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Awareness and portion size: individuals appear to be more aware of the influence of larger portions than previously thought.

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There is reliable evidence that larger portions lead to increased energy intake. It has been suggested that individuals are unaware of the influence that large portion sizes have on the amount of food they consume. The current study sought to determine whether individuals are able to identify the influence that larger portions have on their food intake. Participants (n = 40) were provided with a fixed-sized lunch and then a large portion of ice-cream. They rated how much they intended to consume of the ice-cream before eating as much of the portion as desired. After the meal, participants reported to what extent they believed they had been influenced by the size of the portion and reasons why they felt they had or had not been influenced. The majority of participants (65.7%) believed that they had been influenced by the size of the portion they received. Critically, these beliefs also appeared to reflect behaviour, as participants who believed they had been influenced by portion size tended to have eaten more ice cream. These findings suggest that consumers may be more aware of external influences on their food intake than previously assumed.