

Compliance with Smoke-Free Laws in Karachi, Pakistan East District: 2019 vs. 2022

Background

The Government of Pakistan has implemented a ban on smoking in public spaces and requires the display of no-smoking signage in accordance with the “Prohibition of Smoking and Protection of Non-smokers Health Ordinance 2002.”¹ This assessment aimed to assess compliance with these laws in the East district of Karachi at two different time points: in 2019² and 2022, before and after the smoke-free enforcement activities. Karachi, with an approximate population of 17 million, is Pakistan’s most populous city.

Methods

STEP 1

Baseline compliance assessment was conducted in October–November 2019 by the Institute for Global Tobacco Control (IGTC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, in partnership with the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) and a research team from Gallup Pakistan.

STEP 2

The Administration of the East District of Karachi planned and carried out implementation activities to improve compliance with the smoke-free law. These activities included training officers, distributing no-smoking signage, stricter enforcement of smoke-free policies in public spaces, conducting raids and issuing fines. Large-scale awareness activities, including marches, billboard advertisements and media campaigns, were conducted.

STEP 3

Follow-up compliance assessment was conducted in September–October 2022 by IGTC, The Union and Gallup Pakistan. In 2022:

- ➔ Data collectors observed venues sampled in 2019 (or replacements where appropriate). A total of 687 venues were visited in the East district.
- ➔ A standardized observation tool was used for on-ground data collection.
- ➔ Data collectors were expected to spend at least 20 minutes at each venue, visiting specific locations within the venue, and observing instances of “evidence of smoking” (i.e., active smoking, cigarette butts or ashtrays), as well as the presence of no-smoking signage, tobacco advertisements, and on-site sales, among other factors.
- ➔ Differences in compliance in 2022 compared to 2019 were assessed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. A venue was considered compliant with the composite indicator assessing “evidence of smoking” if it met the following criteria: no one was observed smoking inside, no cigarette butts were observed inside, and no ashtrays or other instruments used to hold cigarette ash were observed inside.

Image 1.

Between 2019 and 2022, the Karachi Administration took steps to increase compliance with the smoke-free law. The 2022 observations still found “evidence of smoking.”



Images 2 & 3.

The 2022 observations also found some increased compliance, including smoke-free signage.



1. Government of Pakistan. *The Prohibition of Smoking in Enclosed Places and Protection of Non-smokers Health Ordinance, 2002.*

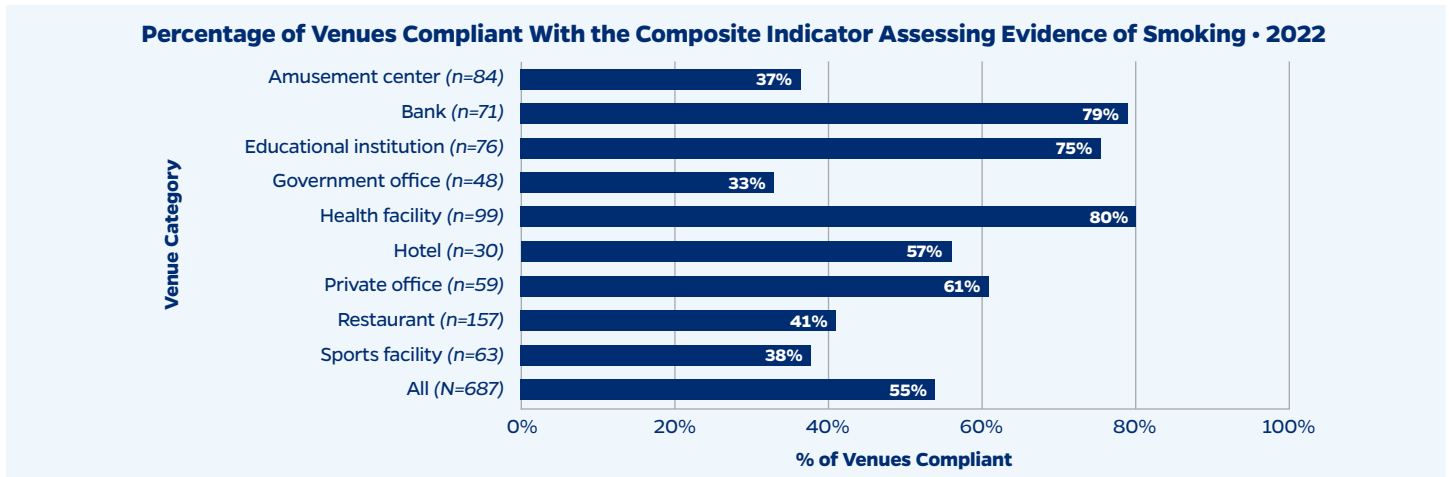
Available at <https://www.tobaccocontrol.org/legislation/country/pakistan/laws>

