

Smoking giant China planning e-cigarette regulation

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China is planning to regulate e-cigarettes in an attempt to stave off a new gateway addiction in what is already the world's largest smoking population.

The Asian giant has over 300 million tobacco-smokers—nearly a third of the world's total—but the battery-operated vaping trend has yet to explode as it has in the United States and elsewhere.

"The supervision of electronic cigarettes must be severely strengthened," said Mao Qunan, head of the National Health Commission's (NHC) planning department, at a press conference Monday.

The NHC "is working with relevant departments to conduct research on electronic cigarette supervision and we plan to regulate electronic cigarettes through legislation," he said.

Vaping is generally believed to be safer than smoking, and [e-cigarette](#) users don't get exposed to the estimated 7,000 chemical constituents present in combustible cigarettes.

The liquids do, however, contain nicotine, which has been studied for decades and is known to be highly addictive.

But more concerning for China, and policymakers worldwide, is a slew of recent studies that have found that, among adolescents, e-cigarettes effectively provide a gateway toward full-fledged smoking.

"We want to reduce the smoking rate and prevent young people from trying tobacco," said Mao.

Enforcing anti-[smoking](#) measures can be difficult in China as the state-run tobacco monopoly provides the government with colossal sums—one trillion yuan (\$145 billion) in taxes and profits in 2018, or more than five percent of central government's revenue.

China's tobacco regulator shares offices and senior officials with the state-owned China National Tobacco Corp—a near-monopoly and by far the world's biggest cigarette producer.

The [tobacco](#) regulator submitted plans for e-cigarette standards to the World Trade Organization in May.

Some cities and countries around the world have begun to limit e-cigarettes.

San Francisco in June became the first major US city to effectively ban the sale and manufacture of e-cigarettes, as concerns grow over a sharp rise in vaping among youths.

Singapore has banned e-cigarettes, while many countries have introduced strict regulation.

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