

Post-GME Career Aspirations

Overview report

Prospective Students Survey 2026 data
report

April 2026



Post-GME Career Aspirations: Prospective Students Survey is a product of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), a global, mission-driven association of 228 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.

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Nearly 4,300 individuals responded to the Prospective Students Survey in 2025.

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 4,253 individuals surveyed between January and December 2025.

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 in 2025 show little change compared with the previous year. Candidates continue to prioritize higher income, international work opportunities, and project management experience as their primary career goals. Products & Services, Finance & Accounting, and Consulting remain the top three preferred industries, all of which have experienced steady growth over the past decade. Consulting continues to be the most preferred job function, maintaining its leading position for eight consecutive years since 2017. In addition, Finance & Accounting reached a new high in 2025, surpassing General Management to become the second most preferred job function.

Gender differences in career goals remain consistent with last year's findings. Women are more likely than men to prioritize higher pay, international travel opportunities, and contributing to society. In terms of industry preferences, men show stronger interest in Finance & Accounting, Consulting, and Technology, while women demonstrate greater interest in Nonprofit & Government. Men also report higher interest than women across most post-GME job functions, with the exception of Marketing & Sales and Human Resources, where women's interest is comparatively higher.

Career priorities also vary by age group. Candidates aged 24 and younger are more likely to prioritize international travel opportunities, while those aged 25 to 30 place salary increases first. Industry and job function preferences also shift with age. Interest in Finance & Accounting declines across both industry and job function dimensions as age increases. In contrast, interest in Products & Services, Nonprofit & Government and Manufacturing industries, as well as General Management and Operations & Logistics job functions, tends to increase with age.

Regional differences are also evident. Candidates from the United States, Latin America, and East & Southeast Asia are more likely to prioritize salary increases, while candidates in Africa show stronger interest in entrepreneurship. In the Middle East, candidates emphasize gaining project management experience, whereas those in Europe and Central & South Asia prioritize international mobility. Despite these regional differences, Products & Services remains the leading post-GME industry globally, except for Western Europe. Consulting and Finance & Accounting generally rank among the top three industries across most regions. Consulting also continues to be the most sought-after job function worldwide, followed by Finance & Accounting and General Management.

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/prospectivestudents

to access all nine reports.

Career goals

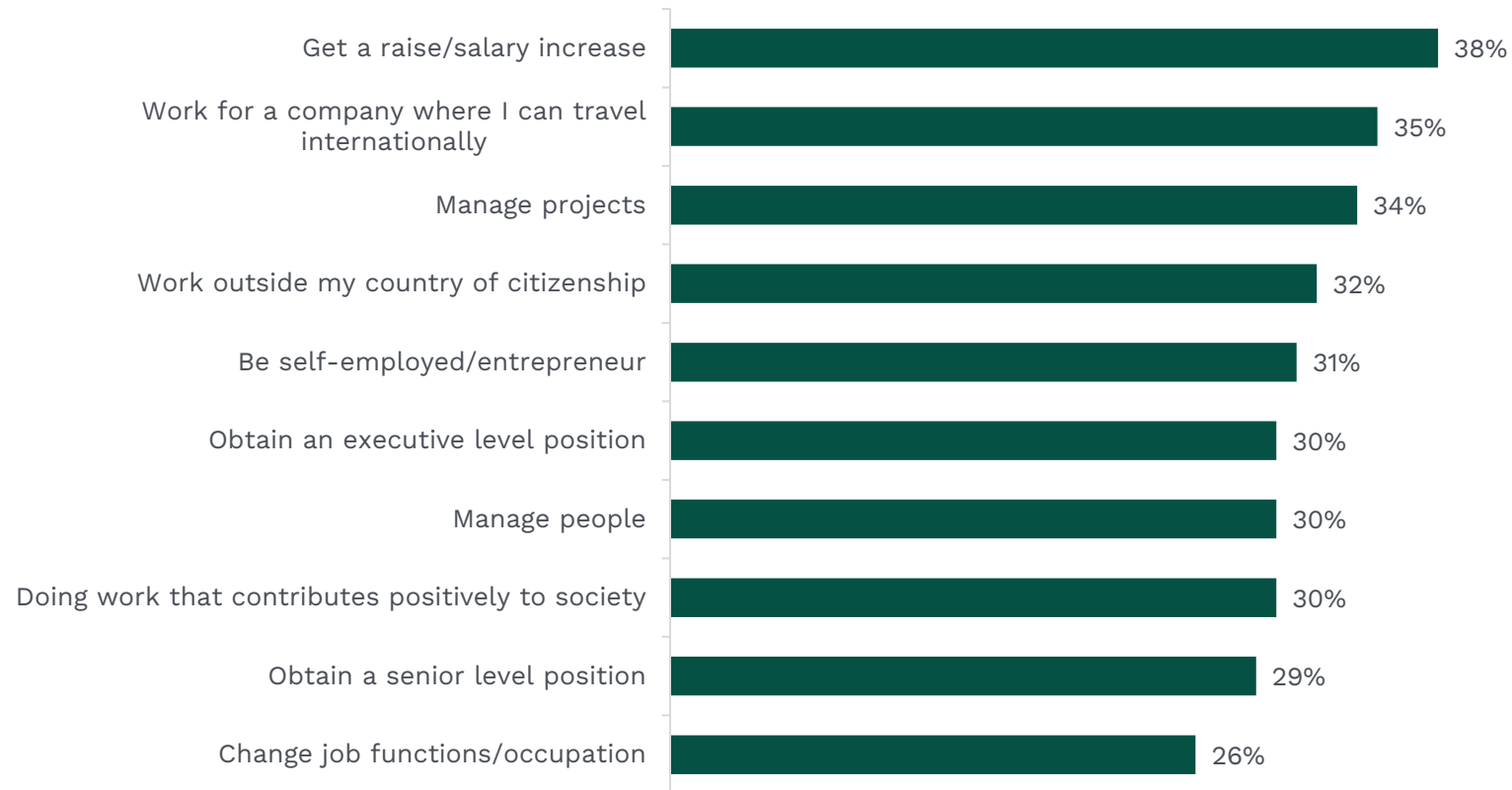
Our differences make us individuals, and our similarities connect us to one another. This section focuses on candidates' specific post-GME career goals, exploring them through the lens of the following demographic characteristics:

- Gender
- Age group
- World region of citizenship



The top 3 career goals for candidates pursuing GME are higher earnings, opportunities to work internationally, and project management experience.

