

GLOBAL TOBACCO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

**Two Decades in Review:
Paving the Way for the Future
in the Eastern Mediterranean Region**



World Health
Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE Eastern Mediterranean

GTSS is a global standard used to monitor the prevalence of tobacco use among youth and adults, as well as important control policies.

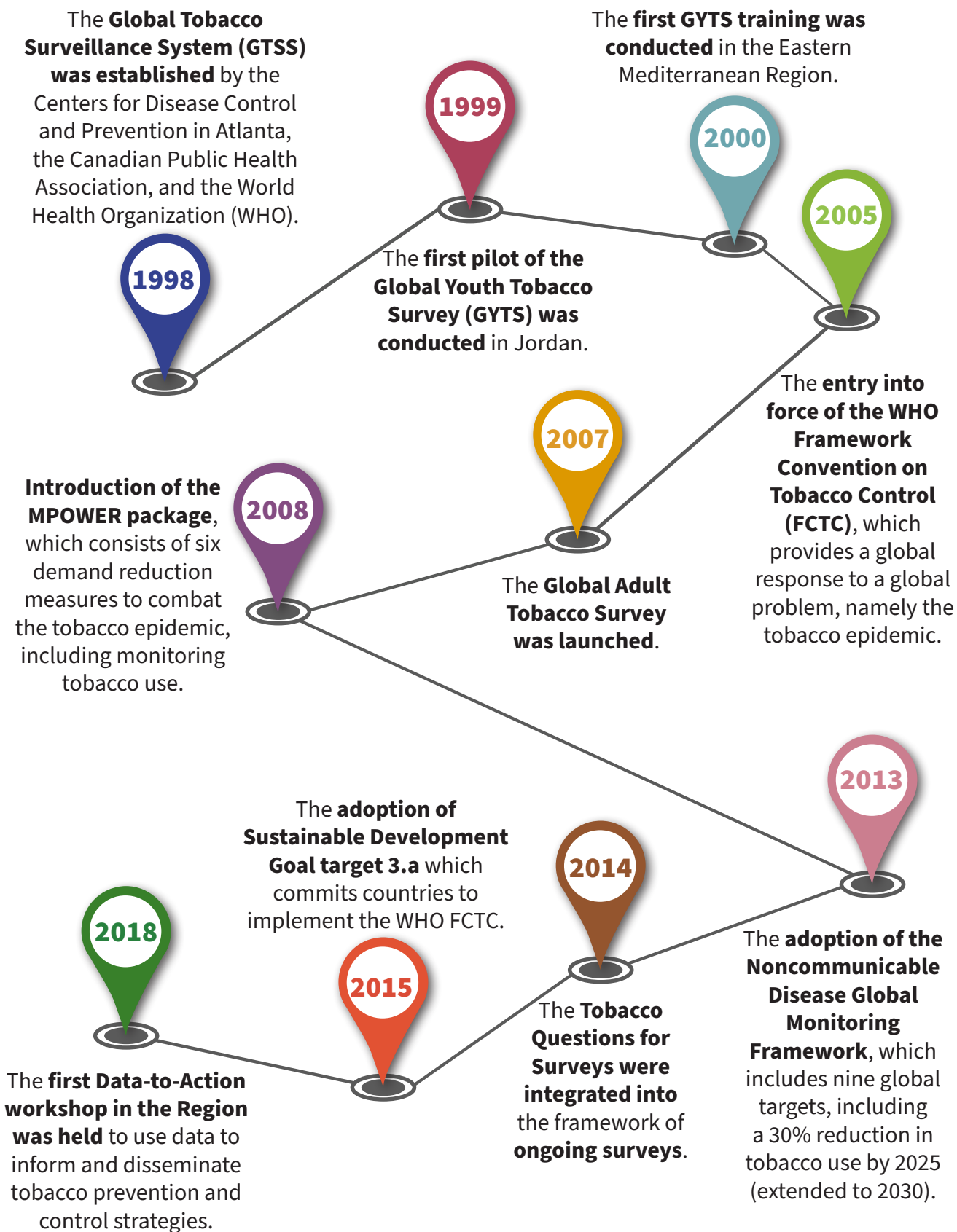
In 1998, the Global Tobacco Surveillance System (GTSS) was established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Canadian Public Health Association, and the World Health Organization (WHO) to monitor tobacco use globally. This was a significant step as GTSS is a global standard used to monitor the prevalence of tobacco use among youth and adults, as well as important tobacco control policies. GTSS components, including the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS), Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS), and Tobacco Questions for Surveys (TQS), have helped in gathering data on tobacco use among youth and adults and led to the development of effective tobacco control policies.

