

1 **Ambient Volatile Organic Compounds in a Suburban Site between Beijing and**  
2 **Tianjin: Concentration Levels, Source Apportionment and Health Risk**  
3 **Assessment**

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## 22 **Abstract**

23 Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) have vital implications for secondary pollutants,  
24 atmospheric oxidation and human health. Ambient VOCs were investigated using an online system,  
25 gas chromatography-mass spectrometry/flame ionization detector (GC-MS/FID), at a suburban site  
26 in Xianghe in the North China Plain from 6 November 2017 to 29 January 2018. Positive matrix  
27 factorization (PMF) receptor model was applied to identify the major VOC contributing sources.  
28 Four-step health risk assessment method was used to estimate risks of all risk-posing VOC species.  
29 A total of 101 VOCs were quantified, and the mean concentration of total VOCs was  $61.04 \pm 65.18$   
30 ppbv. The VOCs were dominated by alkanes (38.76%), followed by alkenes, aromatics, halocarbons,  
31 OVOCs, acetylene and acetonitrile. The results of PMF revealed that vehicle exhaust, industrial  
32 emissions, liquefied petroleum gas & natural gas, solvent utilization and secondary and long-lived  
33 species contributed 31.0%, 26.4%, 18.6%, 13.6% and 10.4%, respectively, to the total VOCs.  
34 Pollutant-specific and source-specific noncarcinogenic and carcinogenic risk estimates were  
35 conducted, which showed that acrolein and vehicle exhaust had evident noncarcinogenic risks of  
36 4.9 and 0.9, respectively. The carcinogenic risks of specific species (1,3-butadiene, acetaldehyde,  
37 benzene, chloroform and 1,2-dichloroethane) and identified sources were above the United States  
38 Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) acceptable level ( $1.0 \times 10^{-6}$ ) but below the tolerable risk  
39 level ( $1.0 \times 10^{-4}$ ). Vehicle exhaust was the largest contributor (56.2%) to noncarcinogenic risk, but  
40 solvent utilization (32.6%) to carcinogenic risk. Moreover, with the evolution of pollution levels,  
41 almost all VOC species, contributions of alkenes, aromatics, solvent utilization and vehicle exhaust,  
42 and pollutant-specific and source-specific risks increased continuously and noticeably. Collectively,  
43 our findings unraveled the importance of alkenes, aromatics, solvent utilization and vehicle exhaust

44 in the evolution of pollution levels. Future studies should consider targeting these VOC groups and  
45 sources when focusing on effective reduction strategies and assessing public health risks.

46 **Keywords:** VOCs; source apportionment; health risk assessment; vehicle exhaust; solvent  
47 utilization

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## 66 **1 Introduction**

67 Overwhelming quantities of VOCs are emitted into the troposphere from anthropogenic  
68 sources and biogenic sources (Chen et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019b). VOCs are not merely critical  
69 precursors to ground-level ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), secondary organic aerosol (SOA), peroxyacetyl nitrate (PAN)  
70 and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which have a strong influence on the oxidation  
71 capacity of the troposphere (Gentner et al., 2017; McDonald et al., 2018), but are unequivocally  
72 harmful to human health and are occurring in close proximity to populated areas (Bolden et al.,  
73 2015). For instance, benzene, the simplest aromatic VOC, is listed as a toxic air contaminant under  
74 the USA Clean Air Act (CAA) in section 112 (<https://www3.epa.gov/airtoxics/orig189.html>) and is  
75 even classified as a known human carcinogen (IARC Group 1<sup>1</sup>) by the International Agency for  
76 Research on Cancer (IARC). Chronic exposure to elevated levels of benzene can reduce the  
77 production of both red and white blood cells from bone marrow in humans, resulting in aplastic  
78 anaemia (<http://www.inchem.org/documents/ehc/ehc/ehc150.htm>). Epidemiological studies have  
79 shown that toluene (IARC Group 3), ethylbenzene (IARC Group 2B) and xylenes (IARC Group 3)  
80 could increase the odds of low birth weight, rhinitis and cardiovascular disease (Bolden et al., 2015;  
81 Halliday et al., 2016). Consequently, vast multitudes of studies on VOCs are being conducted  
82 globally, covering measurement techniques (Wang et al., 2014; Bourtsoukidis et al., 2017), chemical  
83 mechanisms (Atkinson and Arey, 2003; Atkinson et al., 2006), reactivity scales (Carter, 1994;  
84 Derwent et al., 1998), emission inventories (Bo et al., 2008; Huang et al., 2011; Wu and Xie, 2017;  
85 Zhao et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2017), health risk assessment (Li et al., 2014b; Bari and Kindzierski,  
86 2017) and removal technology (Domeno et al., 2010; Sui et al., 2016; Wolowiec et al., 2017).

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<sup>1</sup> Group 1: Carcinogenic to humans; Group 2A: Probably carcinogenic to humans; Group 2B: Possibly carcinogenic to humans; Group 3: Not classifiable in terms of its carcinogenicity to humans; Group 4: Probably not carcinogenic to humans.

87 Rising anthropogenic interferences due to astonishing economic growth and rapid  
88 industrialization and urbanization in China have triggered a dramatic increase in VOCs since the  
89 Chinese Economic Reform began in 1978 (Wu and Xie, 2017), particularly in some highly  
90 industrialized and densely populated regions, e.g., North China Plain (NCP) (Li et al., 2015b; Qi et  
91 al., 2017), Yangtze River Delta (YRD) (Shao et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2017), Pearl River Delta (PRD)  
92 (Lu et al., 2013; Ou et al., 2015) and Sichuan Basin (SB) regions (Li et al., 2014a). Over the past  
93 several decades, the abundance and speciation of VOCs, source apportionment of VOCs and the  
94 relationship of VOCs with O<sub>3</sub> and SOA in NCP, which are mainly concentrated in the megacities of  
95 Beijing and Tianjin, have been comprehensively studied (Guo et al., 2017). The common findings  
96 in the NCP region were that alkanes and aromatics were the most abundant VOCs (Duan et al., 2008;  
97 Wang et al., 2015); vehicle-related emissions were the most predominant contributor to VOCs (Song  
98 et al., 2007; Shao et al., 2009); the photochemical O<sub>3</sub> formation in Beijing was VOC-limited (Guo  
99 et al., 2017). To tackle the problem of severe air pollution, China has implemented active clean air  
100 policies in recent years. As a consequence, the emissions of major air pollutants have decreased  
101 during 2010–2017 as follows: -62% for SO<sub>2</sub>, -17% for NO<sub>x</sub>, -27% for CO, -38% for PM<sub>10</sub>, -35% for  
102 PM<sub>2.5</sub>, -27% for BC and -35% for OC (Zheng et al., 2018). However, nonmethane volatile organic  
103 compounds (NMVOCs) emissions are estimated to have increased by 11% because China lacked  
104 effective emission control measures on NMVOCs (Zheng et al., 2018).

