

Post-GME Career Aspirations

Overview report

Prospective Students Survey 2025 data
report

April 2025



Post-GME Career Aspirations: Prospective Students Survey is a product of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), a global, mission-driven association of 227 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 is dedicated to creating access to and disseminating information about graduate management education that business schools and candidates need to learn, connect, and evaluate each other. School and industry leaders rely on the Council as the premier provider of reliable data about the graduate management education industry.

Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	4
<u>Executive summary</u>	5
<u>Career goals</u>	7
<u>Career aspirations</u>	12
<u>Industries of interest</u>	14
<u>Job functions of interest</u>	20
<u>Methodology</u>	26
<u>Contributors & contact information</u>	29

Over 4,900 individuals responded to the Prospective Students Survey in 2024

The Prospective Students Survey is one of the Graduate Management Admission Council's (GMAC) keystone research programs. The global graduate management education (GME) community has relied on data from this survey to gain insights about candidates' decision-making processes when considering and applying to graduate business schools since 2009.

The findings detailed in this report are based on responses from a total of 4,912 individuals surveyed between January and December 2024.

Prospective students who responded represent those interested in various MBA and business master's programs, including full-time MBA, professional MBA, executive MBA, master's in management and international management, and other specialized business master's programs.

Responses used for analysis came from candidates who were actively applying to business schools or researching about graduate business programs.

Additional information on the survey methodology and analytical procedures supporting this report can be found on [page 26](#).

Explore the data for yourself

An Interactive Data Research Tool accompanies the Prospective Students Survey is available for all readers with a valid gmac.com account. This tool empowers users to customize data searches by multiple survey response variables, such as preferred study destination, preferred program type, citizenship, residence, gender, age, and more. Access this tool with your gmac.com login at:

gmac.com/prospectivestudents

Business school participation in GMAC Research

Graduate business schools around the world are invited to take advantage of 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:

gmac.com/surveysignup

Executive summary

This overview report offers insights into candidates' post-GME career aspirations, along with their considerations and preferences regarding job industries and functions.

The overall results for 2024 indicate that candidates prioritize higher income, international work opportunities, and project management experience as their primary career goals. They tend to favor industries such as Products & Services, Consulting, and Finance & Accounting, which have experienced continuous growth over the past decade. Consulting remains the top job function of interest, maintaining its position for seven consecutive years since 2017. Additionally, Finance & Accounting has reached a new high in 2024.

While a salary increase is the top career goal for both men and women, their priorities diverge in other areas. Men place greater emphasis on managing people and entrepreneurship, while women show a stronger preference for international travel opportunities and contributing to society. In terms of industry preferences, men are more likely to pursue careers in Finance & Accounting, Technology, and Energy & Utilities, while women show greater interest in Nonprofit & Government. Men express more interest than women in most post-GME job functions, except for Marketing & Sales and Human Resources, where women's interest is higher.

Career priorities also vary across age groups. Candidates aged 22 and younger are more likely to prioritize international travel opportunities, while those aged 23–39 primarily seek salary increases, and those aged 40 and older aspire to attain higher-level positions. Preferences for post-GME industries and job functions shift with age as well: interest in Finance & Accounting declines in both aspects with age, whereas interest in Nonprofit & Government industry, General Management, and IT & MIS job functions grows with age.

When analyzing the results by different world regions, candidates from North America and East & Southeast Asia prioritize salary increases, while those in Africa are more likely to pursue entrepreneurship. In the Middle East, candidates focus on project management experience, whereas candidates from all other regions prioritize international mobility. Despite regional differences, Products & Services remains the top post-GME industry globally, followed closely by Consulting and Finance & Accounting—with the exception of Africa, Canada, and the Middle East. Consulting continues to be the most sought-after job function worldwide, followed by General Management except in East & Southeast Asia and the U.S.

More information available

We are excited to continue sharing valuable insights from our latest GMAC Prospective Students Survey through the following nine reports:

2 overview reports



5 regional reports



2 program reports



Visit gmac.com to access all nine reports.

Career goals

Our differences make us individuals, and our similarities connect us to one another. This section focuses on candidates' specific post-GME career goals, exploring them through the lens of the following demographic characteristics:

- Gender
- Age group
- World region of citizenship



Candidates aim for higher income, international work opportunities, and management experience

Percentage of candidates who aspire to pursue GME for different career goals in 2024



Note: Percentages of candidates who aspire to pursue GME for different career goals do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.

Men prioritize managing people and entrepreneurship more than women, while women show a stronger preference for international travel opportunities and contributing to society

Percentage of men and women who aspire to pursue GME for different career goals in 2024



Notes:

- 1. Percentages of men or women who aspire to pursue GME for different career goals do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.
- 2. Results for candidates who self-identified as non-binary are not included because the sample size is below reporting threshold.

Post-GME priorities differ across age groups: 22 and younger desire international travel opportunities; 23-39 seek a salary increase; 40 and older aim to obtain higher level positions

Post-GME career goals	Age				
	22 and under	23 to 24	25 to 30	31 to 39	40 and older
Get a raise/salary increase	28%	39%	49%	43%	41%
Work for a company where I can travel internationally	40%	35%	34%	29%	28%
Manage projects	31%	38%	37%	36%	32%
Work outside my country of citizenship	32%	31%	33%	31%	23%
Obtain an executive level position	29%	30%	30%	38%	50%
Obtain a senior level position	24%	26%	35%	38%	35%
Manage people	28%	33%	36%	36%	26%
Doing work that contributes positively to society	27%	33%	32%	33%	33%
Be self-employed/entrepreneur	30%	32%	29%	28%	38%
Change job functions/occupation	12%	27%	38%	42%	41%

Notes:

- 1. Column percentages do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.
- 2. Bolded cells highlight the most preferred post-GME goals within each age group.

