

# Challenging the “alcohol problem” framework: How did we get here?

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# LIQUOR AND THE LIBERAL STATE

*Drink & Order before Prohibition*

DAN MALLECK

Not just  
shameless self  
promotion... look  
at these folks!





# Uisce beatha

*(ish-kah 'bah-hah)*

1. a: Gaelic translation of Latin: [aqua vitae]  
b: water of life
2. strong distilled alcoholic drink (e.g. whiskey)

Increase Mather



Drink is in itself a good creature of God, and to be received with thankfulness, but the abuse of drink is from Satan, the wine is from God, but the Drunkard is from the Devil.

(Some Puritans were ok)

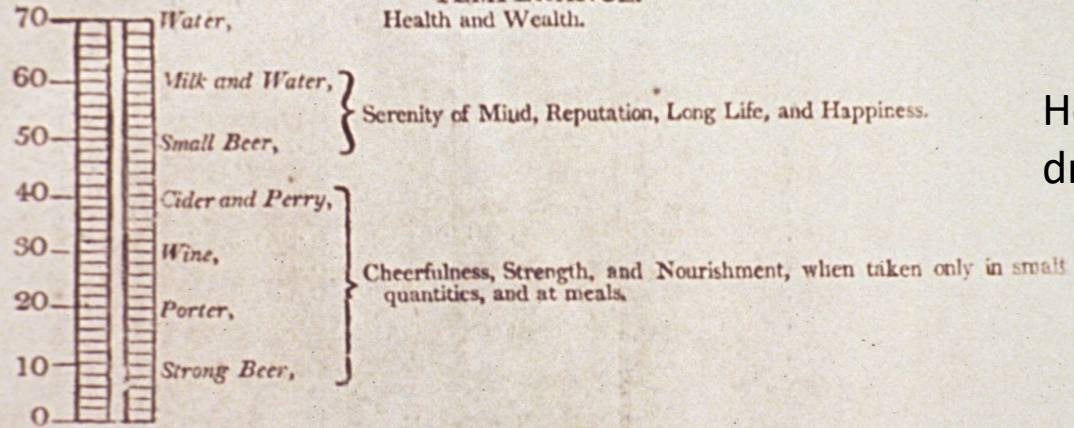
Image source: <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/592837>



# A MORAL AND PHYSICAL THERMOMETER.

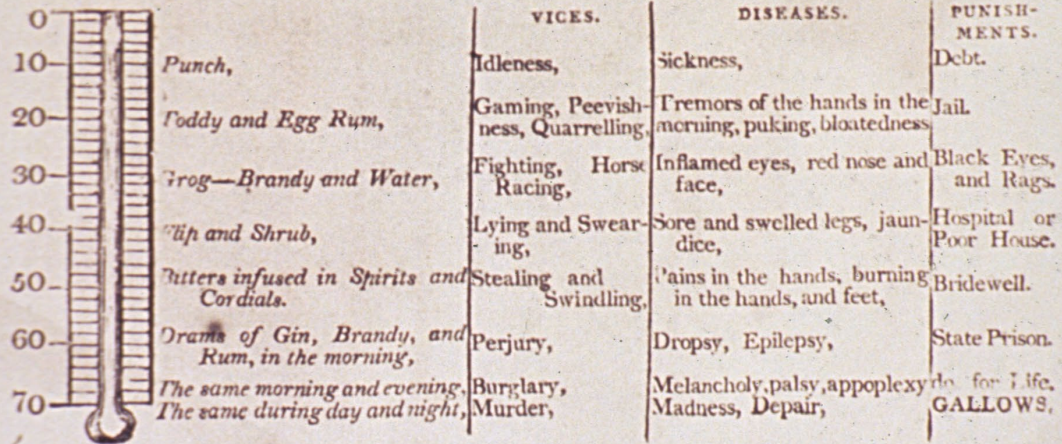
*A scale of the progress of Temperance and Intemperance.—Liquors with effects in their usual order.*

