

New Zealand imposes lifetime ban on youth buying cigarettes

December 13 2022, by Nick Perry



A man sits while smoking in Auckland, New Zealand, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021. New Zealand on Tuesday passed into law a unique plan to phase out tobacco smoking by imposing a lifetime ban on young people buying cigarettes. Credit: AP Photo/David Rowland, File

New Zealand on Tuesday passed into law a unique plan to phase out

tobacco smoking by imposing a lifetime ban on young people buying cigarettes.

The law states that tobacco can't ever be sold to anybody born on or after Jan. 1, 2009.

It means the minimum age for buying [cigarettes](#) will keep going up and up. In theory, somebody trying to buy a pack of cigarettes 50 years from now would need ID to show they were at least 63 years old.

But [health](#) authorities hope smoking will fade away well before then. They have a stated goal of making New Zealand smoke-free by 2025.

The new law also reduces the number of retailers allowed to sell tobacco from about 6,000 to 600 and decreases the amount of nicotine allowed in tobacco that is smoked.

"There is no good reason to allow a product to be sold that kills half the people that use it," Associate Minister of Health Dr. Ayesha Verrall told lawmakers in Parliament. "And I can tell you that we will end this in the future, as we pass this legislation."

She said the health system would save billions of dollars from not needing to treat illnesses caused by smoking, such as cancer, heart attacks, strokes, and amputations. She said the [bill](#) would create generational change and leave a legacy of better health for youth.

Lawmakers voted along [party lines](#) in passing the legislation 76 to 43.



Vaping by a man in a street in Auckland, New Zealand, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021. New Zealand on Tuesday passed into law a unique plan to phase out tobacco smoking by imposing a lifetime ban on young people buying cigarettes. Credit: AP Photo/David Rowland, File

The libertarian ACT party, which opposed the bill, said many small corner stores, known in New Zealand as dairies, would go out of business because they would no longer be able to sell cigarettes.

"We stand opposed to this bill because it's a bad bill and its bad policy, its that straightforward and simple," said Brooke van Velden, ACT's deputy leader. "There won't be better outcomes for New Zealanders."

She said the gradual ban amounted to "nanny-state prohibition" that

would end up creating a large black market. She said prohibition never worked and always ended with unintended consequences.

The law does not affect vaping, which has already become more popular than [smoking](#) in New Zealand.

Statistics New Zealand reported last month that 8% of New Zealand adults smoked daily, down from 16% ten years ago. Meanwhile, 8.3% of adults vaped daily, up from less than 1% six years ago.

Smoking rates remain higher among Indigenous Māori, with about 20% reporting they smoked.

New Zealand already restricts cigarette sales to those aged 18 and over, requires [tobacco](#) packs to come with graphic health warnings and cigarettes to be sold in standardized packs.

New Zealand in recent years also imposed a series of hefty tax hikes on cigarettes.

The law change was welcomed by several health agencies. Health Coalition Aotearoa said the new law represented the culmination of decades of hard-fought advocacy by health and community organizations.

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