

Hooking the next generation: how the tobacco industry captures young customers



A GLOBAL
TOBACCO
INDUSTRY
WATCHDOG



World Health
Organization

#TOBACCO EXPOSED

Hooking the next generation: how the tobacco industry captures young customers

“History is repeating, as the tobacco industry tries to sell the same nicotine to our children in different packaging. These industries are actively targeting schools, children and young people with new products that are essentially a candy-flavoured trap. How can they talk about harm reduction when they are marketing these dangerous, highly addictive products to children?”

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General, World Health Organization



Hooking the next generation: how the tobacco industry captures young customers.

ISBN 978-92-4-009464-2 (electronic version)

ISBN 978-92-4-009465-9 (print version)

© World Health Organization 2024

Some rights reserved. This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>).

Under the terms of this licence, you may copy, redistribute and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, provided the work is appropriately cited, as indicated below. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that WHO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the WHO logo is not permitted. If you adapt the work, then you must license your work under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If you create a translation of this work, you should add the following disclaimer along with the suggested citation: "This translation was not created by the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition shall be the binding and authentic edition".

Any mediation relating to disputes arising under the licence shall be conducted in accordance with the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization (<http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules/>).

Suggested citation. Hooking the next generation: how the tobacco industry captures young customers. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data. CIP data are available at <https://iris.who.int/>.

Sales, rights and licensing. To purchase WHO publications, see <https://www.who.int/publications/book-orders>. To submit requests for commercial use and queries on rights and licensing, see <https://www.who.int/copyright>.

Third-party materials. If you wish to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, it is your responsibility to determine whether permission is needed for that reuse and to obtain permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

General disclaimers. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of WHO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted and dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

The mention of specific companies or of certain manufacturers' products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by WHO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. Errors and omissions excepted, the names of proprietary products are distinguished by initial capital letters.

All reasonable precautions have been taken by WHO to verify the information contained in this publication. However, the published material is being distributed without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied. The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the material lies with the reader. In no event shall WHO be liable for damages arising from its use.

Contents

Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction: creating an environment that promotes youth uptake	1
1. The industry designs products that appeal to children and markets them aggressively	2
Product design and flavours	3
Pervasive marketing	3
Targeted tobacco marketing	4
Sales tactics	5
Industry marketing tactics around the world	6
2. The industry uses misleading messages and messengers to influence public opinion and appeal to youth	8
3. The industry works to influence policies that would protect youth	12
Conclusions	14
Solutions	14
References	16
Additional resources	20

Acknowledgements



This report was produced under the leadership of Dr Rüdiger Krech, Director of the Department of Health Promotion and Vinayak Prasad, Unit Head, No Tobacco Unit, World Health Organization. The overall scientific coordinators and lead authors of the report were Jorge Alday, Ranti Fayokun, Jaimie Guerra, Tracey Johnston, Benn McGrady, Simone St Claire, Erin Sandberg and Kerstin Schotte.

This publication would not have been possible without the substantial contributions, reviews and suggestions from colleagues at the Convention Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), Kelvin Khoo and Mitchel Lara, as well as colleagues from WHO headquarters and regional offices: Diana Ceron, Angela Ciobanu, Alison Commar, Fatimah El-Awa, Jagdish Kaur, Liza Lebedeva, William Maina, Priscilla Obodai, Rosa Sandoval and Xi Yin.

WHO wishes to thank the following external contributors and reviewers from STOP and Vital Strategies: Emma Green, Yayne Hailu, Shantal Henry, Alyssa Holder, Fahmida Islam, Shivam Kapoor, Sharan Kuganesan, Allegra Lynn, Melina Samar Magsumbol, Huong Nguyen, Barrett Prinz and Morgan Zeiss, as well as Phil Chamberlain and Allen Gallagher from the Tobacco Control Research Group at the University of Bath, United Kingdom and Mary Assunta and Debby Sy from the Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control.

The creative agency Rooftop has supported the development of the publication design: thanks to Richard Ahlfeldt, Design Director Steven Bryden and Graphic Designer Louw Sevenster.



An estimated
37 million
children aged 13-15
years use tobacco.

Introduction: creating an environment that promotes youth uptake

Most adults who use tobacco start when they are children or young adults, with lifetime users most likely to become hooked before the age of 21 years.

The industry works to reach children and youth to replace customers who quit or die. And it succeeds: an estimated 37 million children aged 13–15 years use tobacco (1), and globally, in most countries that have measured it, use of the industry’s electronic products is more prevalent among young people than among older generations.

In the WHO European Region, e-cigarettes have overtaken conventional cigarettes in popularity, with 32% of 15-year-olds surveyed reporting e-cigarette use at some point and 20% in the past 30 days (2).

The range of products the industry uses to appeal to youth has expanded significantly, from cigarettes, cigarillos and shisha to newer products like e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products and nicotine pouches. Flavoured products and additives, sleek designs and child-friendly packaging and imagery make addictive products even more appealing to youth. Companies rapidly launch new products that sidestep, or are not included, in current laws, and use every available means to expand their market share before regulations can catch up with them.

The industry’s tactics include positioning many nicotine products as “safer” than cigarettes, potentially distracting policy-makers and consumers from the fact that nicotine itself is addictive and harmful, particularly to children and youth.

For example, e-cigarettes with nicotine are highly addictive and are harmful to health. While long-term health effects are not fully understood, it has been established that they generate toxic substances, some of which are known to cause cancer and some that increase the risk of heart and lung disorders. Use of e-cigarettes can also affect brain development, potentially leading to learning and anxiety disorders for young people (3).

