

# little cigars, cigarillos & cigars

## BACKGROUND

- **Cigars** are defined in the United States (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>
- However, despite those definitions, cigars are a heterogeneous product category, with at least three major cigar products—little cigars, cigarillos and large cigars.<sup>2</sup>
  - **Little Cigars** (aka 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>
  - **Cigarillos** weigh more than 3 lbs/1000 and are classified as “large” cigars by federal tax code.<sup>2</sup> Cigarillos are longer, slimmer versions of large cigars. Cigarillos do not usually have a filter, but sometimes have wood or plastic tips.<sup>2</sup>
  - **Traditional** (aka large cigars) weigh more than 3 pounds/1000<sup>2</sup> and are also referred to as “stogies.”
- Little cigars, cigarillos, and large cigars are offered in a **variety of flavors including candy and fruit flavors such as sour apple, cherry, grape, chocolate and menthol.**<sup>5,6</sup>
- Until recently, cigars were not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). However, in May 2016, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) finalized its “deeming” regulation, extending its authority to little cigars, cigarillos, and premium cigars, as well as to components and parts such as rolling papers and filters. This authority does not extend to accessories such as lighters and cutters.<sup>7</sup> This means that **FDA can now issue product standards to make all cigars less appealing, toxic and addictive, and it can issue marketing restrictions** like those in place for cigarettes, in order to keep cigars out of the hands of kids.



CIGARETTE



LITTLE CIGAR



CIGARILLO (TIPPED AND UNTIPPED)



CIGAR

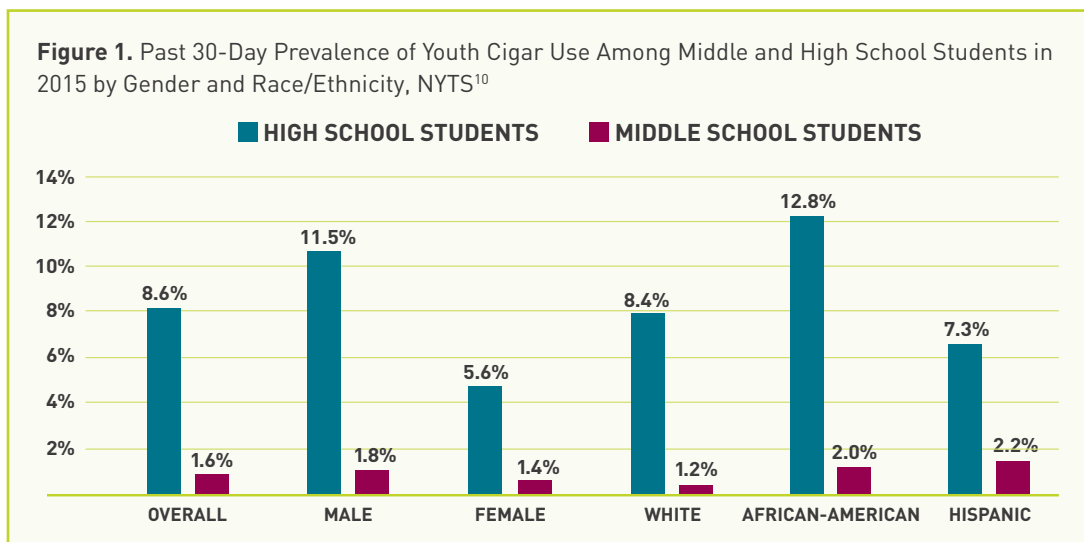


## PATTERNS OF USE IN THE U.S.

From 2000-2011, **cigarette consumption rates in the U.S. declined while consumption rates of traditional cigars increased dramatically among adults.**<sup>8</sup> However, the percentage of people aged 12 or older that were past 30-day cigar smokers declined to 4.5% in the most recent data, compared to 5.7% in 2004.<sup>9</sup>

### Youth

- According to the National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS), the prevalence of **past 30-day cigar use was 8.6% among all high schools students and 1.6% among all middle school students** in 2015. This compares to 9.3% prevalence of past 30-day cigarette smoking among high school students.<sup>10</sup>
- Among youth, cigar use is highest in male and African American populations.<sup>10</sup> (Figure 1)



