

Research Abstract

Obesity rates are at record levels, presenting health and economic hardships for individuals and, often, their communities. The rising consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages has been associated with the increased incidence of obesity. A penny-per-ounce tax on these beverages has been examined as a possible solution for addressing obesity, but has yet to be passed. Media discourse plays a major role in public acceptance of policies because it shapes the public understanding of issues, and policy debates. This study uses content analysis to explore how news media represents obesity and proposed soda taxes in the top three media sources in several states in which these taxes have been proposed: Vermont, Illinois, California, and Texas. Specifically, this study asks, (1) how do media represent sources, and (2) how do media adopt frames related to responsibility for health differently. Coding and analysis of news media will be conducted in March. We will present the results of this process to respond to our research questions.