## TEMPERANCE.



Healthy  
drinking

## INTEMPERANCE.

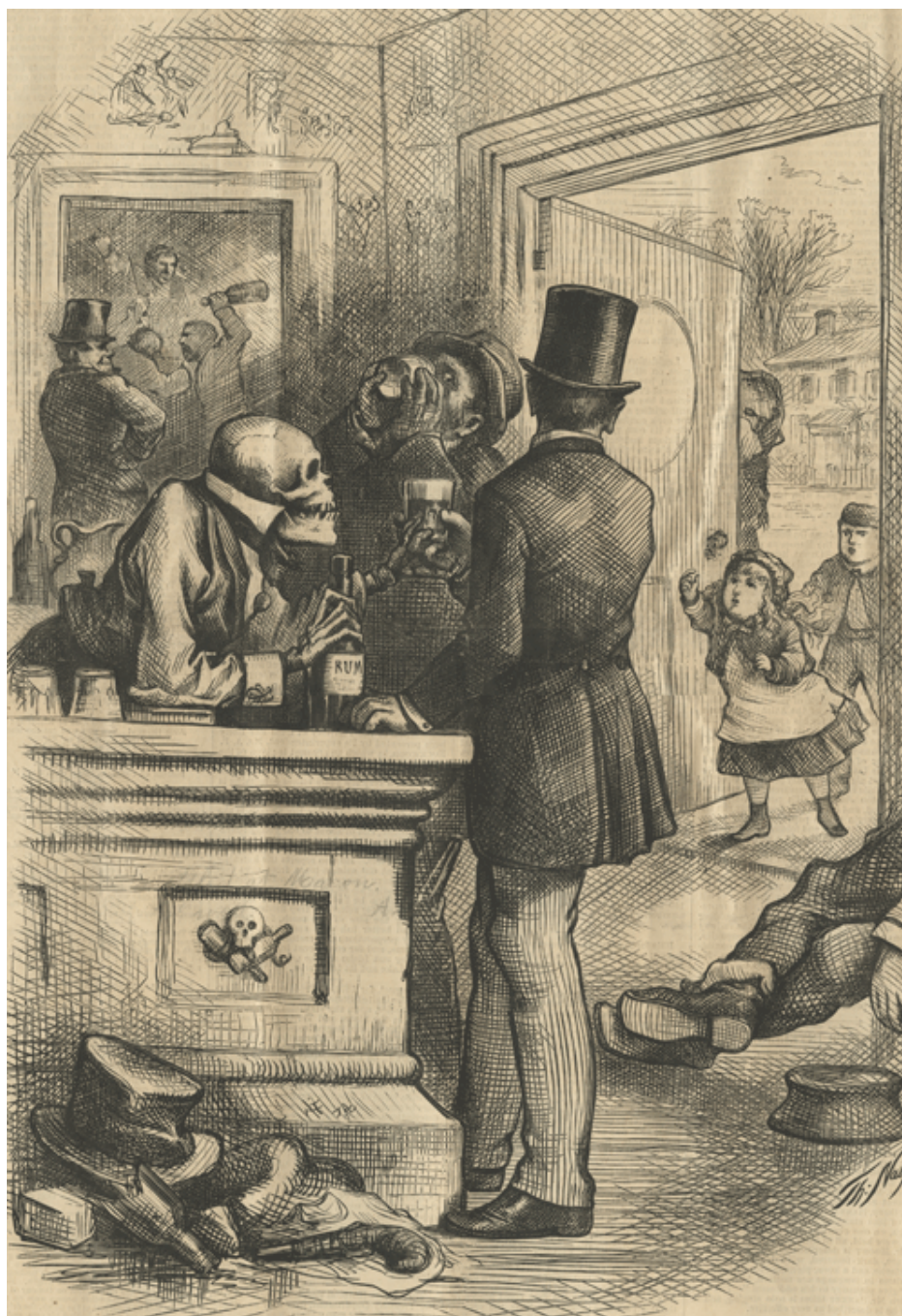


Increasingly  
unhealthy

# Social and economic changes made drink appear dysfunctional

- Seen as damaging families
- Affecting health
- Destroying communities
- (this was actually the effect of industrial capitalism, but drink was easier to blame)





Drink destroys families and by the way you consort with monsters

No consideration of what positive things happened in the tavern

# "WET" OR "DRY"

"VOTE WET  
FOR MY  
SAKE!"



"VOTE DRY  
FOR  
MINE!"



Shall the Mothers and Children  
be Sacrificed to the Financial  
Greed of the Liquor Traffic?

IT IS UP TO YOU, VOTER, TO DECIDE

**VOTE DRY**

You are either with us or against **the family** and **all good things**. No room for moderation.



# Government regulation is equated to consorting with the devil.

Drunken husband & father

Government agent



THE WAR ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

Liquor Traffic.—With these weapons I'm as deadly as ever, and I'll show you no mercy!

# National prohibition: during WWI



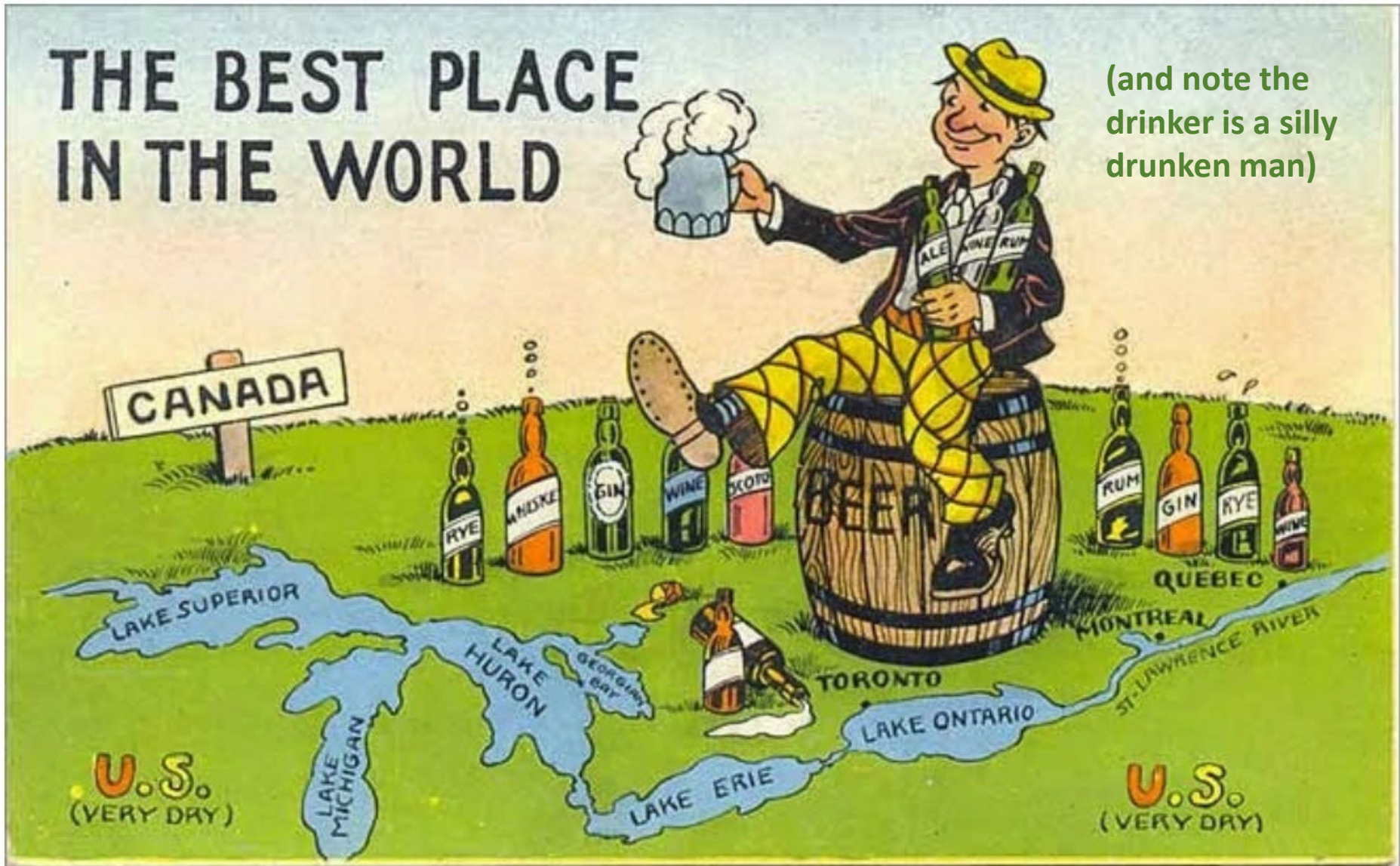
**ENFORCING THE C.T.A.  
AT MONCTON, N.B.**



It did not last.

THE BEST PLACE  
IN THE WORLD

(and note the  
drinker is a silly  
drunken man)



Canadian Postcard by E.L. White (c. 1929-1930)



# But perception of drink was changed by temperance

Figure 1. We don't want bread money.



## WE DON'T WANT BREAD MONEY

Liquor is one of the luxuries of life, to be bought and enjoyed only after the necessities are provided. Whoever needs bread for himself or his family, should not buy whiskey.

The persons we want for our regular customers have definite incomes and definite obligations. They do not exceed the one nor neglect the other. We make sales to such persons with a clear conscience because Seagram whiskeys are well worth

all they cost to those who can afford the luxury of moderate use. We don't want to sell whiskey to anyone who buys it at a sacrifice of the necessities or decencies. At this season of the year it seems opportune to again repeat our policy... to again reiterate our sense of social obligation.

"We don't want to sell whiskey to anyone who buys it at a sacrifice of the necessities of life."

SEAGRAM-DISTILLERS CORPORATION, EXECUTIVE OFFICES, N.Y.

THE HOUSE OF SEAGRAM

Figure 2. Pay your bills first.



## PAY YOUR BILLS FIRST

No person should spend a cent for liquor until the necessities of living are provided — and paid for. Bills for groceries... clothes... shoes... rent... light... heat... doctors... bills such as these have the first call on America's payroll.

