

## STUDY

Changes in Dutch non-alcoholic drinks consumption

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# Increased water intake **does not replace softdrink intake**

*The intake of non-alcoholic beverages has changed quite a bit in recent decades. We drink a lot more water. But Food Consumption Surveys since 1988 show that it is milk, not soft drinks, that we're replacing.*

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Figure 1: Average intake of non-alcoholic beverages, milk and dairy drinks, and plant-based drinks in the Netherlands, according to the Dutch National Food Consumption Survey between 1988 and 2021 (ml/day). Source: Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)

Based on the most recent Dutch National Food Consumption Survey (DNFCS) - performed by the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment - it can be said that the Dutch drink 1.8 liters of non-alcoholic beverages per day. Non-alcoholic beverages include fruit and other syrups, soft drinks, coffee, tea, water, fruit and vegetable juices and alcohol-free beer and spirits. Excluded from this group are dairy beverages and all plant-based drinks that can replace milk according to the Netherlands Nutrition Centre’s definition, such as fortified soy milk. The average Dutch person drinks 181 ml of dairy and 13 ml of plant-based beverages. Tea intake per day is 242 ml and coffee intake 335 ml. These numbers are based on the latest DNFCS 2019-2021.

### Soft drinks, juice and water

Figure 1 shows the changes in the consumption of non-alcoholic beverages (excluding coffee and tea), dairy and plant-based beverages since 1988, according to the DNFCS. A very positive trend is

the increase in water consumption. This has risen almost sevenfold over the last 30 years. Drinking water has become the norm. There have also been active policies to encourage water intake. For instance, water taps have been set up in schools and public places, and water consumption is proactively communicated. The aim of this policy is to discourage the consumption of soft drinks (and juice). However, we do not see this reflected in successive surveys. Along with the increase in water consumption, soft drink and juice consumption also grew. Between 1988 and 2007, soft drink intake more than tripled, from 110 to 357 ml. Only the latest survey shows a slight drop in soft drink consumption.

### Decline in milk consumption

Since the 2007 survey, dairy beverage intake has been decreasing by an average 5 ml per year. This has not been offset by other dairy products, as total dairy intake also decreased in recent years, now averaging 329 grams per day. The decline in total dairy is mainly due to a drop in the consumption of milk. Current average intake is now lower than the Wheel of Five

recommendation. It is often assumed that the decline in milk intake is offset by plant-based drinks that present themselves as dairy alternatives. Looking at the survey results, this too does not appear to be the case. According to the latest DNFCS, the intake of plant-based beverages is 13 ml. That is a fraction of the total drop in milk consumption.

### Conclusion

The survey reveals a favorable and positive trend in water consumption, but set against non-alcoholic, milk and plant-based beverages intake, this increase has not led to lower soft drink consumption. Both the DNFCS and market data indicate that the increase in water consumption has not caused soft drink consumption to go down. It appears that water is mainly a competitor to milk. This is not ideal, since milk is an important source of essential nutrients and is included in the Wheel of Five.