

Changes in Smoke-free Compliance After the Implementation of a “Smoke-Free Government” Initiative: An Observational Study in Qingdao, China

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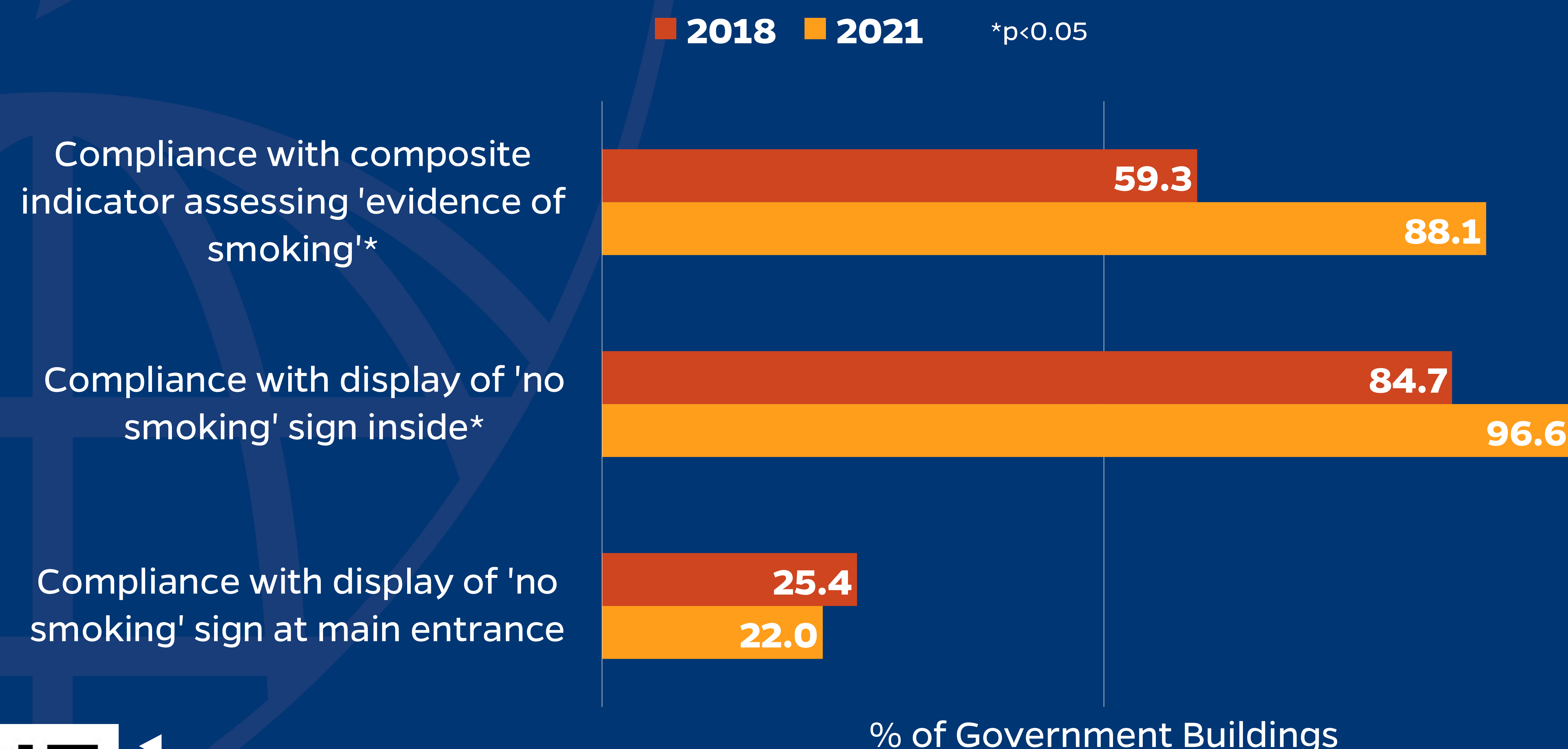
Background

China’s smoke-free government (SFG) initiative offers provincial and local governments a means to “lead by example” and engages government stakeholders to mobilize political support for policy change at all levels. Qingdao city has implemented SFG initiative since 2019. This study examines the changes in smoke-free compliance in government buildings before and after SFG implementation.

Methods

- A mix of urban and suburban districts in Qingdao were selected for observation.
- Trained data collectors observed 747 public settings of 13 venue types, including 59 government buildings in October-November 2018, and revisited these venues in September-October 2021.
- Compliance with composite indicator assessing “evidence of smoking” was measured by (1) no observed smoking, (2) no cigarette butt litter, and (3) no ashtrays .
- Wilcoxon signed-rank tests and Mann-Whitney U tests were used to test the longitudinal changes and differences between venue types, respectively.

In Qingdao, China, compliance with smoke-free policy has been significantly improved in government buildings. However, there is an opportunity to enhance compliance by posting no-smoking signs at main entrances.



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Results

- Government buildings became more smoke-free compliant based on the composite indicator for “evidence of smoking” (59.3% vs 88.1%, $p<0.05$), moving up in rank from the 9th to the 3rd among the 13 venue types.
- Government buildings became more compliant with displaying no-smoking signs with all the required components (71.2% vs 89.8%, $p<0.05$) and performed the best regarding this indicator among all venue types.
- Compliance with posting no-smoking signs at main entrances of government buildings was low and decreased slightly (25.4% vs 22.0%, $p=0.70$), moving down in rank from 3rd to 12th among all venue types.

Conclusion

Clear instructions from authorities regarding sign placement, strong enforcement, and sustained commitment for tobacco control from city leadership are needed to achieve the goals of the SFG initiative and to be a role model for citizens.

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