Defying the Law
- MOONSHINE (illegal alcohol) was produced on illegal stills in hidden factories, mines, barns, fens and forests. Agents found and destroyed up to 280,000 stills but there were plenty to replace them and few convictions.
- SMUGGLING: The US had a border that has thousands of miles in length, Canada, Mexico and Caribbean countries all had alcohol and many became wealthy smuggling it into the US. The Real McCoy became famous for his smuggled Scotch from the West Indies.
- SPEAKEASIES - up to 250,000 of these illegal bars sprung up.
- DRIED WINE: California wine sellers dried the wine into blocks and sold it - buyers soaked it in water for 1 day to create alcohol.
- DRINKING: it was illegal to sell, produce and transport but not drink. Rich Americans stocked up their wine sellers before prohibition.

Loopholes
There were major loopholes which were keenly exploited. Alcohol was allowed for religious occasions. These boomed in popularity 😊

Doctors could also hand out prescriptions for alcohol. There were over 10 million of these handed out!

Failure of Enforcement
The Federal prohibition agents were poorly paid, ill resourced and there was only 1,500 for the whole USA! Many were open to bribes and corruption.

It was a fact that many in Harding's government including himself were not privately in favour of prohibition. There were major scandals which implicated many of his advisors in corruption.

The border was too huge to adequately patrol it had a 4,000 km border with Canada alone and nearly 30,000 km of coastline.

Even when they did spot smuggling the agents had slower cars or boats and the bootleggers almost always got away.

Agents were only paid $2,500 a year making them vulnerable to corruption. 1 in 12 took bribes. Even Judges took bribes.

The UNTOUCHABLES were set up under the command of Eliot NESS. They were a dedicated and more successful group who eventually got Capone jailed for tax evasion!

Bootleggers
Many big criminal organisations saw prohibition as gold dust to develop their criminal enterprises. Bootlegging (smuggling) alcohol became a massive business for these criminal gangs. There was a switch from beer to spirits as they had more alcohol and were easier to hide.

Racketeering
Another growth industry was racketeering which was intimidating business and industry into offering 'protection'. Failure to pay this could result in destruction of premises, injury or death.

Before 1920's
Criminal gangs were quite low key and based on low level prostitution or local racketeering. Prohibition allowed these gangs to boom in finance and power. It was big criminal business.

Women
Famous Americans like Pauline Sabin campaigned to end it claiming that the massive levels of people disobeying the law gave children an open disrespect for the law.

She founded the WOFP - Women's Organisation for National Prohibition Reform. This again showed the effective political voice women were using. It was much larger than the temperance movements.

Economics
The 1930's and the Great Depression helped change Americans. They realised the need for jobs associated with alcohol. They also badly needed tax revenue to pay for the swelling unemployment.

Health
There were major dangers to health from unregulated production of alcohol. There were over 100 deaths from moonshine alcohol poisoning.

Was it a complete failure?
- Alcohol consumption decreased by 70% in the 1920s with added health effects. Deaths from liver disease decreased dramatically.
- There remained high degrees of rural support for prohibition. They saw drunkenness as a threat of the cities.
- Religious groups continued to support prohibition throughout its time arguing that it improved family life and morals.
- Middle Class communities also tended to support it arguing that it helped American productivity.