



Cigar Sales Over the Years

Tracking the sales of cigars in the US over the years, some clear trends appear. In the 1920s, cigar sales reached just over eight billion units sold and then saw a downturn into the late 1950s to about five billion cigars.

In the 1960s, sales began to pick up again. And by the early 1970s cigar volumes reached nearly eleven billion units. From the early 1970s through the early 1990s, sales dropped substantially, falling to around to as low as three billion annually. At this time in the early 1990s, industry outlook for sales was quite pessimistic.

Beginning in 1996, cigars became popular again. Many described the period as a cigar “renaissance” as attitudes toward cigars became more positive. There was a growing interest in anything that had to do with cigars and volumes grew annually to almost fourteen billion units by 2012.

There was a downturn from 2012-2015 with a 12% drop from the peak of 2012. Some external factors may have led to this drop such as the long recovery from the recession of 2008-2009. Cigars are like any other product and the reduction in consumer discretionary spending lasted longer than many anticipated.

Cigar sales began to increase from 2016 to 2018 by around 9%. This was despite substantial governmental regulatory and state legislative action impacting the business environment.

In 2019, sales increased slightly by just 1% over 2018. As COVID-19 began to impact the global economy in early 2020, sales dipped from February through May. Then unit sales began to level out and climb from June through December 2020. Total sales for 2020 were still lower than 2019 but the last half of 2020 showed a strong comeback.

In 2021 sales of all cigar types, large and little, soared to record numbers. Total cigar volume increased to 15.25 billion. Premium cigars also showed record numbers at 456 million imports, a 25% increase compared to 2020. When domestic production is included, premium cigar total volume soared to near 496 million cigars.

Even with the record growth in premium cigar imports in 2021, a steady uptrend has been consistent over the last 10 years. The 10-year compounded annual growth rate has been 5% for premium cigar volumes. Popular price large cigars amounted to 14.38 billion in total volume in 2021. It is estimated that 37% to 47% were flavored (1).

In 2022, total cigar sales volume dropped 14%, down to 13.1 billion cigars. However, the upward trend in premium cigar imports continued just over 2% year-over-year growth. But, imports of popular price cigars for 2022 were down close to 15% year-over-year. (2)

(1) The 2021 sales volume estimate of popular price large cigars is based on an analysis of the MSAi database for the 12-month period ending on 1/1/2022.

(2) 2022 sales volume estimates for the different types of cigars are based on the TTB Statistical Reports, the U.S. Census Bureau IM-146 Import Report based on U.S. Customs data, the MSAi data report, IRI data, and CAA member companies.