2. Institute for Global Tobacco Control. *Technical Report on the Assessment of Compliance with the Smoke-free Policy in Karachi, Pakistan.*

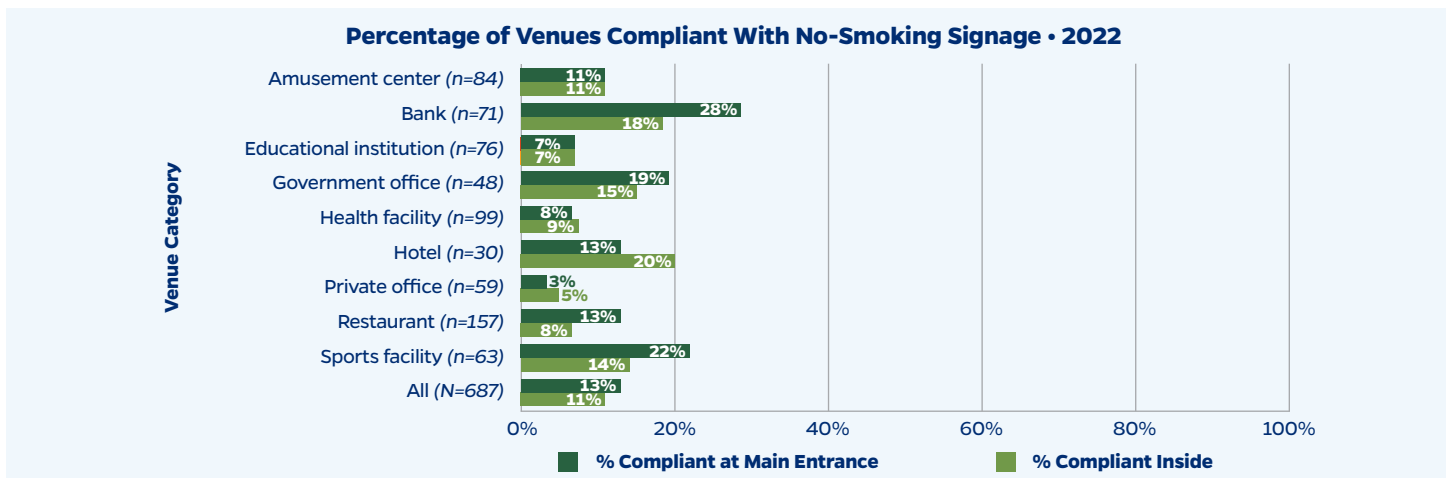
Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; June 2020. Available at <https://www.globaltobaccocontrol.org/resources>

Results: 2022

Overall, 55% of venues in the East district were compliant with the composite smoking indicator. High rates of compliance with the composite indicator were observed among health facilities (80%), banks (79%), and educational institutions (75%). Less than half of restaurants (41%), sports facilities (38%), amusement centers (37%) and government offices (33%) were compliant:

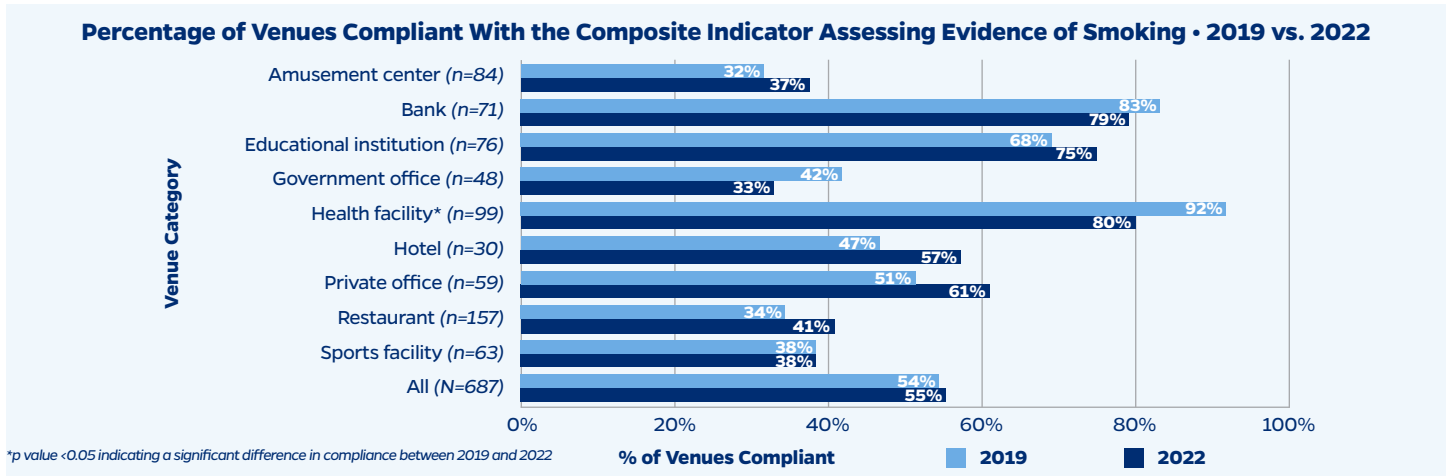


Compliance with no-smoking signage at the main entrance in the East district in 2022 was low overall (13%) and in each venue category. Private offices (3%) had the lowest compliance rate while banks (28%) had the highest compliance rate. Similarly, compliance with no-smoking signage inside venues in 2022 was low overall (11%) and across all venue categories. Private offices (5%) had the lowest compliance rate and hotels (20%) had the highest compliance rate:

