

Obesity Action Scotland strongly supports the proposed Soft Drinks Industry Levy. This is a vital part of a wider package of measures needed to tackle obesity through the price, promotion and reformulation of food and drink. This will help us create food environments where the healthy option is the easy and affordable option.

Key Facts

- Sugar-sweetened Beverages (SSBs) promote weight gain, type 2 diabetes and tooth decay
- In Scotland, we consume almost three times the recommended maximum amount of sugar
- SSBs are the biggest single source of free sugar in the diet of Scottish children
- The levy on SSBs is a vital element to address the obesity crisis
- Soft drink taxes work. In Mexico, a 10% tax reduced consumption of SSBs by an average of 6% in its first year - and 7% in the second year

The Problem

Recommended Sugar Intake

Updated in March 2016, the Scottish Dietary Goals now recommend reducing intake of free sugars to less than 5% of daily energy intake for anyone older than 2 years.

What does 'less than 5%' mean?

30g per day for an adult of normal weight
24g per day for children aged 7 to 10
19g per day for children aged 4 to 6



Only 13%
of UK adults
achieve this goal¹

Scottish Sugar Intake

Sugar intake in Scotland fell from 15.5% of daily energy intake in 2001 to 14.4% in 2014².

A recent evaluation from Kantar World Panel (2015)³ reported 13%, this is still far off the Scottish Dietary Goal of 5% of daily energy intake.

Between 2010 and 2015, consumption of SSBs in Scotland declined by 21%. In 2015 it was 173 million litres⁴.

After fruit and table sugar, SSBs are the highest contributors to the purchase of sugar in Scotland⁵. We need action to reduce consumption by a further 50%².

SSBs are the largest contributors to free sugar intake among children⁶.

Sugar Sweetened Beverages

The sugar content of typical SSBs in UK supermarkets ranges from 1 gram per 100ml to over 15 grams per 100ml⁷. Standard cola has around 10 grams of sugar per 100ml. A typical can of cola (330ml) contains 33g of sugar. One can therefore exceeds the daily recommended intake for children **and** adults.

Health Impacts^{8,9}

Sugar

- Adults who consume more sugar also consume more calories
- Sugar increases health risks through increased body weight
- Obesity is a risk factor for many diseases, including cardiovascular disease, many types of cancer and type 2 diabetes
- Sugar causes tooth decay; children in Scotland have substantially more decay than other EU children – particularly prevalent in deprived areas
- Tooth decay is the most common reason for children aged 5-9 being admitted to hospital

Sugar Sweetened Beverages

The effects SSBs have on health are stronger than of sugar itself because:

- SSBs have a direct effect on type 2 diabetes (increased risk)
- It is very easy to consume too many calories when drinking SSBs; this is because SSBs weaken our appetite control
- Excess consumption of SSBs for children and adolescents results in weight gain and increased Body Mass Index

The Proposed Solution

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy has the potential to promote reformulation and reduce consumption of SSBs. We support the introduction of the levy whilst also asking that the following is given consideration:

- Review products subject to the levy to ensure the inclusion of all milk drinks with added sugar, as well as dissolvable powders, liquid drink flavourings and candy sprays
- Create a scaled levy to cover all concentrations of free sugars encouraging producers to reduce sugar content as far as possible
- Undertake or commission comprehensive, independent evaluation of the levy to measure success and identify how that success has been achieved

Support

A tax on sugar sweetened beverages has been backed by a large number of public health organisations including WHO, Public Health England, UK Faculty of Public Health, BMA, Obesity Health Alliance, and the House of Commons Health Select Committee^{10,11,12}.



House of Commons
Select Committee

Polling from March 2016 shows that **69% of the British public support the levy**¹³

69%



Success Elsewhere – Mexico

In Mexico, an excise tax on non-dairy and non-alcoholic beverages with added sugar came into effect on 1 January 2014. The tax was set at one peso per litre, resulting in a price increase of almost 10%.

An evaluation of the effectiveness of this tax

demonstrated that SSB sales were on average 6% lower in the first year¹⁴ and 7% lower in the second year¹⁵ of implementation. At the same time, increases of 4-5% in the sales of untaxed beverages - mainly bottled plain water - were seen¹⁶.



Definitions

Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs)

SSBs are “beverages that contain added, naturally derived caloric sweeteners such as sucrose (table sugar), high-fructose corn syrup, or fruit juice concentrates, all of which have similar metabolic effects”¹⁷. The consultation on SDIL uses the term ‘added sugar soft drinks’.

Total sugar

as defined in the EU regulation No 1169/2011

All sugar (monosaccharides and disaccharides, excluding polyols) present in food/drinks; the regulation specified reference intake (RI) for sugar at 90 grams per day¹⁸. Total sugars include naturally occurring sugars and free sugars.

Free sugars

as defined by WHO and SACN¹⁹

All monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, plus sugars naturally present in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juices. Under this definition lactose (the sugar in milk) when naturally present in milk and milk products and the sugars contained within the cellular structure of foods (particularly fruits and vegetables) are excluded.

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Obesity Action Scotland Soft Drinks Industry Levy Factsheet

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