Over the past 20 years, WHO and its partners have achieved several significant milestones in the fight against tobacco, both regionally and globally. These milestones include:

- the introduction of GYTS and GATS in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to gather data on tobacco use among youth and adults;
- the entry into force of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), which asserts the importance of strategies to reduce both tobacco demand and supply, and provides a framework for tobacco control measures to be implemented at the national, regional and international levels;
- the introduction of the MPOWER package to reduce tobacco demand, which includes six measures to combat the tobacco epidemic, including monitoring tobacco use;
- the adoption of the Noncommunicable Disease (NCD) Global Monitoring Framework, which has nine global targets, including a 30% reduction in tobacco use by 2025 (extended to 2030), and is designed to track progress in preventing and controlling NCDs and their risk factors, while strengthening national health systems;
- the integration of TQS into ongoing surveys to ensure consistent data collection on tobacco use across different surveys;
- the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal target 3.a, which commits countries to implementing the WHO FCTC and taking concrete action to combat the tobacco epidemic; and
- the first Data-to-Action workshop, which was held in the Region in 2018, to effectively use data to inform and disseminate tobacco prevention and control strategies.

This publication, produced by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean aims to provide an overview of GTSS and its components, highlight the milestones achieved by WHO and its partners, and emphasize the link between GTSS data and its use in various tobacco control reports. It also sheds light on the significance of GTSS in reporting and measuring progress in the fight against tobacco, and outlines a way forward for GTSS in the Region to support countries in scaling up their efforts towards fulfilling Sustainable Development Goal target 3.a to implement the WHO FCTC, as well as achieving the global target of reducing tobacco use by 30% by 2025 (extended to 2030).

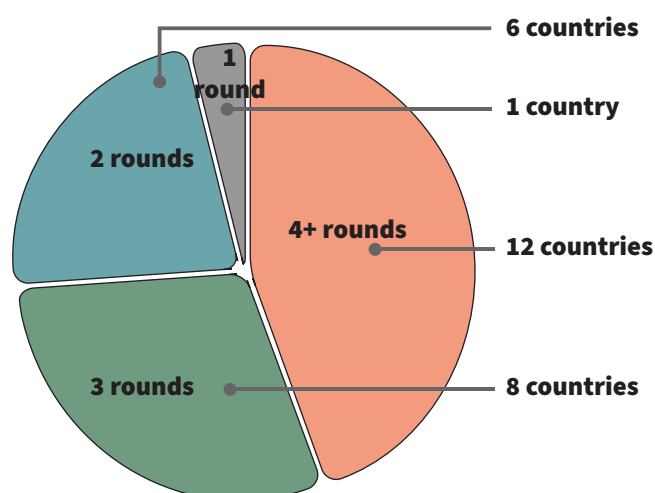
Milestones in the Fight Against Tobacco by WHO and Partners



The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) was initiated in 1999. It is a nationally representative school-based survey that collects data on students aged 13 to 15 years old. GYTS monitors youth tobacco use (smoking and smokeless), and tracks key tobacco control indicators. It covers the following topics: tobacco use (smoking and smokeless); cessation; second-hand smoke exposure; pro-and anti-tobacco media and advertising; access and availability to obtain tobacco products; knowledge and attitudes regarding tobacco; and school policies related to tobacco use among staff and students.

The purpose of GYTS is to help countries enhance their capacity to develop, implement and evaluate tobacco control interventions. GYTS data help establish quantifiable evidence that tobacco is a serious issue among youth and monitor progress in tobacco control. To ensure the data collected from GYTS are efficient, a series of manuals have been created that provide standardized requirements and recommendations for designing and implementing the survey at every stage. These manuals also offer guidance on how a particular country can modify features of the GYTS protocol to make the most of the data collected within their country.

89 GYTS rounds
across
22 countries
and territories
in the Region



The Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) was launched in 2007. It is a nationally representative household survey conducted among adults aged 15 years and older. GATS enables countries to collect data on adult tobacco use and key tobacco control measures. It covers the following topics: tobacco use prevalence (smoking and smokeless tobacco products); second-hand tobacco smoke exposure and policies; cessation; knowledge, attitudes and perceptions; and exposure to media and economics.