Candidates prioritize salary increases and geographic mobility in most world regions

Post-GME career goals	World region of citizenship									
	Africa	Australia & Pacific Islands	Canada	Central & South Asia	East & Southeast Asia	Eastern Europe	Latin America	Middle East	United States	Western Europe
Get a raise/salary increase	18%	35%	58%	32%	39%	29%	48%	25%	59%	36%
Work for a company where I can travel internationally	38%	46%	31%	39%	33%	37%	31%	26%	27%	40%
Manage projects	42%	31%	33%	38%	24%	31%	36%	48%	38%	34%
Work outside my country of citizenship	35%	27%	22%	32%	35%	36%	51%	47%	13%	37%
Obtain an executive level position	24%	27%	41%	37%	17%	31%	35%	46%	33%	34%
Obtain a senior level position	21%	15%	38%	34%	25%	20%	34%	28%	38%	28%
Manage people	23%	35%	36%	32%	20%	31%	33%	30%	42%	34%
Doing work that contributes positively to society	42%	27%	33%	34%	25%	23%	31%	27%	35%	29%
Be self-employed/entrepreneur	52%	38%	20%	35%	24%	33%	34%	42%	28%	23%
Change job functions/occupation	18%	15%	31%	29%	27%	24%	27%	29%	36%	25%

Notes:

- 1. Column percentages do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.
- 2. Bolded cells highlight the most preferred post-GME goals within each age group.

Career aspirations

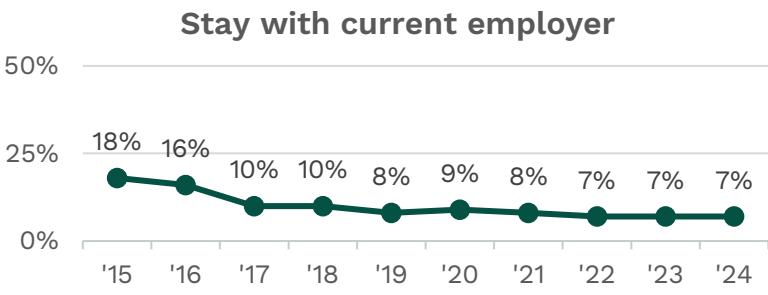
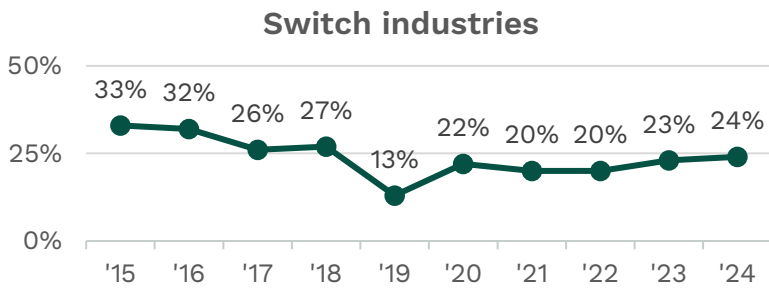
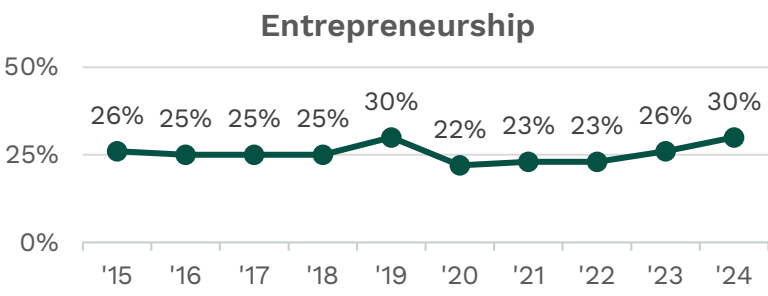
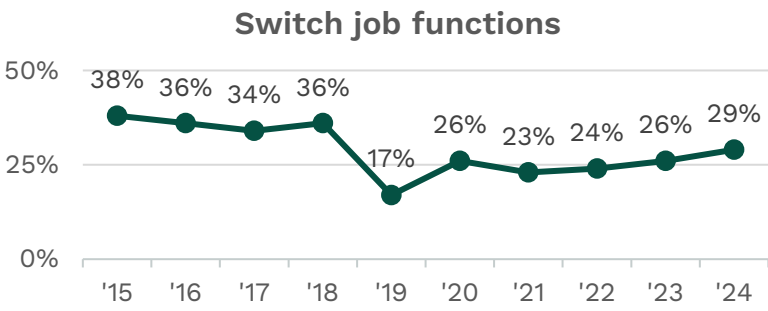
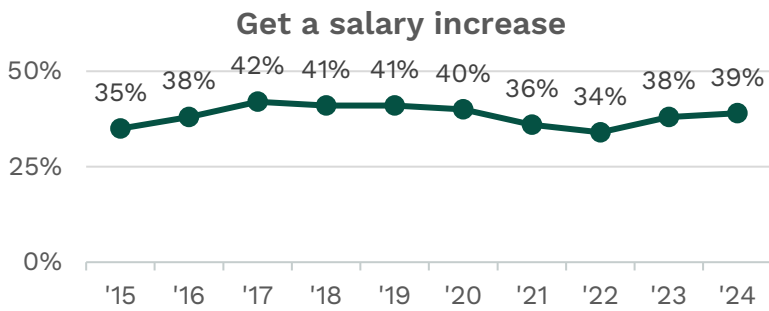
This section examines 10-year trends across the career aspirations that candidates are most interested in pursuing upon graduating from graduate business school.

While every individual is propelled by unique motivations, the following six aspirations are most common among prospective students regardless of geography or demographic characteristic.

