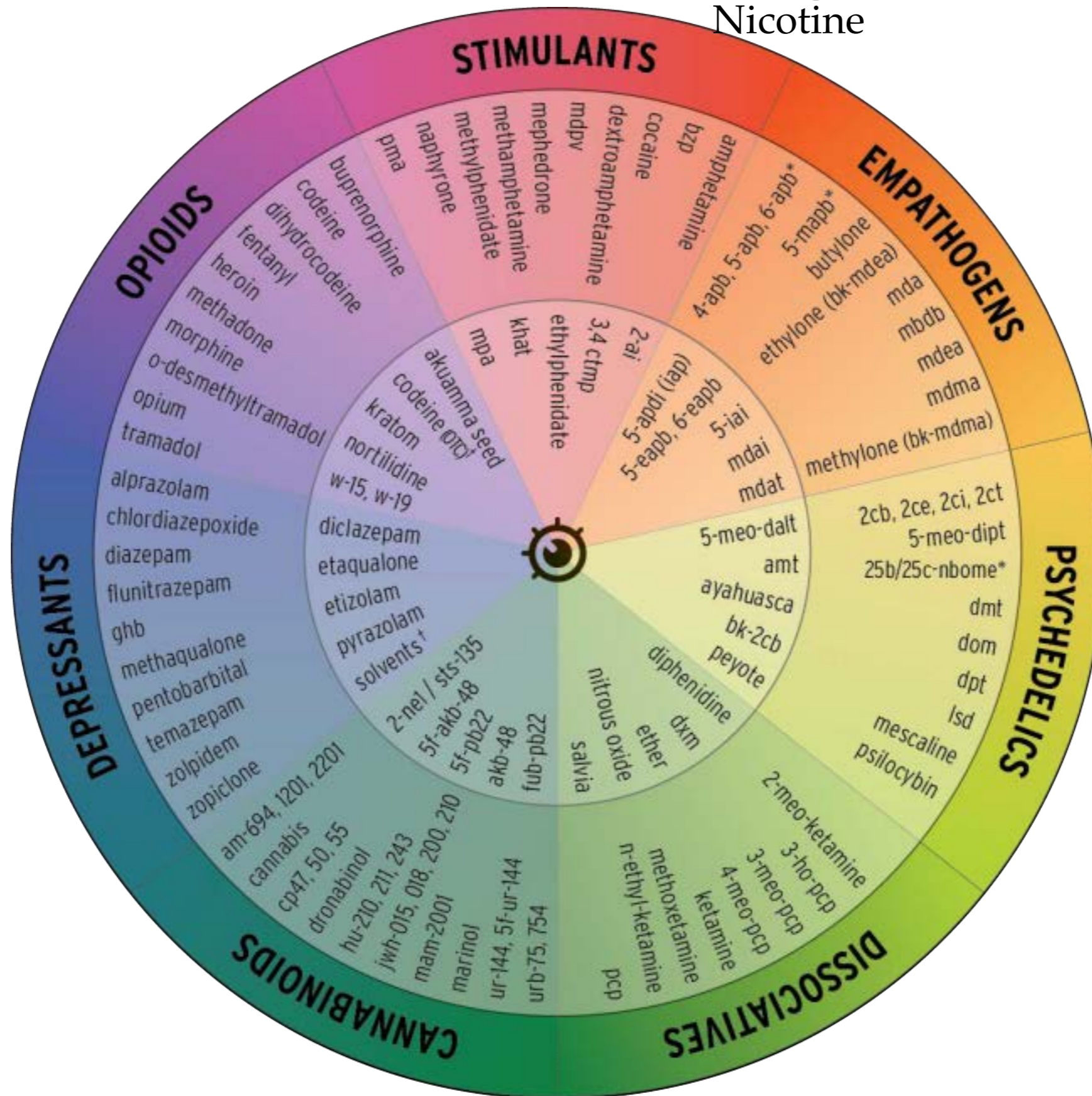


Can drug prohibition be successful?

Kristiana Bebre
University of Latvia

What is a drug?