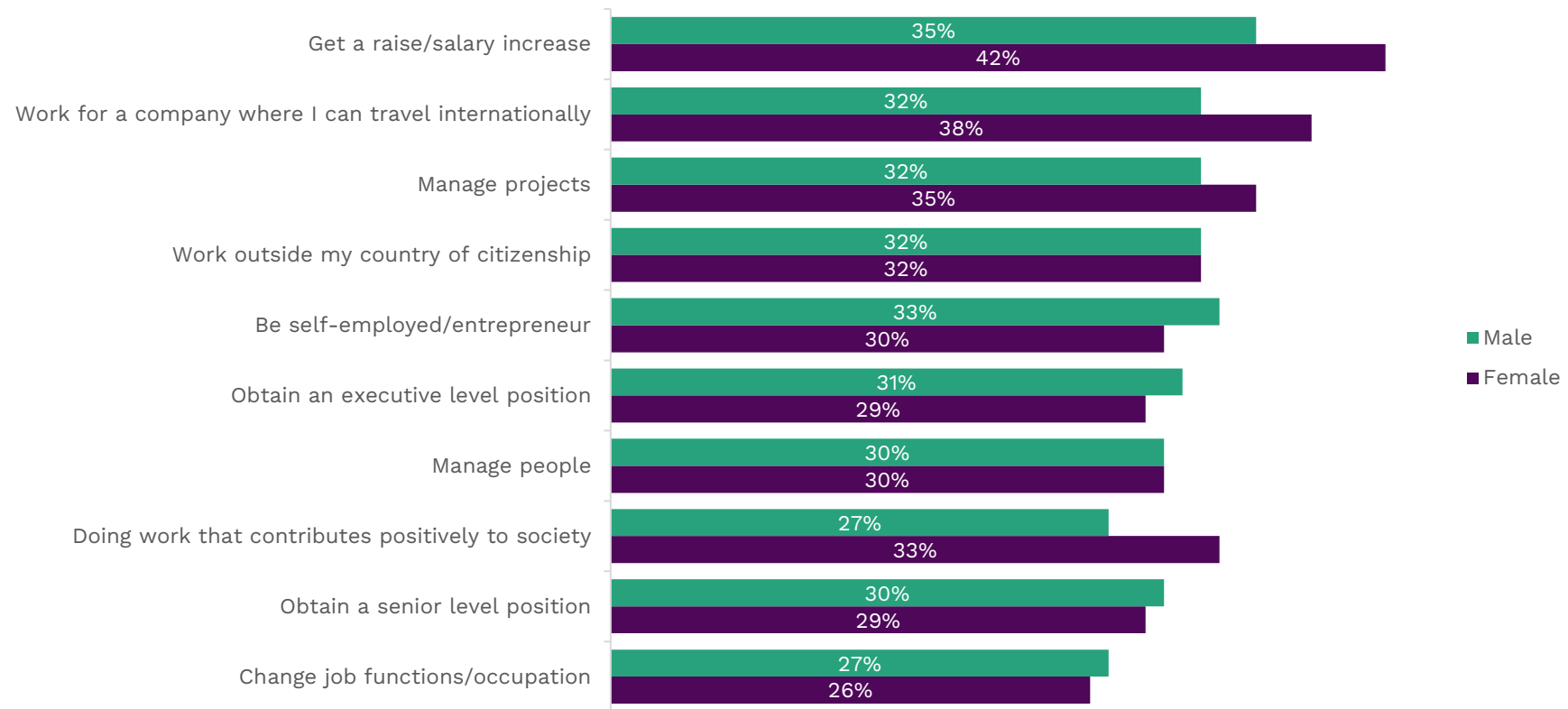
Percentage of candidates who aspire to pursue GME for different career goals in 2025



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

Women show a stronger preference than men for higher pay, opportunities for international travel, and making a positive contribution to society.

Percentage of men and women who aspire to pursue GME for different career goals in 2025



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.

Top post-GME career goals vary across age groups, with candidates aged 24 and younger prioritizing international travel opportunities, while those aged 25–30 place salary increases first.

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	31%	35%	46%	41%	37%
Work for a company where I can travel internationally	36%	40%	37%	28%	26%
Manage projects	31%	37%	38%	30%	25%
Work outside my country of citizenship	31%	35%	32%	32%	20%
Be self-employed/entrepreneur	29%	27%	34%	32%	38%
Obtain an executive level position	25%	23%	32%	40%	39%
Manage people	28%	31%	33%	31%	23%
Doing work that contributes positively to society	24%	32%	33%	30%	32%
Obtain a senior level position	24%	25%	33%	33%	36%
Change job functions/occupation	10%	20%	38%	38%	32%

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 in the U.S., Latin America, and E&SE Asia prioritize salary increases, while those in Europe and C&S Asia value international opportunities; African candidates show strong interest in self-employment.

