



PRESS RELEASE

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Obesity maps show inequalities and patchy policies

A series of maps published this week by the World Obesity Federation show the extraordinary disparities in obesity prevalence across different social groups, according to household incomes and to educational attainment. They also show wide variation in the implementation of policies and community actions.

Looking at both children and adults, dramatic contrasts are found in the likelihood of overweight and obesity with lower levels being found in higher income and better educated families compared with families with lower incomes and poorer education. In Spain, for example, just 27% of women in higher income levels are overweight or obese, while the figure rises to 51% among women in lower income households. Similar contrasts are found among women in Austria, while in Slovakia the level of overweight and obesity rises to 65% among women in lower income households.

Similar trends can be found in many countries for children. The maps show French children aged 3-14 years are more than twice as likely to be overweight if they live in households with poorly educated parents compared with children in households with well-educated parents. Worryingly in Scotland morbid obesity in children increases by three- to five-fold among children in the most deprived families compared with children in better-off households.

Across most of Europe, the figures show less contrast between men in different income and educational groups than they do among women and children.

The maps also show which countries have national policies to address the drivers of obesity, and which countries have active community interventions to tackle obesity, especially in lower income neighbourhoods. Some countries are tackling advertising of junk food to children directly, while others rely on voluntary measures offered by some of the food companies. With respect to community-based projects, some countries have many initiatives while others appear to have only one or two.

"We have trawled through hundreds of websites and collected materials from many databases," said World Obesity's research chief, Rachel Jackson-Leach. "If you click on the maps you will find descriptions of the material we have found and links through to their sources. The maps will prove an invaluable 'one stop' resource for researchers and analysts, both now and in the future as they continue to evolve."

URL: Obesity inequalities maps: <http://www.worldobesity.org/resources/>

Policy and intervention maps: <http://www.worldobesity.org/resources/policies-and-interventions/>

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The construction of the maps benefited from an operational grant given by the European Community under the Third Health Programme. The data presented in the maps are based on surveys collated by the World Obesity Federation; the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of these data.