

2016 MBA Applicant Survey

Program Consideration
Reasons for Applying
Test Prep/Admission Consultant Engagement
Expectations

Barbara Coward
Founder
Enrollment Strategies



Background Information

Findings reflect applicants who plan on enrolling in Jan 2017 or sooner, and who applied to at least one school (N=1,114)

- 65% male, 35% female
- 35% are U.S. citizens, 61% international
- 44% live in the U.S.
- 56% live in 83 other countries represented
- 19% already have a master's degree

Survey open dates: February 15 through May 2, 2016

Total respondents: 3,586



Executive summary

- MBA applicants remain as optimistic as in past years about their post-MBA employment prospects
 - Confident that an MBA education would enable them to secure a significantly higher salary post-MBA
 - Continue to focus on Consulting, Finance/Accounting, & Technology
- While optimistic about the future, many MBA applicants are realistic about the competitiveness of the process
 - Turn to multiple sources for support with application process
 - Friends, admissions consultants, & family members top list of resources sought out
 - Fewer than 20% of applicants “go it alone”



Executive summary

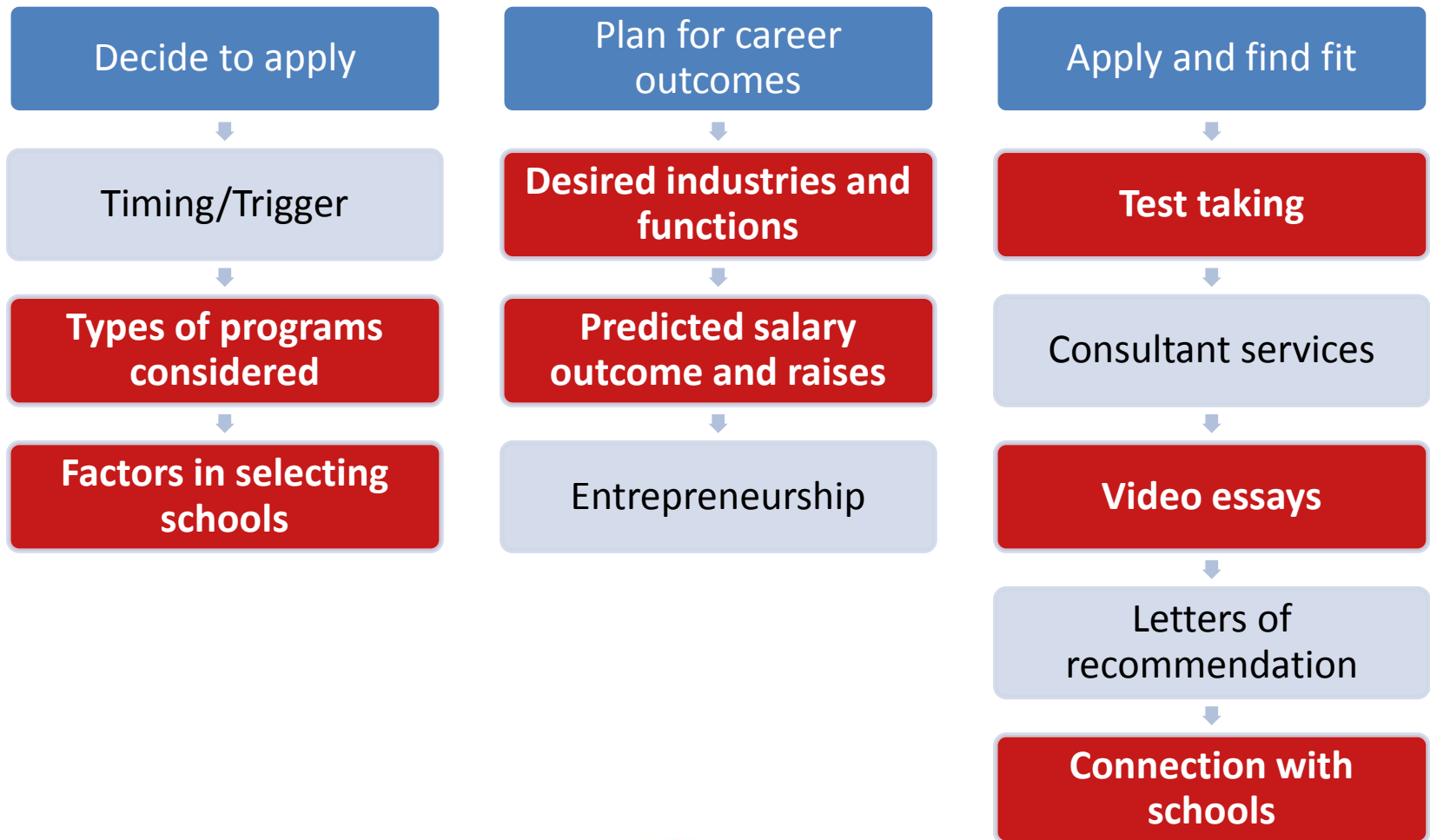
- Applicants are also mindful of program costs
 - Declining interest in two-year programs reflects openness to options perceived as more cost-effective
 - 41% of respondents indicated that school choice was partly influenced by affordability
 - 21% of applicants report modifying list of target schools based on cost & access to financial aid
 - Cost appears to loom larger in applicants' minds than it did in the first *AIGAC MBA Applicant Survey* in 2009
 - Net cost of program attendance can be difficult to assess, skewing choices of where to apply



