

# Review of: "Youth Patterns of Use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) Use, Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH) Waves 4 – 5.5"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This is an interesting study, with some unexpected results. The most unexpected finding is the decline in prevalence of ENDS use by youth during Wave 5.5 to less than half the prevalence during Wave 5 (4.6 versus 10.2 %). In the same time period, cigarette use by youth declined from 2.7 % (Wave 5) to 1.3 % (Wave 5.5). Similar trends were also found in two other surveys (NYTS and MTF) on tobacco/nicotine use by youth. The fact that prevalences for both product types changed in the same direction is remarkable and requires a plausible explanation. The authors mention a number of weaknesses in the PATH study, which could limit the comparability to the other two studies. My suggestion is that changes in the PATH study caused by the Covid 19 pandemic might be most probably responsible for the observed (somewhat unexpected) results. Therefore, I think that the authors are right when they suggest to interpret the Wave 5.5 PATH data with caution.

I have two (minor) points, which should be addressed in order to improve the readability of the manuscript:

- Table 1: somewhat difficult to read. I suggest to adjust the rows so that the same row contains comparable information for each wave.
- Page 10, 3rd paragraph: I had problems in understanding the sentence starting with "The declining cigarette smoking ...". I suppose it should read "... can help ..." instead of "... an help ..." ?