

Tobacco and the Rights of Women and Girls in Luxembourg

Tobacco use remains a critical public health challenge in Luxembourg, with a prevalence rate higher than the European average. Despite its commitment to international frameworks such as the *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)*, Luxembourg has yet to implement comprehensive measures to combat tobacco consumption effectively. This report examines the current state of tobacco use in Luxembourg, with a focus on its impact on women and girls, and outlines actionable recommendations to address these challenges.

Tobacco use in Luxembourg is relevant to work of this Committee as it negatively impacts the rights protected by several articles of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The most relevant article is of course Article 12 (Health and preventive care), but Articles 2. (Equality), Article 10 (Education and Information) and Article 11 (Safe Employment) are also implicated.

I. Summary

- A. Tobacco use remains a significant public health and human rights issue in Luxembourg. A national survey (1) highlights that 27% of residents aged 16 and above smoked in 2023, with rates stable overall but rising significantly among younger populations.
- B. Women face unique challenges related to tobacco use, including higher rates of e-cigarette usage. Tobacco consumption directly impacts fertility, increases the risk of ectopic pregnancies, premature births, and miscarriages, and contributes to other health issues (2).
- C. The national strategy *Génération Sans Tabac 2040* seeks to create a tobacco-free generation by reducing the prevalence of smoking to less than 5% by 2040 through targeted interventions and public policies (3).

II. Relevant Facts and Statistics

A. Prevalence of Smoking

In general, according to the OECD report *Health at a Glance: Europe 2024* (4), tobacco consumption in Luxembourg increased between 2012 and 2020. In 2022, 20% of residents reported smoking daily, placing Luxembourg above the European average.

A national ILRES survey commissioned by the Fondation Cancer and the Ministry of Health and Social Security (1) found that 27% of residents aged 16 and older were smokers. Between 2019 and 2023, smoking rates remained stable overall, but trends varied across age groups. Smoking rates increased notably between 2019 and 2023 among younger age groups (16-24 years: from 16% to 35%), is less pronounced among the 25 to 64-year-olds and stabilized among those 65+ (13%).

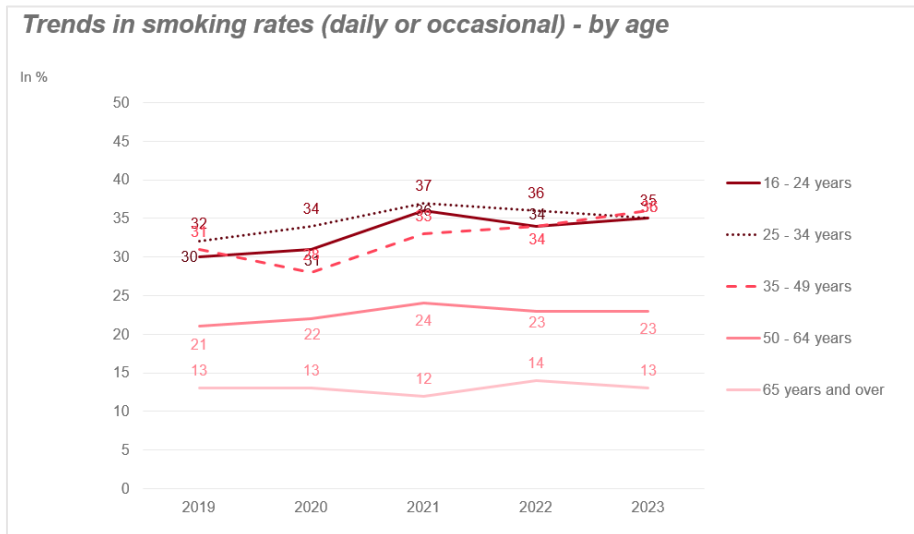


Figure 1 - Enquête ILRES- Le tabagisme au Luxembourg en 2023

B. Tobacco's Broader Impact

Smoking reduces fertility in both genders, contributes to 35% of ectopic pregnancies and triples the risk of premature births as well as miscarriages (2).

Tobacco not only harms smokers but also endangers children, pregnant women, and families exposed to secondhand smoke.