105 The average annual concentrations of PM<sub>10</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub> and CO in Langfang in 2017  
106 (<http://www.lfwbj.gov.cn/>) were 102, 60, 14, 48 and 2900 ug/m<sup>3</sup>, dropping 8.93%, 9.09%, 22.22%,  
107 7.69% and 17.14%, respectively, compared with 2016. These official statistics showed that the air  
108 quality has substantially improved in Langfang. However, relatively few research studies

109 concerning the current situation of VOCs pollution in Xianghe have been completed (Xin et al.,  
110 2015; Li and Lu, 2017). Limited available studies have mainly focused on the determination of the  
111 concentration levels and seasonal variation of VOCs. For example, the study conducted from 12  
112 September to 10 October 2012, in which 56 VOCs were measured, reported that the average  
113 concentration of total VOCs in Xianghe was 28.2 ppbv with the highest concentration being 79.4  
114 ppbv in April and the lowest being 5.8 ppbv in August, and aromatics were the highest abundant,  
115 accounting for 37.1%, followed by halocarbons (30.2%), alkanes (26.8%), and alkenes (10.5%)  
116 (Xin et al., 2015). These measurements provided the first snapshot of VOC concentrations in  
117 Xianghe. However, field measurements online of VOCs in Xianghe remain scarce. To further  
118 advanced our understanding of VOCs pollution, more measurements of ambient VOCs in Xianghe  
119 are still needed.

120 In this study, a three-month campaign was carried out at Xianghe, a typical suburban site  
121 located between the megacities of Beijing and Tianjin from 6 November 2017 to 29 January 2018.  
122 Continuous measure atmospheric VOCs was made using an electronic cryogenic technology for  
123 preconcentration and a GC-FID/MS for separation and detection. The objectives of the present study  
124 are to (1) determine the ambient VOC pollution level, (2) identify and apportion the major sources,  
125 and (3) screen the human health risk assessment of risk-posing VOC species and sources. To our  
126 knowledge, this study represents the first online field observations of VOCs in Xianghe. The data  
127 collected here are unique and valuable. The results from this work can provide useful information  
128 for policy-makers to develop strategies to alleviate air contamination in Xianghe.

## 129 **2 Methodology**

### 130 **2.1 Sampling-site description**

131 The sampling site is located at the Xianghe Atmospheric Observatory (39.798°N, 116.958°E;  
132 15m above sea level). The sampling site is a typical suburban site in the serious pollution region,  
133 the Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei large urban region, which is approximately 50 km southeast of Beijing,  
134 75 km northwest of Tianjin, and 35 km northeast of Langfang in Hebei province. The unique  
135 geographical location makes it an indispensable platform in Beijing air pollution warning system  
136 and plays an important strategic role in regional air pollution research. The sampling site is  
137 approximately 4 km west of the downtown center and is surrounded by residential areas and  
138 agricultural land (see Figure 1).

### 139 **2.2 VOCs Measurements**

140 Ambient VOC samples were analyzed with a time resolution of 1 h using a custom-built gas  
141 chromatography-mass spectrometry/flame ionization detector (GC-MS/FID). A complete analysis  
142 cycle for ambient VOC measurements by the online GC-MS/FID system includes five stages:  
143 preparation, sampling and preconcentration, injection/GC analysis, idle/GC analysis, and back  
144 purge/GC analysis (Wang et al., 2014). In the preparation stage, air samples were vented from the  
145 sampling and pre-concentration system via the pump, which could reduce or avoid interferences by  
146 previous samples. In addition, temperatures for H<sub>2</sub>O and enrichment traps during the preparation  
147 stage were set at their corresponding values for the sampling and pre-concentration stage. In the  
148 sampling and preconcentration stage, air samples were drawn into the FID channel and MS channel  
149 for VOCs enrichment. The temperatures of the enrichment traps for both channels were set at -  
150 150°C. In the injection/GC-analysis stage, The concentrated VOCs in the enrichment traps were

151 volatilized by thermal desorption at 110 °C and were injected into the GC system by Helium carrier  
152 gas. After the 1 minute injection, GC analysis was continued for VOCs separation and detection.  
153 Moreover, the sampling and pre-concentration system shifted to the idle condition. Twenty minutes  
154 after the injection/GC-analysis stage, a 5 minutes back purge for the sampling and pre-concentration  
155 system was programmed for removing residues in the water management traps and cleaning  
156 sampling lines to prevent samples carryover effects. Briefly, samples are collected into GC-MS/FID  
157 for 5 min every 1 h at a flow of 60 mL min<sup>-1</sup>. Both the CO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>O were removed in an electronic  
158 cryogenic pre-concentrator (TH300, Wuhan Tianhong Environmental protection industry co., LTD,  
159 Wuhan, China) before VOC analysis. The air was then thermally desorbed at 100 °C and transferred  
160 for analysis in a gas chromatography (GC, 7820A, Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA, USA)  
161 coupled with mass spectrometric detector (MSD)/flame ionization detector (FID) (5977E, Agilent  
162 Technology, Santa Clara, CA, USA). Dual columns and detectors were applied for the simultaneous  
163 analysis of C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>12</sub> hydrocarbons. C<sub>2</sub>-C<sub>5</sub> hydrocarbons were separated on a PLOT-Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> column  
164 (15 m×0.32 mm ID×3 μm, J&W Scientific, USA) and were measured by the FID channel. Other  
165 compounds were separated on a semipolar column (DB624, 60 m×0.25 mm ID×1.4 μm, J&W  
166 Scientific, USA) and were quantified using a quadrupole MS detector. The VOC species measured  
167 by GC-MS/FID are listed in Table S1. Several OVOCs species are also measured by the MS channel,  
168 including acetaldehyde, acrolein, acetone, propanal, methyl tert-butyl ether (MTBE), n-butanal,  
169 methyl ethyl ketone (MEK), methyl vinyl ketone (MVK), methacrolein (MACR), 2-pentanone,  
170 pentanal, 3-pentanone and hexanal. Good agreements were found between GC-MS/FID and high-  
171 sensitivity proton-transfer-reaction mass spectrometry (PTR-MS) for C<sub>3</sub>-C<sub>4</sub> carbonyls and  
172 MVK+MACR, with correlation coefficients larger than 0.90 and slopes ranging from 0.7 to 1.4



173 (Yuan et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2014). The GC was programmed for a 35 min run  
174 time, with a temperature program as follows: staying in 35°C for 3 minutes, then rising to 180°C at  
175 a heating rate of 6°C min<sup>-1</sup> and keeping it for 5 minutes, then rising to 185°C at a heating rate of  
176 6°C min<sup>-1</sup> and keeping it for 2 minutes. The MSD was operated with the electron ionization (EI)  
177 impact (70 eV), where the ions were detected in the selected ion monitoring (SIM) mode with a  
178 minimum of two and maximum of eleven ions being monitored for each time window.