GATS results assist countries in developing, tracking and implementing effective tobacco control interventions. It also allows countries to compare their survey results with those of other countries. GATS is an important tool to assist countries in supporting MPOWER, a package of six evidence-based demand reduction measures contained in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

GATS carried out across **4** countries in the Region

- Egypt
- Pakistan
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia

GTSS Tobacco Questions for Surveys

The Tobacco Questions for Surveys (TQS) were introduced in 2014 to enhance survey comparability over time and harmonize questions across global surveillance and monitoring efforts. TQS have been developed to provide a standard set of survey questions on tobacco use for adult surveys. They consist of survey questions aimed at assessing behaviours, attitudes and perceptions related to tobacco use. TQS cover tobacco smoking prevalence and key topics related to tobacco use and policies, including cigarette consumption, smokeless tobacco, second-hand smoke exposure, cessation, anti-cigarette information, cigarette advertising and economics.

TQS are a subset of the most important questions from GATS. They are categorized based on the six MPOWER measures that are designed to reduce the demand for tobacco. The questions can be included in national, sub-national and international surveys to ensure consistency of data across countries and over time. The data obtained from these tobacco questions can be used to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of existing tobacco control policies and programmes, and to guide the development and implementation of new interventions at the community, sub-national and national levels.

19 surveys, mainly **STEPS** incorporating **TQS** across **18** countries and territories in the Region



TQS were used in several population-based surveys, mainly the WHO STEPS survey. WHO STEPS is a simple, standardized method for collecting, analyzing and disseminating data on key noncommunicable disease risk factors in countries, including tobacco use. By using the same standardized questions and protocols, all countries can use STEPS information, not only for monitoring within country trends, but also for making comparisons across countries.

GTSS data play a crucial role in monitoring the global tobacco epidemic and guiding national tobacco prevention and control programmes.

Data-to-Action

Tobacco use is a major public health concern that causes disease, death and economic damage worldwide. To combat this issue, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and its guidelines are used as a basis for countries to implement and manage tobacco control. WHO and its partners introduced the six MPOWER measures in 2008, to practically implement effective measures to reduce tobacco demand, as stated in the WHO FCTC. These measures are proven to save lives, reduce healthcare costs and include:

- **M**onitoring tobacco use and prevention policies
- **P**rotecting people from tobacco smoke
- **O**ffering help to quit tobacco use
- **W**arning about the dangers of tobacco
- **E**nforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship
- **R**aising taxes on tobacco



The WHO FCTC requires its Parties to regularly collect and share data on the magnitude, patterns, determinants and consequences of tobacco use and exposure. These data are important for implementing and evaluating effective tobacco control policies. WHO aims to improve the availability of national and global data on tobacco use, exposure and related health outcomes. This is achieved by encouraging the use of scientific, evidence-based and standardized protocols for monitoring tobacco use, gathering data for national and global monitoring of trends in tobacco use, and using the data to advocate for strengthening policies that reduce tobacco use. With this approach, interventions can be more effectively managed and improved, as well as tailored to specific needs, and progress can be tracked.

The Global Tobacco Surveillance System (GTSS) is critical in providing data to help countries monitor tobacco use and guide prevention and control programmes. GTSS data are instrumental in supporting the findings of the WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic and the WHO Global Report on Trends in Prevalence of Tobacco Use. These reports analyze countries' efforts in implementing the most effective measures from the WHO FCTC, estimate tobacco use prevalence, and measure progress towards the 30% tobacco reduction target. By implementing and enforcing the MPOWER measures as a package, countries can prevent youth from starting to smoke, help current smokers quit, and protect non-smokers from exposure to tobacco's harm.