- Get a salary increase
- Switch job industries
- Switch job functions
- Entrepreneurship
- International employment
- Stay with current employer



10-year trend shows the most popular aspiration for candidates was a salary increase; entrepreneurship has returned to its peak; desire for career changes has gradually risen in recent years



Industries of interest

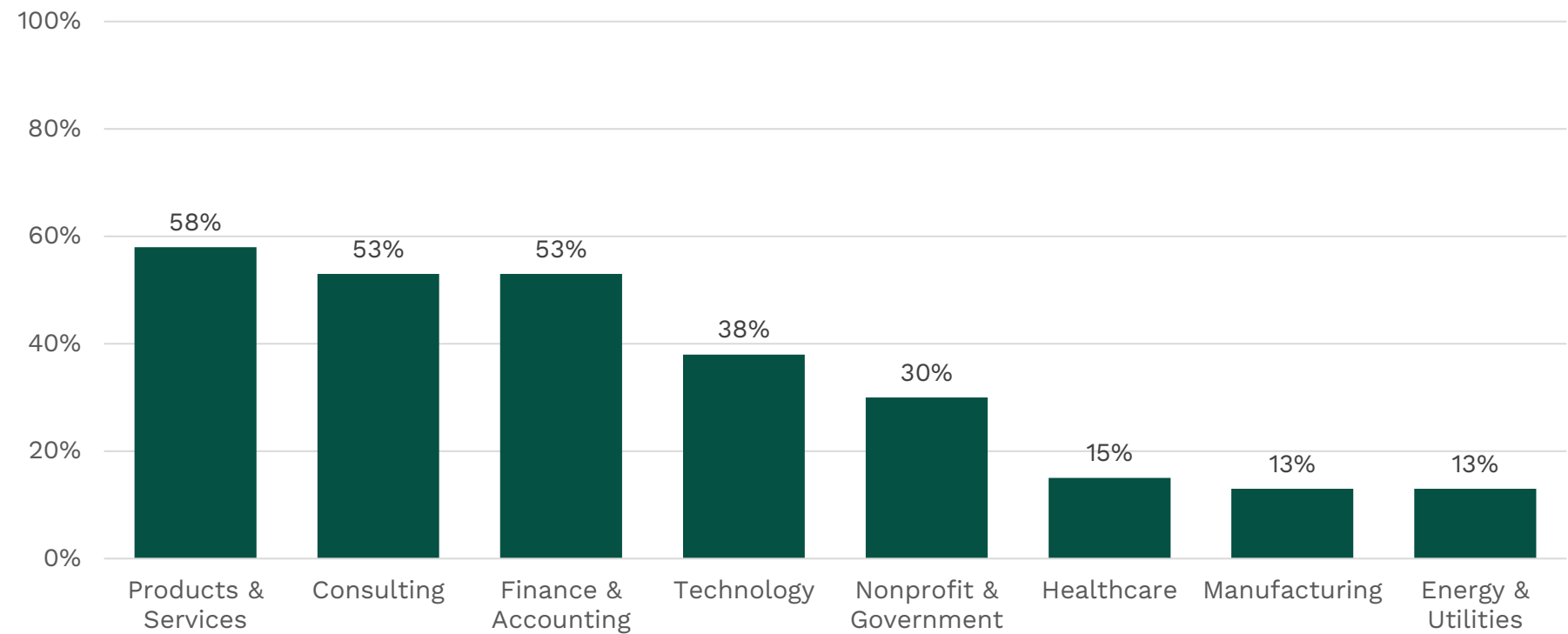
This section focuses on 2024 respondents' industries of interest for post-GME employment by the following demographic characteristics:

- Gender
- Age group
- World region of citizenship



Candidates most aspire to work in Products & Services, Consulting, and Finance & Accounting

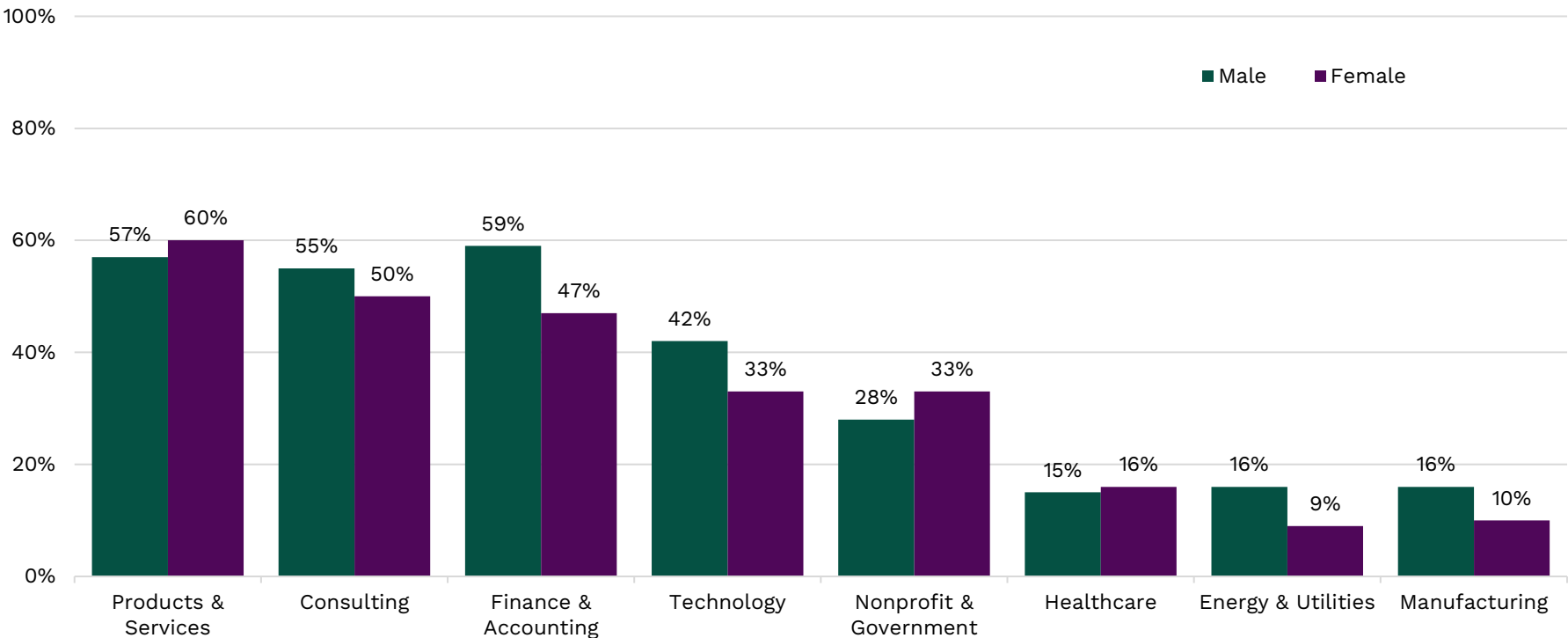
Percentage of candidates interested in each post-GME industry in 2024



Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.

Men are most likely than woman to choose Finance & Accounting, Technology, and Energy & Utilities for post-GME industries, while women are more interested in Nonprofit & Government

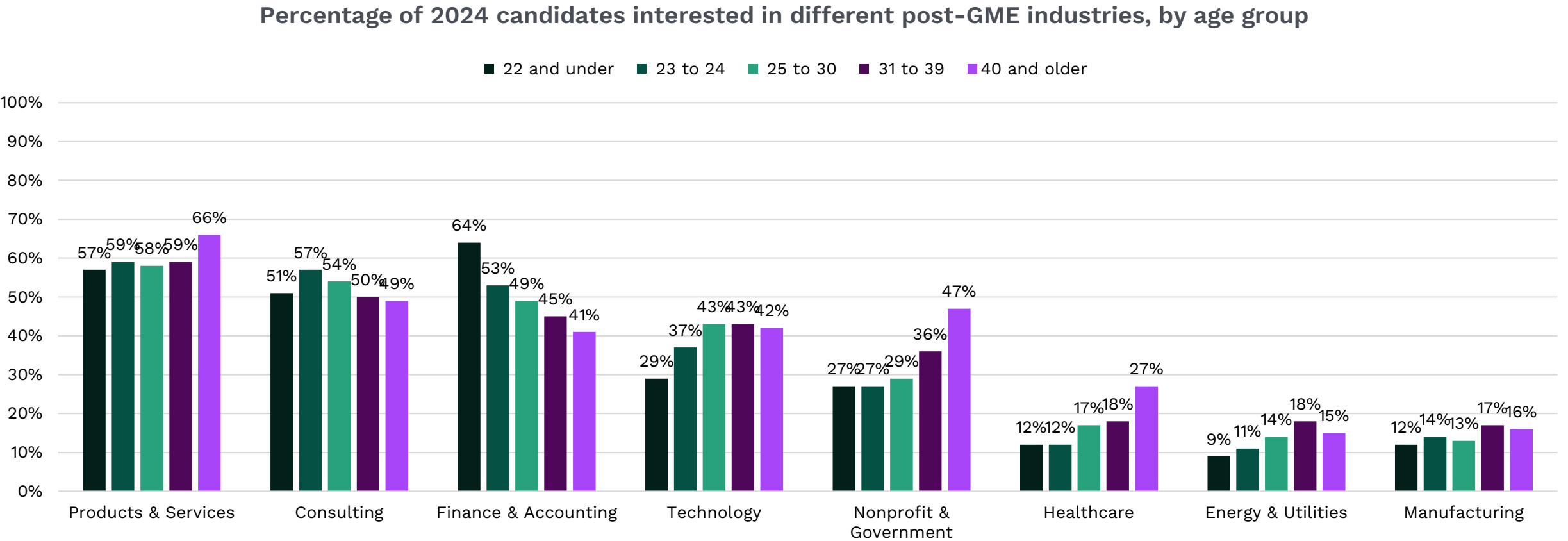
Percentage of men and women interested in each post-GME industry in 2024



Notes:

- 1. Percentages of candidates among men or women who are interested in different industries do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.
- 2. Results for candidates who self-identified as non-binary are not included because the sample size is below reporting threshold.

Interest in Finance & Accounting decreases with age, while that in Nonprofit & Government increases with age



Note: Percentages within the same age group do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.

