

**Graduate
Management
Admission
Council™**

Market Intelligence

Demand for MBA and Business Master's Programs: Insights on Candidate Decision Making

Summary Report

**[mba.com Prospective Students
Survey 2021](#)**

May 2021



Demand for MBA and Business Master's Programs: Insights on Candidate Decision Making Summary Report, mba.com Prospective Students Survey 2021 is a product of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), a global, mission-driven association of 223 leading graduate business schools. Founded in 1953, we are actively committed to advancing the art and science of admissions by convening and representing the industry and offering best-in-class products and services for schools and students. GMAC owns and administers the Graduate Management Admission Test™ (GMAT™) exam, used by more than 7,000 graduate programs worldwide. Other GMAC assessments include the NMAT by GMAC™ exam, for entrance into graduate management programs in India, South Africa, and the Philippines, and the Executive Assessment, specifically designed for Executive MBA programs around the world. The Council is based in the United States with offices in the United Kingdom, India, and China.

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Introduction

Nearly 9,000 mba.com registrants worldwide responded to the mba.com Prospective Students Survey in 2020

Each month, the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC) surveys a random sample of individuals who three months prior registered on mba.com—the GMAC™ website for prospective graduate business students. Their survey responses provide an inside look into the decision-making process of people currently considering applying to a graduate business school program. The findings detailed in this report are based on responses from a total of 8,430 individuals surveyed between January and December 2020.

Survey respondents represent demand for various MBA and business master's *program categories*, including full-time MBA, professional MBA, executive MBA, and business master's programs. Each program category contains specific *program types*. For example, full-time MBA programs include full-time one-year and full-time two-year MBA programs. Professional MBA programs include part-time, flexible, and online MBA programs. Business master's programs include Master in Management, Master of Finance, Master of Data Analytics, and Master of Accounting, among others.

About the Data

The results of this survey do not necessarily reflect a statistically representative sample of the global prospective student population. Rather, the results reflect responses from prospective students who register on mba.com. Because of this limitation, the results of this research study should not be used to generalize about the global prospective student population, but rather the mba.com registrant population.

Explore and Filter the Data for Yourself

An Interactive Data Research Tool accompanies the mba.com Prospective Students Survey 2021. Available exclusively to school professionals at GMAT™ score-accepting institutions, the tool allows users to customize data searches by multiple survey response variables, such as candidate segment, citizenship/residence, gender, age, preferred program type, and more. Access it with your gmac.com login at:

www.gmac.com/prospectivestudents.

Business School Participation in GMAC Research

GMAC Research offers graduate business schools opportunities to gather data and generate insights about the business school pipeline.

Schools can sign up to participate in the GMAC Application Trends Survey and Corporate Recruiters Survey on our survey sign-up page:

www.gmac.com/surveysignup.

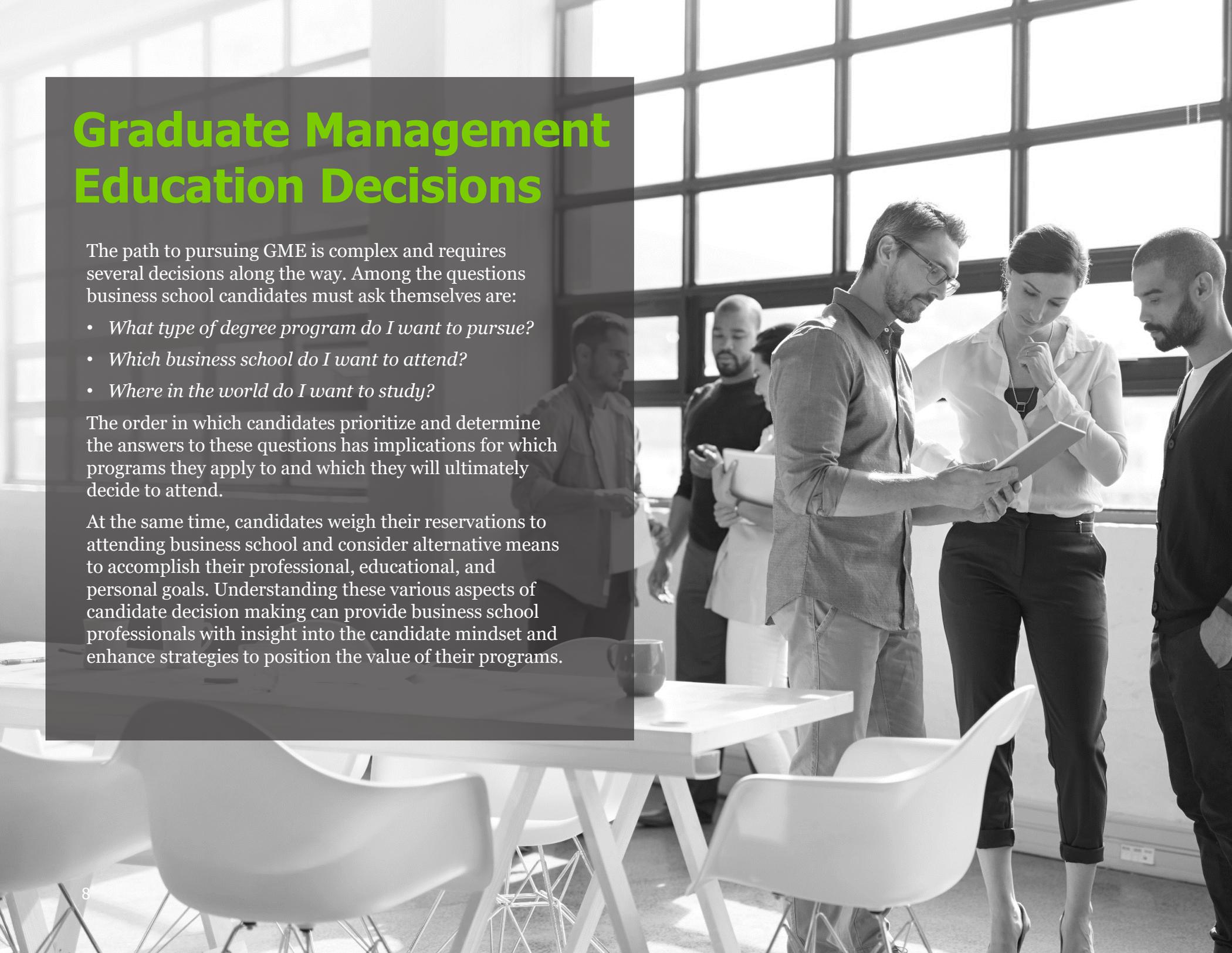
Graduate Management Education Decisions

The path to pursuing GME is complex and requires several decisions along the way. Among the questions business school candidates must ask themselves are:

- *What type of degree program do I want to pursue?*
- *Which business school do I want to attend?*
- *Where in the world do I want to study?*

The order in which candidates prioritize and determine the answers to these questions has implications for which programs they apply to and which they will ultimately decide to attend.

At the same time, candidates weigh their reservations to attending business school and consider alternative means to accomplish their professional, educational, and personal goals. Understanding these various aspects of candidate decision making can provide business school professionals with insight into the candidate mindset and enhance strategies to position the value of their programs.

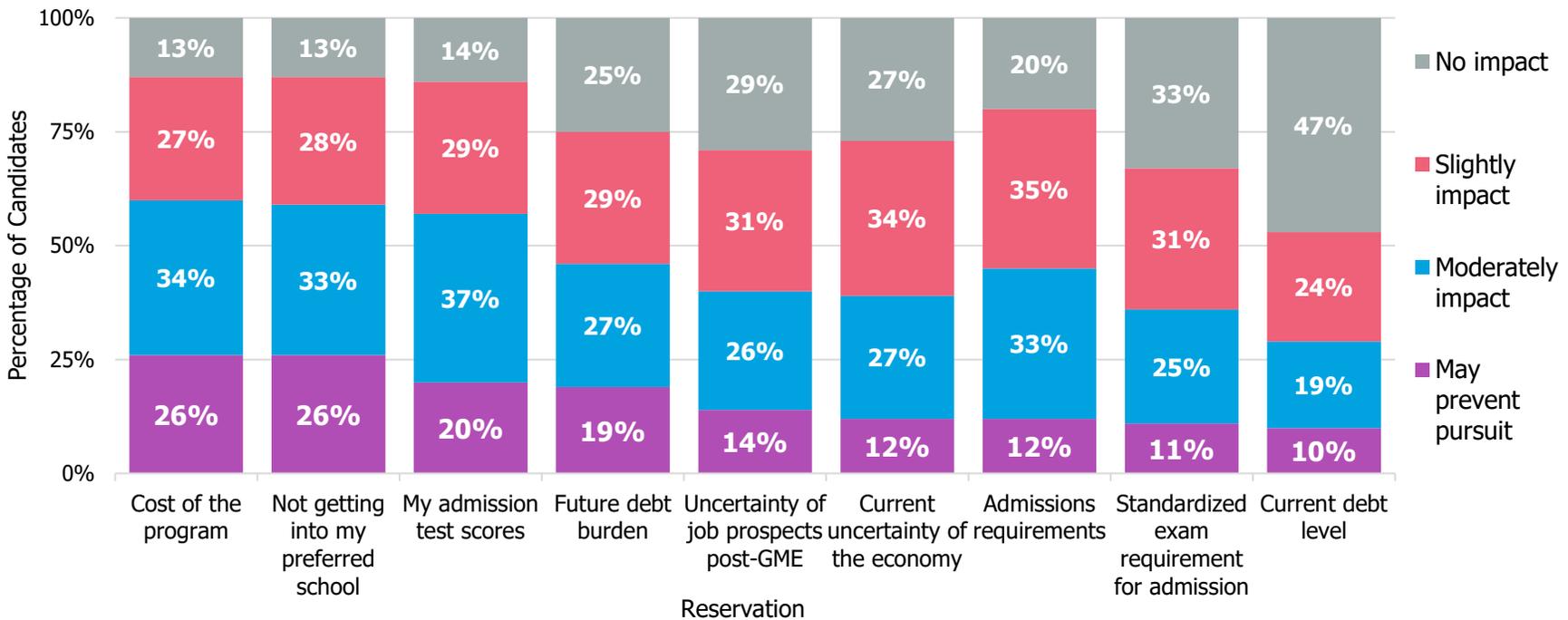


Barriers related to cost are the most likely to impact candidates' pursuit of business school

Cost is the chief source of reluctance among candidates in deciding whether or not to pursue GME. Overall, over a quarter of candidates say that not getting into their preferred school may prevent their plans to pursue GME. On average, only about 13 percent of candidates say these factors have no impact on their decision to pursue business school. More than half say these factors will have a slight or moderate impact on their choice.