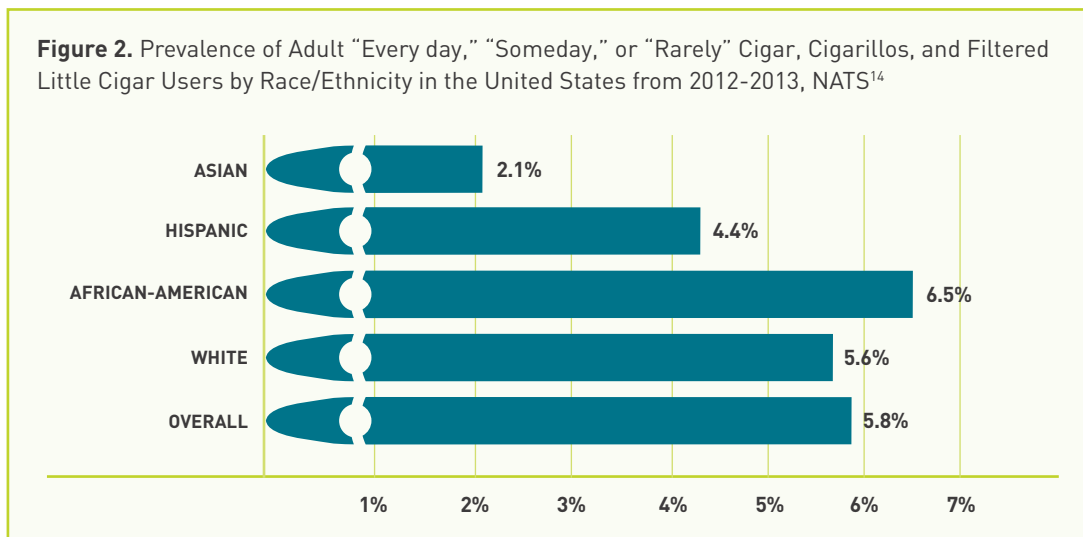
- Flavored cigars are popular in youth. In 2014, among past 30-day cigar smokers, **64.7% of high school students and 56.6% of middle school students used a flavored cigar in the past 30 days.**<sup>11</sup>
- Cigar use among youth is often accompanied by use of other tobacco products. Among middle and high school students, **77.3% of past 30-day cigar smokers**, who reported using cigars on 1–5 days during the past 30 days, **also used at least one other tobacco product.**<sup>12</sup>
- Cigar use is intermittent. In 2014, among high school students who were past 30-day users of cigars, **13.1% of cigar smokers used the product on 20 or more days** in the past 30 days.<sup>12</sup>
- Cigars are often hollowed out and used to smoke marijuana. The marijuana filled cigar wrapper is called a “blunt.” **Nearly half of youth past 30-day cigar users reported using blunts.** In the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), the prevalence of **past 30-day blunt use among past 30-day cigar users (ages 12-17) was 49.1%.**<sup>13</sup>



**49.1%  
OF YOUNG  
CIGAR SMOKERS  
REPORTED  
USING BLUNTS**

## Young Adults & Adults

- **Adult cigar use is higher among younger adults.**
  - Respondents in the 2012-2013 National Adult Tobacco Survey (NATS) reported that “every day” or “someday” use of cigars, cigarillos, and filtered little cigars was 2.0% in adults overall, but 3.4% in 18-24 year olds and 2.3% in 25-44 year olds.<sup>14</sup>
  - In the same survey, respondents who reported “every day,” “someday,” or “rarely” use of cigars, cigarillos, and filtered little cigars was significantly higher. It was 5.8% in adults overall, but 8.9% in 18-24 year olds and 7.4% in 25-44 year olds.<sup>14</sup>
- Among respondents of the 2012-2013 NATS, 10.1% of men and 1.5% of women reported “every day,” “someday,” or “rarely” use of cigars, cigarillos, and filtered little cigars.<sup>14</sup>
- In the adult population, **cigars, cigarillos and little cigars are most popular among African Americans** (Figure 2).



- In the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, **young adults ages 18-25, had the highest prevalence of past 30-day cigar use (9.7%)** compared to youth ages 12-17 (2.1%) and adults ages 26 or older (3.9%).<sup>9</sup>
- A national study of young adults aged 18-24 found that **marijuana use was strongly correlated with past 30-day little cigar and cigarillo use.**<sup>15</sup>
- In 2014, the prevalence of past 30-day blunt use among past 30-day cigar users was 49.0% for young adults ages 18-25 and 19.3% for adults ages 26 or older.<sup>13</sup>

