Prevalence of Designated Smoking Areas in Restaurants, Lounges, Hotels in Eight Indian Cities, and Compliance with the National Law

Significance

- In India, smoking is banned in many public places and workplaces including healthcare, educational, and government facilities, and public transport.
- The federal Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), permits designated smoking areas (DSAs) in airports, hotels having 30 or more rooms, and restaurants/lounges having seating capacity for 30 or more patrons.
- The following study sought to understand the prevalence of DSAs in hotels, restaurants, and lounges in the following eight cities: Bangalore, Chennai, Guwahati, Jaipur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, and New Delhi.

Methods

- The hospitality search websites Zomato (restaurants and lounges), TripAdvisor, and MakeMyTrip (hotels) were used to generate a list of hospitality venues in each city.
- Venues were telephoned by an Indian-based firm using a two-step calling protocol; for each step, the firm made up to 10 attempts to reach a manager or owner of the venue.
- Step 1: Venue management was surveyed about room/seating capacity to assess if the establishment would be permitted based on size, to have a DSA.
- Step 2: All venues were called again during Step 2 (regardless of their completion of Step 1) and were asked if they have a “separate indoor smoking area” where a patron could smoke.

Results

- The sample generated from hospitality search websites included 5,373 venues with working phone numbers, roughly proportional to the population in each of the eight cities. Surveys from Step 1 and/or Step 2 were completed by 3,461 venues (n=81 venues completed Step 2, and not Step 1).
- Across the eight cities, 20% (n=803) of venues reported that they had a DSA, ranging from 30% in Chennai (n=118) to 17% in Lucknow (n=29).
- The majority of venues reporting the presence of a DSA (n=660) were eligible based on size (30 or more seats/rooms); however, some reported having a DSA (8%, n=61) and reported having fewer than 30 seats/room.

Conclusions

- The findings of this study indicate that about one in five hospitality venues in eight cities report having a DSA.
- The study identified 61 venues that report having a DSA despite not meeting the size requirements stipulated by the federal law.
- Venue management may have been motivated to report the presence of a DSA to entice possible patrons who smoke to visit their establishment.
- Restricting smoking to DSAs does not provide adequate protection from dangerous tobacco smoke. The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control calls for 100% smoke-free environments.

Acknowledgements: This work was supported with funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use (Bloomberg.org)