

## HEALTH: UAE REVALENCE OF OBESITY PROJECTED TO DROP TO 18% BY 2031

**Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight brings numerous positive benefits to individuals' health and overall well-being:**

### Lower risk of chronic illnesses:

Weight loss significantly reduces the likelihood of developing chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and certain cancers<sup>48</sup>.

### Improved mobility and physical function:

Shedding excess weight alleviates joint pain and decreases the risk of early-onset osteoarthritis. Enhanced mobility enables individuals to engage in physical activities more comfortably, promoting a more active and dynamic lifestyle<sup>49</sup>.

### Increased life expectancy:

Maintaining a healthy weight is associated with a longer life expectancy. By reducing the risk of life-threatening diseases like cardiovascular disease and stroke, weight loss contributes to a healthier and longer life<sup>50</sup>. This extended lifespan may allow individuals to remain active in their communities, and

spend more quality time with their families, including the possibility of meeting future generations.

### Enhanced Mental Health:

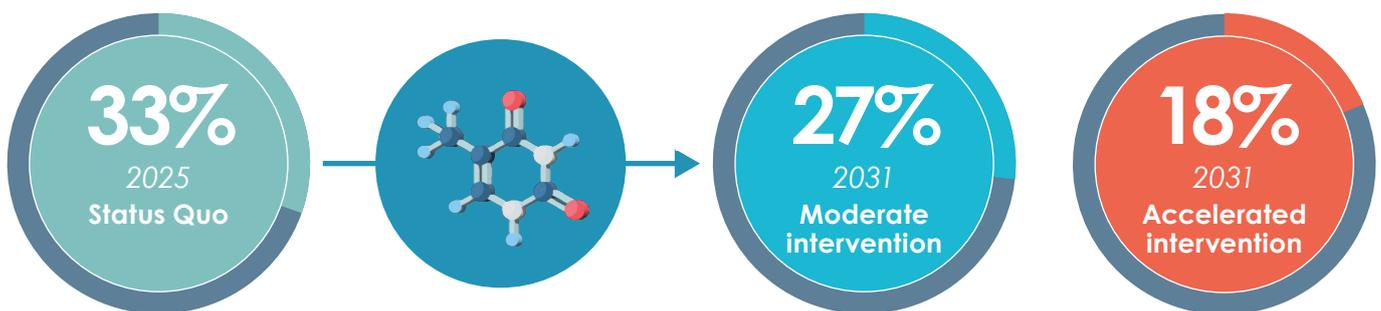
Weight loss positively impacts mental health by reducing the incidence of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem<sup>51</sup>.

**Addressing obesity may lead to reduced healthcare expenditures for treating obesity and its related comorbidities. Consensus on the positive health implications of losing weight are observed through a sentiment analysis of social media channels.**

"I've noticed a significant reduction in dislocations, and I have much greater mobility post weight loss"

"Losing weight been a game-changer for my diabetes management. My blood sugar levels are much more stable" - Whiteshield Sentiment Analysis

