What we fund
Reducing the harmful use of alcohol

The World Health Organization estimates that the harmful use of alcohol results in the death of 2.5 million people annually and contributes to more than 60 types of disease and injury. The misuse of alcohol is a critical risk factor for non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Reducing its abuse is key to achieving the global target of reducing NCDs by 25% by 2025.

IDRC’s Non-Communicable Disease Prevention (NCDP) program supports this goal by funding research in low- and middle-income countries to address alcohol misuse through effective controls.

Alcohol control research areas

It is important that the research be solution-oriented. The following graphic outlines the key themes and cross-cutting issues that research proposals should address:

- **Understanding the policy environment**
  - Situation analyses on alcohol control:
    - Extent to which control measures are implemented (controls on availability, price to consumer, restrictions on marketing, etc.)
    - Analysis of the regulatory environment (national and international by including the analysis of trade agreements)
    - Analysis of how the legal framework of alcohol regulation is implemented, enforced, and assessed
  - Cost-benefit of inaction on alcohol misuse

- **Predicting and evaluating policy impact**
  - Impacts, or potential impacts, of:
    - Tax and price policies aimed at reducing the affordability of alcohol products
    - Marketing restrictions, such as:
      - Reducing availability of retailed alcohol
      - Bans on alcohol advertising, sponsorship, and promotion
    - Measures to reduce the public health impact of illicit alcohol

- **Cross-cutting issues**
  - **Equity**: Understanding the value and impact of alcohol control policies on different social groups
  - **Commercial influence**: Understanding and addressing the industry-specific barriers to policy adoption and implementation
  - **Intersectoral action**: Understanding how best to engage the relevant sectors
**Important cross-cutting issues**

While these issues cannot be addressed in all projects, whenever possible researchers should take the following into account when designing research and dissemination strategies:

- **Equity:** Evidence about alcohol control interventions should also show the impact of policies on different social groups. In fact, as NCDs disproportionately affect poor and marginalized populations, inequity is an important issue to understand and address. As a key NCD risk factor, alcohol use may also show unique geographic and gender patterns in different regions.

- **Intersectoral action:** There is a need for policy research to examine various factors that enable or constrain the use of a holistic approach engaging multiple sectors of government to address health issues, including alcohol misuse. We invite research teams to generate evidence through case studies about the most effective coordination and accountability mechanisms for bringing together different sectors of government and relevant and appropriate stakeholders to tackle the NCD epidemic.

- **Commercial influence:** Alcohol industry opposition can be a major barrier to the successful implementation of healthy public policies. Yet, policy dialogue can be strengthened by sound evidence that addresses misperceptions resulting from industry influence.

A variety of research designs and approaches can be used to generate rigorous evidence:

- Case studies and natural experiments: for example, to assess the outcome and impacts of alcohol policies
- Studies to identify “enablers” and opportunities leading to successful alcohol policy changes
- Research on promising small-scale interventions that could be expanded at a higher level
- The use of simulation models using local data to estimate the health and economic impact of alcohol tax increases and/or other alcohol policies
- Mixed-methods studies focusing on the relationships between alcohol consumption and household poverty (e.g. the opportunity costs of alcohol)
- Systematic reviews of research evidence – including reviews of complex interventions designed to reduce the harmful use of alcohol in LMICs
- Regional and cross-regional situation analyses of alcohol issues and responses in LMICs

Research projects that address multiple NCD risk factors are also welcomed and will be considered for funding. Multi-country, regional or sub-regional research is encouraged, especially projects addressing policy issues that benefit from cross-border cooperation or where it may be helpful to compare the presence and absence of policy interventions in neighbouring countries or regions.

**Knowledge translation and policy dialogue**

The focus of NCDP funding is research but it is important that the research informs policy change. Therefore, every research project must include a strong communication strategy that creates opportunities to use and apply the evidence generated. In addition to the usual intent to publish, researchers are encouraged to outline how they will engage with policymakers and key stakeholders to encourage the use of their results in informing the adoption and effective implementation of alcohol control policies. Engaging stakeholders early in project development is a good practice that strengthens relations and the uptake of results.

“Alcohol and ultra-processed food and drink industries use similar tactics and strategies to the tobacco industry to undermine effective public health policies and programmes”

*Profits and pandemics: prevention of harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol, and ultra-processed food and drink industries, Non-Communicable Disease Series 4, The Lancet, 2013*
Out of scope

The following research areas are not a funding focus for the NCDP program:

- Testing and evaluating primary healthcare interventions (e.g. counseling and alcohol cessation trials and evaluation of the integration of cessation support into primary health care)
- Epidemiology and surveillance of alcohol consumption or prevalence; primary data collection for “global surveys”
- Testing and evaluating community and school-based education; awareness-raising campaigns and stand-alone media campaigns focused on individuals’ behavioural change
- Drunk-driving and other injury-prevention research as a sole focus

Eligibility criteria

IDRC’s mission is to support LMIC institutions in undertaking rigorous research on important development issues. Government ministries, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations are eligible for funding.

Eligibility criteria to be met:

- A principal investigator must be a citizen or permanent resident of a low- or middle-income country and have a primary work affiliation in a LMIC institution.
- The recipient institution must be a recognized legal entity in a LMIC and capable of entering into contractual arrangements and assuming legal and financial obligations. Up to three LMIC institutions may administer the funds.
- The applicant(s) must demonstrate that they work in an environment that supports research through the administration of funds, provision of space and equipment, etc.
- Principal investigators from LMICs may, if necessary, work in partnership with co-investigators or collaborators from high-income countries.

“Because alcohol is no ordinary commodity, the public has a right to expect a more enlightened approach to alcohol policy.”

Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity: Research and Public Policy
A summary of the Book, Society for the Study of Addiction to Alcohol and Other Drugs, 2003

IDRC recognizes the OECD list of developing countries and territories eligible for Official Development Assistance. However, please note that we do not currently support research in developing countries or territories in Eastern Europe, Oceania, countries of the former Soviet Union, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and some countries in Central Africa.

Funding scope and duration

Applications for grants over CA$100,000 are encouraged. Grant duration can be a maximum of five years. Grant sizes can vary significantly depending on duration, geographic scope, and methodologies.

We recognize that significantly smaller project grants play a valuable role in advancing evidence for alcohol control. We are seeking to support small grant initiatives that would be administered through LMIC organizations. We therefore invite ideas from LMIC institutions that could manage a small grant initiative aligned with NCDP’s themes.
NCDP research idea review process

In general, the process for soliciting, reviewing, and awarding grants follows this timeline. Please note that we welcome research ideas and concept notes at any time.

*please refer to the concept note form and its general guidelines on our website

About NCDP

IDRC’s Non-Communicable Disease Prevention (NCDP) program funds research with the goal to inform and enable the adoption and effective implementation of policies and programs that prevent non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in low- and middle-income countries. Our focus is on the “best-buys” that reduce NCD risk factors: strategies that are low-cost for countries but have a high impact on improving population health.