179 The analyzed compounds were subjected to rigorous quality assurance and quality control  
180 procedures (QA/QC). The VOCs detected by FID were quantified by the external standard method,  
181 and the components detected by MS were quantified by the internal standard method. Four  
182 compounds, i.e., bromochloromethane, 1,4-difluorobenzene, chlorobenzene-d5, and  
183 bromofluorobenzene, were used as internal standards (Li et al., 2015a). Specifically, the system was  
184 calibrated at multiple concentrations in the range of 0.8-8 ppbv by two gas standards, i.e., a mixture  
185 of 57 PAMS (provided by Spectra Gases Inc., USA), and a mixture of oxygenated VOCs (OVOCs)  
186 and halocarbons (provided by Spectra Gases Inc., USA). Daily calibrations were performed every  
187 day, and the variations of target species responses were required to be within ±20% from the  
188 calibration curve. R<sup>2</sup> values for calibration curves ranged from 0.941 (n-dodecane) to 1.000 for  
189 VOCs, indicating that integral areas of peaks were proportional to the concentrations of target  
190 compounds. The method detection limit (MDL) of the online GC-FID/MS system for all measured  
191 compounds ranged from 0.003 to 0.092 ppbv and the relative standard deviation (RSD) for  
192 measured compounds ranged from 2.1% to 14.9% (Table S1). To check the stability of the  
193 instrument, routine calibration was operated periodically, by using a calibration gas with a mixing  
194 ratio of 2 ppbv and consisting of 56 kinds of VOC components. The variations between measured

195 and nominal concentrations of the periodically calibration was within 10%. The signal variations of  
 196 each targeted compound due to system instability were corrected by the signal of CFC-113 (1,1,2-  
 197 trichloro-1,2,2-trifluoroethane) due to its long atmospheric lifetime and quite stable anthropogenic  
 198 emissions (Yuan et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2014).

### 199 2.3 Source apportionment: PMF model analysis

200 US PMF 5.0 (U.S. EPA, 2014) was comprehensively applied to identify the initial contribution  
 201 of sources to samples based on the composition or fingerprints of the sources. The method is  
 202 described in greater detail elsewhere (Paatero and Tapper, 1994; Paatero, 1997) and reviewed briefly  
 203 here. The PMF is a multivariate factor analytical tool that decomposes the speciated measurement  
 204 data matrix  $x$  of  $i$  by  $j$  dimensions into two matrices-factor profiles ( $f$ ) and factor contributions  
 205 ( $g$ ):

$$206 \quad x_{ij} = \sum_{k=1}^p g_{ik} f_{kj} + e_{ij} \quad (1)$$

207 where  $p$  is the total number of independent sources,  $g_{ik}$  stands for the contribution of  $k^{\text{th}}$  factor  
 208 in the  $i^{\text{th}}$  sample,  $f_{kj}$  is the load of  $j^{\text{th}}$  compound in the  $k^{\text{th}}$  source and  $e_{ij}$  is the relevant  
 209 residual for each sample/species. Factor contributions and profiles are derived by the PMF model  
 210 minimizing the objective function  $Q$ :

$$211 \quad Q = \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^m \left[ \frac{\sum_{k=1}^p g_{ik} f_{kj} + e_{ij} - \sum_{k=1}^p g_{ik} f_{kj}}{u_{ij}} \right] \quad (2)$$

212 where  $m$  and  $n$  are the numbers of samples and chemical species, respectively,  $u$  represents the  
 213 uncertainty of each data. The theoretical  $Q$  ( $Q_{\text{theoretical}}$ ) can be calculated as Eq. (3), and the best  
 214 PMF solution should have  $Q/Q_{\text{theoretical}}$  with the value of  $\sim 1$ .

$$215 \quad Q_{\text{theoretical}} = i \times j - p \times (i + j) \quad (3)$$

216 Two files including species concentrations and uncertainty file are required to be introduced  
217 into the EPA PMF 5.0 model. The concentrations file is a matrix (X matrix) of number of samples  
218 (column) plus the number of species (row), i.e., 2040×49 in this study. PMF analysis requires a  
219 complete data set; in order to reduce the error, the samples with missing values for individual species  
220 were excluded rather than replaced by the mean concentrations of the remaining observations  
221 (Huang et al., 2017). The equation-based uncertainty dataset is constructed according to the method  
222 detection limit (MDL) and error fraction (%). If the concentration is less than or equal to the MDL  
223 provided, the uncertainty is calculated using a fixed fraction of the MDL, as  $\text{Uncertainty} = 5/6 \times \text{MDL}$ .  
224 If the concentration is greater than the provided MDL, the calculation is defined as  $\text{Uncertainty} =$   
225  $\sqrt{(\text{Error Fraction} \times \text{concentration})^2 + (0.5 \times \text{MDL})^2}$ . Not all 101 measured VOCs are  
226 introduced into the PMF model, there are some rules to decide which species should be included or  
227 excluded from the PMF model: 1) the chosen species had relatively high concentrations (i.e., ethane,  
228 ethylene and propane, the top three species in this study) and/or were typical tracers for specific  
229 emissions (i.e., acetylene is marker of combustion sources); 2) highly collinear species, such as iso-  
230 butane & n-butane, iso-pentane & n-pentane, benzene & toluene, m/p-Xylene & o-Xylene are  
231 included (Figure S1); 3) species that are highly reactive are excluded, except for the source markers,  
232 since they are rapidly reacted away in the ambient atmosphere (Shao et al., 2016; Zheng et al., 2017;  
233 Li et al., 2019a); 4) species were incorporated in PMF analysis based on their potential toxicity (e.g.,  
234 1,3-butadiene, tetrachloroethylene, bromoform). Finally, a total of 48 species, including 9 alkanes,  
235 5 alkenes, 7 OVOCs, 10 aromatics and 15 halocarbons, acetylene and acetonitrile were selected for  
236 the input data. In addition, the total measured VOC was included as an input variable in the PMF  
237 model to directly obtain source contribution instead of using post-hoc regression analysis in this

238 study. Prior to the PMF model run, the retained species are firstly classified into strong, weak, and  
239 bad based on their signal-noise-ratios (S/N). Species with S/N ratios less than 0.5 are grouped into  
240 bad and into weak if S/N ratios are in the range of 0.5-1.0 (US EPA, 2014). Finally, 41 species were  
241 categorized as strong and seven species (bromomethane, 1,1,1-Trichloroethane, 1,1,2-  
242 Trichloroethane, 1,2-Dibromoethane, bromoform, 1,1,2,2-Tetrachloroethane and 1,4-  
243 Dichlorobenzene) were characterized as weak. Choosing the optimal number of factors in modeling  
244 is a critical question. Too many factors will result in meaningless factor profiles, while too few  
245 factors will make it difficult to segregate the mixing sources (Bressi et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2017).  
246 The Q-values, source profiles and scaled residuals distributions were examined to obtain the most  
247 reasonable factor solutions (Ji et al., 2018; Li et al., 2019a). The uncertainties of the results were  
248 assessed by bootstrapping (BS) and displacement (DISP) (Belis et al., 2015; Brown et al., 2015;  
249 Debevec et al., 2017). The detailed information as to how to find the optimum factor solutions and  
250 the uncertainty estimation are described in the Supplementary material.