**Figure 13: Reduction in obesity prevalence (2025-2031)**

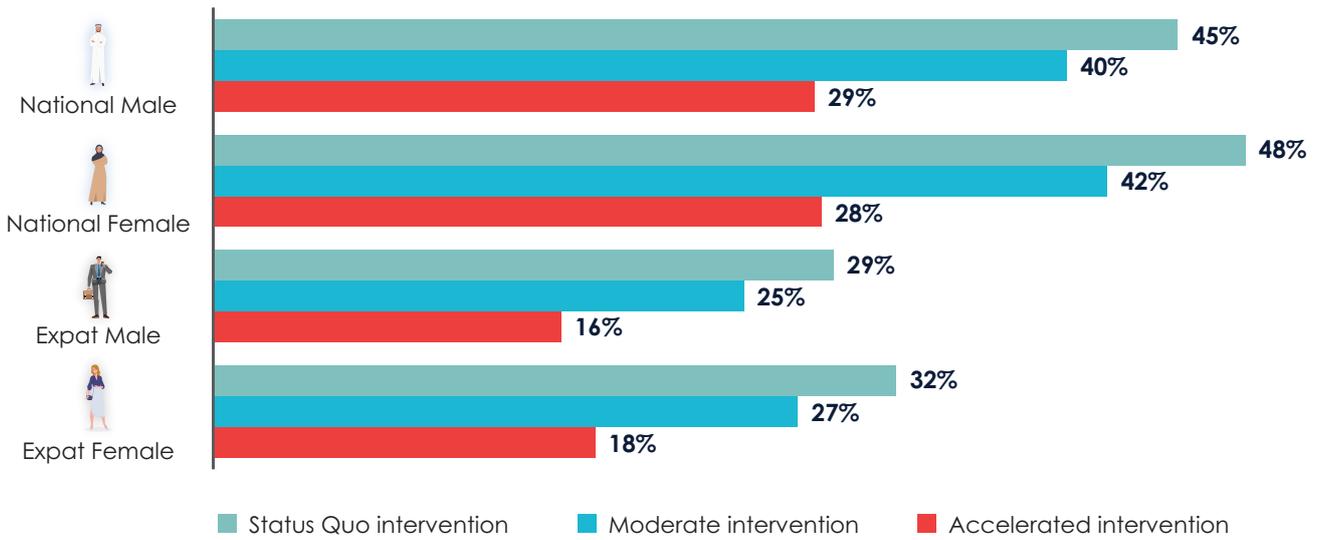


### Obesity prevalence reduces to 18% by 2031

In recent years, obesity prevalence has remained stable in the UAE, hovering near 32% of adults, and is projected to maintain this rate in coming years. This can partly be explained by the sustained inflow of young foreign workers, which tend to have a lower BMI than average.

Innovative weight loss solutions could shift the trend, as they have demonstrated high efficacy, allowing patients to achieve weight loss goals. This efficacy is reflected by the significant projected reduction in prevalence of obesity in the System Dynamics model employed for this report, with over one million adults estimated to transition out of obesity by 2031 in the most aggressive intervention scenario (see Table 1 for details on each scenario).

**Figure 14: Prevalence of obesity - 2031**



With an accelerated intervention scenario, the prevalence of obesity in the adult population, which currently stands at 33%, could drop to 18% by, and to 27% in the moderate intervention scenario.

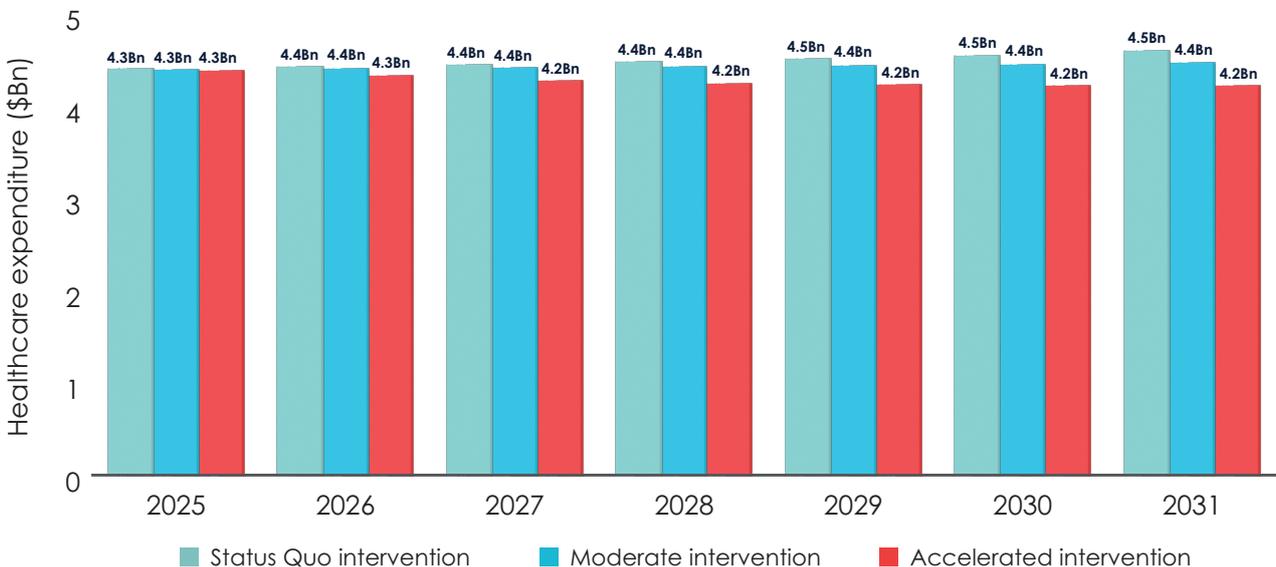
The impact is greatest for Emiratis, as prevalence may shift from 47% in 2024 to 29% by 2031 in the accelerated intervention scenario, a 38% decrease from 2024. This translates to nearly 206,000 Emiratis no longer suffering from

obesity by 2031. In the moderate intervention scenario, the prevalence may reduce more modestly to 41%.

For adult expatriates, the prevalence could drop from 31% to 17% in the accelerated intervention scenario, which translates, to 960,000 adults transitioning out of obesity. In the moderate intervention scenario, the prevalence of obesity among expatriates could reduce to 26%.