Nicotine



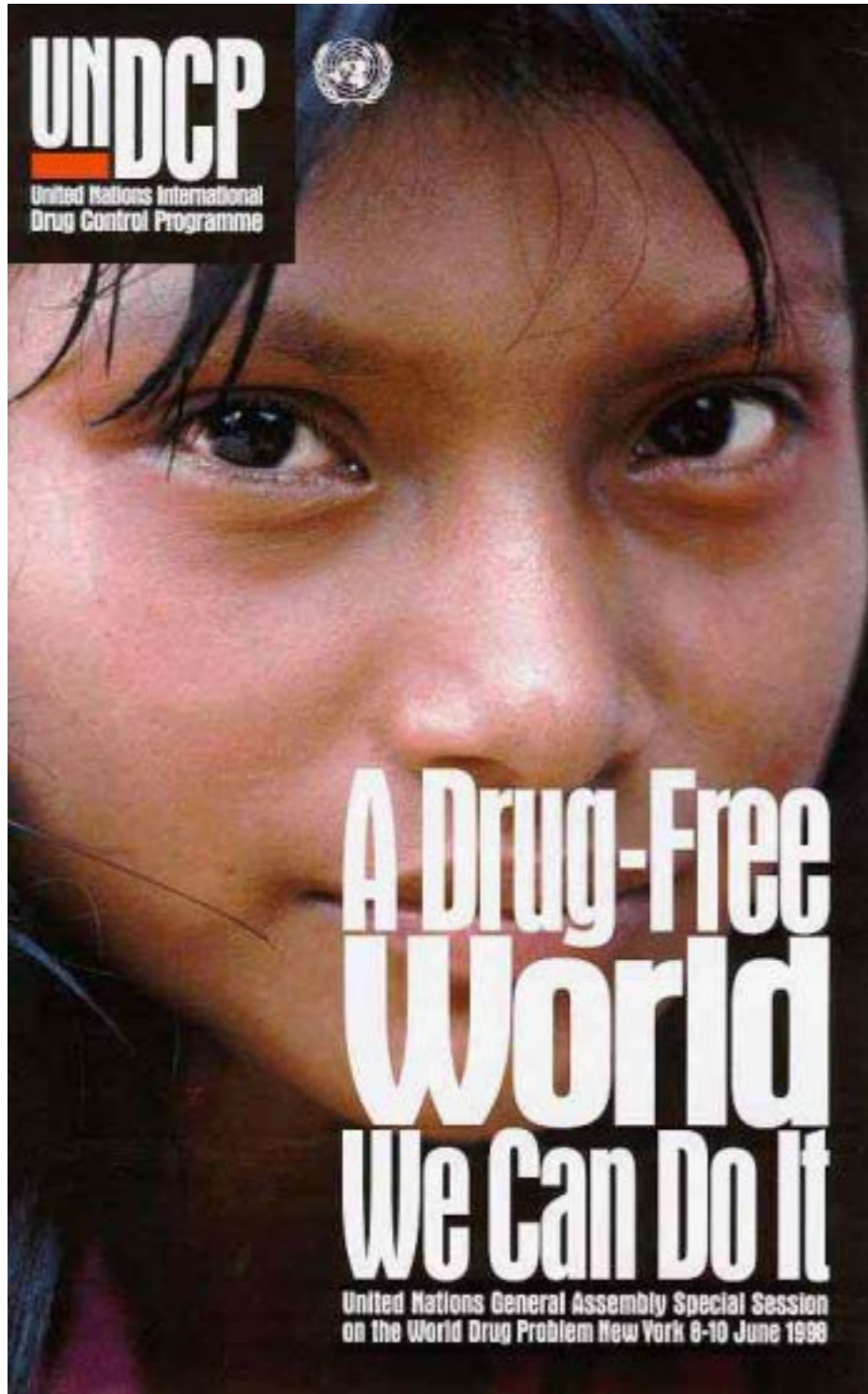
Alcohol

What would be successful to drug prohibition?



