

COST, EQUITY AND ACCEPTABILITY OF SOFT DRINKS TAXES TO PREVENT CHILD OBESITY

A NARRATIVE REVIEW

Childhood obesity is rising globally and is predicted to affect 254 million children by 2030 - a 100 million increase in the course of a decade.*

Countries worldwide have committed to a zero increase in obesity by 2025. To meet this commitment, governments are encouraged to **promote healthy behaviours and reshape obesogenic environments** through a variety of population-wide policies.

Taxing sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) is one such measure. Currently, **37 regional or national governments** apply SSB taxes. Health-related taxes aim to **decrease the purchase of a product associated with harm to health**. They also aim to **raise revenues**, which may, or may not, be earmarked specifically for health promotion.

While other reviews investigated the effectiveness of SSB taxes for preventing obesity, the current review assessed the **cost and cost-effectiveness, equity and acceptability of SSB taxation**.

Cost and cost-effectiveness

The implementation of SSB taxes is **low cost and highly cost-effective**. Transitional costs to companies may arise due to the reformulation of products.

These conclusions are supported by observations from different countries. However, **better estimates are desirable** about the costs of implementing health taxes or subsidies, and the revenues that may be generated from taxation.

Equity

Evidence suggests that taxes are more effective with high-consumers of targeted products. It appears that **the greatest health benefits of taxation accrue to people from lower socio-economic status groups**, who tend to be high SSB consumers.

Favourable effects manifest through a reduction in consumption and a reduction in expenditure on the taxed products. Current evidence on the relation between food taxes and social disparities is mainly based on modelling studies and requires **further confirmation through case studies**.

Acceptability

Actors involved in **public health and consumer protection generally favour SSB taxation**.

Commercial stakeholders involved in selling foods high in fats, sugars or salt **tend to oppose such taxes**. This attitude sheds a light on why significant resistance can be expected when such measures are considered.

At the same time, companies have demonstrated the **ability to rapidly reformulate and adapt their marketing strategies** to meet the challenges of an SSB tax.

Overall, the review concluded that **there is sufficient evidence for policy makers to adopt SSB taxation policies** to tackle obesogenic food environments.





Science and Technology in
childhood Obesity Policy

Cost, equity and acceptability of soft drinks taxes to prevent child obesity

Sugar-sweetened beverage taxes are:



HIGHLY COST-
EFFECTIVE



MODERATELY
FAVOURABLE FOR
HEALTH EQUITY



STRONGLY
SUPPORTED BY HEALTH
PROFESSIONALS and
CIVIL SOCIETY



MODERATELY
SUPPORTED BY
PUBLIC



MODERATELY
OPPOSED BY
COMMERCIALY
INTERESTED ACTORS



SSB TAXES ARE MOST ACCEPTED BY
THE PUBLIC IF REVENUES ARE DIRECTLY
USED FOR HEALTH AND HEALTH
PROMOTION.

Future research should focus on:

case studies
to confirm findings
from model studies



causal links
between price changes
and spending patterns
and preferences

price elasticities
assessments for specific
population groups



peer-reviewed papers
on acceptability
of SSB taxes

