

Unmasking the appeal – countering tobacco and nicotine addiction

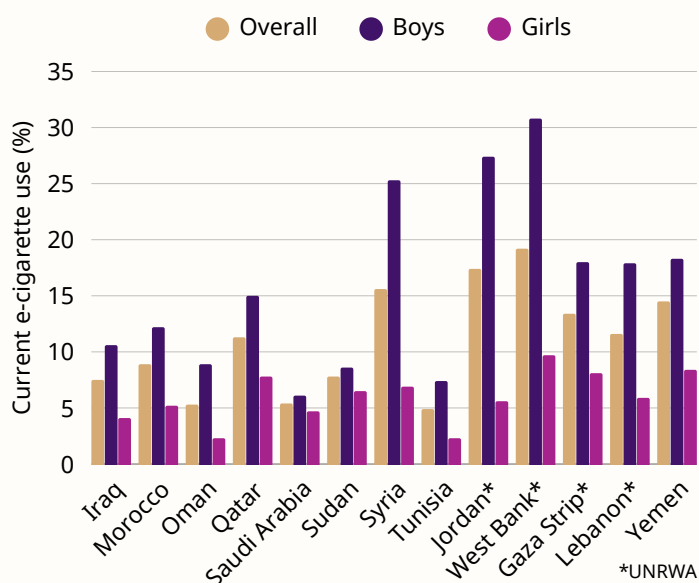
Protecting youth and future generations from tobacco and nicotine addiction in the Eastern Mediterranean Region



Key facts

- The Eastern Mediterranean Region has **one of the highest levels of youth tobacco use globally**, with an estimated 5.5 million children aged 13–15 using tobacco.
- **Globally, adolescents are on average 9 times more likely to use e-cigarettes than adults.**
- In the Region, alarming levels of e-cigarette use are seen among adolescents, **particularly young boys, with rates reaching 30% in some areas.**
- In several countries, **the majority of young people report exposure to tobacco marketing.**

Youth e-cigarette use



Priority actions

For **all tobacco and nicotine products**, countries should

- 🚫 **enforce comprehensive bans on advertising, promotion and sponsorship**
- 📄 **strengthen graphic health warnings**
- 💰 **increase taxes and prices**
- 🌿 **ensure regulations are in place, including for e-cigarettes, heated tobacco and nicotine pouches**
- 🛡️ **counter industry tactics, especially in digital and retail environments**

Unmasking the appeal

The tobacco and nicotine industry systematically targets young people through

- 🍬 **flavoured products** that mask the harshness of tobacco
- 🎨 **sleek, attractive packaging** designed to appeal to youth
- 📱 **aggressive digital marketing and social media promotion**

These tactics are designed to initiate use and addict new generations.

Why this matters

Despite progress, the Region faces a growing and evolving tobacco epidemic driven by

- 🚬 **the rapid rise of new and emerging products**
- 📄 **weak regulation and enforcement gaps**
- 🔪 **persistent industry interference**

With a large proportion of the population under 30, the Region is particularly vulnerable.

All Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control are legally committed to implementing its measures.

Key messages

- ⚠️ **Without action, a new generation risks being addicted to nicotine.**
- ⚠️ **Countries already have the tools and legal commitments; now is the time to fully implement them.**
- ⚠️ **Protecting the Region's young population is critical to preventing the next wave of tobacco-related disease.**