The tobacco and related industries continue to use many tactics to hook young people and sustain and grow the tobacco business, including:

- releasing new products, which often feature child-friendly flavours and designs ranging from cartoon characters to sleek, high-tech designs;
- marketing and selling these products near schools, displaying them at children’s eye-level near snacks, sweets or sugary drinks;
- marketing these products in digital spaces, including social media, streaming services and gaming platforms, and securing the endorsement of influencers and celebrities;
- sponsoring youth-oriented events, including sporting events and concerts, as well as school programmes;
- lowering prices of disposable e-cigarettes, engaging in “buy one, get one free” promotions and selling single sticks of cigarettes so they are affordable for children and youth;
- giving away free samples or items with tobacco or related industry brand names;
- playing down perceptions of addictiveness and potential health risks;
- opposing regulation that will reduce demand for tobacco and nicotine products, including among youth; and
- funding front groups and attempting to conduct corporate social responsibility activities so that youth have more positive perceptions of the industry.

Unfortunately, these tactics are working. Evidence from around the world shows an alarming uptake by children of some products, such as e-cigarettes. The tobacco industry is succeeding in its efforts to create a new generation of young people who smoke, vape, suck nicotine pouches or use snuff.

1

The industry designs products that appeal to children and markets them aggressively

Internal tobacco industry documents, dating as far back as the 1970s, show that tobacco companies have long considered children and youth to be “replacement smokers”, “pre-smokers” and a critical market to sustaining their business and the future of their brands.

Today, the tobacco and related industries have more products and communication channels at their disposal than ever before to help them reach youth. They continue to manufacture and sell products that are widely known to appeal to children and youth, including heated tobacco products, nicotine pouches and e-cigarettes. The companies design these products to be appealing to youth and then aggressively market them, including in digital environments where the audience can be easily targeted.

Digital platforms are more complex to monitor and regulate and offer the industry a variety of ways to subvert bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS), directly engage with young people and even sell directly to them. The impact is clear: A survey of 15–30-year-olds in four countries that restrict tobacco advertising found that 85% were exposed to e-cigarette advertising across multiple media platforms, and that higher rates of exposure were linked to higher rates of e-cigarette use (4).

Tobacco industry ads reach millions of youth on Instagram, Facebook, X and TikTok

According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids’ report #SponsoredByBigTobacco, content promoting e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches and heated tobacco products from British American Tobacco (BAT) and Philip Morris International has been viewed more than 3.4 billion times on social media platforms. The marketing content for these three brands – Vuse, Velo and IQOS – has reached over 150 million youth under the age of 25 years (13).

Product design and flavours

The industry has accelerated the introduction and marketing of flavoured products across regions in recent years. Research confirms that flavour is a primary reason why youth try e-cigarettes and other nicotine and tobacco products (5, 6). In the absence of legal restrictions, tobacco and related industries manufacture and sell products in a wide range of flavours, such as fruit and candy. E-cigarettes are available in at least 16 000 unique flavours.


The industry finds ways around flavour bans

The industry subverts bans on flavoured tobacco by reformulating the product, while providing similar appeal, or launching accessories like flavour capsules or cigarette pack inserts. A systematic review of available research on flavour capsule cigarette use found these products are associated with younger people (7).

- **Youth-focused surveys suggest they prefer flavoured products:** the United States Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey 2023 (8) and a 2022 study of youth in Australia (9) both found that nearly nine in 10 current e-cigarette users use a flavoured product.
- **Flavours keep youth hooked:** other research in the United States of America found that more than 70% of youth e-cigarette users would quit if the products were only available in tobacco flavour (10).

E-cigarette producers manufacture products in a wide variety of forms, including designs that resemble toys, candy or child-friendly drinks, use cartoon characters, or incorporate sleek, high-tech designs in limited editions, which appeal to young people. Many e-cigarettes are also designed to allow discreet use and are marketed as such. Some can be integrated into hoodies or resemble pens, lipsticks or watches, so they can be hidden, especially from teachers and parents, and used in places where smoking or e-cigarette use is not permitted.

Tobacco and related industries actively interfere with public health policy-making related to these products by suggesting that they are reduced-risk alternatives for adult smokers or serve as cessation aides. Research suggests a different reality: Children aged 13–15 years are using e-cigarettes at rates higher than adults in all WHO regions (11). Most will not have been previous tobacco users: a United States study found that nearly three quarters of e-cigarette users aged 18–24 years had never smoked a combustible cigarette (12).



85% of 15–30-year-olds were exposed to e-cigarette advertising across multiple media platforms, and that higher rates of exposure were linked to higher rates of e-cigarette use.

Pervasive marketing

Advertising, promotion and sponsorships are targeted at youth and are increasingly being placed in digital contexts popular with this audience. The industry subverts national TAPS bans with cross-border digital advertising on global platforms like Instagram and TikTok. In addition, it is experimenting with marketing on emerging digital platforms, like the Metaverse. Products being promoted range from cigarettes, bidi or smokeless tobacco to e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products and nicotine pouches.

Exposure to these platforms impacts behaviour. One study found that daily use of one social media platform among middle school students was associated with a 3.8% increase in risk of current e-cigarette usage, rising to 6.1% among high school students (13). Another found that each additional hour per day spent on the platform among first-year university students was associated with a 4.6% increase in the probability of lifetime e-cigarette use (14).



Targeted tobacco marketing includes the following:

- paid ads or company-branded pages on social media;
- paid product promotion by influencers whose followers on social media and gaming platforms include children and youth; these financial relationships are not always disclosed, and tobacco companies have been exposed using influencers who are younger than the company's supposed voluntary guidelines;
- product placement like tobacco depictions in streaming shows popular among 15- to 24-year-olds more than doubled in 2022, exposing nearly 25 million young people (15); images of tobacco and e-cigarette use are prevalent in entertainment media, including in popular video games (16) and TV programmes targeted at teens and young adults, like *Stranger Things*, on global streaming platforms (16); research suggests that this exposure is linked to increased awareness and susceptibility to use these products among youth;
- sponsorship of music festivals which can build awareness for tobacco and related companies' products among young audiences; free samples may be provided at these events (17);

- sponsorship of events that take place online, such as e-sports or online festivals; and
- accounts on platforms including Facebook and Instagram that appear to be focused on lifestyle topics like music or sports; some accounts prioritize corporate messages, such as information on diversity and environmental policies.

