

## The role of social eating norms in portion size-related behaviour in Denmark and Island of Ireland

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**Purpose:** Social norms influence eating behaviour, but little is known about their role in portion size-related behaviour. This study explored the role of social eating norms in Denmark (DK) and the Island of Ireland (IOI) in relation to portion size-related behaviour.

**Methods:** In a survey DK (n=1063) and IOI (n=1012) respondents rated social eating norms (11 items) and portion size-related behaviour (3 items) on a 7-point scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). The 3 items relate to: 1) anticipating how much will be eaten at the beginning of a meal, 2) clearing the plate, and 3) clearing the plate even when full. Socio-demographics and eating attitudes (e.g. cognitive restraint) were measured as background variables.

**Results:** Two social eating factors were identified: the 'limit intake' norm (6 items) and the 'plate cleaning' norm (3 items). The DK participants reported stronger 'limit intake' norms and weaker 'plate cleaning' norms than IOI. In both countries females reported stronger 'limit intake' norms while males reported stronger 'plate cleaning' norms. In DK, age was positively correlated with both social eating norm factors. The 'limit intake' norm had stronger association with anticipating how much will be eaten at the beginning of a meal, but the 'plate cleaning' norm had stronger association with clearing the plate. Only the 'plate cleaning' norm was associated with clearing the plate even when full.

**Conclusions:** The social eating norms vary significantly between countries and genders. The 'limit intake' and 'plate cleaning' norms play a role in consumers' reported portion size-related behaviour.

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