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## The global obesity pandemic: shaped by global drivers and local environments

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### Summary

The simultaneous increases in obesity in almost all countries seem to be driven mainly by changes in the global food system, which is producing more processed, affordable, and effectively marketed food than ever before. This passive overconsumption of energy leading to obesity is a predictable outcome of market economies predicated on consumption-based growth. The global food system drivers interact with local environmental factors to create a wide variation in obesity prevalence between populations. Within populations, the interactions between environmental and individual factors, including genetic makeup, explain variability in body size between individuals. However, even with this individual variation, the epidemic has predictable patterns in subpopulations. In low-income countries, obesity mostly affects middle-aged adults (especially women) from wealthy, urban environments; whereas in high-income countries

it affects both sexes and all ages, but is disproportionately greater in disadvantaged groups. Unlike other major causes of preventable death and disability, such as tobacco use, injuries, and infectious diseases, there are no exemplar populations in which the obesity epidemic has been reversed by public health measures. This absence increases the urgency for evidence-creating policy action, with a priority on reduction of the supply-side drivers.



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