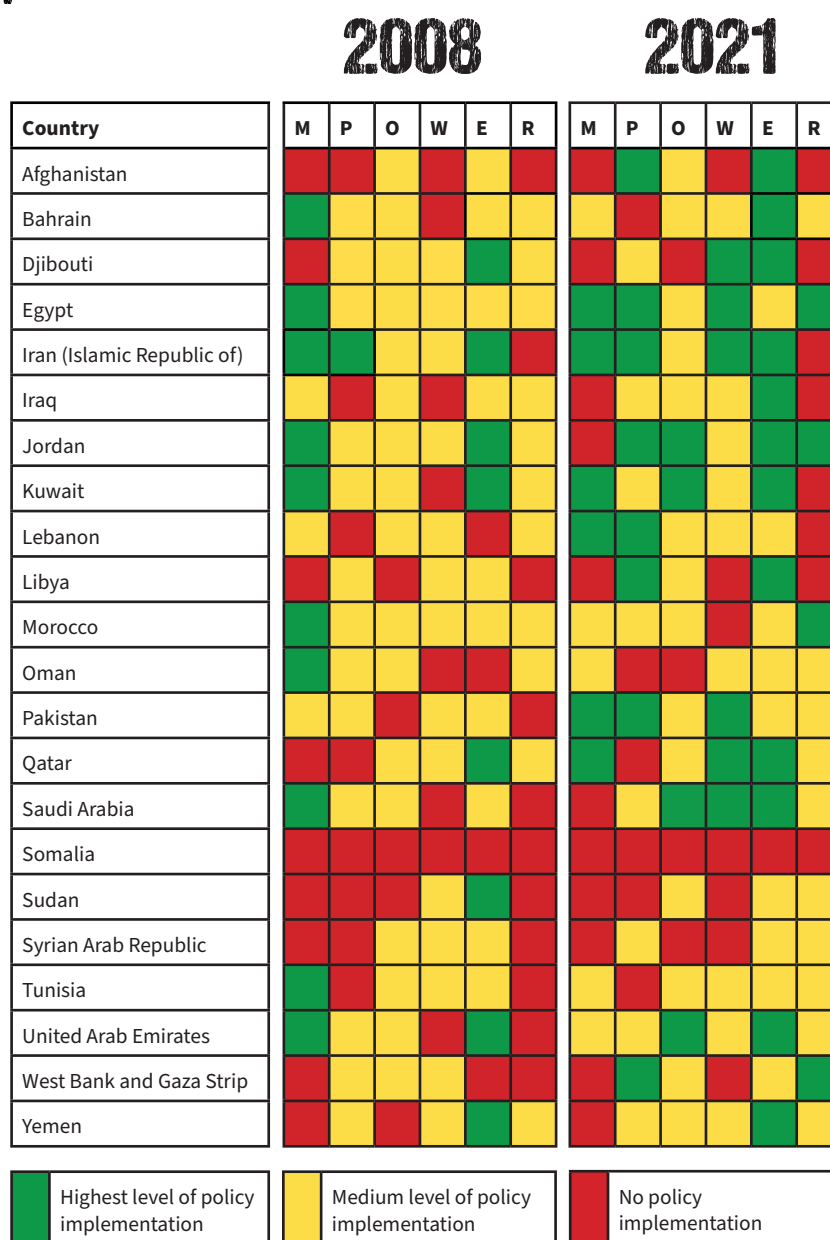
By continuing to implement and enforce these measures, along with the support of GTSS data, progress can be made in preventing tobacco-related harm and promoting healthier lives for individuals and societies. Overall, GTSS data play a crucial role in monitoring the global tobacco epidemic and guiding national tobacco prevention and control programmes, facilitating comparisons of tobacco-related data at the national, regional and global levels.

WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic

The WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic monitors the achievement made by countries towards tobacco control since 2008. The report shows that countries have taken significant steps in the fight against tobacco by implementing one or more of the six MPOWER measures, which are designed to reduce tobacco demand. The report also notes eight previous reports on the tobacco epidemic between 2008 and 2021.

A traffic light colour coding system is used to assess the implementation level of MPOWER measures, with each colour indicating a particular status of achievement. In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, there has been a positive trend over the past 10 years, indicating that more countries are taking effective measures to control tobacco by implementing these measures (see Figure 1).