251       Significantly, previous studies have shown that the emissions from biogenic emissions are very  
252 limited in wintertime because emission from biogenic sources, eg., isoprene, the most abundant  
253 compound from biogenic emissions, is sensitive to a number of environmental parameters,  
254 especially temperature and light intensity (Guenther et al., 1993; Pacifico et al., 2009; Ding et al.,  
255 2014; Saunier et al., 2017). A latest source apportionment study conducted at the atmospheric  
256 monitoring site in the northeast of Langfang city from April 2016 to March 2017 revealed that the  
257 contributions of biogenic emission contributed to ambient VOCs in November, December and  
258 January were only 0.7%, 0.8% and 2.3%, respectively (Song et al., 2019). In addition, in this study,  
259 the linear correlation between isoprene and temperature was extremely poor, fairly correlations

260 between isoprene and three short-lived unsaturated hydrocarbons, i.e., 1,3-butadiene, trans-2-butene  
261 and propylene, as showed in Figure S2, which is partial evidence that isoprene produced from local  
262 vehicular exhaust may be responsible for wintertime isoprene mixing ratio at Xianghe. Therefore,  
263 this study only focused on the source characteristics of anthropogenic emissions.

#### 264 **2.4 Human health risk assessment of VOCs species and sources**

265 A screening-level health risk assessment is the process to characterize the nature and magnitude  
266 of health risks to humans and ecological receptors from chemical contaminants and other stressors  
267 that may be present in the environment (<https://www.epa.gov/risk>). To assess public health risks  
268 associated with chronic inhalation exposure, a four-step health risk assessment method proposed by  
269 the U.S. National Academy of Sciences has become an internationally recognized health risk  
270 assessment method and has been used in several studies to screen ambient concentrations of  
271 hazardous air pollutants (Bari et al., 2016; Bari and Kindzierski, 2017, 2018).

272 The USEPA's risk assessment methods are generally used in studies to evaluate carcinogenic  
273 and non-carcinogenic risks of pollutant-specific (Li et al., 2014b; Zhang et al., 2017). However,  
274 pollutant-specific risk estimates may provide limited information for air quality management due to  
275 contributions of multiple sources to each compound. Source-specific risk estimates may add  
276 valuable information for understanding potential control strategies for particular sources (Bari and  
277 Kindzierski, 2018). Source-risk apportionment, which is a combination of risk assessment and  
278 receptor modeling using actual measurements, has been applied in several studies worldwide to  
279 determine relative source contributions to human health risks (Wu et al., 2009; Liao et al., 2015;  
280 Bari and Kindzierski, 2017).

281 In this study, out of all detected species, only 31 VOC species with known toxicity values were

282 considered, including 27 noncarcinogenic species and 13 carcinogenic species. Target VOCs and  
283 associated toxicity values of health risk assessment can be found in Table S2. Carcinogenic and non-  
284 carcinogenic risks of all risk-posing VOC species were evaluated using the EPA inhalation unit risk  
285 (IUR,  $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ ) and reference concentrations (RfCs,  $\text{mg m}^{-3}$ ) associated with the exposure  
286 concentration (EC) based on the investigation of the Chinese behavior pattern for each trace element.  
287 Noncarcinogenic and carcinogenic risk from inhalation exposure to the  $i^{\text{th}}$  source was estimated as  
288 the sum of cancer and noncancer risks of all available  $n$  risk-posing VOC species in PMF-derived  
289 profiles. Detail information on the health risk estimate procedures are presented in the  
290 Supplementary material.

### 291 **3 Results and discussion**

#### 292 **3.1 Overall concentration characteristics of VOCs**

293 In this study, we identified and quantified approximately 101 VOCs from C2 to C12, including  
294 29 alkanes, 11 alkenes, 13 OVOCs, 16 aromatics, 30 halocarbons, acetylene and acetonitrile, as  
295 presented in Table S1. The time series and fractions of the hourly VOC category concentrations  
296 determined by GC-FID/MS from 6 November 2017 to 29 January 2018 are presented in Figure 2.  
297 The gaps in the data were due to maintenance and calibration of GC-FID/MS or power failure.

298 Over the entire period of the study, the mean concentration of total VOCs was  $61.04 \pm 65.18$   
299 ppbv. Taking the study period as a whole, it was observed that the average composition of VOCs  
300 was mainly characterized by alkanes ( $23.66 \pm 23.90$  ppbv; 38.76% of the total VOCs), followed by  
301 alkenes ( $12.27 \pm 16.47$  ppbv; 20.10%), aromatics ( $8.27 \pm 10.30$  ppbv; 13.55%), halocarbons  
302 ( $8.47 \pm 9.52$  ppbv; 11.62%) and OVOCs ( $5.18 \pm 4.80$  ppbv; 8.49%) and to a lesser extent by acetylene  
303 ( $4.24 \pm 5.20$  ppbv; 6.95%) and acetonitrile ( $0.32 \pm 0.84$  ppbv; 0.53%), as presented in Figure 2.

304 Alkanes were dominated by a strong presence of ethane ( $9.60\pm 10.08$  ppbv), propane ( $5.07\pm 5.71$   
305 ppbv), n-butane ( $2.63\pm 3.27$  ppbv), iso-butane ( $1.49\pm 1.75$  ppbv) and iso-pentane ( $1.02\pm 1.22$  ppbv),  
306 representing 93.07% of the alkanes. Approximately 90.82% of the alkenes were mainly  
307 characterized by ethylene, propylene and 1-butene, with corresponding average mixing ratios of  
308  $8.73\pm 11.73$ ,  $2.02\pm 2.99$  and  $0.39\pm 0.77$  ppbv, respectively. M/p-xylene ( $1.99\pm 2.83$  ppbv), benzene  
309 ( $1.98\pm 2.72$  ppbv), toluene ( $1.91\pm 2.35$  ppbv), ethylbenzene ( $0.74\pm 1.09$  ppbv) and o-xylene  
310 ( $0.67\pm 1.00$  ppbv), collectively called BTEX, together contributed to 88.10% of the aromatics. The  
311 top five halocarbon species were methylene chloride ( $2.71\pm 5.61$  ppbv), 1,2-dichloroethane  
312 ( $1.55\pm 2.71$  ppbv), chloromethane ( $0.69\pm 0.56$  ppbv), chloroform ( $0.68\pm 1.27$  ppbv) and 1,2-  
313 dichloropropane ( $0.61\pm 1.42$  ppbv). These five species accounted for 87.98% of the halocarbons.  
314 Among the OVOCs, acetone and acetaldehyde were the two most abundant species with average  
315 mixing ratios of  $1.79\pm 1.83$  ppbv and  $1.53\pm 1.49$  ppbv, respectively. The top ten VOCs measured in  
316 this study are presented in Figure S3 and Table S3 for comparison with those from cities in China.  
317 In general, the average concentrations of the top ten VOCs fell within the ranges reported for other  
318 Chinese cities (Geng et al., 2010; Guo et al., 2011; An et al., 2014; Zou et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2016a;  
319 Wu et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2017). During the entire sampling period, the average concentrations of  
320 the top ten VOCs in winter in Xianghe were remarkably greater than those reported in fall in Beijing  
321 (Wu et al., 2016) but comparable with those observed in winter in Beijing (Liu et al., 2017). The  
322 discrepancies in the VOC average concentrations can be explained by the strong intensity of  
323 pollution emissions and the fluctuations in meteorological conditions, such as wind speed, relative  
324 humidity, air temperature and pressure, atmospheric stability, the height of the planetary boundary  
325 layer, and air mass origins (Song et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2018; Li et al., 2019a).