We don't want to sell whiskey to anyone who buys it at a sacrifice of the necessities of life. Whiskey is a luxury and should be treated as such. Fine whiskey can play a pleasing part in the scheme of gracious

living... but only when taken in moderation and only after the bills are paid.

This statement may seem contrary to our self interest. Actually it is not. As one of America's leading distillers we recognize a definite social responsibility. The very existence of legalized liquor in this country depends upon the civilized manner in which it is consumed. In the long run, we believe, it is good business for us to say "pay your bills first."

THE HOUSE OF SEAGRAM

It is a problem to be managed, rather than something "to be received with thankfulness"

Source: House of Seagram, *Moderation: The story of a point of view*. New York: House of Seagram, nd (ca. 1980).

Source: House of Seagram, *Moderation: The story of a point of view*. New York: House of Seagram, nd (ca. 1980).

Source: Lisa Jacobson, "Navigating the Boundaries of Respectability and Desire: Seagram's Advertising and the Meaning of Moderation after Repeal" *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 26 (Summer): 122-46





Canadian Centre  
on Substance Use  
and Addiction

Evidence. Engagement. Impact.

[www.ccsa.ca](http://www.ccsa.ca) • [www.ccdus.ca](http://www.ccdus.ca)

# Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health: Final Report

January 2023

# How to revive a moral panic as per the CCSA

- Adopt misleading math: 16 studies = 6000 studies
- Deploy the language of fear and moral judgement
- Employ distorted data to misrepresent risk
- Tap into general fears of ill-health
- Pretend alcohol is the sole risk factor
- Narrow your focus to information that supports your argument (theory-driven research)
- Conveniently ignore evidence that challenges your predetermined conclusions

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“Consequences” is a moral judgement

## The consequences of drinking

▲ **Having 2 drinks or fewer per week** should allow you to avoid negative alcohol consequences.

▲ **If you have 3 to 6 drinks per week,** you are increasing your risk of developing certain cancers, including breast and colon cancer.

▲ **If you have 7 drinks or more per week,** you are actually increasing your risk of developing a heart disease or having a stroke.

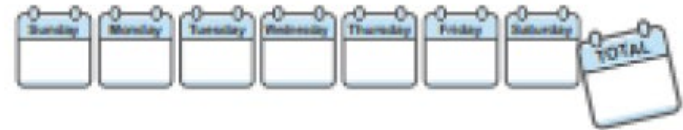
▲ **And with each additional drink,** your risk of having these health problems, and many other diseases and injuries, exponentially increases.

### Alcohol has another consequence

All of these health problems, diseases and injuries can also shorten your life.

## Let's rethink the way we drink

Keep track of how many drinks you have per week



It's never too late to revisit our habits!

We are aiming to drink less.  
How about you?

What is your weekly drinking target?



### Tips to reduce your drinking

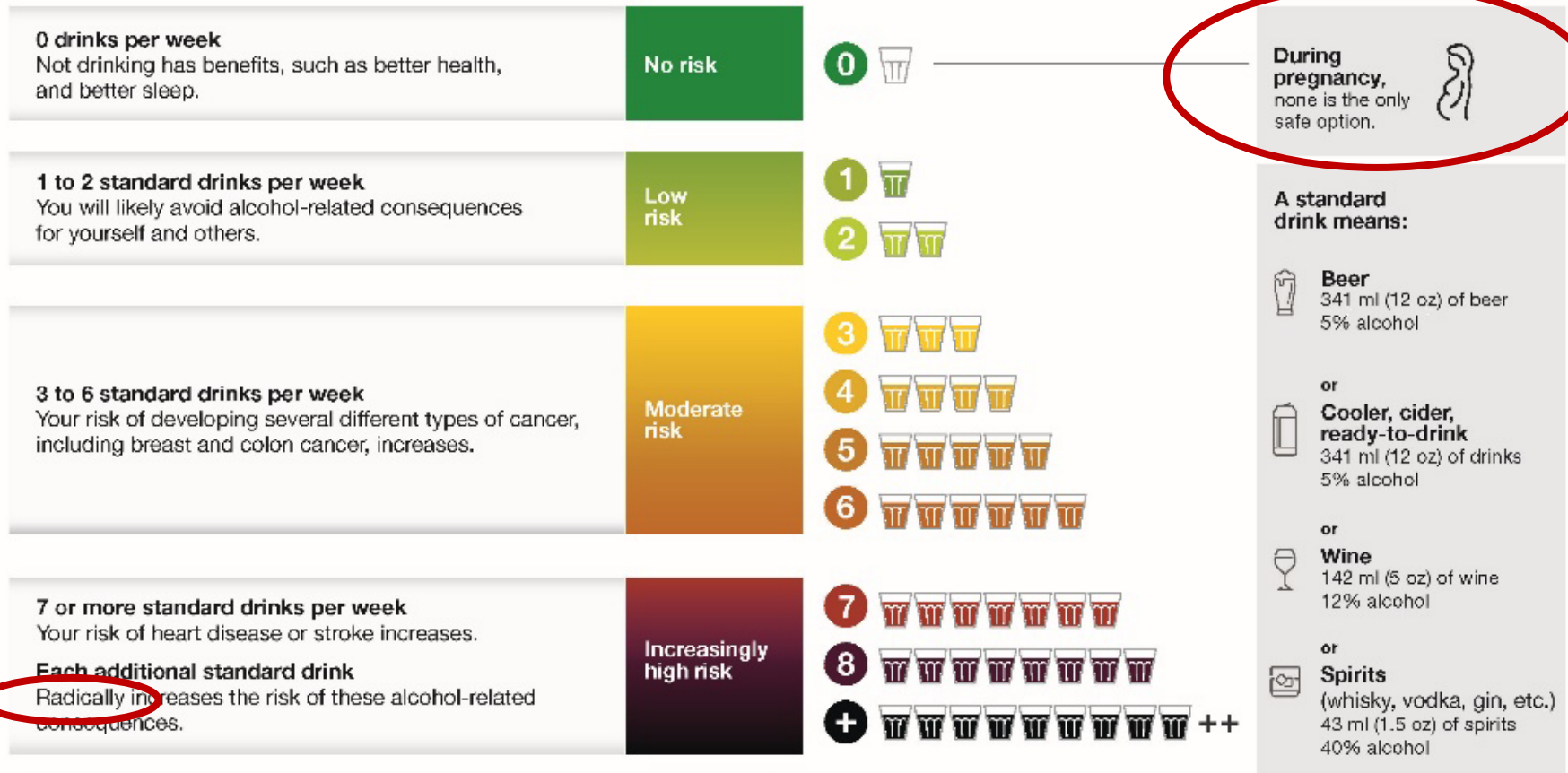
- Stick to the limits you've set for yourself.
- Choose drinks with a lower percentage of alcohol.
- Drink slowly in small sips.
- Always have a pitcher of water on hand.
- For every drink of alcohol, have one non-alcoholic drink.
- Try some alcohol-free cocktail recipes.

