

White Paper

“MBA Applicant Views from Business School Selection to Acceptance”



A study of the latest developments in MBA program admissions based on the *2016 AIGAC MBA Applicant Survey*

June 2016

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, AIGAC would like to thank all of the 3,586 MBA applicants worldwide who took the time out of their hectic schedules to complete the *2016 AIGAC MBA Applicant Survey*. Second, we would like to thank Mike Hanus at Constituent Research, who worked closely and patiently with us, not only in fielding the survey, but also in meticulously analyzing this year's survey data. Third, we would like to thank all of the AIGAC admissions consultants who distributed the survey to their clients worldwide. Last, but not least, we would like to thank *AIGAC's 2016 MBA Applicant Survey* Committee members for their contributions, including (in alphabetical order):

- Barbara Coward, Enrollment Strategies
- Vrinda Jalan, The Red Pen
- Shiela Locatelli Wallace, BTF Enterprises, Inc.
- Stephen Round, Round One Admissions Consulting Co., Ltd.
- Scott Shrum, Veritas Prep
- Andrea Sparrey, The Sparrey Consulting Group

Background Information

The findings in the *2016 AIGAC MBA Applicant Survey* reflect the responses of 1,114 applicants who plan on enrolling in January 2017 or sooner and who applied to at least one graduate business school. Among these respondents 65% are male, 35% female, 35% are U.S. citizens, 61% are international, 44% live in the U.S., 56% live in 83 other countries represented, and 19% already have a master's degree. In terms of when they plan to enroll in graduate business school, 11% will begin prior to August 2016, 80% will do so in August/September 2016, and 10% will start in January 2017. Note that the survey was open between February 15 through May 2, 2016 and that there were 3,586 respondents in total.

Table of Contents

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Executive summary.....	5
The Life of an MBA Applicant.....	7
MBA Applicant Optimism Regarding Their Future Prospects	8
MBA Applicant Views on Competitiveness and Their Own Needs	12
MBA Applicant Views on Program Costs	14
MBA Applicant Adaptation to New Application Components	18
MBA Applicant Views on the GMAT vs. GRE Debate.....	22
Conclusions	26
Methodology.....	27
Appendix.....	28
About AIGAC.....	37

Introduction

Since 2009, the *AIGAC MBA Applicant Survey* has solicited the perspective of MBA applicants across the globe on their application experience. As featured in [Poets & Quants](#), [TopMBA](#), [Business Because](#) and [Bloomberg BusinessWeek](#), our survey helps frame and drive conversations with key influencers in the MBA admissions process, including applicants, schools, advisors and stakeholders.

Schools and members utilize *AIGAC MBA Applicant Survey* data to learn about applicant perceptions of each stage of the admissions process. The survey helps stakeholders understand the tools applicants use to research programs. They also gain insight into the reasons that applicants select programs, as well as their career and salary expectations.

Since its creation, the survey has generated meaningful conversations among MBA admissions officers and graduate admissions consultants. As just one example of the tangible impact that the survey has had on the MBA admissions space, the 2013 edition of the survey highlighted the pressure that many applicants face from their recommenders, encouraging them to write their own recommendations. The analysis and ensuing discussion served as a catalyst for many prominent business schools, including Columbia, Wharton, and Chicago, to move [toward more standardized recommendations](#). The AIGAC Survey Committee hopes this latest version of the *AIGAC MBA Applicant Survey* will continue this tradition of stimulating discussion and encouraging meaningful changes in the business school application process.

For 2016, we are pleased to provide this accompanying white paper, AIGAC's first, which we hope will provide additional insights and promote further discussions to help evolve the MBA application process.

Executive summary

MBA applicants remain as optimistic as in past years about their post-MBA employment prospects

The 2016 applicant pool is comparable to previous groups in terms of their confidence that an MBA education will enable them to secure a significantly higher post-MBA salary. This group appears likely to continue to focus on the traditional post-MBA career paths of Consulting, Finance/Accounting, and Technology.

While optimistic about the future, many MBA applicants are realistic about the competitiveness of the application process

The enthusiasm of today's applicants is tempered by their recognition of the intense competition that they face in pursuing admission to top-ranked graduate business schools around the world. This realization motivates them to seek support from multiple sources during application process, with friends, admissions consultants, and family members topping the list of those sources.

Applicants are also mindful of program costs

For many of today's MBA applicants, the cost of their graduate business studies is more of a concern than it has been for applicants in past years, when economic conditions were generally more favorable than they are now. We observed a declining interest in two-year programs and believe that this reflects an openness among applicants to options perceived as more cost-effective, such as accelerated MBA programs. In fact, 41% of survey respondents indicated that their choice of schools was at least partially influenced by affordability. Thus, it comes as no surprise that 21% of applicants reported that they had modified their list of target schools based on cost and access to financial aid. It was noted that the cost of one's graduate business education was more of a concern for respondents to AIGAC's latest *MBA Applicant Survey* than it was to those who responded to our inaugural survey in 2009. Of particular concern today is the fact that the net cost of MBA program attendance can be difficult to assess. Consequently, it has the potential to influence applicants' choice of schools and the timing around decisions to attend programs. The survey findings suggest that greater transparency among graduate business schools with respect to the full and timely disclosure of MBA program net costs would be beneficial to applicants in their school selection process.

Applicants have so far adapted well to newer application components

As advances in technology have made it possible for graduate business schools to introduce new tools for evaluation over the past few years, such as video essays, applicants seem to be taking this in stride. In fact, nearly half of applicants (49%) said that their video essays represented them “well” or “extremely well”. Although there are applicants, including some non-native English speaking international applicants, who assert that the video essays do not well represent them, this new format doesn’t seem to create an insurmountable hurdle that would deter applicants from applying. Similarly, applicants appear to be fairly comfortable with the group exercises recently introduced by some graduate business schools, with the majority of respondents indicating that they did not find such exercises to be overly challenging. No doubt, innovations in technology will continue to drive the evolution of the admissions process.

The Life of an MBA Applicant

Figure 1: What it takes to get one's ducks in line

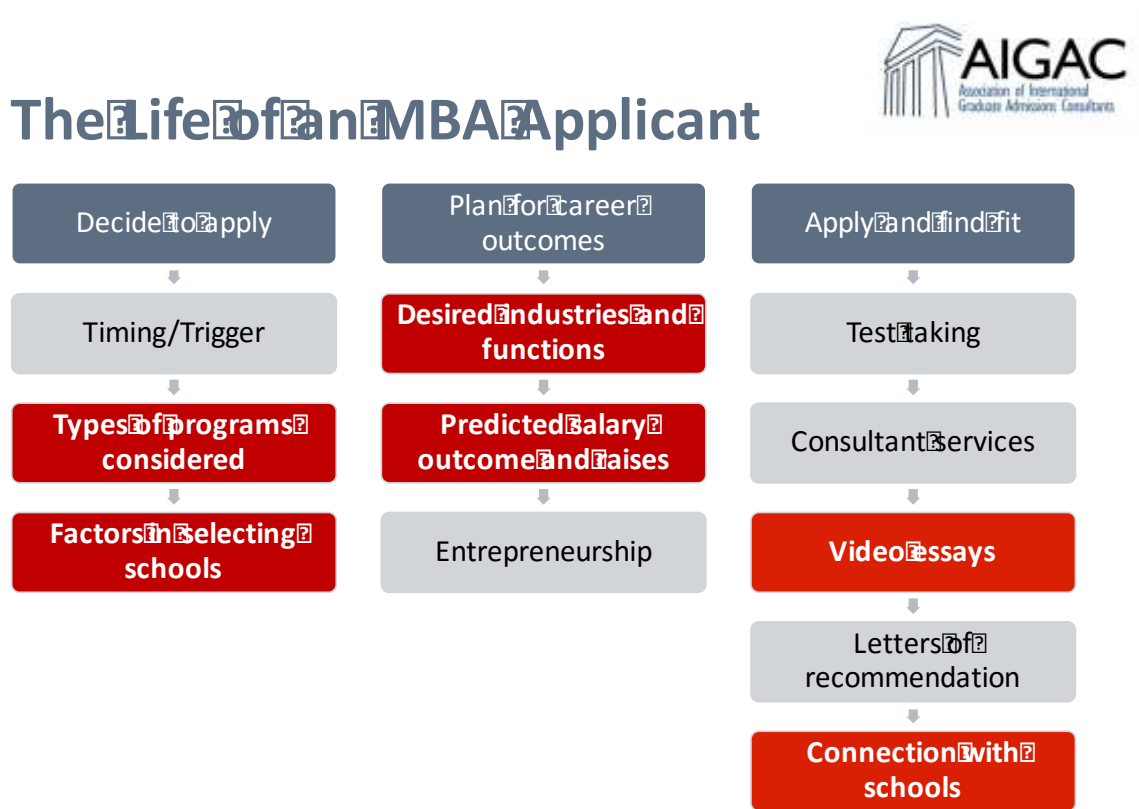
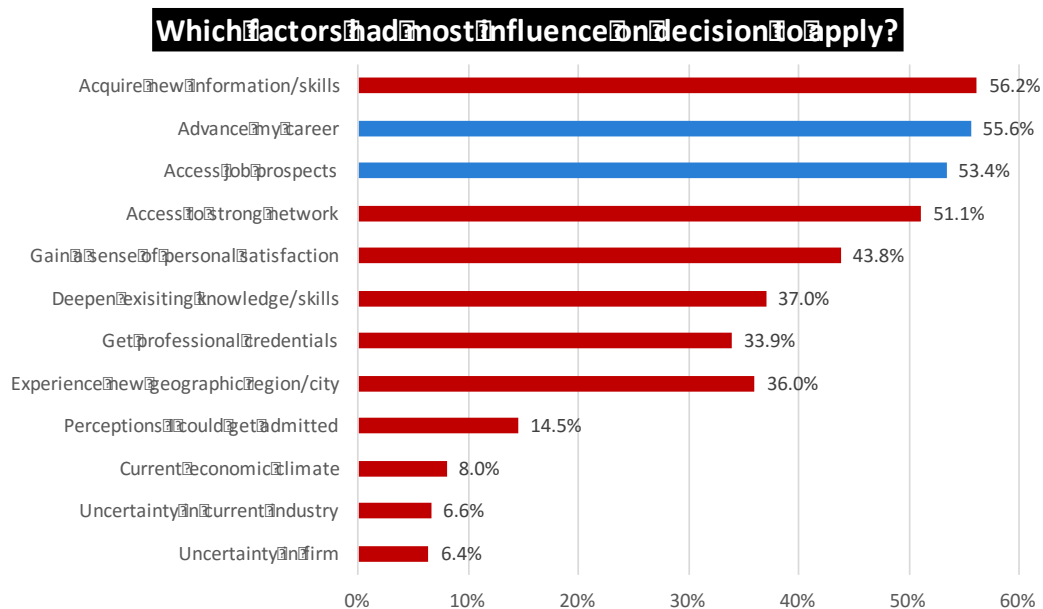


