

# TOBACCO FACT SHEET

## LARGE CIGARS, CIGARILLOS AND LITTLE CIGARS



- Cigars are defined in the U.S. tax code as “any roll of tobacco wrapped in leaf tobacco or in any substance containing tobacco” that does not meet the definition of a cigarette.<sup>1</sup>
- Current federal tax classifications narrowly define cigars, cigarillos and little cigars into *two* categories based on weight: little cigars and large cigars.<sup>2</sup> This two-tiered tax classification groups cigarillos with large cigars because they generally weigh more than three pounds per thousand.
- However, despite those definitions, cigars are a heterogeneous product category, with at least *three* major cigar products— large cigars, cigarillos and little cigars.<sup>2</sup>
  - **Little Cigars** (Small Cigars) weigh less than 3 lbs/1000 and resemble cigarettes.<sup>3</sup> Cigarettes are wrapped in white paper, while little cigars are wrapped in brown paper that contains some tobacco leaf. Generally, little cigars have a filter like a cigarette.<sup>4</sup>



CIGARETTE



LITTLE CIGAR

- **Cigarillos** weigh more than 3 lbs/1000 and are classified as “large” cigars by federal tax code.<sup>3</sup> Cigarillos are longer, slimmer versions of large cigars. Cigarillos do not usually have a filter, but sometimes have wood or plastic tips.<sup>4</sup>



CIGARILLO (TIPPED)



CIGARILLO

- **Large Cigars** weigh more than 3 pounds/1000.<sup>3</sup>



CIGAR

- A review of formerly secret tobacco industry documents found that at least one company intended to replace cigarettes with little cigars as cigarette advertising became increasingly restricted, and taxes on cigarettes, but not cigars, continued to increase.<sup>5</sup>

## HEALTH RISKS

- Large cigars, little cigars, and cigarillos contain the same compounds as cigarettes and can be just as harmful and addictive.<sup>6</sup>
- Regular cigar smoking was responsible for approximately 9,000 premature deaths in the US in 2010. These deaths represented almost 140,000 years of potential life lost and a monetary loss of \$22.9 billion.<sup>7</sup>
- Similar to 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 that of nonsmokers.<sup>6</sup>

- Cigar smoke is a growing source of environmental tobacco smoke in indoor air. Secondhand cigar smoke exposes nonsmokers to much higher levels of carbon monoxide and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) when compared to secondhand smoke from a cigarette.<sup>8</sup>
- Those who smoke cigarettes are more likely to inhale cigar smoke, significantly increasing risk of disease.<sup>9-13</sup>

## INCREASED CONSUMPTION, LOWER TAXES AND REGULATION

In the last decade, cigarette consumption rates have declined while consumption rates of cigars have increased dramatically.<sup>14</sup>

- The FDA currently does not regulate cigar products under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, but in April of 2014, FDA proposed two options for regulating cigars — one where all cigar products would be regulated by FDA and one where only little cigars and cigarillos would be regulated by FDA.<sup>1</sup> The Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) of 2009 increased federal excise taxes on little cigars from \$0.04 to \$1.01 per pack of 20 — bringing the tax rate on little cigars on par with cigarettes.<sup>15</sup>
- CHIPRA also increased the tax on large cigars and cigarillos from 20.72% of the manufacturer’s price per cigar (capped at approximately \$0.05 per cigar) to 52.75% of the manufacturer’s price per cigar (capped at approximately \$0.40 per cigar).<sup>16</sup>
- In spite of continued declines in cigarette smoking in the US, the consumption of large cigars has increased from about 9.8 billion cigars in 2009 to approximately 12.9 billion in 2011.<sup>14,17</sup>
- The consumption of small cigars has decreased from about 2.3 billion cigars in 2009 to 798 million in 2011.<sup>14,17</sup> The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) maintains that the decrease in consumption of small cigars is due to many cigar companies adding weight to their cigars so they will qualify as large cigars and circumvent the federal excise tax increase on small cigars that resulted from CHIPRA.<sup>18,19</sup>
- Little cigars and cigarillos are available as singles, which are similar to single cigarettes or “loosies” which were popular in African American communities before being banned by the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act.<sup>20,21</sup> Little cigars and cigarillos are also available in pack sizes of less than 20, with some available in 2-packs, 5-packs, and 7-packs. Small packs tend to be cheaper than cigarettes, which may appeal to price sensitive populations.<sup>22-25</sup>

## PREVALENCE OF CIGAR USE

- Young adults, ages 18-25, have the highest prevalence rates of current cigar use (10.7%) compared to youth aged 12-17 (2.6%)<sup>26</sup> and adults aged 26 or older (4.5%).<sup>26</sup>
- The top five brands of cigars among young adults are Black & Mild, Swisher Sweets, Dutch Masters, White Owl, and Phillies, all of which are primarily cigarillo and little cigar products.<sup>27</sup>
- In 2012, 12.6% of high school students were current cigar smokers. A total of 8.4% of females and nearly 16.7% of males in high school were current cigar users, including cigarillos and little cigars.<sup>28</sup> Below is a breakdown of high school youth cigar smokers by race (2012)<sup>28</sup>:
  - 12.2% Caucasians;
  - 12.4% Hispanics; and
  - 16.7% African Americans

