

MARKETING MATTERS

Policymakers must protect the health of children and young people

Companies use predatory tactics to target youth with marketing for unhealthy products, including tobacco, alcohol and ultra-processed foods high in salt, sugar and fat.

They seek out kids in their own environments like schools and youth sport events, and increasingly through youth-oriented apps, games and websites.



Health-harming industries spend billions of dollars each year, using child psychology and marketing theory to make their products ultra-appealing to kids.

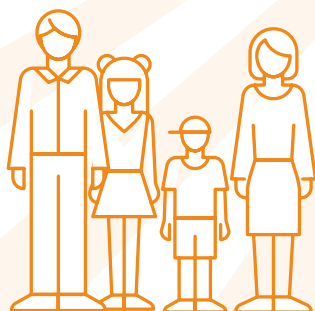


This gets children using unhealthy products from a young age and makes it more likely to keep them hooked as users for life.



Marketing of these products harms youth immediately and across the life course, **contributing to the global epidemic of noncommunicable disease (NCDs).**

It is also deteriorating their mental health and well-being, often by destroying self-confidence with unrealistic ideals.



Governments have a responsibility to listen to young people and protect their rights and health by regulating marketing.



Many young people are aware that they are being targeted with harmful marketing and offer valuable insights that must be considered.



CALL TO ACTION

We call on national policymakers to urgently enact comprehensive, robust regulation to protect children and young people from being targeted by harmful marketing, ideally banning all forms of marketing of unhealthy products that can reach these groups, both inside and outside of child-specific environments.

1

Promote mandatory marketing regulation over self-regulation and voluntary industry commitments, as the latter are ineffective and counterproductive.

2

Support comprehensive approaches to marketing regulation that cover the widest possible scope of ages, environments, channels, techniques, products and industries.

3

Ensure environments in and around schools, as well as at off-campus school events, are given special protection in marketing regulations given that school environments constitute a major source of exposure for children and young people.

4

Craft regulations to address the 'power' of marketing (i.e., the creative and convincing tactics that target children and young people), as this aspect of marketing is currently under-regulated.

5

Use specific definitions, technology-neutral language, and opt-in protocols for data collection to ensure regulations are not easily avoided.

6

Plan for regular policy reviews and embedded evaluations, as companies manoeuvre quickly to overcome regulations, reformulate products, and evade attempts to control their activity.

7

Allocate sufficient funds to implement robust monitoring, evaluation and enforcement of policies and regulations, by means that may include promoting citizen participation in denouncing non-compliance via public education campaigns; and imposing financial penalties on violators.

8

Mobilise the strong existing scientific evidence on marketing harms to raise awareness that harmful commercial marketing is a significant health and human rights issue.

9

Include children and young people in policymaking processes through meaningful and inclusive engagement by raising their awareness about harmful marketing and bringing in their perspectives.

10

Keep health-harming industries out of policy consultations, prohibiting them from also using lobbies or front groups to influence public policy by using robust conflict of interest and disclosure policies.

More detailed information and recommendations can be found in:
[Selling a sick future: countering harmful marketing to children and young people across risk factors for NCDs](#)