Figure 1 above, reveals the thought processes, considerations, plans, and actions that encompass the life of an MBA applicant. In this section of AIGAC's white paper, we focus on the types of programs considered, factors in selecting schools, desired industries and functions, as well as predicted salary outcome and raises.

MBA Applicant Optimism Regarding Their Future Prospects

Figure 2: Factors that influenced MBA applicants' decision to apply

Short-term career outcomes are core drivers of the decision to apply

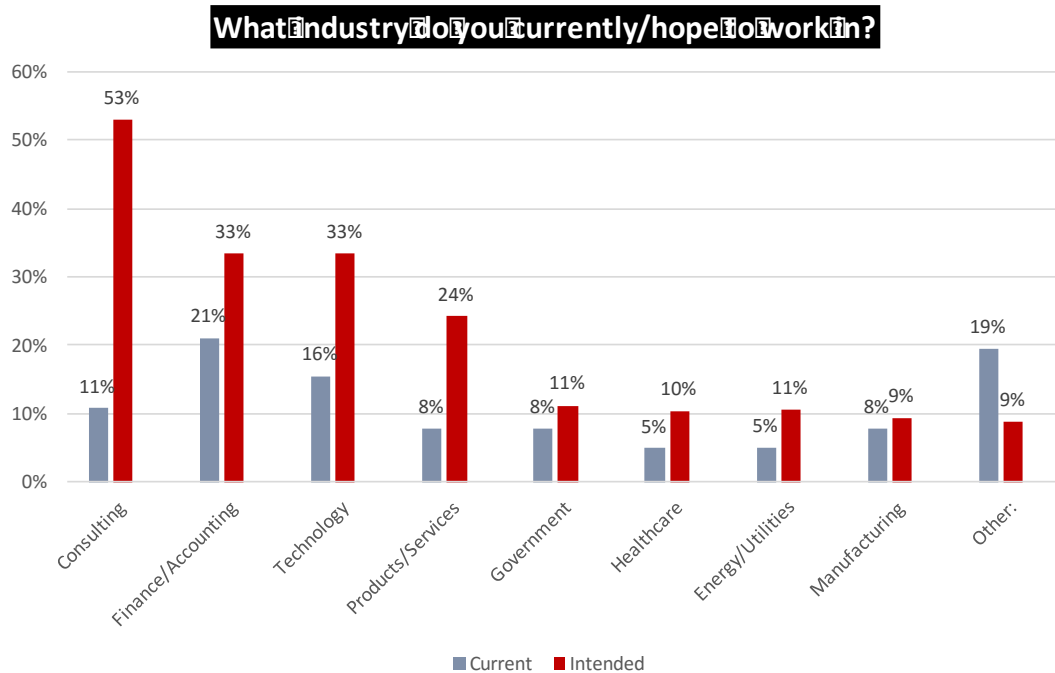


Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1143 (those intending to start by January 2017)

MBA applicants are optimistic about the future. As you can see in **Figure 2** above, the top four factors that most influenced applicants to make the decision to apply to graduate business school selected by this year's survey respondents included *Acquire new information/skills* (56.2%), *Advance my career* (55.6%), *Access job prospects* (53.4%), and *Access to strong network* (51.1%). Thus, it appears that the desire to enhance or switch careers continue to be among the core drivers of the decision to apply to graduate business school. Note that these top four factors remained largely consistent among survey respondents from 2015 to 2016.

Figure 3: Industries in which applicants currently work and hope to work in post-MBA

Applicants continue to desire traditional post-MBA roles



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1040 (those intending to start by January 2017)

Applicants continue to desire traditional post-MBA roles

Figure 3 shows that the majority of applicants expressed interest in the traditional post-MBA career paths of Consulting (53%), Finance/Accounting (33%), and Technology (33%). Given its past popularity, it's not surprising that Consulting remains the industry of choice for more than half of respondents. A modest rise in interest in Consulting was observed among applicants from 2015 (43%) to 2016 (53%). Nevertheless, it has definitely lost some ground to other industries since the first AIGAC *MBA Applicant Survey* was administered in 2009, when 79% of respondents expressed their desire to work in Consulting post-MBA. Interest in Finance/Accounting remained fairly steady from 2015 (34%) to 2016 (33%), but these figures are down significantly from 2009, when 60% of respondents targeted this industry. As for Technology, interest in this sector among applicants rose slightly from 2015 (29%) to 2016 (33%), which is not far from the interest level reported in 2009 (30%).

Interest in traditional industries may be challenged in the next downturn

As growth ebbs and flows worldwide, intended career paths of MBA candidates will likely shift away from traditional industries, at least for a period of time, as they have done during past economic cycles. While this occurs, graduate business schools can provide valuable opportunities for MBA candidates to re-invent themselves in order to tackle the dynamic and most pressing problems facing organizations in our increasingly global economy. By continuously evolving and fine-tuning their curriculums to meet the changing needs of the labor market, graduate business schools can best serve the needs of MBA candidates, companies, and global society.

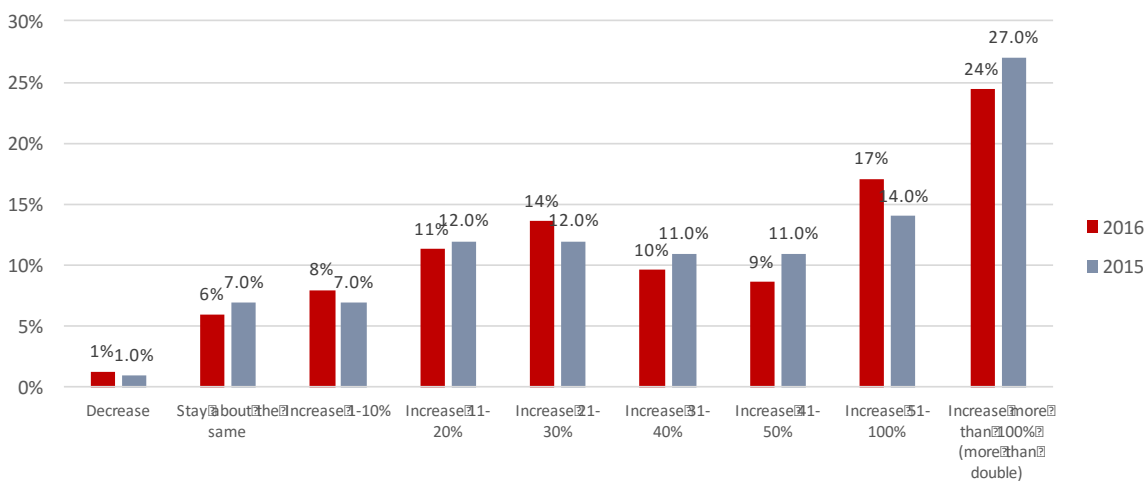
As the modern labor market continues to evolve, driven by increasingly rapid advances in technology, this “evolutionary” effort should be made in close cooperation with each school’s career services office, as well as the recruiters who hire their MBAs, in order to ensure that graduates are equipped with the proper skill sets and most suitable career opportunities to succeed in the future.

Figure 4: Salary expectations during the first 6 months post-MBA

Nearly half of applicants expect a salary increase of >50% within 6 months of graduation



What effect do you expect completing an MBA to have on your earnings potential within the first six months of graduating?



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1040 (those intending to start by January 2017)

The earnings potential of MBA applicants displayed in **Figure 4** indicates that nearly half of applicants (41%) who intend to apply by January 2017 expect a salary increase of more than 50% within six months after graduation. These expectations seem largely on par with those of last year's respondents.

We conducted further analysis concerning the expectations of candidates at various pre-MBA income levels in order to understand their salary expectations.