### 326 3.2 Source profiles and apportionments of VOCs

327 In this campaign, a solution of five factors was chosen to best represent VOC sources at  
328 Xianghe from 6 November 2017 to 29 January 2018. Figure 3 presents the source profiles i.e.,  
329 chemical composition of emission sources of each of the identified source factors from the base runs  
330 and the average contributions (in ppbv and percentage) of PMF-derived sources to ambient VOCs.  
331 The regression relationship between modeled and measured total VOCs concentrations (Figure S4)  
332 showed a good fit with square of the correlation coefficient ( $R^2$ ) of 0.97 suggesting that statistically,  
333 observed VOC concentrations at Xianghe were well represented by the PMF model-resolved source  
334 factors. Bootstrapping mapping of PMF factor solutions are shown in Table S4, indicating the results  
335 were more stable with all factors mapped in BS in 100%, and there are no unmapped BS factors and  
336 no swaps with DISP. In order to further determine if source contributions are really different, we  
337 summary the error estimation of concentrations and percentages for TVOCs, as showed in Table S5.  
338 For each factor, the median bootstrap value is typically within  $\pm 5\%$  of the base run value and the  
339 interquartile range of the bootstrap run values is mostly within  $\pm 5\%$  of the bootstrap median, except  
340 for industrial emissions where the interquartile range of the bootstrap run values is 22.7% of the  
341 bootstrap median, showing that the percentages were reasonable. The presences of discrepancies of  
342 the concentrations/percentages of base value, BS 5th, BS 25th, BS 50th, BS 75th and BS 95th among  
343 factors, as showed in Table S5, demonstrate that these contributions are really different. In  
344 conclusion, the analysis of uncertainty revealed that the identified source profiles are reasonable in  
345 this study.

346 Factor 1 was characterized by 82.4% of the total 1,4-Dichlorobenzene mixing ratios, 81.8% of  
347 the total bromoform mixing ratios, 79.7% of the total 1,1,1-Trichloroethane mixing ratios and 73.6%



348 of the total carbontetrachloride mixing ratios, which have a long lifespan in the atmosphere  
349 (Mccarthy et al., 2007; Li et al., 2015a). Factor 1 also included high mixing ratios of pentanal (72.7%)  
350 and hexanal (68.5%). Based on the abundances of long-lived compounds and carbonyls, factor 2  
351 was assigned to secondary and long-lived species, and its contribution to the observed VOCs was  
352 10.4%. Previous studies also reported that secondary formation was still an important source of  
353 carbonyls, although carbonyls mainly came from direct anthropogenic emissions in winter (Chen et  
354 al., 2014; Li et al., 2015a). Factor 2 consisted of abundant 2-methylhexane, cyclohexane and n-  
355 hexane, which are widely used solvents and adhesives in paints (Cai et al., 2010). The loadings of  
356 aromatics, including o-xylene, m/p-xylene and ethylbenzene, were high, accounting for 68.1% of  
357 o-xylene, 66.8% of m/p-xylene, 62.7% of ethylbenzene, respectively, in the atmosphere; these  
358 species are the dominant components of organic paint solvents (Ying et al., 2008; Li et al., 2015a;  
359 He et al., 2019). Consequently, we believe that the loadings of VOC species in this source were  
360 related to solvent utilization, which contributed 13.6% of the observed VOCs. Factor 3 accounted  
361 for 26.4% of the total observed VOCs and for more than 91.7% of our measured 1-pentene, which  
362 is often considered as a tracer for industrial emissions (Gao et al., 2014), so we attributed this factor  
363 to industrial emissions. Factor 4 was abundant in 1,3-butadiene, propylene, ethylene and benzene,  
364 which accounted for 78.3%, 68.7%, 68.3% and 61.4% of the total 1,3-butadiene, propylene,  
365 ethylene and benzene, respectively. These chemicals are typical VOCs observed in vehicle exhaust  
366 (Ying et al., 2008; Chen et al., 2014; Jun-Lin et al., 2014; Song et al., 2018), suggesting that this  
367 factor was associated with vehicle exhaust and was responsible for 31.0% of the total VOCs. Factor  
368 5 contributed 63.1% of measured n-butane, 62.3% of measured n-pentane, 61.8% of measured iso-  
369 butane, 58.1% of measured iso-pentane, 40.0% of measured MTBE and 38.1% of measured propane.

370 It has been reported that these chemicals are representative species in liquefied petroleum gas &  
371 natural gas (Wang et al., 2015; Li et al., 2019a). Totally, 18.6% of the observed VOCs were  
372 associated with liquefied petroleum gas & natural gas.

373 The source apportionment results showed that the dominant source in this study was vehicle  
374 exhaust (18.7 ppbv, 31.0%), followed by industrial sources (15.9 ppbv, 26.4%), liquefied petroleum  
375 gas & natural gas (11.2 ppbv, 18.6%), solvent utilization (8.2 ppbv, 13.6%) and secondary and long-  
376 lived species (6.3 ppbv, 10.4%). Comparable results can be found in latest source apportionment  
377 study conducted at the atmospheric monitoring site in the northeast of Langfang city (Xianghe city  
378 belong to Langfang district) from April 2016 to March 2017 (Song et al., 2019). The source  
379 apportionment results in this study were compared with former studies, as listed in Table S6. In  
380 these studies, vehicle exhaust was the major source in urban and industrial areas, contributing  
381 approximately 27.8-58.3% to the total VOCs. Among the compared Chinese cities, the contribution  
382 of vehicle exhaust in this study was lower than that in other cities due to the huge vehicle flows in  
383 megacities. The contribution of industrial emissions in this study was higher than the values reported  
384 for various Chinese cities. The contribution of liquefied petroleum gas & natural gas was  
385 comparable with that in Tianjin, Hong Kong and Wuhan but much lower than that in the Junggar  
386 Basin. Given that there are no LPG-fueled vehicles in Xianghe, the emissions of LPG-related VOCs  
387 from household and catering were considerable. The contribution of solvent utilization to VOCs in  
388 Xianghe is higher than that in Tianjin (Liu et al., 2016b), , lower than that in Lanzhou, Wuhan, Baoji,  
389 Chengdu, Nanjing and Hong Kong (Guo et al., 2004; Gao et al., 2014; Jia et al., 2016; Lyu et al.,  
390 2016; Xue et al., 2017; Song et al., 2018), and comparable with that in Beijing (Li et al., 2015a).  
391 The contribution of secondary and long-lived species was much higher than that in Beijing.

392 Nevertheless, source identification and source contributions strongly depend upon the model, the  
393 study period, and the species and profiles used for source apportionment (Pandolfi et al., 2008; Yuan  
394 et al., 2012; Lyu et al., 2016). In summary, the comparison suggests a general characteristic of source  
395 apportionments of VOCs, where vehicle-related emissions, industrial sources and solvent utilization  
396 were the major contributors to ambient VOCs.