III. Special Concerns

A. Women and Girls

Since 2019, the proportion of women who smoke has risen significantly, reaching parity with men. Women are even slightly more likely than men to use tobacco or nicotine products:

- 24% of women and 23% of men smoke traditional cigarettes.
- 18.1% of women use e-cigarettes, compared to 15.9% of men. Among young adults (aged 16–34) the difference is even more significant: 38 % of women and 32 % of men use e-cigarettes.
- Among dual users of e-cigarettes and cigarettes, 15% of women compared to 6.2% of men began with e-cigarettes, reflecting potential gateway effects.
- 22.2% of women smoke shisha, slightly higher than the 20.8% of men who do so.

When it comes to quitting, 50% of male and female smokers expressed an intention to quit within the next six months. However, only 37% had attempted to quit in the past year. In addition, only 49,8% of

women are aware of cessation programs compared to 57% of men, signaling a need for gender-sensitive outreach (1).

The primary motivations for quitting among both genders are health concerns and the rising cost of tobacco. Barriers to cessation include stress, concerns about weight management, and a lack of information on effective quitting strategies, as reported in the 2023 national survey (1).

B. Youth Targeting

Tobacco consumption among youth in Luxembourg is particularly concerning.

- The 2022 HBSC Luxembourg report (5) revealed that 19.9% of girls and 18% of boys aged 11–18 had smoked. The prevalence increases significantly with age, with 43% of girls and 39.2% of boys aged 17–18 identifying as smokers. This gender disparity persists across all age groups, with girls consistently smoking more than boys.
- The trend extends to e-cigarette use. Among 11- to 18-year-olds, 25.4% of girls and 24.2% of boys have tried e-cigarettes, with usage reaching 46% for girls and 43.6% for boys aged 17–18 (4). According to the 2024 OECD report, 20% of adolescents aged 15–24 in Luxembourg are regular vapers, placing the country third among EU nations in e-cigarette consumption (4).

In addition to traditional cigarettes, alternative nicotine products such as disposable e-cigarettes (“puffs”) have gained popularity. These products, often marketed with appealing flavors and bright packaging, are perceived as less harmful despite their significant health risks. Such items promote rapid addiction among young consumers and serve as a gateway to other tobacco products (6). Additionally, their environmental impact is heavily criticized.

- Higher use of roll-your-own tobacco, shisha, and e-cigarettes among younger populations (1) suggests targeted marketing or cultural trends that disproportionately affect the young.

IV. Legal Obligations

A. Luxembourg’s Anti-Tobacco Policies

Luxembourg ratified the *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)* in 2005 (8), committing to coordinated measures such as taxation, product regulation, cessation support, illicit trade prevention, and public awareness campaigns. Despite these commitments, the country’s anti-tobacco efforts lag behind other European nations.

Luxembourg ranks 28th out of 37 European countries for tobacco control policies in 2021 (7). While slight improvements were made in affordability metrics, Luxembourg’s tobacco prices remain among the lowest in Europe, largely due to minimal taxation. This pricing strategy has made the country a hub for cross-border shopping, undermining efforts to reduce tobacco consumption domestically.

Additionally, while advertising for tobacco products has been banned since 2006, their visibility and availability remain pervasive.

B. Génération Sans Tabac 2040

The *Génération Sans Tabac* national strategy (3), launched by Fondation Cancer in 2023, aims to reduce the smoking rate to less than 5% by 2040 and therefore to give today's children and young people the right to grow up in a tobacco-free environment, so they can become the first "smoke-free generation of adults" by 2040. Supported by 37 national partners, the strategy focuses on six key measures:

1. Increase tobacco prices: Raising prices has proven to be one of the most effective strategies to discourage smoking, particularly among youth.
2. Prevent youth initiation: Regular anti-smoking campaigns and stricter enforcement of laws prohibiting underage smoking are critical.
3. Ban all tobacco advertising: The visibility of tobacco products encourages consumption and hinders cessation efforts.
4. Reduce product availability: Limiting the accessibility of tobacco products, particularly in 24/7 retail outlets, is essential.
5. Expand smoke-free environments: Protecting the population, especially children and pregnant women, from secondhand smoke is a priority.
6. Enhance cessation support: Providing accessible, tailored cessation programs can help individuals overcome nicotine addiction effectively.