Other notable areas of reservation include uncertainty around future debt burden, uncertainty of job prospects and the economy following GME, and their admission test scores along with other admissions requirements.

Impact of Barriers on Pursuing Business School



Pursuing a new job is the most commonly considered alternative to business school

Most candidates are considering alternatives to business school to achieve their professional, educational, and personal goals (84%). Consistent with past years, employment is the most widely pondered alternative, whether it be candidates thinking about pursuing a new job (45% of candidates) or continuing in the same job (35%). Candidates who prefer full-time MBA programs are more likely to be considering pursuing a new job (50%) than continuing in the same job (40%), whereas candidates who prefer professional MBA programs are more likely to consider staying in their current role (51%) over a new one (38%).

Other notable alternatives candidates consider include shorter and cheaper educational options, such as graduate certifications in business (20% of candidates), graduate certificate programs in nonbusiness (10%), and massive open online courses (20%).

Alternatives to Business School Considered

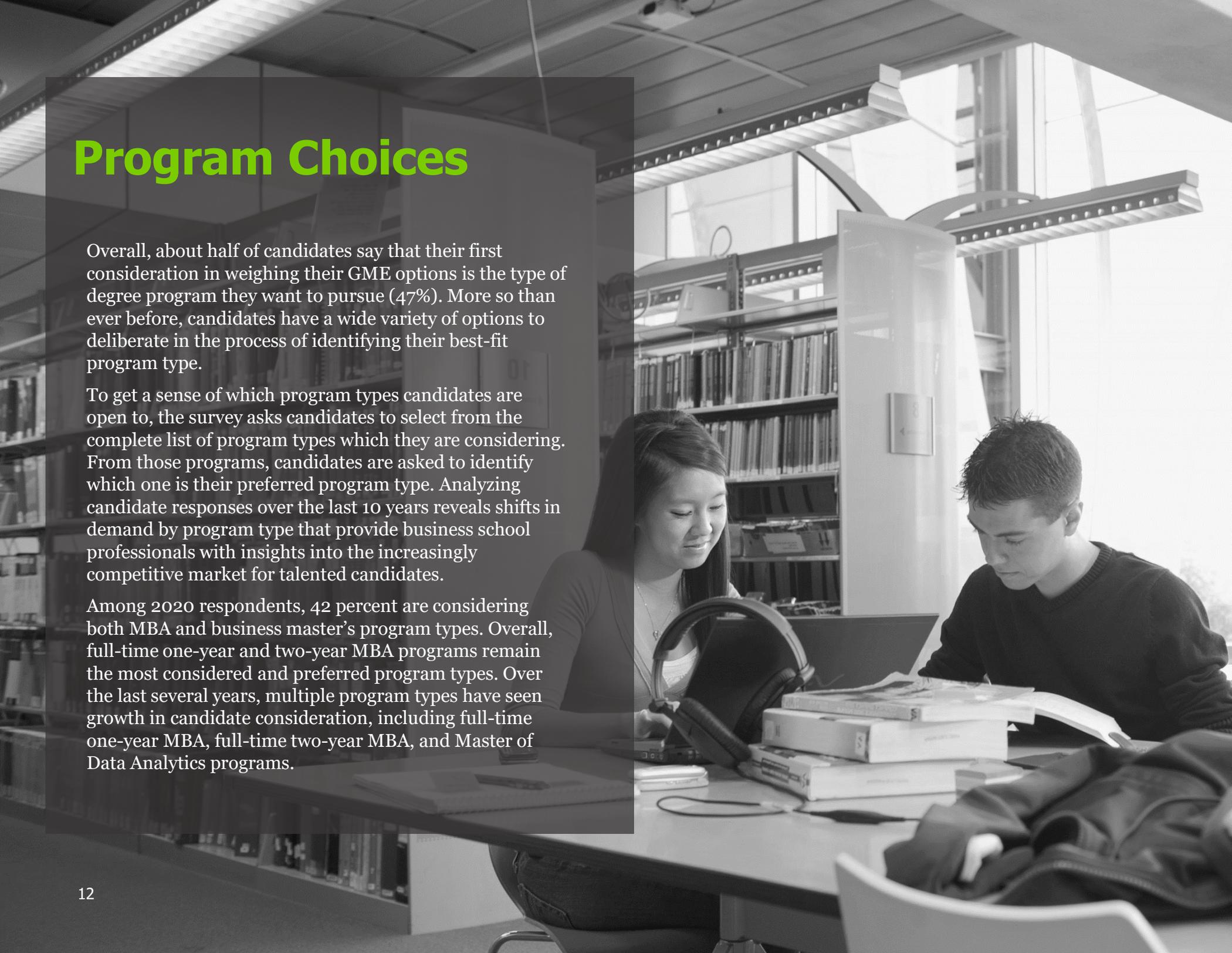
Alternatives	Overall	Preferred Program Category			
		Business master's	Full-time MBA	Professional MBA	Executive MBA
Obtain a new job	45%	44%	50%	38%	32%
Continue working in a current job	35%	22%	40%	51%	45%
Professional certification	29%	28%	27%	37%	32%
Graduate certificate program (business)	20%	21%	16%	24%	21%
Massive, open online courses (MOOCs)	20%	20%	18%	27%	25%
No, I didn't consider any other alternatives	16%	18%	16%	11%	18%
Another graduate degree program	12%	9%	12%	15%	10%
Graduate certificate program (nonbusiness)	10%	10%	8%	12%	9%
Other	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%

Program Choices

Overall, about half of candidates say that their first consideration in weighing their GME options is the type of degree program they want to pursue (47%). More so than ever before, candidates have a wide variety of options to deliberate in the process of identifying their best-fit program type.

To get a sense of which program types candidates are open to, the survey asks candidates to select from the complete list of program types which they are considering. From those programs, candidates are asked to identify which one is their preferred program type. Analyzing candidate responses over the last 10 years reveals shifts in demand by program type that provide business school professionals with insights into the increasingly competitive market for talented candidates.

Among 2020 respondents, 42 percent are considering both MBA and business master's program types. Overall, full-time one-year and two-year MBA programs remain the most considered and preferred program types. Over the last several years, multiple program types have seen growth in candidate consideration, including full-time one-year MBA, full-time two-year MBA, and Master of Data Analytics programs.



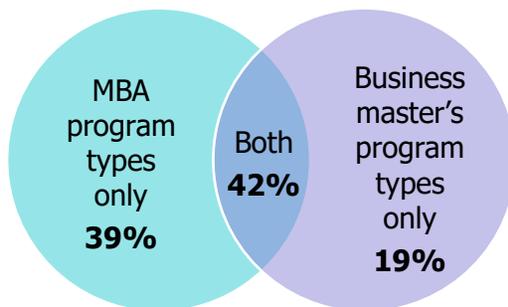
Program Choices

The full-time one-year and two-year MBA top the list of most considered program types

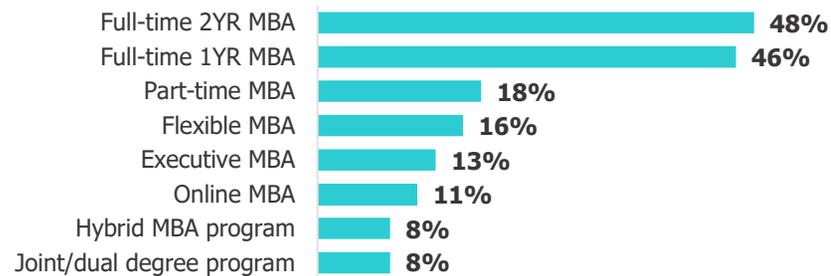
The MBA remains the predominant credential sought in GME, as overall 4 in 5 candidates are considering an MBA program type (81%). Consideration of two-year MBA programs (48%) returns to levels slightly higher than one-year MBA programs (47%) in 2020 following the expected trend in the last decade of survey data.

On par with last year, 1 in 5 candidates are exclusively considering business master's program types (19%). Topping the list of most considered business master's program types are the Master of Finance (22%) and the Master of Data Analytics (17%), the latter of which has grown its consideration each year since it was added to the survey in 2013.

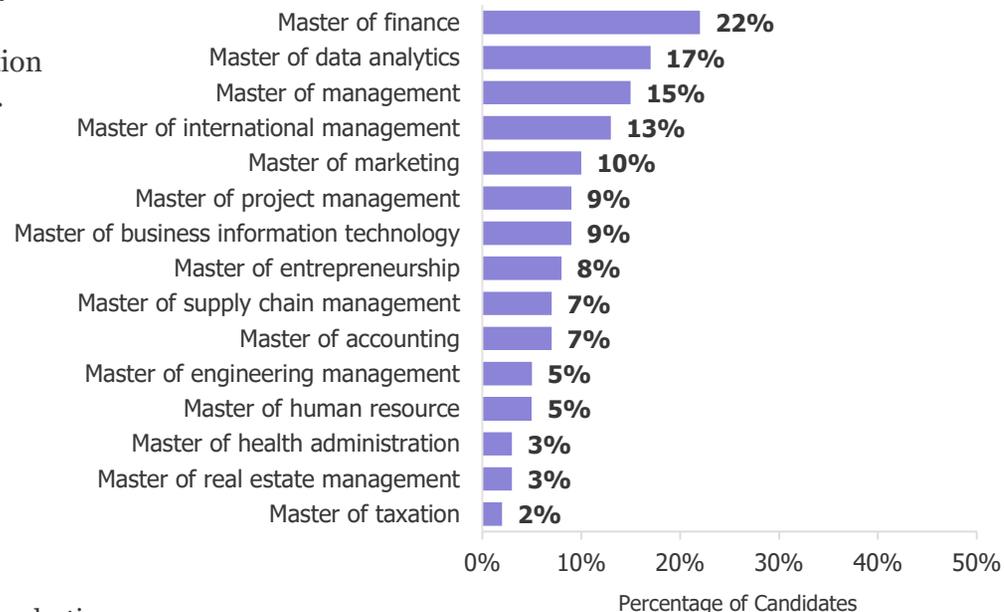
Program Considerations



MBA Program Types Considered*



Business Master's Program Types Considered*



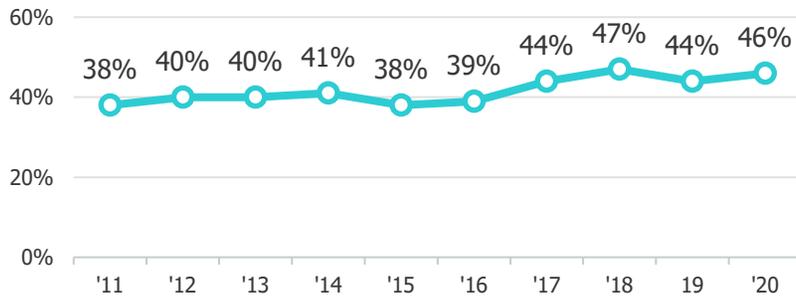
*Total does not sum to 100 percent because of multiple selections.

