

Kerry research shows that long-term health concerns are motivating consumers in Asia to reduce sugar in diets

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New global consumer research from Kerry, a global leader in taste and nutrition, reveals that consumers are concerned about the long-term negative effects of high sugar intake. Health, with a focus on improving immunity, gut health and mental wellness, are primary reasons why consumers are taking steps to cut back on how much sugar they consume.

In Southeast Asia, as many as 86% of respondents are concerned about overconsumption of sugar leading to diabetes, more than 70% want to cut their sugar intake to enjoy quality of life, while 62% are doing so to avoid potential health issues. A total of 82% of global consumers agree that reduced sugar products are healthier.

The findings were revealed in Kerry's worldwide Sensibly Sweet survey conducted among more than 12,000 consumers across 24 countries including Europe, North America, Australia, Saudi Arabia, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and South Africa.

Kerry's study in Southeast Asia revealed three consumer profiles around sugar and sweetness perception: the Reduced Sugar Seeker, Zero Sugar Advocates, and the Taste Chaser. At 47%, the Reduced Sugar Seeker makes up the largest consumer segment, citing a healthier lifestyle as their key motivation in cutting back on sugar.

The Taste Chaser, the second largest consumer segment in Southeast Asia, revealed the most interesting finding. They prefer not to consume reduced or zero sugar products to avoid the negative health effects of artificial sweeteners as well as the poor taste and sensorial experience that often come with it. Their preference is to eat in moderation; however, they are open to reduced or low sugar products, particularly in indulgent categories like ice cream or coffee beverages, if they taste good.

Sugar has long been at the centre of the taste-versus-nutrition debate. However, post-pandemic perceptions are reframing the way people think about sweetened food and drinks, ultimately changing their relationship with sugar. A large majority of

respondents in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, prefer natural sweeteners. Those who do not like artificial sweeteners say they are bad for health and have harmful side effects. Most expressed a desire for plant-derived sweeteners in the future. Besides honey and sugar, there is high preference for stevia, followed by jaggery, palm sugar and fructose.