V. Recommendations

Luxembourg has significant room for improvement in its fight against tobacco. Adopting a comprehensive national strategy inspired by *Génération Sans Tabac* would provide the framework needed to address current gaps. Special attention must be given to the unique challenges faced by women and girls, ensuring that all policies are inclusive and effective.

In this context, Fondation Cancer Luxembourg proposes concrete demands and actions to strengthen the fight against tobacco consumption in Luxembourg:

1. From 2024 onward, significant annual price increases of at least 10% for tobacco and related products.
2. Ban on the sale of any new nicotine-containing product.
3. Harmonization of taxes and excise duties on all tobacco products and related items such as e-cigarettes and all nicotine-containing products.

4. Prohibition of smoking in cars in the presence of minors.
5. Smoking ban in company vehicles used by multiple people.
6. Prohibition of the visible display of tobacco products and related items at points of sale.
7. General ban on marketing, advertising, and promotion, including at points of sale.
8. Removal of cigarette vending machines:
 - In public spaces
 - In semi-public spaces (e.g., restaurants, cafés)
9. Introduction of a licensing system for the sale of tobacco products.
10. Implementation of a legal smoking ban in the workplace.
11. Prohibition of smoking in open and enclosed sports venues.
12. Smoking ban in shared areas of communal properties.
13. Support for smoking cessation for all patients (including tailored assistance for every person treated in a hospital).

By committing to these measures, Luxembourg can meet its international obligations under the FCTC, safeguard public health, and pave the way for a tobacco-free future.

Signed,

Action on Smoking and Health

ASH Canada

ASH Scotland

Asian Consultancy on Tobacco Control

Association ALUPSE et ALUPSE-DIALOGUE

Association des Etudiants Luxembourgeois en Médecine (ALEM)

Association des Médecins et Médecins-Dentistes (AMMD)

Association luxembourgeoise des médecins en voie de spécialisation (ALMEVS)

Association Luxembourgeoise des Sages-Femmes (ALSF)

Association Luxembourgeoise du Diabète (ALD)

Association Nationale des Infirmiers et Infirmières Luxembourgeoises (ANIL)

Caritas Jeunes et Familles



Centre Francois Baclesse
Centre Hospitalier de Luxembourg (CHL)
Centre Hospitalier du Nord (CHdN)
Centre Hospitalier Emile Mayrisch (CHEM)
Centre National de Prévention des Addictions (CNAPA)
Cercle des Médecins Généralistes (CMG)
Comité national contre le tabagisme, CNCT
Comité Olympique et Sportif Luxembourgeois (COSL)
Conférence Nationale des Élèves du Luxembourg (CNEL)
Corporate Accountability
Croix-Rouge Luxembourgeoise
Daachverband vun den Lëtzebuerger Jugendstrukturen (dlj)
Ecole Nationale de Santé du Luxembourg (ENSA)
Europa Donna
European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention - ENSP
Fédération des Hôpitaux Luxembourgeois (FHL)
Fédération Nationale des Eclaireurs et Eclaireuses du Luxembourg (FNEL)
Fondation Cancer Luxembourg
Fondation Kriibskrank Kanner
Healis Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health
Hôpitaux Robert Schuman (HRS)
Institut national du cancer (INC)
Lëtzebuerger Associatioun fir Beträffener vun engem Hireschlag (Blëtz a.s.b.l.)
Lëtzebuerger Guiden a Scouten (LGS)
Ligue Luxembourgeoise de Prévention et d'Action Médico-Sociales
Lycée Technique pour Professions Educatives et Sociales (LTPES)
Société Luxembourgeoise d'Onco-Hématologie (SLOH)
Société Luxembourgeoise de Cardiologie (SLC)
Société Luxembourgeoise de Diabétologie (SLD)
Société Luxembourgeoise de Gynécologie et d'Obstétrique (SLGO)
Société Luxembourgeoise de Neurologie (SLN)
Société Luxembourgeoise de Pneumologie (SLP)
Tanzania Tobacco Control Forum
Tobacco Free Association of Zambia
UNICEF Luxembourg
Université de Luxembourg
Vital Strategies

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Article 10 States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women: h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.

Article 11 1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular: (f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

Article 12 1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.