# Alcohol consumption per week

Drinking alcohol has negative consequences. The more alcohol you drink per week, the more the consequences add up.

“Consequences” is still a moral judgement

(No credible evidence)



Radical=extreme, let's see how “extreme” it is

**Table 1. Increased risk of diseases and injuries for females based on average weekly alcohol use (standard drinks per week)**

Disease or injury	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	14	21	35
Tuberculosis	3.7%	7.5%	11.4%	15.5%	19.7%	24.1%	26.3%	62.4%	105.2%	233.3%
Lower respiratory infections	1.0%	1.9%	2.9%	3.9%	4.9%	5.9%	6.4%	13.7%	21.0%	37.6%
Oral cavity and pharynx cancer	5.1%	10.3%	15.8%	21.6%	27.6%	33.8%	37.0%	89.4%	152.3%	338.4%
Oesophagus cancer	2.7%	5.4%	8.2%	11.1%	14.1%	17.2%	18.7%	42.7%	69.1%	139.3%
Colorectal cancer	1.4%	2.7%	4.1%	5.6%	7.0%	8.5%	9.2%	20.0%	31.1%	57.4%
Liver cancer	0.8%	1.6%	2.4%	3.2%	4.0%	4.8%	5.2%	11.2%	17.0%	30.1%
Breast cancer	1.8%	3.7%	5.6%	7.6%	9.5%	11.6%	12.6%	27.9%	44.0%	84.2%
Larynx cancer	3.0%	6.0%	9.1%	12.3%	15.5%	18.8%	20.5%	46.3%	73.8%	143.5%
Pancreatitis	-5.3%	-10.3%	-15.0%	-19.2%	-22.7%	-25.5%	-26.7%	-20.8%	14.8%	173.9%
Diabetes Mellitus	-15.2%	-19.9%	-23.0%	-25.2%	-26.9%	-28.3%	-28.9%	-33.5%	-34.6%	-32.7%
Liver cirrhosis	61.5%	94.3%	124.3%	153.3%	182.1%	211.0%	225.5%	444.7%	685.5%	1337.2%
Atrial fibrillation and flutter	1.3%	2.6%	3.9%	5.3%	6.6%	8.0%	8.7%	18.9%	29.2%	53.7%
Hypertension	1.2%	2.4%	3.6%	4.8%	6.0%	7.1%	7.7%	16.1%	24.8%	45.2%
Ischemic heart disease	-5.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%	4.0%	4.0%	15.0%
Ischemic stroke	-10.0%	-10.0%	-10.0%	-10.0%	-10.0%	-8.0%	-8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	14.0%
Intracerebral hemorrhage	-8.0%	-8.0%	-8.0%	-8.0%	-8.0%	-1.0%	-1.0%	25.0%	25.0%	67.0%
Subarachnoid haemorrhage	21.0%	21.0%	21.0%	21.0%	21.0%	11.0%	11.0%	39.0%	39.0%	82.0%
Epilepsy	3.1%	5.7%	8.3%	11.0%	13.8%	16.6%	17.0%	40.2%	64.5%	129.2%
Road injuries	1.9%	3.9%	5.9%	8.0%	10.1%	12.2%	13.3%	29.6%	46.8%	90.2%
Other unintentional injuries	1.6%	3.2%	4.8%	6.4%	8.1%	9.8%	10.6%	23.3%	36.5%	68.3%
Intentional injuries	5.1%	10.5%	16.1%	22.1%	28.3%	34.8%	38.3%	96.1%	171.2%	431.9%

Dark red > 50%; light red 20% to 50%; yellow 10% to < 20%; green < 10%

With an increase in 7 drinks per week, a jump between -5% (ie: alcohol is protective) and 4% (increased risk) is what the CCSA considers “radical”

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# Relative risk is a misleading distortion of risk

Table 1. Increased risk of diseases and injuries for females based on average daily alcohol use

Disease or injury	Deaths per 100,000 people per year	Premature deaths per 100,000 people per year	Average alcohol intake (g/day)									
			5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50
Ischemic heart disease	72.1	16.7	-5.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%	-5.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	7.0%	7.0%
Breast cancer	28.3	17.3	4.7%	9.5%	14.7%	20.0%	25.6%	31.5%	37.6%	44.0%	50.7%	57.7%
Other unintentional injuries	22.6	4.3	4.0%	8.1%	12.4%	16.8%	21.4%	26.3%	31.3%	36.5%	41.9%	47.5%
Lower respiratory infections	22.3	3.7	2.4%	4.9%	7.4%	10.0%	12.7%	15.4%	18.2%	21.0%	23.9%	26.9%
Colorectal cancer	21.0	9.2	3.4%	7.0%	10.7%	14.5%	18.4%	22.5%	26.7%	31.1%	35.6%	40.3%
Diabetes Mellitus	12.6	4.7	-21.6%	-26.9%	-30.0%	-31.9%	-33.2%	-34.0%	-34.4%	-34.6%	-34.6%	-34.4%
Hypertension	11.3	1.9	3.0%	6.0%	8.9%	11.8%	14.9%	18.0%	21.4%	24.8%	28.4%	32.0%
Atrial fibrillation and flutter	10.4	0.6	3.3%	6.6%	10.1%	13.7%	17.4%	21.2%	25.2%	29.2%	33.5%	37.8%
Intracerebral hemorrhage	8.6	2.4	-8.0%	-8.0%	-1.0%	-1.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	67.0%
Liver cirrhosis	6.9	5.5	109.5%	182.1%	254.9%	330.8%	411.2%	496.7%	588.0%	685.5%	789.6%	900.9%
Ischemic stroke	6.5	1.1	-10.0%	-10.0%	-8.0%	-8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	14.0%
Liver cancer	6.0	3.2	2.0%	4.0%	6.1%	8.2%	10.3%	12.5%	14.7%	17.0%	19.3%	21.7%
Intentional injuries	5.8	5.9	13.3%	28.3%	45.4%	64.7%	86.6%	111.4%	139.4%	171.2%	207.3%	248.1%
Road injuries	2.8	2.5	4.9%	10.1%	15.5%	21.2%	27.1%	33.4%	39.9%	46.8%	54.0%	61.6%
Esophagus cancer	2.6	1.5	6.8%	14.1%	21.9%	30.2%	39.0%	48.4%	58.5%	69.1%	80.5%	92.5%
Subarachnoid hemorrhage	2.4	1.7	21.0%	21.0%	11.0%	11.0%	39.0%	39.0%	39.0%	39.0%	39.0%	82.0%
Oral cavity and pharynx cancer	2.2	1.2	13.1%	27.6%	43.6%	61.4%	81.0%	102.6%	126.3%	152.3%	180.8%	211.7%
Pancreatitis	1.2	0.5	-12.7%	-22.7%	-28.3%	-28.4%	-23.9%	-15.0%	-2.0%	14.8%	34.9%	58.4%
Epilepsy	0.7	0.4	7.0%	13.8%	21.0%	28.6%	36.8%	45.5%	54.7%	64.5%	74.9%	86.0%
Larynx cancer	0.3	0.2	7.5%	15.5%	24.0%	32.9%	42.3%	52.3%	62.8%	73.8%	85.4%	97.6%
Tuberculosis	0.2	0.1	9.4%	19.7%	30.9%	43.2%	56.7%	71.4%	87.6%	105.2%	124.5%	145.6%

