

Sugary Drink Consumption among Minnesota Youth: 2019

Overview

Children who consume sugary drinks are at higher risk for obesity¹, cavities², type 2 diabetes³, and cardiovascular complications⁴. Having just one sugary drink per day increases a child's risk of becoming obese by 55%⁵. Promoting healthy habits in children is important to prevent health problems later in life. Notably, adults with obesity, type 2 diabetes, or heart conditions are at increased risk of becoming severely ill from the COVID-19 virus⁶.

The 2019 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) collected information from approximately 170,000 youth in grades 5, 8, 9, and 11 across the state of Minnesota⁷. Among other questions about health and well-being, the survey asked students how often they had sugary drinks.

The results show that while, on average, Minnesota youth are having less sugary drinks than the national average, nearly half are still having sugary drinks at least once a day. Additionally, there are major disparities in how often students are having sugary drinks for those who identify as Black, youth of color, or American Indian and students experiencing economic hardship.

What are sugary drinks?

Sugary drinks are drinks with *added* sugars. Added sugars are different than the sugars that are found naturally in milk or fruit, which contain other beneficial nutrients.

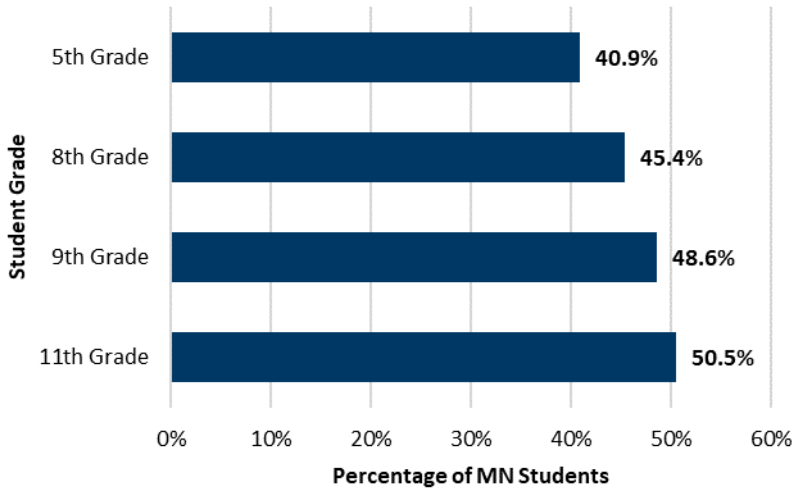
The Minnesota Student Survey asked questions about five types of sugary drinks:

- Soda
- Sports drinks (e.g., Gatorade, Powerade)
- Energy drinks (e.g., Rockstar, Red Bull, or Monster)
- Sweetened juice drinks (e.g., Kool-Aid, Capri Sun, lemonade)
- Sweetened coffee or tea

Learn more about sugary drinks:
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/sugarybeverages>

Nearly half of Minnesota youth have sugary drinks at least once a day

Figure 1. Youth Having Sugary Drinks At Least Once Per Day, by Grade

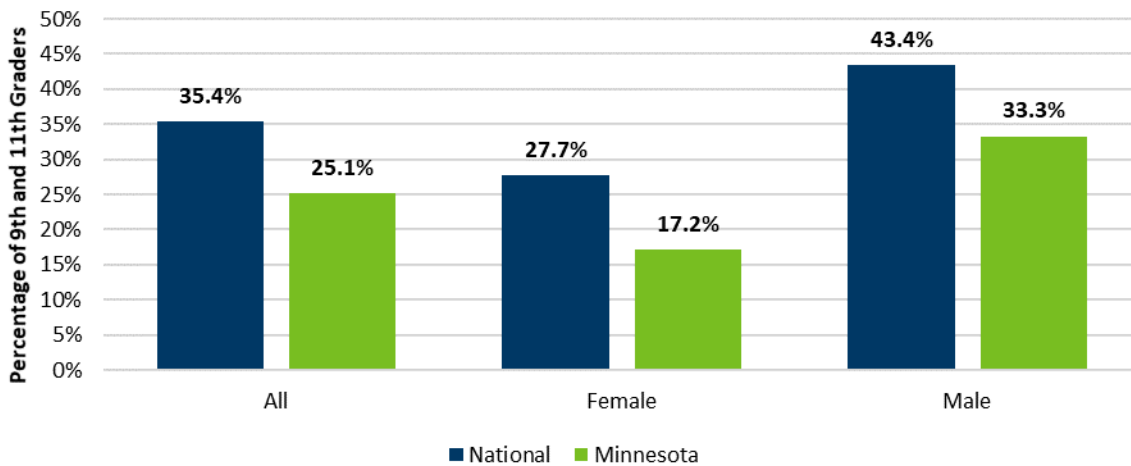


Source: 2019 MSS¹⁰; all differences in SSB consumption between groups are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

The results of the Minnesota Student Survey found that on average, 46.1% of Minnesota students in grades 5, 8, 9, and 11 have sugary drinks at least once per day. Students also have more sugary drinks as they get older, as shown in **Figure 1**.