- Among middle school youth in 2012, almost 2.8% were current cigar smokers.<sup>28</sup> A total of 3.2% of males and 2.4% of females in middle school were current cigar users, including cigarillos and little cigars.<sup>28</sup>
- Below is a breakdown of middle school youth cigar smokers by race (2012)<sup>28</sup>:
  - 1.6% Caucasians;
  - 4.9% Hispanics; and
  - 5.0% African Americans
- Among young adult cigar ever users aged 18-34, 21.5% were ever users of small cigars only (little cigars, cigarillos) and 46.2% were ever users of both large cigars and small cigars.<sup>29</sup> Little cigar and cigarillo users are more likely to be younger and female.<sup>29</sup>
  - Cigar use is likely to indicate use of other tobacco products among young adults. Ever users of cigars are more likely to be current cigarette smokers, smoke cigarettes more frequently, and smoke a greater amount of cigarettes daily than non-users of cigars.<sup>30</sup>
  - Cigar users are also more likely to use non-cigarette tobacco related products and have higher levels of nicotine dependency.<sup>30</sup>

## FLAVORING AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CIGAR USE

- Cigars, particularly little cigars and cigarillos, come in a variety of flavors. As is the case with flavored cigarettes, such flavorings may appeal to youth and young people.<sup>4,31,32</sup>
- The Tobacco Control Act bans flavored cigarettes and the sale of packages of fewer than 20 cigarettes. Currently, these regulations do not apply to cigars, little cigars, or cigarillos.<sup>33</sup>
- Kretek International began developing Djarum clove cigars in 2007 in anticipation of the passage of the Tobacco Control Act in 2009. Following the cigarette flavor ban, sales of this clove cigar increased by more than 1400% between 2009 and 2012.<sup>34</sup>
- Among current adult cigar smokers, 42.9% reported using flavored cigars. Use was higher among female cigar smokers (60.8%), and decreased with increasing age and income level.<sup>35</sup> One study's findings showed a clear preference for cigar brands that produced flavored varieties among youth, young adult, female, and black cigar smokers.<sup>27</sup>
- In 2011, 1.2% of middle school youth were current users of flavored cigars, and 5% of high school youth were current users of flavored cigars. Among middle school current cigar smokers, 26.3% currently used flavored little cigars. Among high school current cigar smokers, 38.4% currently used flavored little cigars.<sup>36</sup>

## CIGAR MARKETING AND SALES

- Cigar smoking rose dramatically in the 1990s and 2000s,<sup>37</sup> in part due to cigar marketing strategies. Recent studies have shown that cigar companies package some small cigars to look similar to cigarettes and sell them in the same places that cigarettes are sold.<sup>38</sup> They also use marketing tactics currently used by cigarette companies such as social media<sup>39</sup> and marketing tactics previously used by cigarette companies such as celebrity endorsements.<sup>40</sup>
- One study found that large cigar, little cigar, and cigarillo advertising on the exterior of retail outlets is significantly more prevalent in neighborhoods with African Americans and young adults. This study showed that little cigars and cigarillos are more available, cheaper, and highly advertised in African American neighborhoods.<sup>38</sup>
- Sales of premium cigars increased by 7.7% from 258.7 million units sold in 2010 to 278.5 million units sold in 2011.<sup>41</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> 26 U.S.C. 5702.
  - <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Treasury, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Trade Bureau. Available at: [http://www.ttb.gov/main\\_pages/schip-summary.shtml](http://www.ttb.gov/main_pages/schip-summary.shtml). Accessed May 11, 2012.
  - <sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking & Tobacco Use: Cigars. Available at: [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/tobacco\\_industry/cigars/](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/tobacco_industry/cigars/). Accessed May 22, 2012.
  - <sup>4</sup> Trinkets and Trash: Artifacts of the Tobacco Epidemic. Available at: <http://www.trinketsandtrash.org>. Accessed May 1, 2012.
  - <sup>5</sup> Delnevo CD. "A Whole 'nother smoke" or a cigarette in disguise: how RJ Reynolds reframed the image of little cigars. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2007;97:1368-1375.
  - <sup>6</sup> National Cancer Institute. *Cigars: Health Effects and Trends. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 9*. Bethesda, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institutes of Health;1998.
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  - <sup>15</sup> Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 H.R. 2(S.275) Sec. 701. Increase in Excise Tax Rate on Tobacco Products. Available at: [http://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/crsreports/crsdocuments/R40226\\_01102013.pdf](http://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/crsreports/crsdocuments/R40226_01102013.pdf)
  - <sup>16</sup> H.R. 1256--111th Congress: Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act. 2009; <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/111/hr1256>. Accessed April 2, 2012.
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