

Reducing the Sugar Intakes of Children in Aotearoa: Development of sugar reduction targets for packaged foods and beverages

Helen Eyles¹, Yannan Jiang¹, Bruce Neal⁴, Boyd Swinburn², Kathy Trieu⁴, Lisa Te Morenga⁵, Tony Blakely³, Cliona Ni Mhurchu¹

¹National Institute for Health Innovation, School of Population Health, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

²Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Population Health, The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

³Department of Public Health, The University of Otago, Wellington, New Zealand

⁴The George Institute for Global Health, The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

⁵School of Health, University of Victoria, Wellington, New Zealand

Background: Reducing the sugar intakes of children in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) is critical to protect their future health, yet there is currently no Government-led sugar reduction programme. Our aim was to develop targets for the total sugar contents and serve size of single serve products contributing most to children's sugar intakes in NZ.

Methods: Targets were developed using an eight-step process informed by the UK sugar and salt reduction interventions. In summary, major food groups contributing 2% or more to children's total sugar intakes were identified using national nutrition survey data. Unweighted and sales-weighted means and reduction targets were estimated using the Nutritrack supermarket database (2018; n=15,193 products) linked with the Nielsen Homescan[®] panel (2018; n~1,600 households). Preliminary targets were estimated as 20% reductions of sales-weighted means. Final targets were set for 2020 (~5% reduction) and 2025 (~20% reduction) by adjusting preliminary targets for feasibility, i.e. a check to ensure that ~33% of products met the target, and alignment with Australian/UK targets and the Health Star Rating nutrition label.

Results: Nineteen food groups were identified as major contributors to children's total sugar intakes. Sufficient products (n≥20) were available in Nutritrack to develop robust sugar reduction targets for 17 and serve size targets for 11. The food group with the highest unweighted mean (SD) sugar contents was confectionary (57 (19) g/100g), and serve size was sports drinks (676 (181) mL). Sales-weighted means and final reduction targets are being developed and will be presented.

Take home messages: Suitable data are available to develop robust, phased sugar reduction targets for NZ food manufacturers.

How the presentation fits with the theme of collaboration: This research represents collaborators from four universities, two countries, and multiple ethnic groups. Our research outcomes (targets) are intended for use by Government, industry, researchers and consumers.