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	19%	33%	44%	32%	37%	30%	52%	20%	58%	33%
Work for a company where I can travel internationally	41%	28%	26%	40%	29%	34%	39%	29%	28%	42%
Manage projects	41%	44%	39%	36%	25%	30%	35%	45%	35%	33%
Work outside my country of citizenship	34%	22%	26%	33%	35%	38%	48%	41%	12%	39%
Be self-employed/entrepreneur	54%	33%	32%	35%	26%	38%	38%	43%	29%	24%
Obtain an executive level position	26%	33%	45%	32%	19%	30%	39%	38%	33%	28%
Manage people	27%	39%	39%	31%	21%	22%	32%	30%	38%	32%
Doing work that contributes positively to society	43%	22%	35%	34%	20%	27%	37%	22%	35%	25%
Obtain a senior level position	24%	28%	38%	34%	23%	24%	36%	34%	38%	19%
Change job functions/occupation	21%	33%	35%	29%	22%	14%	33%	21%	37%	19%

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

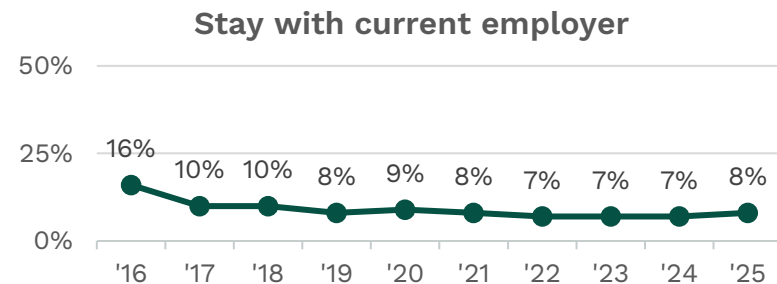
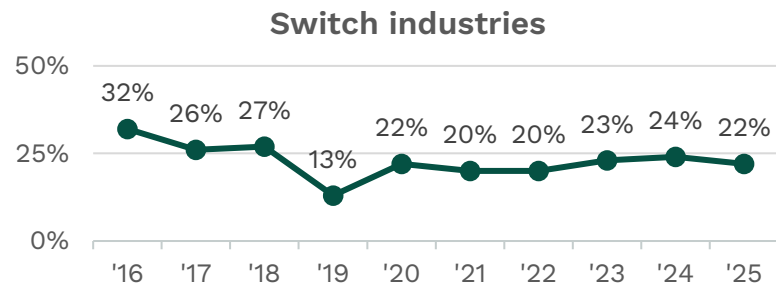
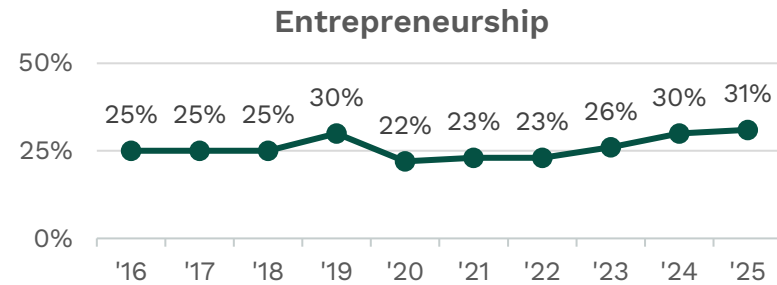
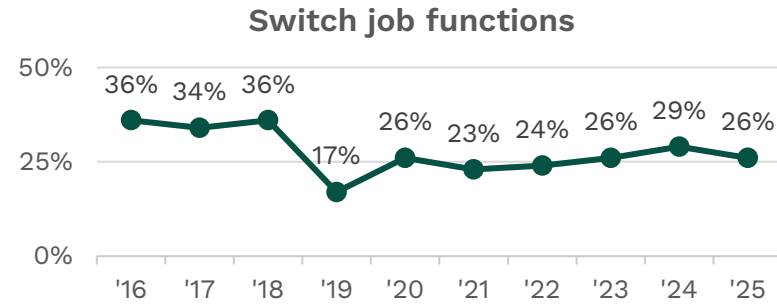
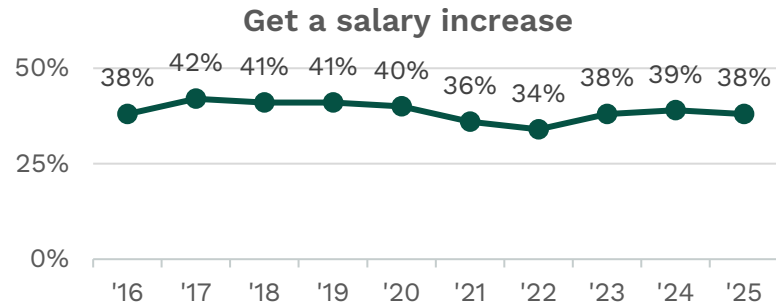
This section examines 10-year trends across the career aspirations that candidates are most interested in pursuing upon graduating from graduate business school.

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 that salary increases remain the most common aspiration, interest in entrepreneurship has been rising, while aspirations to switch job functions and industries have been declining.



Industries of interest

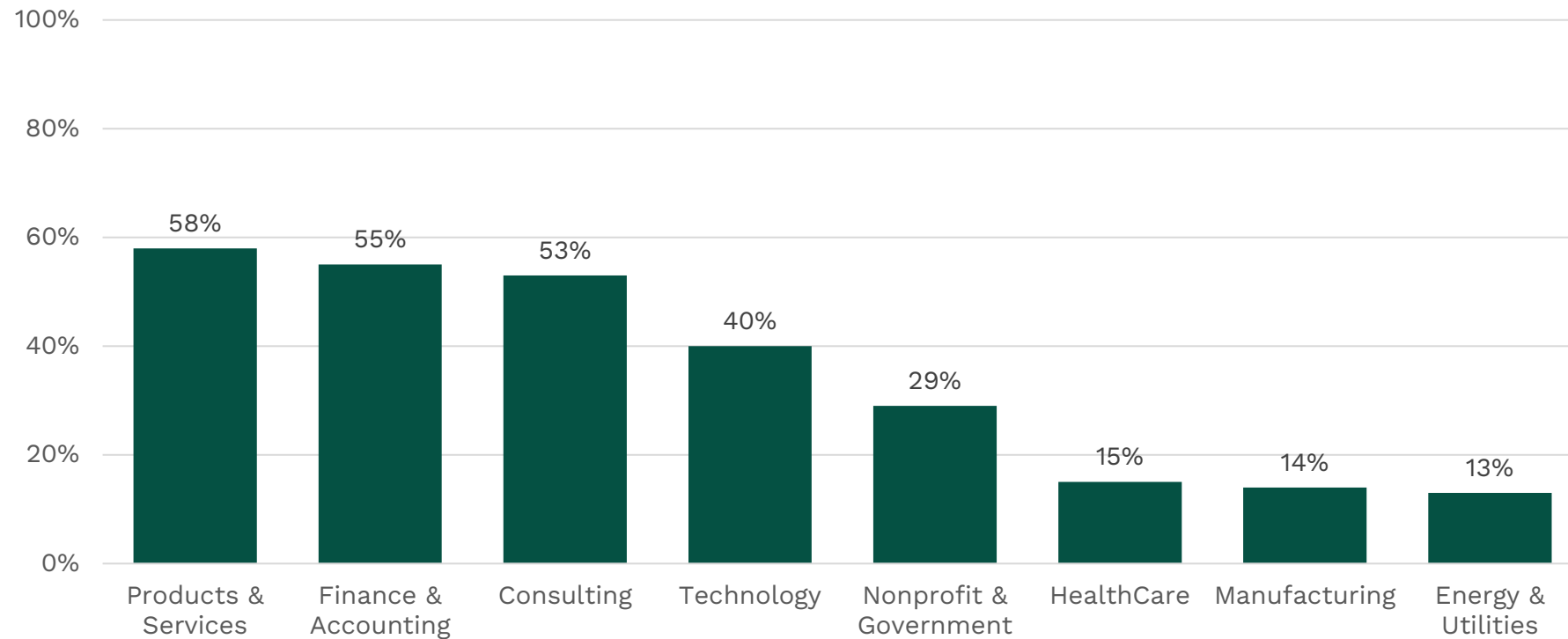
This section focuses on 2025 respondents' industries of interest for post-GME employment by the following demographic characteristics:

