

# Obesity as a growing social norm

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From a philosophical point of view, we cannot reconcile a world in which so many people are suffering from malnutrition and starving for want a few grains and yet others are killing themselves through obesity.

Now, L. Manning of the Food Policy and Management Food Science

and Agri-Food Supply Chain Management at Harper Adams University, in Newport, Shropshire, and J. Kelly of the Aston Business School at Aston University, in Birmingham, UK, discuss how we might locate the social responsibility for obesity in the context of evolving norms.

Writing in the *International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development*, the team suggests that most countries have experienced a significant increase in the incidence of obesity in their general population over the last two decades. "Indeed, the condition is now so common, commentators conclude that obesity has become normalized and no longer attracts social opprobrium," the team writes.

Obesity comes with many morbidities and an increased risk of premature death due to a greater incidence of many serious health conditions. Governments and regulators have looked at how individuals should become responsible for their own health but have also applied pressure to food and drink manufacturers to take some of the responsibility for providing citizens with healthier choices. But, are individual and [social responsibility](#) the appropriate response to what is a growing crisis, especially as being overweight or obese is increasingly seen as normal despite the health effects.

The notions of gluttony and sloth are often raised in discussions of [obesity](#), but these are at odds with a more enlightened view of the problem that looks at vulnerability that arises through a range of social and [economic factors](#) influence an individual's ability to make an informed choice about what they eat and drink, exercise, and their tendency to gaining weight to a problematic degree.

**More information:** L. Manning et al. Obesity: locating social responsibility in the context of evolving norms, *International Journal of Innovation and Sustainable Development* (2019). [DOI: 10.1504/IJISD.2020.104241](#)

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