

The role of globalisation in obesity: a cross-country analysis

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Abstract

Anecdotal and descriptive evidence has led to the claim that globalization plays a major role in inducing overweight and obesity in developing countries, but robust quantitative evidence is scarce. We therefore undertook extensive econometric analyses using a series of new proxies for different dimensions of globalization potentially affecting overweight in about 790,000 women aged 15-49 from 244 Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) in 56 countries between 1991-2009. After controlling for relevant individual and country level factors, globalization substantially and significantly increases the individual propensity to be overweight. Surprisingly, political and social globalization dominate the influence of the economic dimension. Hence, more consideration needs to be given to the forms of governance required to shape a more health-oriented globalization process.