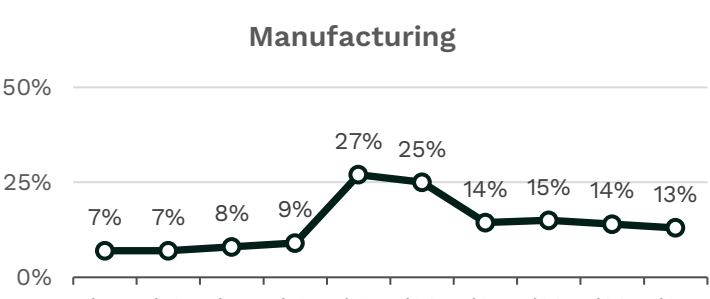
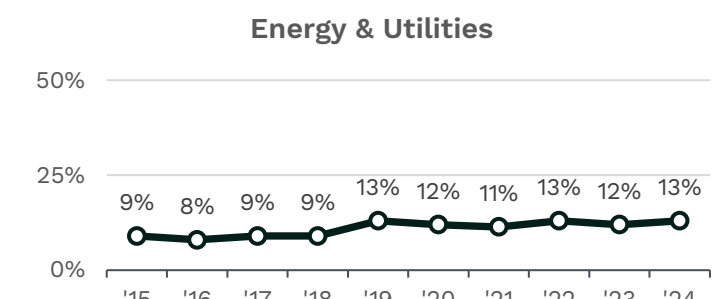
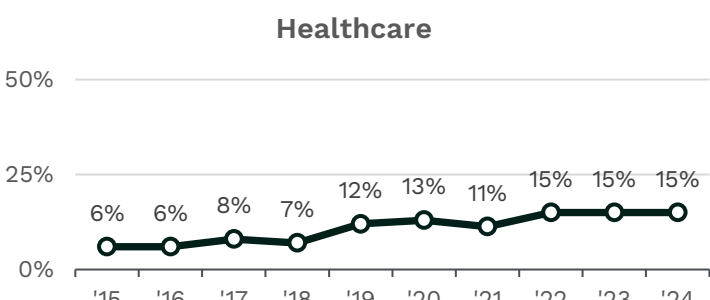
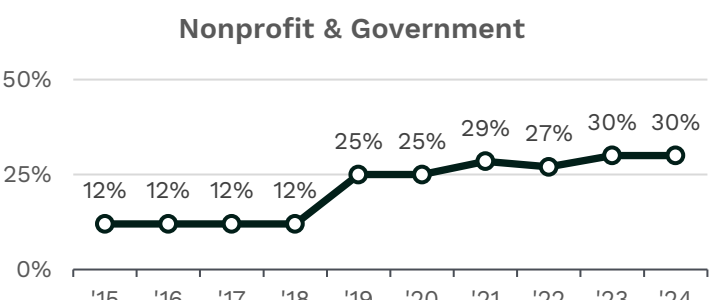
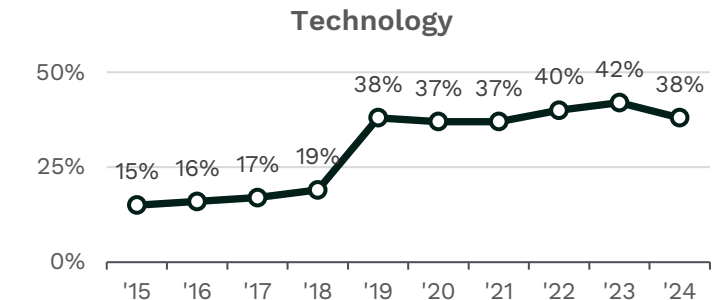
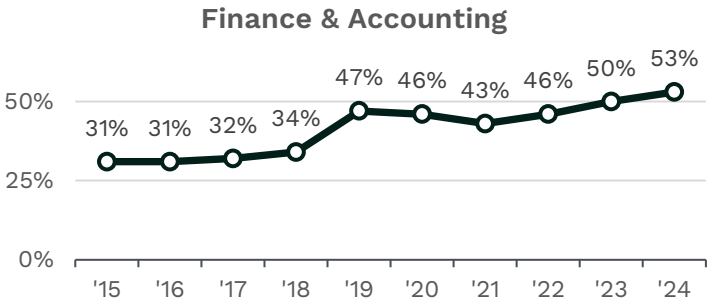
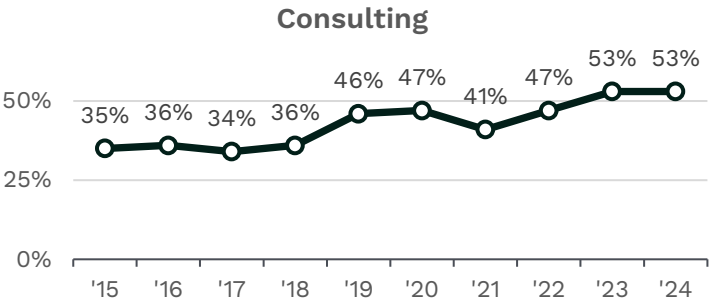
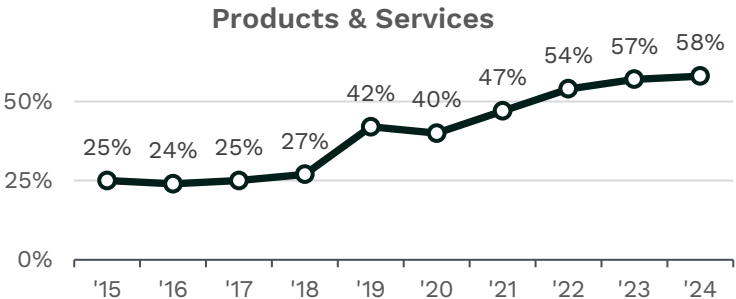
Products & Services is one of the top post-GME industry for candidates from all regions; Consulting and Finance & Accounting follow closely behind for most regions

World region of citizenship	Industries							
	Products & Services	Consulting	Finance & Accounting	Technology	Nonprofit & Government	Healthcare	Energy & Utilities	Manufacturing
Africa	69%	42%	54%	44%	47%	15%	35%	24%
Australia & Pacific Islands	52%	28%	36%	24%	27%	4%	24%	12%
Canada	56%	48%	43%	35%	45%	17%	9%	15%
Central & South Asia	62%	63%	55%	49%	35%	15%	14%	21%
East & Southeast Asia	60%	49%	55%	37%	29%	16%	10%	12%
Eastern Europe	64%	39%	58%	28%	25%	11%	8%	6%
Latin America	63%	55%	51%	44%	23%	15%	20%	12%
Middle East	58%	50%	35%	42%	35%	11%	20%	15%
United States	59%	46%	47%	36%	34%	15%	7%	8%
Western Europe	45%	56%	58%	27%	20%	19%	15%	12%

Notes:

- 1. Row percentages do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.
- 2. Bolded cells highlight the top three post-GME industries for candidates from each region of citizenships.

Post-GME interest in Products & Services and Finance & Accounting continues to grow, while Technology has a slight decline



Note: The methodology for asking candidates about their desired job industry after GME changed in 2019. The questionnaire condensed a few business-related industries while removing some non-business-related industries.