Dark red > 50%; light red 20% to 50%; yellow 10% to < 20%; green < 10%

Bolded percentages indicate significant estimates

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# All of these conditions have multiple causes

Table 1. Increased risk of diseases and injuries for females based on average weekly alcohol use (standard drinks per week)

Disease or injury	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	14	21	35
Tuberculosis (A BACTERIAL INFECTION)	1.7%	5.1%	11.4%	15.5%	19.7%	24.1%	26.3%	62.4%	105.2%	233.3%
Lower respiratory infections	1.0%	1.9%	2.9%	3.9%	4.9%	5.9%	6.4%	13.7%	21.0%	37.6%
Oral cavity and pharynx cancer	5.1%	10.3%	15.8%	21.6%	27.6%	33.8%	37.0%	89.4%	152.3%	338.4%
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Larynx cancer	3.0%	6.0%	9.1%	12.3%	15.5%	18.8%	20.5%	46.3%	73.8%	143.5%
Pancreatitis	-5.3%	-10.3%	-15.0%	-19.2%	-22.7%	-25.5%	-26.7%	-20.8%	14.8%	173.9%
Diabetes Mellitus	-15.2%	-19.9%	-23.0%	-25.2%	-26.9%	-28.3%	-28.9%	-33.5%	-34.6%	-32.7%
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Ischemic stroke	-10.0%	-10.0%	-10.0%	-10.0%	-10.0%	-8.0%	-8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	14.0%
Intracerebral hemorrhage	-8.0%	-8.0%	-8.0%	-8.0%	-8.0%	-1.0%	-1.0%	25.0%	25.0%	67.0%
Subarachnoid haemorrhage	21.0%	21.0%	21.0%	21.0%	21.0%	11.0%	11.0%	39.0%	39.0%	82.0%
Epilepsy	3.1%	5.7%	8.3%	11.0%	13.8%	16.6%	18.0%	40.2%	64.5%	129.2%
Road injuries	1.9%	3.9%	5.9%	8.0%	10.1%	12.2%	13.3%	29.6%	46.8%	90.2%
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CANCER!