1. Drug free world?
2. World free of drug users?
3. World free of drug sellers?
4. World free of drug harms?

Prohibition effects



United Nations set out a 10 year plan in 1998 to reach a “drug-free world” by 2008 (Wood et al, 2009)

Result?

- ▶ Massive illicit market has emerged (approx. \$320 billion) (UNODC, 2005)
- ▶ Increased drug expenditures have not prevented the growth of this market
 - ▶ Falling drug prices
 - ▶ Increasing purity & supply (ibid.)
- ▶ Increased drug-law enforcement expenditure
 - ▶ US incarceration of drug offenders has resulted in worlds highest incarceration rate (Fellner & Vinci, 2008)
 - ▶ Consistent association between drug prohibition & increased drug-market violence

Countries with most stringent prohibitive drug policies do not have lower levels of drug use than countries with policies that focused on more evidence-based approaches

(EMCDDA, 2008)

UK Psychoactive Substances Act 2016

- ▶ 332 retailers having ceased the sale of NPS
 - ▶ Anecdotal feedback from police confirms that open sale has ceased
 - ▶ Large scale shift away from retailers to street dealers & internet for recreational users
- ▶ A considerable reduction in NPS use primarily among 16-24
 - ▶ Increase in Class A Drug use among 16-59 year olds
 - ▶ Qualitative evidence shows some displacement from NPS to 'traditional' drugs for vulnerable users
- ▶ Potency of NPS has increased, especially synthetic cannabinoids



US Alcohol prohibition 1920-1933

Temperance was largest enduring middle-class movement of 19th century.



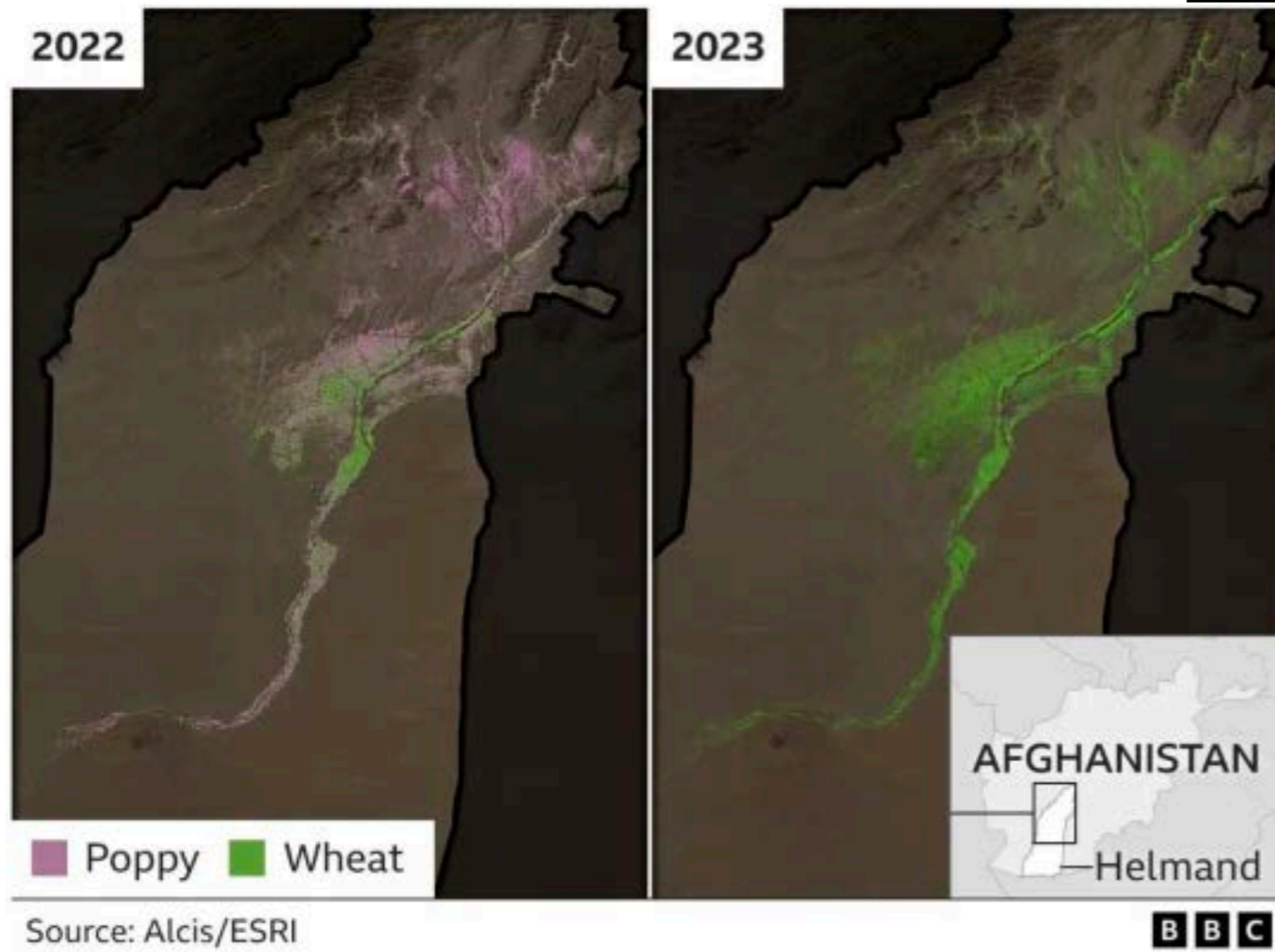
Alcoholic drink in any form was dangerous and destructive... Moderate consumption... naturally led to compulsive use - to addiction

