Consumer Behavior in the UAE: Trends and Transformations

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Introduction

- The UAE has rapidly transformed into a high-income nation.

- This shift has led to major changes in lifestyle—such as dietary habits, increased energy use, and digital behaviors (Mehairi et al., 2013; Paul & Rabel, 2024).

- Understanding UAE consumption requires looking beyond economics—to culture, tech, and sustainability (Abo-Khalil, 2024).

Population Estimates and Growth by Gender - All Data Points (162 total)
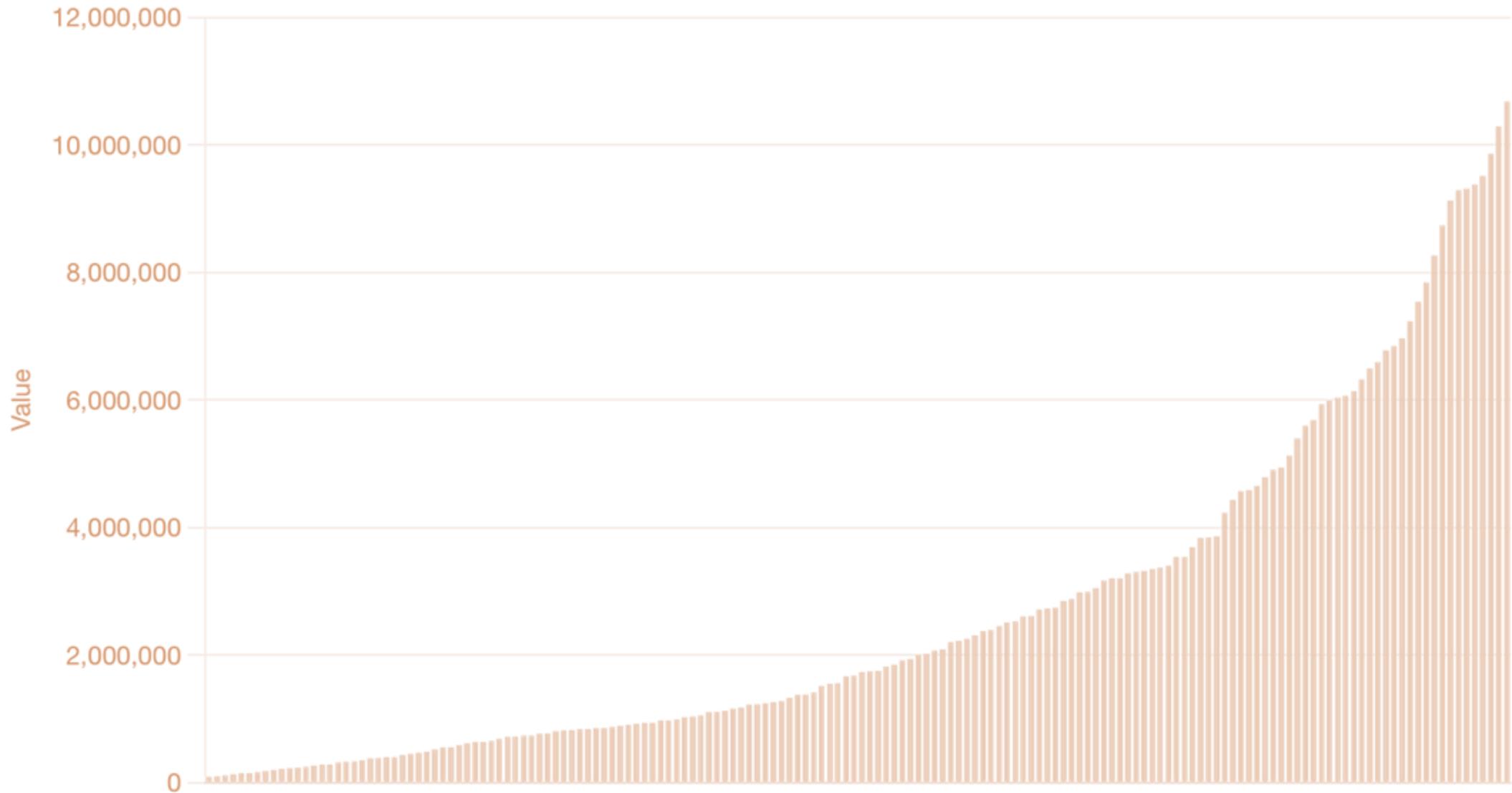
Measure: Population Indicators

Reference area: UAE

Frequency: Annual

Source: Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre

Time period		2019	2020
Population Indicators	Unit of measure		
Gender ratio	Ratio	196.89	229.90
Life expectany at birth (in years)	Years	79.90	79.70
Life expectany at birth for males (in years)	Years	-	78.00
Life expectany at birth for females (in years)	Years	-	81.40
Median age (in years)	Years	31.30	32.80
Median age for males (in years)	Years	-	33.50
Median age for females (in years)	Years	-	31.20
Age dependancy ratio	Ratio	22.43	20.00
Children dependancy ratio	Ratio	20.37	17.90
Elderly dependancy ratio	Ratio	2.06	2.10
Population density (per km2)	Persons	133.80	130.70

GDP per person employed (constant 2021 PPP $) - United Arab Emirates

- **Steady climb in the 1990s–mid-2000s:** Real GDP per person rose from roughly $42,000 in the early 1990s to over$60,000 by mid-2000s.

- **Current level (~2024):** Estimated at $42,597 in constant 2015 US$

- In 2025, the household disposable income per capita in the United Arab Emirates is forecast to amount to US$22.37k.

Sources: Statista Market Insights, World Bank, OECD, Eurostat, World Bank PovcalNet, WID - World Inequality Database

Demographics & Consumer Behavior

Over **80% of the UAE's population are expatriates**, with a **youth-heavy demographic** (20–39 age group dominates) – a dynamic, digital-native audience (Samier, 2015; Vadakepat, 2013).

A young, tech-savvy population drives trends in electronics, social media, and e-commerce (Na'amneh, 2021).

Urbanization is intensifying—cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi are luxury consumption hubs (AL-Dabbagh, 2022).

Socio-Cultural Drivers

Identity Expression

Brand consumption among youth is tied to identity expression and taste (Na'amneh, 2021).

Retail Evolution

There's been a shift from traditional souks to malls and digital platforms (Kazim, 2018).

Digital Shopping

Online shopping is influenced by enjoyment, convenience, and peer comparison (Abdeldayem, 2010; Nemati et al., 2022).

Cultural Norms

Cultural norms, especially around appearance, shape product demand (Alzahrani & Copeland, 2017).

Key Sector Trends

Fashion:

- E-commerce accounts for 1/3 of retail fashion spend (Rao et al., 2021).
- Green fashion and luxury consumption are rising (PİR, 2018; Shabbir et al., 2020).

Food:

- Coffee culture is booming.
- Organic, health-conscious eating is gaining ground (Vegro & Almeida, 2019; Enríquez & Archila-Godinez, 2021).

Tech:

- The UAE has one of the highest internet and smartphone penetration rates globally.
- Big Data and AI are personalizing shopping experiences (Guercini et al., 2018; Vakhariya & Khanzode, 2018).
- Digital impatience is shaping consumer expectations (Agrawal & Narain, 2018).

Thank you!

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