The percentage of Minnesota boys having at least one sugary drink per day is nearly double that of girls*. This mirrors national trends, although at lower rates. (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2. 9th and 11th Graders Having Sugary Drinks At Least Once Per Day



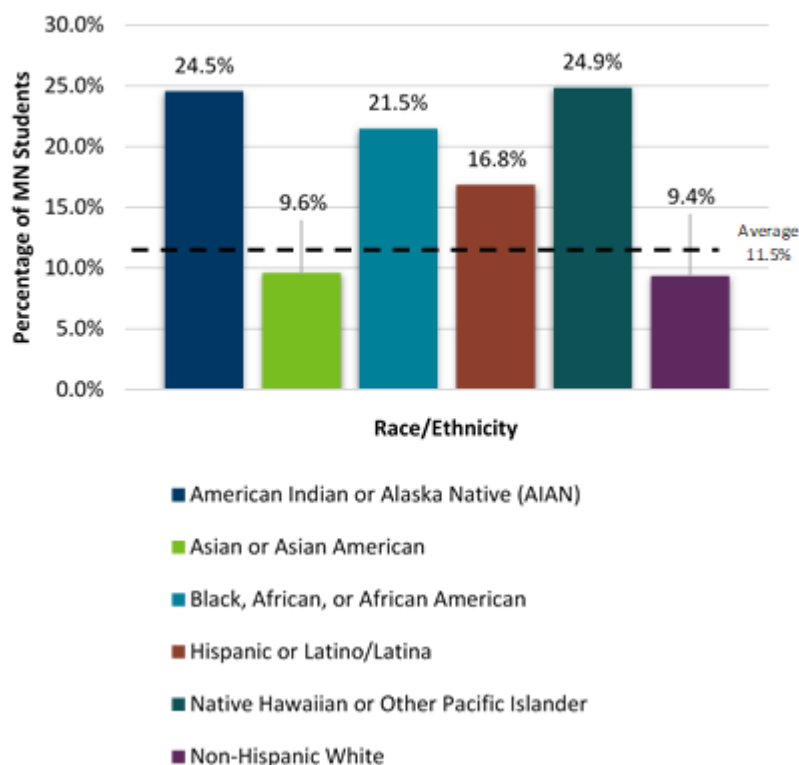
Source: 2019 MSS¹⁰, 2017¹¹ YRBS; all differences in SSB consumption between groups are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

* These data are based on answers to survey questions about biological sex only, and do not capture differences among different gender identities.

More than one in five American Indian, Black, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students have sugary drinks 3 or more times per day

The differences in the percentage of students having sugary drinks three or more times per day are particularly striking. American Indian or Alaskan Native; Black, African, or African American; and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students are approximately twice as likely to report having sugary drinks three or more times per day compared to the average for all students. Similarly, Hispanic or Latino/Latina students were nearly 50% more likely to report having sugary drinks three or more times per day compared to the average (Figure 3)[†].

Figure 3. Youth Having Sugary Drinks Three or More Times Per Day



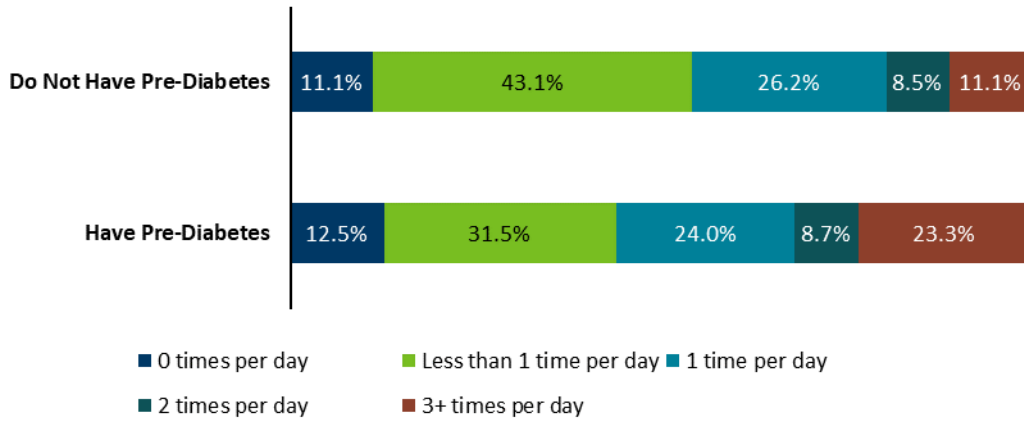
Source: 2019 MSS¹⁰; all differences in SSB consumption between groups are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Minnesota students with prediabetes are having more sugary drinks than their peers

