



VISION FOR ALTERNATIVE  
DEVELOPMENT - GHANA

## POLICY BRIEF:

# NOVEL AND EMERGING TOBACCO AND NICOTINE PRODUCTS IN GHANA 2024



## SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Ban advertising, promotion, and sponsorship activities related to e-cigarettes, vapes, and new tobacco/nicotine products.
- ▶ Promote Information campaign among young people about the harms associated with e-cigarette use.
- ▶ Prohibit claims that e-cigarette aids smoking cessation.
- ▶ Implement a comprehensive smoke-free policy for all indoor public places that includes e-cigarettes
- ▶ Strengthen existing tobacco surveillance and monitoring systems to assess developments in e-cigarette use.
- ▶ Conduct context-specific independent research to find sufficient evidence on potential effects in Ghana.
- ▶ Legislate on the ban of e-cigarette use in Ghana

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The growing popularity of e-cigarettes has raised many concerns about their attraction and the possible normalization of these products among youth. A rising amount of research studies suggests that using e-cigarettes reverses decades of progress made in tobacco control, exposes young people who do not smoke to nicotine, and increases health risks. Additionally, there is conflicting evidence on using new products as a cessation aid.

In Ghana, between 5% and 7% of the younger population uses e-cigarettes. Although electronic cigarettes are prohibited commercially, over 100 brands are available on the country's internet marketplace. The 2023 Excise Duty Amendment Act, which was just passed, also mentions the commodity. Taxing a product that isn't authorized for usage remains debatable. Complete product bans seem like a far better option, especially because e-cigarette use is still in its infancy and is not very common in Ghana. Also, the smoking prevalence in Ghana remains relatively low. Implementing ENDS in Ghana would undermine current tobacco control initiatives.

## INTRODUCTION

Tobacco smoking remains the largest risk factor for premature death. In recent years, the popularity of novel products known as electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) has surged the markets worldwide, especially among young populations (WHO 2023). These products were initially claimed to be less harmful and could serve as an alternative to cigarettes for those wanting to quit smoking and for cessation purposes. This has led to the tobacco industry rapidly marketing these products and taking advantage of the limited amount of regulation.

Recent studies have highlighted the risks of cardiovascular disease, stroke, respiratory and oral diseases for e-cigarettes as similar to cigarettes (Glantz et al. 2024).

Also, dual-use (using e-cigarettes and cigarettes at the same time) is riskier than smoking alone for all outcomes. These findings of comparable or slightly lower risks for e-cigarettes undermine the whole argument that e-cigarettes, as used, are an effective tool for harm reduction for smokers because the harms of e-cigarette use are not substantially below that of cigarettes.

The marketing of these novel products as a less harmful alternative to cigarettes has seen rapid growth in popularity across many countries including Ghana. Limited evidence on the use of these products particularly by young people in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa calls for more understanding of the landscape of its use and retail marketing. This may help regulators better forecast the impact of regulatory oversight in Ghana.

## Objectives

This study advances research about the regulatory landscape and the retail environment for e-cigarettes by conducting an online market survey and interviews with stakeholders within the tobacco control space in Ghana.

- 1) What are the perspectives of various stakeholders, on the regulatory framework and current e-cigarette legislation in Ghana, and recommendations for future policies ?
- 2) What are the main types of ENDS/ENNDS products in Ghana and what are the main suppliers, prices, marketing, and advertising of the products ?

## Methods

This policy briefing is informed by: **a rapid literature review, an online market survey, stakeholder consultations (face-to-face or online interviews), and a desk-based mapping** to identify any relevant unpublished data sources such as government reports and online print press. All of these data sources captured information to inform the overall objective of the study. For further information on the methods, please contact the research team via the contact information on the last page.