- ▶ *Prohibition was massively & openly violated*
- ▶ *Adulterated & even poisonous alcohol was sold*
- ▶ *Many... were locked up for violating prohibition laws*

Prohibition - Taliban way?

Taliban's ban on opium has come into force estimating 80%+ reduction in Afghan opium production - which supplies about 95% of EU heroin market

Results?



- A. Opium ban is not sustained
- B. Opium ban is sustained & production is displaced to other regions
- C. Opium ban is sustained & displaced production doesn't meet demand & synthetic opioids fill the market void

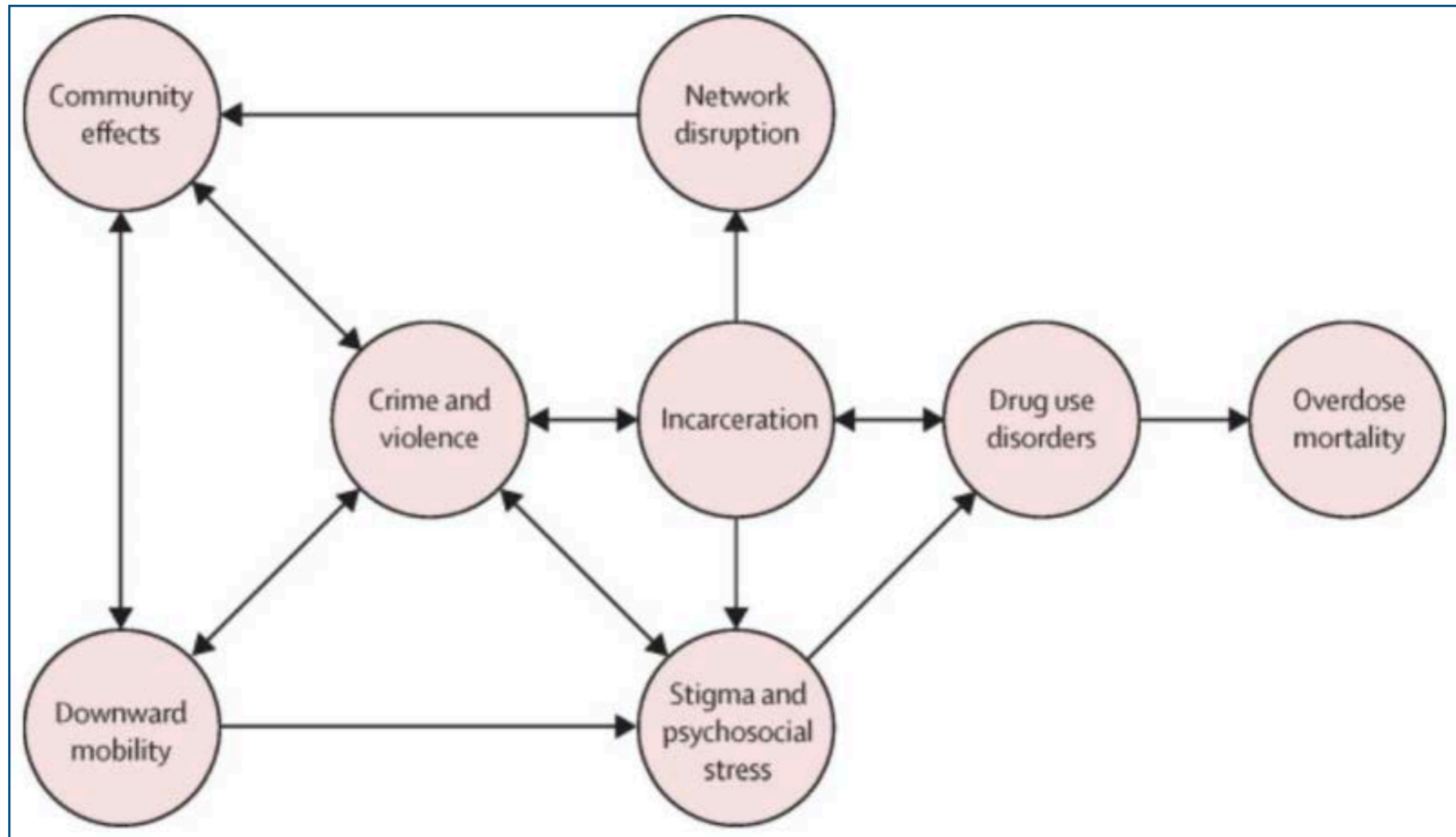


(Mansfield, 2023)

Prohibition effects

The most conspicuous harms of drugs currently are those caused by prohibition

(MacCoun & Reuter, 2001)



If not prohibition, then what?

Harm reduction refers to policies, programmes and practices that aim to minimise the negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use, drug policies and drug laws.

It focuses on **positive change** and working with people without judgement, coercion, discrimination, or requiring that people stop using drugs as a precondition of support.

INFORMATION ON SAFER DRUG USE

NEEDLE & SYRINGE PROGRAMMES

OPIOID AGONIST THERAPY

such as methadone and buprenorphine

DRUG CHECKING

HOUSING

OVERDOSE PREVENTION & REVERSAL

DRUG CONSUMPTION ROOMS

(also called overdose prevention centres or supervised consumption sites)

