

Awareness of street smoking ban regulation in Kobe city: Results of interviews from a pedestrian survey

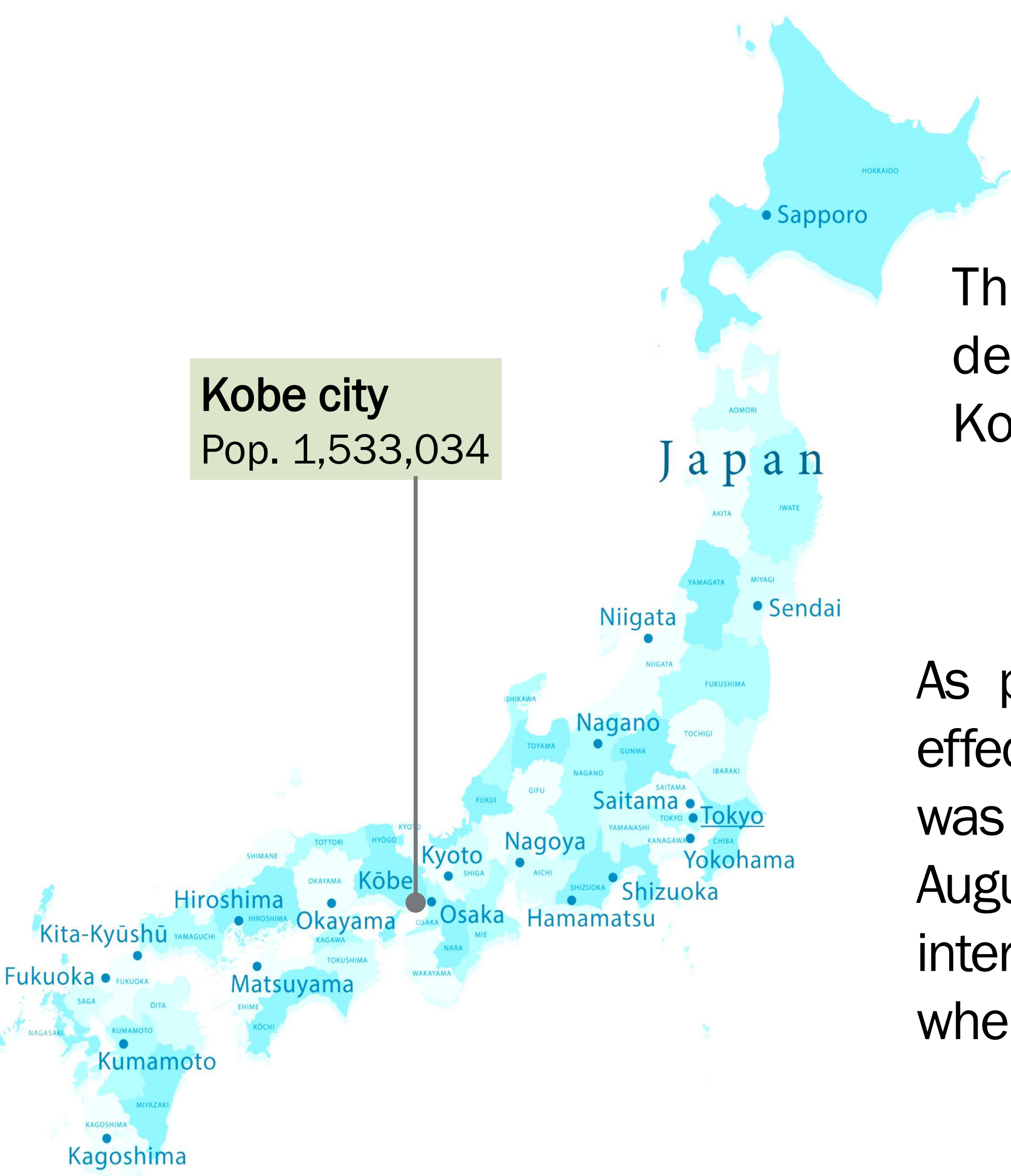
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Background

Although Japan has been a signatory to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control since 2004, comprehensive measures still need to be implemented at national level to protect against second-hand smoke. Meanwhile, some local government initiatives are addressing tobacco control, mainly through ordinances restricting street smoking. However, they are mostly implemented for environmental beautification purposes.

Kobe city is one of the 112 (as of 2009) cities in Japan that implemented an ordinance prohibiting smoking on selected streets. Since its introduction in 2008, smoking in designated streets has been prohibited and a fine of JPY 1000 imposed for violations.



