# Smoke-free products deserve appropriate and risk-proportionate regulation

**The World Health Organization estimates there are about 1 billion smokers in the world today—and come 2025 the number will be roughly the same[1].**

Science and technology have enabled the development of alternatives for adults who would otherwise continue smoking. For example, e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products and oral smokeless products.

Provided they are scientifically substantiated and manufactured under appropriate quality and safety controls, they can be a better choice to continued smoking. This is because smoke-free alternatives do not burn tobacco.

Everyone knows that smoking causes serious disease and is addictive. There is no doubt that the best choice a smoker can make is to quit tobacco and nicotine completely.

But for those adults who would otherwise continue to smoke, better, smoke-free alternatives now exist.

However, there are many countries around the world where the only tobacco and nicotine products that can be legally sold are smoked, such as cigarettes.

And even where better, innovative alternatives to cigarettes are available, existing policies often impede access to them. This has to change.

Adult smokers need to be able to access accurate information about these better alternatives.

**Science and technology have enabled the development of smoke-free alternatives.**

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A growing number of public health and policy experts recommend that regulation should follow a fundamental principle: products that carry different levels of risks should be regulated differently and in proportion to the risks they pose. We agree.

We support and encourage the regulation of both cigarettes and smoke-free alternatives, but in most countries, regulation has not been adjusted to take into account recent developments in science and technology.

This prevents the many adults who would otherwise continue smoking from learning about and accessing better alternatives, and in turn means accepting the status quo and the fact they will continue to smoke cigarettes, the most harmful form of nicotine consumption.

Some in the public health community have called for smoke-free alternatives to be regulated in the same way as cigarettes because the long-term effects of these products are unknown. But regulatory decisions should be based on the totality of the evidence regarding alternative products and their potential to be much less harmful than continuing to smoke.

Experts and national health authorities—the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as well as the UK Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, among others—have rigorously reviewed the science behind smoke-free products, acknowledging harm reduction as a viable and much-needed approach to tobacco control.

## Change needs to happen now

It's our view that all tobacco and nicotine products should be regulated. The question that remains is not if they should be regulated, but how they should be regulated.

Governments have a crucial role in defining the way forward. They can influence the pace and scale at which adult smokers switch to better alternatives by adopting risk proportionate regulations that keep pace with scientific and technological progress.

The commercialization of smoke-free alternatives cannot come at the expense of youth or people who don't smoke. Sensible regulation is key to striking the right balance.

**This means adopting regulation that recognizes the role smoke-free alternatives can play in moving those adults who would otherwise continue to smoke away from cigarettes, while protecting youth and non-smokers.**

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# How should regulation be formed to protect the public?

Regulation should allow **adult users** to **access information about better alternatives** to cigarettes and **encourage adult smokers to switch to these if they don't quit altogether.**

Regulation should aim to incentivize adult smokers to **switch to smoke-free products while minimizing unintended consequences,** such as use by non-nicotine users and minors.

Regulation should set **minimum safety and quality standards** for smoke-free products.

Regulation should acknowledge the **fundamental differences between combustible tobacco products** (such as cigarettes), and **scientifically substantiated tobacco and nicotine-containing products** that are smoke-free.

Regulation should have a **framework for post-market surveillance** designed to ensure that the **products are only being adopted by current smokers** who would otherwise continue to smoke and not being used by former smokers, non-smokers, youth.

1. WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco smoking 2000-2005, 2018

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