

Sugar reduction in soft drinks making no progress in Germany, says study

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Soft drinks are seen as major factors in obesity and diabetes. A new study shows that, in Germany, the mean sugar content has hardly dropped over the last six years, despite guarantees on the part of the

industry. In the United Kingdom, where a soft drink industry levy was introduced in 2018, a significantly greater reduction was achieved during the same period of time.

The mean [sugar content](#) of soft drinks in Germany dropped as little as approximately 2% during the period from 2015 to 2021, according to a study conducted by the Deutsche Allianz Nichtübertragbare Krankheiten (German Alliance for Non-Communicable Diseases, DANK) in collaboration with researchers from the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich (LMU).

Germany: 9% reduction would have been necessary

In 2018, the German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture Julia Klöckner launched the "National Reduction Strategy" for processed foods. In this context the beverage industry voluntarily committed to reduce the sales-weighted [sugar](#) content of its products by 15% during the period from 2015 to 2025. The current study shows that up to now the industry is lagging far behind this target. In mathematical terms, a reduction of 9% from 2015 to 2021 would have been necessary to stay on track.

"The study clearly shows that the current strategy that is based on self-commitments of the industry is not sufficient to achieve significant reductions in sugar content," says Michael Laxy, Professor of Public Health and Prevention at TUM, last author of the study together with Prof. Eva Rehfuess (LMU). "At the current pace it would take decades to reach the defined targets."

United Kingdom: Sugar content reduced by 30%

According to the study, the mean sales-weighted sugar content of soft

drinks in Germany was 5.3 grams per 100 milliliters in 2015, and 5.2 grams per 100 milliliters in 2021. By way of comparison: During the same period in the United Kingdom sugar content dropped from the same 5.3 grams per 100 milliliters to 3.8 grams per 100 milliliters, or by about 30%.

"Our data not only illustrate the slow reduction rates in Germany, they also highlight how the process can work elsewhere," says Dr. Peter von Philipsborn, lead author of the study and scientist at the LMU Chair of Public Health and Health Services Research.

Manufacturer's taxes introduced in many countries

In 2018 the government of the United Kingdom introduced a manufacturer's tax on high-sugar beverages intended to help reduce the sugar content of [soft drinks](#). As of today, more than 50 governments around the world have introduced taxes or levies on sugary beverages.

Scientific medical professional societies, the World Health Organization, consumer protection advocates and health insurance carriers have for years recommended the introduction of corresponding regulations in Germany as well.

More information: P. von Philipsborn et al, Interim Evaluation of Germany's Sugar Reduction Strategy for Soft Drinks: Commitments versus Actual Trends in Sugar Content and Sugar Sales from Soft Drinks *Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism* (2023). [DOI: 10.1159/000529592](https://doi.org/10.1159/000529592). www.karger.com/Article/Abstract/529592

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