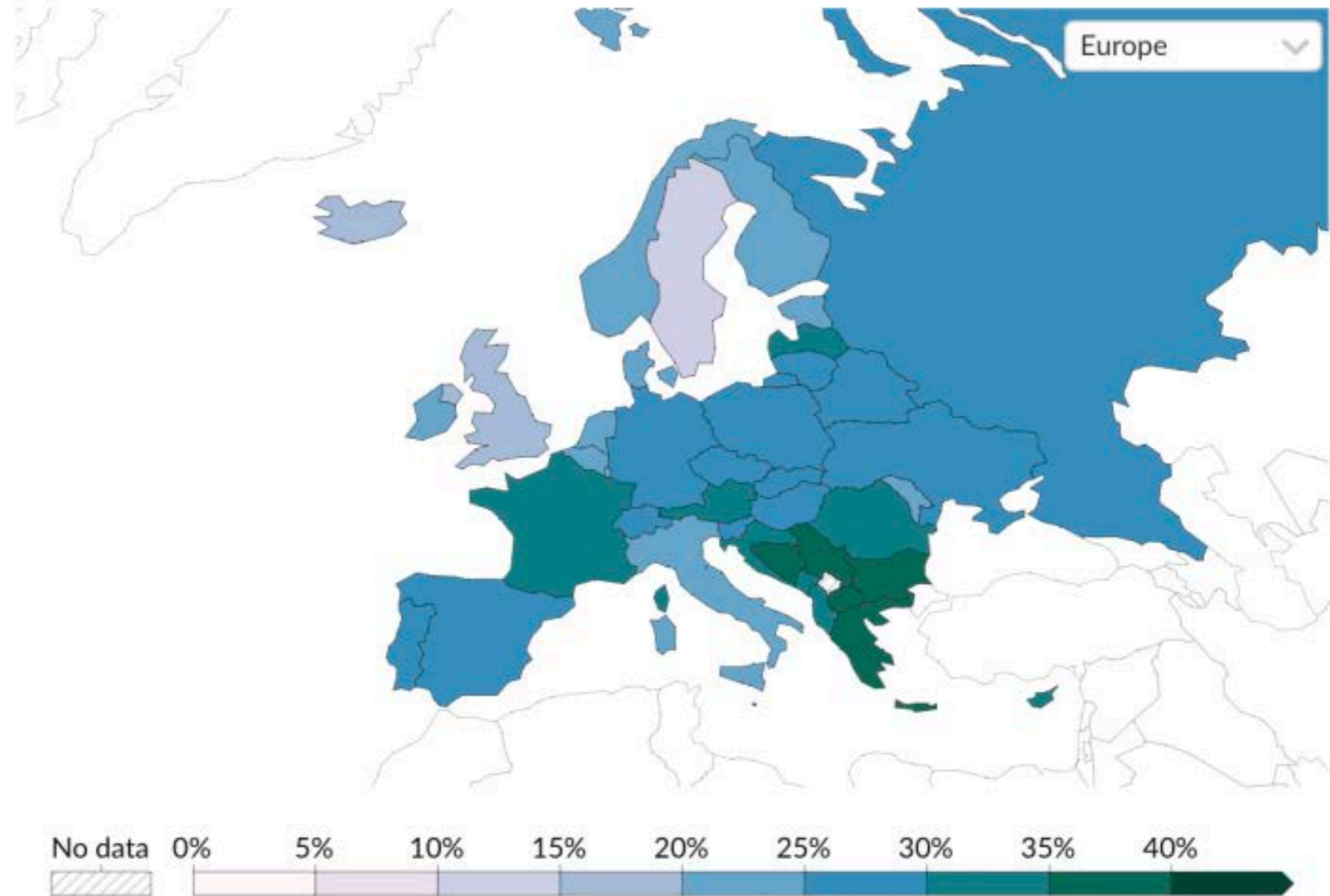
Nicotine harms

- ▶ 95% of harms associated with nicotine use can be attributed to the combustion process (Public Health England, 2015)
- ▶ E-cigarettes are effective in helping individuals quit smoking (Hartmann-Boyce et al, 2022)
- ▶ E-cigarettes pose a positive population-level effect on smoking in several countries, e.g. UK & New Zealand (Beard et al, 2016; Edwards et al, 2022)
- ▶ Countries with high e-cigarette use have some of the lowest youth smoking rates (Shahab et al, 2022)
- ▶ Existence of a gateway effect often have methodological flaws and cannot rule out alternative explanations (Shahab et al, 2022)



High tobacco consumption in LV

Prevalence of daily tobacco smoking in populations aged 15+, 2021



Source: IHME, Global Burden of Disease

OurWorldInData.org/smoking • CC BY

THR effects on smoking prevalence

NHS
South Tees Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Quit smoking. On us.

