



### Introduction

Over the past few decades, Brazil has achieved an internationally recognized track record of implementing and sustaining strong tobacco control measures. However, in recent years – as in many countries – e-cigarette use has become an emerging concern. A national ban has existed since 2009 outlawing the importation, commercialization, production, advertising, and use in indoor public places, workplaces, and public transport of electronic smoking devices, and this was updated in 2024. Yet e-cigarettes continue to pose risks to population health.

Data from a 2024 VIGITEL national survey indicate that while 2.4% of Brazilian adults aged 18 or older reported current use<sup>1</sup> (daily or occasionally) of e-cigarettes, 10.1% of young adults aged 18 to 24 use them. This higher prevalence among young adults is concerning the addictive nature of nicotine and increasing evidence of harm associated with vaping, particularly among adolescents and young adults. It also echoes a broader pattern: data from a 2025 WHO trends report indicated that prevalence of e-cigarette use is substantially higher among adolescents than adults.

Robust national legislation adopts a zero-tolerance approach to electronic smoking devices, including e-cigarettes, and there is a comprehensive ban on their production, use and sale. However, sustained enforcement is needed to ensure these protections are delivered. In addition, misinformation from the tobacco industry has undermined efforts to raise public awareness about potential health harms and whether smoke-free laws apply to e-cigarettes.

National authorities are intensifying action to address these issues. But coordinated action at the subnational level is just as important. The city of Rio de Janeiro has been championing local efforts by taking their own bold steps to protect people from e-cigarettes, through a combination of local policy, enforcement, and public communication aligned with national regulation.

### Defining the problem

According to data from a 2019 VIGITEL national survey, whilst only 5.2% of youth in Rio de Janeiro had experimented with e-cigarettes – a lower percentage than several cities in the North, South, and Central-West regions – this still represents approximately 263,000 young people in absolute terms due to the city's large population.<sup>2</sup> In addition, 76,000 young people were current users of e-cigarettes, making this an issue requiring attention.

Determined to take action, health authorities in Rio de Janeiro first reviewed available data on existing activities and enforcement efforts to identify gaps. Based on preliminary analysis, three key challenges were identified:

- Illegal sales of e-cigarettes (illicit trade), enabling access to devices;

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<sup>1</sup> Current use of electronic cigarettes is defined as the consumption of these products on one or more days within the past 30 days, or by individuals reporting daily or occasional use at the time of a survey.

<sup>2</sup> Analysis conducted by Bertoni and Szklo (2021).

- Low public awareness and persistent misperceptions about risks;
- Limited inspection capacity and lack of integrated enforcement coordination.

To address these issues, the city implemented a set of coordinated, evidence-based interventions aligned with its local legislative and regulatory authority. The work was carried out with support from local, national and international partners, as part of its collaboration with the Partnership for Healthy Cities – a global network of cities committed to reducing the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases and injuries.

### — Strengthening local policy and subnational regulation on smoke-free environments

The city has enacted two key policies of its own to strengthen tobacco control and public health protection. In January 2025, Law No. 8,791 established the Municipal Awareness and Prevention Campaign against Electronic Cigarette Use, promoting education, risk communication, and public engagement to discourage consumption. Subsequently, on March 14, 2025, the Municipal Health Secretariat issued Resolution SMS No. 6409, which prohibits the use of any smoking product, whether tobacco-derived or not, including electronic cigarettes, vapes, and similar devices, in enclosed public and private spaces. The resolution requires establishments to display visible signage, implement protective measures to prevent smoke exposure, and actively monitor compliance, with warnings or penalties for non-compliance. These policies are in line with national legislation and provide concrete guidance to local stakeholders, ensuring that there is no room for confusion over scope or application.

### — Strengthening intersectoral enforcement and data collection

Between 2019 and September 2023, the Municipal Health Secretariat had conducted more than 10,000 inspections related to smoke-free environments and issued over 5,500 sanctions. However, fragmented data systems limited the city's ability to analyze trends, identify priority locations, and measure enforcement effectiveness.

To address these issues, between 2023 and 2025 the city formalized collaboration among public health agencies whose support was required for effective enforcement of e-cigarette legislation in line with the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products of which Brazil is a Party. These included the Municipal Institute of Health Surveillance, Zoonosis Surveillance and Agricultural Inspection (IVISA-RIO), the Municipal Health Secretariat, the Municipal Public Order Secretariat, and intelligence units. Joint inspections were organized and implemented to target illegal sales, advertising and distribution of e-cigarettes, with approximately 400 officials supporting enforcement operations. Strengthening coordination enabled greater efficiency and capacity to run and monitor enforcement efforts.

The city has also digitized tobacco control inspections, replacing paper-based processes with an integrated electronic platform. Inspectors now use tablets to complete standardized checklists, document violations, and upload evidence in real time. This facilitates information-sharing and analysis, whilst making the process faster. By the end of 2025, the system was expanded across the regulatory agency, improving transparency, reducing administrative burden, and enabling more strategic, data-driven inspections.

### — Launching a comprehensive communications strategy

To address misinformation and increase compliance, Rio de Janeiro implemented a multi-channel communications campaign from May to September 2025, targeting both the general population and commercial establishments. Information on smoking regulations was updated on the IVISA-RIO website, providing accessible materials and legal guidance. Campaign activities included World No Tobacco Day initiatives, mass media outreach, print materials, and smoke-free signage. Outreach through paid social media promotion reached more than 451,000 people and generated over 1.28

million impressions, with [messaging on the harms of e-cigarette use](#) performing particularly well. A post-campaign recall study found that 68% of people exposed discussed the campaign with others, and 90% reported attempting to discourage electronic smoking device use. A dedicated landing page also generated 266 contacts, including 78 direct requests for smoking cessation support.



*An image from the communications campaign run by the city, highlighting the health risks of vaping.  
Photo credit: City of Rio de Janeiro/Vital Strategies.*

## — Results and next steps

While comprehensive impact evaluation is ongoing, these coordinated actions are already strengthening enforcement capacity and improving awareness of smoke-free regulations in the city, as well as addressing misinformation around e-cigarettes. Enhanced data systems, supported by the Partnership for Healthy Cities, will allow Rio de Janeiro to better assess outcomes, identify priority areas and guide future scale-up. By advancing policy development, enforcement, communications and regulatory innovation simultaneously, Rio de Janeiro is working to curb the rise of e-cigarette use and reinforce its leadership in tobacco control and public health protection. Just as in the past, when certain jurisdictions took the lead and paved the way toward national policies, it is expected that similar subnational leadership will once again play a catalytic role. This approach offers valuable lessons for other cities in Brazil, and for cities facing similar challenges elsewhere.

*This project was led by IVISA in Rio de Janeiro, with technical and financial support from the Partnership for Healthy Cities and associated partners. For more information on Rio de Janeiro's tobacco control work, please see [Rio Pushes Back on E-cigarette Marketing | Partnership for Healthy Cities](#)*

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