

Conference sub-theme:

- Healthy and resilient populations, just and equitable food systems
- Economic: Resourcing and creative solutions

Abstract title: The weight of society: a comprehensive approach to socioeconomic inequalities in obesity

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Introduction: Targeting individual determinants have failed to curb the global obesity epidemic. Structural determinants of health have, in turn, the potential to condition the development of obesity. Obesity is socially patterned, affecting disproportionately the less advantaged groups. Socioeconomic inequalities in obesity were described in Europe, but robust evidence on this topic is still lacking in Portugal.

Methods: We aim to provide a comprehensive research approach to socioeconomic inequalities in obesity, analysing local, national, and international contexts. Three studies will be conducted to investigate socioeconomic inequalities in obesity at individual and contextual levels: 1) to examine age, cohort, and period effects in three population-based cohorts from Porto; 2) to study time trends to predict future trends of obesity and estimate their economic costs in Portugal, according to different socioeconomic groups; and 3) to compare socioeconomic inequalities in six European countries with different macroeconomic context through a multilevel approach.

Results: As expected results, this work will enlighten the social determinants of obesity in Portugal, and position Portugal within the international context. It will contribute to understanding how structural factors affect the timing and evolution of socioeconomic inequalities in obesity. The analysis of national time trends will provide historical context on the evolution of the problem, and the projection of future obesity trends according to different socioeconomic scenarios has the potential to inform health policies. Also, describing the economic costs of obesity by socioeconomic groups will illustrate whether the vulnerable groups pay more due to obesity than the less vulnerable.

Conclusion: This work will quantify the magnitude of socioeconomic inequalities in obesity in Portugal, and potentially contribute shift obesity prevention strategies from an individual to a societal level, with a higher potential to curb obesity burden and inequity.