

Peer Review

Review of: "Prevalence and Patterns of Tobacco and Nicotine Product Use in Italy: Findings from 2018–2024 Repeated Cross-Sectional Surveys"

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The authors' methodology—encompassing both sample selection and interview techniques—is well-suited to the study's objectives. Given the cross-sectional design, the descriptive nature of the analysis is appropriate. Furthermore, the inclusion of specialized questionnaires provides valuable insights that extend beyond basic usage patterns, capturing critical data on risk perception, respiratory health, exercise capacity, and subjective improvements in hygiene and physical well-being following the transition from cigarettes to HTPs.

The paper identifies Italy as an early European adopter of HTPs, with THS currently commanding ~70% of the Italian HTP market. Between 2018 and 2024, the proportion of THS users who do not smoke rose from 61.4% to 75.9%, while dual use with combustible products dropped from 38.6% to 24.1%. Crucially, for regulators, 30.2% of current dual users reported planning to quit combustible cigarettes within the next 30 days—a rate significantly higher than the 9.3% quit intention reported by general cigarette smokers in the GAPS. This suggests that HTPs, even if not without risk and not specifically intended for quitting, may serve as a practical transition tool for smokers who are otherwise resistant to traditional cessation.

These results support the concept of smoke-free products as acceptable cigarette alternatives and a key component of tobacco harm reduction. Although the study does not evaluate long-term reductions in clinical risk or disease development—nor was it designed to do so—it provides essential data on the initial transition and behavior of users.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare. No