Objective

The objective of this survey was to determine the level of awareness of the Kobe ordinance among interviewees.

Method

As part of a broader study to assess the effectiveness of the Kobe ordinance, a survey was conducted for four weeks between August and September of 2012 through interviews of pedestrians in selected streets where the smoking ban was implemented.

Results

A total of 761 people were approached and 410 responded to the interview. Out of the respondents, 72% acknowledged the existence of the ordinance. However, only 45% of respondents were aware of the existence of a ban when interviewed in the banned-streets (Fig. 1).

Significant differences were observed in the level of awareness (Fig. 2) of the ordinance among current smokers (59%), past smokers (55%) and nonsmokers (38%). Significant differences were also observed (Fig. 3) among current smokers noticing infringing smokers (48%), past smokers (28%) and non-smokers (24%).

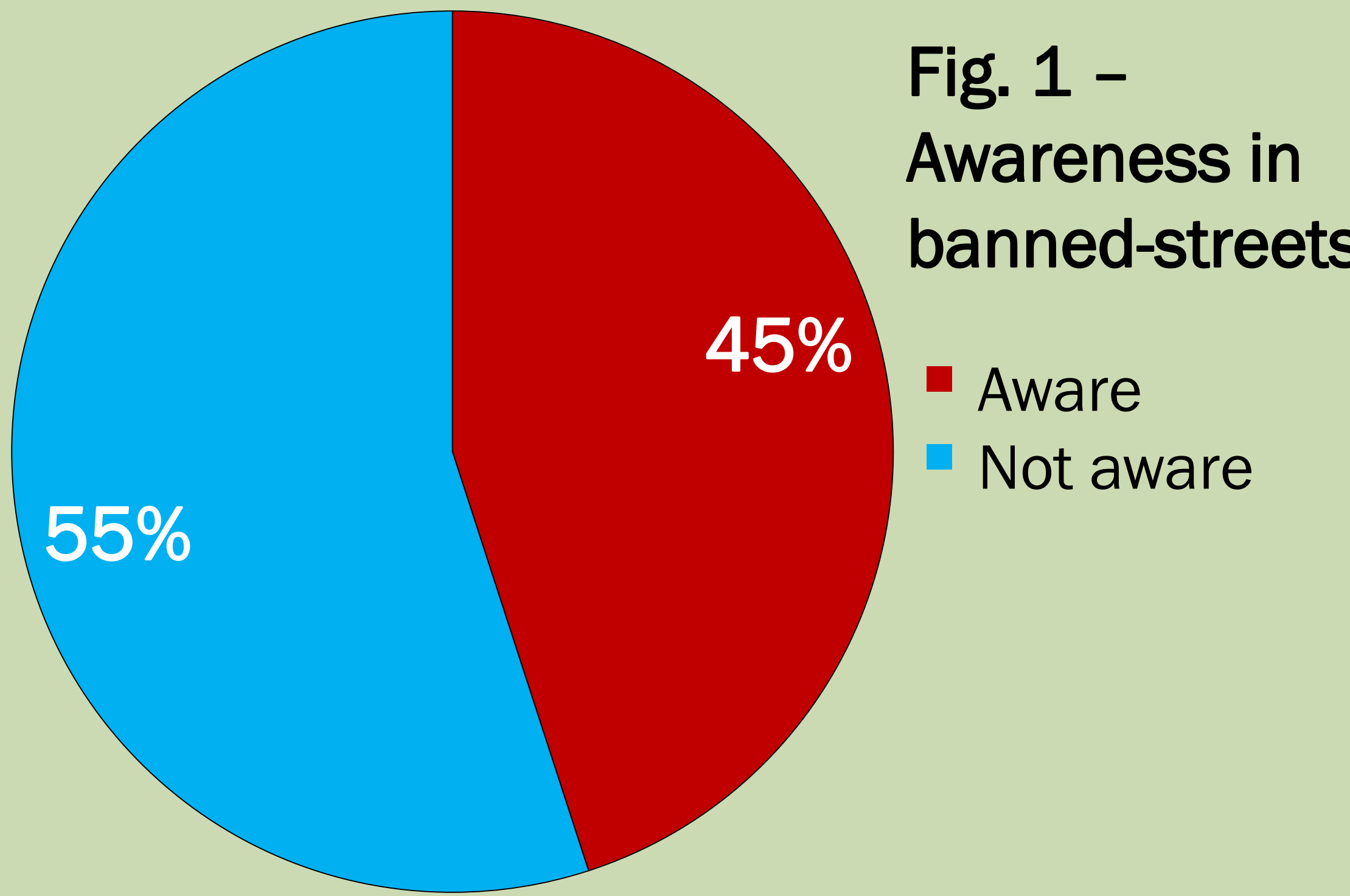


Fig. 1 – Awareness in banned-streets

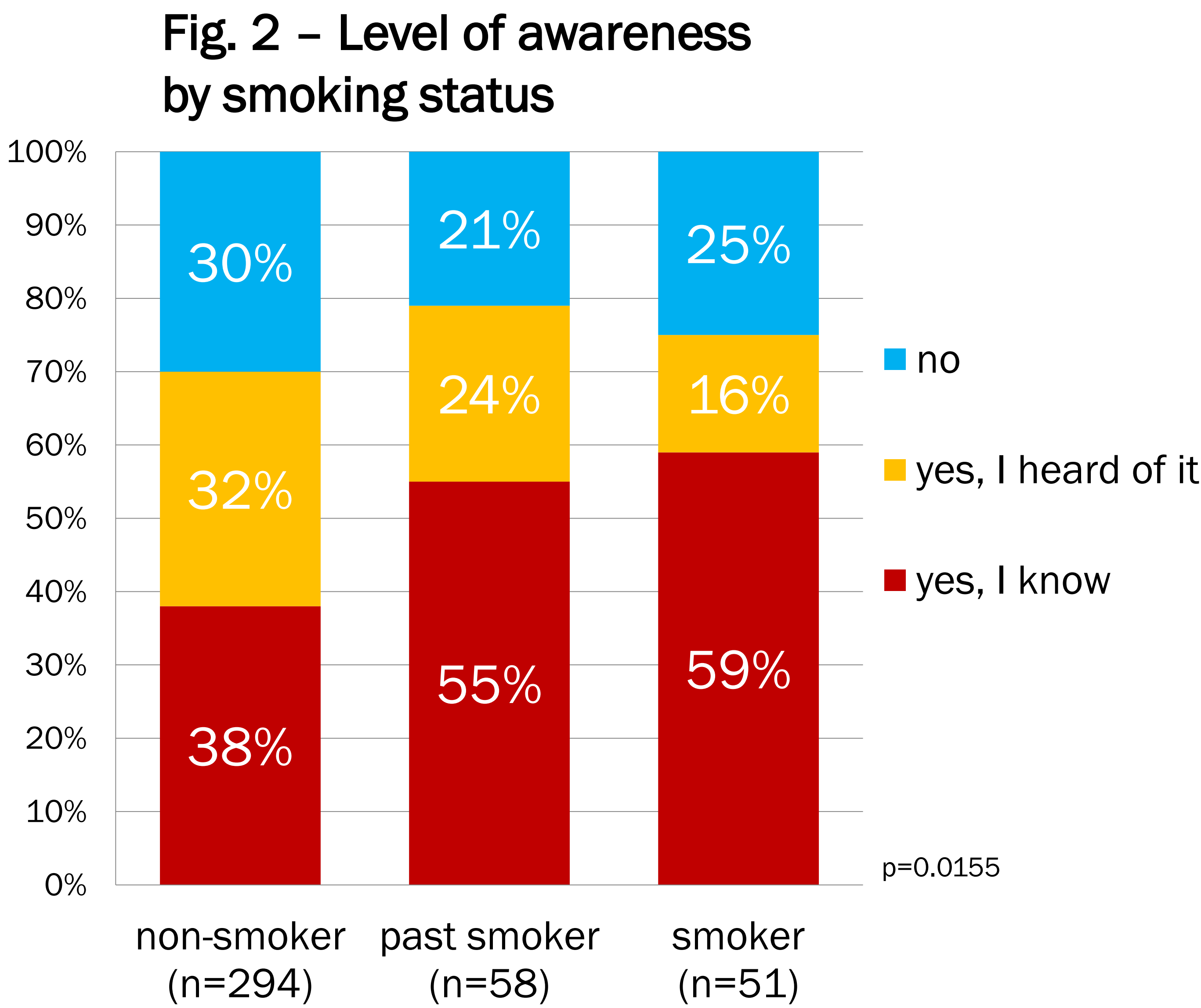


Fig. 2 – Level of awareness by smoking status

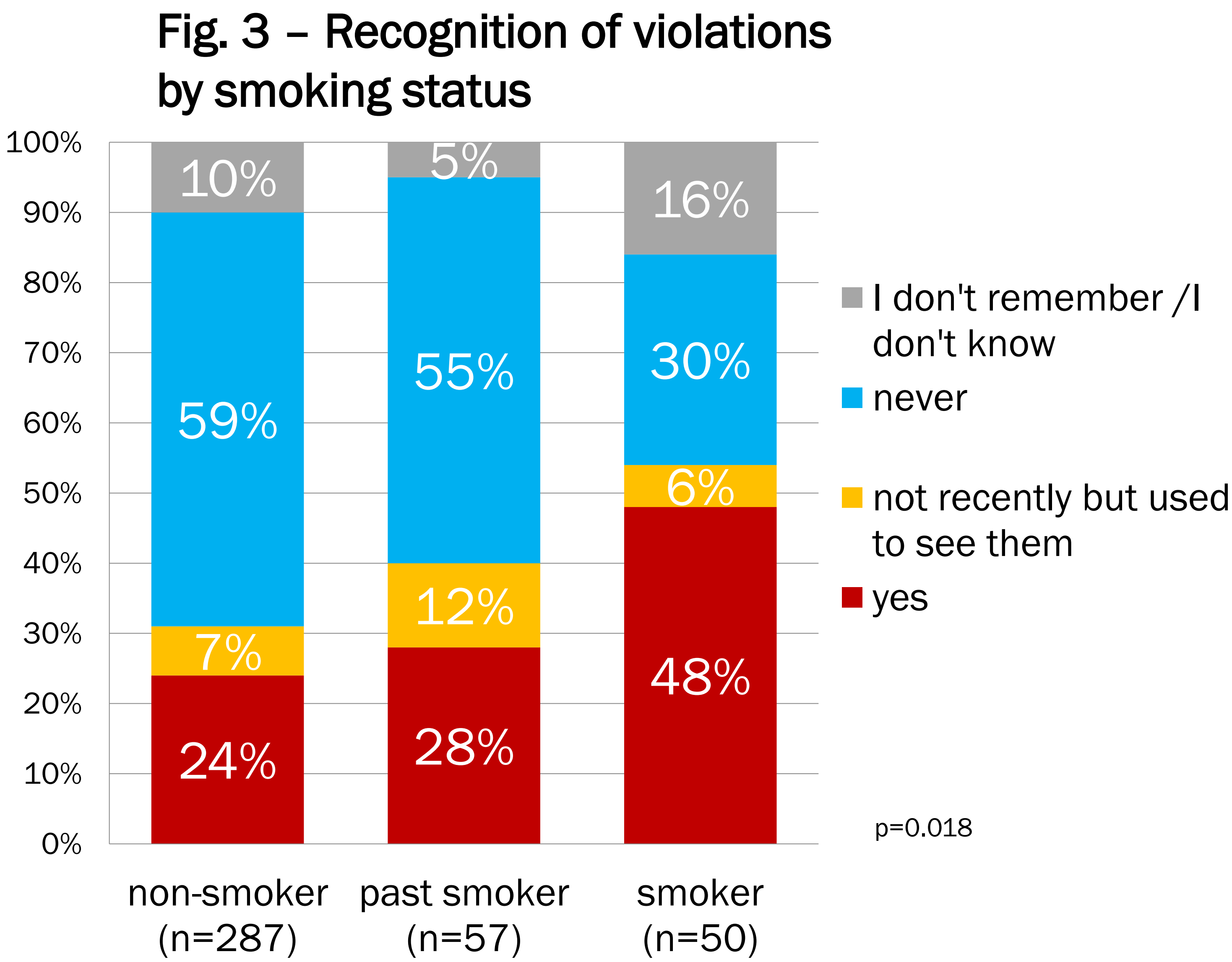


Fig. 3 – Recognition of violations by smoking status

Conclusion

The results show a positive correlation between awareness of the ordinance and recognition of ordinance violations. We suggest that, in order to increase the effectiveness of the Kobe ordinance, a dissemination strategy needs to be implemented taking into account the different levels of perception of smokers, nonsmokers and past smokers. In addition, the awareness level shown by smokers suggests that street smoking bans might contribute to decrease social acceptability of smoking. This would provide an opportunity to introduce cessation programmes and their health benefits to smokers.

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