Job functions of interest

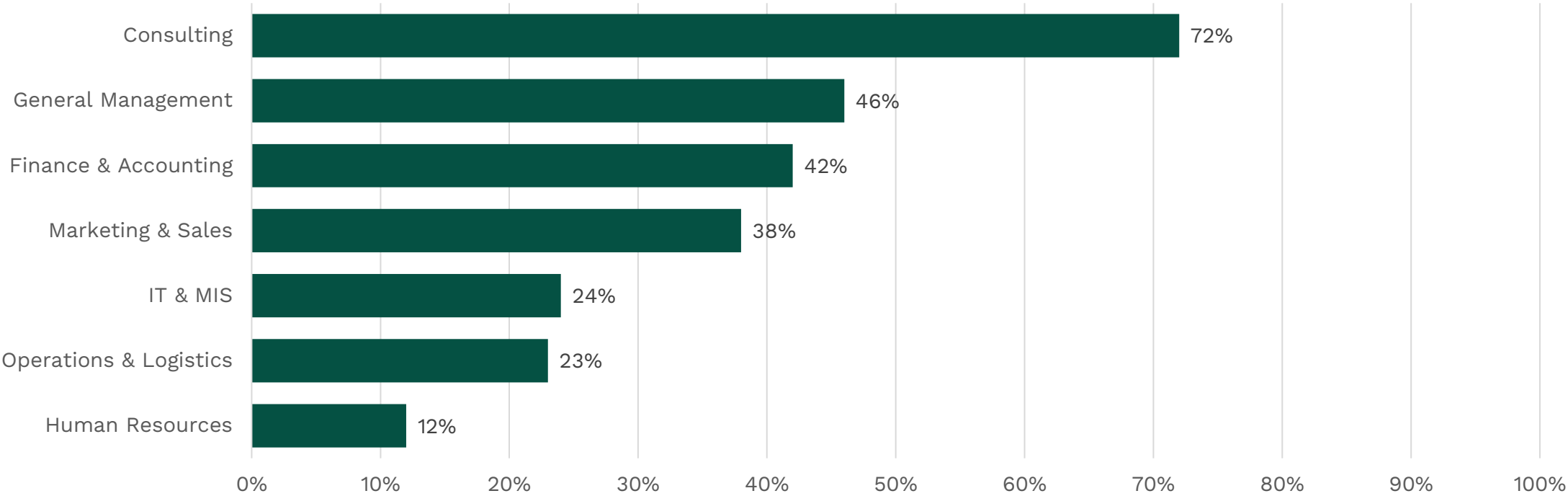
This section presents the job functions of interest for post-GME employment among the 2024 respondents, categorized by the following demographic characteristics:

- Gender
- Age group
- World region of citizenship



Consulting stands out as the most preferred job function with a significant lead over others

Percentage of 2024 candidates interested in each job function

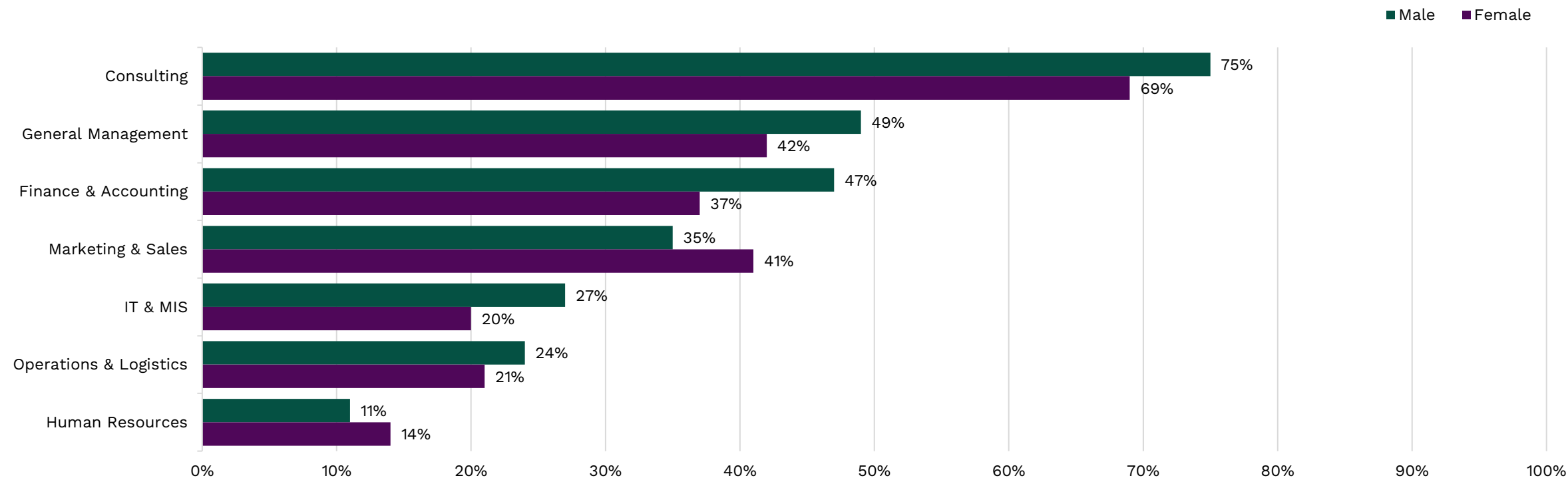


Notes:

- 1. IT & MIS stands for information technology and management information systems.
- 2. Percentages do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.

Men show more interest than women in most Post-GME job functions, except for Marketing & Sales and Human Resources

Percentage of men and women interested in each job function in 2024



Notes:

- 1. IT & MIS stands for information technology and management information systems
- 2. Percentages of men or women who are interested in different job functions do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.
- 3. Results for candidates who self-identified as non-binary are not included because the sample size is below reporting threshold.