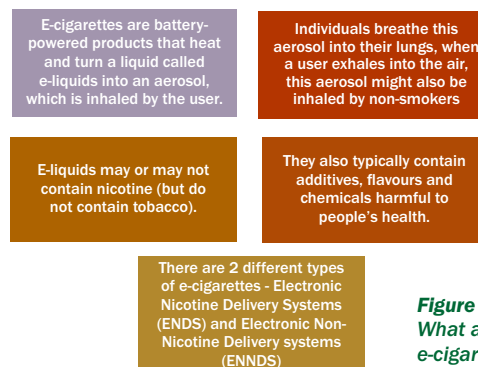


Figure 1:  
What are  
e-cigarettes

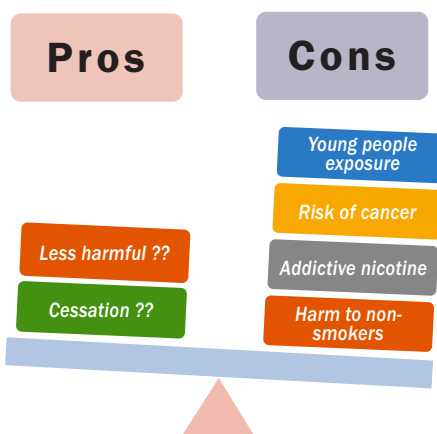


Figure 2:  
E-cigarettes-  
Pros and Cons

## FINDINGS

- ▶ The use of e-cigarettes has seen aggressive growth in recent years especially among high-income countries and young people (Yoong et al. 2021).
- ▶ The lifetime and current prevalence of e-cigarettes globally was 23% and 11%, respectively.
- ▶ The current prevalence of e-cigarette use is highest in Europe (14%) followed by Asia (11%) and then America (10%) (Tehrani et al., 2022).
- ▶ Close to 78 countries (including Ghana) have not started monitoring e-cigarette use and have no data to guide local policy and regulatory decisions (WHO 2023)
- ▶ African countries like Egypt, Senegal, and Uganda have implemented regulations to reduce the growth in novel product use.
- ▶ The absence of specific regulations on these products and limited evidence of their harms provides the potential for growth in e-cigarette use in many low and middle-income countries.
- ▶ E-cigarette use is associated with age (older age), sex (males), alcohol use, friends use, and the use of other tobacco products or substances (Erinoso et al., 2021).

- ▶ Advertising and promotion of these products, including the use of online influencers, tobacco, and related sponsorships, and the use of technology and sleek designs, have been suggested as reasons for the potentially increasing popularity in children and adolescents in high-income countries.
- ▶ The most frequently reported flavors were fruit and menthol or mint flavor

## E-cigarette uses in Ghana

- 111 different brands of e-cigarettes were advertised for sale on [www.jiji.com](http://www.jiji.com)
- 61 brands were found on the [www.tonaton.com](http://www.tonaton.com) site.
- The product's location was mainly in Accra.
- Product price ranged from 100-600 GHC (~10-60 USD).

- ▶ In Ghana, 4.9% were currently using e-cigarettes (males: 4.9%; Females: 5.0%) (Logo et al. 2017).
- ▶ The prevalence of e-cigarette use among junior high school students in the Upper East Region of Ghana was 7.8% (males=10.4%; females=5.3%)
- ▶ 10.5% of them had ever experimented with using e-cigarettes in 2022. (unpublished source) (unpublished source)
- ▶ As part of the Excise Duty Amendment Bill (2023), tax rates were introduced on electronic cigarettes and smoking devices.

### Electronic cigarettes

50% of the ex-factory price and a specific duty of 50 pesewas per millilitre

### Excise Duty (Amendment) (no.2) Act 2023 (ACT 1108)

Excise duty (Amendment) Act 2023 (Act 1093)

### Electronic smoking devices

50% of the ex-factory price

### Electronic Cigarette liquids

50% of the ex-factory price and a specific duty of 50 pesewas per millilitre

Excise Duty Amendment Act (no.2), 2023 (Act 1108)

## Policy recommendations

- ▶ Since any form of tobacco use is addictive and detrimental to health, all forms of tobacco use should be actively discouraged by governments as outlined by the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

**“My thoughts are that it has the same effect that the normal cigarettes have on people, throughout usage the effect will be the same. And that is why we are keen in controlling that space....” (interview 1)**

- In Ghana, e-cigarettes are not licensed for sale and their use is currently unregulated and meant for only cessation.

**“In Ghana, the product is not even regulated even though they are in our tariffs, they are not even supposed to be sold on the market. It is for cessation purposes only” (Interview 1)**

- As part of the government's obligations under the FCTC, it should consider a complete ban on the product and other regulatory measures to discourage the use of electronic tobacco products.