Income level	Expected increase
<\$25,000	72%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	62%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	32%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	25%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	15%
\$200,000+	27%

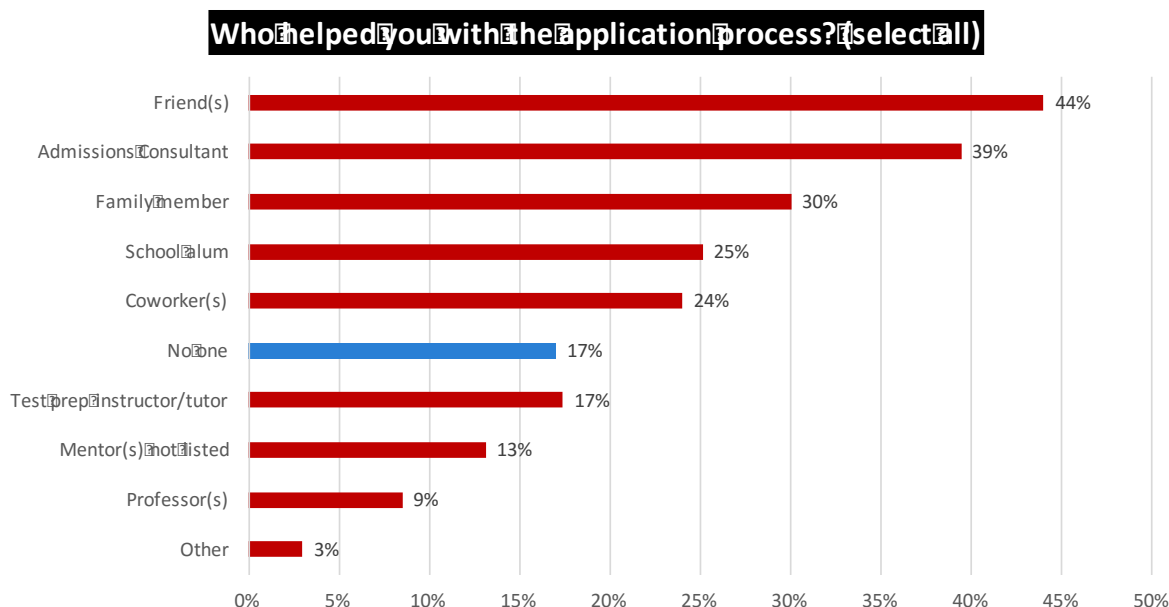
In addition, applicants currently living in the US expect a 41% salary increase after their MBA, while those living outside the U.S. expect a 57% increase, on average. This statistically significant difference is a trend that we want to continue to monitor in light of the Visa challenges that were discussed repeatedly at the 2016 AIGAC Conference, and have been featured in articles in [Poets and Quants](#), and [Business Because](#).

We are hopeful that an increasing number of programs identify opportunities to give international candidates a chance to find meaningful employment in the U.S. after their MBA and were pleased to see the [announcement](#) from MIT Sloan regarding the STEM status for their Master of Finance degree and from Babson regarding the Visa support it is providing to entrepreneurs, via their [Global Entrepreneur in Residence Program](#).

MBA Applicant Views on Competitiveness and Their Own Needs

Figure 5: Sources of support sought by MBA applicants

Many applicants seek out multiple sources of support, ~20% “go it alone”



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1141 (those intending to start by January 2017)

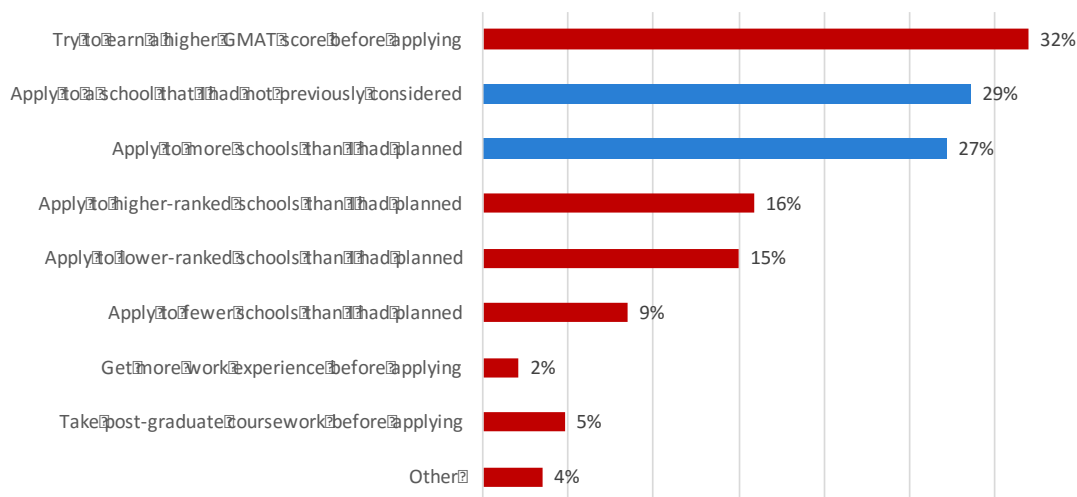
2016 MBA applicants are realistic about the competitiveness of the application process. Understanding the intense competition that they face in applying to top-ranked graduate business schools, most MBA applicants relied on multiple sources of support for the application process. As you can see in **Figure 5**, friends (44%), admissions consultants (39%), and family members (30%) topped the list of resources used in 2016, whereas 17% of this year’s respondents indicated that no one supported them compared to 15% who applied without any outside assistance in 2015. It is noteworthy that, responses to “Who helped you?” and “What services did you pay for?” are combined, 45% of this year’s applicants indicated that they had worked with an admissions consultant.

Figure 6: Admissions consultant support in school selection

Admissions consultants helped applicants to evaluate choices



How did your admissions consultant influence school choice?



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=434 (those intending to start by January 2017)

Role of admissions consultants in expanding school choices

Notwithstanding their being urged to retake GMAT before applying, 29% of respondents said their admissions consultant also encouraged them to apply to a school that they had not previously considered, and 27% of applicants said their consultant encouraged them to apply to more schools than they had originally planned. A modest increase in the average number of graduate business schools applicants applied to was noted from 2015 (4.18) to 2016 (4.42).

Indeed, admissions consultants can help MBA applicants to look beyond a total focus on quality and reputation to consider other factors that may be relevant in their school selection process, such as strengths of overlooked business schools in their desired area of specialization. The MBA programs they recommend can also include schools that applicants may not have previously prioritized, increasing their chances of winning scholarships, a key benefit for cost-conscious applicants.

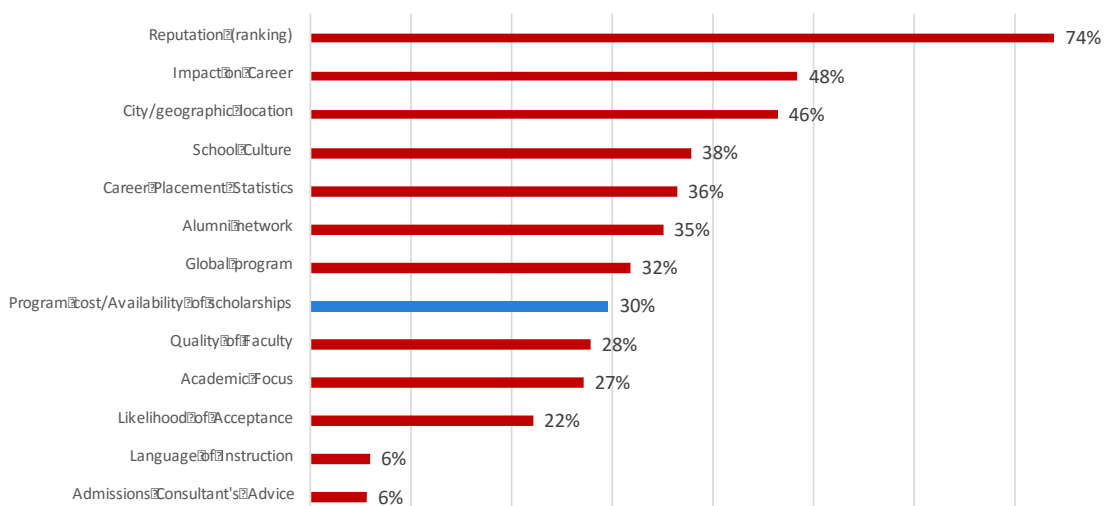
MBA Applicant Views on Program Costs

Figure 7: Factors that influence school choice among MBA applicants

30% of applicants consider net cost when selecting programs



Which factors had the most influence on specific school choice? (select all)



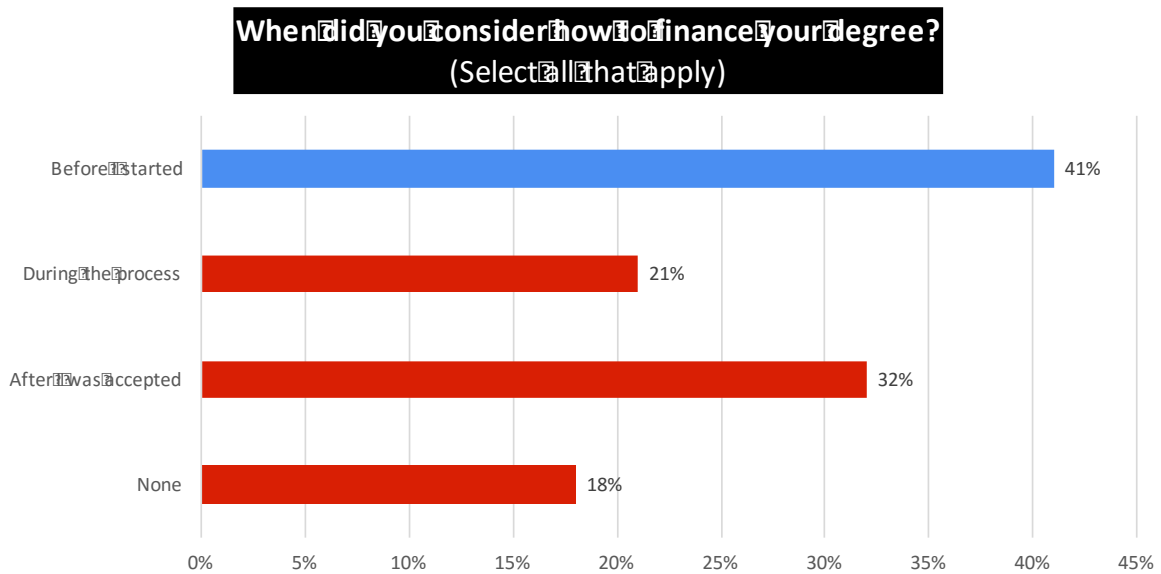
Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1144 (those intending to start by January 2017)

Affordability impacts school selection but reputation matters most

Figure 7 indicates that reputation (ranking) of the MBA program (74%), followed by impact on career (48%), city/geographic location (46%), and school culture (38%) are the most influential factors in specific school selection, although 30% of the respondents considered net cost (program cost/availability of scholarships) when evaluating specific schools.