Candidates of all age groups prefer Consulting as a post-GME job function; interest in General Management and IT & MIS¹ increases with age, whereas Finance & Accounting decreases

Age	Job functions						
	Consulting	General Management	Finance & Accounting	Marketing & Sales	IT & MIS ¹	Operations & Logistics	Human Resources
22 and under	65%	40%	58%	36%	21%	18%	13%
23 to 24	76%	45%	43%	42%	21%	22%	13%
25 to 30	78%	46%	35%	38%	27%	25%	10%
31 to 39	72%	53%	32%	37%	22%	26%	14%
40 and older	71%	59%	23%	40%	29%	29%	15%

Notes:

- 1. IT & MIS stands for information technology and management information systems
- 2. Cells in watermelon highlight the top job function of candidates in each age group
- 3. Row percentages do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.

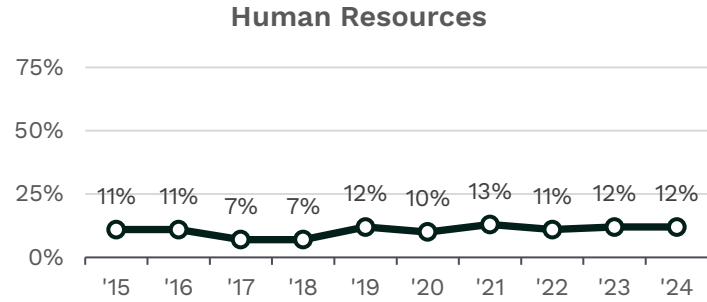
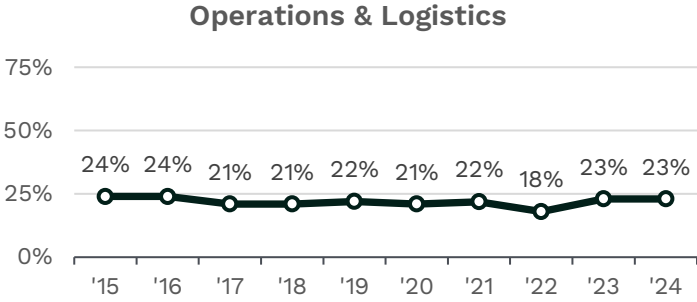
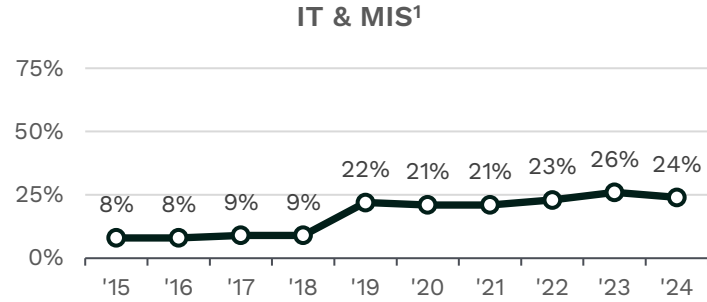
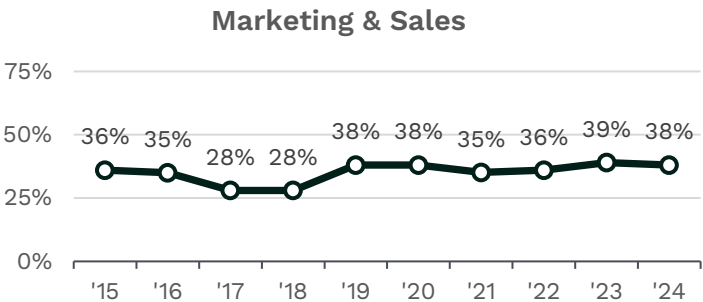
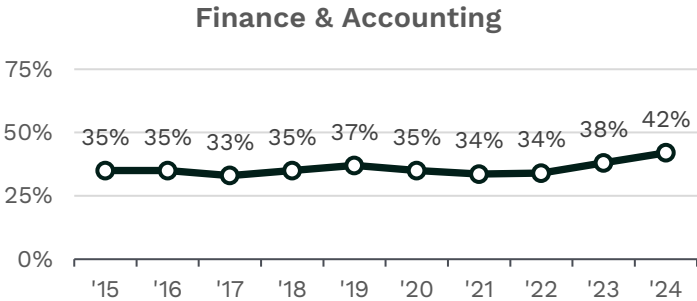
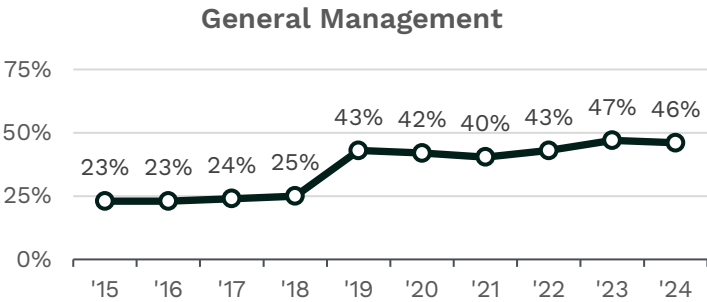
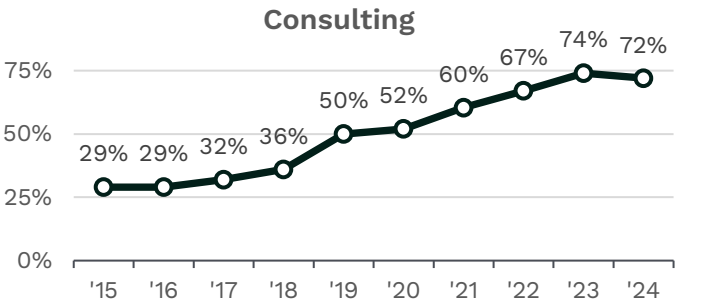
Consulting is the top choice of job functions for candidates from all world regions, followed by General Management except in East & Southeast Asia and the U.S.