Sports sponsorship

- This helps build brand recognition and appeal. For example, Formula 1 sponsorship enables tobacco companies to promote their messages and brands to the sport's increasingly younger global fanbase via race footage, social media and other promotional activities linked to the sport (18). They also reach viewers of Netflix's reality series, *Formula 1: Drive to Survive*, who may not watch the sport itself. BAT's sponsorship of the McLaren F1 team helps it promote its e-cigarette brand, Vuse, in countries like India, where e-cigarettes are banned.

Corporate social responsibility

Tobacco and related industries also use **corporate social responsibility** activities to raise brand awareness and polish their reputations among young audiences.

- In some countries, the industry sponsors academic scholarships or the building of schools to encourage positive sentiments and distract from its exploitation of the young.
- In some countries, the industry has run youth antismoking and anti-e-cigarette use campaigns. Research shows these campaigns are not effective in reducing youth intention to use tobacco or e-cigarettes, and may even have the opposite effect (19). Such campaigns may also prompt youth to have more favourable attitudes towards tobacco companies.
- The industry sponsors global competitions for youth, such as the Conrad Challenge, which is aimed at 13–18-year-olds (20) and BAT's Battle of the Minds, which targets university students (21). It also sponsors sports events and facilities, effectively raising awareness of the tobacco companies and their products among youth.

Sales tactics

Sales and pricing tactics help ensure that products remain accessible and affordable to youth

- Single cigarettes (22), nicotine pouches and disposable single-use e-cigarettes (23) make these products more affordable for children and youth.
- Bans on sales to minors may be subverted by unscrupulous sellers, both in physical stores and via e-commerce and immersive commerce.
- Delivery services like UBER Eats, which delivers e-cigarettes in South Africa (24), may make it easier for young people to access these products.
- There are reports of under-18-year-olds being sold tobacco and nicotine products or offered free samples, across a wide range of countries. In 87 countries participating in the Global Youth Tobacco Survey between 2014 and 2018, each reported that between 0.4% and 22.7% of 13–15-year-olds had been offered a free tobacco product from a tobacco company representative (25).



In 87 countries, between 2014 and 2018, each reported that between 0.4% and 22.7% of 13–15-year-olds had been offered a free tobacco product from a tobacco company representative.

Examples of industry marketing tactics around the world

- In 2021, **BAT Nigeria Foundation** partnered with the National Youth Service Corps, a federal government youth scheme for young agriculture entrepreneurs (26).
- China National Tobacco Corporation has built or sponsors schools in **China** (27) and **Africa** (28).
- In **Jamaica**, BAT subsidiary Carreras offers financial scholarships, open to students attending a range of colleges and universities (29).
- In **Colombia**, Philip Morris International (PMI) sponsored the 2023 Festival Estéreo Picnic, one of the most important music festivals in South America and ran a BONDS-by-IQOS-branded competition where people buying the device could win admission to the event (30).
- The **Indian** smokeless tobacco company DS Group developed and promoted a gamified mobile ad for its extended candy product, Pass Pass Pulse. The game prominently features the DS Group logo, which fosters associations with the company's well-known tobacco brands (31).
- One of **Indonesia's** largest cigarette companies runs a campaign focusing on electronic music, including in the Metaverse, to indirectly promote one of its cigarette brands (31).
- In **Pakistan**, BAT partnered with digital radio company Spotify to promote its Velo products on Spotify, Instagram and Facebook, with sponsored content and paid advertising on these platforms (32).
- In **Switzerland**, the tobacco industry funded and supported a campaign encouraging voters to oppose restrictions on tobacco advertising, designed to protect children. Nevertheless, the referendum vote went in favour of the proposed restrictions (33).

To address the marketing of tobacco products, nicotine products (other than medicines) and related products, governments should implement a comprehensive ban (or restrictions) on TAPS. Such measures should apply to all categories of tobacco products, nicotine products (other than medicines) and related products and should apply to all media.



Without strong TAPS bans, youth are exposed to industry marketing

The industry has long used sports, music, film and TV to ingratiate harmful brands into young people’s lives; social media has given it new ways to appeal to and interact with young audiences.

Mexico

This post promoting e-cigarettes sold by a Mexican retailer shows a digitally altered image of Guillermo Ochoa, a goalkeeper for the Mexican National team. The caption reads: “Don’t let your cravings get to you in this World Cup, give yourself a break by vaping like the greats.” (34)



Source: Kapital Smoke & Vapor Twitter.

Indonesia

This image of Naruto, a popular anime character, is used to market e-cigarettes. The caption reads: “Naruto just chased Aegis Solo 2, why don’t you 😂 Come on, let’s check the waves, show off HC [the e-cigarette] and its GeekVape products.” (35)



Source: GeekVape Indonesia Facebook.

India

A poster for the film “Shehzada” featuring the actor-movie producer Kartik Aaryan smoking. Miraj Cinemas is owned by Miraj company, a smokeless tobacco company (31).



Source: mirajcinemas Instagram.

Note: the examples here were collected by the Tobacco Enforcement and Reporting Movement (<https://termcommunity.com/>), a digital media monitoring system that provides evidence of tobacco and nicotine marketing on social media platforms and news sites.