- Gender
- Age group
- World region of citizenship



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

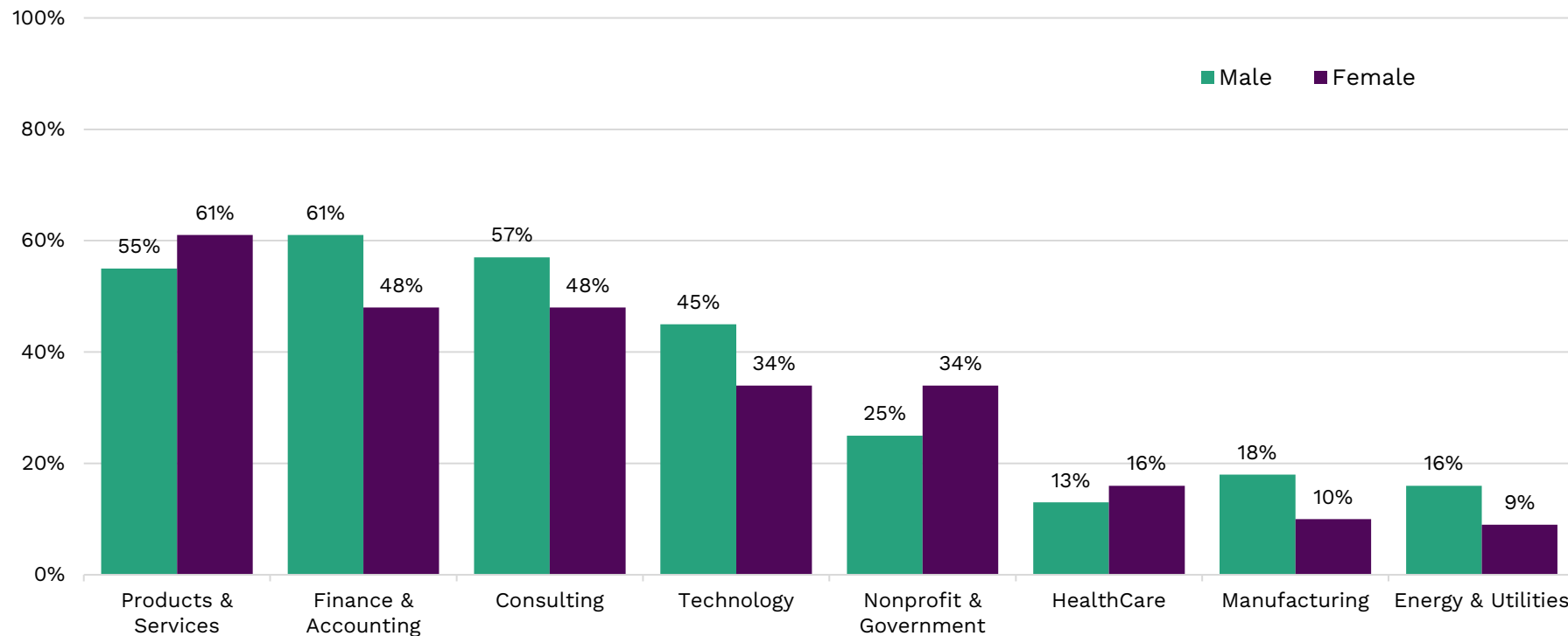
Percentage of candidates interested in each post-GME industry in 2025



