



Frequently asked questions

Enforce a total comprehensive ban on tobacco products advertising, promotion and sponsorship

Q: Why should tobacco not be advertised, promoted or sponsored as it is a legal product?

Tobacco, although a legal product, should not be advertised. 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 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 tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS) is one legitimate mechanism for governments to safeguard people from the harms of tobacco.

Q: Do TAPS bans violate the constitutional right to freedom of expression?

TAPS bans do not violate the constitutional right to freedom of expression. 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. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, enshrined in the constitution and bill of rights of many countries, specifically exempts public health from its principle of freedom of speech.

Q: Do TAPS affect youth?

TAPS affect youth tobacco use. Careful analysis of tobacco industry documents made public through the Master Settlement Agreement conclusively revealed the tobacco industry's intentional targeting of children and youth in their advertising and marketing strategies. TAPS continues 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. Without a doubt, the only guaranteed way to protect children and youth from tobacco advertising and marketing is through a comprehensive TAPS ban.

Q: Will TAPS bans destroy the advertising industry or impact negatively on the economy?

TAPS bans will not destroy the advertising industry and will not negatively impact the economy. 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.



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.

Q: Will point-of-sale bans impact smaller businesses and retailers or cause job losses?

Point-of-sale bans will not impact smaller businesses and retailers, nor cause job losses. 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. 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.

Q: Do point-of-sales bans work in preventing smoking, especially among the youth?

Point-of-sales bans work in preventing smoking, especially among the youth. 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. This experience is being replicated in other countries that have since implemented similar legislation.