

# Looking at Policy Change at the Provincial Level in China

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## Objective

To compare progress towards implementation of five key tobacco control policies in seven Chinese provinces (Shanghai, Tianjin, Heilongjiang, Henan, Guangdong, Zhejiang and Jiangxi). The policies were based on MPOWER<sup>1</sup> and included: protection from second-hand smoke (SHS); offering help to quit; health warnings regarding tobacco use; the enforcement of bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship; and increasing tobacco taxes and prices.

## Methods

The Global Adult Tobacco Survey<sup>2</sup> questionnaire (GATS-China) provided national-level data. A modified version was used in the seven provinces; 2000 families were selected by 4-stage stratified cluster sampling and surveyed. The sample was stratified by age, gender and urban-rural status based on Chinese census data from 2010. The survey contained 10 indicators to assess key policy areas<sup>3</sup> (Table 1).

## Results

Provinces were located in the east, northeast, south and the central areas of China, representing a broad range of the population. Two indicators (smokers attempting to quit with cessation aids and warnings about tobacco use) were better in the provinces than at the national level. Regarding warnings about tobacco use: nationally, 59.8% of respondents noticed information on the dangers of smoking while the rates in the provinces ranged from 64.7% to 92.1%. However, protection from SHS

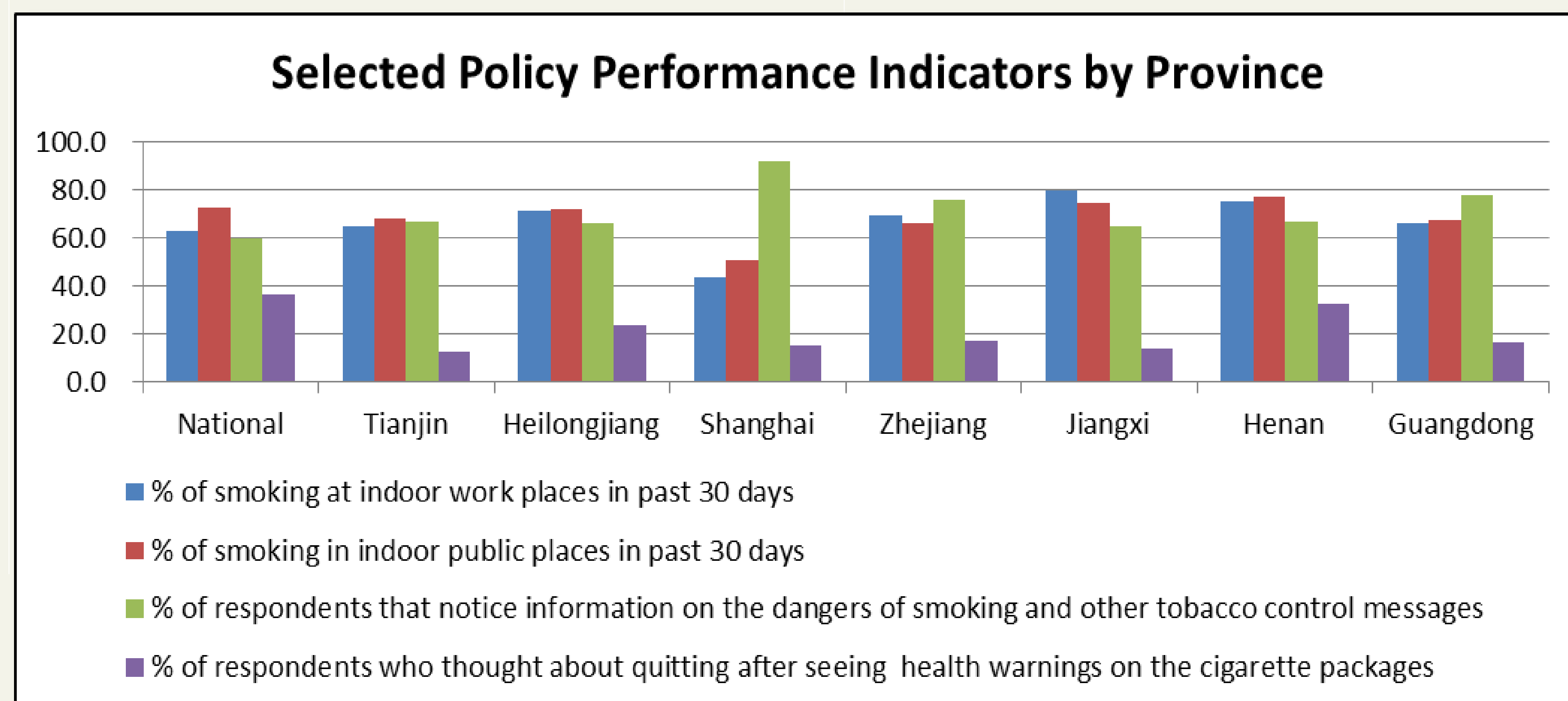
1	Percentage of smoking at indoor work places in past 30 days
2	Percentage of smoking in indoor public places in past 30 days
3	Percentage of respondents reporting being advised to quit when seeing doctors during the past 12 months
4	Percentage of smokers attempted to quit without any cessation aids in past 12 months
5	Percentage of respondents that notice information on the dangers of smoking and other tobacco control messages
6	Percentage of respondents who thought about quitting after seeing health warnings on the cigarette packages
7	Percentage of respondents who noticed tobacco marketing during the past 30 days
8	Percentages of respondents who noticed tobacco marketing on TV programs during the past 30 days
9	Maximum expenditure to buy a pack of cigarettes paid by 50% smokers
10	Expenditure of 100 packs of cigarettes as a percentage of 2009 GDP Per Capita

exposure was much lower in a number of the provinces when compared with the national level, and only Shanghai had lower levels of SHS when compared to national levels. Heilongjiang, Jiangxi and Henan were found to have the highest levels of SHS exposure at indoor working places (71.3%, 80.0%, and 75.1%, respectively) than nationally (63.3%). No differences were found concerning tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship comparing provincial and national levels. Expenditures for 100

packs of cigarettes as a percentage of 2009 per capita GDP were lower than the national average in Tianjin, Shanghai and Guangdong. Cigarettes remain very cheap in the provinces/cities surveyed. However, findings indicate that only 1% of an individual's per capita income is spent on cigarettes.

## Conclusion

China, by implementing the modified version of the GATS questionnaire at the provincial-level was able to determine how policy implementation was progressing in seven provinces compared to the nation as a whole. The findings show that provinces differ on their progress toward implementation and on some policy issues provinces are making progress while others are not. It is encouraging to find that use of cessation aids and warnings about the dangers of tobacco are making progress in some of the provinces; however, much work is still needed on SHS protection. China taxation rate remains very low and should be increased. This work also highlights the importance of tobacco control at the provincial level in China.



References:  
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