Program Choices

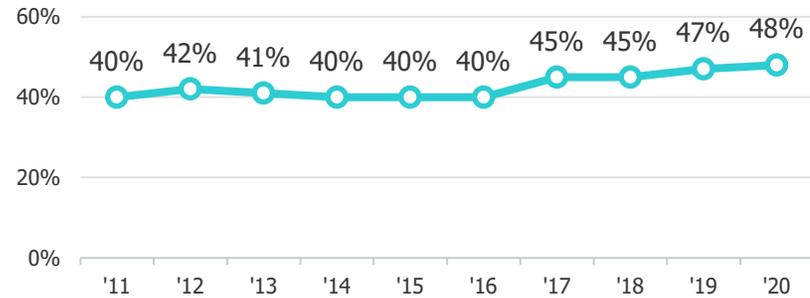
The percentage of candidates considering full-time one-year and two-year MBA programs rises steadily

10-Year Trend in Program Type Consideration

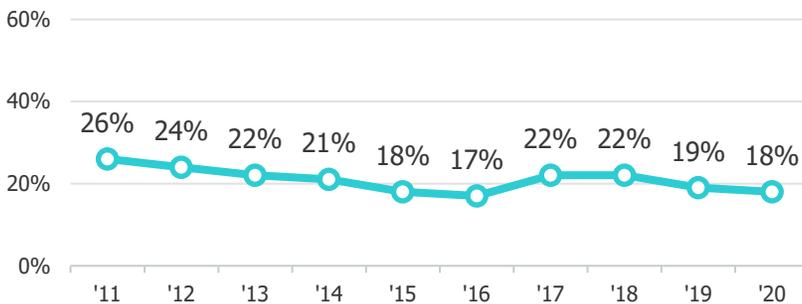
Full-Time One-Year MBA



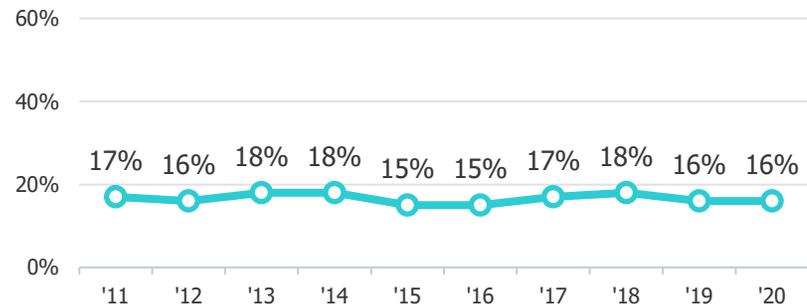
Full-Time Two-Year MBA



Part-Time MBA



Flexible MBA

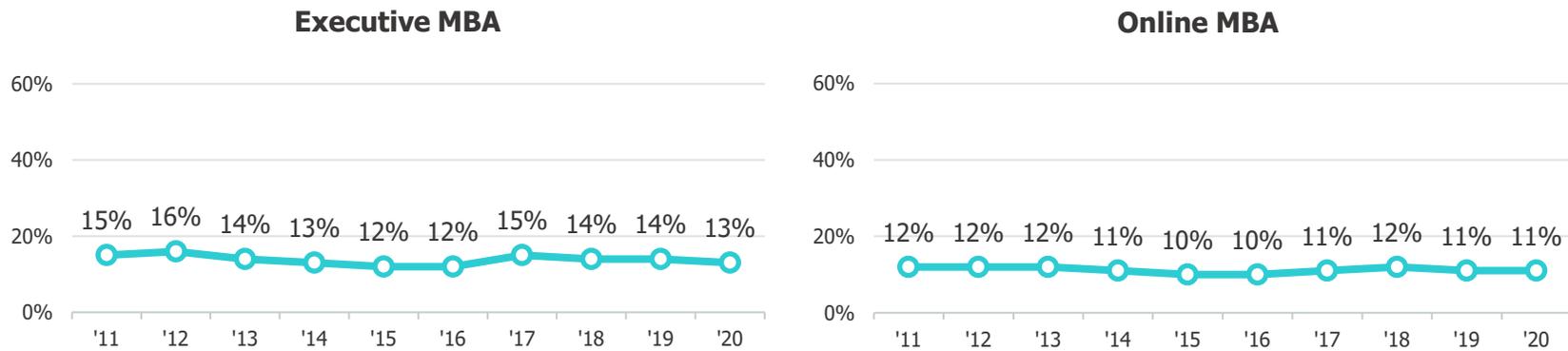


Note: The way candidates are asked about the program types they are considering was modified in 2017. Prior to then, candidates were first asked which program category types they are considering (e.g., full-time MBA, business master's) and then asked which program types within those categories they are considering. From 2017 and forward, candidates select from a list of all program types.

Program Choices

Consideration of Executive MBA and Online MBA programs has remained relatively stable over the 10-year period

10-Year Trend in Program Type Consideration



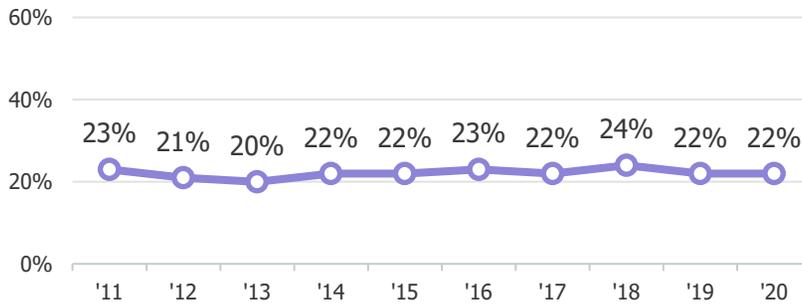
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Program Choices

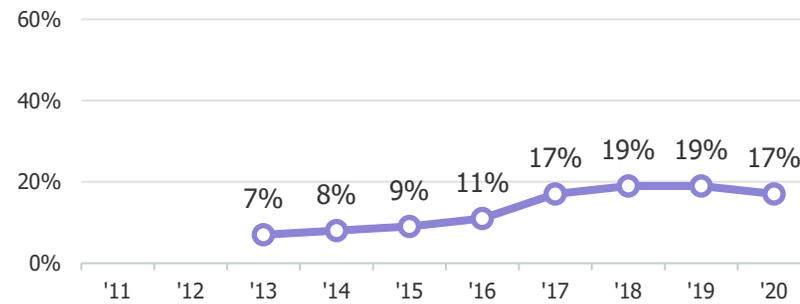
Master of Finance remains the top business master's program type considered; Master of Data Analytics growth moderates

