

Illicit trade of cigarettes in Moldova at 9.8% in 2024

During September-October 2024, the illicit trade of cigarettes in the Republic of Moldova constituted 9.8%, registering a decrease of 1.9 percentage points compared to September-October 2023, according to the IPSOS study data.

The research results show that the main source of illicit trade are cigarettes of unknown origin, uncompliant with the law or/and which copy an authentic brand without authorization, their share is 5.8%. At the same time, the study reveals a significant increase in illicit trade of cigarettes without an excise stamp, i.e., "illicit whites", their share is 3.0%, an increase of 2.3 percentage points. The share of tobacco products intended for sale in countries other than Moldova, i.e., "non-domestic duty-paid, is 0.6%, and of cigarettes of "duty-free" origin - 0.4%.

The largest increase was recorded in Chisinau, where illicit trade of tobacco products amounted to 6.9%, in September-October 2024, 3.2 percentage points more than during the same period last year. The largest illicit cigarette market, however, is recorded in the Southern region of the country, with illegal trade reaching 14.7%, a slight increase of 0.1 percentage points. The largest decrease was recorded in the Central region of the country, from 14.2% to 7.2%, and in the Northern region from 14.0% to 11.5

The average purchase price of a pack of illicit cigarettes is approximately 34.9 lei for a pack, while the average price of a pack of legally traded cigarettes is 47.4 lei.

The IPSOS study also reveals that grocery stores remain the main channel for purchasing illegal products with a share of over 60%. The share of illicit cigarette trade in minimarkets has also increased, from 10.8% to 14.1%, followed by supermarkets with a share of 7.3%. Also, the share of illegal trade increased in market place (open or closed) by 3.5 percentage points, and is now 6.4%.

The study was conducted by IPSOS, one of the largest market research companies in the world, in September-October 2024. The previous study was conducted in September-October 2023. The research methodology involves interviews with sample collection. A total of approximately 1,500 adult smokers aged 19 to 64 were surveyed, from rural and urban areas of the country, except for the Transnistrian region. The study was commissioned by the main cigarette manufacturers present in Moldova - JTI and PMI