Figure 8: The influence of affordability in school selection

Affordability is a significant factor in school selection



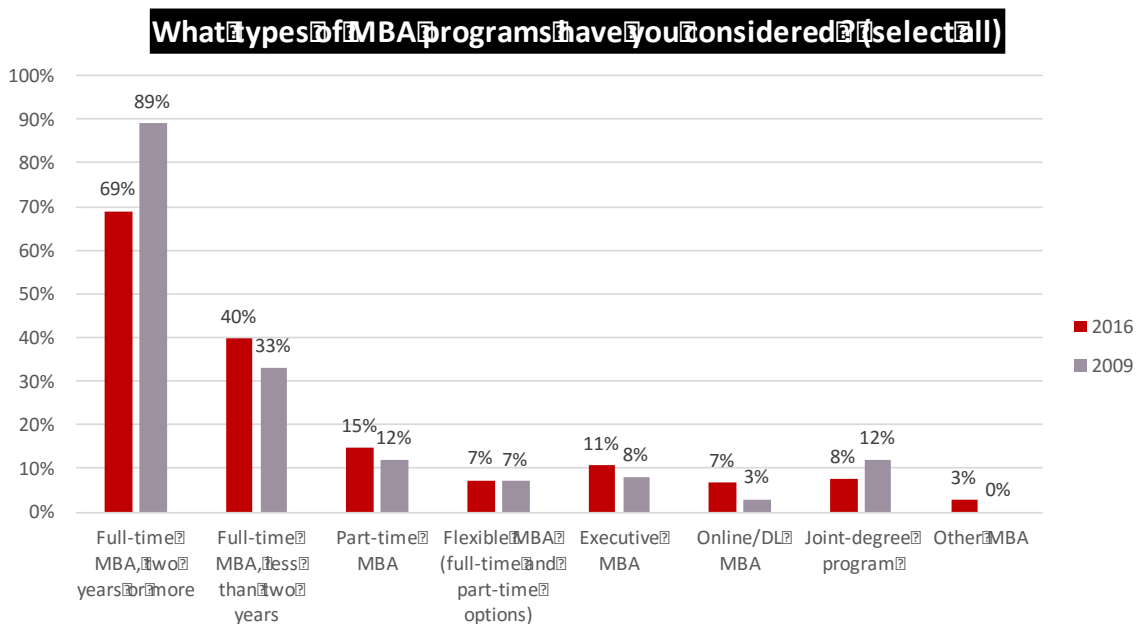
Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1143 (those intending to start by January 2017)

As you can see in **Figure 8**, cost appears to loom larger in applicants' minds than it did in the 2009 AIGAC MBA Applicant Survey. Nearly a quarter (21%) of 2016 MBA applicants indicated that they modified their list of target schools during the application process based on cost and access to financial aid, and 41% of 2016 respondents indicated that their initial choice of schools was partly influenced by affordability. By comparison, financial aid and program costs were ranked the least important factors in 2009, the first year that AIGAC conducted their MBA Applicant Survey.

It is noteworthy that, from 2009 to 2016, tuition for leading MBA programs increased on average 3-5% per year, representing a cumulative increase of ~25%.

Figure 9: Types of programs considered by MBA applicants

A result is that respondents are increasingly open to programs other than traditional two-year MBAs



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1144 (those intending to start by January 2017)

Respondents show increasing openness to programs other than traditional two-year MBAs

Figure 9 shows that interest in full-time, two-year MBA programs decreased from 89% in 2015 to 69% in 2016. Meanwhile, interest in full-time, less than two-year programs increased from 33% in 2015 to 40% in 2016, while slightly more than a quarter of applicants (26%) considered part-time MBA or executive MBA programs in 2016. Thus, graduate business schools would do well to consider exploring the possibility of offering less expensive, shorter duration programs to meet the needs of increasingly cost-conscious MBA applicants.

As we considered the decline in interest in full-time programs, we recognized the impact of student loan balances among US College Graduates: New York Fed [data](#) shows that student loan balances grew for borrowers of ALL ages between 2004 and 2014. The mean outstanding balance of loans is \$26,000, whereas the median balance is \$15,000. Many students are carrying significant debt into their education experience.

Applicants found it difficult to assess program cost

One vital concern among applicants today is the fact that the net cost of MBA program attendance can be difficult to assess. Consequently, it has the potential to influence applicants' choice of schools and the timing of their decision to commit to enroll at a specific school.

Survey results suggest that it would be prudent for graduate business schools to provide a clear understanding of the timeline for financial aid, and increase transparency where possible, so that applicants can make a more informed selection on schools to apply to (and eventually commit to). This transparency would help candidates to be more certain about their school selection and communicate decisions earlier. This could help reduce the stress associated with determining how applicants will be able to finance their investment in higher education and, in doing so, likely improve student satisfaction.

The following anecdotal comments from recent applicants highlights the value of graduate business schools making such an effort.

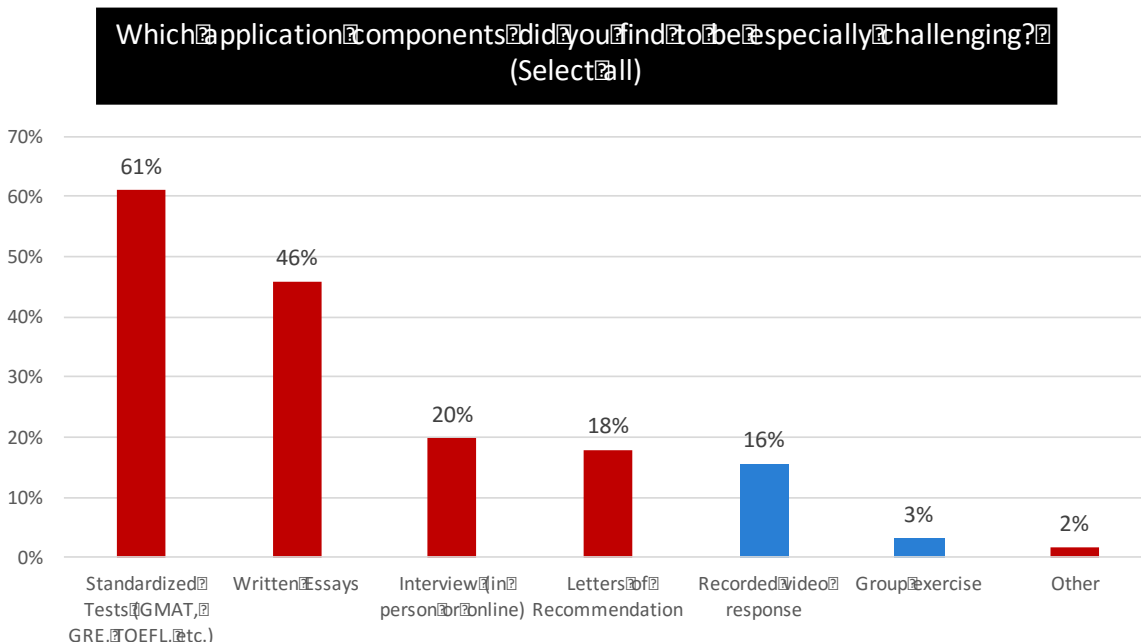
“The school’s ability to give financial aid and merit fellowships helped make an MBA more affordable and therefore my decision making easier.” – 2016 Applicant

“While I wanted to make a decision about programs earlier, I had no visibility into the actual cost of the program I was going to attend until financial aid decisions were made in May. As a result, I had to make deposits at multiple schools.” – 2016 Applicant

MBA Applicant Adaptation to New Application Components

Figure 10: Aspects of the MBA application process that challenge applicants

Applicants still find tests and essays to be the most challenging



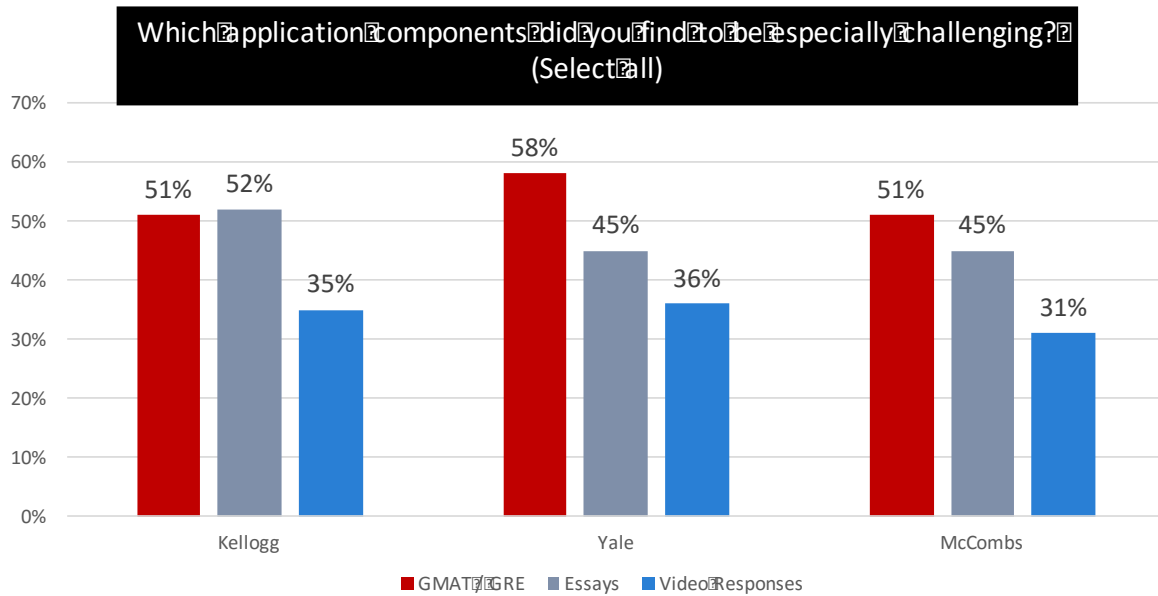
Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1088 (those intending to start by January 2017)

Standardized tests and essays are still considered harder than video essays and group exercises

Figure 10 shows that the majority of respondents (61%) named standardized tests as the most challenging application component, followed by written essays (46%), and interviews (20%). Only 19% of applicants said that recorded video responses and group exercises were especially challenging. Nearly half of applicants (49%) said the video essay represented them “well” or “extremely well,” although survey comments revealed concerns by some applicants regarding technical difficulties in remote overseas locations. All things considered, it appears that applicants seem to be adapting well to the newer application components.