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

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

Percentage of men and women interested in each post-GME industry in 2025

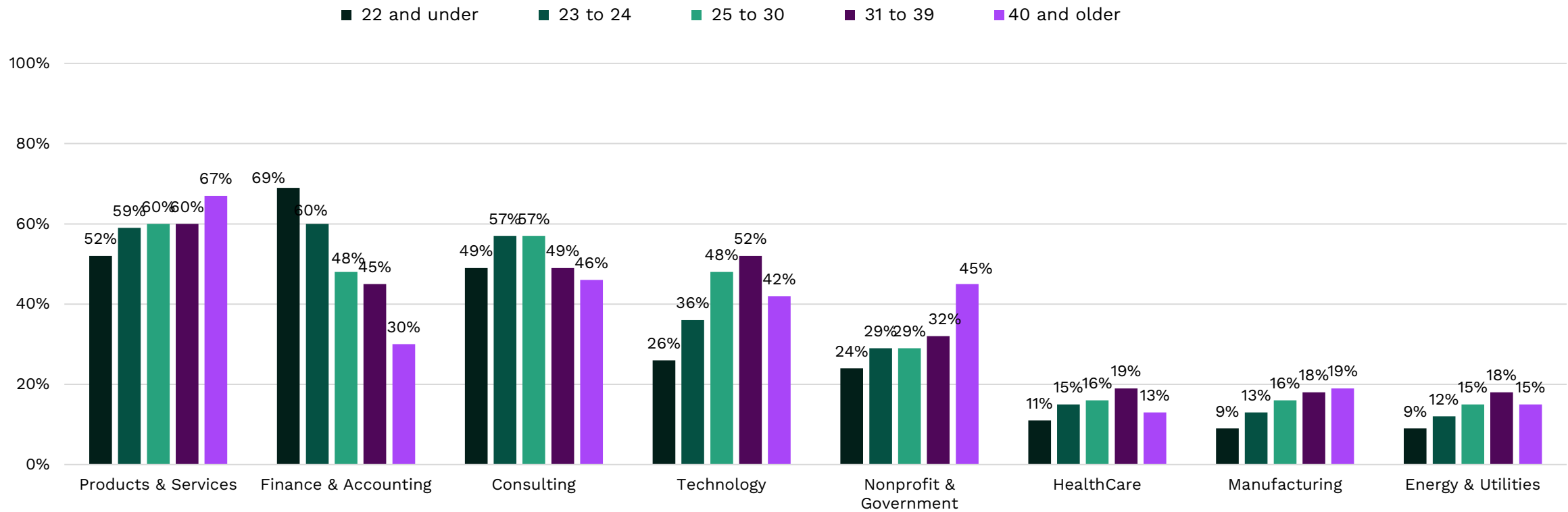


Notes:

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.

Interest in Finance & Accounting decreases with age, while interest in Product & Services, Nonprofit & Government, and Manufacturing increases.

Percentage of 2025 candidates interested in different post-GME industries, by age group



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

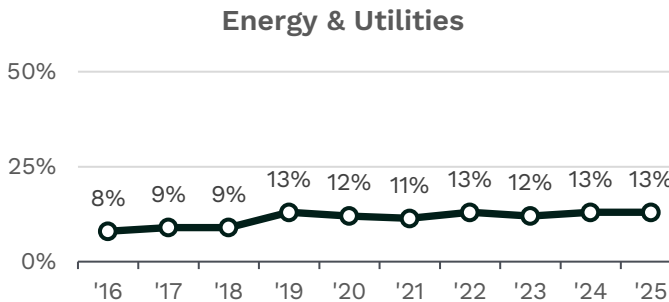
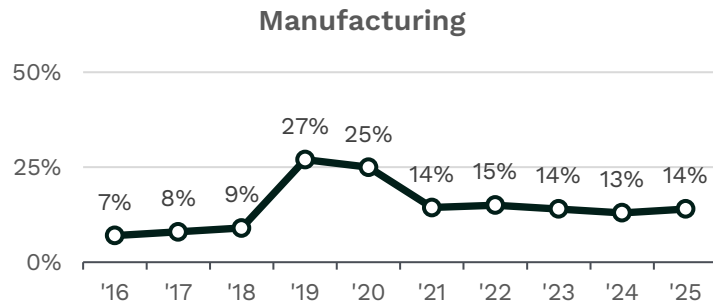
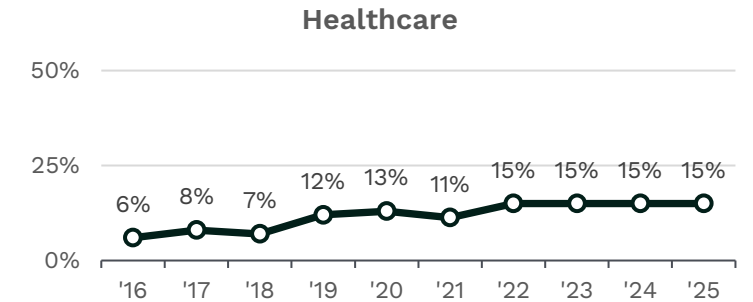
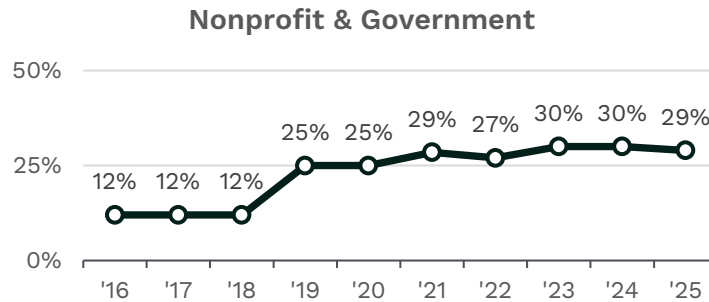
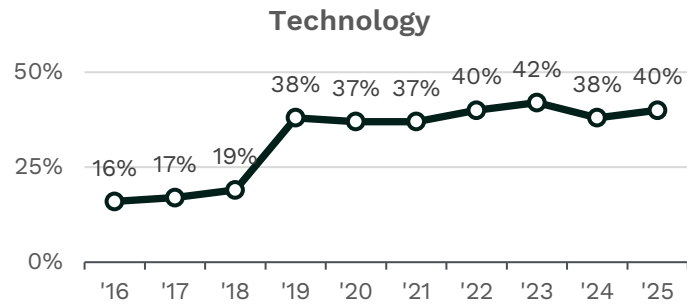
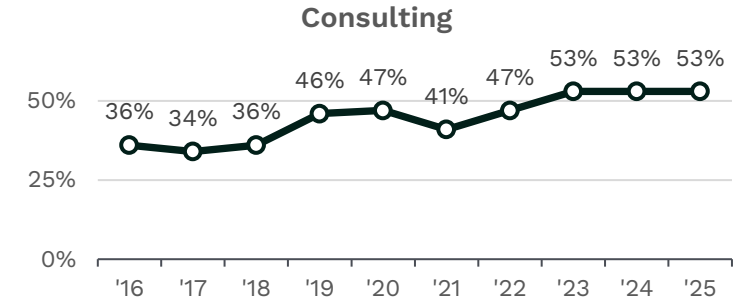
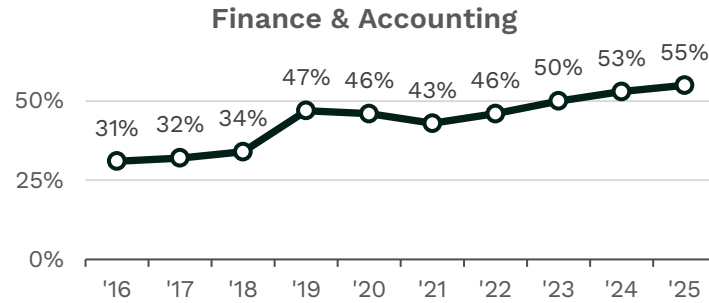
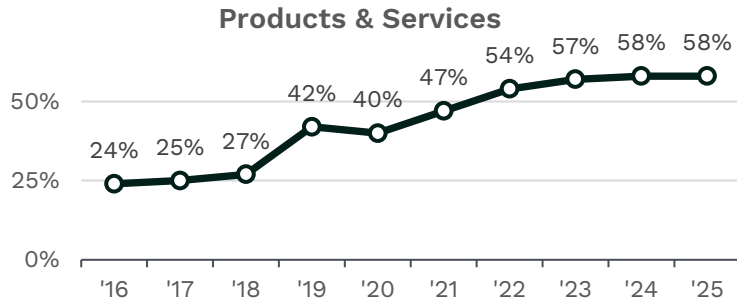
Products & Services is one of the top post-GME industries for candidates from all regions except Western Europe. Consulting and Finance & Accounting follow closely behind for most regions.