MARGINALIZE THE OUTLIERS

BIG MEDIA ATTENTION

Dark red > 50%; light red 20% to 50%; yellow 10% to < 20%; green < 10%

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The pesky J curve

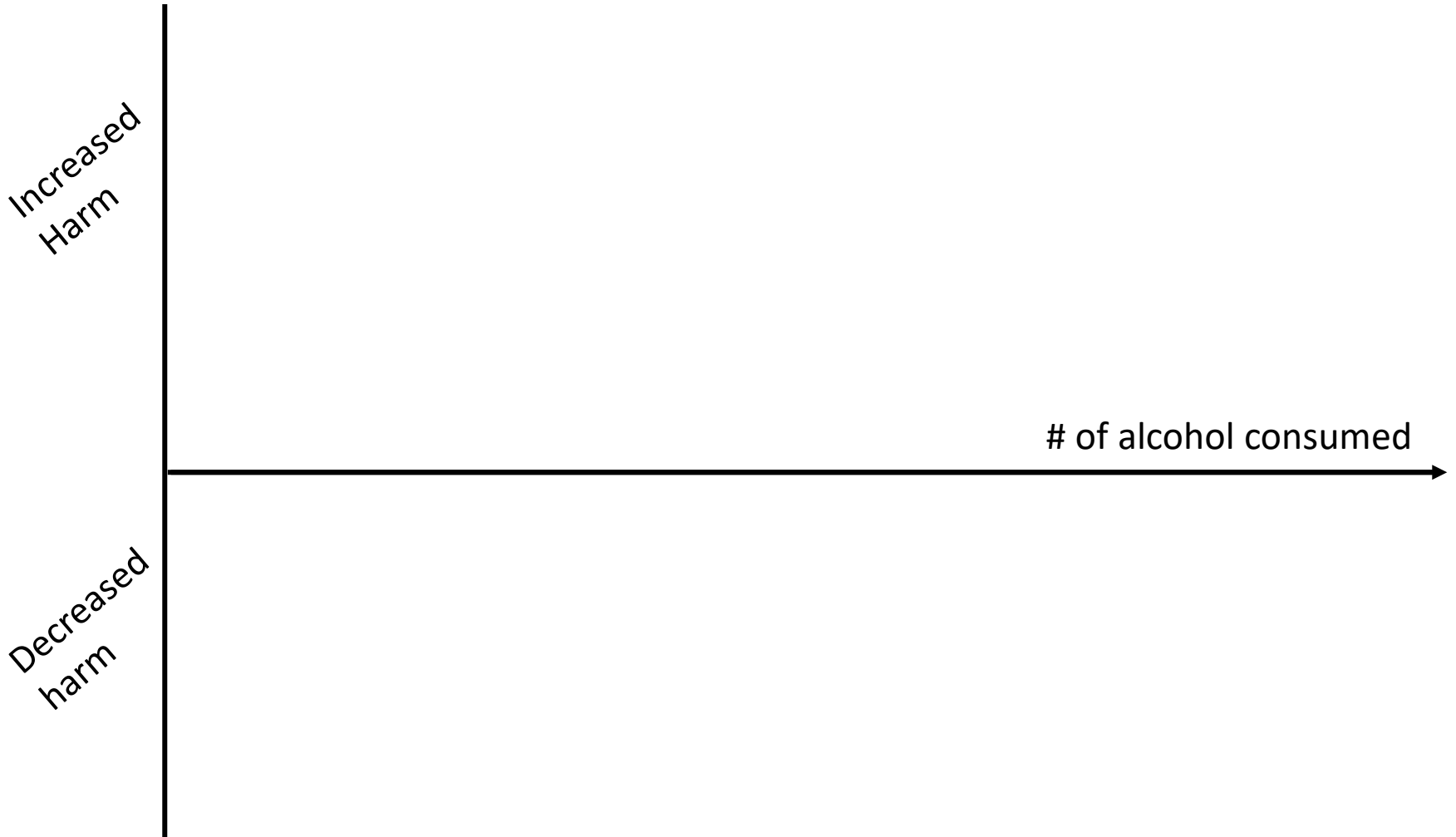


# The pesky J curve

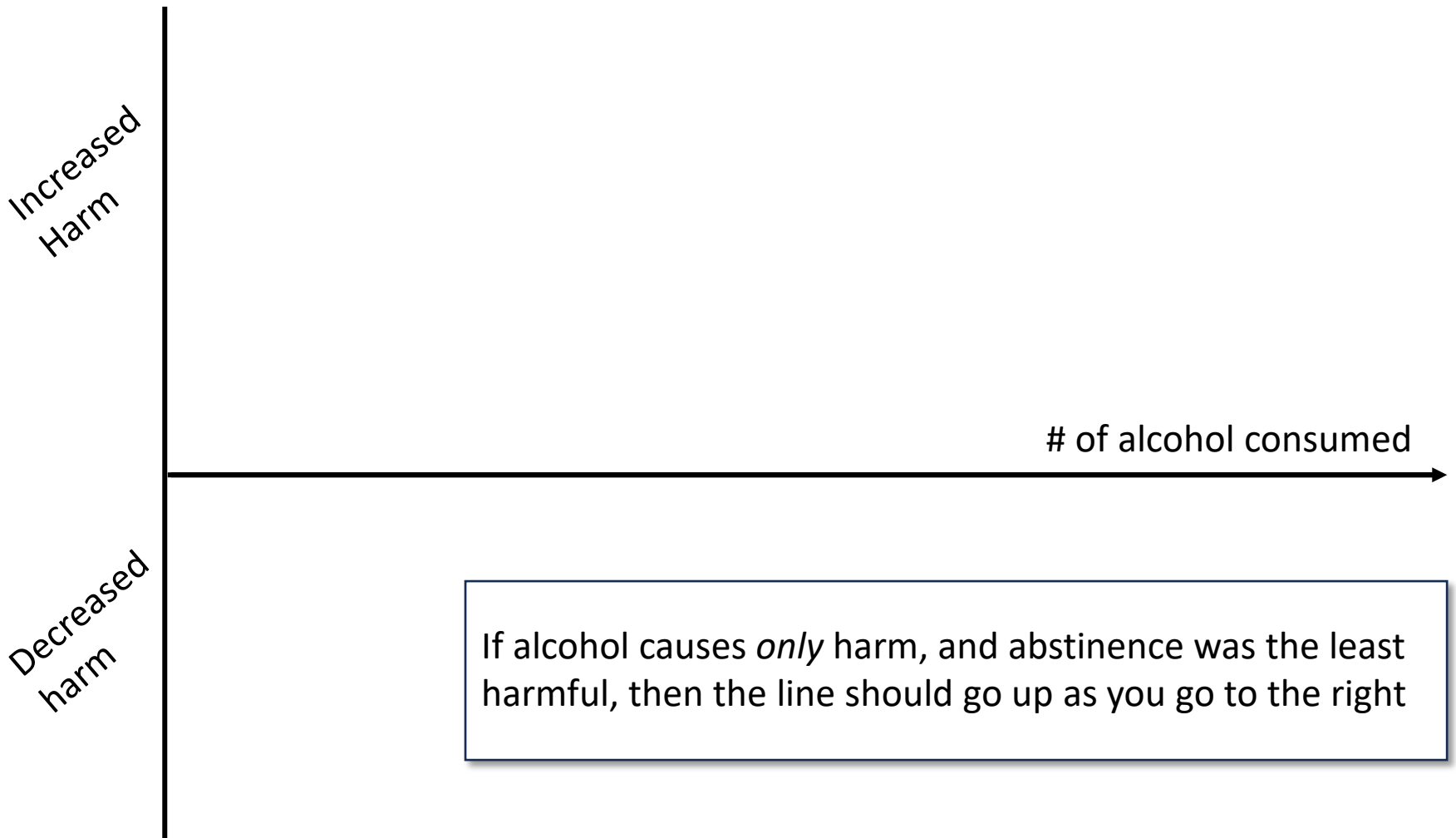
# of alcohol consumed



# The pesky J curve



# The pesky J curve



# The pesky J curve

Increased Harm

Linear growth

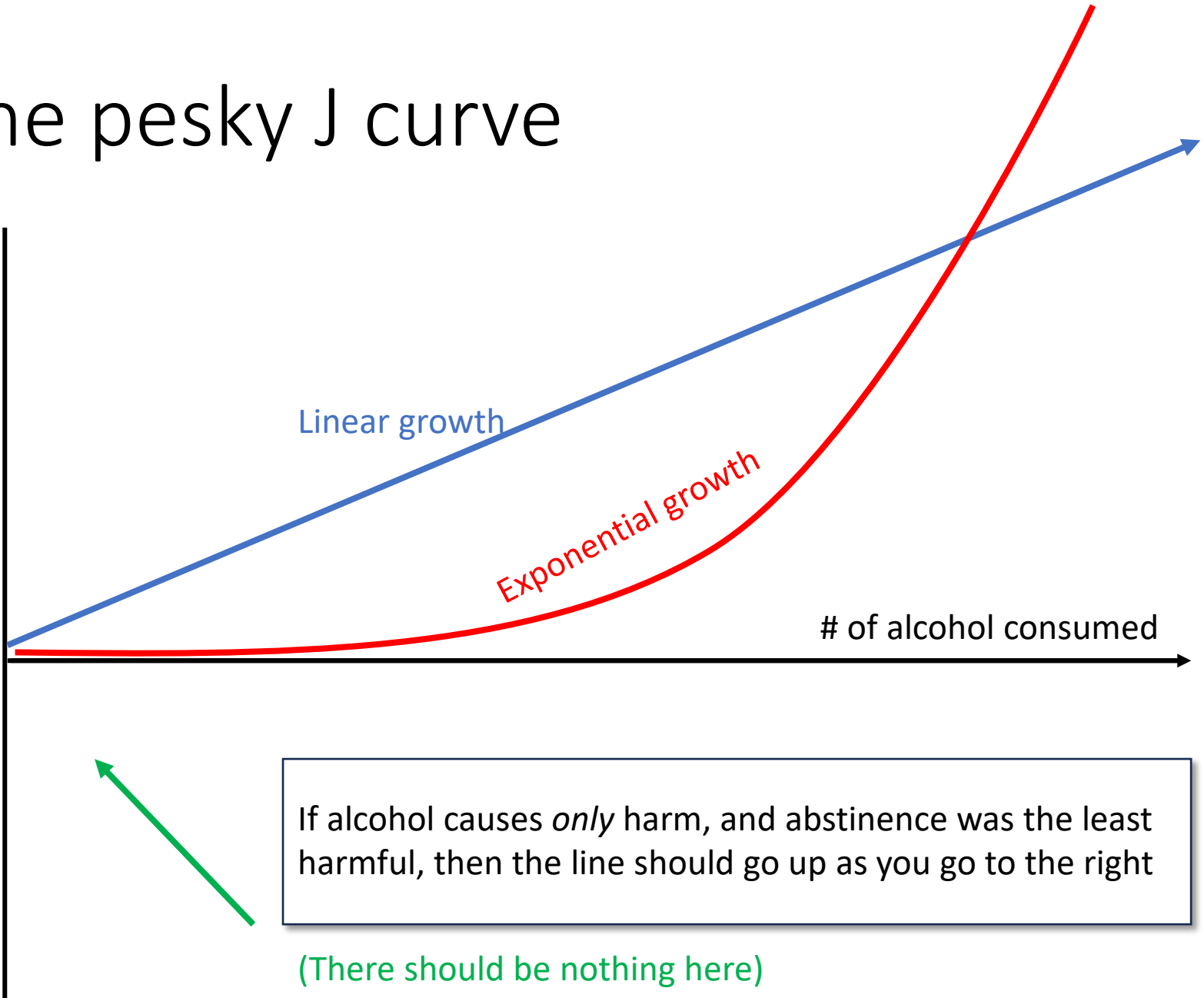
Exponential growth

# of alcohol consumed

Decreased harm

If alcohol causes *only* harm, and abstinence was the least harmful, then the line should go up as you go to the right

