

Comprehensive Bans on Tobacco Advertising, Promotion, and Sponsorship Effectively Decrease Tobacco Use



The tobacco industry spends tens of billions of dollars per year advertising and promoting its deadly products.¹ Among the most sophisticated marketers in history, their combination of powerful campaigns and highly addictive product has resulted in well over 100 million deaths globally while reaping them immense profits. Despite decades of denial, the industry targets youth and other vulnerable populations with aggressive well-funded campaigns to attract new customers, including youth, increase sales to current customers, decrease current customers' desire to quit, and encourage former customers to resume smoking.^{2,3,4,5}

No public health entity can compete with the tobacco industry's resources and marketing prowess, so it is critical that governments pass strong tobacco marketing restrictions to mitigate tobacco industry efforts. Comprehensive tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS) bans effectively reduce tobacco use, especially among youth and other vulnerable populations.⁶

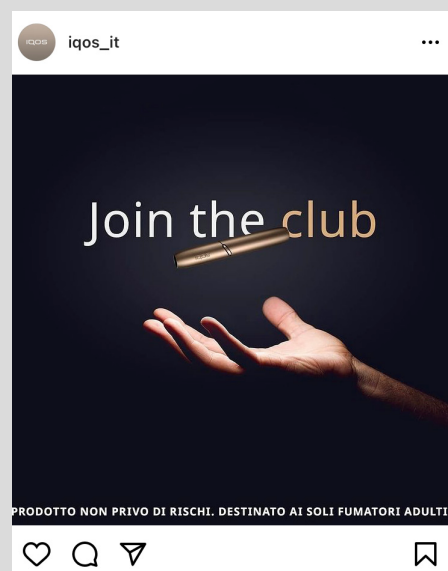
As of 2024, at least 68 countries have adopted comprehensive TAPS legislation, including 53 low- and middle-income (LMIC) countries.

Comprehensive Bans Reduce Exposure to Tobacco Advertising

Exposure to TAPS promotes youth tobacco initiation and continued use among tobacco users. Prohibiting all forms of tobacco advertising effectively reduces exposure and impact.

- A 2025 review of 80 countries, including LMICs, found that banning point-of-sale (POS) advertising led to a 7.8% reduction in reported exposure to POS tobacco advertising.⁷
- Surveys conducted in 14 countries between 2008–2010 found that adults were less aware of tobacco advertising and promotion when comprehensive or near-comprehensive bans were implemented compared to countries with few to no restrictions.⁸
- A study examining the impact of tobacco marketing regulations in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States from 2002–2008 found a significant reduction in smokers' reported awareness of tobacco marketing after restrictions were implemented.

Article 13 of the WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) requires Parties to the treaty to implement and enforce a comprehensive ban on TAPS. Article 13 Guidelines recommend that a comprehensive TAPS ban should include a ban on display of tobacco products at points of sale as well as the adoption of plain packaging to eliminate the effects of advertising or promotion on packaging.



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Reductions were greatest immediately following implementation of a ban, and smaller declines continued over time.⁹

- Exposure to tobacco advertising among adults and youth decreased significantly after the United Kingdom implemented its 2003 TAPS ban.^{10,11}

- Bans on advertising of specific products are also effective. A study in the US demonstrated a ban on POS advertisement and sale of flavored e-cigarettes and cigarettes significantly lowered levels of youth exposure to advertisements for such flavored products.¹²

Comprehensive Bans Reduce Tobacco Use

Countries that implement TAPS bans experience decreases in tobacco consumption. TAPS bans are especially effective at reducing consumption in low- and middle-income countries.