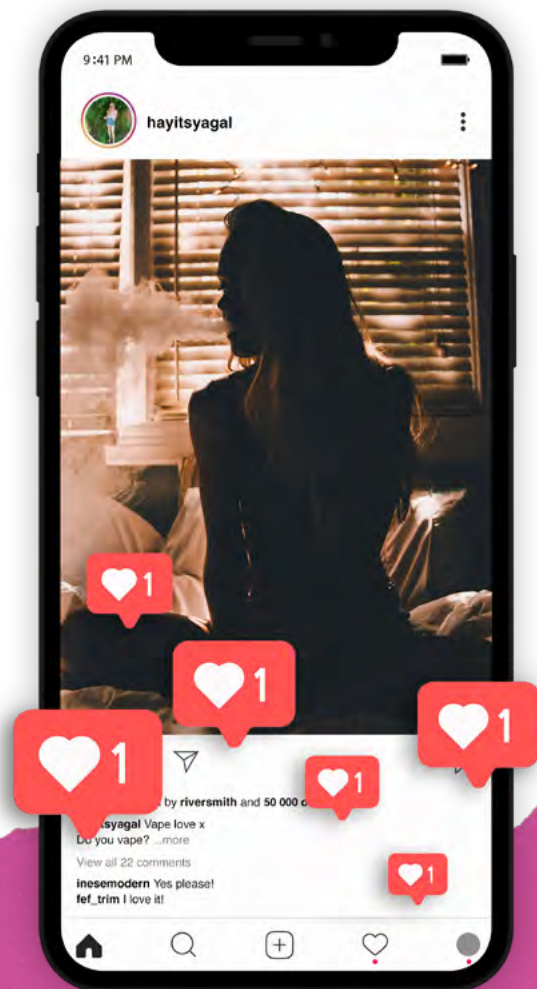
2

The industry uses misleading messages and messengers to influence public opinion and appeal to youth

The tobacco and related industries carefully craft messages to portray themselves as beneficial to society. This serves two purposes.

First, some of these messages are particularly resonant with younger generations who are interested in sustainability, human rights and the common good. Claiming to contribute to progress in these areas may create favourable perceptions among younger generations.

Second, tobacco and related industries may be able to persuade policy-makers and the public that they have a net positive impact on society. If these groups believe the industry is benefiting public health, the economy or the environment, policy-makers may be more likely to support them. With their support, the industry can ultimately get what it wants: to sell more addictive and deadly products.



Here are some of the messages these industries use to try to influence public opinion, and facts that challenge them.

Industry message:

“We’re sustainable”

Many large tobacco companies position themselves as ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) leaders (36). They participate in ESG assessments that are most likely to give them a positive rating, not the ones where they would rate poorly (37). The industry also tries to greenwash its reputation by publicizing simplistic environmental efforts, such as tree-planting or cigarette butt clean-up programmes that may generate positive attention but have little impact

In reality:

- tobacco devastates the planet at every step of its supply chain;
- almost all cigarette filters contain toxic, single-use plastics and are a leading source of plastic pollution; and
- the tobacco and related industries’ electronic products generate a growing amount of toxic plastic, metal and battery waste.

Industry message:

“We help society through our charity work and donations”

The tobacco industry engages in “corporate social responsibility” activities relating to disaster relief, the environment, education, development and more. It does this to portray itself as a responsible industry. Ensuring these activities, plus any endorsement by or partnership with government, are covered by the media allows the industry to reach a wide consumer audience, including youth.

In reality:

- tobacco use costs the world approximately US\$ 1.4 trillion in economic damage every year (38), causes more than 8 million deaths a year, harms the environment and perpetuates poverty, far outweighing any monetary donations or charity work from the industry.

Industry message:

“We’re reducing the harm caused by cigarettes”

Tobacco and related companies promote the idea of “harm reduction” to try to convince consumers of the safety of addictive and harmful e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products and nicotine pouches. The implied advertising of these products as “reduced risk” echoes the tobacco industry’s past misleading claims of tobacco harm reduction through cigarette filters and “low-tar” cigarettes.

In reality:

- while there is insufficient evidence that these newer products are effective in helping smokers quit, there is growing evidence that these new and emerging products come with their own risks, and most users end up becoming dual users, which is more harmful; and
- the tobacco industry also shows no serious commitment to ending the sale of cigarettes and continues to promote them to young people.

In 2018, PMI claimed that it was giving up cigarettes and creating a “smoke-free future”. The campaign appeared to be designed to market PMI’s IQOS heated tobacco product to consumers. PMI has pushed this messaging via ad campaigns and opinion pieces in the media in a wide range of countries (39).

Industry message:

“E-cigarettes, heated tobacco products and nicotine pouches are only for adult smokers who cannot quit any other way”

Tobacco and related companies often insist that these newer products, supposedly intended to reduce harm, are not designed for or advertised to youth.

In reality:

- increasing evidence shows that these products are marketed as consumer products and are often targeted at youth;
- these products' fruit and candy flavours, designs that appeal to children and youth and widespread social media marketing are hooking youth around the globe; and
- data show that the rate of e-cigarette use is higher among younger rather than older age groups in every WHO region and that young people who use e-cigarettes are almost three times more likely to use traditional cigarettes later in life (11).

In media interviews, a PMI executive in the Philippines hailed the reversal of the country's ban on e-cigarettes as a “win for public health”, despite the rapid increase in youth use of these products (40).



The tobacco and related industries try to influence opinion and policy by discrediting proven science and funding or disseminating pseudo-science

The tobacco and related industries have directly and indirectly harmless funded scientists, researchers, connected lobbyists and former insiders to dispute scientific evidence that shows their products are harmful. For decades, the tobacco industry knowingly lied and falsified the evidence base on tobacco harm, second-hand smoke harm and the “benefits” of various product innovations such as “low-tar” and filtered cigarettes. They have also paid to sponsor journals, medical education and events for health and scientific audiences. In 2024 PMI funded a series of courses on Medscape for smoking cessation that portrayed “nicotine products as relatively harmless”. The series was subsequently cancelled after outcry from the scientific and medical communities.

They do all of this to sow doubt among policy-makers and the public about the damage their products can cause, so that their products might be less regulated. Fewer regulations could make their products more affordable and more widely available, including to youth. Tobacco companies also produce or sponsor the production of misleading data on their own economic importance, the difference between their tax revenue contributions and the harms their products cause to health and society, and the link between tobacco taxes and illicit trade.

