

# Greater availability of non-alcoholic drinks may reduce alcohol consumption

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People are more likely to opt for non-alcoholic drinks if there are more of them available than alcoholic drinks, according to a study published in the open access journal *BMC Public Health*.

A team of researchers at the NIHR Bristol Biomedical Research Centre, and the Universities of Bristol and Cambridge, UK found that when

presented with eight drink options, participants were 48% more likely to choose a non-alcoholic drink when the proportion of non-alcoholic drink options increased from four (50%) to six (75%). When the proportion of non-alcoholic drink options decreased from four to two (25%), participants were 46% less likely to choose a non-alcoholic drink.

Dr. Anna Blackwell, the corresponding author said: "Alcohol consumption is among the top five risk factors for disease globally. Previous research has shown that increasing the availability of healthier food options can increase their selection and consumption relative to less [healthy food](#). To our knowledge, this is the first study to demonstrate that increasing the availability of non-[alcoholic drinks](#), relative to alcoholic drinks in an online scenario, can increase their selection."

Participants in the study completed an online task in which they were presented with a selection of alcoholic beer, non-alcoholic beer and soft-drinks. The drink selections included four alcoholic and four non-alcoholic drinks, six alcoholic and two non-alcoholic drinks or two alcoholic and six non-alcoholic drinks. 808 UK residents with an average age of 38 years who regularly consumed alcohol participated in the study.

When presented with mostly non-alcoholic drinks, 49% of participants selected a non-alcoholic drink, compared to 26% of participants who selected a non-alcoholic drink when presented with mostly alcoholic drinks. These results were consistent regardless of the time participants had to make their decision, indicating that the findings were not dependent on the amount of time and attention participants were able to devote to their drink choice. The findings suggest that interventions to encourage healthier food and drink choices may be most effective when changing the relative availability of healthier and less-healthy options.

Anna Blackwell said: "Many licensed venues already offer several non-

alcoholic options but these are often stored out of direct sight, for example in low-level fridges behind the bar. Our results indicate that making these non-alcoholic products more visible to customers may influence them to make healthier choices. The market for alcohol-free beer, wine and spirit alternatives is small but growing and improving the selection and promotion of non-alcoholic drinks in this way could provide an opportunity for licensed venues to reduce [alcohol consumption](#) without losing revenue."

The authors caution that as the study measured hypothetical drink selection online, results may differ in real-world settings. Further studies are needed to determine how the relative availability of non-alcoholic and alcoholic drinks impacts the purchasing and consumption of alcohol in real life.

**More information:** "The impact on selection of non-alcoholic vs alcoholic drink availability: an online experiment" *BMC Public Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.1186/s12889-020-08633-5](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-08633-5)

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