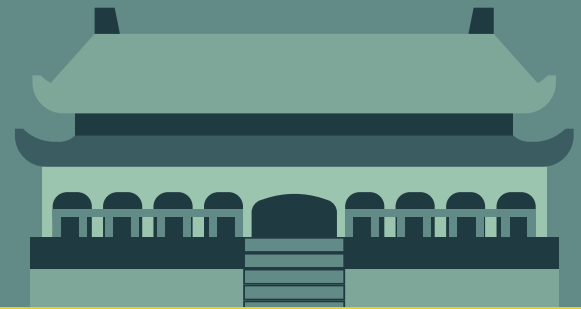


# Beijing



**Intervention area:** Tobacco control

**City focus:** Mobile technology for the enforcement of smoke-free zones

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In China, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) currently account for 87% of total deaths and 70% of the country's total disease burden.<sup>i,ii</sup> With 315 million smokers, tobacco use is a major driver of NCDs in China,<sup>iii</sup> which loses a staggering 1 million lives annually to tobacco. China ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in 2005, but the lack of a comprehensive national tobacco control law remains a major impediment to reducing the country's tobacco epidemic. A pivotal turning point for China has been the adoption of a comprehensive smoke-free law in its capital, Beijing – the world's fifth most populous city with nearly 20 million residents.

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The Beijing Smoking Control Ordinance, which came into effect on 1 June 2015, requires all indoor and many outdoor public places (including schools, kindergartens, historic and cultural sites, and public transport across the city) to be 100% smoke-free. Fully compliant with WHO FCTC, the ordinance is the strictest in the country and sets a high standard for other cities.<sup>iv</sup> It also establishes a strong benchmark for the national smoke-free regulation being debated in China's State Council.<sup>v</sup> Adopting a social co-governance approach, the law calls for a whole-of-society response to ensuring its effective enforcement.<sup>vi</sup>

Two years after it was enforced, in 2017 the Beijing Municipal Health and Family Planning Commission reported a 1.1% decline in the smoking rate. Beijing currently has about 4 million smokers, accounting for 22.3% of the adult population.<sup>vii</sup> The Commission also reported an

increase in the number of cessation clinics set up at city hospitals, treating over 5000 patients and providing drug therapies to over 2000.<sup>viii</sup>

In 2017, China reportedly had 773 million mobile Internet users,<sup>ix</sup> demonstrating the tremendous surge of Internet connectivity via mobile devices. WeChat or *Weixin* is the country's most popular mobile application, with over 1 billion monthly active users.<sup>x</sup> The Chinese government has invested in several online government and civic services through WeChat, including a complaint system for traffic violations, meteorology reports, and utility payments.

Taking advantage of this socio-technological phenomenon and in response to the Beijing government's call for civil society support to enforce the smoking ordinance, the Beijing Tobacco Control Association (BTCA) launched the Beijing Tobacco Control Map, with funding from Beijing Science and Technology Commission.<sup>1</sup> This mobile enforcement project allows citizens to use WeChat to report smoking violations in real time, which are recorded and uploaded to a live, interactive tobacco control map on BTCA's website using tri-coloured flashing lights to identify reported venues.<sup>xi</sup>

The system automatically notifies enforcement volunteers to inspect venues with more than five complaints, verify complaints, educate venue managers on corrective measures, and report continued non-compliance to enforcement officers. BTCA's live map not only displays enforcement activities, but also provides other tobacco control information such as issuance of fines, model venues with good compliance and facilities offering cessation services.<sup>xii</sup>

Between October 2015 and 2017, Beijing citizens submitted over 14 500 complaints via WeChat, with numbers reaching nearly 25 000 as of 2018 and surpassing BTCA's annual target of 10 000 reported violations. The BTCA mEnforcement platform, with its expansive network of citizen reporters and trained volunteers, complements the government complaints hotline mandated by the smoking ordinance. In June 2017, 835 violation reports were received via both channels, of which 600 reports were via WeChat, which unlike the hotline is available 24/7. Volunteers, who currently account for over 13 times the number of government health supervisors, have verified over 8000 venues and improved compliance in over 4500. The mEnforcement platform has helped city enforcement agencies to deal swiftly with the majority of violations reported around the city centre.