### 397 **3.3 Pollutant- and source-specific health risk assessment**

398 The HQs and carcinogenic risks of hazardous VOC species via inhalation exposure in the  
399 present study and in other cities in China were estimated and are presented in Figure 4 and listed in  
400 Table S7. Apart from benzene, o-xylene, bromomethane, trichloroethylene and 1,4-dichlorobenzene,  
401 the HQ of other noncarcinogens was higher than that in Beijing (Zhang et al., 2017). With the  
402 exception of styrene, the HQ of other aromatics was basically within the values reported for other  
403 Chinese cities (Cai et al., 2010; Li et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2017), as showed in Figure 4a. A  
404 noncarcinogenic risk is represented by hazard index (HI). US EPA states that if  $HI < 1$ , there is no  
405 appreciable risk of adverse health effects, while  $HI > 1$  indicates a chance of noncancer effects  
406 occurring (USEPA, 2009). In our study, HI of the observed noncarcinogenic species was 5.2, so they  
407 had significant non-carcinogenic risk. Specifically, among the noncarcinogens, only the HQ of  
408 acrolein (4.9) exceeded the value of 1, indicating a obvious noncarcinogenic risk. In contrast, the  
409 HI of other noncarcinogens was lower than the value of 1, suggesting no chance of noncancer effects  
410 occurring.

411 Among the carcinogens, as illustrated in Figure 4b and Table S7, with the exception of benzene,  
412 trichloroethylene, tetrachloroethylene and vinylchloride, the carcinogenic risks of the four other  
413 carcinogens in this study were evidently greater than those reported in Beijing (Zhang et al., 2017).

414 The excess cancer risk range recommended by the (USEPA, 2009) for public health protection is  
415 one in a million ( $1.0 \times 10^{-6}$ ) acceptable risk level to one in ten thousand ( $1.0 \times 10^{-4}$ ) tolerable risk level.  
416 The carcinogenic risks of 1,3-butadiene, acetaldehyde, benzene, chloroform and 1,2-dichloroethane  
417 were above the acceptable level of  $1.0 \times 10^{-6}$  but below a tolerable risk of  $1.0 \times 10^{-4}$ , showing a  
418 potential carcinogenic risk (Dutta et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2012). The cancer risks of other VOC  
419 species were below the acceptable level of  $1.0 \times 10^{-6}$ , which means that there might be no obvious  
420 cancer risk from these VOC species. In this study, the average cumulative carcinogenic risk (the  
421 summation of available individual compound risks) based on personal exposure was  $5.4 \times 10^{-5}$ .  
422 Compared with other studies using the same IURs, cumulative carcinogenic risks for personal  
423 exposure were higher than average estimates in Tianjin ( $3.0 \times 10^{-5}$ ) (Zhou et al., 2011) and South  
424 Baltimore ( $4.3 \times 10^{-5}$ ) (Payne-Sturges et al., 2004). The difference in the cumulative cancer risk  
425 among these studies may be the result of VOCs species and individual activities magnifying the  
426 variability in personal exposure concentrations (Payne-Sturges et al., 2004; Zhou et al., 2011), eg.,  
427 13 VOCs in this study, but 9 VOCs in Payne-Sturges' study and 5 VOCs in Zhou's study. In short,  
428 from pollutant-specific health risk perspective, much more attention should be paid to acrolein, 1,3-  
429 butadiene, acetaldehyde, benzene, chloroform and 1,2-dichloroethane.

430 In addition, health risk was apportioned to the five identified sources by summing the  
431 carcinogenic and noncarcinogenic risks of all available risk-posing VOC species in a particular  
432 source (Bari and Kindzierski, 2017, 2018). The source-specific noncarcinogenic and carcinogenic  
433 risk values are shown in Figure 5a-5b and Table S8. Noncarcinogenic risks of different sources  
434 ranged from 0.01 (solvent utilization) to 0.9 (vehicle exhaust), and all noncarcinogenic values were  
435 lower than the USEPA safe level (1.0), except for vehicle exhaust, where the noncarcinogenic value

436 was comparable with the safe level, as illustrated in Figure 5a. The source-specific carcinogenic risk  
437 of different sources ranged from  $1.0 \times 10^{-6}$  (secondary and long-lived species) to  $3.1 \times 10^{-6}$  (solvent  
438 utilization), and all risk values were above the USEPA acceptable level ( $1.0 \times 10^{-6}$ ) but below the  
439 tolerable risk ( $1.0 \times 10^{-4}$ ). In general, vehicle exhaust posed the greatest noncarcinogenic risk to  
440 public health (56.2%), followed by secondary and long-lived species (23.1%), industrial emissions  
441 (17.7%) and liquefied petroleum gas & natural gas (2.2%). Solvent utilization posed a relatively  
442 low noncarcinogenic risk (0.8%) to public health. Solvent utilization was the largest contributor  
443 (32.6%) to carcinogenic risk, followed by vehicle exhaust (30.3%), industrial emissions (15.0%)  
444 and Liquefied petroleum gas & natural gas (11.5%). Secondary and long-lived species posed a  
445 relatively low carcinogenic risk (10.6%) to public health, as depicted in Figure 5b. In brief, from  
446 source-specific health risk perspective, much more attention should be paid to vehicle exhaust and  
447 solvent utilization.

448 It should be mentioned that there are some limitations to our health risk assessment.  
449 Noncarcinogenic and carcinogenic risks were calculated based solely on 27 and 13 detected  
450 hazardous VOCs, respectively, whereas other potentially important hazardous VOCs, for example,  
451 formaldehyde, acetophenone, and cresols/cresylic acid, in the USEPA list of 187 air toxins  
452 (<https://www3.epa.gov/airtoxics/orig189.html>) and 30 urban air toxins ([https://www.epa.gov/urban-](https://www.epa.gov/urban-air-toxics/urban-air-toxic-pollutants)  
453 [air-toxics/urban-air-toxic-pollutants](https://www.epa.gov/urban-air-toxics/urban-air-toxic-pollutants)) were not measured in this study. It is reported that  
454 formaldehyde and BTEX are more serious indoors than outdoors (Wang et al., 2007), and according  
455 to the exposure parameters of the Chinese population, the Chinese population spends most of their  
456 day indoors (1213 min/day); hence, the estimations can only represent the lower limits. Overall, the  
457 resultant inhalation noncarcinogenic and carcinogenic risks estimated here are a reasonable first step

458 for understanding ambient VOC risks to public health in Xianghe.

### 459 **3.4 Evolution at different pollution levels**

460 Theoretically, determining high and low pollution levels from total VOCs concentrations are  
461 more common and reasonable than that from PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations. However, determining pollution  
462 levels using total VOCs concentrations are random and unfounded. PM<sub>2.5</sub> (fine particulate matter  
463 with a diameter of less than 2.5 μm) is the premier pollutant of atmosphere pollution in winter in  
464 NCP and PM<sub>2.5</sub> pollution grading standards is clear and specific in the Air Quality Index (AQI)  
465 technical regulations (HJ 633-2012) formulated by the Chinese Ministry of Environmental  
466 Protection. In view of the above-mentioned facts, in this study, drawing on the PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations  
467 as a reference and considering the quantity of samples analyzed, days with average concentrations  
468 of PM<sub>2.5</sub> <75, 75 ≤ PM<sub>2.5</sub> <150, and PM<sub>2.5</sub> ≥150 μg m<sup>-3</sup> were defined as clean (C), moderate pollution  
469 (MP), and heavy pollution (HP) days, respectively. PM<sub>2.5</sub> was measured continuously using  
470 RP1400-PM<sub>2.5</sub> instruments at the Xianghe site. The time series of the PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations during  
471 the entire observational period are presented in Figure S5.