Prediabetes is the condition in which blood sugar is too high, but not yet high enough to be considered type 2 diabetes. Students who reported having prediabetes also reported having sugary drinks more often than their peers. Among students who have been told they have prediabetes, 56% reported having sugary drinks at least once per day, compared to 45.8% of students who have not been told they have prediabetes. Furthermore, students with prediabetes were two times more likely to report having sugary drinks three or more times per day compared to students without prediabetes (Figure 4).

[†] Ideally, all Native and Indigenous people would be referred to by their tribal affiliations (e.g. Dakota, Ojibwe, etc.) which each have unique histories and cultures. Latinx is also currently preferred to the word “Hispanic.” However, this data brief uses the same racial and ethnic categories that were used in the data collection to reduce confusion for the reader.

Figure 4. Daily Sugary Drink Consumption by Students with Prediabetes

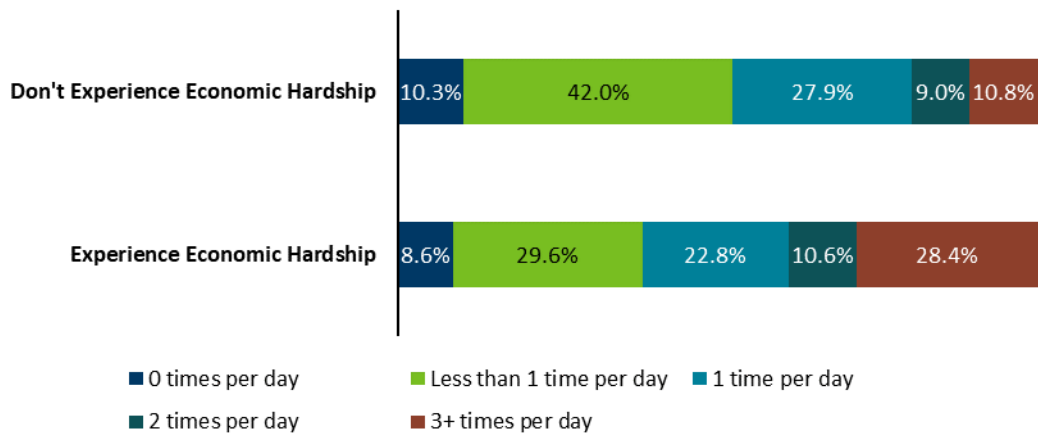


Source: 2019 MSS¹⁰; all differences in SSB consumption between groups are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Students from families experiencing economic hardship are more likely to have sugary drinks

The survey asked questions about economic hardship, which included questions about whether students and their families had to go without food or stay in a shelter. Students experiencing these types of hardships reported having sugary drinks more often than their peers. Most notably, 28.4% of students experiencing economic hardship reported having sugary drinks three or more times per day, while only 10.8% of their peers did the same (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Daily Sugary Drink Consumption by Students Experiencing Economic Hardship



Source: 2019 MSS¹⁰; all differences in SSB consumption between groups are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

We can all play a role in promoting healthy beverage choices

While nearly half of Minnesota youth are having a sugary drink at least once a day, students who reported experiencing economic hardship or students who identify as Black, youth of color, or American Indian are consuming sugary drinks more frequently. Sugary drink industry advertisements, which totaled over \$1 billion in the U.S. in 2018⁷, contribute to these disparities by aggressively targeting youth⁸, and youth from lower income communities and communities of color in particular⁹.

Communities can help make the healthy choice the easy choice for all Minnesota youth by taking the following actions:

- Educate children about the long-term risks of drinking sugary beverages and encourage them to choose water, low-fat milk, or soy milk[‡].
- Talk to your school and recreational facilities about limiting sugary drinks in vending machines, concessions, and at events.
- Encourage employers and public places to install water-filling stations to make it more convenient to fill up reusable water bottles or other containers.

Parents and caregivers can help make the healthy choice the easy choice for all Minnesota youth by taking the following actions:

- Make sure that water, low-fat milk, or soy milk are readily available at home.
- Make sugary drinks less available at home.
- Ask restaurants to offer water, low-fat milk, or soy milk as part of kids' meals.

[‡] Soy milk is recommended because it has a similar amount of protein to milk, compared to other milk alternatives.

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- ¹¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Questionnaire. Available at: www.cdc.gov/yrbs. Accessed on 2/20/2020.

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