

Designated Smoking Areas (DSAs) and Smoke-Free Compliance in Indian Hospitality Venues

Background

Under India's Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) of 2003, **designated smoking areas (DSAs)** are permitted in certain hospitality venues: hotels with 30 or more rooms and restaurants, bars and lounges with seating capacity for 30 or more people.

DSAs must be marked as “smoking area” in English and one Indian language, fully enclosed, with automatic doors, health warning signage, and no service inside, including hookah service. Additionally, all hospitality venues are required to maintain smoke-free conditions.

Venues without a DSA must be entirely smoke-free. Where a DSA is permitted, smoking is restricted to the designated area only; all other areas of the venue must remain smoke-free.

Between September–October 2025, we conducted an observational study in six cities in India—**Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Gandhinagar, Guwahati, Jaipur, and Lucknow**—to assess the prevalence of DSAs in hospitality venues and examine compliance with COTPA requirements¹.

Key Findings

- ➔ DSAs were rare across eligible venues
- ➔ **None of the assessed venues with DSAs were fully compliant with legal requirements for DSAs**
- ➔ Smoking-related indicators were observed in non-designated areas across hospitality venues, regardless of the presence of a DSA
- ➔ Hookah sale or service was offered by venues both with and without DSAs, despite requirements that venues remain smoke-free outside DSAs and that no service be provided inside DSAs



Prevalence

Among the 1135 DSA-eligible venues observed, including 113 bars/lounges, 278 hotels, and 744 restaurants, **1% of venues (n=17)** had at least one clearly labelled DSA, as confirmed by a physical visit.

Compliance

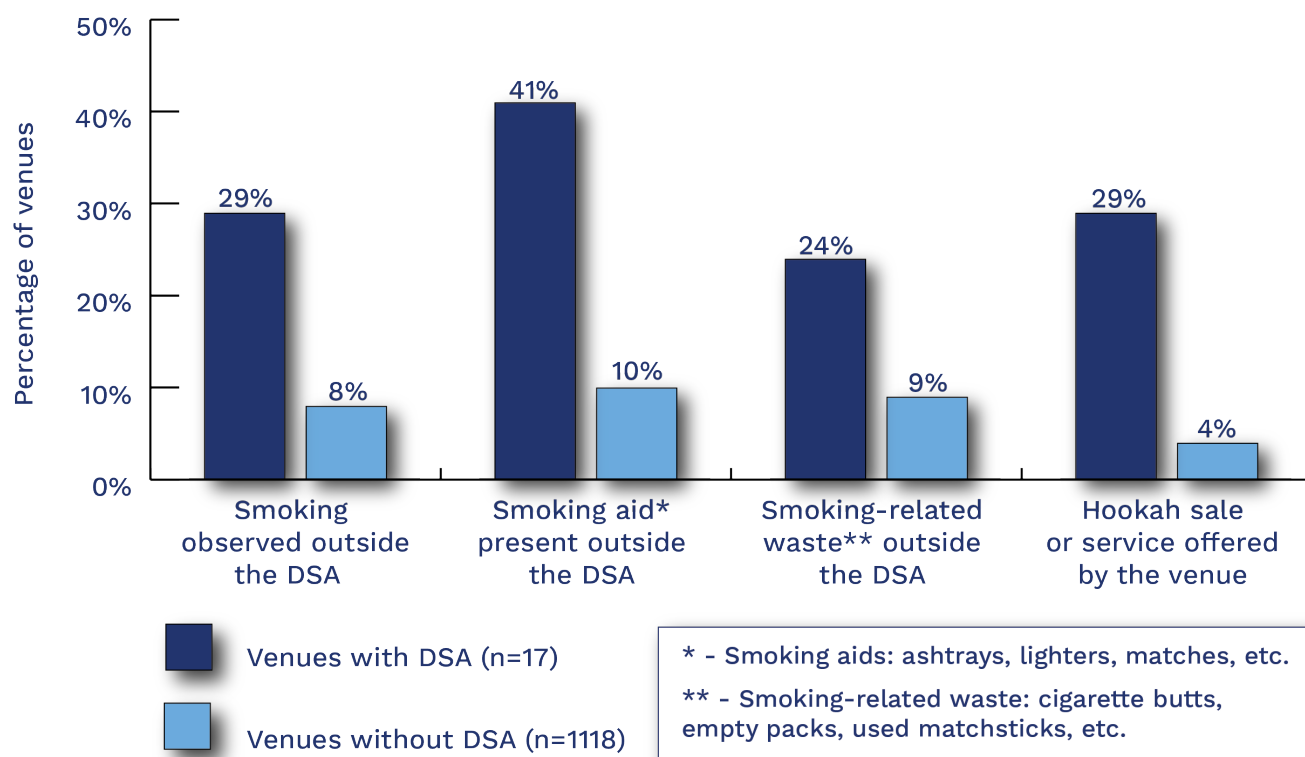
Of the 17 venues with DSAs, none were compliant across all measures.

Two venues had two DSAs each, while 15 venues had one DSA each; a venue was counted as compliant only if all DSAs within it met the compliance criteria.

- ➔ **81% (n=13) of venues²** with DSAs did not meet all DSA structural design standards (floor-to-ceiling walls on all four sides, entrance with a door, automatic self-closing door, and door kept closed when not in use)
- ➔ **100% (n=17) of venues** did not display the required warning signage
- ➔ **63% (n=10) of venues²** had employees providing services inside the DSA

Smoking Evidence

Smoking and evidence of smoking were observed in areas outside DSAs, and in venues that did not have a DSA. Hookah sale or service was offered in both venues with and without DSAs but was more common in venues with DSAs.



Conclusions

Findings from the study suggest:

- ➔ DSAs were rare among DSA-eligible hospitality venues across the six cities, indicating **limited use of the DSA provision** in practice
- ➔ Where DSAs existed, none met all assessed legal requirements, with recurring gaps in structural design features, mandatory warning signage, and the prohibition on service inside DSAs, suggesting **weak compliance and enforcement**
- ➔ Smoking and evidence of smoking were observed in non-designated areas, including in venues with DSAs where smoking occurred in the venue but outside the DSA, as well as in venues without DSAs
- ➔ The offering of hookah sale or service in venues with and without DSAs raises compliance concerns, given smoke-free requirements outside DSAs and the prohibition on service inside DSAs
- ➔ This pattern suggests that DSAs, as implemented in practice, do not provide adequate protection to patrons and staff from exposure to tobacco smoke, **highlighting the need for 100% smoke-free requirements**—potentially including not allowing DSAs—alongside improved enforcement to reduce secondhand smoke exposure in hospitality settings

Footnotes

¹Venues were selected using proportional stratified random sampling by city, venue type, and price/rating tier. Eligible venues were required to be open at the time of visit and have at least 30 seats or rooms. Three categories of COTPA DSA requirements were assessed: (1) structural design standards (floor-to-ceiling enclosure, automatic self-closing door, door kept closed when not in use); (2) mandatory warning signage; and (3) prohibition on service inside the DSA. Requirements related to ventilation systems and air pressure differentials were not assessed. ²Denominator for this indicator was 16 rather than 17 because the DSA in one venue was reserved for hotel guests and could not be accessed by data collectors for a complete assessment.