## HEALTH & SAFETY

- In 2012, **cigar smoking was responsible for approximately 9,000 premature deaths** among adults aged 35 and older in the US. These deaths represented almost 140,000 years of potential life lost and monetary loss of \$22.9 billion.<sup>16</sup>
- Cigar smoking is associated with **higher risk of oral, esophageal, laryngeal, and lung cancer**.<sup>16-19</sup> Cigar smokers have a marked increase in risk for COPD,<sup>20</sup> and cigar smokers experience higher mortality from COPD than do non-smokers.<sup>21</sup>
- Though generally similar to cigarette smoke, cigar smoke contains higher levels of harmful constituents including tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNAs), NNK, Carbon monoxide (CO), Ammonia, and Tar.<sup>22-24</sup>
- Secondhand cigar smoke contains dangerous compounds and chemicals that pose significant health problems to cigar smokers and non-smokers. **Cigar smoke contains higher concentrations of toxic and carcinogenic compounds than cigarette smoke.**<sup>25,26</sup>

**Cigar smoke contains higher concentrations of toxic and carcinogenic compounds than cigarette smoke.**

## PERCEPTIONS OF CIGARS IN THE U.S.

### Harm Perceptions

- **Cigar users significantly underestimate the health risks of cigars.**<sup>25</sup> Some cigar smokers indicate that they either did not know whether or not cigars were more or less harmful than cigarettes or perceived cigars to be less harmful than cigarettes.<sup>24,27-29</sup> In particular, this misperception of the health effects of cigars was shown to be higher in specific demographic groups<sup>30</sup> – young adults<sup>29,31,32</sup> and black youth, in particular.<sup>30,31,33</sup>
- Respondents from a nationally representative sample of young adults 18-34 were **more likely to rate cigars (13.9%) as being less risky compared to noncombustible snus (10%) and other smokeless tobacco products (7.1%) relative to cigarettes.**<sup>34</sup>



## MARKETING IN THE U.S.

- Cigar smoking in the United States rose dramatically in the 1990s and 2000s,<sup>35</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>36</sup> They also use marketing tactics currently used by cigarette companies such as social media<sup>28</sup> and marketing tactics previously used by cigarette companies such as celebrity endorsements.<sup>37</sup>



- One study found that 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 also showed that **little cigars and cigarillos are more available, cheaper, and highly advertised in African American neighborhoods.**<sup>36</sup>
- Little cigars and cigarillos are available as singles. By contrast, single cigarettes or “loosies” which were popular in African American communities were banned in 2009 by the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (FSPTCA).<sup>38,39</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 such as youth and low-SES populations.**<sup>40-42</sup>
- Advertising and promotional activities increased the visibility of cigar smoking, “normalizing” cigar use.<sup>43</sup> **Tobacco companies promote cigar smoking as pleasurable, a symbol of status, wealth, and class.**<sup>44,45</sup>



\* actual promotions found online & in-stores



## POLICY IN THE U.S.

### Youth Access

- FDA's final "deeming" regulation establishes a federal minimum age of sale of 18 for all tobacco products, including cigars. However, retailers must also follow state or local tobacco laws, even if the minimum age of sale is higher than the federal minimum age of sale of 18 years.<sup>7,46</sup> **Retailers must also check photo ID of everyone under age 27 who attempts to purchase cigars.**
- Vigorous enforcement of these age requirements is necessary to reduce youth uptake.<sup>47</sup>
- FDA's final "deeming" regulation **bans vending machine sales** except in facilities where only those over 18 are allowed. The final rule also bans free samples of all cigars, and their components or parts.<sup>7,46</sup>
- The FSPTCA required FDA to issue regulations to establish age verification requirements for the Internet and other non-face-to-face purchase of any tobacco products. However, FDA has yet to implement this set of regulations.<sup>48</sup>

### Flavored Cigars

- Currently flavored cigars are allowed on the market. **FDA has indicated that it intends to extend the current ban on flavored cigarettes (excluding menthol) to cigars**, but that has not yet happened.
- Maine has banned the sale of cigars with candy, chocolate, vanilla, fruit, berry, nut, herb, spice, honey, and alcoholic drink flavors. Premium cigars are exempt from the flavor ban.<sup>49</sup>
- Several other localities such as Providence, RI, New York, NY, Chicago, IL, Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN, and Boston, MA, have instituted **some sort of ban on the sale of flavored tobacco**, which includes flavored cigars. With the exception of Chicago, all of these bans exclude menthol flavored tobacco.



