

E Enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS)

Commitments of Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC)¹

- Undertake a comprehensive ban of all tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS).
- Cooperate in the development of technologies and other means necessary to facilitate the elimination of cross-border advertising.

Global evidence

TAPS are key to the expansion of the tobacco epidemic.

- The tobacco industry invests heavily in tobacco advertising. In the United States alone, the industry spends about US\$ 10 billion annually for TAPS activities.²
- The tobacco industry vehemently opposes TAPS bans and is increasingly aggressive in circumventing TAPS prohibitions in countries.³

Global best practice: comprehensive TAPS bans reduce tobacco use

Effective TAPS bans:³

- are comprehensive and complete; partial bans do not work.
- apply to all types of tobacco products.
- apply to all types of TAPS, both direct and indirect, including promotional activities through “corporate social responsibility.”
- cover all media, including online media.
- prohibit false, misleading or deceptive advertising, such as the use of terms like “mild” or “light.”

- address cross-border advertising, such as tobacco advertising on international television channels and Internet sites, and sponsorship of international sporting and cultural events.
- ban promotional strategies, such as price discounts and free product giveaways.
- prohibit point-of-sale advertising and promotion.
- address and limit tobacco imagery in entertainment media, such as films and television.
- ideally, mandate plain packaging for all tobacco products.

Prohibiting all forms of TAPS activities is a pivotal tobacco control strategy.

- Exposure to TAPS is associated with higher smoking prevalence rates,⁴⁻⁵ particularly with initiation and continuation of smoking among youth.⁶⁻⁷
- About a third of youth experimentation with tobacco occurs as a result of exposure to TAPS.⁸
- Comprehensive bans on TAPS reduce cigarette consumption in all countries regardless of income level.⁴
- Point-of-sale advertising bans reduce spontaneous tobacco purchases by 30%.⁹

Global impact

- In high-income countries, a comprehensive ban that covers tobacco advertising in all media and also includes bans on all promotions or displays using tobacco brand names and logos has been documented as decreasing tobacco consumption by about 7%, independent of other tobacco control interventions.¹⁰⁻¹²

- Nearly 613 000 fewer smokers and 306 323 deaths averted by implementation of enforced marketing bans in four countries across the world from 2007 to 2010, including Syrian Arab Republic.¹³

Regional status and data

Tobacco advertising already impacts children of the Region.

- 84% of children aged 6 in Pakistan could identify a cigarette brand.¹⁴
- More than 1 in 10 children aged 13–15 years had been offered free cigarettes by a tobacco company representative in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Somaliland, and the West Bank.¹⁵

Complete TAPS bans are feasible and effective in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

- The Islamic Republic of Iran included corporate social responsibility initiatives, Internet advertising and sales and point-of-sale advertising in its TAPS ban, making it one of the first countries in the Region to completely ban all forms of tobacco advertising.²
- Bahrain, Djibouti, Islamic Republic of Iran, Libya, United Arab Emirates and Yemen are ranked among the highest achieving countries in the world for TAPS bans.²

Only 6 out of the Region's 22 countries are fully protected from exposure to TAPS.¹⁶ Where TAPS bans exist, enforcement remains suboptimal in some countries.

Note: The highest achieving countries in the Global Tobacco Control Report are ranked based on the presence of a ban on all forms of direct and indirect advertising.

Actions needed

- Legislate comprehensive TAPS bans, if they do not yet exist.
- Expand existing bans to cover all forms of TAPS in all media.
- Fully enforce TAPS bans.

Facts and fallacies: the truth about TAPS bans

Fallacy: As a legal product, tobacco should be advertised.

Fact: Tobacco kills, and second-hand smoke disregards the right of non-smokers to breathe clean air. Many types of business, with legal products and services (including pharmaceuticals, fireworks, asbestos and guns) have restrictions on the marketing of their products and services. Tobacco is more harmful than any of these, and is the only legal product that kills when used according to the manufacturers' instructions. Governments have a responsibility to protect the public and their health from potentially dangerous products. Banning TAPS is one legitimate mechanism for governments to safeguard people from the harms of tobacco.

Fallacy: TAPS bans violate the constitutional right to freedom of expression.

Fact: Throughout the world, constitutions recognize the higher imperative for governments to uphold and protect their citizens' safety and welfare over private enterprise interests and rights to free speech. The data on tobacco's harmful effects are solid, as is the evidence that tobacco advertising promotes tobacco use. TAPS bans have been upheld by various courts across the world despite challenges by the tobacco industry, because they are based on public health protection and do not interfere with free trade.^{17–19}

Fallacy: TAPS target only adults and do not affect youth tobacco use.

Fact: Careful analysis of tobacco industry documents made public through the Master Settlement Agreement²⁰ conclusively revealed the tobacco industry's intentional targeting of children and youth in their advertising and marketing strategies. TAPS continue to target non-smokers and youth, especially in developing countries where regulations on advertising and promotion are weak and knowledge of the danger of tobacco is limited. Some of the documented industry advertising tactics include concert ticket giveaways, prizes after buying a certain number of packs, and free samples of cigarettes, which cater specifically to low-income groups, such as youth and the poor.^{21,22} Without a doubt, the only guaranteed way to protect children and youth from tobacco advertising and marketing is through a comprehensive TAPS ban.

Fallacy: TAPS bans will destroy the advertising industry and will negatively impact the economy.

Fact: No country in the world that has implemented a comprehensive TAPS ban has witnessed the collapse of the advertising industry or documented a

significant negative impact on the economy. In reality, tobacco advertising represents a minuscule fraction of advertising revenue in most countries; previous studies have documented that tobacco advertising accounted for only 0.5% of the total advertising budget in France, 0.7% in the United Kingdom and 1.8% in Belgium.¹⁷ In the European Union, which implemented a TAPS ban ahead of many countries, tobacco expenditures in advertising were quickly replaced by publicity from other sectors and industries without revenue or net job losses.²²

Fallacy: Point-of-sale bans will severely impact smaller businesses and retailers, and cause job losses.

Fact: To date, there have been no reports of small businesses closing down or significantly losing revenue in countries that have implemented point-of-sales bans. For example, complete display bans introduced in Saskatchewan, Canada, resulted in no stores being closed down and no staff being dismissed.²³ Similar experiences were documented in Iceland, Ireland, Norway and Thailand and various states and territories in Australia, who, together with Canada, were the first to enact point-of-sales bans.²³

Fallacy: Point-of-sales bans do not work in preventing smoking, especially among the youth.

Fact: Iceland and Canada, which were the first countries to enact point-of-sales bans, have conclusively demonstrated significant drops in youth smoking shortly after their bans came into effect.²³ This experience is being replicated in the other countries that have since implemented similar legislation.²⁴

Tobacco advertising makes a deadly product attractive. Ban all forms of TAPS and markedly reduce tobacco use!

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