

## Sugary Drink Survey and Schema Building

1. Do you drink soda (pop), sports drinks, sweetened tea, sweetened coffee or espresso based drinks every day?

YES

NO

If yes, how many per day? \_\_\_\_\_ How many per week? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many teaspoons of sugar do you think the average American consumes (eats or drinks) every day?

\_\_\_\_\_ teaspoons

3. How many teaspoons of sugar does the Food and Drug Administration say the average American man and woman should not exceed (go beyond) per day?

Men: \_\_\_\_\_ teaspoons

Women: \_\_\_\_\_ teaspoons

4. How many pounds of added sugar do you think the average American consumes every year?

\_\_\_\_\_ pounds

5. Would Americans continue to drink sugary drinks if the price of those drinks had a tax that raised the amount of the drink one penny per ounce?

YES

NO

Explain your thoughts.

6. Should the US government add extra taxes to products—sugary drinks, tobacco products, and alcoholic beverages—that are unhealthy for Americans to consume?

Explain your thoughts.

# SODA SHOWDOWN

## Should there be an extra tax on sugary drinks?

By Rebecca Zissou

**Z**eke Gumora, a 14-year-old at Maybeck High School in Berkeley, California, loves sugary drinks. He downs at least two cans of Arizona Iced Tea a day.

Zeke may soon have to shell out a bit more money for his daily sugar fix. In November, more than 75 percent of voters in Berkeley approved a penny-per-ounce tax on sugar-sweetened drinks, including sodas, iced teas, and sports drinks. The city is the first in the U.S. to put a special tax on sugary beverages.

Companies that distribute sugar-sweetened drinks in Berkeley have to pay the tax. If stores raise their prices as a result, the cost of a 12-ounce can of soda could go up 12 cents.

Supporters hope the tax will help lower obesity rates by discouraging people from buying soda.

Now some Americans are calling for extra taxes on sugary drinks nationwide. Last summer, U.S. Representative Rosa DeLauro, a Democrat from Connecticut, introduced a bill in Congress that would impose a 1-cent tax for every teaspoon of sugar in a drink.

(A 12-ounce can of soda has about 10 teaspoons of sugar. Health experts recommend that teens limit their intake of added sugar to about 5 to 9 teaspoons a day.)

Some people find DeLauro's proposal hard to swallow. They say taxes won't make people healthier and that the government shouldn't try to regulate what Americans eat and drink.

Are taxes on sugary drinks a good way to get people to buy less soda? *JS* spoke with experts on both sides of the issue.



### BY THE NUMBERS

**1 in 4**

Number of U.S. teens who drink soda every day

**42**

Gallons of soda and energy drinks consumed per person in the U.S. in 2013

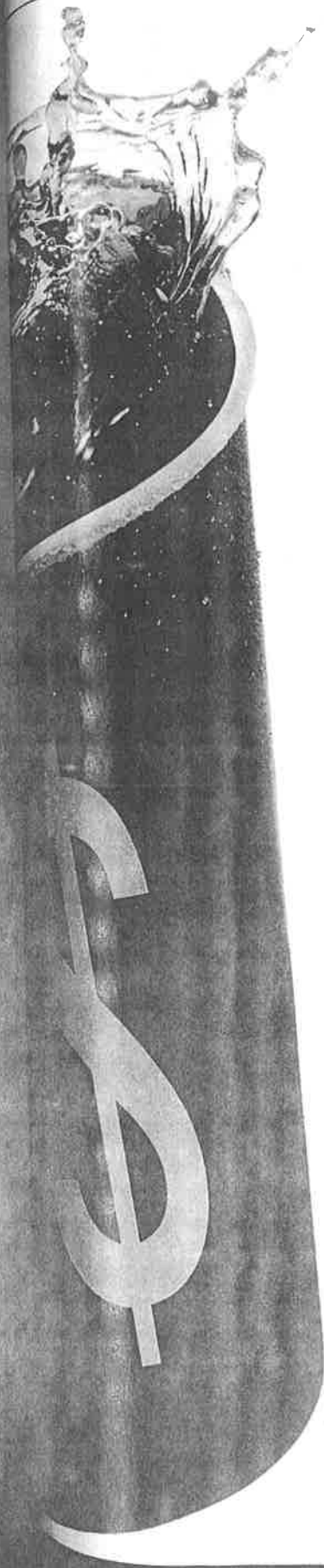
**\$76 billion**

Amount Americans spent on soda and energy drinks in 2013

**22**

Teaspoons of sugar the average American consumes each day

SOURCES: CDC, *Beverage Digest*, American Heart Association



## **YES** Too Much Sugar Is Unhealthy

Robert Lustig, a pediatrician in California, says sugar-sweetened drinks are the biggest source of added sugar in the American diet. Studies show that consuming too much sugar can lead to serious health problems, including obesity, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and tooth decay.