**“We are looking at totally halting the harm. And while we are fighting the already existing problem that has been caused by the consumption of tobacco if you were coming to the table to discuss anything, it wouldn't be to introduce any other product, it would be to look at completely banning the product.” (interview 3)**

- Conduct context-specific independent research to find sufficient evidence on potential effects in Ghana.

**“Yes, a lot of research has to be done. We need to track how many people are using these e-cigarettes and what has been the health implications...a lot of research has to be done.” (Interview 5)**

## CONCLUSION

Ghana like many other countries is slowly experiencing a growing demand for e-cigarettes as a trendy alternative to traditional smoking. The prevalence of e-cigarette use in Ghana (from little evidence) ranges from 5-7% among the young population. Despite e-cigarettes not being licensed as a commercial product, over 100 brands continue to perpetuate the Ghanaian market (including online). The product was also included in the recently passed 2023 Excise Duty Amendment Act, however, taxing a product not licensed for use remains questionable. There is a growing body of evidence to support that smoking e-cigarettes leads to health risks, introduce non-smoking youth to nicotine, renormalizes smoking, and reverses decades of progress in tobacco control. Evidence on the use of novel products as a cessation aid also remains inconclusive. Given that the use of e-cigarettes in Ghana is still in the early phase with a relatively low prevalence, banning the product completely seems a much better solution. Introducing ENDS in Ghana could only undermine existing tobacco control efforts.



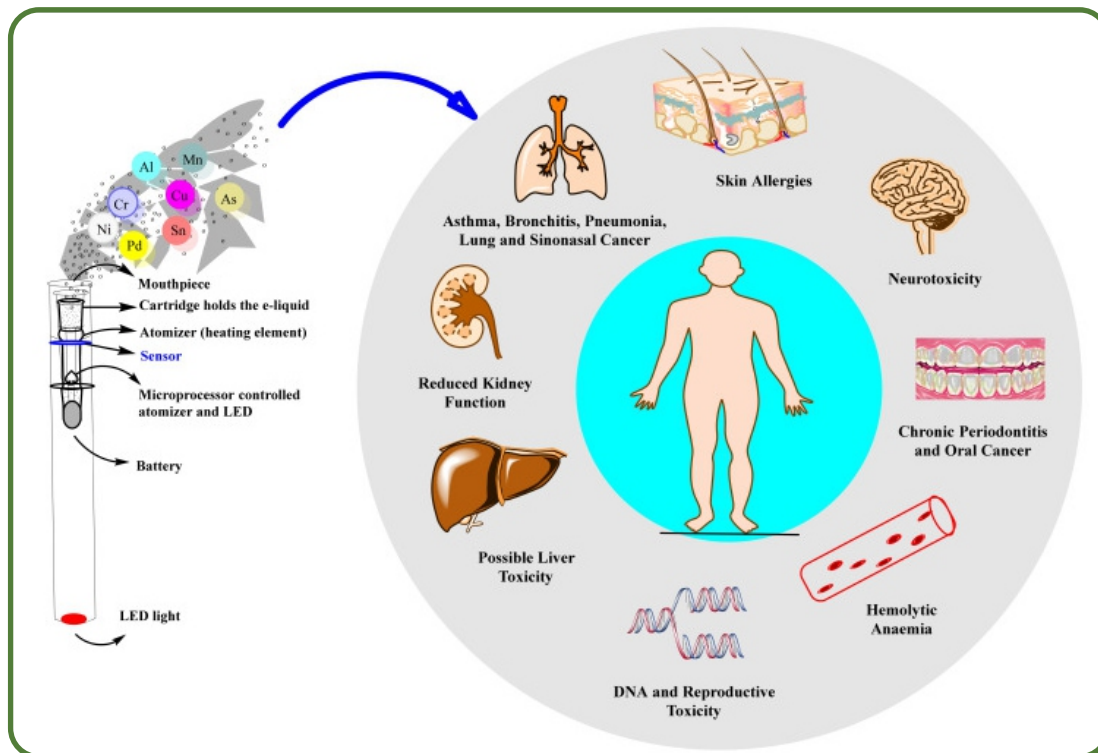


Figure 3: Effect of trace metals on human health



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