World region of citizenship	Industries							
	Products & Services	Finance & Accounting	Consulting	Technology	Nonprofit & Government	Healthcare	Manufacturing	Energy & Utilities
Africa	70%	53%	43%	43%	49%	17%	22%	35%
Australia & Pacific Islands	53%	47%	29%	24%	29%	12%	18%	12%
Canada	60%	39%	53%	39%	39%	24%	7%	13%
Central & South Asia	60%	54%	64%	48%	31%	15%	20%	15%
East & Southeast Asia	62%	55%	46%	37%	26%	16%	13%	12%
Eastern Europe	57%	65%	47%	35%	26%	8%	14%	10%
Latin America	61%	55%	58%	45%	24%	18%	15%	18%
Middle East	61%	44%	47%	50%	30%	12%	16%	18%
United States	60%	50%	46%	34%	33%	15%	10%	9%
Western Europe	47%	59%	52%	35%	25%	14%	10%	12%

Notes:

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

Post-GME interest in Finance & Accounting continues to grow, while interest in Products & Services and Consulting has remained stable in recent years.



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

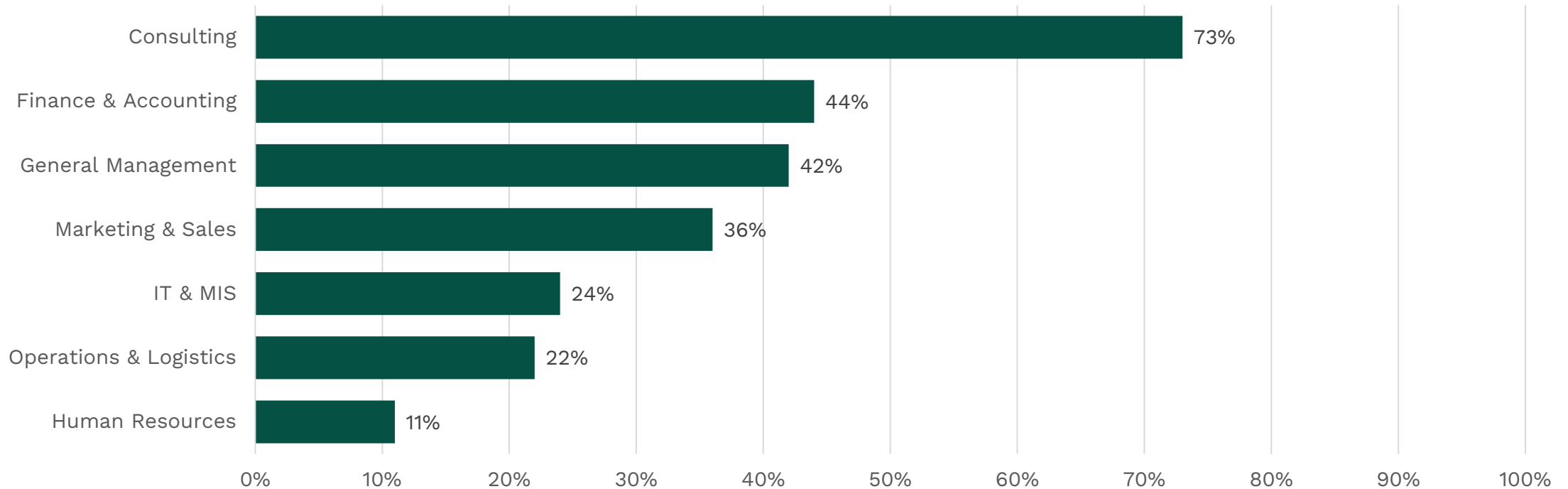
This section presents the job functions of interest for post-GME employment among the 2025 respondents, categorized by the following demographic characteristics:

