

Raise taxes on tobacco



World Health Organization

European Region

The tenth edition of the WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic (1), released in June 2025, presents the latest comparative data to assess global, regional and national progress in protecting people from the harms of tobacco use. To support evidence-based policy dialogue in the WHO European Region, a set of measure-specific factsheets has been developed, each summarizing the implementation of one MPOWER¹ component. This factsheet provides an overview of the status of the **R — Raise taxes on tobacco** measure as of 2024.

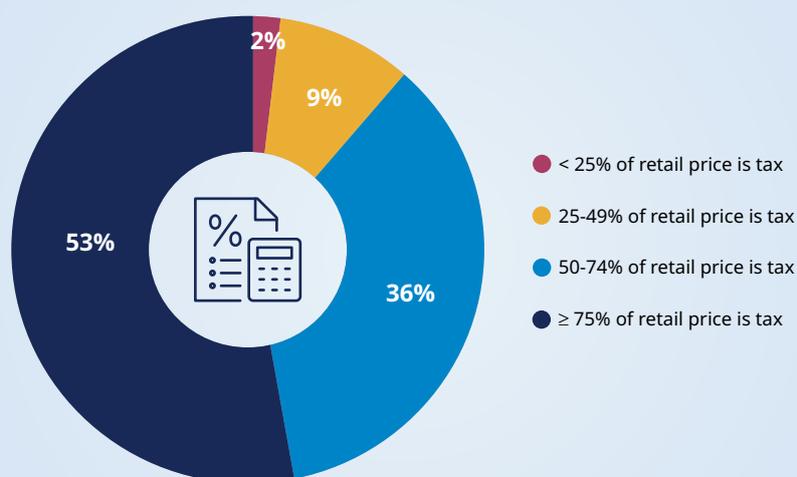
Key messages

Forty countries in the Region apply mixed excise tax, while 10 apply a specific excise and two more apply ad valorem taxes. The increasing use of mixed and specific systems indicates progress towards maximizing the impact of tobacco taxes on public health by reducing price differentials and deterring consumers from switching to cheaper alternatives.

In 2024, tax represented more than 75% of the retail price of the most popular brand of cigarettes in 28 countries in the WHO European Region (Fig. 1) – an increase from 16 countries in 2008 (1).



Fig. 1. Percentages of countries in the WHO European Region with different proportions of total taxes in the retail price of the most widely sold brand of cigarettes, 2024

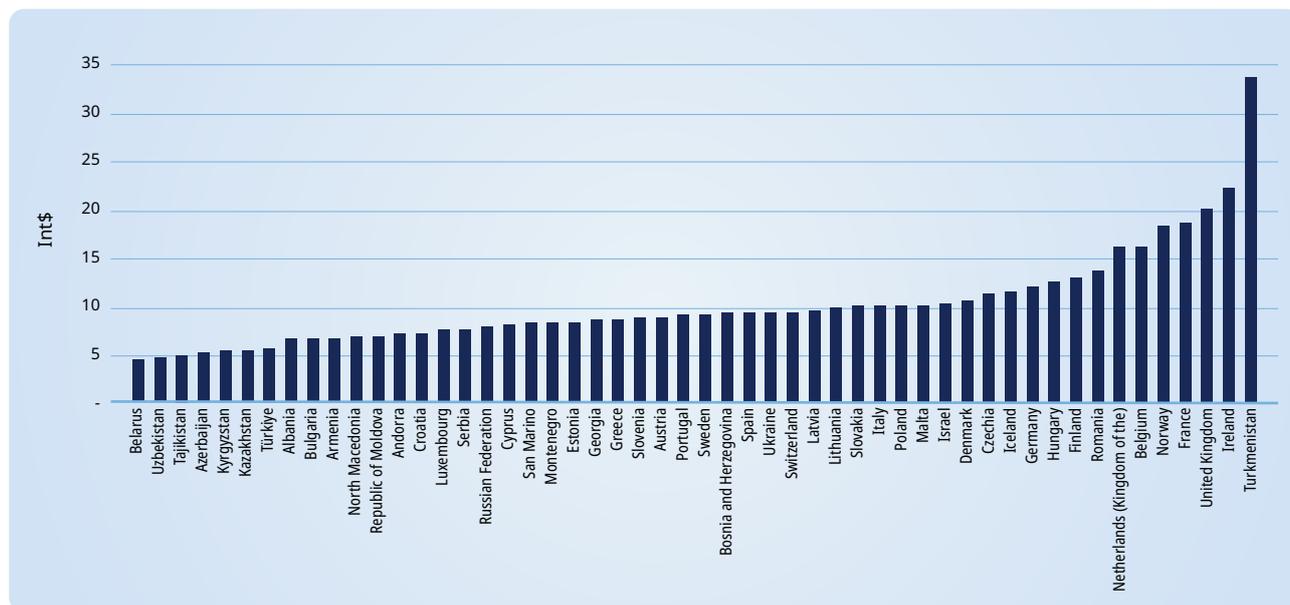


Source: WHO (1).

