Consumption of added sugars in Canada is often reported to be higher than data suggest. This occurs for several reasons, including incorrectly citing unadjusted national food supply (availability) data as actual consumption, using total sugars consumption to describe added sugars intakes, and citing US data when describing Canadian eating habits.

**Terminology**

- **Sugar** = sucrose (from sugar cane or sugar beet)
- **Sugars and syrups** (Statistics Canada category) = sugar and sugar syrups, maple syrup, and honey, but not corn sweeteners, e.g. high fructose corn syrup or glucose syrup
- **Added sugars** = all sugars added to foods, e.g. sugars and syrups, corn sweeteners, and other ingredients that act as a sweetener (e.g. concentrated fruit juice)
- **Sugars** = all monosaccharides and disaccharides

**Statistics Canada availability data**

- Statistics Canada publishes annual availability data on ‘sugars and syrups’ (i.e. sugar, honey and maple sugars), but not corn sweeteners [1] (Figure 1)
- Soft drink data provided an indirect estimate of corn sweetener availability (Figure 2)
- Consumption of added sugars was estimated by adjusting total availability of added sugars for retail, institutional and household losses

**CCHS nutrition survey data**

- In 2004, CCHS collected 24 hr dietary recall data from 35,000 Canadians [2]
- CCHS total sugars data were used to estimate added sugars consumption based on studies that have reported added sugars to account for approximately half of total sugars intake [3]
- Contribution of added sugars to total energy intake was also calculated using both availability data and CCHS data (Tables 1 & 2, respectively)

**Methods**

**Results**

**Added ‘Sugars and Syrups’ Consumption**

- Consumption of added ‘sugars and syrups’ as a percent of total energy has declined over the past 3 decades from 14% to 10% (Figure 1).
- This decline in part reflects the replacement of sugar (sucrose) by high fructose corn syrup in sweetened beverages; therefore total added sugars intake has been relatively stable in Canada over the last 30 years.

**Trends in Body Weight**

- Statistics Canada availability data is the only trend data for estimates of added sugars in Canada that has been completed only once.
- Trends in added ‘sugars and syrups’ consumption plotted against obesity rates show an inverse correlation (Figure 3).
- This is consistent with current scientific literature, which does not support an association between body mass index and sugars consumption [4].
- Other countries, including Australia, the UK, and the US have also shown similar trends [5,6].

**Table 1: CANADA ESTIMATED ENERGY AVAILABLE FROM TOTAL ADDED SUGARS, 2008, Statistics Canada**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sugars and syrups (kcal)</th>
<th>352</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soft drinks (HFCS) (kcal)</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total added sugars (kcal)</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total energy availability (kcal)</td>
<td>3572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Energy total added sugars</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Overestimate as does not correct for diet soft drinks (i.e., all soft drinks are considered caloric). Abbreviations: HFCS = high fructose corn syrup.

**Table 2: CCHS 2004 SELF-REPORTED INTAKES OF CARBOHYDRATES AND SUGARS FOR CANADIAN ADULTS (19+ yrs)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Energy (kcal/day)</th>
<th>Total Carbohydrates (% energy)</th>
<th>Total Sugars (g/day)</th>
<th>Total Sugars (kcal/day)</th>
<th>Total Sugars (% energy)</th>
<th>Added Sugars (% energy est)</th>
<th>Added Sugars (g/day est)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1775</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2420</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Average</td>
<td>2065</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on estimation that added sugars comprise approximately half of total sugars (3). Abbreviations: est = estimate

**Conclusions & Significance**

- **Added sugars consumption in Canada is not increasing, contrary to common perception**
- **Estimated added sugars consumption in Canada is:**
  - 10-13% of total energy
  - Approximately 53 g/day
  - Stable or modestly declining as a % of total energy
  - Substantially below US levels

**References**


The Nutrition Information Service is managed by qualified nutrition professionals including registered dietitians and nutrition researchers and is guided by a Scientific Advisory Council.