

Cigarette Gift Giving Practices in China: A Descriptive Analysis

Fact Sheet

The practice of gifting cigarettes is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and found throughout China regardless of economic or smoking status.¹ The gifting of cigarettes, particularly premium brands, is considered both a sign of respect and a status symbol and is particularly common during holidays and other special occasions.^{1,2}

The tobacco industry exploits these gift giving holidays, e.g., Spring and Fall Festival, by promoting their brands using festival values, such as, warmth, friendship, and celebration.² These practices have contributed to the normalization of smoking in China and have been cited as reasons for smoking initiation and failure to quit.¹

This study was conducted in Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen. The findings on cigarette gift giving may support ongoing and future efforts to reduce cigarette gift giving in China.

Key Findings

Previous Gifting (Ever):

Over half the sample reported that either they or family have previously gifted cigarettes. Both male and female smokers were significantly more likely than their non-smoking counterparts to report either they or their family previously gifted cigarettes. Interestingly, female smokers and non-smokers were more likely than their respective male counterparts to report having previously gifted cigarettes.

Holiday & Special Occasion Gifting (Past year):

Of those who reported previously gifting cigarettes, the top three holidays or special occasions resulting in respondents gifting cigarettes were: 1. Spring Festival, 2. Event at work, 3. Fall Festival. Smokers reported significantly higher gifting than non-smokers during Spring Festival, Fall Festival, New Years Day (January 1st), and birthdays. Females reported significantly higher amounts of gifting during Spring Festival compared to their male counterparts but not during other holidays or special occasions.

Figure 1. Have you or your family ever given cigarettes as a gift?

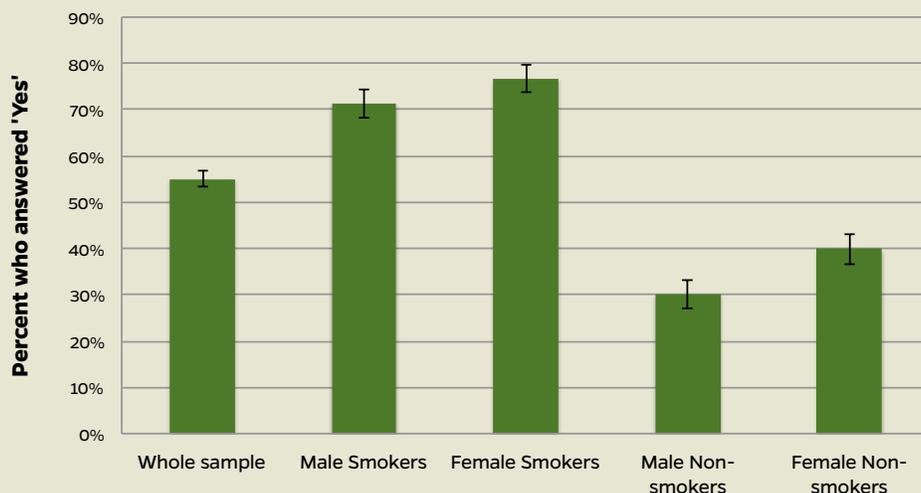
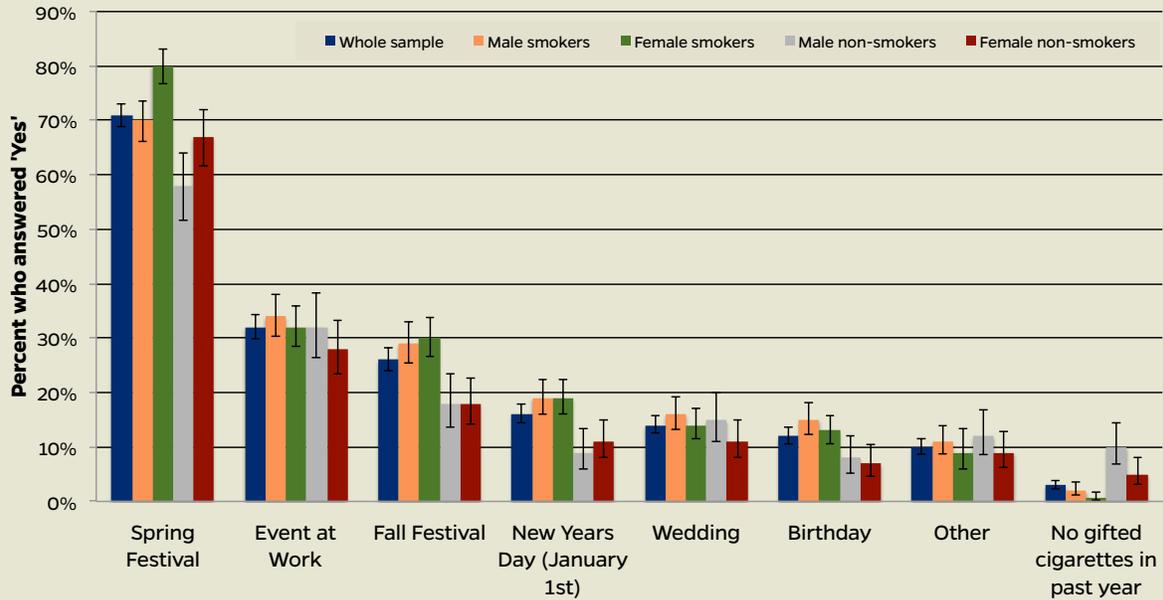


Figure 2. On which occasions or holidays have you or your family given cigarettes as a gift in the past year? [Select all that apply] (n=1752)



Study Design

The data were collected during December 2017. Approximately 1066 adult (18+) residents from each city were recruited via street intercept to participate in our self-administered 25 minute tablet-based survey. The sample was approximately 25% male smokers, 25% male non-smokers, 25% female smokers, and 25% female non-smokers.

Discussion

The evidence from this study indicates that gift giving remains a common practice in China especially during Spring Festival.

Although it is common for both smokers and non-smokers to gift cigarettes during holidays or special occasions, smokers are more likely to report gifting cigarettes during Spring Festival, Fall Festival, New Years Day (January 1st), and birthdays. Women smokers and non-smokers may gift cigarettes significantly more often than men during Spring Festival.

While little data on cigarette gift giving practices exist, the ITC China Survey in 2012 found female smokers were more likely than males to report receiving their most current cigarette as a gift. The authors suggested this finding might be due to shifting norms around women and smoking in China.³ Our data support this hypothesis but other cultural explanations may exist.

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References

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