Plus, says Lustig, the more sugar you consume, the more you want.

“Sugar can be addictive in some people, driving excessive consumption and more disease,” he tells *JS*.

Supporters of soda taxes say that making sugary drinks more expensive discourages people from buying them. A 2013 study by Harvard University in Massachusetts found that increasing the price of a 20-ounce soda by 20 cents would lead to a 16 percent drop in sales. Supporters also point to the success of cigarette taxes, which have helped curb smoking.

Pat Crawford, a professor at the Berkeley School of Public Health, points out that soda companies spend millions of dollars advertising their products. She says the \$1 million a year the tax in Berkeley is expected to raise can help fund nutrition programs and raise awareness about the dangers of consuming too much sugar.

“It is very important that we do everything we can to reduce the amount of sugar we drink,” she tells *JS*. “If we don’t, too many kids will be crippled by diseases when they grow up.”

## **NO** Why Single Out Sugary Drinks?

Roger Salazar, a spokesperson for the American Beverage Association, agrees that obesity is a major problem. But, he says, taxing soft drinks won’t help.

“Taxes are not a solution to change behaviors or teach people about healthy lifestyles,” says Salazar. “But it will have an impact on consumers and businesses already struggling to make ends meet. [Taxes increase] everyone’s cost of living with higher prices at the grocery store.”

Other opponents say it’s unfair to single out soda in the fight against obesity. If we tax soda, they say, why not add an extra tax on candy, cupcakes, or ice cream? Those foods have a lot of added sugar too. Plus, they argue, if soda is taxed, people will just satisfy their sweet tooth with other unhealthy foods.

Salazar says that most Americans don’t support soda taxes. According to a 2013 poll by the Pew Research Center, 64 percent of American adults oppose raising taxes on sugary drinks.

Amy Myrdal Miller, a nutritionist in California, says the government shouldn’t tell people what to drink.

“Freedom of choice is an American value,” she tells *JS*. “We have the freedom to choose who we vote for, the freedom to communicate openly about our views on politics, and the freedom to choose a religion. We should also have the freedom to choose foods and beverages.”



What do you think is the most convincing argument on each side?

## EVALUATING ARGUMENTS



# What's the Best Evidence?

Authors use several pieces of evidence to support their arguments. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the supporting evidence cited in "Soda Showdown" on pp. 18-19.

**Step One:** Rank these statements cited as supporting evidence for each side of the debate, with **1** as the strongest piece of evidence and **4** as the weakest piece of evidence.

### Too Much Sugar Is Unhealthy

Rank	Supporting Evidence
	Studies show that consuming too much sugar can lead to serious health problems, including obesity, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and tooth decay.
	Sugar can be addictive in some people, driving excessive consumption and more disease.
	A 2013 study by Harvard University in Massachusetts found that increasing the price of a 20-ounce soda by 20 cents would lead to a 16 percent drop in sales.
	Cigarette taxes . . . have helped curb smoking.

### Why Single Out Sugary Drinks?

Rank	Supporting Evidence
	Taxes increase everyone's cost of living with higher prices at the grocery store.
	It's unfair to single out soda in the fight against obesity. If we tax soda, why not add an extra tax on candy, cupcakes, or ice cream? Those foods have a lot of added sugar too.
	According to a 2013 poll by the Pew Research Center, 64 percent of American adults oppose raising taxes on sugary drinks.
	Freedom of choice is an American value. . . . We should also have the freedom to choose foods and beverages.

**Step Two:** Explain your ranking.

**Explanation:** Too Much Sugar Is Unhealthy \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Explanation:** Why Single Out Sugary Drinks? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Step Three:** Based on your answers from Steps One and Two, which side of the debate had better supporting evidence? Put an X next to your selection.

\_\_\_\_\_ Too Much Sugar Is Unhealthy      \_\_\_\_\_ Why Single Out Sugary Drinks?