

# Why they choose you (and why they don't)

## Understanding graduate applicant decisions



What motivates different types of candidates to go to graduate business school, and what might hold them back? What types of information are candidates using to make decisions, and where are they looking for it? What factors are most important in selecting a school for candidates in different regions and for different program types? With **more than 15 years of longitudinal insights** about the decision-making of business school candidates around the world, GMAC is best positioned to answer these questions - providing insights into the candidate pipeline to aid schools in their strategic planning.

This report from GMAC combines **five years of global Prospective Student Survey data (2019 – 2024)** with **additional data** from the first half of 2025 to provide a comprehensive analysis of how candidates choose which programs to attend and concrete suggestions for applying these learnings to your programs.

### Why this report is different

This report goes **beyond** GMAC's complimentary research reports to explore **global candidates' decision making over time for different candidate segments**.

Enhanced insights	Complimentary Prospective Student Survey report	Commissioned why they choose you (and why they don't)	Our new insight report offers...
Segmented data on candidate decision-making	—	✓	Longitudinal insights into global candidate decision-making by gender and age group.
11 detailed candidate profiles by preferred program type	—	✓	Unique insights into candidates interested in each program type, including preferred program format, preferred study regions, and where candidates come from. <b>Included program types:</b> Full-time two-year MBA, Full-time one-year MBA, EMBA, Part-time MBA, Online MBA, Hybrid MBA, Master of Finance, Master of Accounting, Master in Management, Master of International Management, Master of Business Analytics
9 detailed candidate profiles by candidate region	—	✓	Actionable findings about candidates from each world region, including preferred program types, study regions, and the reasons behind their study location preferences. <b>Included world regions:</b> Africa, Central and South Asia, Greater China, East and Southeast Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, United States, Canada

## ↑ Turn insights into action

Make more confident strategic decisions **specific to your program type and candidate region** using the insights available in the report, such as:

Optimize your recruitment and marketing strategies by segment	Benchmark your applicant pools against the global pool to identify opportunities	Better understand regional markets to refine your outreach strategies
<p>Longitudinal insights on candidate decision-making segmented by age group and gender, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Motivations influencing candidates' decisions to pursue GME and barriers that might stop them</li><li>◆ Factors influencing school and program selection</li><li>◆ Where candidates go for information about programs and what types of information they look for</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Candidate demographic profiles by program type, including gender, age, first-generation status, employment status, residence region, and more</li><li>◆ Details on candidates interested in each program type, including preferred program format, preferred study regions, how they choose a school, what social media platforms they use, what they want to learn, and what information they're using to make their decisions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Candidate demographic profiles by region, including where and what candidates from that region want to study</li><li>◆ Details on how candidates from each region make decisions, including what proportion prefer to study domestically or internationally and why</li></ul>

## 🎯 Who should read this report and why

Understanding the drivers of candidates' application and enrollment decisions can be what separates resilient programs from the rest as they develop strategies for the future. These insights can inform business school decision-makers as well as admissions, marketing, and recruitment practitioners.

**Business school deans and associate deans:** Understand candidate motivations and demographics to inform strategic and portfolio decisions

**Program directors:** Apply insights on candidate preferences, motivations, and barriers to refine program design, positioning, and value propositions for target segments

**Admissions and recruitment leaders:** Leverage data on, candidate profiles, decision drivers, and information sources to sharpen targeting, personalize outreach, and improve yield across key segments

**Marketing and enrollment strategy teams:** Use findings on candidate journeys, content preferences, and social media usage to create more effective campaigns, messaging, and channel strategies

**Institutional research and strategic planning teams:** Integrate segmented data and market insights into benchmarking and evidence-based planning to guide institutional priorities



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