World region of citizenship	Job Functions						
	Consulting	General Management	Finance & Accounting	Marketing & Sales	IT & MIS ¹	Operations & Logistics	Human Resources
Africa	62%	50%	38%	44%	35%	29%	31%
Australia & Pacific Islands	69%	38%	19%	38%	23%	19%	19%
Canada	70%	43%	26%	33%	27%	36%	14%
Central & South Asia	81%	54%	43%	41%	32%	29%	18%
East & Southeast Asia	70%	38%	44%	39%	31%	21%	16%
Eastern Europe	62%	51%	42%	37%	18%	14%	7%
Latin America	79%	47%	37%	37%	21%	20%	9%
Middle East	68%	49%	32%	47%	26%	22%	20%
United States	64%	35%	44%	32%	19%	26%	9%
Western Europe	75%	48%	44%	37%	12%	16%	5%

Notes:

- 1. IT & MIS stands for information technology and management information systems.
- 2. Bolded cells highlight the top three choices of job functions for candidates from each world region.
- 3. Row percentages do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.

10-year trend shows a rise in interest for Consulting, General Management, and IT & MIS¹ job functions



Note:

1. IT & MIS stands for information technology and management information systems.
2. The methodology for asking candidates about their desired job function after GME changed in 2019. The questionnaire condensed a few business-related industries while removing some non-business-related industries.

Methodology

Population & sampling methods

In 2024, the GMAC™ Prospective Student Survey was conducted every month of the year among individuals who visited GMAC’s web properties (i.e., mba.com, businessbecause.com, gmac.com, gmat.com.cn, and social media accounts) to learn about GME programs and prepare for applications to business schools worldwide. Additionally, members of partnership organizations such as the Forté Foundation and Beta Alpha Psi (an international honor society for accounting, finance, and information system students attending universities accredited by the AACSB or the European Quality Improvement System) were also invited to complete the survey.

This broader invitation aimed to ensure representation from diverse regions worldwide. In total, 4,912 prospective students from 147 countries or regions across all 10 populated world regions completed the survey.

Responses used for analysis included candidates who are actively applying to business schools or currently researching about graduate business programs.

Analysis

Descriptive analyses were conducted on survey responses to examine prospective students’ career goals. Analyses were conducted on all respondents and by respondents’ age, gender, and region of citizenship.

Global results are weighted to more accurately represent the regional population of individuals who may be interested in a graduate business degree in each region. Public data from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, World Bank, UNESCO Education, and China’s Ministry of Education are used to estimate the population size that may pursue graduate management education in each world region, which is used to calculate the expected percentage of prospective students from each region.

Weights are generated by dividing the expected percentage of prospective students from each region by the observed percentage of respondents from each region. Weights are applied when generating global results. Regional or country-level results are not weighted.

Respondent demographic profile

		2024 unweighted		2024 weighted
		N	%	%
	Total	4,912		
Gender	Male	2,662	54%	52%
	Female	2,203	45%	47%
	Non-binary	47	1%	1%
Age group	22 and younger	1,123	23%	31%
	23 to 24	796	16%	17%
	25 to 30	1,805	37%	31%
	31 to 39	862	18%	15%
	40 and older	326	7%	6%
Region of citizenship	Africa	1,574	32%	2%
	Australia and Pacific Islands	26	1%	<1%
	Canada	81	2%	2%
	Central & South Asia	1,180	24%	26%
	East & Southeast Asia	533	11%	14%
	Eastern Europe	75	2%	9%
	Mexico, Caribbean, & Latin America	220	4%	5%
	Middle East	63	1%	4%
	United States	794	16%	19%
	Western Europe	366	7%	18%

Country-world region assignment

All geographic regions mentioned in this report use the following country-region classifications:

Africa: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, French Southern Territories, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast (Cote D'Ivoire), Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab, Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mayotte, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Reunion, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Svalbard and Jan Mayen, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Western Sahara, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Australia and Pacific Islands: American Samoa, Australia, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Heard Island and McDonald Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna Islands

Canada

Central & South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, British Indian Ocean Territory, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

East & Southeast Asia: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Hong Kong SAR, Indonesia, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Laos, Macao SAR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, China, Thailand, Vietnam

Eastern Europe: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Republic of Kosovo, Romania, Serbia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia

Latin America: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Bolivia, Bonaire, Saint Eustatius and Saba, Brazil, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Falkland Islands, French Guiana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Saint Barthelemy, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Sint Maarten, South Georgia-Sandwich Islands, St. Helena, St. Martin, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Uruguay, US Minor Outlying Islands, Venezuela, British Virgin Islands, US Virgin Islands

Middle East: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian, Territory, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

United States

Western Europe: Aland Islands, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bouvet Island, Cyprus, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Greece, Greenland, Guernsey, Iceland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Italy, Jersey, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Vatican City State

Contributors & contact information

Contributors

The following individuals made significant contributions to the publication of this report:

Quan Yuan, Manager of Survey Research: Data analysis & interpretation, manuscript draft & design, sample development, survey design & management.

Katie Bao, Manager of Survey Research: Manuscript review.

Kun Yuan, Director of Research & Data Science: Manuscript review.

Contact information

For questions or comments regarding the data or analysis presented in this report, please contact the GMAC Research & Data Science Team at research@gmac.com.

©2025 Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC). All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, distributed or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of GMAC. For permission contact the GMAC Legal Department at legal@gmac.com.

GMAC™, GMAT™, Graduate Management Admission Council™, Graduate Management Admission Test™ and NMAT by GMAC™ are trademarks of GMAC in the United States and other countries.