

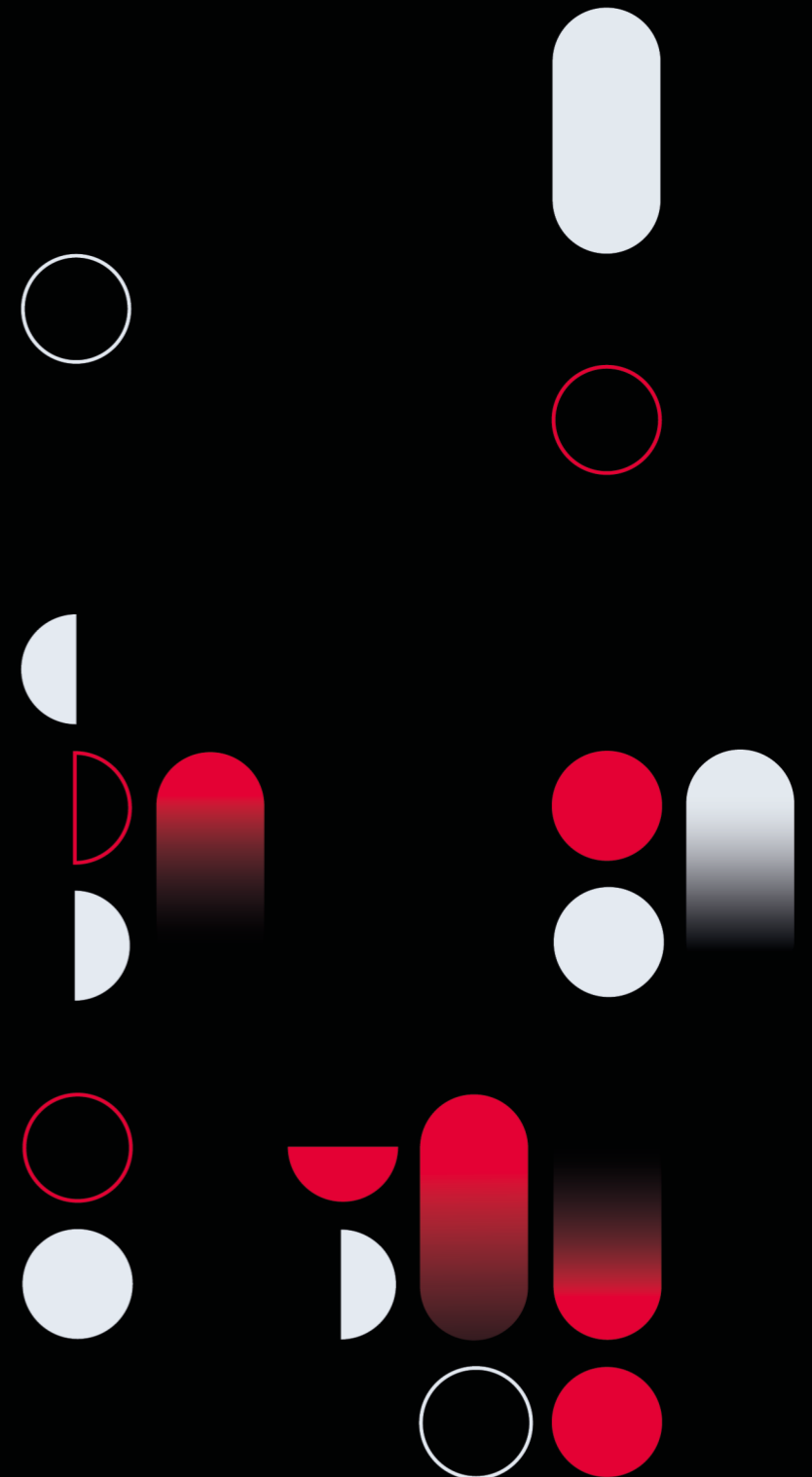
Does Childhood Obesity Hinder Human Capital Development?

