

## EDUCATION: 10,563 ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES

**Addressing obesity can significantly improve educational attainment, as studies highlight a positive relationship between healthy weight and academic performance:**

- Obesity is linked to chronic systemic inflammation<sup>72</sup>. Inflammation in brain tissue can worsen memorization skills. Although confounding variables may be at play, students living with obesity have been found to have higher dropout rates<sup>73</sup>
- By mitigating obesity-related health issues and boosting self-confidence, weight loss interventions help students remain committed to their studies. This can decrease the dropout rate in the KSA (currently rates are at 30-35%),

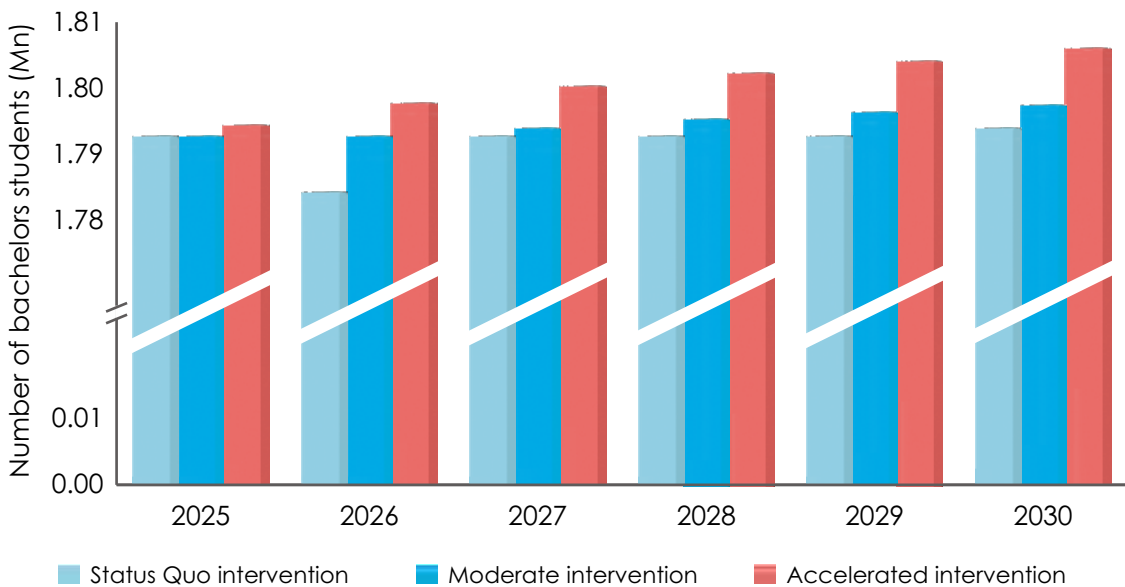
ensuring that more individuals complete their education and are prepared to contribute to the workforce<sup>74</sup>.

Increasing educational outcomes in the KSA is a key priority for the government's Vision 2030, and it is actively working to increase the number of skilled graduates in the country. Reducing obesity could increase the number of students pursuing higher education, helping achieve the objectives of this strategy as well as helping the KSA become future-ready.

**Weight loss could lead to an increase in the number of bachelor's degrees graduates, as well as average years of schooling, and a reduction in dropout rate.**

**Figure 17: Additional bachelors program enrolments (2025-2030)**

**~10,563 more students obtain a bachelors education by 2030, equal to the current student size of the University of Ha'il in the high impact scenario**



**10,563 additional students could enroll in bachelor's programs in the KSA by 2030**

Without weight loss interventions, growth of students obtaining a bachelor's degree in the KSA is constrained and is only projected to reach 1,795,394 students by 2030. As young adults start to lose weight, however, their self-esteem is positively impacted, and they are more likely to complete

their studies, or enroll in higher education. This is partially due to that obesity is a severe health issue associated with many diseases, including neuroinflammation and cognitive decline. Due to these mechanisms, in the accelerated intervention scenario, 10,563 additional students are estimated to enroll in a bachelor's program, and in the moderate intervention scenario, 3,444 students enroll in a bachelor's program cumulatively, by 2030.

These additional students in higher education will be equipped with the necessary technical and practical skills to drive the economy in both public and private sectors. Around 95% of these additional students would be Saudi nationals. Weight loss would contribute to enabling additional students to enroll in higher education. By 2030, in the accelerated intervention scenario, 10,034 additional Saudi students could enroll, and 3,272 in the moderate intervention scenario.

**Dropout rate could reduce to 28.6%, preventing 22,114 students from dropping out of college by 2030**


There is also an estimated reduction in the average dropout rate among those living with obesity. At present, the dropout rate for higher education students stands at 30%, due to factors such as disengagement, self-esteem issues, and greater absenteeism<sup>76</sup>. With weight loss interventions,



Losing weight allows promising students like Mariam, who was previously at risk of not being able to enroll in university, to improve their academic performance and muster the self-confidence needed to join university and pursue a degree.

the average dropout rate is estimated to reduce to 28.6% in the accelerated intervention scenario and 29.7% in the moderate intervention scenario by 2030. Taken cumulatively, this is equivalent to 22,114 students in the accelerated intervention scenario and 4,363 students in the moderate intervention scenario being prevented from dropping out of college by 2030.

**Table 6: Education indicators**

Category	Indicator (by 2030)	Measure	Status Quo (2024)	Base Scenario (2030)	Moderate Intervention (2030)	Accelerated Intervention (2030)
 Education	Bachelors' enrolment	#	1,795,937	1,795,937	1,799,381 (+3,444)	1,806,500 (+10,563)
	Students dropping out	#	538,871	538,618	534,255 (+4,363)	516,504 (+22,114)

### Analysis by Key Demographics

**Weight loss contributes to a significant boost for Saudi and women graduates**

**Nationality:**

- There is an increase of 10,034 Saudi nationals who graduate from bachelors' programs compared to 529 expatriate students in the accelerated intervention scenario by 2030. In the moderate intervention scenario, there is still an increase of 3,272 Saudi graduates compared to 172 expatriate graduates by 2030.
- This is an important result as highly skilled Saudi graduates are more likely to be able to gain employment in the private sector, which is one of the key goals of the Vision 2030.

**Gender:**

- Out of the 10,034 additional graduates, in the accelerated intervention scenario, 5,770 are women, implying a significant increase in female participating in higher education in the KSA. Even in the more moderate scenario, there is an addition of 1,880 women in bachelors enrolment across KSA.
- This rise can be attributed to improved health outcomes and greater academic engagement among women following weight loss interventions, as well as evolving societal and policy support that encourages women's educational attainment in the KSA.