

## International Application Woes Continue for U.S. Programs as European and Asia-Pacific Programs Make Gains

Midway through the current admissions cycle, half of U.S. business school programs have received fewer international applications compared with the same point last year.

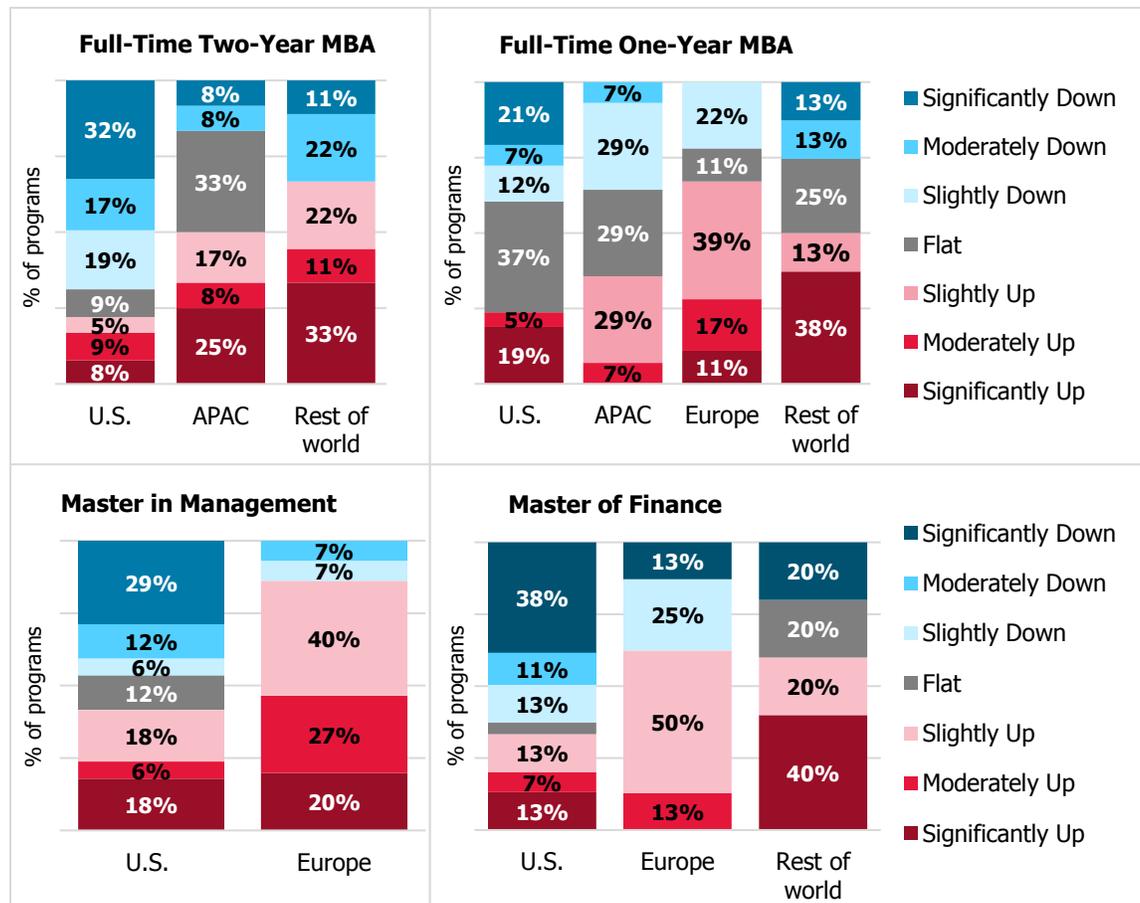
**April 2018**

Coming off a tumultuous 2017, U.S. business school programs continue to see declining interest from international candidates through the first half of the current admissions cycle, according to the results of GMAC's annual Preliminary Application Trends Survey. Overall, 48 percent of U.S. programs report that they have received fewer international applications compared with the same point last year. The survey results show increasing numbers of international candidates are now applying to programs in Europe and Asia-Pacific, where more programs report growth in international applications than declines.

More than 2 in 3 U.S. full-time two-year MBA programs report international application declines, including 32 percent that are *significantly down* (declines of 21 percent or more), 17 percent that are *moderately down* (declines of 11 to 20 percent), and 19 percent that are *slightly down* (declines of 1 to 10 percent).