10-Year Trend in Program Type Consideration

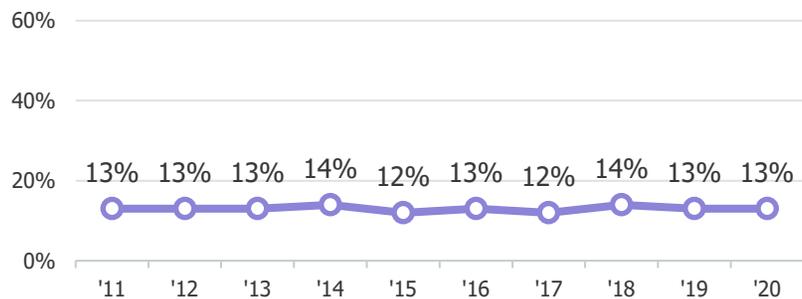
Master of Finance



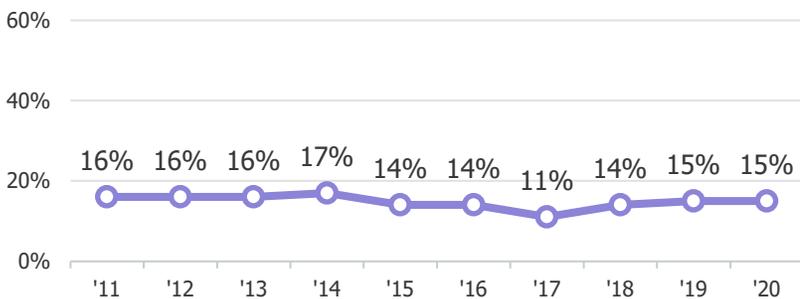
Master of Data Analytics



Master in International Management



Master in Management

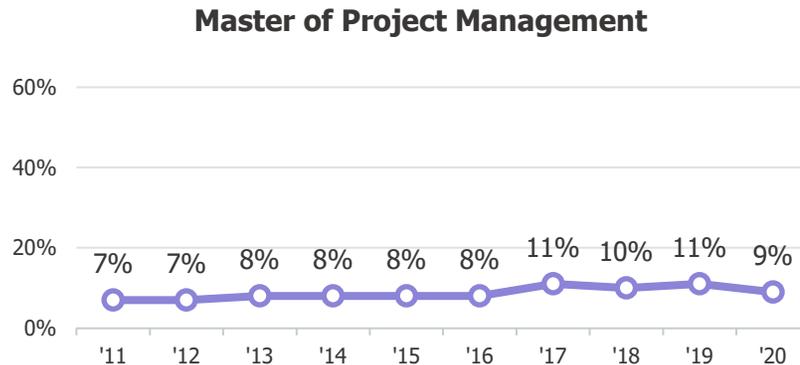
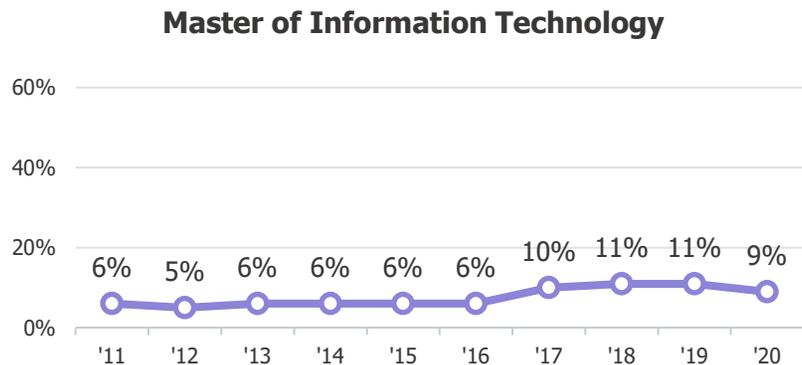
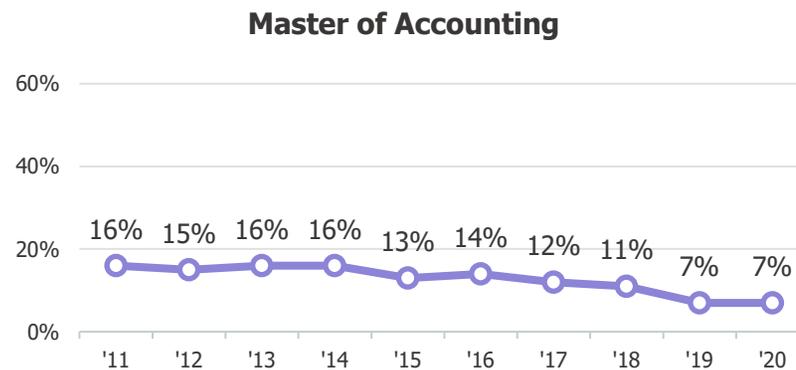
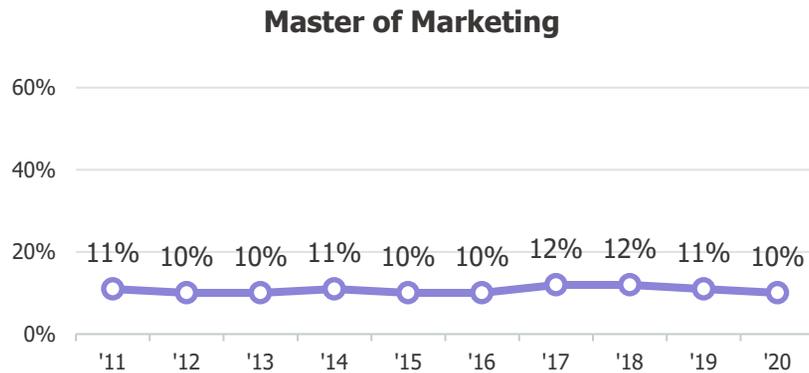


Note: The way candidates are asked about the program types they are considering was modified in 2017. Prior to then, candidates were first asked which program category types they are considering (e.g., full-time MBA, business master's) and then asked which program types within those categories they are considering. From 2017 and forward, candidates select from a list of all program types.

Program Choices

Consideration of Master of Accounting has declined; Master of Information Technology growth flattens

10-Year Trend in Program Type Consideration



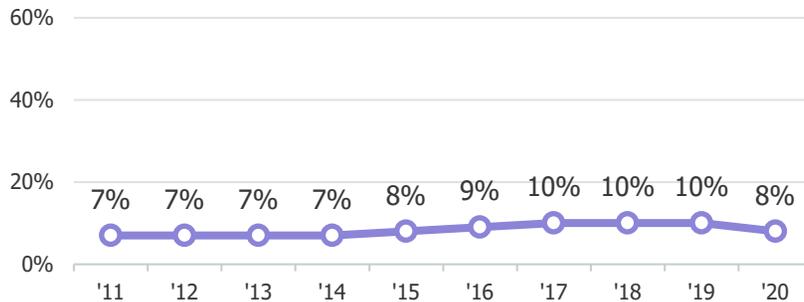
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Program Choices

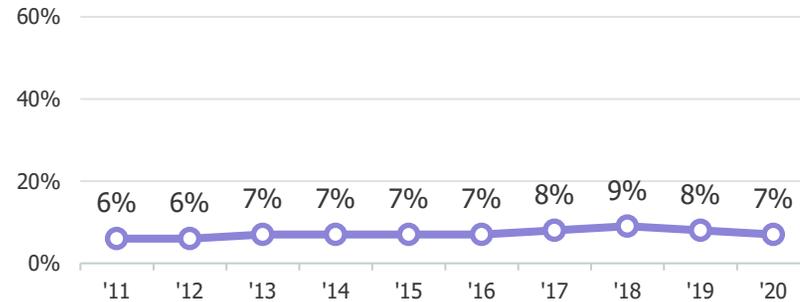
Just under 1 in 10 global candidates are considering Master of Entrepreneurship programs

10-Year Trend in Program Type Consideration

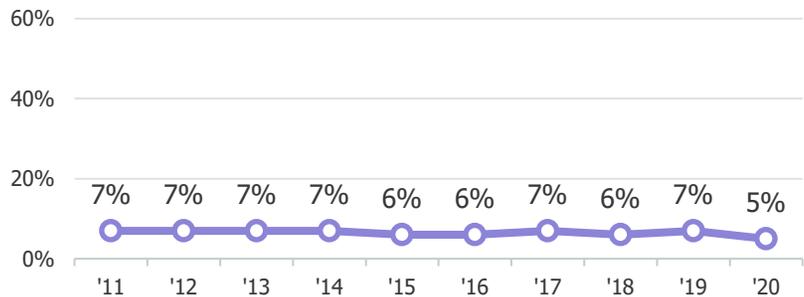
Master of Entrepreneurship



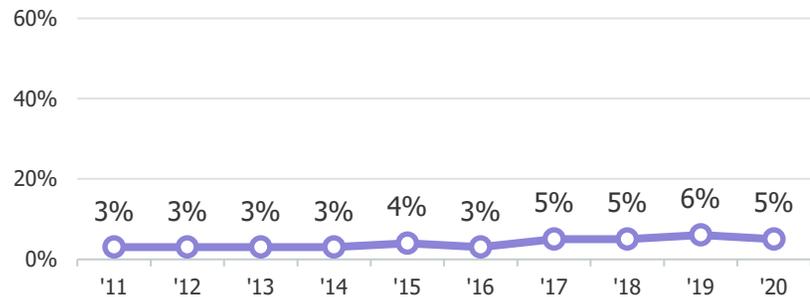
Master of Supply Chain Management



Master of Human Resources



Master of Engineering Management

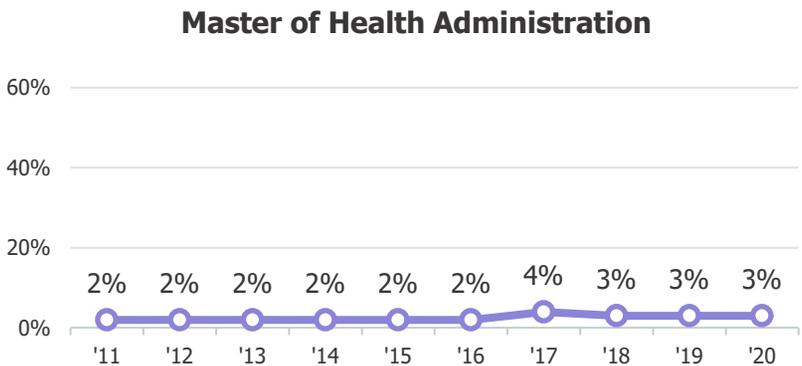
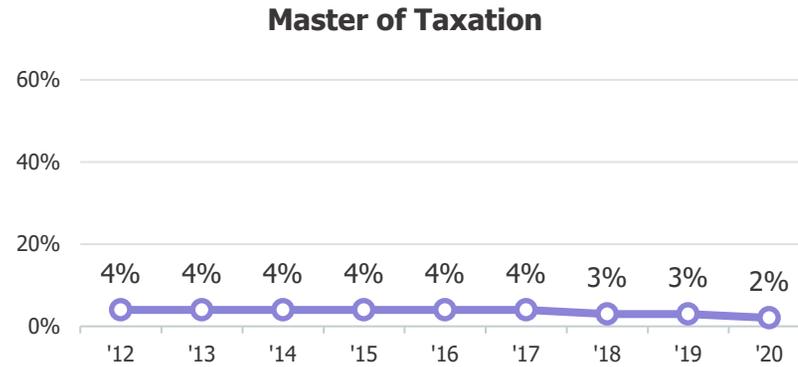
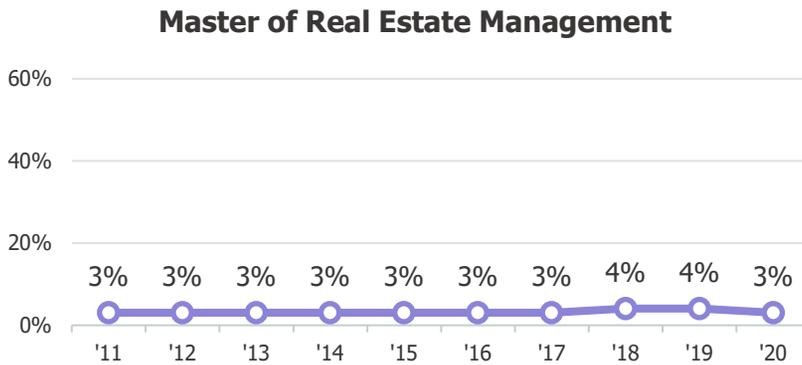


Note: The way candidates are asked about the program types they are considering was modified in 2017. Prior to then, candidates were first asked which program category types they are considering (e.g., full-time MBA, business master's) and then asked which program types within those categories they are considering. From 2017 and forward, candidates select from a list of all program types.

Program Choices

Real estate, taxation, and health administration programs appeal to a small niche of business school candidates

10-Year Trend in Program Type Consideration



Note: The way candidates are asked about the program types they are considering was modified in 2017. Prior to then, candidates were first asked which program category types they are considering (e.g., full-time MBA, business master's) and then asked which program types within those categories they are considering. From 2017 and forward, candidates select from a list of all program types.