Misleading research and disinformation are often channelled to academic and public health communities, policy-makers and the media through front groups and allies.

The tobacco and related industries use deceptive messengers to broadcast these misleading messages. Because they are increasingly isolated and excluded from public-sector and private-sector channels and groupings, and cut off from public sympathy and support, the tobacco and related industries need to create front groups and cultivate allies to act in their interests.

These groups can be classified as third parties, front groups or astroturf groups (41).

3

The industry works to influence policies that would protect youth

The tobacco and related industries spare no expense to pre-empt, obstruct, defeat, weaken and delay government action at all levels that prioritizes youth, human health, economic well-being and environmental integrity over their profits.

To undermine political will and capacity, they employ strategies to influence legislative and regulatory processes at national, subnational and intergovernmental levels. This includes exaggerating the industry's economic importance; manipulating public opinion to trick and pressure officials into meetings, concessions and even partnerships; creating front groups and fostering allies; manipulating science and intimidating with litigation or the threat of litigation. When successful, industry actors can manipulate both decisions and institutions at the expense of public health.

At the **national** level, the industry tries to influence executive office holders and to divide ministries, particularly health, from counterpart departments like trade, finance and agriculture to create channels for advancing its own interests. Among the key strategies it uses are:

1. buying a better reputation;
2. lobbying to secure better access to decision-making;
3. activating third parties that have better reputations to lobby on its behalf;
4. exaggerating its economic importance;
5. using intimidation and the threat of litigation;
6. drafting legislation; and
7. attending regulatory meetings/committees.



Litigation

The industry uses the threat of litigation or actual litigation to intimidate policy-makers into cancelling, delaying, weakening or even proposing ineffective tobacco control measures. Domestic courts increasingly uphold strong tobacco control measures such as large graphic health warnings or plain packaging, often referencing the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). At the international level, rulings typically are made in favour of countries' rights and obligations to protect the health of their citizens. More recently, tobacco companies and their supporters have challenged laws and regulations that are particularly important for protecting youth: addressing additives in cigarettes, heated tobacco products, e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches (42). For example:

- in **Brazil**, a tobacco lobbying group which has BAT, Japan Tobacco International and PMI as members is challenging regulation to prohibit the use of certain additives in tobacco products; and
- in **Ireland**, three PMI companies and two BAT subsidiaries are challenging an EU directive to ban characterizing flavours in heated tobacco products (43, 44).

At the **subnational** level, the tobacco and related industries target state, provincial, city and other local governments which may have weaker restrictions and capacity to enforce policies on lobbying and conflicts of interest.

- In Indonesia, decentralization has led to wide variations across the country in the adoption and implementation of measures to reduce smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke (45).
- A range of municipalities, hotels and companies in Greece, Spain and other countries have been certified as "smoke-free", many with the assistance of PMI. PMI is seeking to redefine the concept of "smoke-free" to promote the use of the harmful heated tobacco product IQOS. (46, 47).
- At the **intergovernmental** level, the industry seeks to form partnerships with United Nations agencies, interfering with the implementation of the WHO FCTC by undermining shared positions on reducing tobacco and nicotine use and limiting interactions with tobacco and related companies, distorting decision-making and legitimizing itself. By influencing this level, tobacco and related industries can both stifle multilateral efforts to promote health and create obstacles to progress at the national level.

- The major tobacco companies founded, fund and participate in the Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing Foundation. Its interactions with United Nations agencies and national authorities may hamper true accountability and progress on the issue of child labour, while helping the tobacco companies to polish their reputations using an issue that is important to younger generations (48).

Smoke-Free
Environment



Protecting policy: Article 5.3

Currently, there are 183 Parties to the WHO FCTC, covering more than 90% of the world's population. Parties commit to protect policy from tobacco industry interference by implementing Article 5.3 of the treaty. The Parties have agreed on ways to stop tobacco industry interference based on four principles:

- there is a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the tobacco industry's interests and public health policy interests;
- Parties, when dealing with the tobacco industry or those working to further its interests, should be accountable and transparent;
- Parties should require the tobacco industry and those working to further its interests to operate and act in a manner that is accountable and transparent; and
- because its products are lethal, the tobacco industry should not be granted incentives to establish or run its businesses.

The Panama Declaration, adopted at the recent tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC (COP10), reiterates the fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the interests of the tobacco industry and the interests of public health and makes clear the need for policy coherence within governments to comply with the requirements of Article 5.3.

Youth organizations from around the world participated in the COP10 under the united banner, "Global Youth Voices" to deliver a powerful message, "Future generations will remember you as the ones who protected them or the ones who failed them and put them in danger." (49)

Conclusions

The tobacco and related industries continue to lure youth into what can be a lifetime of addiction to harmful products.

- The industry reaches youth via traditional marketing in countries where it is permitted to do so and through cross-border digital marketing and depictions in entertainment media, even in countries with restrictions on tobacco marketing.
- It also reaches young people through the arts, sports and corporate social responsibility projects.
- Lack of policies to reduce tobacco use and nicotine addiction, weak policies and poorly implemented and enforced policies all help the industry continue to hook new generations.
- The industry targets all levels and all sectors of government.
- Industry interference in health policy is a major reason why youth remain unprotected, or not as protected as they should be.

- Youth have called on governments to protect current and future generations and to hold tobacco and related industries liable for the harm they cause.

