

Policy Brief: Tobacco Market Analysis in Jordan (July 2025)

Executive Summary

Jordan continues to face a critical public health challenge, with very high consumption of tobacco and very affordable cigarettes. To address this, a high uniform specific tax on cigarettes must be implemented. At the same time, efforts should be made to secure the supply chain and reduce illicit trade. Recent household survey findings reveal that smoking intensity remains alarmingly high, and nearly one in four smokers purchases illicit cigarettes. The affordability of cigarettes — both licit and illicit — fuels high consumption levels, particularly among young adults and lower-income groups. The illicit trade is primarily a supply-side issue, compounded by inadequate enforcement, gaps in the regulatory framework, and the absence of a fully operational track and trace system. This brief outlines key findings and presents policy recommendations to reduce smoking prevalence, curb illicit trade, and strengthen tobacco control in Jordan.

Background

High Smoking Prevalence

- Adult smoking rates: 65.3% among men; 16.4% among women.
- Youth smoking rates (ages 13–15): 33.9% among boys; 13.8% among girls.

Affordability and Consumption

- Average cigarette consumption: 26.2 cigarettes/day for males; 25.1 for females.
- Average cigarette price: JD 2.14 per pack; prices range from JD 0.3 to JD 4.5.

Illicit Cigarette Trade

- 22.2% of smokers purchase illicit cigarettes.
- Illicit packs typically lack tax stamps and mandated health warnings.
- Street vendors are the predominant source of illicit cigarettes.

Governance and Enforcement Gaps

- No comprehensive, operational track and trace system as of early 2025.
- Weak retail enforcement and insufficient penalties for illegal sales.

Main Findings

- Males, married individuals, and those with higher education levels are more likely to purchase illicit cigarettes.
- Higher illicit cigarette use in Amman (28.2%) and Al Mafrq (25.1%) compared to Irbid (13.3%).
- 87.4% of illicit packs lack health warning images.
- None of the illicit packs display valid Jordanian QR codes.
- Illicit cigarettes, often sold without health warnings, target youth and low-income groups.
- Dominant brands: Winston and Marlboro (licit); lesser-known brands common in illicit sector.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Tobacco Tax Policy

- Implement a uniform specific excise tax on cigarettes.
- Regularly adjust tax rates to outpace inflation and economic growth.
- Eliminate price gaps between brands.

2. Establish a Robust Track and Trace System

- Implement a transparent, independent system to monitor the tobacco supply chain.
- Mandate digital authentication (e.g., QR codes) on all cigarette packs.

3. Enhance Enforcement Measures

- Conduct regular inspections of retailers.
- License tobacco retailers; revoke licenses for non-compliance.
- Strengthen border controls.

4. Counter Myths about Taxation and Illicit Trade

- Launch public campaigns to debunk myths that link tax increases to illicit trade.
- Amplify global success stories where strong governance prevents illicit growth.

5. Invest in Smoking Cessation and Public Health Campaigns

- Use tobacco tax revenues for cessation programs and awareness campaigns.
- Target young adults and low-income smokers.

6. Target Supply-Side Drivers of Illicit Trade

- Improve coordination between customs, tax authorities, and law enforcement.
- Collaborate internationally to dismantle smuggling networks.

Key Takeaway

Jordan's illicit cigarette trade is a supply-side problem rooted in governance failures, not taxation. Implementing a strong track and trace system, tightening enforcement, and sustaining high tobacco taxes are essential to reduce smoking rates, improve public health, and protect government revenue.

Conclusion

Jordan's public health and fiscal stability demand urgent action to curb tobacco consumption and the illicit cigarette trade. Strengthening the regulatory environment, modernizing the tax system, and enhancing enforcement are essential steps toward achieving the goals outlined in Jordan's National Tobacco Control Strategy 2024–2030.