Figure 11: Applicant perceptions of the difficulty of video responses

Applicants rated video responses as less challenging than tests and essays



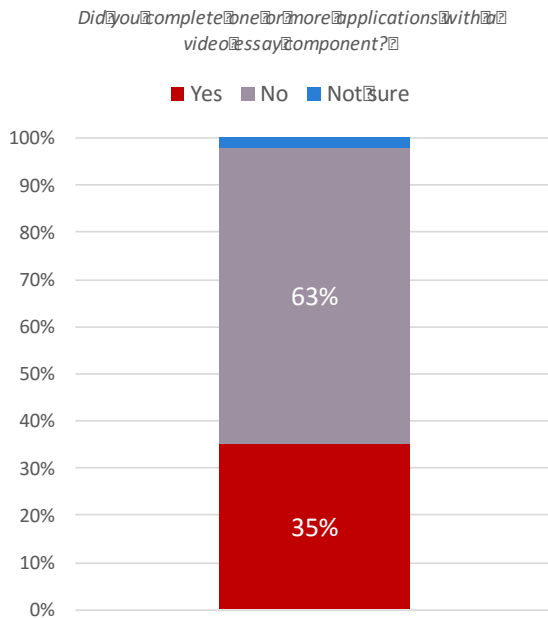
Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=198 (Kellogg), n=120 (Yale), n=89 (McCombs)

Upon examining **Figure 11**, we can see perceptions of the difficulty of video responses by applicants to the MBA programs at Kellogg, Yale, and McCombs. (In the 2015-2016 admissions season, Kellogg and Yale required video responses, while McCombs made them an option for applicants.) In each case, applicants considered the video responses to be significantly less challenging than the standardized tests and essays.

Figure 12: Applicants who submitted applications with video essays



A tipping point in the percentage of applicants completing video responses



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1071 (those intending to start by January 2017)

Many applicants liked video interviews

"I think the video components are a good way for schools to get a preliminary view into the applicant before inviting them to an interview." - 2016 Applicant

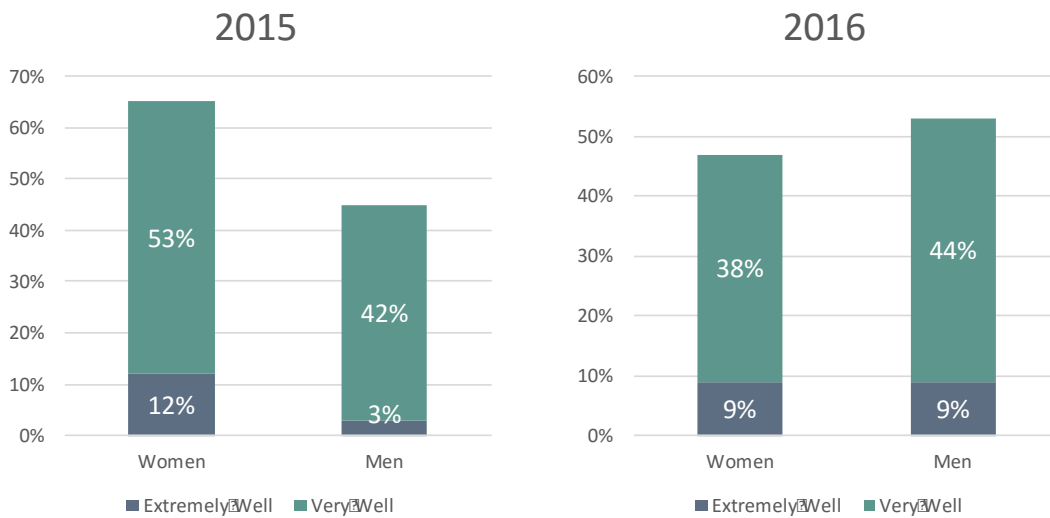
"It's a great addition to the application process. A video can tell something beyond the essays, which is very beneficial to the adcom. It's the logical utilization of the latest technology." - 2016 Applicant

"Although it is a bit nerve wrecking, the video essays are a great way for candidates to show admissions committees their communication skills and to put a personal touch to the application. It was a very interesting exercise for me." - 2016 Applicant

Figure 12 indicates that, for the first time, more than a third of survey respondents completed at least one application with a video response component (up from 27% in the 2015 survey). Taken with the data that indicate that applicants do not find video responses to be exceptionally challenging, these results suggest that the MBA admissions space may have reached a tipping point in the adoption of video as a standard component of applications. Indeed, INSEAD announced in June, 2016, that it has added a video component to the application for its September 2017 intake. We expect that more prominent business schools may follow suit in the coming year.

Figure 13: Applicant perspectives on how well video responses represented them

Videos don't generate a lot of stress for applicants, but still room for improvement with this new medium



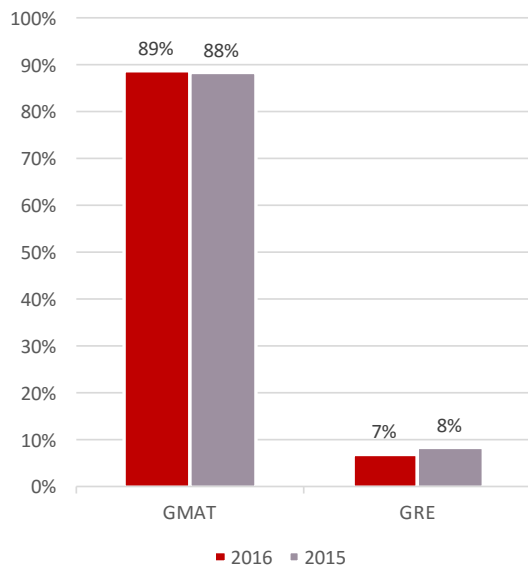
Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=361 (those intending to start by January 2017)

Figure 13 uncovers one of the more surprising findings of the 2016 survey. While in 2015 a notably greater percentage of women than men said that video responses represented them well, this year the percentage of women who indicated that video responses represented them well dropped significantly. Meanwhile, the percentage of men who said that video responses represented them very well was almost unchanged from 2015 to 2016. While there is no obvious reason for this decline, it bears watching to see if this emerges as a trend in future years, especially if more business schools adopt video responses as an application component.

MBA Applicant Views on the GMAT vs. GRE Debate

Figure 14: Proportion of applicants submitting GMAT vs. GRE scores

Survey respondents continue to favor GMAT vs. GRE



- Applicants continue to overwhelmingly favor the GMAT vs. the GRE
- The percentage of applicants submitting GMAT scores decreased slightly from 88% in 2015 to 86% in 2016
- The percentage of applicants submitting the GRE also decreased slightly from 8% in 2015 to 7% in 2016

Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1064 (those intending to start by January 2017)

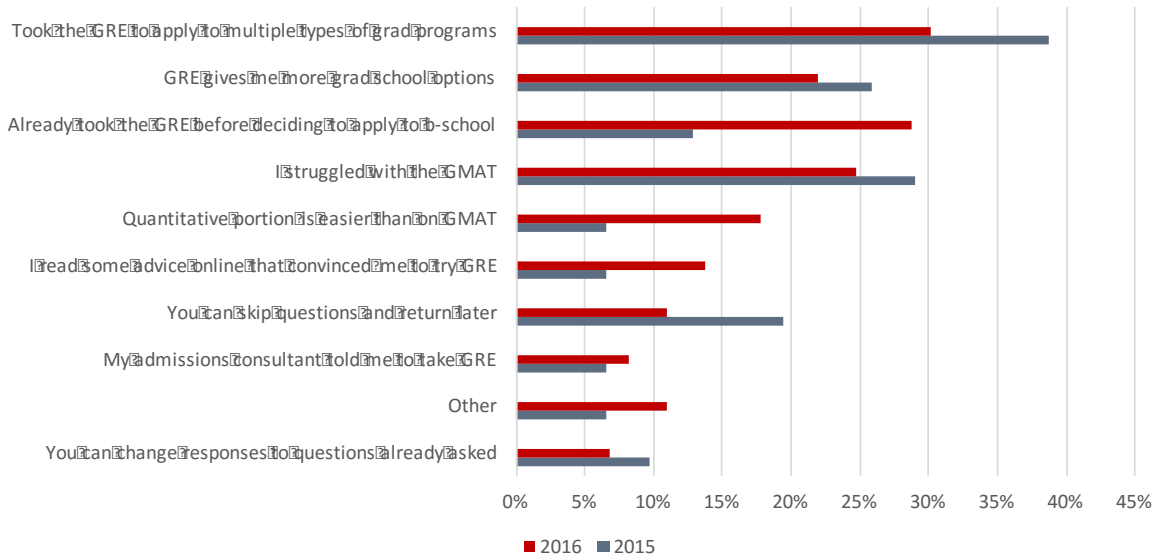
Survey respondents continued to overwhelmingly favor the GMAT vs. GRE

The GMAT remains the test of choice, with 89% of applicants indicating that they submitted a GMAT score and only 7% of applicants responding that they submitted a GRE score in 2016. Survey participants claimed that they took the GRE primarily because they were applying to multiple types of graduate programs or because they had already taken the GRE before applying to business school. Nearly a quarter of respondents, however, said that they had taken the GRE because they had struggled with the GMAT.