Solutions

- Governments should implement in full the WHO FCTC, including:
 - » implementing and enforcing comprehensive TAPS bans and the Additional Guidelines related to Article 13, adopted at the tenth Conference of the Parties in February 2024, to address digital and cross-border marketing and the depiction of tobacco in entertainment media (these guidelines are designed to help governments take swift action to protect children and youth); regulators should hold the industry, marketers, digital platforms and media owners accountable for breaches of national TAPS laws;



Source: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

- » raising prices and taxes on consumer tobacco, nicotine and related products to make them less affordable for children and youth;
 - » banning sales of these products to children; and
 - » implementing Article 5.3 at all levels, taking a whole-of-government approach to protect policy from industry influence.
- Governments should take action against products and marketing that clearly appeal to youth:
 - » since 2018, the United States Food and Drug Administration has issued warning letters to manufacturers, distributors and online retailers that sell e-liquids with labelling and/or advertising that resembles child-friendly food products, such as candies, cookies or juices, or images that imitate cartoons (50);
 - Governments should hold the tobacco and related industries accountable, including imposing financial penalties, for:
 - » the harm they cause to health and the environment;
 - » the health, environmental and economic costs associated with the production, marketing and use of the industry's products; and
 - » their deceptive marketing and other corporate practices that undermine public health and environmental policies.

Youth and parents call for urgent action

Many young people recognize the industry's negative impact on issues they care about: physical and mental health, sustainability, plastics pollution, environmental devastation and climate change, child labour, poverty and inequity. The tobacco and related industries' products kill millions of people every year and their activities continue to harm new generations of children and youth.

Youth groups around the world urge their national governments to implement measures to prevent tobacco use and nicotine addiction and have called for tobacco corporations to be held accountable and financially liable for past, present and future harms caused by their activities (51).

Parents' groups like the United-States-based Parents Against Vaping (<https://www.parentsagainstvaping.org/>), Red PaPaz, Colombia (<https://entretodos.redpapaz.org/es/movilizaciones>) and the National Parents Association, Kenya (52) also actively call for their governments to protect children and youth from the industry and its addictive products.

References¹

1. WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco use 2000–2030. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/375711/9789240088283-eng.pdf?sequence=1>).
2. Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study [website]. World Health Organization; 2024 ([https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/health-behaviour-in-school-aged-children-\(hbsc\)-study](https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/health-behaviour-in-school-aged-children-(hbsc)-study)).
3. Tobacco: e-cigarettes [website]. World Health Organization; 2024 (<https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/tobacco-e-cigarettes>).
4. Pettigrew S, Santos JA, Pinho-Gomes A, Li Y, Jones A. Exposure to e-cigarette advertising and young people’s use of e-cigarettes: a four-country study. *Tob. Induc. Dis.* 2023;21:141. (<https://doi.org/10.18332/tid/172414>).
5. Bach L. Flavored tobacco products attract kids. Washington (DC): Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids; 2023 (<https://assets.tobaccofreekids.org/factsheets/0383.pdf>).
6. Flavors (including menthol) in tobacco products [issue brief]. New York: STOP; 2022 (<https://exposetobacco.org/wp-content/uploads/Flavors-Including-Menthol-In-Cigarettes-and-Tobacco-Products.pdf>).
7. Kyriakos CN, Zatoński MZ, Filippidis FT. Flavour capsule cigarette use and perceptions: a systematic review. *Tob Control.* 2023;32:e83-e94 (<https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2021-056837>).
8. Results from the Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey. Silver Spring (MD): US Food and Drug Administration; 2023 (<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>).
9. Jongenelis MI. E-cigarette product preferences of Australian adolescent and adult users: a 2022 study. *BMC Public Health.* 2023;23(1):220. doi:10.1186/s12889-023-15142-8.
10. Nearly two thirds of youth would stop vaping with no added sweet flavors, menthol or cooling agents. *The James.* 10 July 2023 (<https://cancer.osu.edu/news/nearly-two-thirds-of-youth-would-stop-vaping-with-no-added-sweet-flavors-menthol-or-cooling-agents>).
11. Urgent action needed to protect children and prevent the uptake of e-cigarettes [news release]. World Health Organization; 14 December 2023 (<https://www.who.int/news/item/14-12-2023-urgent-action-needed-to-protect-children-and-prevent-the-uptake-of-e-cigarettes>).
12. Harris E. Most young adults who use e-cigarettes have never smoked. *JAMA.* 2023;330(21):2045. doi:10.1001/jama.2023.22357.
13. Tobacco industry ads generate billions of views and reach millions of kids on Instagram, Facebook, X and TikTok [news release]. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids; 8 December 2023 (https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2023_12_08-social-media-report).

¹ All references accessed 19 April 2024.

