

Illicit cigarette market in Moldova at 8.8% in April- May 2026

The share of illicit cigarettes in the Republic of Moldova increased to **8.8%** in **April- May 2026**, up from **6.9%** in **September- October 2025**, according to the latest IPSOS study.

- The Northern and Southern regions continue to record the highest incidence of illicit cigarette trade, at 13.2% and 13.5%, respectively.

The research indicates that the main source of illicit trade remains cigarettes of unknown origin, those not compliant with legal requirements, and/or unauthorized copies of authentic brands. Their share increased from 3.8% in the previous wave to 6.6% in the current wave, with a significant increases in the North (from 5.0% to 9.6%) and South (from 3.8% to 10.9%) regions of the country.

The share of "Illicit whites", i.e., cigarettes not placed for sale on the Moldova market, is at 1.8%, down from 2.2% in the previous wave. However, their share in the North region registered an increase since the last wave (from 1.4% to 3.2%).

Meanwhile, non-domestic duty-paid products, intended for sale outside Moldova, account for 0.3% of total consumption, while duty-free cigarettes represent 0.1%.

The average retail price of illicit cigarettes is estimated at 42 lei per pack, while legally traded cigarettes sell for an average of 56.8 lei per pack, meaning illicit products are sold at around 14.8 MDL less per pack.

The IPSOS study also shows that grocery stores remain the main sales channel for illicit cigarettes, accounting for 73.5% of illegal sales, a significant increase from 45.3% in the previous wave.

The study was conducted by IPSOS, one of the largest market research companies in the world, in April- May 2026. The previous study was conducted in September- October 2025. The research methodology involves interviews with sample collection. A total of approximately 1,532 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.