## Warning Labels

- In 2001, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) established five cigar warnings for the top 6 selling brands based on data from the National Cancer Institute Monograph on Cigars.<sup>50,51</sup>
- FDA's final "deeming" regulation extends these same warnings to all cigar brands and added an additional warning. On a rotating basis, cigar manufacturers must include the following six warnings statements on all cigar packages and advertisements:
  - **WARNING:** This product contains nicotine. Nicotine is an addictive chemical.
  - **WARNING:** Cigar smoking can cause cancers of the mouth and throat, even if you do not inhale.
  - **WARNING:** Cigar smoking can cause lung cancer and heart disease.
  - **WARNING:** Cigars are not a safe alternative to cigarettes.
  - **WARNING:** Tobacco smoke increases the risk of lung cancer and heart disease, even in nonsmokers.
  - **WARNING:** Cigar use while pregnant can harm you and your baby. (Or, as an optional alternative statement: **SURGEON GENERAL WARNING:** Tobacco Use Increases the Risk of Infertility, Stillbirth, and Low Birth Weight.)
- Retailers who sell individual, unpackaged cigars must display a sign that is a minimum of 8.5 x 11 inches which includes all six warning statements on or within 3 inches of each cash register.
- These warning statement requirements will become effective May 10, 2018.

## Taxes

- 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 federal tax rate on little cigars on par with cigarettes.<sup>52</sup>
- In 2009, following the tax increase on all tobacco products, several little cigar brands increased their weight slightly in order to qualify as "large cigars" under the federal tax code to receive a better tax rate. With this preferential tax treatment, these products became significantly cheaper.<sup>53</sup>



## where we stand: little cigars, cigarillos & cigars

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Truth Initiative's mission is to achieve a culture where all youth and young adults reject tobacco. Consistent with Truth Initiative's vision of a future where tobacco is a thing of the past, we support the following policies with regard to little cigars, cigarillos, and cigars:

- Given their well-documented appeal to youth, **all flavors, including menthol, should be eliminated** from little cigars, cigarillos and other cigar products.
- The marketing of all cigar products should be restricted so that it **does not target or appeal to youth**.
- Sales of all cigar products should be **limited to those age 21 or older**.
- Internet and other **non-face-to-face sales of cigars should be prohibited**.
- All cigar use **should be subject to smoke-free laws and requirements**.
- We support **taxation proportional to the harms of each type of tobacco product** to discourage use of the most harmful products (e.g. combusted tobacco). As highly harmful combustible tobacco products, little cigars, cigarillos and other cigar tobacco products should be taxed at the highest rate.



## TRUTH INITIATIVE PUBLICATIONS ON LITTLE CIGARS, CIGARILLOS, AND CIGARS

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# CIGARS

Cigars remain popular among young smokers.

**8.6% of high school students smoked a cigar** in the last 30 days in 2015, compared to **9.3% of high school students who smoked a cigarette** in the last 30 days.

## SMOKED CIGARETTES

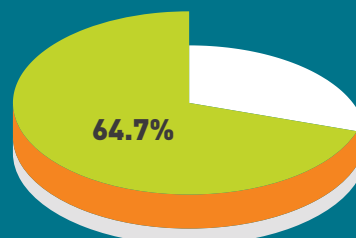


**9.3%**

## SMOKED CIGARS



**8.6%**



Flavors are popular with young smokers. **64.7% of recent cigar smokers in high school** reported smoking flavored cigars.

## Male and African American youth are the most likely to smoke cigars.

11.5% of male high school students and 12.8% of African American high school students are recent cigar smokers.

MALE  
HIGH SCHOOLERS



**11.5%**

AFRICAN AMERICAN  
HIGH SCHOOLERS



**12.8%**

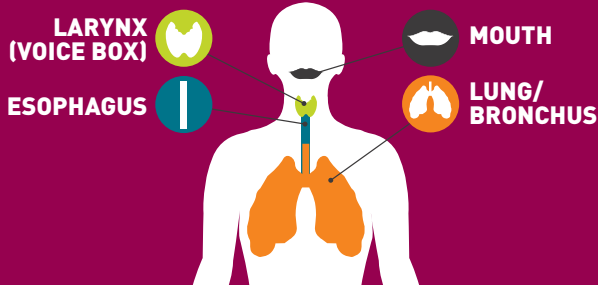


**49.1%**

**BLUNTING** – filling cigar wrappers with marijuana – is popular among young cigar smokers. Nearly half (49.1%) of high school students who are recent cigar smokers smoked a blunt in the last 30 days.

Youth cigar smokers also use other tobacco products (poly-use). 77.3% of high school and middle school students who are current cigar smokers also **used at least one other tobacco product**.

## CIGAR SMOKING TO 4 TYPES OF CANCER



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