

## **Cultural selection and human food preferences**

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### **Abstract**

Genes and culture co-evolve to determine variations in dietary habits. Our evolutionary heritage regarding food choice and food preferences is responsible for the mismatch with the food environments we have created, which leads to problems such as overweight and obesity. Several hypotheses have attempted to explain the high rate of obesity present in today's world. The "thrifty genotype" hypothesis (TGH) suggested that obesity today is a throwback to our ancestors having undergone positive selection for genes that favored energy storage. The "drifty genotype" hypothesis contends that the prevalence of thrifty genes is not a result of positive selection for energy-storage genes but, rather, is attributable to genetic drift resulting from the removal of predatory selection pressures. Both hypotheses focus on environmental changes over time, positive selection and genetic drift. While genetics plays a significant role, we believe that cultural selection is also responsible for the spread of obesogenic phenomena in Albania. The high rates of overweight and obesity among Albanians today can be explained as a mismatch between our evolutionary past and maladaptive behaviors.

**Key words:** cultural selection, human food preferences, obesity, overweight, Albania.