Figure 15: Applicant motivations for taking the GRE



Why did you take GRE?



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=73 (those intending to start by January 2017)

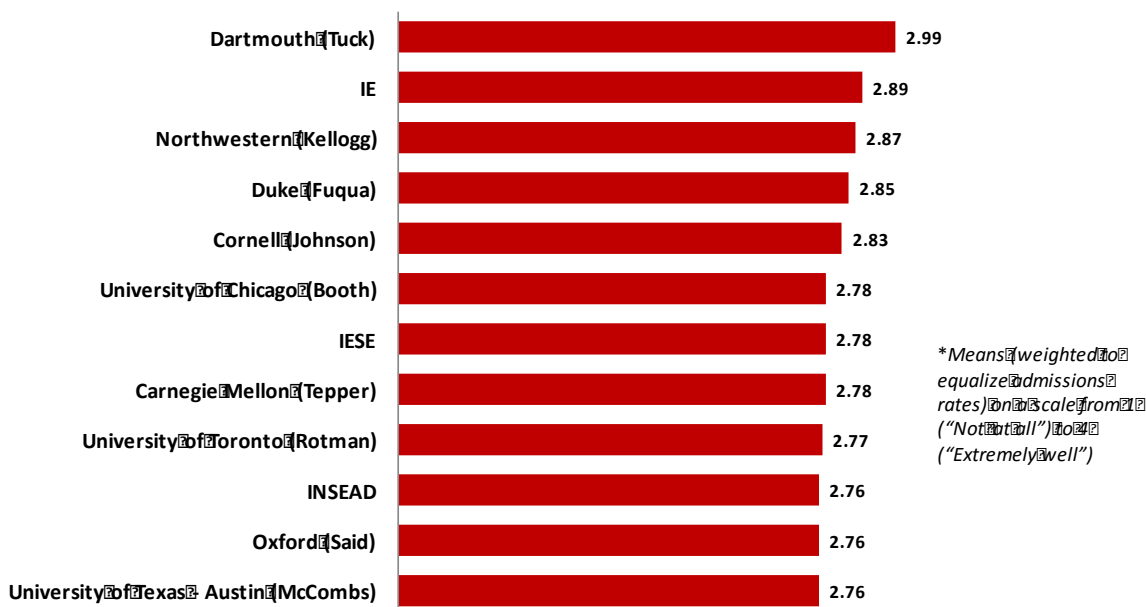
Although there are some fluctuations regarding the reasons why applicants took the GRE between 2015 and 2016 in **Figure 15**, these may simply be attributable to the small number of applicants who actually took the GRE. In any case, it appears that the leading motivation for taking the GRE continues to be because doing so enables applicants to apply to multiple types of graduate programs.

Figure 16: Efficacy of business school outreach efforts

Top 10 Schools Who Got to Know Applicants Well



How well did each of the schools get to know you through the admissions process?*



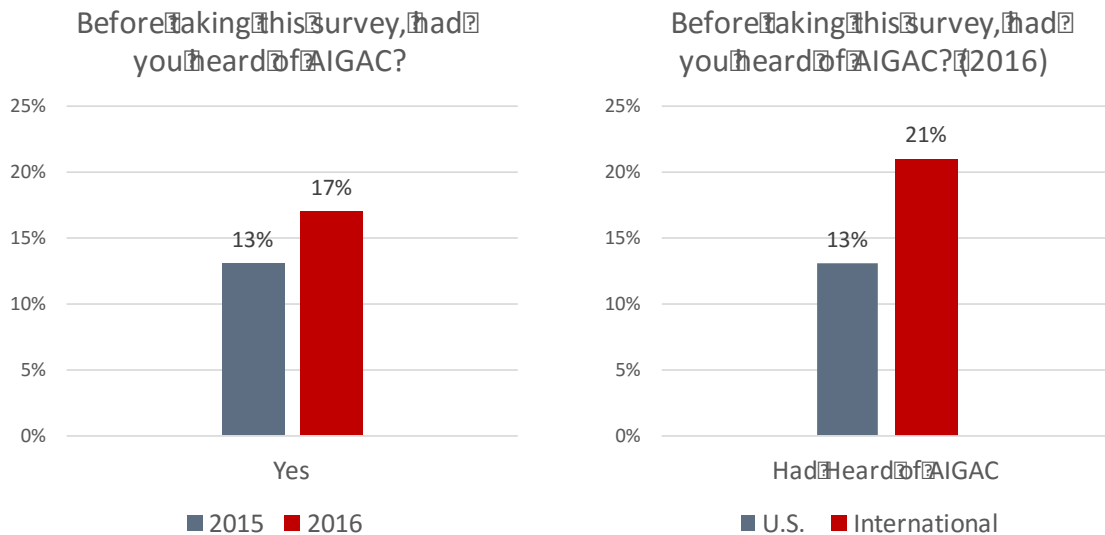
Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1114 (those intending to start by January 2017)

Each year, AIGAC asks candidates to evaluate how well the schools they applied to got to know them through the application process. This year, the top 10 schools include Dartmouth (Tuck), IE, Northwestern (Kellogg), Duke (Fuqua), Cornell (Johnson), University of Chicago (Booth), IESE, Carnegie Mellon (Tepper), University of Toronto (Rotman), INSEAD, Oxford (Saïd), University of Texas – Austin (McCombs).

Tuck, Kellogg, and Fuqua have consistently been in AIGAC’s top-5 since we first asked this question three years ago. Anecdotally, several consultants mentioned how much candidates enjoy getting to know Tuck in-person, how the small details (like welcome signs for visiting candidates) engage people during Kellogg visits, and how much candidates enjoy Fuqua’s now familiar question “25 things”.

Figure 17: AIGAC brand awareness

Making progress, AIGAC still has work to do in building awareness



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1143 (those intending to start by January 2017)

While we have seen a modest increase in awareness of AIGAC year-over-year, we are far short of our target of 50%+ awareness among applicants. Our goal is to provide increased information relevant to the market and act as a valuable additional resource for applicants and business schools alike worldwide.

Conclusions

In hopes of providing graduate business schools with useful and “actionable” information, we have provided a summary of key points from AIGAC’s white paper in this section.

- Given the increasing level of cost-consciousness among MBA applicants, graduate business schools can set themselves apart by fully disclosing the net cost of MBA program attendance, along with the amount of financial aid available to students. It is critical for students to know the timing of when it will be dispensed.

Leveling the playing field in terms of the disclosure of such information would be very helpful in facilitating the school selection process among MBA applicants.

- As graduate business schools continue to experiment with and incorporate new technology into the MBA application process, such as video essays, applicants can provide valuable suggestions for improving and fine-tuning the use of such technology through the constructive feedback that they provide in AIGAC’s MBA Applicant Survey (e.g. Some survey respondents commented that they felt that there should have been more preparation and response time for the video essays).

We would like to encourage schools to collaborate with us on questions for the 2016/17 applicant survey to capture more information about these trends.

- Since many MBA applicants apply to American graduate business schools with dreams of working in the US following their graduation, consultants and schools can work together to set realistic expectations among international MBA applicants regarding the likelihood of their being able to work in the US beyond the post-graduation period during which they are eligible.

Consultants can play a role in setting expectations early and schools can help applicants by sharing employment statistics for international students both at graduation and again 12 months after graduation, when prospects can change dramatically in some countries.

Methodology

As previously noted, the data for the *2016 AIGAC MBA Applicant Survey* was collected from 3,586 MBA applicants. This represents a record volume for the survey, since it was first launched in 2009. In order to make results more comparable to previous years' results as well as focus analyses on applicants further along in the MBA application process, we restricted our analyses to the 1,144 respondents who are planning to matriculate in or before January 2017 and have applied to at least one MBA program.

