

# **Reflections on public health and HIV care in Belgian prisons**

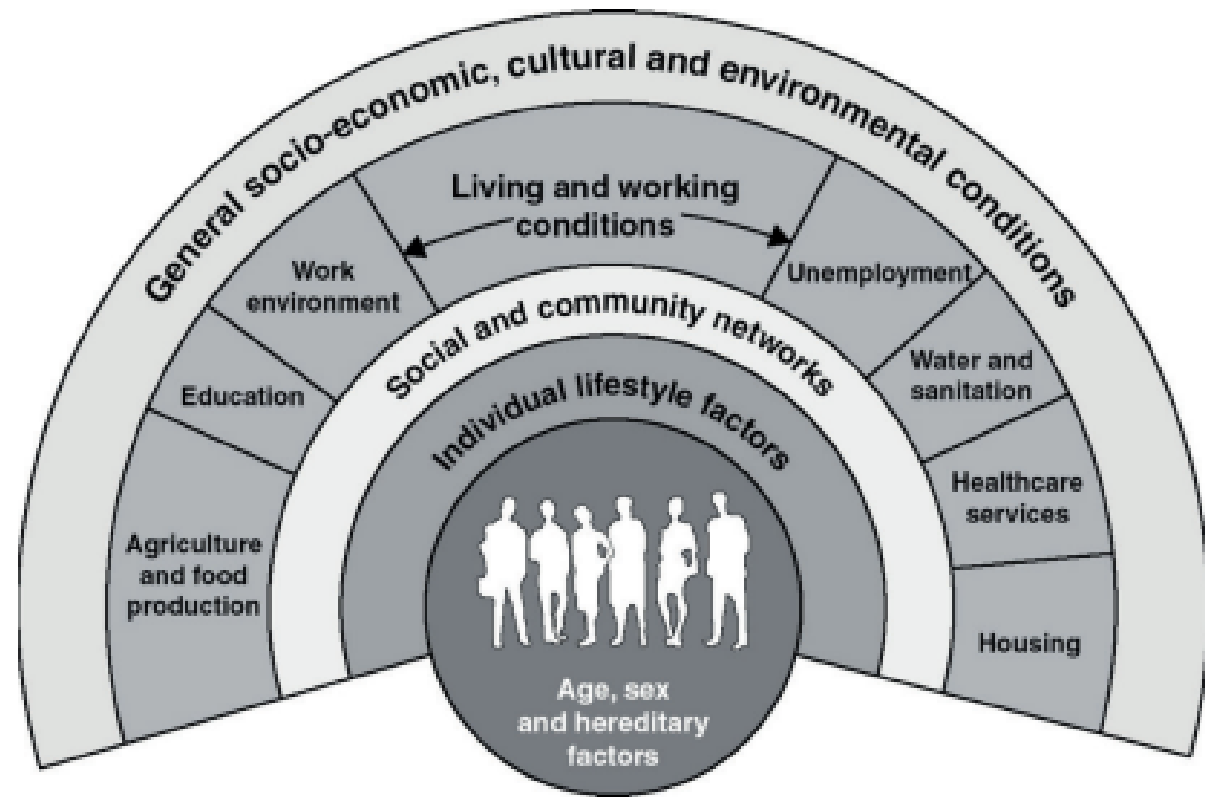
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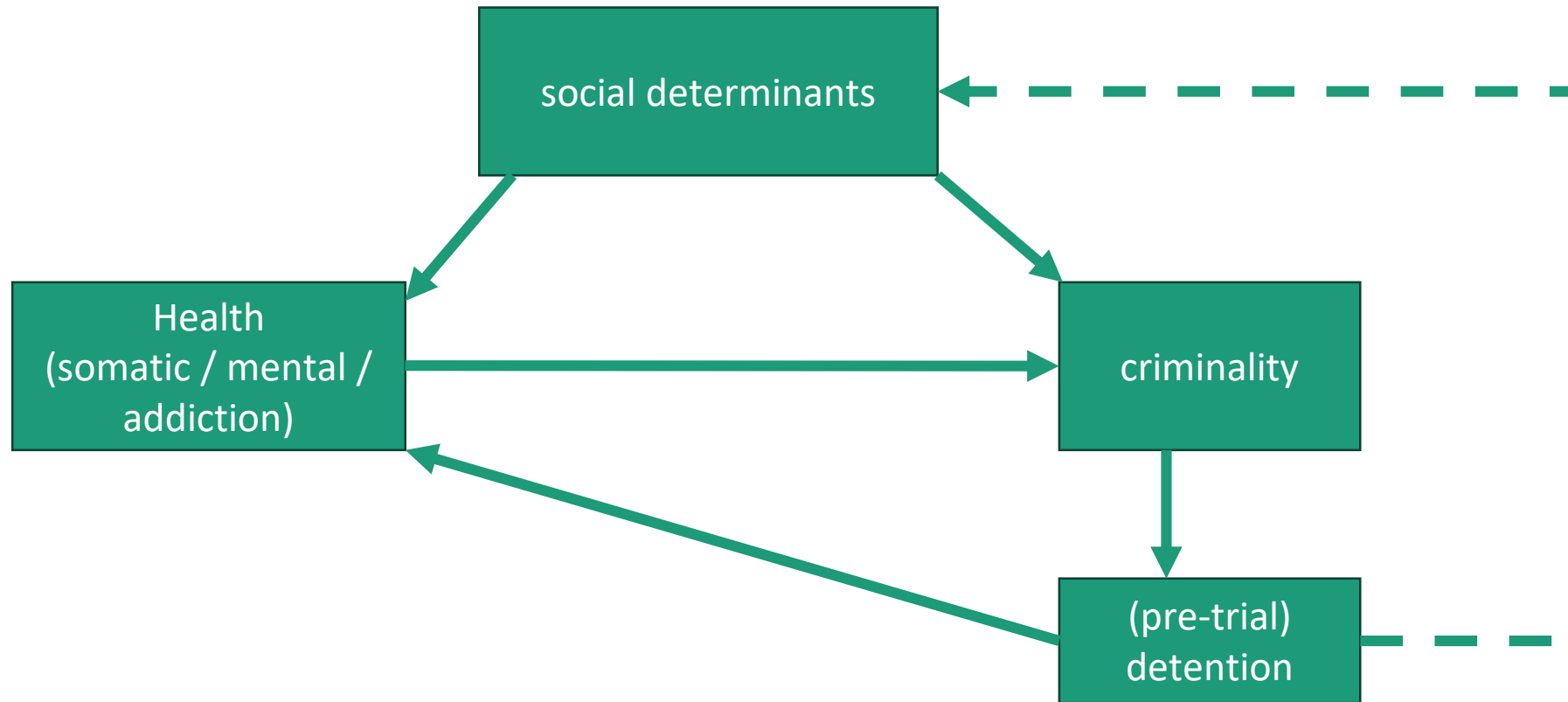
# Some numbers