- Gender
- Age group
- World region of citizenship



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

Percentage of 2025 candidates interested in each job function

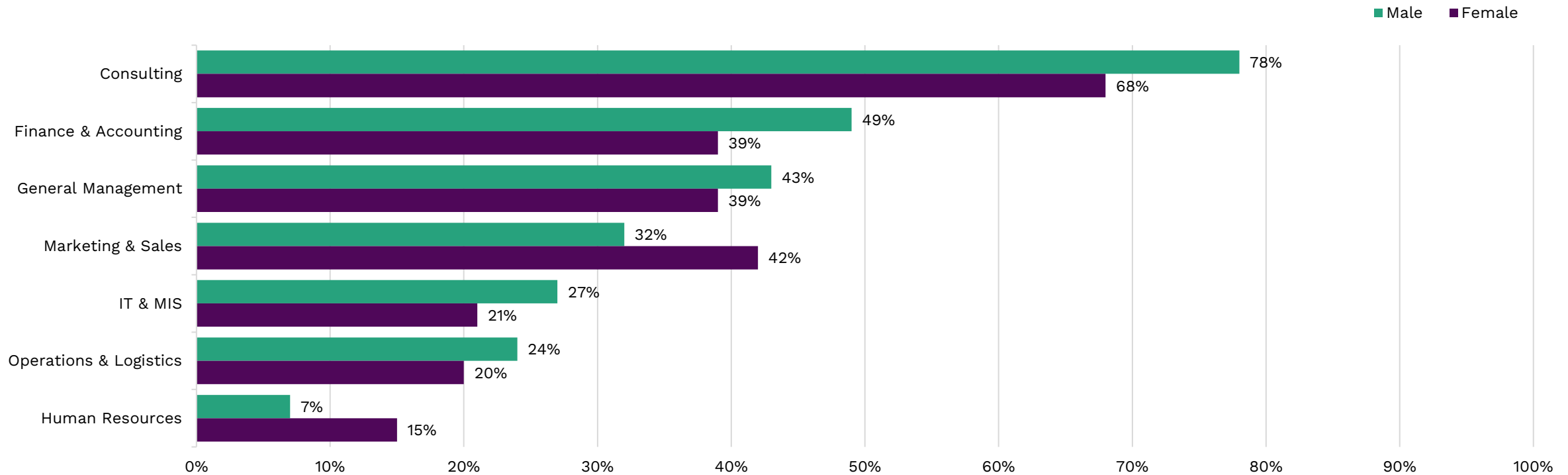


Notes:

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.

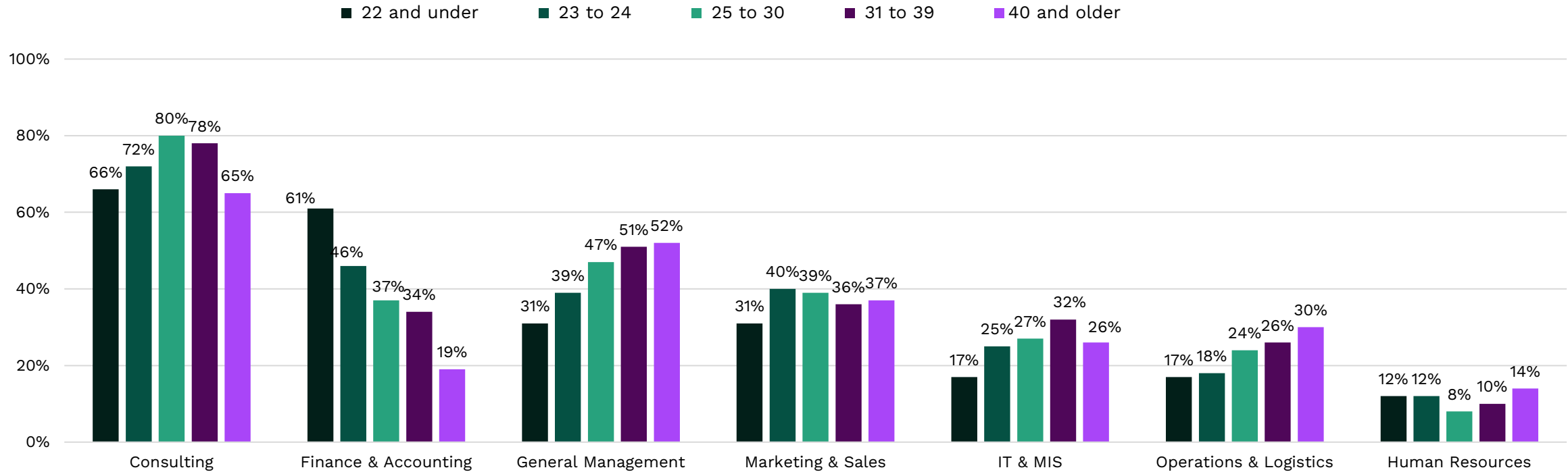
Percentage of men and women interested in each job function in 2025



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.

Candidates of all age groups prefer Consulting as a post-GME job function; Interest in General Management and Operations & Logistics increases with age, whereas Finance & Accounting decreases.



Notes:

1. IT & MIS stands for information technology and management information systems.
2. Percentages within the same age group do not sum to 100 percent due to multiple selections.

