



# Generational Endgame Policies

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**Most current tobacco users around the world started smoking regularly before age 20.<sup>1</sup> Because the tobacco industry tries to block policies that reduce tobacco use, many people who are already hooked face significant barriers to quitting.**

**Policies that prevent people from ever starting, such as generational endgame policies, could have a significant impact on reducing tobacco use around the world.**

## What are generational endgame policies?

- Policies that prohibit the sale of tobacco to people born after a certain year. For example: A policy that prohibits the sale of tobacco to anyone born after January 1, 2000.
- These policies would effectively create a “tobacco-free generation,” reducing tobacco use rates to nearly zero for the youngest generations.

## National-level generational endgame policies have been proposed in:



### Malaysia

- **Proposed rule:** Prohibit the use and sale of tobacco products and e-cigarettes to anyone born after January 1, 2007, as part of the “Control of Tobacco Products and Smoking Bill 2022.”
- **Status:** Not implemented. According to the country’s former health minister, the generational endgame portion was removed from the bill due to industry lobbying.<sup>2</sup>



### New Zealand

- **Proposed rule:** Prohibit the sale of tobacco products to anyone born after January 1, 2009, as part of the “Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products’ Amendment Act.”
- **Status:** Not implemented. Parties forming a new coalition government repealed the Act, which had seen industry opposition, prior to implementation. The Act also included regulations to reduce the amount of nicotine in tobacco products and decrease the number of tobacco retailers.<sup>3,4</sup>



### The United Kingdom

- **Proposed rule:** Prohibit the sale of tobacco products to anyone born after January 1, 2009.
- **Status:** Not implemented. The government’s consultation period closed in December 2023 and next steps are awaited.<sup>5</sup>

**The tobacco industry has a long history of fighting health policies that could harm its profits. In response to generational endgame policies, the industry and its allies are using the same tactics they use to oppose other tobacco control measures, such as:**



**Suggesting “compromises” that water down the effectiveness of the proposed legislation.**

In the U.K., an industry source reportedly said the industry would not fight raising the legal smoking age from 18 to 21 as a “comprise” for not implementing the generational endgame policy.<sup>6</sup>

**Counterargument:** This appears to be an attempt to publicly support weaker regulation to distract the public and stave off stricter regulation.<sup>7</sup> Raising the legal smoking age simply delays people from becoming hooked, while generational endgame policies could prevent non-tobacco-users from ever becoming hooked.



**Delivering potentially misleading information about impacts on tax revenues.**

The Malaysian Vape Chamber of Commerce warned that an estimated RM 5.75 billion (about US \$1.2 billion) would be lost in taxes.<sup>15</sup> The incoming finance minister in New Zealand also cited the need for tobacco tax revenues to finance other tax cuts.<sup>16</sup>

**Counterargument:** The costs of smoking outweigh the taxes tobacco brings in. For example, in Malaysia, the amount spent on treating smoking-related diseases (an estimated RM 16 billion, or US \$3.3 billion) dwarfs the estimated tax losses. In New Zealand, the policy was estimated to generate income growth totaling about NZ \$46 billion (US \$31 billion) by 2050.<sup>17</sup>



**Promoting alarmist messaging around illicit trade.**

<sup>8</sup> Policy opponents in Malaysia claimed illicit trade would increase, allegedly citing industry-led estimates.<sup>9</sup> An industry-linked think tank in the U.K., the [Institute of Economic Affairs](#), claimed that “children will find it easier to access cheap cigarettes” by turning to the illicit market.<sup>10</sup> The industry-linked [Consumer Choice Center](#) also called the policy “a boon for mobsters and a loss for consumers.”<sup>11</sup>

**Counterargument:** While illicit trade is a real problem, the industry uses the threat of increased illicit trade to argue against many tobacco control measures such as increased taxes or plain packaging, despite its own historical complicity.<sup>12</sup> Tobacco companies have also been found to overestimate the scale of the illicit trade when compared to independent data.<sup>13, 14</sup>



**Lobbying for exemptions.** The Malaysian Vapers Alliance—a member of the [World Vapers’ Alliance](#), which has received funding from [British American Tobacco](#) (BAT)—urged the government to exempt e-cigarettes from the policy.<sup>18</sup> In the U.K., [Philip Morris International](#) (PMI) also allegedly lobbied to ensure heated tobacco products were exempt from endgame policies.

**Counterargument:** The industry wants to ensure people have a potential path to addiction, regardless of which products will hook them. Exempting e-cigarettes from generational endgame policies also threatens to increase youth e-cigarette use, a growing global epidemic.<sup>19</sup>

# Major tobacco companies are publicizing a misleading “transformation” narrative, claiming they want consumers to move away from cigarettes. But their responses to these policies show they aren’t serious about reducing smoking, especially among young people.

- PMI claims it is “delivering a smoke-free future” and that it has “made the decision to go smoke-free.”<sup>20</sup> Yet in the U.K., PMI threatened to sue the government over the proposed legislation (the threat was withdrawn) and met with MPs to try to protect its heated tobacco products from endgame policies.<sup>21, 22</sup>
- [Japan Tobacco International](#) claims it is committed to “youth access prevention by supporting initiatives, campaigns and legislation which prevents minors from accessing tobacco... ”<sup>23</sup> BAT also promotes

“youth access prevention”<sup>24</sup> and claims it’s “building a smokeless world.”<sup>25</sup> [Imperial Brands](#) says it is “leaning into the transformation” of the industry and its journey “towards a healthier future.”<sup>26</sup> However, BAT and Imperial discouraged the endgame policy in the U.K., claiming it would be difficult to enforce, and all three companies submitted responses to the government consultation opposing the major endgame policies in New Zealand.<sup>27, 28, 29</sup>

## Sub-nationally, two policies have been implemented.

- **Balanga City, the Philippines, 2016:** The city’s generational endgame policy prohibited the sale of tobacco products to those born after January 1, 2000. The policy was repealed two years later after industry litigation that also targeted the designation of the city’s University Town as “smoke-free.”<sup>30</sup>
- **Brookline, United States, 2021:** The Massachusetts city passed a law to prohibit the sale of tobacco products to anyone born after January 1, 2000. Implementation of the law began in September 2021. Later that month, several tobacco retailers filed a lawsuit against the regulation, but the policy currently remains in effect.<sup>31, 32</sup>

## There is still a lot to learn.

- We do not have long-term, real-world data because no national policies have been implemented yet.
- Three simulation modelling studies, however, concluded that generational endgame policies have potential to achieve “substantial population-level health improvements.”<sup>33</sup>

### Learn more

Read about these policies and the industry’s attempts to stop them:

<https://tobaccotactics.org/article/tobacco-industry-interference-with-endgame-policies/>

Connect with a STOP expert:

<https://exposetobacco.org/media-inquiries/>

## Endnotes

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STOP is a global tobacco industry watchdog whose mission is to expose the tobacco industry tactics that undermine public health. Comprised of a network of academic and public health organizations, STOP researches and monitors the tobacco industry, shares intelligence to counter its tactics, and exposes its misdeeds to a global audience. STOP is funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies as part of the [Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use](#). For more information, visit [exposetobacco.org](https://exposetobacco.org).