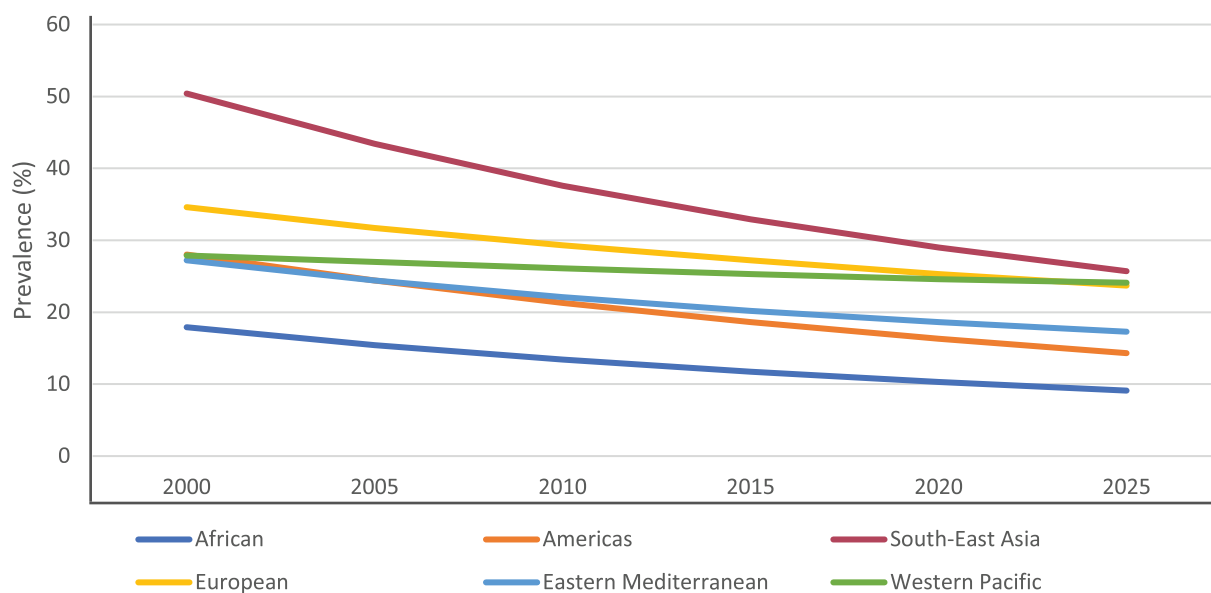
Figure 1. Implementation Level of MPOWER Measures in the Region



WHO Global Report on Trends in Prevalence of Tobacco Use 2000–2025

The fourth edition of the WHO Global Report on Trends in Prevalence of Tobacco Use from 2000 to 2025 highlights the reduction of tobacco use as a significant indicator for measuring countries' progress in implementing the WHO FCTC – target 3.a under the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. Countries have adopted this indicator to report progress towards reducing tobacco use under the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013–2020 and WHO's Global Programme of Work triple billions target. The report provides WHO estimates of tobacco use prevalence and projected trends until 2025 at global, regional and country levels (see Figure 2). The report also notes four previous reports on trends in the prevalence of tobacco use between 2015 and 2021.

Figure 2. Current Tobacco Use Trends, Both Sexes



The ultimate goal is to enhance the evidence-to-policy and decision-making progress and impact, in order to meet the global commitments related to tobacco control.

The Way Forward

The Global Tobacco Surveillance System (GTSS) is an important global standard used to monitor tobacco use and tobacco control policies among youth and adults. Its goal is to support countries in developing, implementing and evaluating tobacco control prevention and control programmes. GTSS data are being used to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of existing tobacco control policies and programmes, guide the development and implementation of new interventions at the community, sub-national and national levels, and promote evidence-based policies that decrease tobacco use.

Moving forward, the surveys conducted by GTSS for both youth (Global Youth Tobacco Survey) and adults (Global Adult Tobacco Survey) will continue to be implemented and expanded into more countries, and there will be greater integration of Tobacco Questions for Surveys into ongoing surveys. Additionally, there will be increased cooperation and sharing of data and best practices among countries, and ongoing advocacy for the implementation of effective tobacco control measures to achieve the global targets that countries committed to implementing, including Sustainable Development Goal target 3.a to implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and a 30% reduction in tobacco use by 2025 (extended to 2030).

The use of innovative solutions and digital technology will be employed to enhance the tobacco surveillance system. Furthermore, progress will be measured and reported regularly, and trends and estimates will be examined to improve interventions. The acceleration of progress will be achieved by strengthening and enforcing policies and using all survey data to inform evidence-based decision-making. The ultimate goal is to enhance the evidence-to-policy and decision-making progress and impact, in order to meet the global commitments related to tobacco control.

Sources

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Annexes

Annex 1. Global Youth Tobacco Survey in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The table presents information about the various rounds of the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) that have been conducted in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. A total of 89 GYTS rounds have been conducted across 22 countries and territories in the Region, in addition to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic and West Bank. The table also includes the year in which each round was conducted, as well as links to available factsheets and/or country reports on GYTS.