**Figure 15: Healthcare expenditure**

Weight loss helps save the UAE \$1.5 Bn of public healthcare expenditure in the accelerated intervention scenario, \$0.4 Bn in the moderate intervention scenario



**Healthcare expenditure savings estimated to amount to \$1.5 Bn cumulatively by 2031**

Obesity imposes a substantial financial burden on government and private healthcare systems, diverting critical resources from other health services. Based on model results, the UAE healthcare system may spend \$4.4 Bn in 2025 on healthcare costs related to obesity. This expenditure is projected to maintain its current levels, reaching \$4.5 Bn by 2031. However, with weight loss, these costs are expected to drop to \$4.1 Bn in 2031, saving the healthcare system over \$1.5 Bn cumulatively from 2025 to 2031 in the accelerated intervention scenario, of which \$377 Mn are saved in 2031 alone. The moderate intervention scenario could lead to cumulative savings of \$400 Mn, \$140 Mn of which are in 2031. **This significant cost reduction not only alleviates the healthcare budget but also enables the reallocation of funds towards preventive care and other important health**

**initiatives, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of the national healthcare system.**

**Life expectancy could increase by 2.4 years**

Weight loss significantly contributes to the preservation and extension of individuals' life expectancy. Individuals suffering from obesity may lose up to 8 years of life expectancy.

**According to estimates of this study, based on scientific literature on the topic, an accelerated intervention scenario of weight loss could add 2.4 years of life expectancy on average to each resident who previously lived with obesity by 2031, and 0.3 years of life in the moderate intervention scenario.**

The key driver behind this increase in life expectancy is the reduction of obesity-related comorbidities, such as diabetes, or even cancer. By losing weight, an individual previously living with obesity could live a longer and healthier life.

***“I’m pre-diabetic with a BMI of 32+ (it was 37+ 3 months ago) [...] I need to take action now to be healthy so I can live longer and not get diabetes.” - Whiteshield Sentiment Analysis***



Consider the case of Ali, the 55-year-old expatriate from Pakistan who drives a taxi in Dubai. With weight loss, he has gained more peace of mind over his health, significantly reducing his risk of developing chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases. He finds himself more energetic, engaging in activities with his friends on the weekends and is not worried about what his next visit to the doctor may reveal.

**Weight loss is estimated to save up to 6.8 years of healthy life**

Weight loss not only adds years to life but also improves the quality of those years, as measured by Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs). By reducing obesity-related comorbidities, weight loss interventions substantially increase Quality-Adjusted Life Expectancy (QALE)<sup>52</sup>, ensuring individuals spend more of their extended lifespan in good health. **According**

**to this study’s modelled estimates, in the accelerated intervention scenario, 6.8 years of healthy life are gained on average for each individual previously living with obesity.**

In the moderate intervention scenario, the gain is 1.5 years of healthy life by 2031. This highlights how weight loss not only prolongs life expectancy but also enhances everyday functioning, mental well-being, and overall quality of life.

Table 3: Health indicators

Category	Indicator (by 2031)	Measure	Status Quo (2024)	Base Scenario (2031)	Moderate Intervention (2031)	Accelerated Intervention (2031)
 Health	Prevalence of Obesity	%	32.8%	31.9%	27%	18%
	Healthcare costs	\$ Bn	4.38	4.48	(0.14)	(0.37)
	Life expectancy	Years (adults living with obesity)	75.5	75.5	+0.3 years	+2.4 years
	QALY savings	Healthy Life Years (adults living with obesity)	53.4	53.4	+1.5 years	+6.8 years

*From a health perspective, Emiratis of all ages, and expatriates in the working age group benefit the most from weight loss*

## Analysis by Key Demographics

### Nationality:

- Obesity prevalence decrease may occur more strongly for Emirati nationals than expatriates. For nationals, the prevalence of obesity is estimated to drop from 47% to 29% and for expatriates, the prevalence could drop from 31% to 19%.
- The higher drop in obesity prevalence in Emirati nationals can be explained by the fact that Emirati nationals have a higher obesity rate to begin with.

### Age

- The most significant weight reduction estimated from this study's model in terms of the absolute

number of people that may overcome obesity is seen in the working age group of people aged 30-59. The obesity prevalence could reduce from 36% to 20%. This leads to around 920,000 working age professionals overcoming obesity and becoming more productive in their employment, adding a significant boost to GDP. The prevalence of obesity in people aged 18-29 could drop from 18% to 10%, enabling around 140,000 youth to overcome obesity.

This implies a healthier and more active workforce, leading to an increase in individual and business income, more government revenues and lower public healthcare spending.