Appendix

This section provides supplementary information that may be of particular interest to graduate business school administrators. It includes the following charts in the order noted below:

Figure 18: Level of admissions consultant support during the admissions process

Figure 19: Authorship of recommendation letters

Figure 20: Age of MBA applicants

Figure 21: Full-time work experience of MBA applicants

Figure 22: Ethnic origin of US or dual citizen MBA applicants

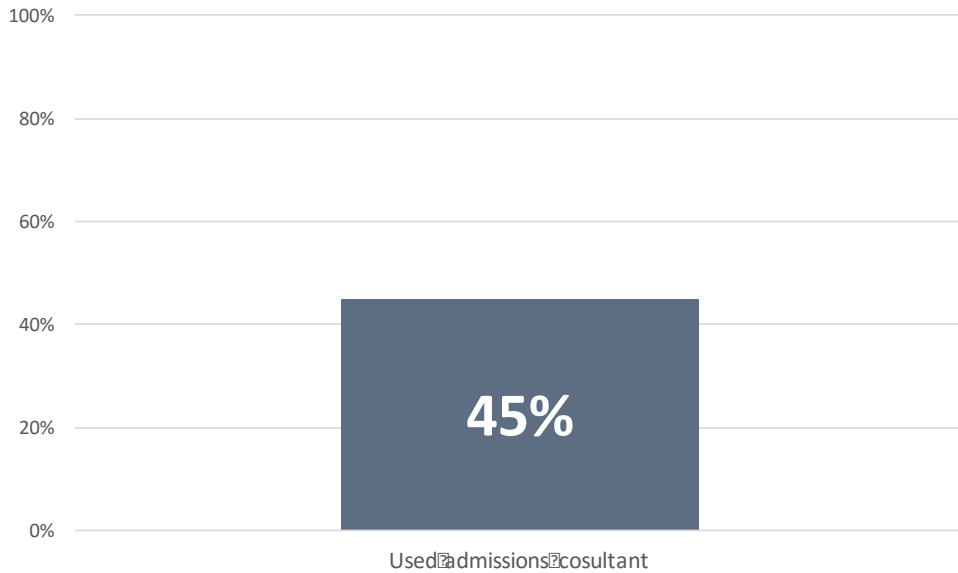
Figure 23: Top countries of residence for international MBA applicants

Figure 24: Timing when MBA applicants began working with an admissions consultant

Figure 25: How well MBA applicants got to know their admissions consultant

Figure 18: Level of admissions consultant support during the admissions process

Nearly half of surveyed applicants used admissions consultants

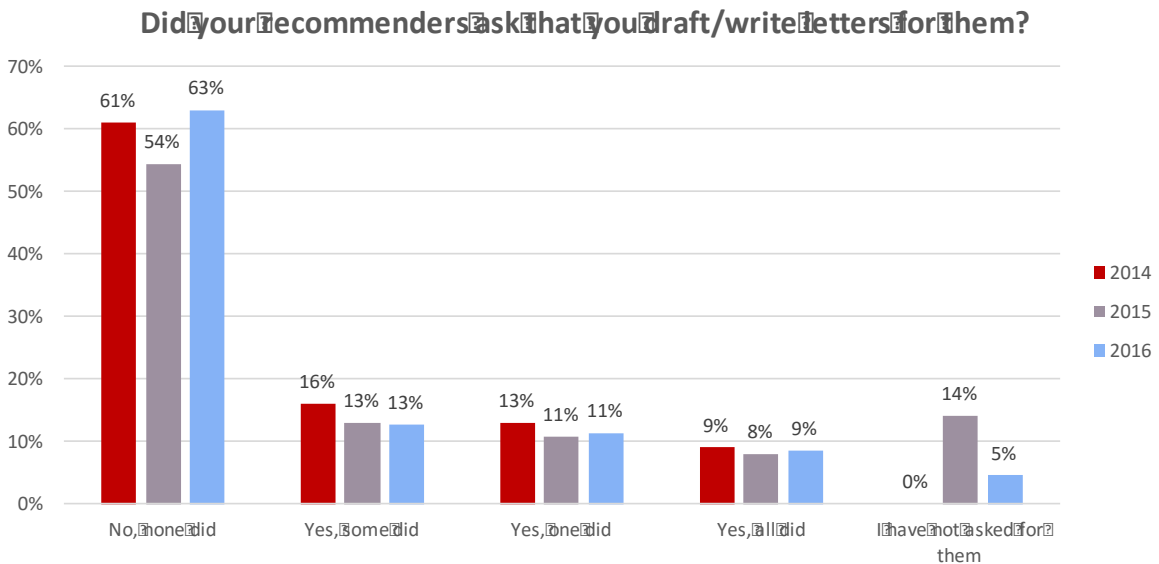


Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1071 (those intending to start by January 2017). NOTE: Data represents those responding directly that they used an admissions consultant and respondents who did not select that they used a consultant but indicated that they paid a consultant for services.

Figure 18 indicates that nearly half (45%) of survey respondents received help from admissions consultants, consistent with last year's results.

Figure 19: Authorship of recommendation letters

We saw a slight decline in the number of applicants asked to draft their own recommendation letters



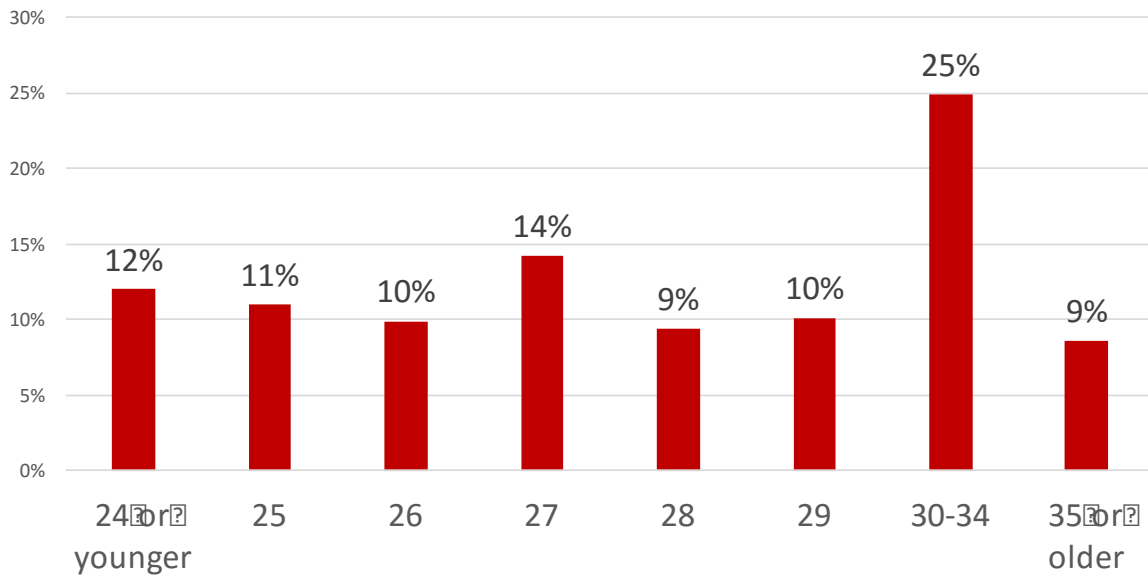
Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1097 (those intending to start by January 2017)

AIGAC began asking candidates about requests they had received to draft their own recommendation letters back in 2013. Since that time, we’ve seen some reduction in the number of candidates who have been asked to draft the letters. There was extensive discussion at the AIGAC16 Conference about the benefits of many schools now coming together to ask common recommendation questions. There were mixed reactions to the concept of a common recommendation form in future years – several consultants mentioned that they had candidates who had selected different recommenders for each of the programs. They indicated a belief that while candidates appreciate the common questions, they may feel constrained if a common recommendation system only allowed them to use the same recommenders for every school they apply to.

Figure 20: Age of MBA applicants



Survey Participants: Age



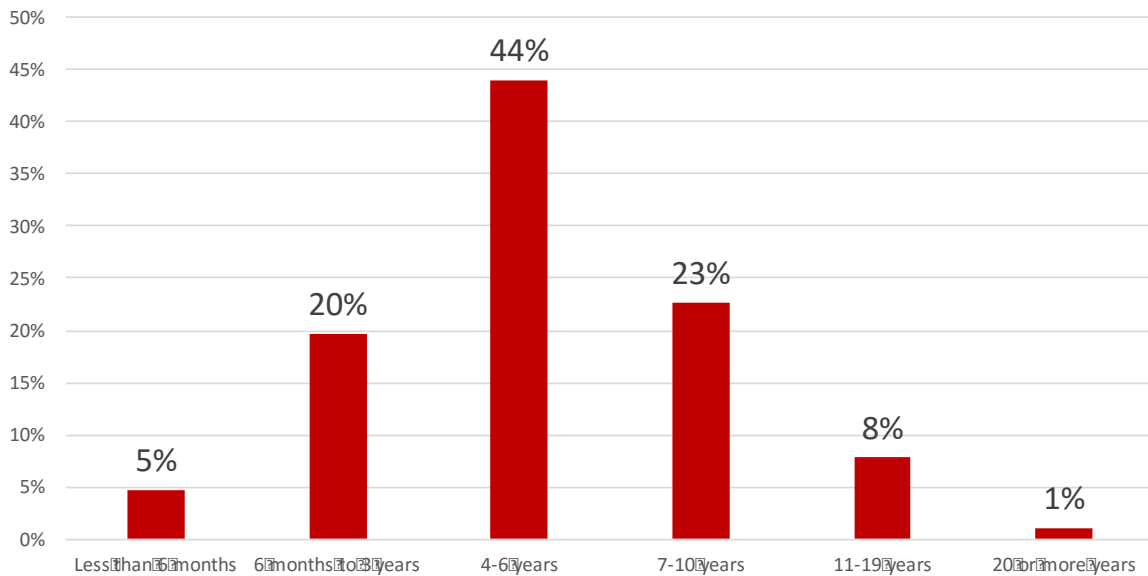
Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1058

Our survey results reflect a broad range of ages. While the typical profile of applicants for a school would skew more toward the 26-29 age bracket, we are thrilled to see older applicants represented in our survey. Many of these candidates may be military veterans, who often have several more years of experience when they decide to apply.