Program Choices

Most candidates consider multiple program types (80%), often selecting from among similar program types

Four in 5 candidates are considering more than one program type in their business school decision-making process (80%). Often, there is overlap in program type consideration among similar program types. For example, more than half of candidates considering full-time one-year MBA programs are also considering full-time two-year MBA programs, and vice versa. Candidates considering a professional MBA program types tend to consider other professional MBA program types as well. Business master's program types are less likely to be considered among these candidates as they tend to be further along in their careers and less likely to be seeking specialized study. Candidates considering business master's program types, however, are likely to be considering full-time MBA program types, as well as program types with similar specializations. For example, most candidates considering Master of Accounting programs are also considering Master of Finance programs (62%).

Top Five Alternative Program Types Considered, Candidates Considering MBA Program Types

		Program Type Considered					
		Full-time one-year MBA	Full-time two-year MBA	Part-time MBA	Flexible MBA	Executive MBA	Online MBA
Top Five Alternative Program Types Considered	1	Full-time two-year MBA (57%)	Full-time one-year MBA (56%)	Flexible MBA (53%)	Full-time one-year MBA (61%)	Full-time one-year MBA (54%)	Part-time MBA (55%)
	2	Flexible MBA (21%)	Master of Finance (19%)	Full-time one-year MBA (51%)	Part-Time MBA (60%)	Full-time two-year MBA (45%)	Flexible MBA (54%)
	3	Part-Time MBA (20%)	Flexible MBA (18%)	Full-time two-year MBA (45%)	Full-time two-year MBA (54%)	Part-Time MBA (39%)	Full-time one-year MBA (48%)
	4	Master of Finance (19%)	Part-time MBA (17%)	Online MBA (34%)	Online MBA (38%)	Flexible MBA (35%)	Full-time two-year MBA (41%)
	5	Executive MBA (16%)	Master of Data Analytics (16%)	Executive MBA (28%)	Executive MBA (29%)	Online MBA (26%)	Hybrid MBA (35%)

Program Choices

Most candidates consider multiple program types (80%), often selecting from among similar program types

Top Five Alternative Program Types Considered, Candidates Considering Business Master's Program Types

		Program Type Considered					
		Master of Finance	Master of Data Analytics	Master of Accounting	Master in Int'l Management	Master in Management	Master of Marketing
Top Five Alternative Program Types Considered	1	Full-time one-year MBA (41%)	Full-time two-year MBA (43%)	Master of Finance (62%)	Master in Mgmt. (49%)	Master in Int'l Mngmt. (44%)	Full-time one-year MBA (47%)
	2	Full-time two-year MBA (41%)	Full-time one-year MBA (42%)	Full-time one-year MBA (35%)	Full-time two-year MBA (41%)	Full-time one-year MBA (38%)	Full-time two-year MBA (44%)
	3	Master of Data Analytics (26%)	Master of Finance (33%)	Full-time two-year MBA (32%)	Full-time one-year MBA (40%)	Full-time two-year MBA (37%)	Master in Mgmt. (32%)
	4	Master in Mgmt. (20%)	Master of Info. Technology (31%)	Master of Taxation (27%)	Master of Finance (29%)	Master of Finance (29%)	Master of Int'l Mgmt. (32%)
	5	Master of Accounting (19%)	Master in Supply Chain Mngmt. (20%)	Master of Data Analytics (25%)	Master of Data Analytics (27%)	Master of Data Analytics (23%)	Master of Data Analytics (29%)
		Master of Information Technology	Master of Project Management	Master of Entrepreneurship	Master of Supply Chain Management	Master of Human Resources	Master of Engineering Management
Top Five Alternative Program Types Considered	1	Master of Data Analytics (57%)	Full-time one-year MBA (49%)	Full-time one-year MBA (50%)	Master of Data Analytics (50%)	Full-time two-year MBA (52%)	Full-time two-year MBA (52%)
	2	Full-time two-year MBA (45%)	Full-time two-year MBA (45%)	Full-time two-year MBA (48%)	Full-time two-year MBA (49%)	Full-time one-year MBA (48%)	Full-time one-year MBA (47%)
	3	Full-time one-year MBA (43%)	Master of Int'l Mgmt.. (37%)	Master of Int'l Mngmt. (36%)	Full-time one-year MBA (47%)	Master of Int'l Mngmt. (42%)	Master of Project Mgmts.. (39%)
	4	Master of Finance (29%)	Master of Data Analytics (35%)	Master of Data Analytics (33%)	Master of Project Mngmt. (37%)	Master in Mngmt. (34%)	Master of Data Analytics (37%)
	5	Master of Project Mngmt. (26%)	Master in Mgmt.. (34%)	Master of Marketing (32%)	Master of Int'l Mngmt. (30%)	Master of Project Mngmt.. (30%)	Master of Info. Technology (30%)

Program Choices

Most candidates consider multiple program types (79%), often selecting from among similar program types

Top Five Alternative Program Types Considered, Candidates Considering Business Master's Program Types

		Program Type Considered		
		Master of Real Estate Management	Master of Taxation	Master of Health Administration
Top Five Alternative Program Types Considered	1	Full-time one-year MBA (49%)	Master of Accounting (78%)	Full-time two-year MBA (54%)
	2	Full-time two-year MBA (49%)	Master of Finance (62%)	Full-time one-year MBA (48%)
	3	Master of Finance (43%)	Full-time one-year MBA (39%)	Part-time MBA (33%)
	4	Master of Project Mgmt. (38%)	Full-time two-year MBA (33%)	Flexible MBA (31%)
	5	Master of Entrepreneurship (34%)	Master of Data Analytics (27%)	Online MBA (28%)

Program Choices

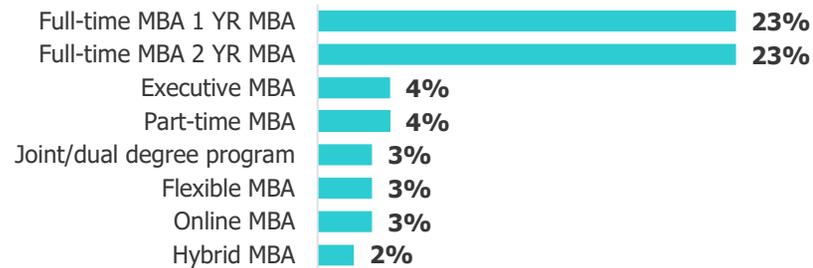
Overall, 65 percent of candidates prefer an MBA program type while 32 percent prefer a business master's program type

While most candidates consider multiple program types (81%), the survey asks candidates to identify a single option as their preferred program type. Generally speaking, trends in candidates' preferred program types mirror trends in candidate consideration.

Overall, more candidates prefer an MBA program type (65%) than prefer a business master's program type (32%). Almost one in 2 candidates prefer a full-time MBA program type (46%). Similar to trends in consideration, an equal percentage of candidates overall prefer full-time two-year programs (23%) to full-time one-year programs (23%). A smaller proportion of candidates prefer professional and executive MBA program types.

Overall, just under 1 in 10 candidates identify the Master of Finance as their preferred program type (9%), double the share of candidates that prefer the next highest among business master's program type, Master of Data Analytics (5%).

Preferred Program Type, MBA Program Types



Preferred Program Type, Business Master's Program Types



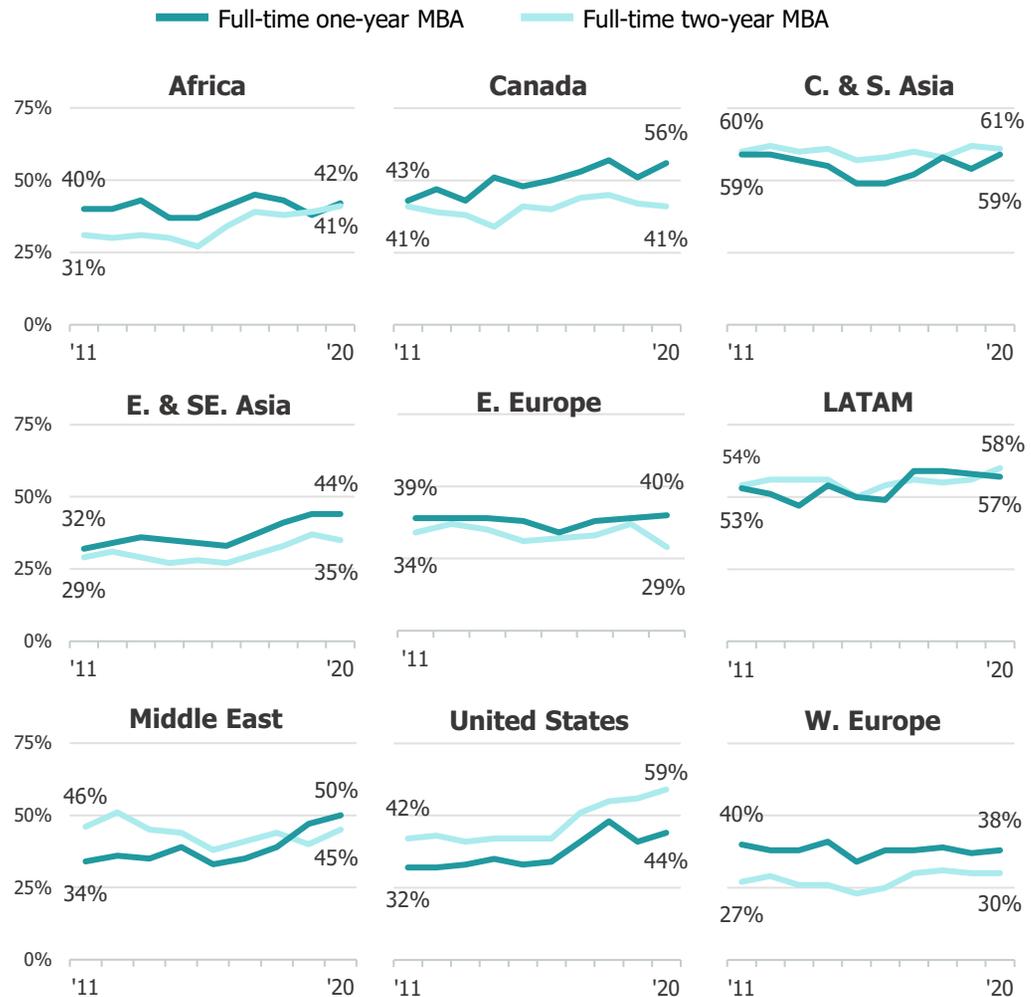
Focus on full-time MBA programs

Overall, a slightly larger percentage of candidates are considering full-time one-year MBA programs (46%) than full-time two-year MBA programs (45%) among 2020 survey respondents.

