Abstract

Non-Alcoholic Ready-to-Drink Beverages in New Zealand: Snapshot of Availability, Serve Size and Sugar Content in 2019 [†]

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Free sugars, particularly from beverages, are a major contributor to the growing burden of diet-related diseases. We aimed to describe the types of non-alcoholic ready-to-drink beverages available for sale in New Zealand (NZ) in 2019, and their serving size and sugar contents.

Data on the availability, serve size and sugar contents of single serve beverages (serving size = 1 and packet size <600 mL) were obtained from Nutritrack, an annually updated brand-specific food composition database. Beverages were classified into seven groups based on total sugar contents and presence of added sugars. Outcomes examined were: mean (SD) total sugar contents (g/100 mL), proportion of beverages sweetened with added sugars, proportion with serving size <250 mL, and proportion that would be liable for the UK Soft Drinks Industry Levy (>5 & <8 g and >8 g sugar/100 mL). ANOVA and Tukey post-hoc tests were applied for comparisons of means ($p < 0.05$).

We found that most available beverages were sweetened with added sugars (66.5%, 260/391). Only 18.9% had a serve size <250 mL. Sugar sweetened waters and electrolyte, energy and soft drinks had a lower mean (SD) total sugar content 7.92 (3.6) g/100 mL than sweetened fruit juices/drinks 9.55 (3.4) g/100 mL and similar mean total sugar content to sweetened flavoured dairy, plant-based milks, drinking yoghurts and breakfast beverages 8.46 (2.2) g/100 mL. Overall, 69.9% of sugar-sweetened beverages in NZ would be liable for the UK soft drinks levy: (97.6% energy drinks; 100% electrolyte drinks; 66.7% soft drinks; 0% waters with added sugars; and 96.4% fruit juices/drinks with added sugars).

To summarize, two thirds of beverages available for sale in NZ supermarkets in 2019 were sweetened with added sugars, four fifths had serve sizes >250 mL, and almost three quarters would be taxed if a tax similar to the UK Soft Drinks Industry Levy was implemented.

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