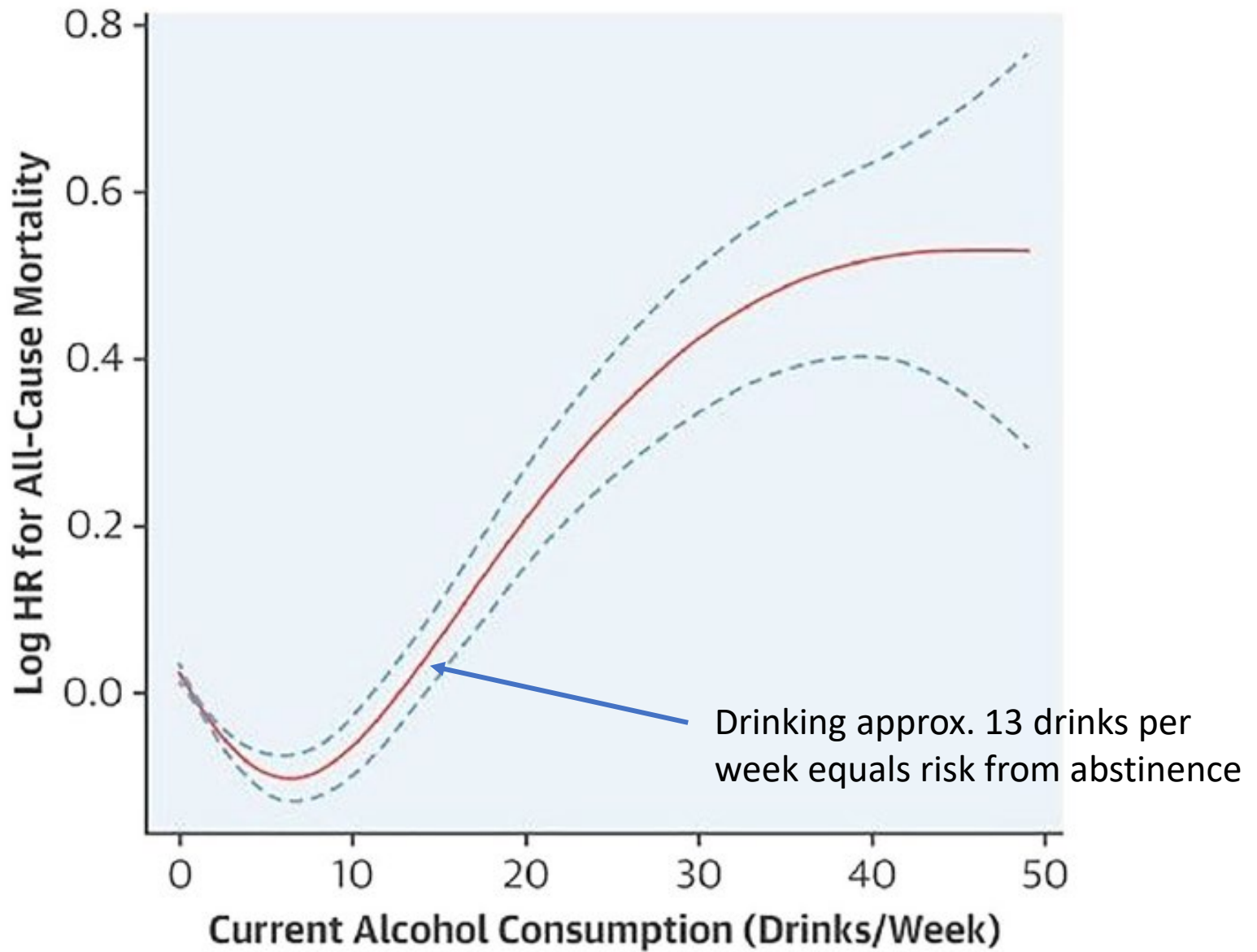
(There should be nothing here)



