

O. Daute u. J. Knoppik Q1

Diet and the gap between the poor and the rich

The food and drinks we consume every day are the chemical foundation of our existence. It does not matter whether it is a fresh salad or a sugary dessert. This nourishment gives us what we need to live and our body builds our own cells with its components. Thus, food is absolutely essential and has a big influence on our bodily and psychological wellbeing.

On our planet people in vastly different cultures have existed on a plethora of different combinations of food for all of human existence. For example, rice is mostly eaten in the Asian regions of the earth due to the climatic conditions it needs to flourish, despite it being also appreciated by European cuisine. In Portugal however, which is located at the bays of the Iberian peninsula that are very rich in fish, they use said fish as a staple of their diet.

Regardless of the foods themselves there is a wide range of customs and behaviours which also vary from culture to culture. For example, there are many different forms of table manners, the place of food consumption and the way how they are consumed (on the go, with the family, alone, etc.)

But there are not only differences between nationalities, cultures or geographic areas. Even within a single nation or culture there can be tremendous differences between different groups. The most distinctive example for a difference between groups would be that of rich and poor.

The socio-economic status of an individual seems to be one of the most important factors that influence the human diet. This is especially important when talking on the topic of obesity, because in this comparison a clear difference between the wealthy and the poor becomes evident.

Obesity is a serious problem of our current age. For the first time in our history, there are now more people suffering from obesity than the symptoms of food deprivation. And the number of obese people is steadily growing all across the world. Obesity has been proven to be linked to cancer, cardiac diseases, strokes and high blood pressure among other symptoms and is therefore a huge public health risk.

When observing a group of young people at the age of 11 to 17 years, one can clearly see that some of those individuals are suffering from obesity. When sorting the groups based on their economic status, one can see that young males belonging to the upper class suffer from obesity at a rate of around 12%. Girls from the same group are even less likely to be obese at a rate of 10%. When comparing those young people to those that belong to the lower economic class it is immediately evident that the poorer people suffer from obesity at a far higher rate than their wealthier counterparts. Young men are obese at a rate of 22% in those economic circumstances while women have an obesity rate of a towering 25% which constitutes an increase of 15% more than doubling the previous amount. Here it is also important to notice that women seem to suffer to an even greater degree than men when looking at the rate of obesity.

It is also crucial to realize that the eating behaviour which is learned in the early stages of one's life is very hard to dispense with when a person is older. This hints at the fact that the solution should maybe target the early stages of development of a person.

Looking outside of the European continent, the U.S.A also shows the link between poverty and obesity. In the states where the worst economic situation prevails, the rate of obesity is significantly increased. There are 7 U.S. states which hold both titles of one of the poorest and most obese states at the same time.