The survey, which collects mid-cycle application data from graduate business schools every February, collected responses from 767 graduate business programs around the world this year, including 307 U.S. MBA programs and 284 U.S. business master's programs.

### Year-on-Year Change in Mid-Cycle International Application Volume, by Program Type and Location



GMAC (2018). Preliminary Application Trends Survey.

## European and Asia-Pacific Programs Thrive as U.S. Programs Struggle

Across all program types included in the survey, a greater percentage of U.S. programs report declines in international applications than growth, apart from online MBA programs (44% report flat volumes) and Master of Data Analytics programs (50% report growth, including 41% that report significant growth).

These declines come as monthly GMAC survey pulses show that non-U.S. citizen preference for the U.S. as a study destination dropped off significantly following the 2016 election to a low of 32 percent, slowly recovered through the spring and summer to 44 percent in August, and dropped again to 33 percent in January. The latest survey pulse in February shows 38 percent of non-U.S. citizen respondents prefer to study in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, business school programs in other parts of the world are largely reporting increases in international application volumes. For example, most European Master in Management (87%) and full-time one-year MBA programs (67%) report year-on-year international application increases, as well as half of Asia-Pacific full-time two-year MBA programs (50%).

### Acceleration of U.S. Market Share Decline

While the U.S. remains the largest single country destination of GMAT score reports from non-U.S. citizens, there has been a slow erosion of U.S. programs' market share of these candidates between 2013 and 2016. A much steeper decline was observed in 2017, when 44.9 percent of non-U.S. citizen score reports went to U.S. programs. Over the same period, Western European and Canadian programs have gained market share.

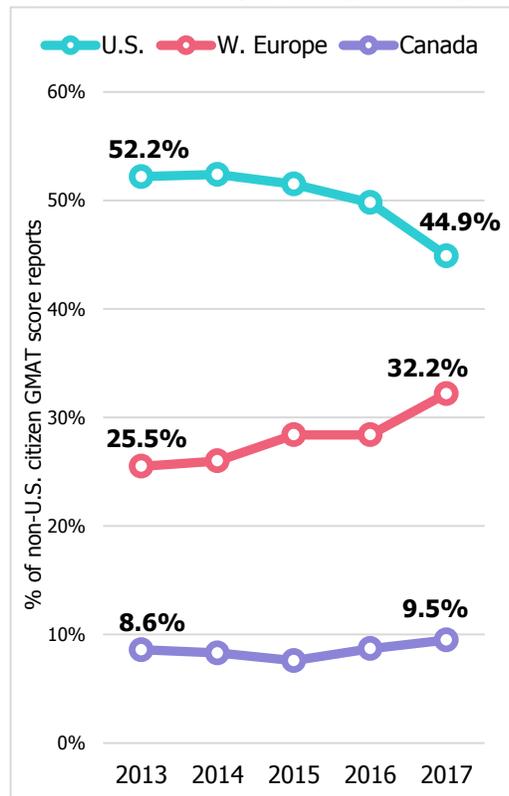
### Brexit Continues to Be a Non-Factor in International Application Trends

Despite a 2017 GMAC survey of non-U.K. citizen GMAT score senders that showed 45 percent of respondents were less likely to choose the U.K. as their study destination because of Brexit,<sup>2</sup> U.K. business school programs continue to see strong international demand.

Of the 30 business school programs in the U.K. that responded to the 2018 Preliminary Application Trends Survey, 67 percent report increases in international application volume compared with the same point last year, including 30 percent reporting significant growth. The top five sources of international applications to these programs are India, China, Italy, Thailand, and the U.S.

GMAC's next touch point with business school international application volumes will be the annual Application Trends Survey, which is slated to launch in June and publish in September. Schools can sign up to participate and receive their customized benchmark report at [gmac.com/surveysignup](http://gmac.com/surveysignup). For additional international student mobility perspective, visit the [GMAC News Center](#).

### Destinations of Non-U.S. Citizen GMAT Score Reports, January - June by Calendar Year, by Program Region



GMAC (2018). GMAT score sending data, 2013-2017.

<sup>1</sup> Monthly surveys of non-U.S. citizen mba.com registrants. Monthly sample ranges from about 400 to 700 candidates.

<sup>2</sup> Survey of 442 non-U.K. citizens that sent at least one GMAT score report to a U.K. business school program in Q1 2017. Survey conducted between March 29 and April 7, 2017.