

[An interesting explanation of obesity](#) [1]

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Obesity is on the rise amongst UK teenagers. Present figures suggest that 30 percent of boys and 26 percent of girls are obese according to their BMI (Body Mass Index), with the Department of Health predicting a rise of up to 6 percent for both sexes.

Many ideas have been put forth as to why this is happening. Most recently, a study by Stephanie von Hinke Kessler Scholder [found](#) [3] that having a working mother is detrimental to a child's weight. Ms Scholder's main finding was that there is a high incidence of obesity in children at 16 where their mothers are in full time work between the ages of 5-7. With the mother spending time away from parenting, the child effectively controls its own diet and the choices it makes tend to be unhealthy. This is also the case with childcare and schooling, both of which fail to give adequate time to the child's nutritional needs. And while there is no immediate affect on the child's weight, a poor diet aged 5-7 sets an apparent precedent that ends in 16-year olds being obese.

Working mothers should be applauded. They boost the economy and significantly reduce child poverty. It is unfortunate that there may be an externality to this that affects their offspring's health, but this is an issue that should be addressed. Ideally, women should be able to provide for their children while enjoying flexible working hours (as well as support from their partners). There seems to be a degree of political consensus around this at the moment. However, in a 21st Century economy there is no need for government intervention to bring this about. Flexible working hours legislation, for example, is unnecessary; businesses and their employees should have the freedom and the rationale to draw up their contracts accordingly.

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