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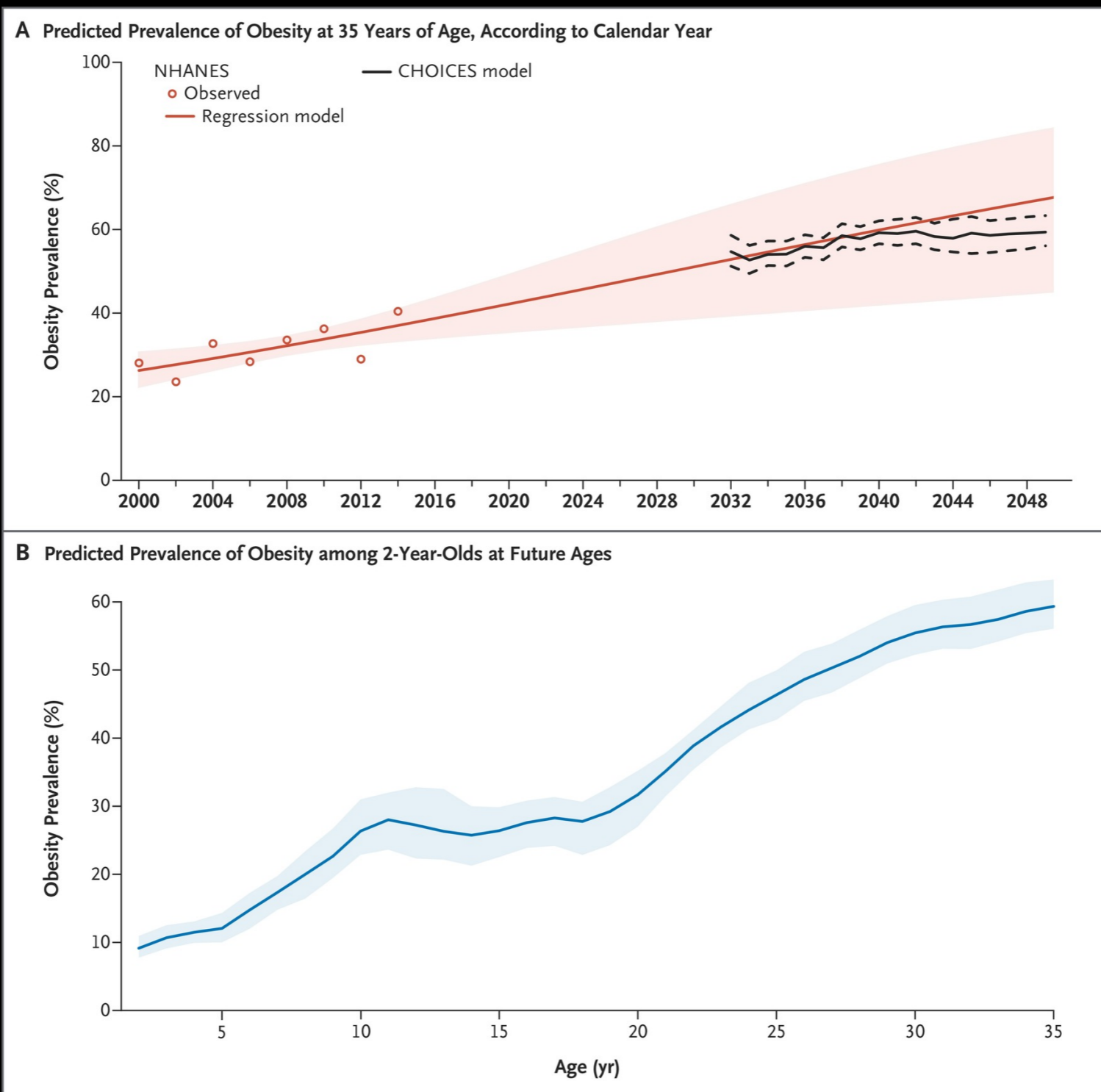
Gastein, European Health Forum, 4th October 2018



Obesity: a Key Public Health Challenge of Our Times

- Obesity is a marker for behavioural and social factors linked with chronic diseases throughout the life course
- Childhood obesity not only about childhood
- US study predicts that 57% of current children will be obese at age 35, half of this prevalence will occur during childhood (*Ward et al., 2017*)
- Childhood obesity is a social phenomenon, impacts from and on family and household functioning
- “*our current knowledge of the causal impacts of obesity on [education, labour market and social] outcomes is limited at best*”