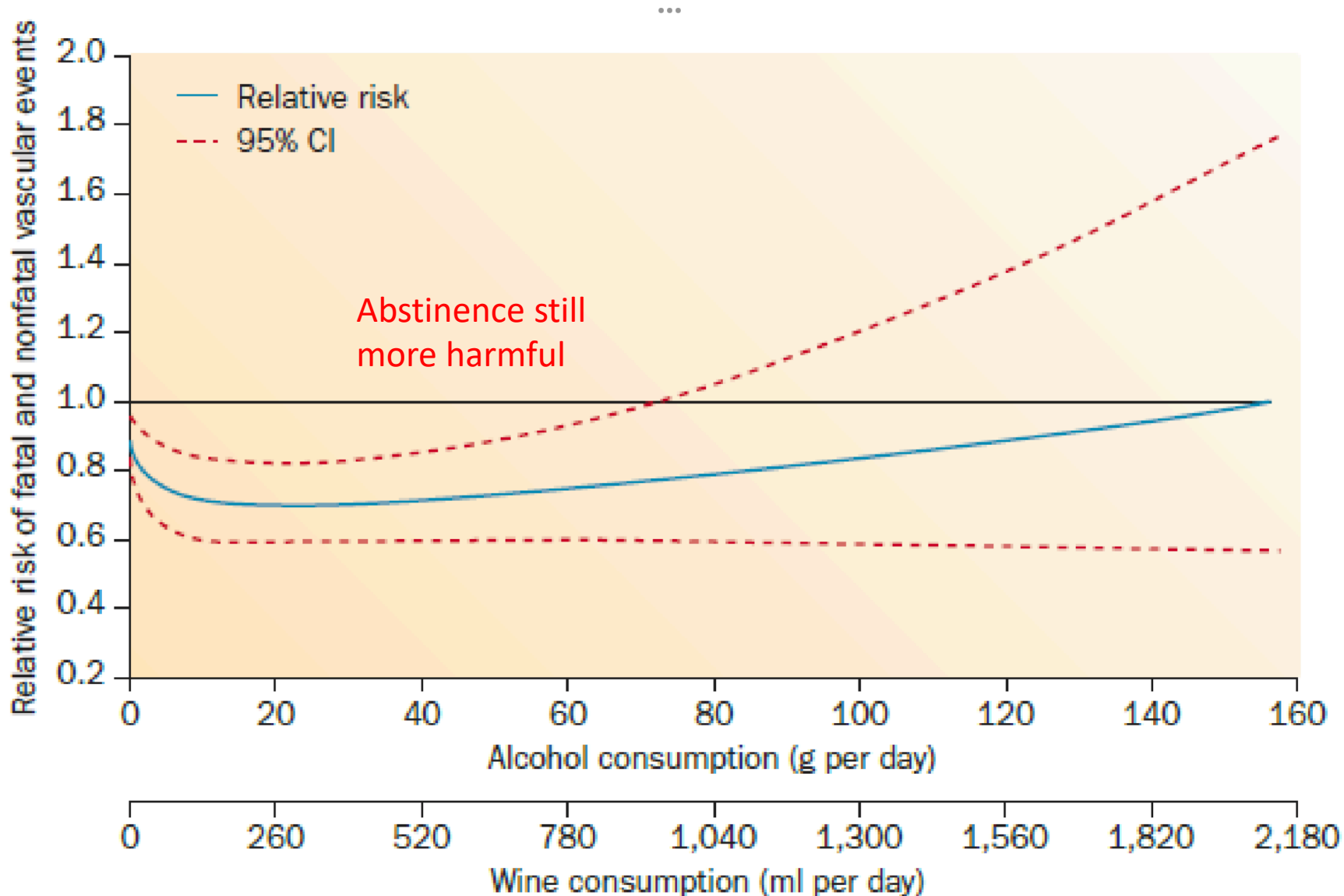
# The pesky J curve

- But what does the bulk of alcohol research on harm find?
- One example (due to time):





Ed Day and James H F Rudd (2019) "Alcohol use disorders and the heart" *Addiction* doi:10.1111/add.14703



Joaquim Fernández-Solà, (2015) "Cardiovascular risks and benefits of moderate and heavy alcohol consumption" *Nature Reviews Cardiology* doi:10.1038/nrcardio.2015.91

# Temperance success = distortions

- Drink=a problem to be managed
- Temperance industry amplifies and advances evidence of harm, while ignoring or downplaying evidence of benefits.

# TEMPERANCE IS ALIVE...! ALIVE!

FOUNDED IN 1942

## Alliance House Foundation

We are a registered charity.  
Providing education on the effects of alcohol,  
And promoting the general welfare of the community.



*Who are we?*



We continue to promote alcoholic abstinence as a lifestyle choice and believe an alcohol free society can be reached by agreement.

[READ MORE](#)





# TEMPERANCE IS ALIVE...! ALIVE! And it is amplifying these distortions

## DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ALCOHOL PREVENTION

Movendi International is the largest independent global movement for development through alcohol prevention. We unite, strengthen and empower civil society to address alcohol as serious obstacles to development on personal, community, societal and global level.

[The Issues](#)

[What We Do](#)

[Take Action](#)



**151**

ORGANIZATIONS

**57**

COUNTRIES

**1851**

FOUNDED

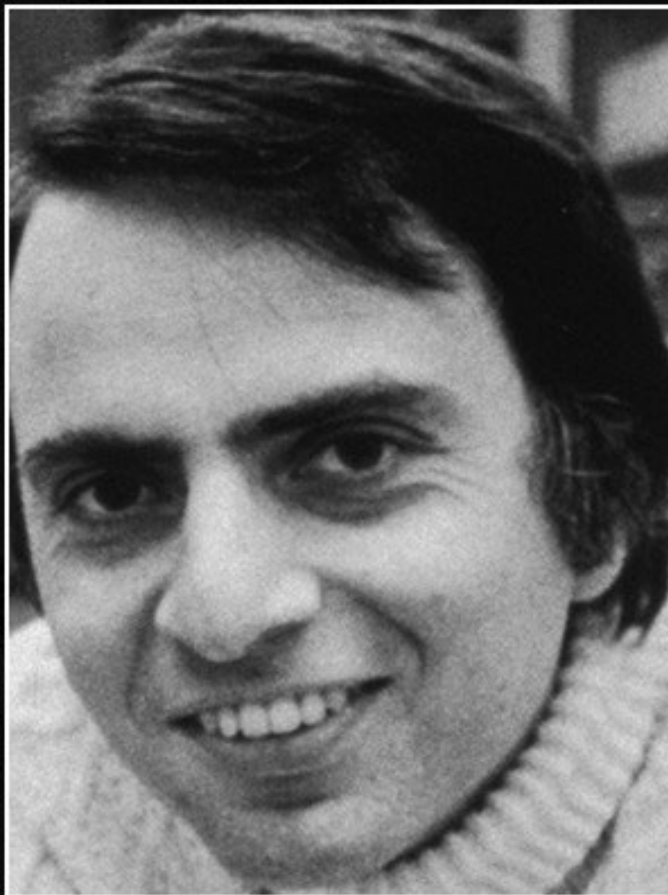
**25.000.000**

REACH IN 2021

# But what about benefits?

- French paradox?
- Socialization?
- Reduced stress and anxiety?
- Address social isolation?
- Creativity and camaraderie?
- ....more?

Benefits are **harder to trace** and such research is **rarely funded**. Most research funding examines **harms**, but that **doesn't** mean there are no benefits. Just that **we don't have the same "quality" of evidence** as harm-based research.



The absence of evidence is not the  
evidence of absence.

— *Carl Sagan* —

And non-harms are invisible



Don't kill yourself.  
Let's have a drink.

# So people find harms-based arguments easy to find



## Why do we need Bill S-254?

Many Canadians don't know that there is a direct causal link between alcohol consumption and seven fatal cancers.

### Cancers caused by alcohol

- 1 Oral cavity
- 2 Oropharynx
- 3 Larynx
- 4 Oesophagus
- 5 Breast (in women)
- 6 Liver
- 7 Colorectum

and believe

and push

## BECAUSE SIZE MATTERS

### Standard drinks



Beer, cider, hard seltzer or coolers at 5% alcohol:  
**341 mL**  
or 12 oz



Wine at 12% alcohol:  
**142 mL**  
or 5 oz



Spirits at 40% alcohol:  
**43 mL or**  
**1.5 oz or**  
one shot



Bill S-254 would require alcohol labels to show how many standard drinks are contained in the package and to note the direct causal link between alcohol use and the development of fatal cancers.

“We are intentionally trying to scare people”

## FAIR WARNING MEANS FAIR LABELLING.

Help Senator Brazeau [#EnabletheLabel](#) and show your support for Bill S-254 online. [@senatorbrazeau](#)



# These distortions need to be revealed and challenged



## Why do we need Bill S-254?

Many Canadians don't know that there is a direct causal link between alcohol consumption and seven fatal cancers.

**Cancers** for which risk of cancer may be increased by alcohol

- 1 Oral cavity
- 2 Oropharynx
- 3 Larynx
- 4 Oesophagus
- 5 Breast (in women)
- 6 Liver
- 7 Colorectum

It also may reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke which are far more likely to kill you

## BECAUSE SIZE MATTERS

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## FAIR WARNING MEANS FAIR LABELLING.

Based on clear and honest evidence that is not being politicized to meet a personal or evangelical agenda

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“We are intentionally trying to scare people”