¹ MPOWER is a set of six cost-effective and high impact measures that help countries reduce the demand for tobacco. The acronym MPOWER stands for: M: monitor tobacco use and prevention policies; P: protect people from tobacco smoke; O: offer help to quit tobacco smoking; W: warn about the dangers of tobacco; E: enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship; and R: raise taxes on tobacco.

Cigarette retail prices continue to vary considerably in the Region, with the price of a 20-cigarette pack of the most-sold brand varying from Int\$ 4.56 in Belarus to Int\$ 33.76 in Turkmenistan (Fig. 2).

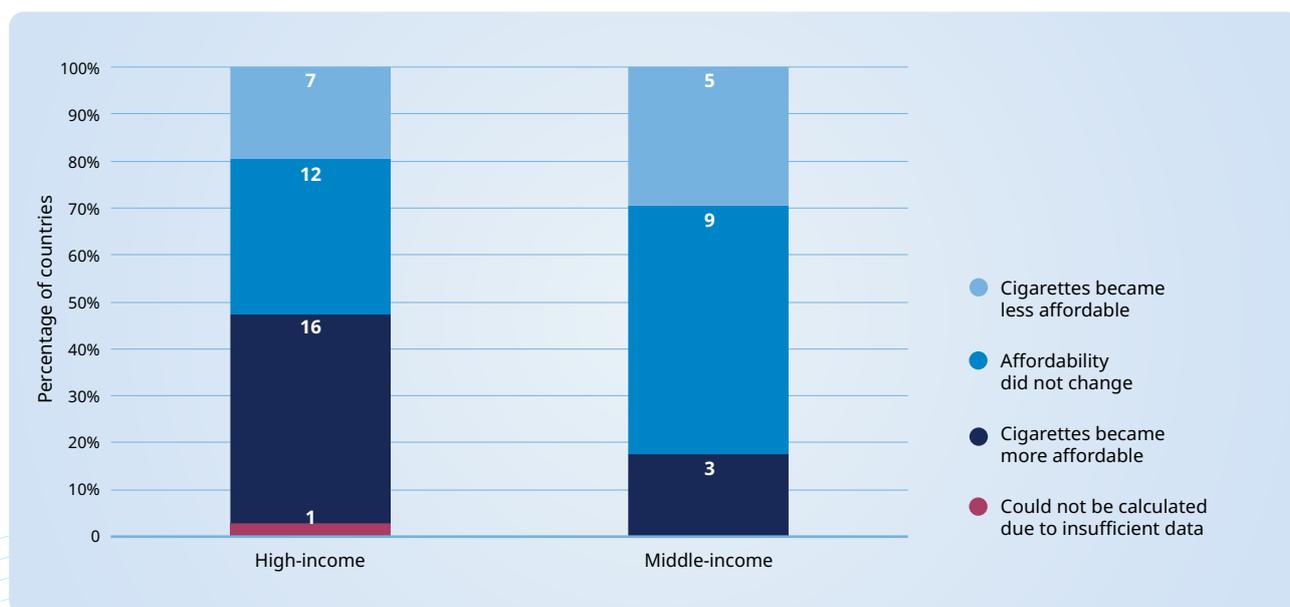
Fig. 2. Price of a 20-cigarette pack of the most widely sold brand (Int\$, at purchasing power parity), 2024^a



^a Data not reported or not available for Monaco.
Source: WHO (1).

Since 2014, cigarettes have become less affordable in 12 countries across the Region, including Belgium, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan. In contrast, cigarette affordability has increased in 19 countries – up from just nine in 2022 – which may potentially lead to higher consumption and increased smoking initiation. In 21 countries, there has been no significant change in cigarette affordability since 2014 (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Change in affordability of cigarettes in high-income and middle-income countries in the WHO European Region, 2014–2024



Notes: the number of countries is indicated in the box.
Source: WHO (1).



What should be done?

- ▶ Enforce the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Article 6, which states “Each Party should [...] adopt [...] tax policies and [...] price policies on tobacco products, so as to contribute to the health objectives aimed at reducing tobacco consumption” (2).
- ▶ Simplify the overall tax structure to ensure easy implementation.
- ▶ Tax all tobacco products in a comparable way, which will make excise tax on tobacco products more effective in reducing overall tobacco use and helps avoid substitution between products.
- ▶ Raise taxes periodically so that real prices increase faster than the combined effects of inflation and increased consumer purchasing power.
- ▶ Implement measures to combat tax evasion and smuggling.
- ▶ Consider using tobacco taxes to pay for tobacco control and other public health and social programmes. This will make increases in tobacco taxes more popular with the public, including tobacco users.
- ▶ Examine trends in the affordability of cigarettes. Analyse changes in cigarette prices relative to people’s purchasing power to help policy-makers to change tax policy and to reduce cigarette consumption effectively (2).

References²

1. WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2025: warning about the dangers of tobacco. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2025 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/381685>). License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.
2. WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control [website]. World Health Organization; 2025 (<https://www.who.int/fctc/en/>).

² All references were accessed 14 November 2025.