- A 2024 meta-analysis found that comprehensive TAPS bans were associated with 20% lower odds of current smoking and a 37% reduced risk of smoking initiation.¹³
- A 2018 review study on the impact of TAPS bans on total tobacco consumption estimates that a comprehensive TAPS ban reduces per capita consumption by approximately 4% in the short term and 6% in the long term.¹⁴
- A 2000 study of 22 high-income countries found that TAPS bans reduced tobacco consumption by 6.3%.¹⁵
- A 2008 analysis of TAPS bans in 30 LMIC found a 23.5% per capita reduction in consumption in countries with comprehensive bans.¹⁶
- In 2016, the US National Cancer Institute assessed consumption data from 66 countries and found that comprehensive advertising bans reduced tobacco consumption by 11.7%.¹⁷
 - In the 35 LMICs included in the sample, comprehensive TAPS bans were more than two times as effective, reducing consumption by 28.3%.

Comprehensive TAPS bans contribute to overall declines in smoking prevalence.

- A 2025 meta-analysis found that TAPS bans are associated with a 20 percent reduction in the odds of current tobacco use.⁸

- A comparison of two rounds of Global Youth Tobacco Survey data in 42 countries found that implementation of TAPS bans was associated with decreased smoking rates among youth in both high- and low-income countries.¹⁸
- A 2018 study analyzed data from 77 countries and found that strengthening TAPS restrictions to include POS display bans reduces adult daily smoking rates by 7%.¹⁴

Comprehensive advertising bans can also increase quit rates:

- A 2008 study of cessation data from 18 European countries found that TAPS bans were strongly associated with increases in quit rates, second only to price policies.¹⁵
- POS display bans are specifically associated with an increase in smoking cessation rates, as they impact impulse purchases. In Canadian provinces that have implemented POS bans for more than two years, individuals had a higher chance of successful cessation.¹⁹

Best practice TAPS bans also reduce prevalence rates of other tobacco & nicotine products such as e-cigarettes:

- A 2025 analysis found that youth in countries with TAPS bans that include e-cigarettes and cover digital media were less likely to use e-cigarettes. Moreover, youth in LMICs that ban tobacco product display and product placement at the POS along with additional strong TAPS measures were also less likely to use e-cigarettes.²⁰

Comprehensive Bans are More Effective than Partial Bans

- Comprehensive TAPS bans are very effective at reducing tobacco use. Partial bans have little to no effect on smoking prevalence as tobacco companies just move their efforts to other channels.
- A 2016 assessment of marketing bans in 66 countries found that comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising significantly reduced consumption (11.7%), while partial bans had no significant effect.²⁷
- A 2000 study of 102 countries found that, in countries with partial bans, consumption only decreased by 1% compared to an 8% decrease in countries with comprehensive bans.²¹
- After implementation of a partial TAPS ban in Mexico in 2008, the tobacco industry shifted its marketing efforts from outdoor advertising to POS marketing, direct to consumer product promotion, and industry-sponsored events.²⁵

TAPS laws must include all media, including digital media.

Partial TAPS bans are ineffective because they enable the tobacco industry to shift its vast resources to the permitted forms of advertising in order to reach its audiences.^{22,23} For example:

- A 2017 study of Hong Kong adults found that loopholes in TAPS regulations, including allowing POS product display, both directly and indirectly exposed the majority of the population to tobacco promotion.²⁴
- Tobacco and nicotine products are increasingly marketed online through various digital channels, including social media. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to marketing in these spaces.^{26,27}
- A 2023 analysis of the Global Youth Tobacco Survey in 15 countries found that adolescent exposure to online tobacco advertisement ranged from 18.2% to 34.3%, including in countries with advertising bans in place.²⁸

Key Takeaways

The evidence is clear that tobacco marketing increases smoking, causing countless deaths and increased health care costs. The evidence is also clear that prohibiting that marketing reduces use, saving lives and health care dollars for individuals and government.

- Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship is a proven risk factor for youth tobacco initiation and continued tobacco use among adult smokers.
- Comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, especially those that are applied to all media, reduce tobacco use, including, and perhaps even more so, in low- and middle-income countries.
- Comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship are more effective and therefore essential for reducing smoking and saving lives.
- Partial bans do not work because the tobacco industry shifts resources and exploits loopholes to ensure that their marketing efforts continue to reach and influence their targets.

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