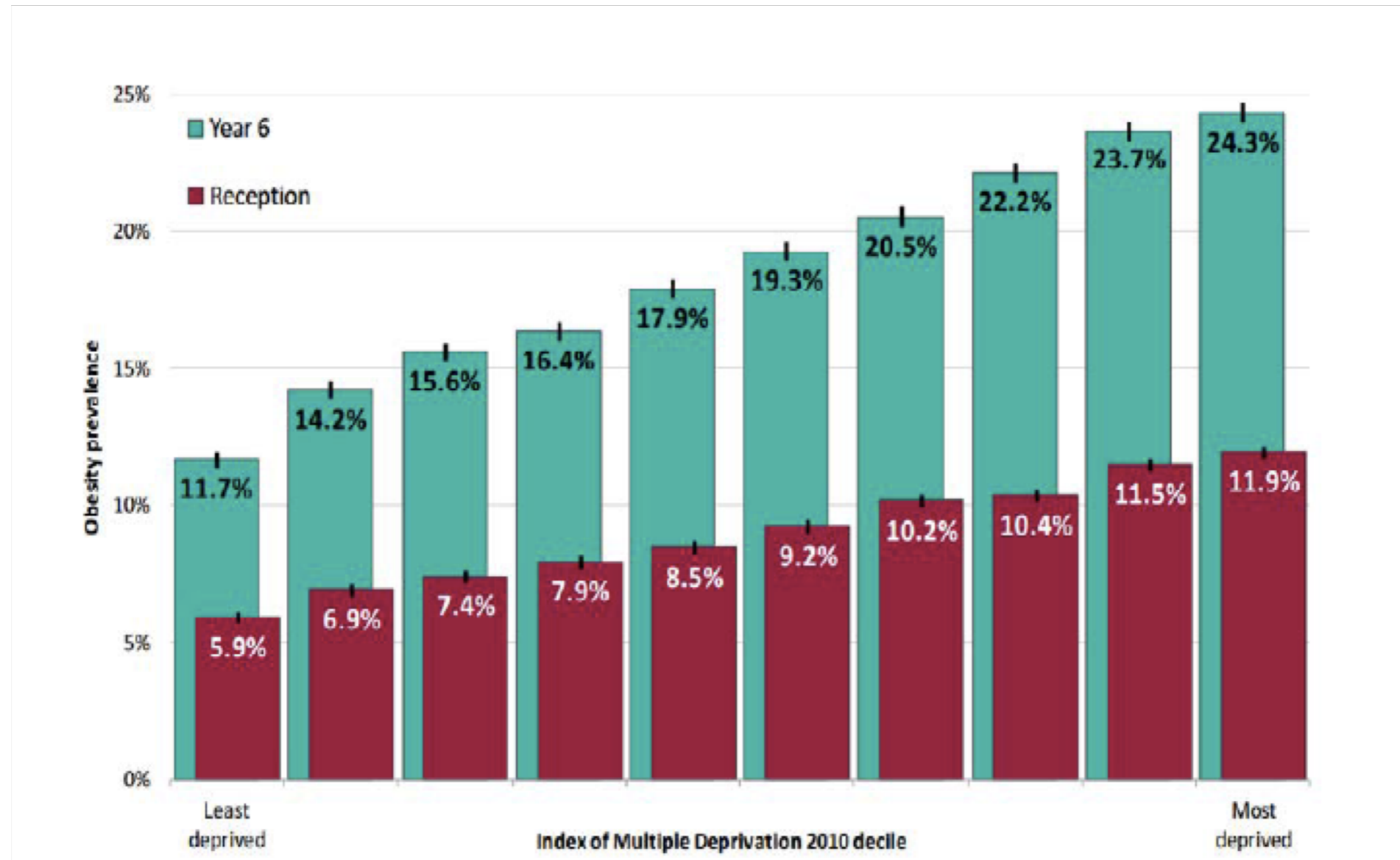
Predicted Prevalence of Obesity at the Age of 35 Years.