#### 472 **3.4.1 Concentration variations at different pollution levels**

473 The mean concentrations and fractional contributions of VOC groups at different pollution  
474 levels during the entire observational period are shown in Figure 6a-6b. The statistical analysis of the  
475 results was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22. Seen from Figure 6a, the results showed that  
476 there was significant difference of the seven VOC groups at p<0.01 at same pollution level. At  
477 different pollution levels, there was significant difference of alkanes and alkenes at p<0.001, but  
478 aromatics, OVOCs, halocarbons and acetonitrile at p<0.01, and acetylene at p<0.05. The statistical  
479 analysis suggested that the differences are statistically significant.

480 Figure 6a indicates that nearly all the VOC groups increased continuously and noticeably with  
481 the deterioration of the air quality. The mixing ratios of the total VOCs in Xianghe were relatively  
482 low on clean days, with an average value of  $33.09 \pm 30.55$  ppbv, but increased to  $164.12 \pm 94.49$  ppbv  
483 on average on heavy pollution days, among which alkanes were the most abundant chemical groups,  
484 accounting for 34.48% ( $56.59 \pm 33.71$  ppbv) of the total VOCs. Alkenes and aromatics were two  
485 other major components. Their average mixing ratios increased by 576.13% and 485.23%,  
486 respectively, on heavy pollution days. Acetylene, which mainly comes from incomplete combustion,  
487 and acetonitrile, which is a typical tracer of biomass burning, increased dramatically to  $11.67 \pm 8.19$   
488 ppbv and  $1.02 \pm 1.43$  ppbv on average, i.e., by 477.48% and 540.10%, respectively, compared with  
489 that on clean days. The fractional contributions of VOC groups to the total VOCs at different  
490 pollution levels are presented in Figure 6b. Visibly, the fractional contribution of alkanes decreased  
491 from clean days to heavy pollution days, whereas alkenes and aromatics increased and the others  
492 remained nearly constant, indicating the significance of alkenes and aromatics in the evolution  
493 process of pollution (Guo et al., 2014).

494 Table S1 summarizes the average mixing ratios of all 101 VOC species measured in this  
495 campaign. It is evident that the average concentrations of almost all quantified individual species  
496 remarkably increased from clean days to heavy pollution days, and their average concentrations on  
497 heavy pollution days were 1-8 times higher than those on clean days, which is in good agreement  
498 with previous studies (Zhang et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2017), except for several  
499 halocarbons (e.g., CFC-113, 1,4-dichlorobenzene and trichloroethylene), where the mixing ratios  
500 remained constant. As each hydrocarbon source has its own characteristic chemical composition,  
501 variations in chemical compositions may indicate differences in the source contributions (Wang et

502 al., 2010). As listed in Table S9, tracers of gasoline vehicle exhaust, diesel vehicle exhaust,  
503 petrochemical industry, paint solvent usage, industrial sources and secondary and long-lived species  
504 comprised the top 20 most increased species, suggesting the importance of these sources in the  
505 evolution of pollution. Of note, among the top 20 VOC species, eight are toxic hydrocarbons,  
506 including 1,3-butadiene, styrene, benzene, methylene chloride, 1,2-dichloropropane, chloroform,  
507 1,1,2-trichloroethane and ethylbenzene, as shown in Table S2. This finding suggested a potential  
508 health risk to the public on pollution days. Parallel results were observed in October 2014 in Beijing  
509 (Wu et al., 2016).

#### 510 **3.4.2 Source contributions at different pollution levels**

511 Figure 6c-6d illustrates the evolution of source factors to the total VOCs mixing ratios at  
512 different pollution levels. In order to determine the significance of the difference in relationships to  
513 the uncertainties found for the different contributions, we summary the bootstrap calculation (with  
514 100 bootstraps and using a minimum correlation R-value of 0.6) with the variability in the  
515 concentrations and percentages of TVOCs for the factors at different pollution levels, as showed in  
516 Table S10 and Table S11. For each factor, the median bootstrap value is typically within  $\pm 15\%$  of  
517 the base run value (Table S10) and the interquartile range of the bootstrap run values is mostly  
518 within  $\pm 15\%$  of the bootstrap median at different pollution levels (Table S11), showing that the  
519 percentages were reasonable. The presences of discrepancies of the concentrations/percentages of  
520 base value, BS 5th, BS 25th, BS 50th, BS 75th and BS 95th among factors at different pollution  
521 levels, as showed in Table S10 and Table S11, demonstrate that the differences of these contributions  
522 are significant. In conclusion, the evolution of mean concentrations and fractional contributions of  
523 PMF-derived sources at different pollution levels in this study was reasonable.



524 As showed in Figure 6c, nearly all of the source mixing ratio contributions increased  
525 continuously with the aggravation of pollution. Industrial emissions and vehicle exhaust were the  
526 largest contributors to the total VOCs mixing ratios on clean days, but vehicle exhaust and liquefied  
527 petroleum gas & natural gas on moderate pollution days, vehicle exhaust, industrial emissions and  
528 solvent utilization on heavy pollution days. The fractional contributions of vehicle exhaust and  
529 solvent utilization increased continuously over time, whereas the fractional contributions of  
530 industrial emissions and secondary and long-lived species decreased continuously, liquefied  
531 petroleum gas & natural gas kept constant on clean days and heavy pollution days, as showed in  
532 Figure 6d. On clean days, industrial emissions was the largest contributor (30.2%) to the total VOCs  
533 mixing ratios, contributing 10.4 ppbv, followed by vehicle exhaustsolvent utilization (8.6 ppbv,  
534 25.0%) and liquefied petroleum gas & natural gas (5.8 ppbv, 16.7%). Solvent utilization and  
535 secondary and long-lived species contributed 4.8 and 4.8 ppbv, accounting for 14.0% and 14.0%,  
536 respectively, of the total VOCs. On moderate pollution days, the largest contributor was vehicle  
537 exhaust, with 30.3 ppbv, accounting for 26.5% of total VOCs, followed by liquefied petroleum gas  
538 & natural gas (29.2 ppbv, 25.6%), solvent utilization (20.7 ppbv, 18.1%), secondary and long-lived  
539 species (17.7 ppbv, 15.5%) and industrial emissions (16.4 ppbv, 14.3%). On heavy pollution days,  
540 the largest contributor was vehicle exhaust, with 59.0 ppbv, accounting for 28.6% of total VOCs.  
541 The second largest contributor was industrial emissions (44.8 ppbv, 21.7%) and solvent utilization  
542 (44.6 ppbv, 21.6%). The contributions from liquefied petroleum gas & natural gas and secondary  
543 and long-lived species were 35.0 ppbv and 22.7 ppbv, accounting for 17.0 and 11.0%, respectively,  
544 of the total VOCs. Compared with that on clean days, the contribution of vehicular exhaust increased  
545 to the greatest extent, with a value of 50.4 ppbv, followed by solvent utilization (39.7 ppbv) and