Country	Year	Factsheet and/or Country Report
Afghanistan	2004 2010 2017	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-afg.html
Bahrain	2001 2015	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-bah.html
Djibouti	2003 2009 2013	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-dji.html
Egypt	2001 2005 2009 2014	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-egy.html
Gaza Strip	2001 2005 2013 2015	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-pal.html
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2003 2007 2016	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-ira.html
Iraq	2006 2008 2014 2019	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-irq.html
Jordan	1999 2003 2007 2009 2014	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-jor.html
Kuwait	2001 2005 2009 2016	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-kuw.html

Country	Year	Factsheet and/or Country Report
Lebanon	2001 2005 2011	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-leb.html
Libya	2003 2007 2010	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-liy.html
Morocco	2001 2006 2010 2016	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-mor.html
Oman	2003 2007 2010 2016	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-oma.html
Pakistan	2003 2004 2008 2013	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-pak.html
Qatar	2004 2007 2013 2018	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-qat.html
Saudi Arabia	2001 2007 2010 2021	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-saa.html
Somalia	2004 2007	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-som.html
Sudan	2001 2005 2009 2014	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-sud.html
Syrian Arab Republic	2002 2007 2010	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-syr.html
Tunisia	2001 2007 2010 2017	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-tun.html
United Arab Emirates	2001 2005 2013	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-uae.html

Country	Year	Factsheet and/or Country Report
West Bank	2001 2005 2009 2016	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-west-bank.html
Yemen	2003 2008 2014	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-yem.html

Other	Year	Factsheet and/or Country Report
UNRWA Gaza Strip	2008 2013	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-unrwa-pal.html
UNRWA Jordan	2008 2014	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-unrwa-jor.html
UNRWA Lebanon	2008 2013	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-unrwa-leb.html
UNRWA Syrian Arab Republic	2008	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-unrwa-syr.html
UNRWA West Bank	2008 2014	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gyts-unrwa-west-bank.html

Annex 2. Global Adult Tobacco Survey in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The table presents information about the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) that was conducted across 4 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The table also includes the year in which each survey was conducted, as well as links to available factsheets and/or country reports on GATS.

Country	Year	Factsheet and/or Country Report
Egypt	2009	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gats-egy.html
Pakistan	2014	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gats-pak.html
Qatar	2013	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gats-qat.html
Saudi Arabia	2019	https://www.emro.who.int/tfi/statistics/gats-saa.html

Annex 3. Surveys Incorporating Tobacco Questions for Surveys in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The table presents information about the surveys conducted in the Eastern Mediterranean Region that incorporated Tobacco Questions for Surveys (TQS). A total of 5 surveys (mainly STEPS) incorporating TQS have been conducted across 18 countries and territories in the Region between 2014 and 2023. The table also includes the year in which each survey was conducted, as well as links to available factsheets and/or country reports on these surveys. The surveys included STEPS Survey, National Health Survey, Smoking and Tobacco Consumption Survey, World Health Survey and Health Examination Survey. The factsheets and/or country reports for the surveys conducted in 2023 are still forthcoming and yet to be made available.

Country	Survey	Year	Factsheet and/or Country Report
Afghanistan	STEPS Survey	2018	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/afghanistan
Bahrain	National Health Survey	2018	https://www.data.gov.bh/en/ResourceCenter/DownloadFile?id=3470
Egypt	STEPS Survey	2017	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/egypt
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	STEPS Survey	2016	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/iran-(islamic-republic-of)
Iraq	STEPS Survey	2015	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/iraq
Jordan	STEPS Survey	2019	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/jordan
Kuwait	STEPS Survey	2014	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/kuwait_2
Lebanon	STEPS Survey	2017	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/lebanon
Libya	STEPS Survey	2023	Forthcoming

Country	Survey	Year	Factsheet and/or Country Report
Morocco	STEPS Survey	2018	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/morocco
Occupied Palestinian territory	Smoking and Tobacco Consumption Survey	2021	https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4246
Occupied Palestinian territory	STEPS Survey	2023	Forthcoming
Oman	STEPS Survey	2017	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/oman
Pakistan	STEPS Survey	2014	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/pakistan
Qatar	STEPS Survey	2023	Forthcoming
Saudi Arabia	World Health Survey	2019	https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/Ministry/Statistics/Population-Health-Indicators/Documents/World-Health-Survey-Saudi-Arabia.pdf
Sudan	STEPS Survey	2016	https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/surveillance/data/sudan
Tunisia	Health Examination Survey	2016	http://www.santetunisie.rns.tn/images/rapport-final-enquete2020.pdf
United Arab Emirates	National Health Survey	2018	https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/ncds/ncd-surveillance/data-reporting/united-arab-emirates/uae-national-health-survey-report2018-2017-.pdf?sfvrsn=86b8b1d1_9&download=true

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