Ward ZJ et al. N Engl J Med 2017;377:2145-2153



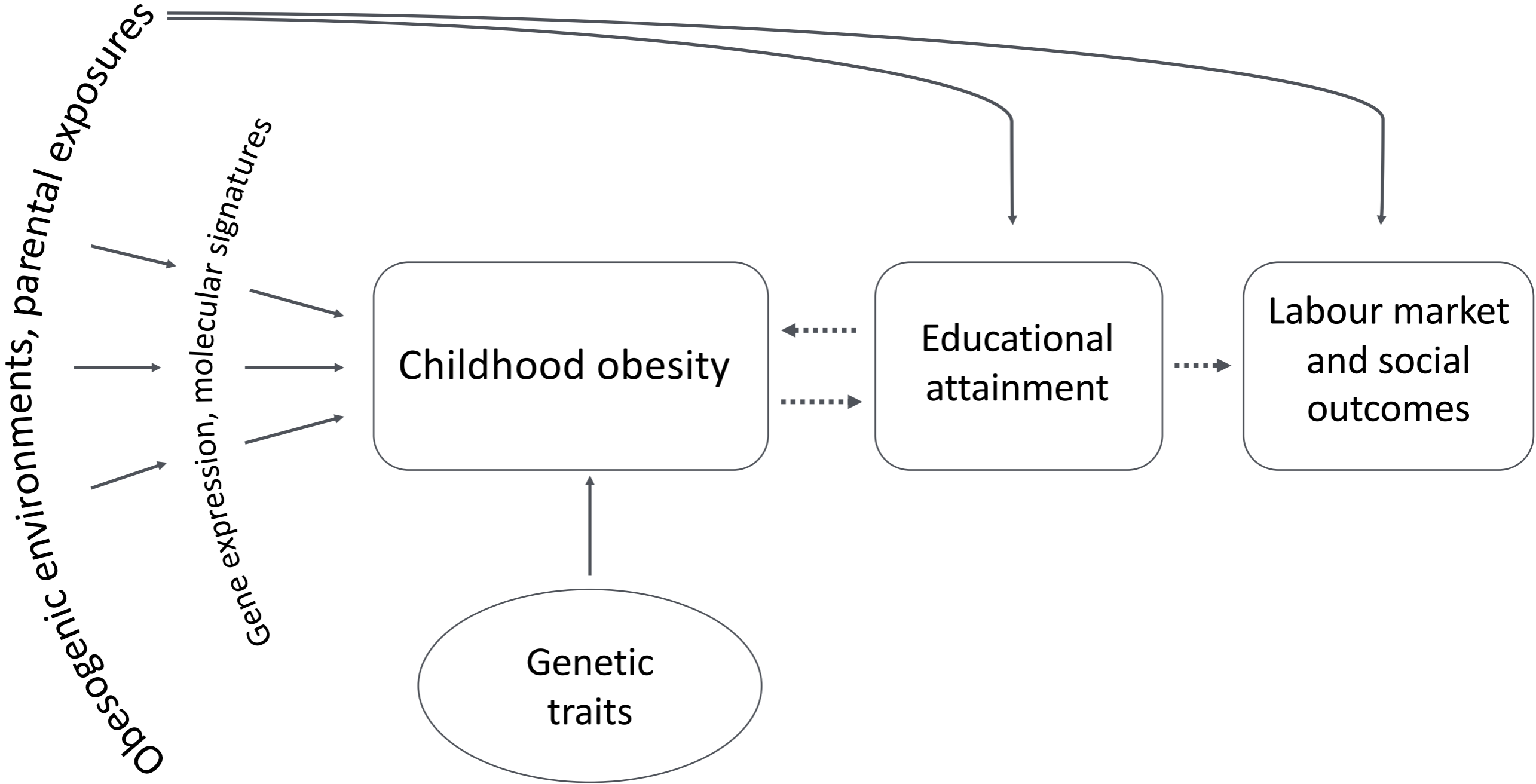
Childhood Obesity Strongly Associated with SES in UK



An Important, and Yet Unanswered, Question

- Substantial work on **adult obesity** and labour outcomes: obesity affects employment, wages, sick leave, early retirement
 - Causal links identified (*Lindeboom et al., 2009; Morris, 2006, 2007; Font et al., 2010; Cawley, 2004; Devaux & Sassi, 2015*)
 - Adult obesity causally linked with 5 socioeconomic outcomes in UK Biobank data (Tyrrell et al., 2016).
- **Childhood obesity**: detrimental impact on girls' educational attainment in correlation study based on ALSPAC (*Booth et al., 2014*)
- Systematic review (*Martin et al., 2017; 31 studies, 17 cohorts*): increasing evidence from longitudinal studies but mostly based on correlations

The Project's Conceptual Framework



The Economic and Social Outcomes of Childhood Obesity

Educational achievement:

- cognitive achievement (test scores from assessments)
- educational attainment (highest qualification obtained)

Employment and earnings:

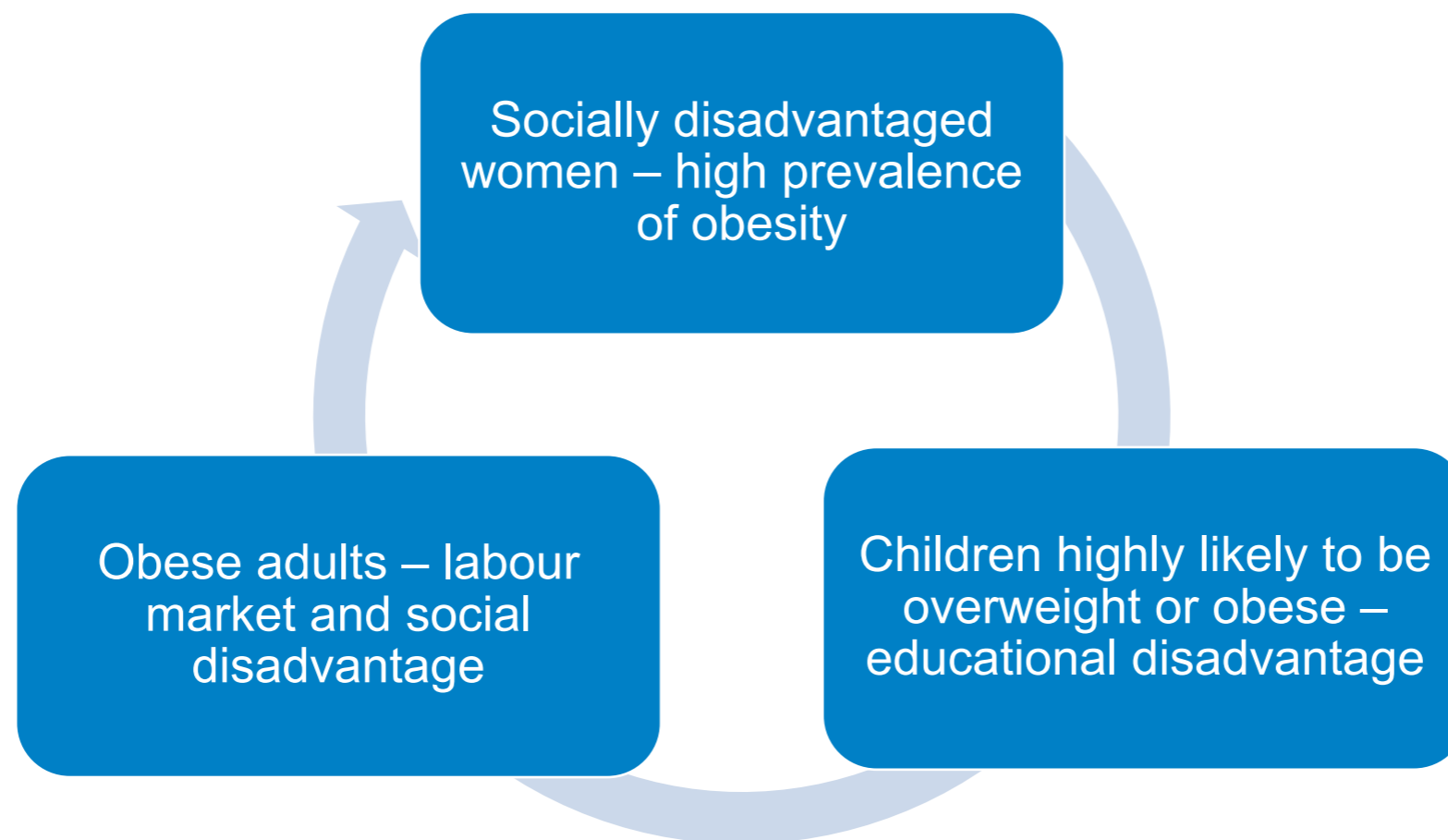
- whether in employment
- occupation (official occupational UK classification)
- individual earnings

Civic participation:

- taking part activities organisations
- trust other people
- voting in last general election

Childhood Obesity Impacts over the Life Course

- Can we break the vicious circle linking obesity, ill-health and social disadvantage across generations, and mitigate its burden on women?



Understanding Impacts over the Life Course

- Impacts of early-onset obesity vs. adolescent obesity
- Impacts on educational outcomes at different points in time
- Labour and social outcomes at different life stages
- Impacts of childhood-onset obesity vs. adult-onset obesity

Policy Relevance and Potential Impacts

If project succeeds in demonstrating causal impacts of childhood obesity, twofold policy implications:

- Strengthen childhood obesity prevention through:
 - Government action in health care, public health, education, transport, environment, sport, media
 - health professionals
 - industry
 - NGOs and other civil society
- Mitigate the impacts of childhood obesity through government policies, health professionals, employers, civil society