This year, the both full-time programs are at equal levels of consideration. Full-time one-year programs have been the slightly more frequently considered full-time MBA option for most citizenship groups over the same period. This is particularly true among citizens of Canada and Mexico, and countries in the Caribbean, Latin America, Western and Eastern Europe, and East and Southeast Asia.

In 2020, the Central & South Asia leads the United States as the only citizenship groups among the nine major groups examined in which the full-time two-year MBA is more widely considered than the one-year alternative.

Consideration of Full-Time MBA Programs by Region of Citizenship



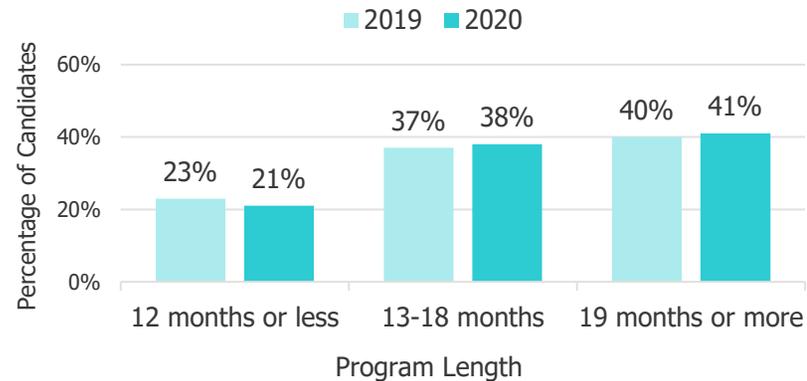
Focus on full-time MBA programs

Apart from the survey items that examine candidates' considered and preferred program types, a separate survey item inquires about candidates' preferred program length. In line with the trends discussed earlier, program duration preferences have shifted somewhat over the last year among candidates who prefer full-time MBA program types. The percentage of these candidates who say their preferred program length is 19 months or more (i.e., two-year programs) stayed at high levels overall from 40 percent to 41 percent, while the percentage who say their preferred length is 13-18 months (i.e., one-year programs) also maintained from 37 to 38 percent.

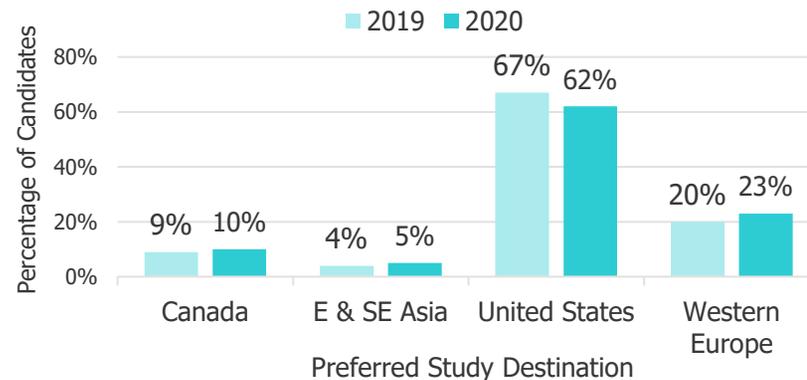
Trends in program length preference differ by candidates' preferred study destination. Among candidates whose preferred study destination is the United States, preference for programs of 19 months or longer fell slightly from 67 percent to 62 percent, while among candidates preferring Canada increased a percentage point from 9 percent to 10 percent. These shifts are likely driven in part by larger shifts in candidates' preferred study destination that are discussed later in this report.

Candidates Preferring Full-Time MBA Programs

Preferred Program Length, 2019 vs. 2020



Percentage That Prefer Programs 19 Months or Longer by Preferred Study Destination, 2019 vs. 2020



School Selection Criteria

Among the different aspects of business schools that candidates take into account in deciding where to attend are financial aspects (e.g., total costs, availability of scholarships), specific program aspects (e.g., desired program format and length), student class profile (e.g., the percentage of women, underrepresented minorities, nationalities, or other groups within the class), curriculum aspects (e.g., specific curriculum offered), career aspects (e.g., job placement, career services quality), quality/reputation (e.g., rankings, accreditation, faculty), and school culture (e.g., competitive vs. collaborative, vocational vs. academic).

Understanding how candidates weigh the importance of different school selection criteria can give school professionals insight into how to best highlight the features of their schools to different candidate audiences.

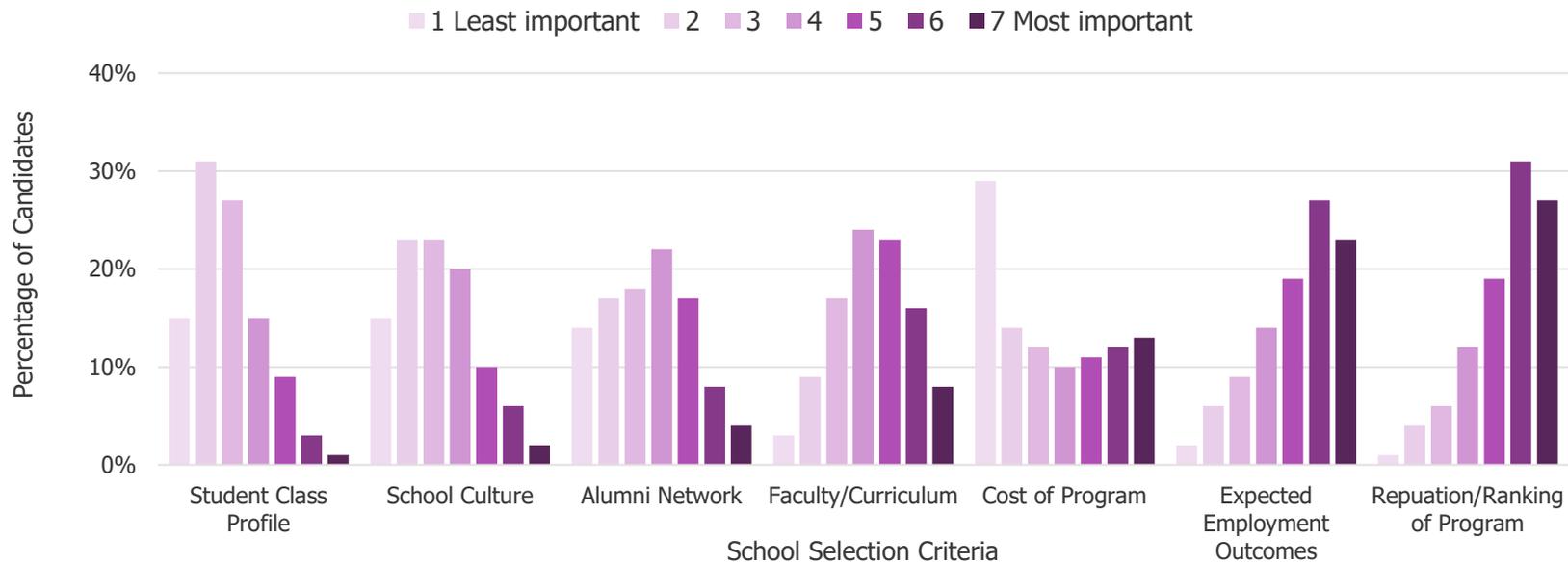


School Selection Criteria

Candidates most often say reputation/ranking is the most important selection criteria they have in choosing a school

Candidates weigh a number of factors in determining which specific business schools they are interested in attending. These factors, of course, are not all equal in their power to sway candidates' decisions. In the survey, candidates are asked to rank the importance of seven school selection criteria from most important to least important. Overall, reputation/ranking is the most common selection as most important (e.g., rankings, accreditation, faculty, 27%), followed by career aspects (e.g., job placement, career services quality, 23%) and financial aspects (e.g., total costs, availability of scholarships, 13%). School culture (e.g., competitive vs. collaborative, vocational vs. academic) and student class profile (e.g., the percentage of women, underrepresented minorities, nationalities, or other groups within the class) tend to be viewed as less important to candidates relative to the other factors.

Ranking of Importance of School Selection Criteria



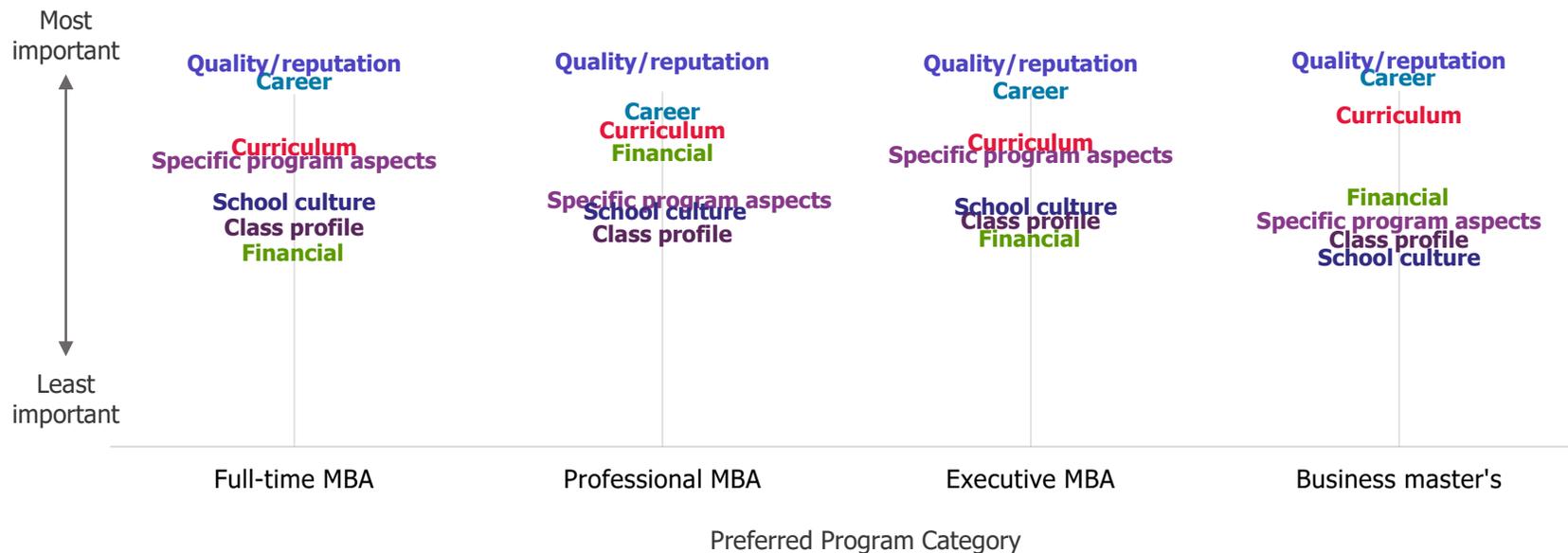
School Selection Criteria

Candidates' school selection criteria vary by the type of program they prefer

The relative importance candidates place on these school selection criteria vary somewhat by their preferred program category. Across all, quality/reputation is the most common selection as most important, although to a greater degree among candidates preferring full-time MBA and business master's programs. School culture and class profile similarly low across preferred program categories.

