

Cigars, Cigarillos & Little Cigars Fact Sheet

Cigars are defined by the US government as “any roll of tobacco wrapped in leaf tobacco.”¹ While there are currently *three* major cigar products—cigars, cigarillos and little cigars—current federal classifications narrowly define them into *two* categories: little cigars and large cigars.² This two-pronged classification groups cigarillos with large cigars because they generally weigh more than three pounds per thousand. These products, colloquially known as “cigarillos,” “blunts” or “cheroots” (referred to as cigarillos in this fact sheet), are included in the “large cigar” category despite significant differences in their marketing and packaging from that of typical large cigars.

Little Cigars: Weighing less than 3 pounds/1000, these products resemble cigarettes.



CIGARETTE



LITTLE CIGAR

Cigarillos: Weighing more than 3 pounds/1000, cigarillos are classified as large cigars.



CIGARILLO (TIPPED)



CIGARILLO

Large Cigars: Weigh more than 3 pounds/1000.



CIGAR

Flavors

- Some cigars—usually small cigars or cigarillos—come in flavored varieties, including cherry, chocolate, vanilla, peach rum, raspberry and sour apple.³
- As is the case with flavored cigarettes, such flavorings may appeal to youth and young people.^{4,5}
- Flavorings in cigars are not regulated by the federal government.

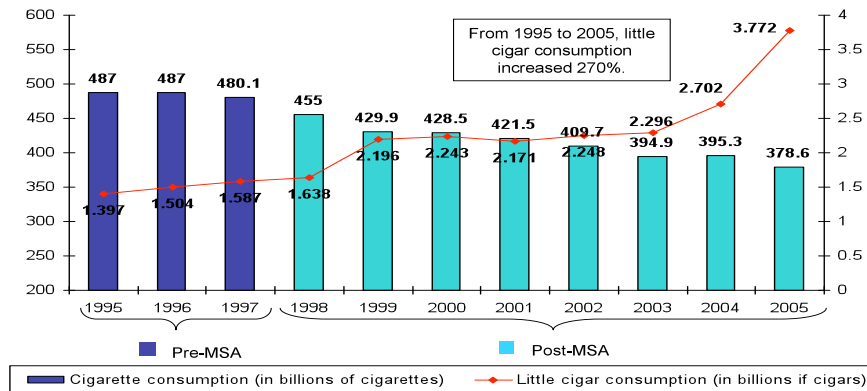
Increase in Consumption of Little Cigars and Cigarillos

In the last decade, cigarette consumption rates have declined while cigarillos’ and little cigars’ sales rates have increased dramatically.^{6,7} In addition, Philip Morris now owns the most popular cigarillo brand: “Black & Mild’s.”⁸

- Sales of little cigars has increased by 240% while cigarillo sales increased by almost 150% between 1997 and 2007. Large cigar sales decreased by 6% during the same time period.⁷
- U.S. imports of little cigars increased from 34 million pieces in 1997 to 311 million pieces in 2007, an increase of more than 800%. Large cigar imports jumped from 587 million to 889 million during the same time period, an increase of only 51%.⁹
- A review of formerly-secret tobacco industry documents finds that little cigars were intended to replace cigarettes as cigarette advertising became increasingly restricted, and taxes on cigarettes, but not cigars, continued to increase.¹⁰

- The recent increase in sales of little cigars is frequently attributed to increases in taxes on cigarettes, and historically much lower taxes on cigars.^{11,12,13}
- Effective April 1, 2009, federal excise taxes on little cigars were increased by \$0.97 to \$1.01 per pack of 20 – bringing the tax rate on little cigars in line with cigarettes. The tax on large cigars and cigarillos was raised from 20.719% of the manufacturer's price (capped at \$0.05) per cigar to 52.75% of the manufacturer's price (capped at \$0.40) per cigar.¹⁴ This means that a premium cigar with a manufacturer's price of \$5.00 would have its taxes raised from 5 cents to 40 cents (it hits the 40 cent cap). A cheaper cigar or a cigarillo with a manufacturer's price of \$0.40 would have its taxes raised from 5 cents to 21 cents per cigar.

Increases in U.S. little cigar consumption compared to cigarette consumption, 1995-2005



Sources: US Department of Agriculture, US Alcohol & Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, Bureau of the Census

Prevalence of Cigar Use Among Youth

- There is no national prevalence data for little cigar or cigarillo products specifically. Among high school youth in 2006, nearly 12% of high school students reported use of any type of cigar. Over 12% of Whites, nearly 9% of African Americans, 12% of Hispanics, and almost 5% of Asians were current cigar smokers. Nearly 17% of males and over 7% of females were current cigar users.¹⁵
- Among middle school youth in 2006, 4% were current cigar smokers. Three percent of Whites, nearly 6% of African Americans, over 6% of Hispanics, and 1.6% of Asians reported current cigar use. Over 5% of males and 2.7% of females were current cigar users. Again, it is important to note that this survey question asked about all cigar use, and did not differentiate between, large cigars, little cigars and cigarillos.⁹
- While no national-level data is available on prevalence of little cigar/cigarillo use, in 2005, the leading brand preferred by cigar smokers of any kind aged 12 to 17 was Black & Mild (41.4%), a cigarillo brand. Among cigar smokers, nearly 20% of males and 38% of females reported using Black & Mild cigarillos most frequently of any type of cigar. Over 16% of Whites, 55% of African Americans, and 24% of Hispanics who smoked cigars usually preferred Black & Milds.¹⁶

Health Risks of Large Cigars, Little Cigars, and Cigarillo

- There is a misperception by some that these products are less addictive and less harmful than cigarettes,¹⁷ but large cigars, little cigars, and cigarillos contain the same compounds as cigarettes and can be just as harmful and addictive.¹⁸
- Just like cigarettes, all types of cigars can cause lung, oral, laryngeal, and esophageal cancers and impart the cigar smoker with a greater risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) than nonsmokers.¹⁸

SOURCES

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