14. Lin SY, Cheng X, Rossheim ME, Gress D, Cuellar AE, Cheskin L et al. Associations between use of specific social media sites and electronic cigarette use among college students. *J Am Coll Health*. 2023;71(7):2217-2224. doi:10.1080/07448481.2021.1965149.
15. Lights, camera, tobacco? Washington (DC): Truth Initiative; 2024 (<https://truthinitiative.org/lights-camera-tobacco>).
16. Played: this year's video games glamorize tobacco use to youth [news release]. Truth Initiative; 19 December 2017 (<https://truthinitiative.org/press/press-release/played-years-video-games-glamorize-tobacco-use-youth>).
17. Loud and clear: Big Tobacco's music sponsorship motives [blog]. In: STOP; 13 July 2022 (<https://exposetobacco.org/news/tobacco-music-sponsorship/>).
18. Driving addiction: F1, Netflix and cigarette company advertising. New York: STOP; 2023 (<https://exposetobacco.org/campaigns/driving-addiction/>).
19. Azad A. Juul went into a ninth-grade classroom and called its device 'totally safe,' teens testify. *CNN*; 25 July 2019 (<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/25/health/juul-reps-in-classroom-teen-testimony/index.html>).
20. CSR: education. Bath: Tobacco Tactics; 2021 (<https://tobaccotactics.org/article/csr-education/>).
21. Battle of minds [website]. British American Tobacco; 2024 (<https://competition.bat-battleofminds.com/>).
22. Single sticks fact sheet. New York: STOP; 2023 (<https://exposetobacco.org/wp-content/uploads/Single-Sticks-Cigarettes-Fact-Sheet.pdf>).
23. United Kingdom Department for Education. Disposable vape ban and what it means for young people [blog]. In: Education Hub; 29 January 2024 (<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/01/29/disposable-vape-ban-and-what-it-means-for-young-people/>).
24. Pods [website]. Uber Technology Inc.; 2024 (<https://www.ubereats.com/za/store/vape-crazy-sandton/JqDgbbwEVbSyxre7S7vZRg>).
25. Global tobacco surveillance system data (GTSSData) [database]. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2024 (https://nccd.cdc.gov/GTSS/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=OSH_GTSS.ExploreByTopic&islDataSource=GYTS&irbTopicMpower=Topic&islTopic=T07).
26. Africa tobacco industry interference index 2023, second edition. Lomé: African Tobacco Control Alliance; 2023 (<https://globaltobaccoindex.org/upload/assets/Zfcnlhiu4ZbEAP9b3C2S3fntTCLG8WycwLspslmyztapOw52.pdf>).
27. Fang J, Yang G, Wan X. 'Pro-tobacco propaganda': a case study of tobacco industry-sponsored elementary schools in China. *Tob Control*. 2019;0:1-5. doi:10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2018-054646.
28. China National Tobacco Corporation's global expansion. New York: STOP; 2022 (https://exposetobacco.org/wp-content/uploads/CNTC_Brief.pdf).
29. Grant CA. The 2023 Carreras Scholarship categories and application process [website]. Scholarship Jamaica; 2023 (<https://scholarshipjamaica.com/2023-carreras-scholarship-categories/>).

30. Betancourt A. ¿Cómo obtener boletas gratis para el Festival Estéreo Picnic 2023? [How to get free tickets to Estéreo Picnic 2023?]. Enter; 3 March 2023 (<https://www.enter.co/cultura-digital/como-obtener-boletas-gratis-para-el-festival-estereo-picnic-2023/>) (in Spanish).
31. Vital strategies. The next frontier in tobacco marketing: the Metaverse, NFTs, advergames and more. New York; 2023 (https://termcommunity.com/assets/publication/20231107224746000000_The_Next_Frontier_in_Tobacco_Marketing_EN.pdf).
32. #SponsoredByBigTobacco. Tobacco & Nicotine Marketing on Social Media. Washington (DC): Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids; n.d. (https://assets.tobaccofreekids.org/content/what_we_do/industry_watch/social-media-marketing-tactics/2023_12_08_SponsoredByBigTobacco.pdf).
33. The many faces of modern addiction. New York: STOP; 2022 (https://exposetobacco.org/wp-content/uploads/Many_Faces_Modern_Addiction.pdf).
34. Vital Strategies. Tobacco Marketing and Football: A Losing Game. New York, NY; 2023. Available from: termcommunity.com/TobaccoMarketingandFootballALosingGame.
35. GeekVape Indonesia. Naruto aja ngejar Aegis Solo 2, masa kamu ngga [Naruto just chased Aegis Solo 2, why don't you] [post]. Facebook; 6 October 2021 (<https://www.facebook.com/105583304120083/posts/585444479467294/>) (in Indonesian).
36. An inherent contradiction: the tobacco industry's environmental, social & governance (ESG) activities. New York: STOP; 2022 (<https://exposetobacco.org/wp-content/uploads/TI-ESG-CSR.pdf>).
37. Unsustainable: Big Tobacco's use of the UN SDGs. Bath: Tobacco Tactics; 2023 (<https://tobaccotactics.org/article/unsustainable-big-tobaccos-use-of-the-un-sdgs/>).
38. Goodchild M, Nargis N, Tursan d'Espaignet E. Global economic cost of smoking-attributable diseases. *Tob Control*. 2018;27:58-6 (<https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/27/1/58>).
39. Philip Morris International: its smoke-free rhetoric doesn't reflect its behavior. In: *Addiction at any cost: Philip Morris International uncovered*. New York: STOP; n.d. (https://exposetobacco.org/wp-content/uploads/PMI_Report_Chapter_Summary_03.pdf).
40. Vape law a win for public health, opens door to science-based innovation — PMFTC exec. *Inquirer*. 23 August 2023 (<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1820666/vape-law-a-win-for-public-health-opens-door-to-science-based-innovation-pmftc-exec>).
41. Shining the light on tobacco industry allies. New York: STOP; 2024 (<https://exposetobacco.org/tobacco-industry-allies/>).
42. Litigation relevant to regulation of novel and emerging nicotine and tobacco products: case summaries. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240024182>).
43. Pending litigation brought by multinational tobacco companies against governments. Washington (DC): Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids; 2024 (<https://www.tobaccocontrolaws.org/litigation/pending-litigation?country=Ireland>).
44. Philip Morris joins challenge to EU ban on heated flavoured tobacco products. *Irish Times*. 22 March 2023 (<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/2023/03/22/philip-morris-joins-challenge-to-eu-ban-on-heated-flavoured-tobacco-products/>).