Improvements in city-level enforcement of the smoking ordinance, despite limited resources, are attributable to the tobacco control map project, which pivots on innovative and interactive mobile technology, China's social media revolution, and citizen participation. The premise of BTCA's model is that all citizens can and must contribute to tobacco control efforts. Nearly 20 cities in China have enacted smoke-free legislation, several of which have reached out to BTCA for

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<sup>1</sup> The Beijing Tobacco Control Association (BTCA), composed of nearly 200 organizations and individuals engaged in tobacco control efforts in the city of Beijing, is supervised by the Beijing Patriotic Health Campaign Committee, the Beijing Municipal Health and Family Planning Commission, and the Beijing Civil Affairs Bureau.

information on its model. In the absence of a comprehensive national smoke-free law, Beijing has shown how Chinese cities can build a strong case for prioritizing tobacco control in national policy-making through innovative measures that also empower citizens to contribute to the city's health and development.

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<sup>i</sup> Noncommunicable diseases country profiles: China. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014

([https://www.who.int/nmh/countries/2018/chn\\_en.pdf](https://www.who.int/nmh/countries/2018/chn_en.pdf), accessed 29 August 2018).

<sup>ii</sup> Global status report on noncommunicable diseases 2014. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014

([https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/148114/9789241564854\\_eng.pdf](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/148114/9789241564854_eng.pdf), accessed 29 August, 2018).

<sup>iii</sup> WHO Western Pacific Region tobacco fact sheet, 2018

(<http://www.wpro.who.int/china/mediacentre/factsheets/tobacco/en/>, accessed 29 August 2018).

<sup>iv</sup> World Health Organization Western Pacific Region and University of Waterloo, ITC Project. Smoke-free policies in China: evidence of effectiveness and implications for action. Manila: World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific; 2015 ([http://www.wpro.who.int/china/tobacco\\_report\\_20151019\\_en.pdf](http://www.wpro.who.int/china/tobacco_report_20151019_en.pdf) accessed 31 August 2018).

<sup>v</sup> Beijing Smoking Ban begins to bite. News Report on the China State Council's English website.

([http://english.gov.cn/policies/policy\\_watch/2015/06/02/content\\_281475119399710.htm](http://english.gov.cn/policies/policy_watch/2015/06/02/content_281475119399710.htm), accessed 3 September, 2018).

<sup>vi</sup> English translation of the Beijing Smoking Control Ordinance accessed via the WHO Representative Office China (accessed 29 August 2018).

<sup>vii</sup> Report of China City Adult Tobacco Survey 2013–14. Atlanta: CDC Foundation; 2015

([http://www.wpro.who.int/china/tobacco\\_report\\_20150819\\_en.pdf](http://www.wpro.who.int/china/tobacco_report_20150819_en.pdf), accessed 31 August 2018).

<sup>viii</sup> Xin Weng. Smoking rate on decline in Beijing. China Daily

(<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201801/13/WS5a59a7aca3102c394518f029.html>, accessed 30 August 2018).

<sup>ix</sup> Statistical report on internet development in China. China Internet Network Information Centre; 2018.

<sup>x</sup> How WeChat became China's everyday mobile app. South China Morning Post. 16 August 2018

(<https://www.scmp.com/tech/article/2159831/how-wechat-became-chinas-everyday-mobile-app>, accessed 30 August 2018).

<sup>xi</sup> Live tobacco control map [website]. Beijing: Beijing Tobacco Control Association; 2018

([http://103.240.17.155/view.sh?\\_vid=2641D2997B6010DD02F9145B64BEEA37](http://103.240.17.155/view.sh?_vid=2641D2997B6010DD02F9145B64BEEA37), accessed 30 August 2018).

<sup>xii</sup> Live issuance of fines map [website]. Beijing: Beijing Tobacco Control Association; 2018

([http://bjlbs.bjtca.org.cn/view.sh?\\_vid=1089C45321613E70D3473719F0A01559&typeCode=02](http://bjlbs.bjtca.org.cn/view.sh?_vid=1089C45321613E70D3473719F0A01559&typeCode=02), accessed 30 August 2018).