- 1980: 5500 → 2025: 12.000
- 46%: lifetime psychiatric diagnosis
- Suicide: x 8
- 56% drug charges
- Recidivism rate: within the highest in EU

Social  
determinants of  
health =  
Social  
determinants of  
criminality/  
detention



# Reproducing social and health inequalities



# Public health strategies

1. Prevention of detention (pretrial inequalities, drug laws, migration policies, facilities for drug users, psychiatric care, societal inequality etc..)
2. Humanizing detention and detention conditions: working on the prison as a social and intergenerational determinant of health
3. Focus on prison health care systems
  - a. Horizontal: strengthening health care system -> health ministry
  - b. Vertical → specific programs (screening, risk reduction, drugs,...)

# General problems and barriers

- A hierarchy in prison functions:

  - Punishment, deterrence, neutralization, reintegration, ordered around the priority of 'safety'

  - Latent functions: symbolic, discipline, ...

    - Health is not a priority

- The department of justice and the independence of the health care personnel

- Cooperation between services: in - out

- The example of HEP C

# Specific problems and barriers

- Testing and follow-up : the pre trial detention
- Seroconversion and hospital : continuity of care and delays due to strike/annulation/transport/health information
- Old practices and evidence based medicine: deontological issues
- Consultation with handcuffs
- Lack of trust of the prisoner - Confidentiality - Psychosocial support
- Language and intercultural mediation, taboo
- Specific populations / minorities: women / trans
- Harm reduction: Condoms, syringes, information, sexual violence, no prep prescriptions, unsafe drug use, automutilation, promiscuity



# Some conclusions

- Everybody always sees a lot of opportunities in the prison
- There is a lot to be done
- Every prison works differently
- Prison will never be 'a healing environment' or a place where it is easy to offer care
- Lessons from the Hep C case
- Coordination of public health interventions
- Public health involvement as argument for humanisation of the prison
- Haren vs st Gillis