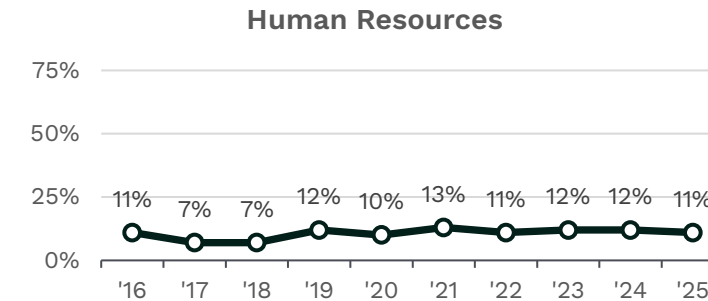
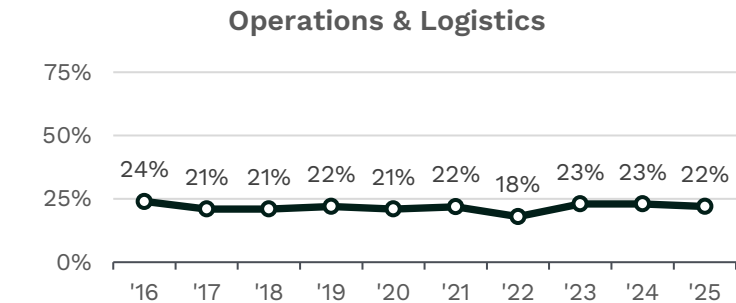
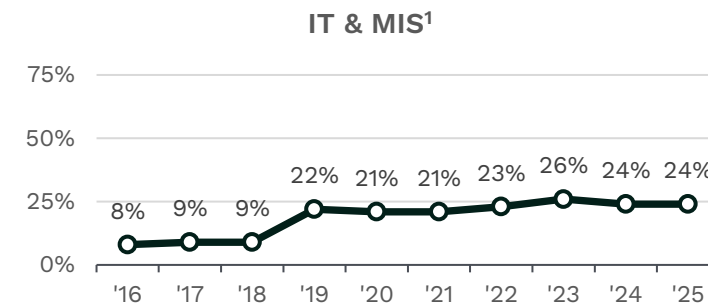
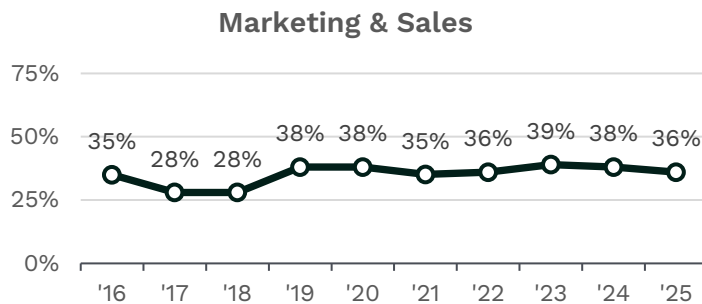
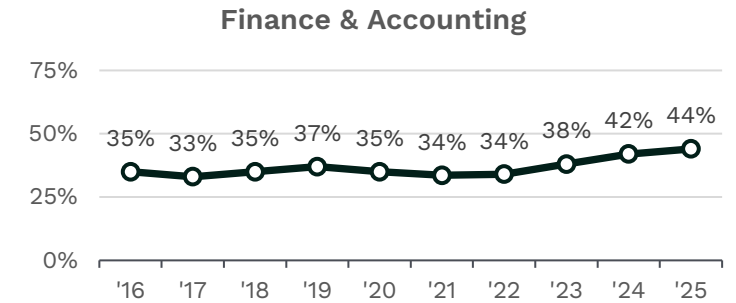
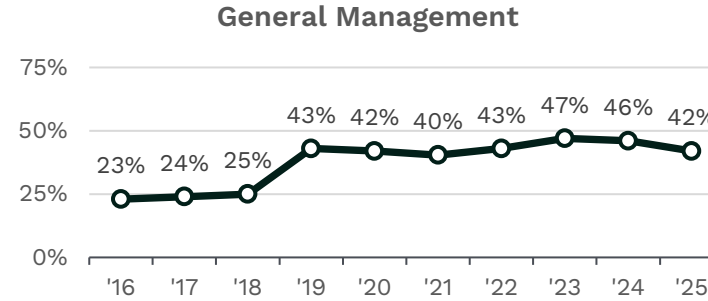
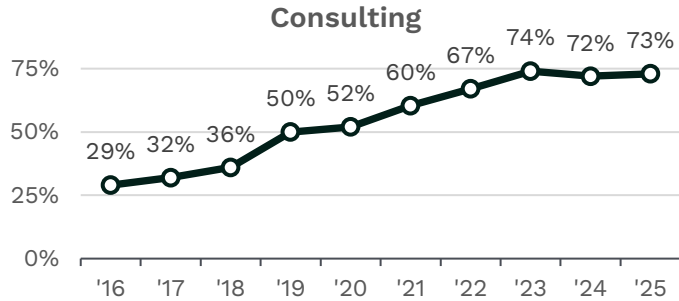
Consulting is the top job function across all regions, while the second-most preferred function varies by region, alternating between Finance & Accounting and General Management.

World region of citizenship	Job Functions						
	Consulting	Finance & Accounting	General Management	Marketing & Sales	IT & MIS ¹	Operations & Logistics	Human Resources
Africa	65%	37%	49%	45%	34%	31%	30%
Australia & Pacific Islands	67%	50%	28%	33%	17%	17%	22%
Canada	76%	29%	45%	32%	26%	30%	12%
Central & South Asia	82%	41%	53%	39%	32%	27%	14%
East & Southeast Asia	67%	49%	33%	40%	27%	18%	13%
Eastern Europe	73%	49%	37%	41%	24%	9%	4%
Latin America	83%	39%	54%	35%	25%	25%	5%
Middle East	73%	34%	51%	34%	30%	20%	16%
United States	64%	47%	31%	33%	18%	26%	9%
Western Europe	73%	46%	39%	32%	16%	17%	6%

Notes:

1. IT & MIS stands for information technology and management information systems.
2. Bolded cells highlight the top two 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 substantial increase in interest for Consulting job functions. Finance & Accounting shows an upward trend, while General Management trends downward in recent years.



Note:

1. IT & MIS stands for information technology and management information systems.
2. 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.

Methodology

Population & sampling methods

In 2025, 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, 4,253 prospective students from 145 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

		2025 unweighted		2025 weighted
		N	%	%
	Total	4,253		
Gender	Male	2,278	54%	53%
	Female	1,944	46%	46%
	Non-binary	31	1%	1%
Age group	22 and younger	1,012	24%	30%
	23 to 24	667	16%	17%
	25 to 30	1,504	35%	32%
	31 to 39	749	18%	15%
	40 and older	321	8%	6%
Region of citizenship	Africa	931	22%	2%
	Australia and Pacific Islands	18	<1%	<1%
	Canada	77	2%	2%
	Central & South Asia	1,053	25%	25%
	East & Southeast Asia	505	12%	15%
	Eastern Europe	92	2%	9%
	Mexico, Caribbean, & Latin America	198	5%	5%
	Middle East	57	1%	4%
	United States	834	20%	19%
	Western Europe	488	11%	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.

Xiaolei Wang, Director of Research & Data Science: Manuscript review.

Contact information

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