

Illicit trade of cigarettes in Moldova at 7.9% in first half of 2025

In April-May 2025, the share of illicit trade of cigarettes in the Republic of Moldova constituted 7.9%, down by 1.9 percentage points compared to September-October 2024 (9.8%), according to IPSOS study data.

The research shows that the main source of illicit trade remains cigarettes of unknown origin, uncompliant with the law or/and which copy an authentic brand without authorization. Their share stands at 3.8%, a notable decline from 5.8% in the previous wave.

The share of "Illicit whites", i.e., cigarettes not intended for sale on the Moldova market, is at 3.4%, showing a slight increase from 3.0%.

Meanwhile, the share of tobacco products intended for sale in countries other than Moldova, i.e., "non-domestic duty-paid" accounts for 0.3%, and of cigarettes of "duty-free" origin for 0.4% of total consumption.

The share of cigarettes of unknown origin, uncompliant with the law or/and which copy an authentic brand without authorization, declined significantly in Chisinau (from 3.7% to 1.3%) and in North region (from 8.0% to 4.2%).

The Southern region continues to record the highest level of illicit cigarette trade, reaching 13.1%, a decrease of 1.6 percentage points compared to the previous wave.

The average retail price of illicit cigarettes is estimated at 36.1 lei per pack, while legally traded cigarettes sell for an average of 51.6 lei per pack.

The IPSOS study also shows that grocery stores remain the main sales channel for illicit cigarettes, representing 61% of illegal sales. Minimarkets hold at 13.7% share, while supermarkets account for 10.6% of total illicit trade.

The study was conducted by IPSOS, one of the largest market research companies in the world, in April-May 2025. The previous study was conducted in September-October 2024. 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.