



Interdisciplinary research activity is challenging but crucial for developing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of and addressing the factors that influence the development of harmful substance use and gambling behaviours

**interdisciplinarity
substance use
determinants
gambling**

Given the diverse range of disciplines involved in ALICE RAP [Work Area 3](#) (e.g. anthropology, economics, psychology and genetics) producing a coherent interdisciplinary synthesis on such a broad topic as the determinants of harmful substance use and gambling was demanding. Key challenges included the diverse approaches to science (e.g. positivism and constructivism) used in different disciplines and the variations in research methods and data that result from such contrasting underlying approaches (e.g. repeated experimentation compared with text-based description), as well as the complex and lengthy process of agreeing on definitions for key terminology (e.g. determinants).

However, despite these challenges it was evident throughout the project that the involvement of multiple disciplines was crucial for developing a broader understanding of the determinants of harmful substance use and gambling, as well as for developing policy and practice responses to problem behaviour. Interdisciplinary discussions enabled discipline experts to extend their knowledge of the factors that influence transitions in the development of harmful substance use and gambling, and through interdisciplinary discussion to negotiate a more nuanced understanding of the problem. Thus, despite the challenges, an interdisciplinary approach was also perceived to be crucial for developing responses to the complex, real world problem of harmful substance use and gambling.

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