45. Kramer E, Masduki RR, Maryani E, Nurhajati L, Redjeki AMS. How do national laws filter down to the local? Tobacco control regulations and smoke free areas in a decentralised Indonesia. *J Curr Southeast Asian Aff.* 2023;42(2):216-41 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034231185159>).
46. Ciurcanu A, Cerantola A. 'Smoke-free' cities and islands — sponsored by Philip Morris. Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project; 5 May 2022 (<https://www.occrp.org/en/loosetobacco/blowing-unsmoke/smoke-free-cities-and-islands-sponsored-by-philip-morris>).
47. Smoke-free destinations. Bath: Tobacco Tactics; 23 February 2022 (<https://tobaccotactics.org/article/smoke-free-destinations/>).
48. Industry brief: Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation. New York: STOP; 2019 (<https://exposetobacco.org/resource/industry-brief-eliminating-child-labour-in-tobacco-growing-eclt-foundation/>).
49. COP10 adopted historic decisions to protect the environment from the harms of tobacco and to address cross-border tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship and the depiction of tobacco in entertainment media [news release]. Geneva: WHO FCTC; 10 February 2024 (<https://fctc.who.int/newsroom/news/item/10-02-2024-cop10-adopted-historic-decisions-to-protect-the-environment-from-the-harms-of-tobacco-and-to-address-cross-border-tobacco-advertising-promotion-and-sponsorship-and-the-depiction-of-tobacco-in-entertainment-media>).
50. Misleadingly labeled e-liquids that appeal to youth. Silver Spring (MD): United States Food and Drug Administration; 2020 (<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/ctp-newsroom/misleadingly-labeled-e-liquids-appeal-youth>).
51. Tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC (Panama City, Panama, 5–10 February 2024): global youth voices statement. Bangkok: Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control; 2023 (https://files.ggtc.world/uploads/2024-01-30/16-14-01-916519/GYV%20Statement_COP10_EN_WEB.pdf).
52. Ojina E. Kenyan parents fight sale of Lyft, BAT's new nicotine product. Nation Media Group; 26 August 2020 (Wednesday, August 26, 2020 <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/parents-fight-sale-of-oral-nicotine-1925788>).

Additional resources¹

Assunta M. Global tobacco industry interference index 2023. Bangkok: Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control, 2023 (<https://globaltobaccoindex.org/>).

Crooked nine: nine ways the tobacco industry undermines health policy. New York: STOP; 2019 (<https://exposetobacco.org/resource/crookednine/>).

Electronic cigarettes: call to action. Technical document. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/electronic-cigarettes---call-to-action>).

Glantz A, Nguyen N, Luiz Oliveira da Silva A. Population-based disease odds for e-cigarettes and dual use versus cigarettes. *NEJM Evid*. 2024;3(3). doi:10.1056/EVIDoa2300229.

Global youth voices resource packages [website]. Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control; 2024 (<https://ggtc.world/knowledge/all-topics/global-youth-voices-resource-packages>).

Heated tobacco products: summary of research and evidence of health impacts. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/368022/9789240042490-eng.pdf?sequence=1>). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Herzog C, Jones A, Evans I, Raut JR, Zikan M, Cibula D et al. Cigarette smoking and e-cigarette use induce shared DNA methylation changes linked to carcinogenesis. *Cancer Res*. 2024. doi:10.1158/0008-5472.CAN-23-2957.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (US) Office on Smoking and Health. The health consequences of smoking—50 years of progress: a report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US); 2014 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK179276/>).

Piano MR, Benowitz NL, Fitzgerald GA, Corbridge S, Heath J, Hahn E et al. Impact of smokeless tobacco products on cardiovascular disease: implications for policy, prevention, and treatment: a policy statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2010;122(15):1520-44.

Progress report on technical matters related to Articles 9 and 10 of the WHO FCTC (regulation of contents and disclosure of tobacco products, including waterpipe, smokeless tobacco and heated tobacco products). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (FCTC/COP/10/7; <https://storage.googleapis.com/who-fctc-cop10-source/Main%20documents/fctc-cop10-7-en.pdf>).

Restricting digital marketing in the context of tobacco, alcohol, food and beverages, and breast-milk substitutes: existing approaches and policy options. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/373130>).

¹ All references accessed 19 April 2024.

Smokeless tobacco and some tobacco-specific N-nitrosamines. Lyon: International Agency for Research on Cancer; 2007 (IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans, Volume 89; <https://publications.iarc.fr/Book-And-Report-Series/Iarc-Monographs-On-The-Identification-Of-Carcinogenic-Hazards-To-Humans/Smokeless-Tobacco-And-Some-Tobacco-specific-Em-N-Em--Nitrosamines-2007>).

Statement of the youth on the intergenerational responsibility of the tobacco industry. Bangkok: Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control; 2022 (<https://ggtc.world/library/statement-of-the-youth-on-the-intergenerational-responsibility-of-the-tobacco-industry>).

Technical note on call to action on electronic cigarettes. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (<https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/tobacco-hq/regulating-tobacco-products/ends-call-to-action-background.pdf>).

Tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC (Panama City, Panama, 5–10 February 2024): decision: implementation of Article 18 of the WHO FCTC. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (<https://storage.googleapis.com/who-fctc-cop10-source/Decisions/fctc-cop-10-14-en.pdf>).

Tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC (Panama City, Panama, 5–10 February 2024): decision: specific guidelines to address cross-border tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship and the depiction of tobacco in entertainment media for implementation of Article 13 (Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship) of the WHO FCTC. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (FCTC/COP10(23); <https://storage.googleapis.com/who-fctc-cop10-source/Decisions/fctc-cop-10-23-en.pdf>).

Tobacco industry interference: a global brief. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2012 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/70894>).

WHO FCTC guidelines for implementation: Article 5.3. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2013 (FCTC/16.1; <https://fctc.who.int/publications/m/item/guidelines-for-implementation-of-article-5.3>).

WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2023: protect people from tobacco smoke. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023. (<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/372043/9789240077164-eng.pdf?sequence=1>).

WHO Study Group on Tobacco Product Regulation. Report on the scientific basis of tobacco product regulation: ninth report of a WHO study group. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (WHO Technical Report Series, No. 1047; <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/372463/9789240079410-eng.pdf?sequence=1>). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

WHO technical manual on tobacco tax policy and administration. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/340659/9789240019188-eng.pdf?sequence=1>).

#TOBACCO EXPOSED



**World Health
Organization**

World Health Organization
Department of Health Promotion

20, Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland
Tel: + 41 22 791 21 11

Email: tfi@who.int
<https://www.who.int/health-topics/tobacco>

exposetobacco.org

