

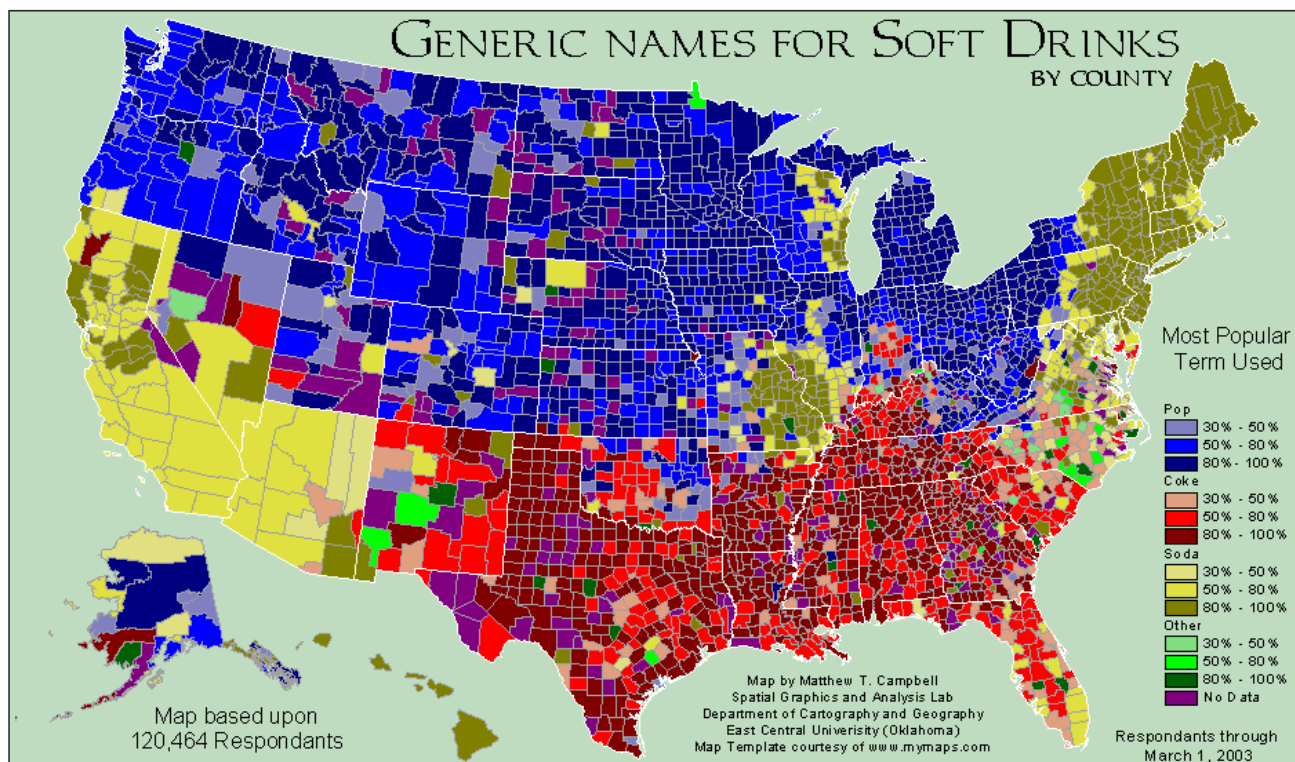


REAL GEOGRAPHY

EXPLORING THE GEOGRAPHY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

McGraw-Hill Higher Education

“I’d Like a Soda, Pop, Coke, or Tonic, Please” by Jon C. Malinowski, Ph.D.



It may seem like a basic thing, but few topics raise more lighthearted debate than what to properly call a soft drink, a carbonated beverage of water and syrup.

In most of New England (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Mas-

sachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut), “soda” is the most common name for a carbonated beverage. This usage continues south through the New York City Metro area and all of the state of New Jersey. Much of eastern Pennsylvania and Upstate New York also uses “soda.”

Beginning in Western New York and Pennsylvania and continuing westward across the northern half of the nation, “soda” gives way to “pop.” States such as Michigan, Ohio, Iowa, and

Minnesota are almost exclusively “pop” states, but there are “soda” enclaves in eastern Wisconsin, Southwestern Illinois, and eastern Missouri.

In much of the south, including Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas, the most commonly used term is neither “pop” nor “soda”, but coke, a word seemingly derived from the brand named product. Coke is also common in Virginia and North Carolina, although these areas are transition

zones, as are Oklahoma and Kentucky.

In the far west, “soda” once again emerges in California, Alabama, and southern Nevada.

There are also some islands of other terms. For example, in Massachusetts, a good number of people use the word “tonic.” This seems to be most common among older generations.

What patterns can you identify in the map, and what do you think might explain the distribution?

Further Research

1. Check out Von Schneidmeyer, Luanne. "Soda or Pop?" Journal of English Linguistics. December 1996
2. Contribute to a survey at www.popvsoda.com

Links:

- Pop vs Soda Page

<http://www.popvsoda.com>