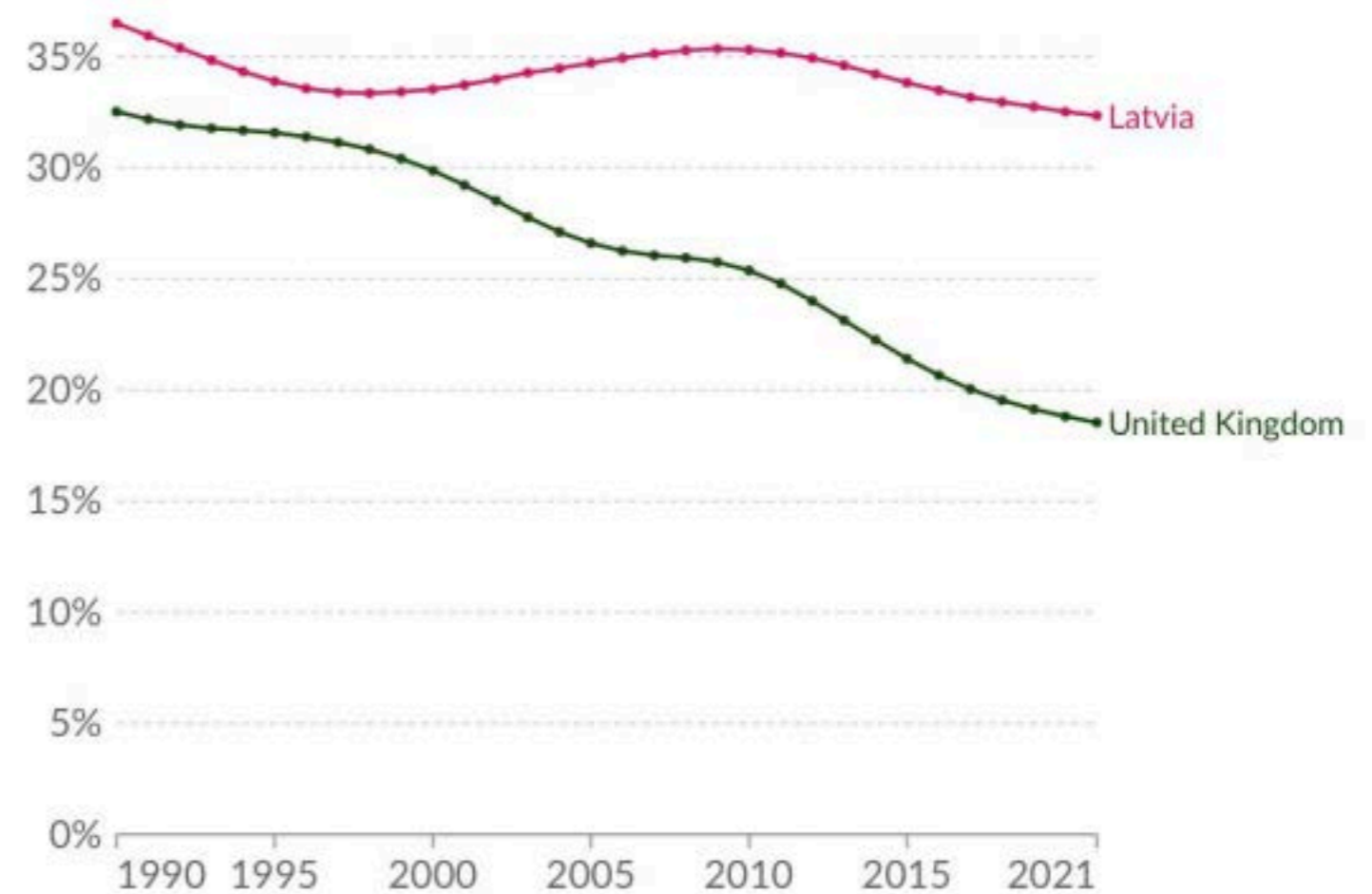
Free quitting aids and support exclusively for NHS staff.

Now's the time to quit! NHS staff can receive a range of FREE support to quit smoking. Sign up today to access:

- Free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT).
- A free refillable e-cigarette.
- A motivational 12 week support programme.
- Free premium access to the new Smokefree app, giving you 24/7 support.

For local support:
Call: 01642 727579
Or scan the QR code:

This offer is provided by the North East and North Cumbria ICS for NHS staff working across the region. For more information about this offer, please contact 01758066029.



Source: IHME, Global Burden of Disease

OurWorldInData.org/smoking • CC BY

Does prohibition still seem like the safe option?



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