Figure 21: Full-time work experience of MBA applicants



Survey Participants: Years of Full-time Work Experience

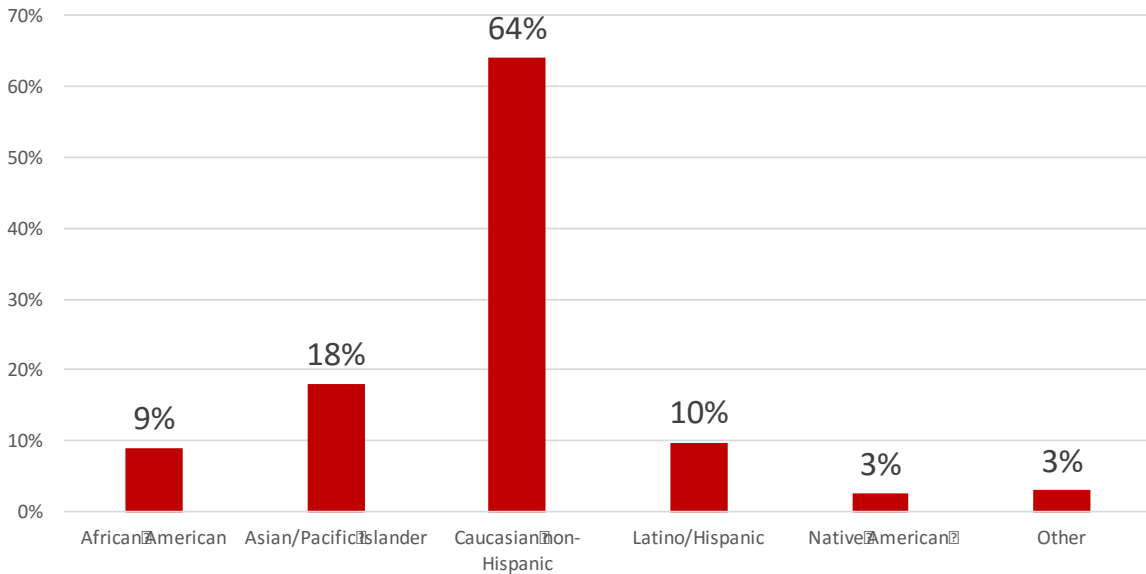


Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=1056

Figure 22: Ethnic origin of US or dual citizen MBA applicants

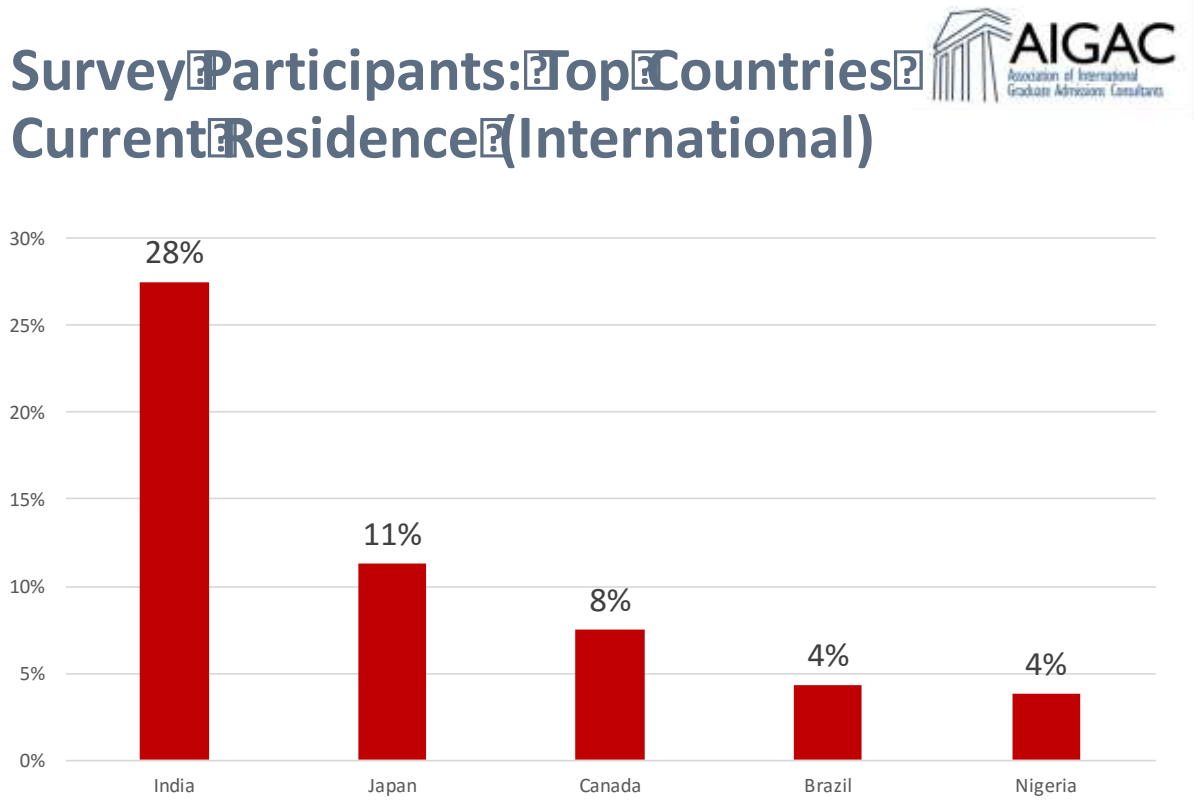


Survey Participants: (Ethnic Origin (U.S. or dual citizens))



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=400

Figure 23: Top countries of residence for international MBA applicants

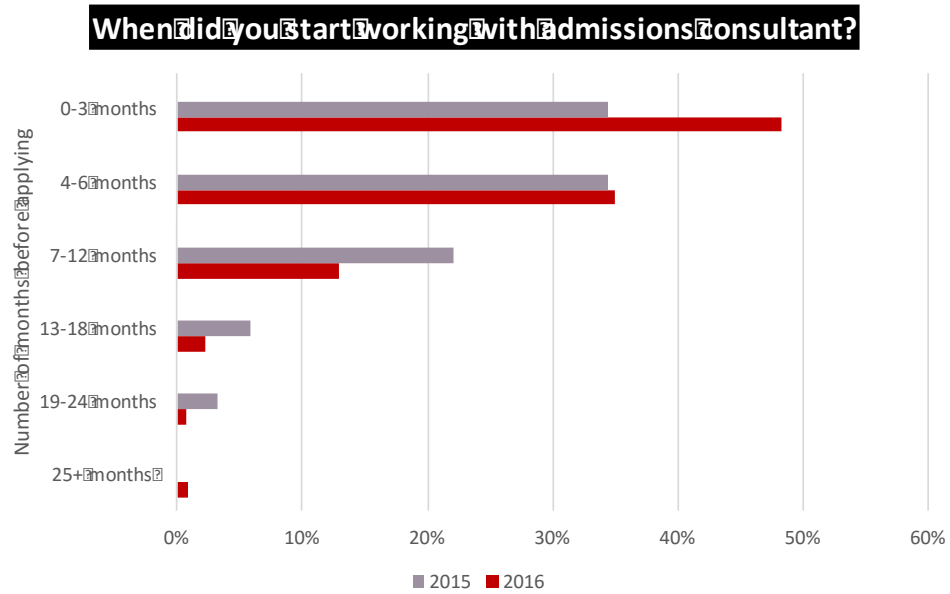


Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=585

56% of survey respondents are U.S. residents. Considering respondents who live outside of the U.S., over a quarter live in India. Japan, Canada, and Brazil represent the next three most common countries of residence.

Figure 24: Timing when MBA applicants began working with an admissions consultant

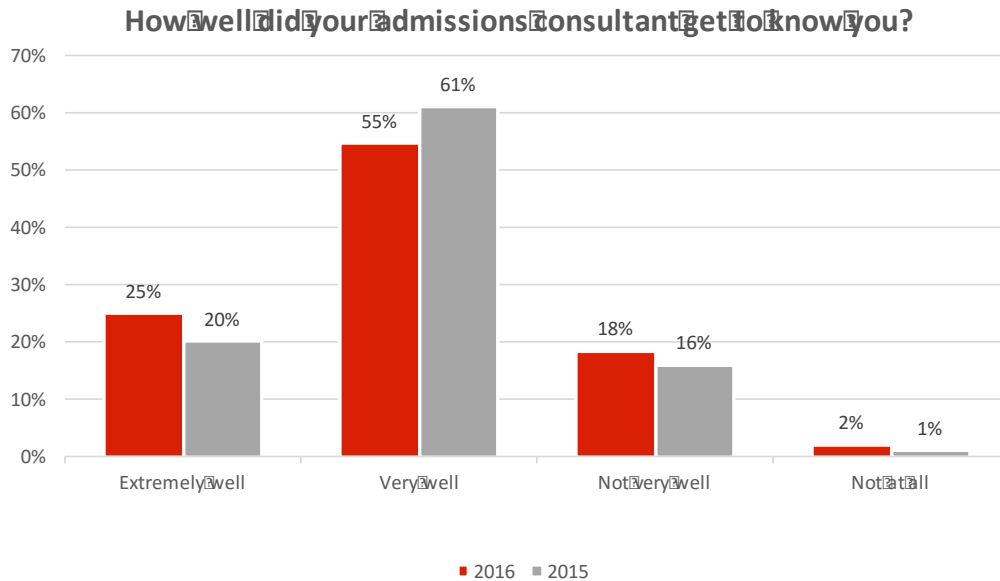
When did you start working with an admissions consultant?



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=434 (those intending to start by January 2017)

Figure 25: How well MBA applicants got to know their admissions consultant

Admissions consultants continued to get to know applicants well



Source: 2016 MBA Applicant Survey, n=434 (those intending to start by January 2017)

About AIGAC

Founded in 2006, the non-profit [Association of International Graduate Admissions Consultants \(AIGAC\)](#) exists to define ethical standards for graduate admissions consultants, contribute to their professional development, educate the public about the admissions consulting industry, and strengthen relationships with related service providers (e.g., test prep) and business schools. AIGAC is the standard bearer for best practices and excellence in advising graduate school applicants around the world.

AIGAC is committed to helping applicants educate themselves about their options and optimize their candidacy as they make high-stakes decisions and investments in their higher education. Members of AIGAC include former admissions officers from top universities, graduates of leading programs, widely-read authors, and subject-matter experts who are frequently quoted in the international media including the *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *Financial Times*, *Forbes*, *Poets & Quants*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Visit the AIGAC website at www.aigac.org. Follow AIGAC on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Media Inquiries

Please email: media@aigac.org