

Box 2 – Societal factors that affect obesity

The International Obesity Task Force has created a model to delineate the major macroeconomic factors that affect obesity. It is important to emphasise that many of the major decisions set in place over the decades related to agricultural research, food trade and related factors affect the relative prices of the foodstuffs available today. Countries have designed their nation's infrastructure partially around certain models, which include an emphasis on cheap and available sugar, corn and soybeans and other grains, and oilseeds used to feed animal-source foods, and inexpensive access to beef, pork, fish, and poultry and eggs. The same can be said to exist for the development of technologies to allow us to be more sedentary. Mankind has seen a distinct focus on improving the variety and tastiness of our food and on reducing our physical effort at travel, work and leisure. Highlighted here (in Fig. 2) are some of the sectors that distinctly affect diet, activity and obesity.

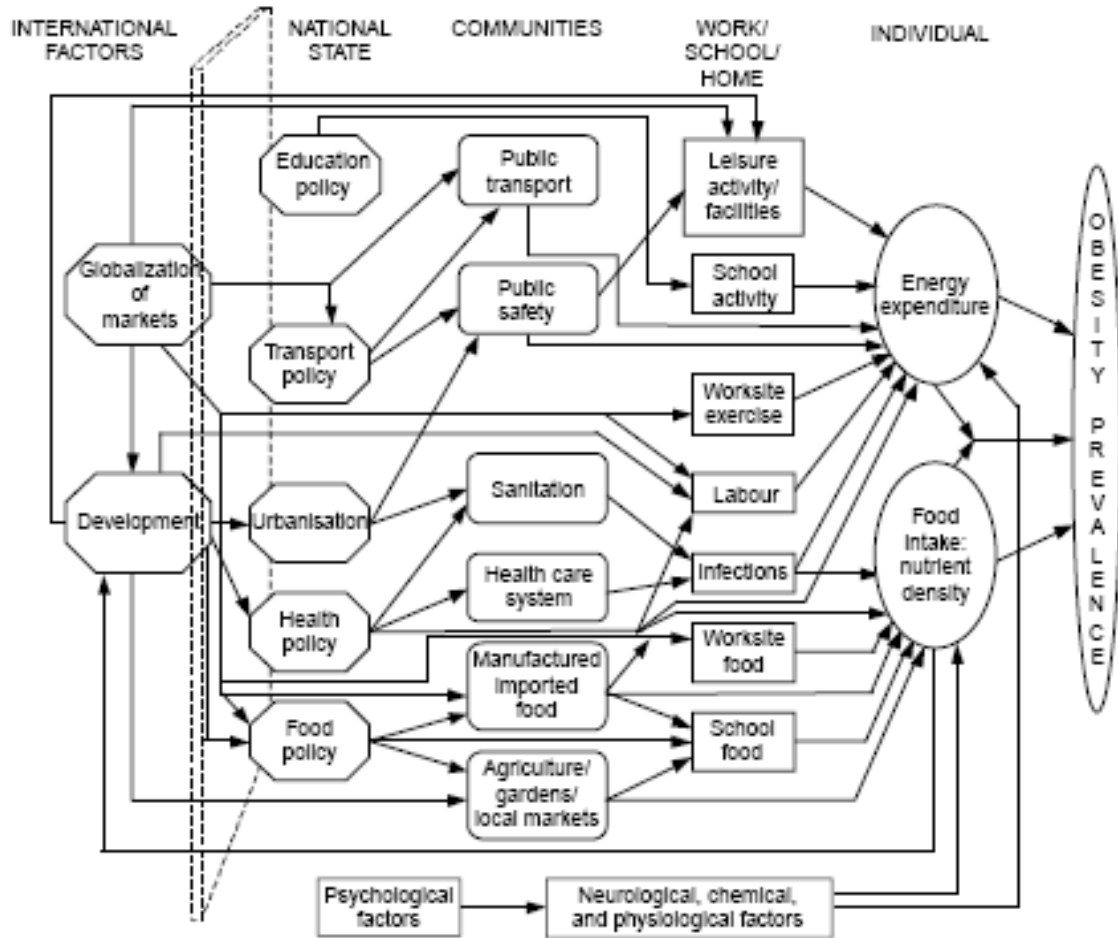


Fig. 2 Causal web of societal influences on the prevalence of obesity. Source: International Obesity Task Force website; figure developed by C Ritenbaugh, S Kumanyika, A Morabia, R Jeffrey and V Antipatis, 1999