Candidates preferring professional MBA program types tend to place greater importance on curriculum and financial aspects, while candidates preferring full-time MBA and executive MBA place lower importance on financial aspects.

Average Ranking of Importance of School Selection Criteria by Preferred Program Category



Study Destination Considerations

GME has long been an enabler of candidates' international mobility, making available to them opportunities to study, live, and potentially work in parts of the world they otherwise would not have been able to.

To understand trends in candidates' application plans and study destination preferences, the survey asks multiple items related to where in the world candidates want to study. Specifically, survey items probe candidates application plans by world region/country, their preferred study destination by world region/country, and their reasons for selecting their preferred study destination. Analysis of candidate responses over time reveal important shifts in candidate attitudes and preferences with implications for school professionals across the globe.

Most recently, changes in the political climate in key study destinations have had the effect of accelerating what had been long-term, gradual shifts in candidate study destination preferences. Between 2016 and 2020 among candidates who plan to apply internationally, the percentage that prefer the United States as their study destination decreased from 48 percent to 36 percent, while the percentage that prefer to study in Western Europe increased from 31 percent to 43 percent.

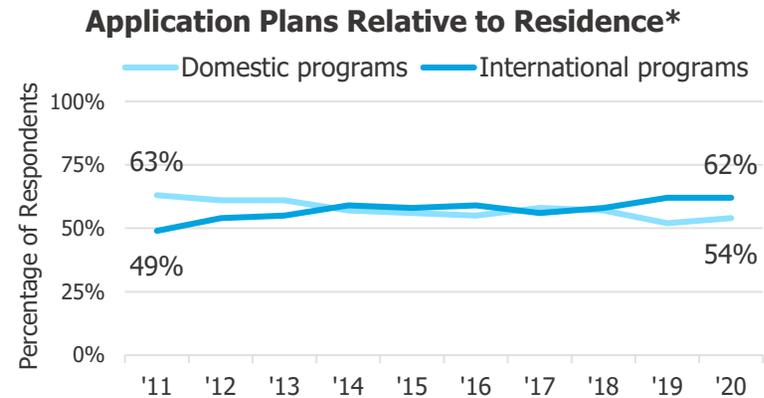


Study Destination Considerations

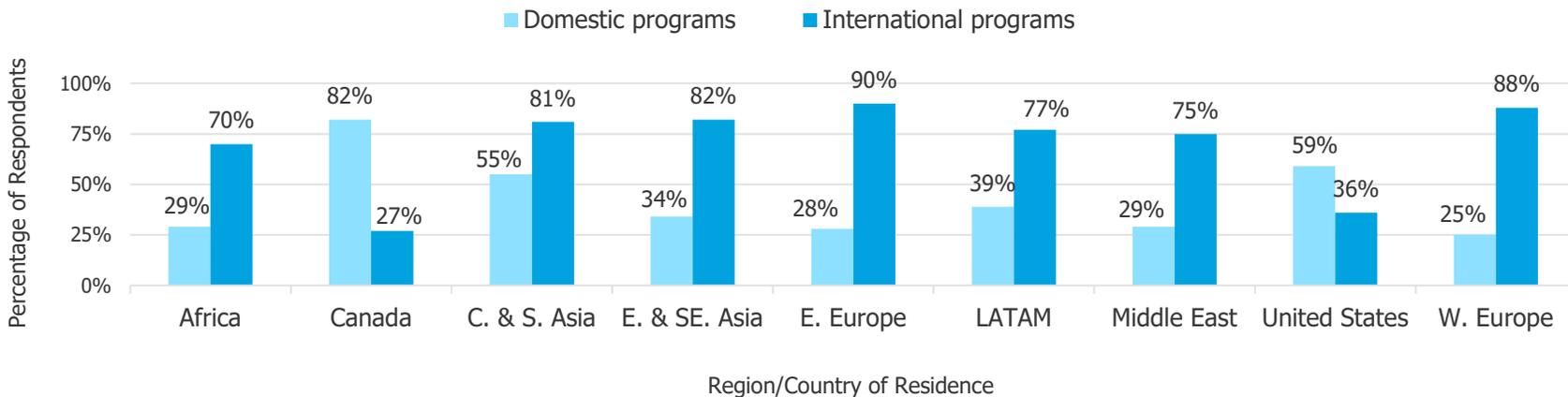
The percentage of candidates planning to apply internationally has been relatively stable for the last decade

Between 2009 and 2014, there was a steady increase in the percentage of candidates who planned to apply to business school programs outside of their country of residence, growing from 49 percent to 54 percent. In the years since, candidates' international application plans have remained stable. Most recently, an increase in plans to apply to international programs can be observed.

In all regions/countries of residence examined, a greater share of candidates plan to apply internationally than domestically, with the notable exceptions of the United States and Canada. This is consistent with recent survey data.



Application Plans Relative to Residence, by Region/Country of Residence*



*Totals sum to more than 100 percent due to candidates planning to apply both domestically and internationally. Candidates with international application plans are those who plan to apply to programs outside their country of residence.

Study Destination Considerations

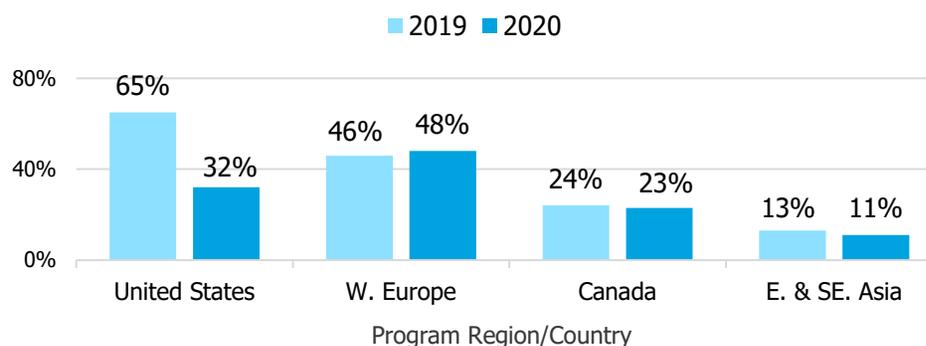
Two in 3 candidates overall plan to apply to a US program; United States and W. Europe are the top int'l application targets

Overall, about 1 in 3 candidates plan to apply to a program in the United States (32%), making it the second-most popular destination in terms of application plans, following Western Europe (48%). Compared to 2019, candidate application plans for US programs fell sharply, while application plans for Western Europe grew two percentage points and application plans for Canada fell one percentage point.

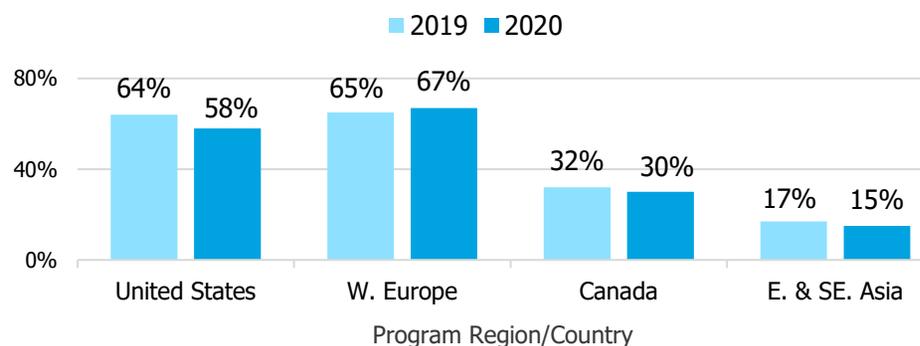
Looking specifically at candidates who plan to apply to programs outside their country of residence, a higher percentage of candidates plan to apply to programs in Western Europe (67%) than the United States (58%). Similar to the overall trend, programs across the globe grew year-on-year. International candidates' plans to apply to Canadian programs decreased from 32 to 30 percent.

Notably, the United States remains a more common international application target than Western Europe among residents of Central and South Asia (36% vs. 29%, details on next page), though Western Europe made gains with both of these groups compared with last year.

All Candidates
Application Plans by Program Region/Country*



Candidates With International Application Plans**
Application Plans by Program Region/Country*



*Totals do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections. **Candidates who plan to apply to programs outside their country of residence.

Study Destination Considerations

Most candidates with international application plans intend to apply to programs in multiple world regions/countries

Candidates With International Application Plans*
Application Plans by Candidate Region/Country of Residence and Program Region/Country

		Overall	Region of Residence**									
			Africa	Canada	C. & S. Asia	E. & SE. Asia	E. Europe	LATAM	Middle East	United States	W. Europe	
Program Region/Country	Africa	1%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Australia & PI	2%	4%	0%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	0%	1%	
	Canada	10%	24%	66%	12%	7%	5%	11%	12%	1%	2%	
	C. & S. Asia	2%	0%	0%	16%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
	E. & SE. Asia	5%	1%	1%	4%	28%	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%	
	E. Europe	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
	LATAM	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	
	Middle East	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%	
	United States	47%	32%	18%	36%	31%	28%	48%	25%	92%	15%	
	W. Europe	32%	27%	13%	29%	32%	59%	34%	48%	5%	79%	

*Candidates who plan to apply to programs outside their country of residence.