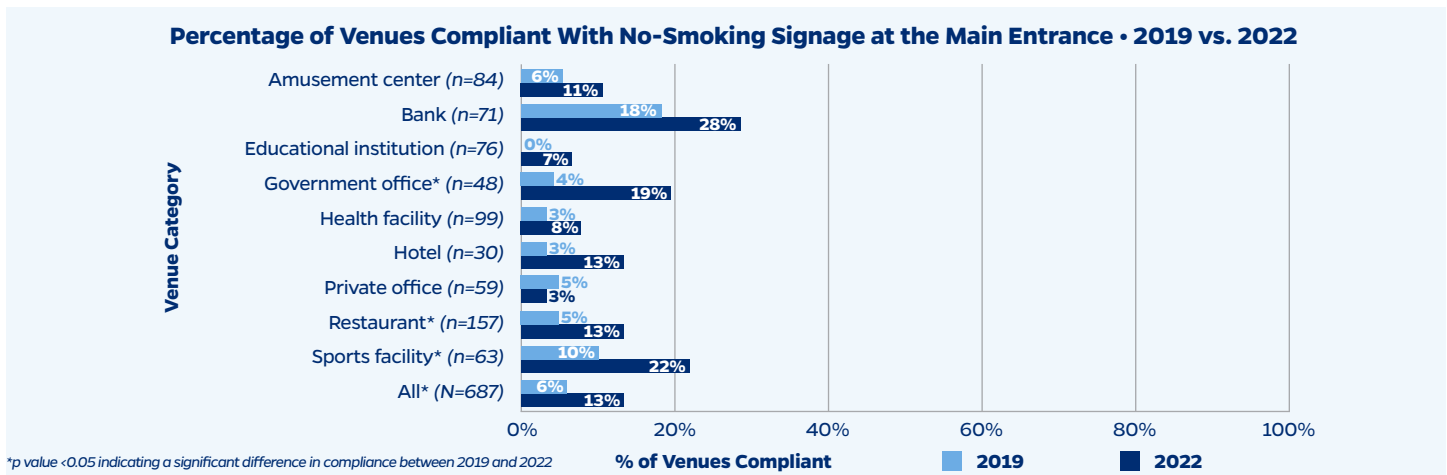


Results: 2019 vs. 2022

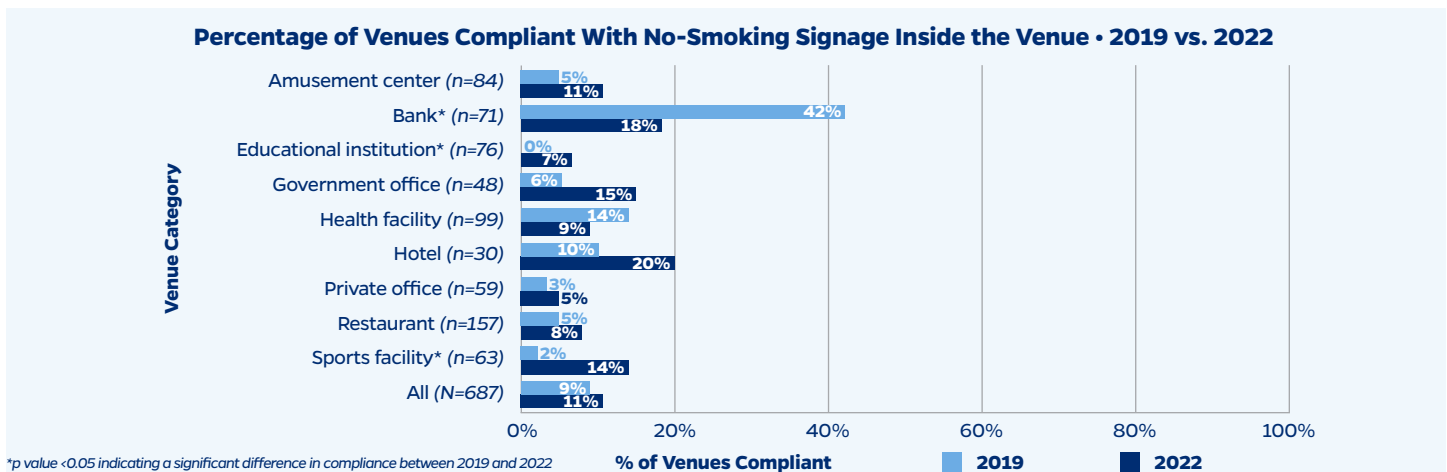
Compliance with the composite indicator assessing evidence of smoking remained the same between 2019 and 2022 overall. There was a significant decrease in compliance with the composite indicator assessing evidence of smoking at health facilities between 2019 and 2022:



Overall, there was a significant increase in compliance with display of no-smoking signage at the main entrance across all venues between 2019 and 2022. However, compliance across venues remained low (<30%). A significant increase in compliance between 2019 and 2022 was observed in sports facilities, restaurants, and government offices:



A significant increase in compliance with display of no-smoking signage inside the venue was observed in sports facilities and educational institutions between 2019 and 2022. A significant decrease in compliance was observed at banks between 2019 and 2022. Compliance was low across all venues in 2022 ($\leq 20\%$):



Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrate some progress in smoke-free measures in the East district of Karachi. While there was no significant change in compliance with the evidence of smoking indicator overall and by venue, there was a significant decrease in compliance observed at health facilities between 2019 and 2022. However, there was an overall increase in the display of no-smoking signage at main entrances. There was no significant overall change in compliance with the display of no-smoking signage inside venues. Overall compliance with display of no-smoking signage at main entrances and inside venues remains low.

Further measures are needed to improve implementation and increase compliance with the smoke-free law. Enforcement efforts in the East district could prioritize health facilities, government offices, restaurants and hotels. The low compliance with smoke-free laws at government offices, restaurants and hotels is particularly concerning because of their importance for shaping social norms about smoke-free spaces, and thus require additional attention. Strategies including training enforcement officers to incorporate regular monitoring inspections into their daily work can ensure tobacco control efforts are effective and sustainable. Mass awareness campaigns can also enhance the public's knowledge about the smoke-free law and the harms of tobacco use. Designated authorities should engage with owners of public spaces to provide guidance on how to create smoke-free venues, understand applicable penalties, and distribute standardized no-smoking signage more widely.

Achieving high compliance with the smoke-free law is crucial in reducing the harmful impact of tobacco use and protecting the public from secondhand smoke.