546 Industrial emissions (34.4 ppbv).

547 Increases in vehicular exhaust and solvent utilization, industrial emissions, liquefied petroleum  
548 gas & natural gas and secondary and long-lived species were responsible for 29.4, 23.2, 20.0, 17.0  
549 and 10.4%, respectively, of the increases in ambient VOCs, indicating that vehicle exhaust, solvent  
550 utilization and industrial emissions played a key role in the development of pollution levels in  
551 Xianghe. The evidently elevated contributions of vehicle exhaust and solvent utilization can be  
552 accounted for by the following facts: 1) Vehicle-related emission was an important source, although  
553 more stringent emission standards for new vehicles have been implemented in Beijing-Tianjin-  
554 Hebei. As of the end of 2016, the number of vehicles reached 19.22 million, accounting for 32.03%  
555 in Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei and its surrounding areas, and the vehicle output in Hebei Province reached  
556 1.29 million, with 29.1% in the Jing-Jin-Ji region (<http://www.hetj.gov.cn/res/nj2017/indexch.htm>).  
557 2) Solvent use is a major contributor to the increase in VOC emissions, which is estimated to have  
558 increased by 52% since 2010, making solvents the largest contributor (36%) to VOC emissions in  
559 2017 in China (Zheng et al., 2018). According to the China Furniture Yearbook, as of the end of  
560 2016, the number of brands in Xianghe was as high as 1500. Consequently, emission reductions of  
561 vehicle exhaust and solvent usage are the optimal scheme to reduce the mixing ratio of VOCs in  
562 Xianghe.

### 563 **3.4.3 Health risk assessment at different pollution levels**

564 Noncarcinogenic risk assessment results of VOC species at different pollution levels are shown  
565 in Figure 7 and Table S12. HI was 2.7, 7.4 and 15.1, respectively, on clean days, moderate pollution  
566 days and heavy pollution days, suggesting an increasing noncarcinogenic risk (Table S12) with the  
567 aggravation of pollution. Specifically, compared with that on clean days, the HQ of methylene

568 chloride, 1,3-butadiene, styrene, 1,2-dichloropropane and benzene increased remarkably by a factor  
569 of 8.3, 8.2, 7.9, 7.8 and 6.7, respectively, on heavy pollution days. Noticeably, the HQ of acrolein  
570 was higher than a safe level (=1) on clean days, posing a clear risk to public health, which should  
571 be paid more attention. In contrast, the HI of the other noncarcinogens was lower than a safe level,  
572 although it increased gradually with the degradation of air quality.

573 Carcinogenic risk assessment results of VOC species at different pollution levels are shown in  
574 Figure 7 and Table S12. Cumulative cancer risk was  $2.8 \times 10^{-5}$ ,  $8.3 \times 10^{-5}$  and  $1.5 \times 10^{-4}$ , respectively,  
575 on clean days, moderate pollution days and heavy pollution days, suggesting a increasing  
576 cumulative cancer risk (Table S12) with the aggravation of pollution. Cumulative cancer risk  
577 estimates on clean days were lower than average estimates in Tianjin and South Baltimore. However,  
578 Cumulative cancer risk estimates on moderate pollution days and heavy pollution days were much  
579 higher than average estimates in Tianjin and South Baltimore (Payne-Sturges et al., 2004; Zhou et  
580 al., 2011). Specifically, the risks of 1,3-butadiene, benzene, chloroform and 1,2-dichloroethane on  
581 clean days were above the acceptable level of  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  but below a tolerable risk of  $1 \times 10^{-4}$ , showing  
582 a potential carcinogenic risk. The cancer risk of acetaldehyde increased gradually until it exceeded  
583 the acceptable level of  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  but below a tolerable risk of  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  on heavy pollution days. Apart  
584 from the above-mentioned potentially toxic VOC species, the cancer risks of the others were lower  
585 than the acceptable level of  $1 \times 10^{-6}$ , although they increased continuously with the aggravation of  
586 pollution.

587 In addition to the evolution of the noncarcinogenic and carcinogenic risks of VOC species at  
588 different pollution levels, significant variations in noncarcinogenic and carcinogenic risks of  
589 predicted VOC sources were also observed. As presented in Figure 5c-5d, Table S13 and Table S14,

590 the noncarcinogenic and carcinogenic risks of predicted VOC sources increased noticeably with  
591 increasing pollution levels. For the noncarcinogenic risk of predicted sources, as showed in Figure  
592 5c and Table S13 ,vehicle exhaust, industrial emissions and secondary and long-lived species  
593 eventually exceeded acceptable safe levels during the transitions from clean days to heavy pollution  
594 days, whereas the other sources remained lower than safe levels at different pollution levels. For the  
595 carcinogenic risk of predicted sources, as showed in Figure 5d and Table S14, all sources eventually  
596 exceeded the USEPA acceptable level ( $1 \times 10^{-6}$ ) but remained lower than the tolerable risk ( $1 \times 10^{-4}$ ).  
597 These findings revealed that predicted sources exerted increasing noncarcinogenic and carcinogenic  
598 risks on the public with the evolution of pollution levels.

#### 599 **4 Conclusions**

600 This study represents the first field online observations of VOCs in Xianghe, focusing on  
601 concentration levels and sources of ambient VOCs and their associated risk to public health. Over  
602 the entire period of the study, the total VOCs varied greatly from 4.61 ppbv to 511.98 ppbv. The  
603 most dominant compounds were alkanes, followed by alkenes, aromatics, halocarbons, OVOCs,  
604 acetylene and acetonitrile. Source apportionment analysis identified five sources, namely, vehicle  
605 exhaust (31.0%), industrial emissions (26.4%), liquefied petroleum gas & natural gas (18.6%),  
606 solvent utilization (13.6%)and secondary and long-lived species (10.4%). Health risk assessment  
607 screening indicated that the noncarcinogenic risk of acrolein (4.9) exceeded 1.0, and the  
608 carcinogenic risks of all selected VOCs were lower than the tolerable risk ( $1 \times 10^{-4}$ ). Estimated  
609 noncarcinogenic risks for all sources were below a safe level (= 1), with vehicle exhaust (56.2%)  
610 was the largest contributor to noncarcinogenic risk. Estimated carcinogenic risks for nearly all  
611 sources were above the USEPA acceptable level ( $1 \times 10^{-6}$ ) but below the tolerable risk ( $1 \times 10^{-4}$ ), with

612 solvent utilization (32.6%) was the largest contributor to carcinogenic risk. With the aggravation of  
613 pollution, the fractional contribution of alkenes, aromatics, vehicle exhaust and solvent utilization  
614 increased during the transition, indicating the significances of these VOC groups and sources in the  
615 evolution process of pollution. The noncarcinogenic risks of vehicle exhaust, industrial emissions  
616 and secondary and long-lived species eventually exceeded acceptable safe levels, and the  
617 carcinogenic risks of nearly all sources eventually exceeded the USEPA acceptable level ( $1 \times 10^{-6}$ )  
618 but remained lower than the tolerable risk ( $1 \times 10^{-4}$ ), suggesting predicted sources exerted increasing  
619 noncarcinogenic and carcinogenic risks on the public with the evolution of pollution levels. We  
620 recommend that the priorities for the control of VOC groups and sources include alkenes, aromatics,  
621 vehicle exhaust and solvent utilization because of their larger emissions and health risks in Xianghe.

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