Study Destination Considerations

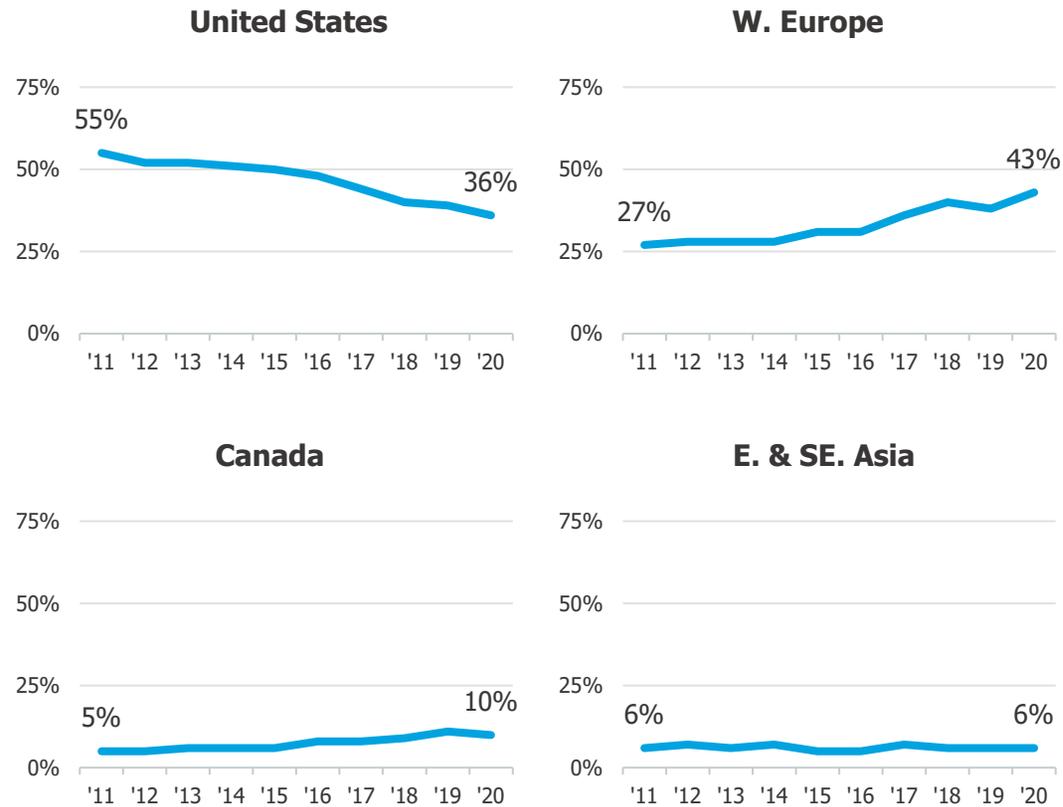
10-year trend in international candidate study destination preferences shows acceleration of decline for United States

In addition to asking which regions/countries candidates plan to send applications to, the survey asks candidates to identify their one preferred study destination region/country.

Among candidates who plan to apply internationally, preference for the United States as their study destination has declined over the last two years in an acceleration of the long-term, gradual decline seen over the previous eight years. The growth is observed in international candidate preference for Western Europe, and to a lesser degree Canada—that is, an accelerated increase over the past two years following a longer period of gradual increase.

This acceleration is likely driven in part by the political climate in the United States, which [ongoing GMAC research](#) shows has elevated concerns among non-US citizen candidates about their ability to obtain work visas in the United States post-GME, among other negative impressions.

Candidates With International Application Plans* Preferred Study Destination



*Candidates who plan to apply to programs outside their country of residence.

Study Destination Considerations

More candidates who plan to apply internationally say their preferred destination is W. Europe over the United States

Among candidates with international application plans, more prefer the United States and Western Europe as their study destination (36% and 43% respectively). Notably, preference for the United States is greater among residents of Canada (38% vs. 28%) and Central and South Asia (39% vs. 31%)—regions that are major sources of international candidates. Most residents of Western Europe and Eastern Europe with international application plans prefer to study in Western Europe (60% and 74%, respectively), and most US residents who plan to apply internationally prefer to study in the United States (65%).

Candidates With International Application Plans*
Preferred Study Destination by Candidate Region/Country of Residence and Program Region/Country

		Overall	Region of Residence								
			Africa	Canada	C. & S. Asia	E. & SE. Asia	E. Europe	LATAM	Middle East	United States	W. Europe
Program Region/Country	Africa	1%	5%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
	Australia & PI	2%	5%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1%
	Canada	10%	25%	31%	13%	7%	5%	12%	13%	2%	2%
	C. & S. Asia	2%	0%	1%	11%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
	E. & SE. Asia	6%	1%	2%	4%	19%	0%	3%	2%	3%	4%
	E. Europe	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	1%	1%	0%
	LATAM	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
	Middle East	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%
	United States	36%	34%	38%	39%	34%	30%	48%	27%	65%	19%
	W. Europe	43%	28%	28%	31%	37%	60%	34%	52%	27%	74%

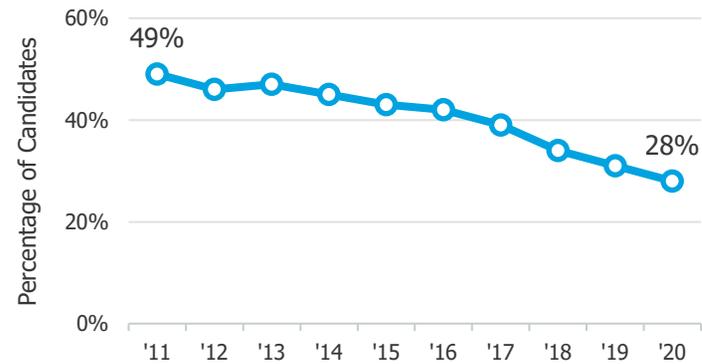
*Candidates who plan to apply to programs outside their country of residence.

Focus on international study in the United States

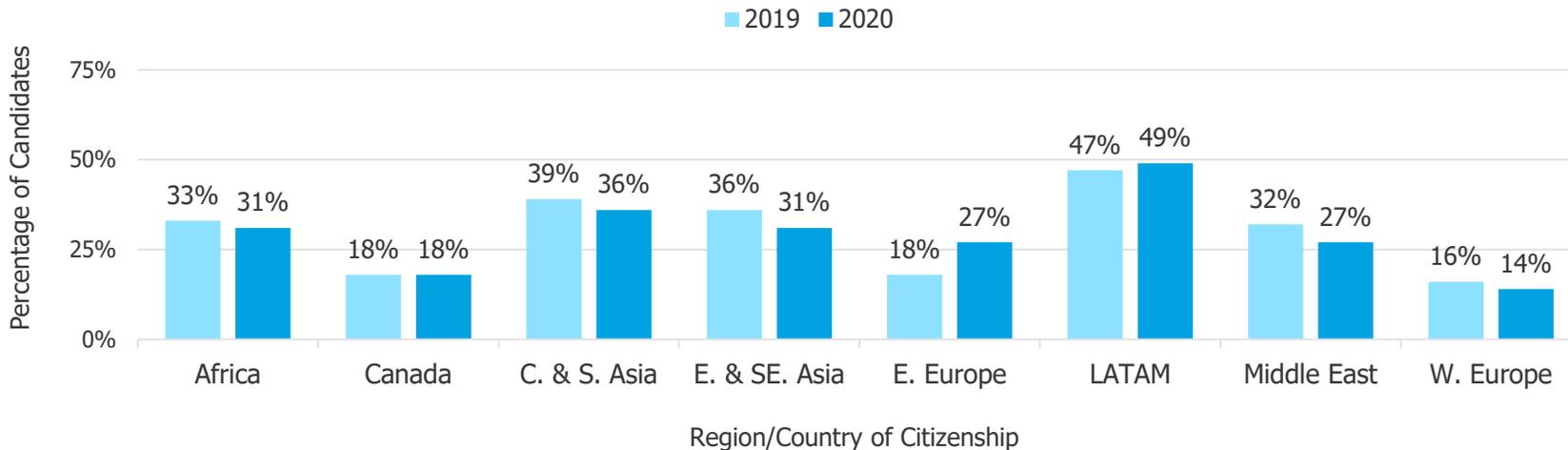
Similar to the trend seen among candidates with international application plans, the percentage of non-US citizens who say the United States is their preferred study destination has declined in the last two years following a long-term, more gradual decline seen over the previous eight years. Between 2011 and 2016, the percentage of non-US citizens who preferred to study in the United States declined from 49 percent to 42 percent. In 2019, it declined to 28 percent.

By region/country of citizenship, the two-year decline is greatest among citizens of countries in East and Southeast Asia and in the Middle East, both declining 5 percentage points.

Non-US Citizens Preferring to Study in the US



Candidate Preference to Study in the United States by Region/Country of Citizenship



Respondent Demographic Profile

This section details the gender and age details of 2020 survey respondents by their country of citizenship and residence.



Respondent Demographic Profile

		Overall*	Gender			Age				
			Male	Female	Other	22 and under	23 to 24	25 to 30	31 to 39	40 and older
Global		8,430	4,826	3,578	26	2,144	1,429	3,060	1,308	489
Citizenship	Africa	610	366	242	2	56	75	253	167	59
	Australia & Pacific Islands	104	61	42	1	16	11	35	24	18
	Canada	455	236	218	1	73	70	193	77	42
	Central & South Asia	1,089	730	356	3	326	214	394	128	27
	East & Southeast Asia	1,019	444	573	2	321	148	347	167	36
	Eastern Europe	189	89	99	1	72	35	40	33	9
	Latin America	521	336	183	2	40	70	281	84	46
	Middle East	277	179	98	0	42	44	112	64	15
	United States	2,534	1,397	1,128	9	560	407	1,001	382	184
	Western Europe	1,632	988	639	5	638	355	404	182	53
Residence	Africa	634	382	250	2	63	74	265	172	60
	Australia & Pacific Islands	101	62	38	1	14	11	35	22	19
	Canada	474	249	223	2	67	73	212	79	43
	Central & South Asia	1,097	731	362	4	324	218	395	131	29
	East & Southeast Asia	1,057	452	603	2	342	151	358	169	37
	Eastern Europe	189	93	95	1	67	36	41	34	11
	Latin America	556	356	197	3	45	80	294	91	46
	Middle East	289	186	103	0	43	46	116	67	17
	United States	2,413	1,319	1,088	6	539	390	943	366	175
	Western Europe	1,615	993	617	5	639	350	398	176	52

*Subtotals may not sum to global or overall figures due to missing demographic data.

Contributors and Contact Information

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Contributors

The following individuals from the GMAC Research team made significant contributions to the publication of this report:

Alexandria Williams, Associate Manager, Survey Research, interpretation of data, drafting of the manuscript for intellectual content; **Tacoma Williams**, Research Senior Coordinator, sample development and quality assurance; **Devina Caruthers**, Associate Research Manager, questionnaire design and survey management.

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