Executive summary

- Applicants have so far adapted well to newer application components
 - Nearly half of applicants (49%) said the video essay represented them “well” or “extremely well”
 - While not all applicants feel that video responses represent them well, the format doesn’t seem to create undue stress
 - Applicants appear fairly comfortable with group exercises; while they are still only employed by a handful of schools, so far, applicants indicate they are not overly challenging

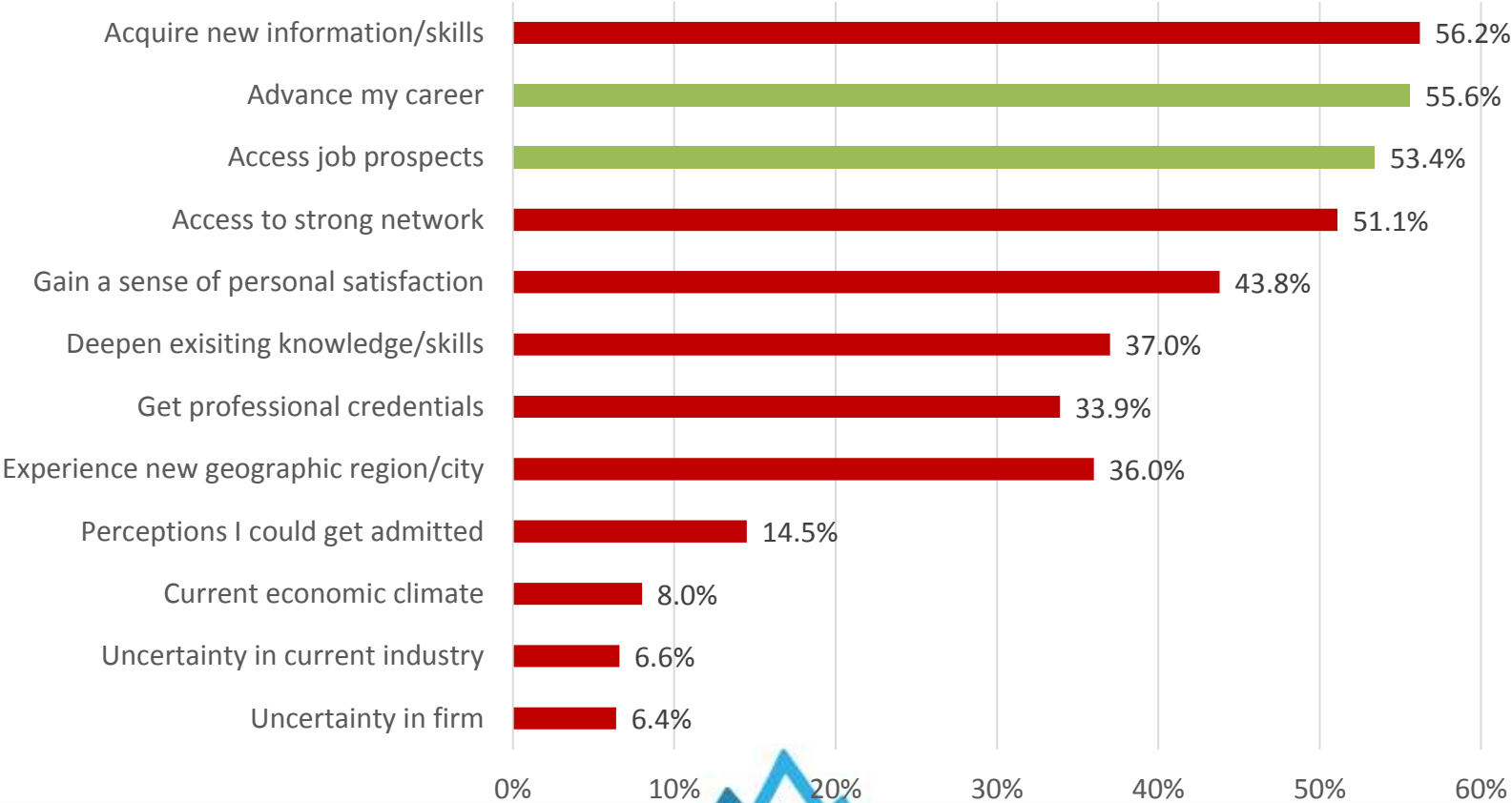
The Life of an MBA Applicant



MBA Applicants are optimistic about the future

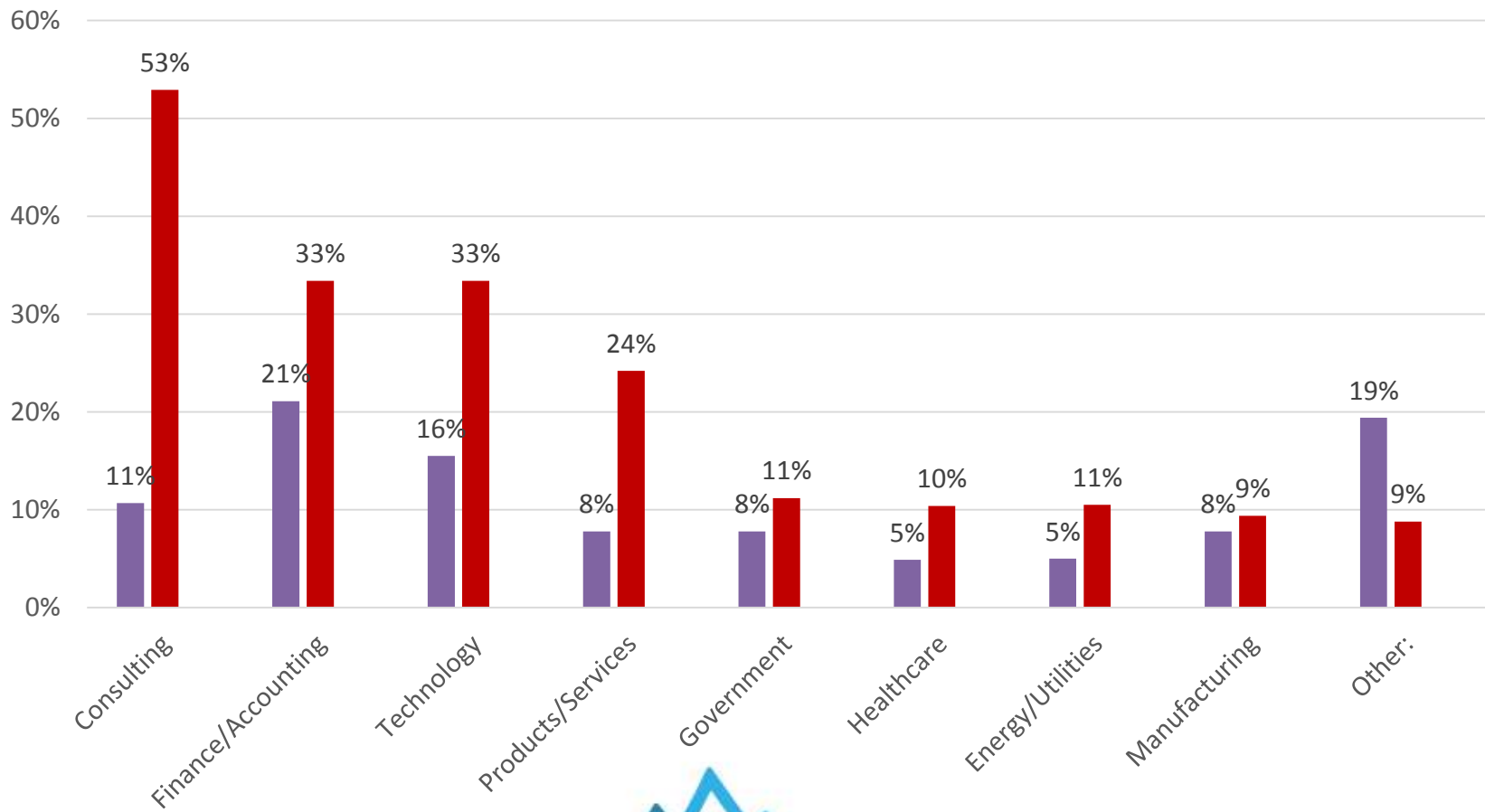
Short-term career outcomes are core drivers of the decision to apply

Which factors had most influence on decision to apply?



Applicants continue to desire traditional post-MBA roles

What industry do you currently/hope to work in?

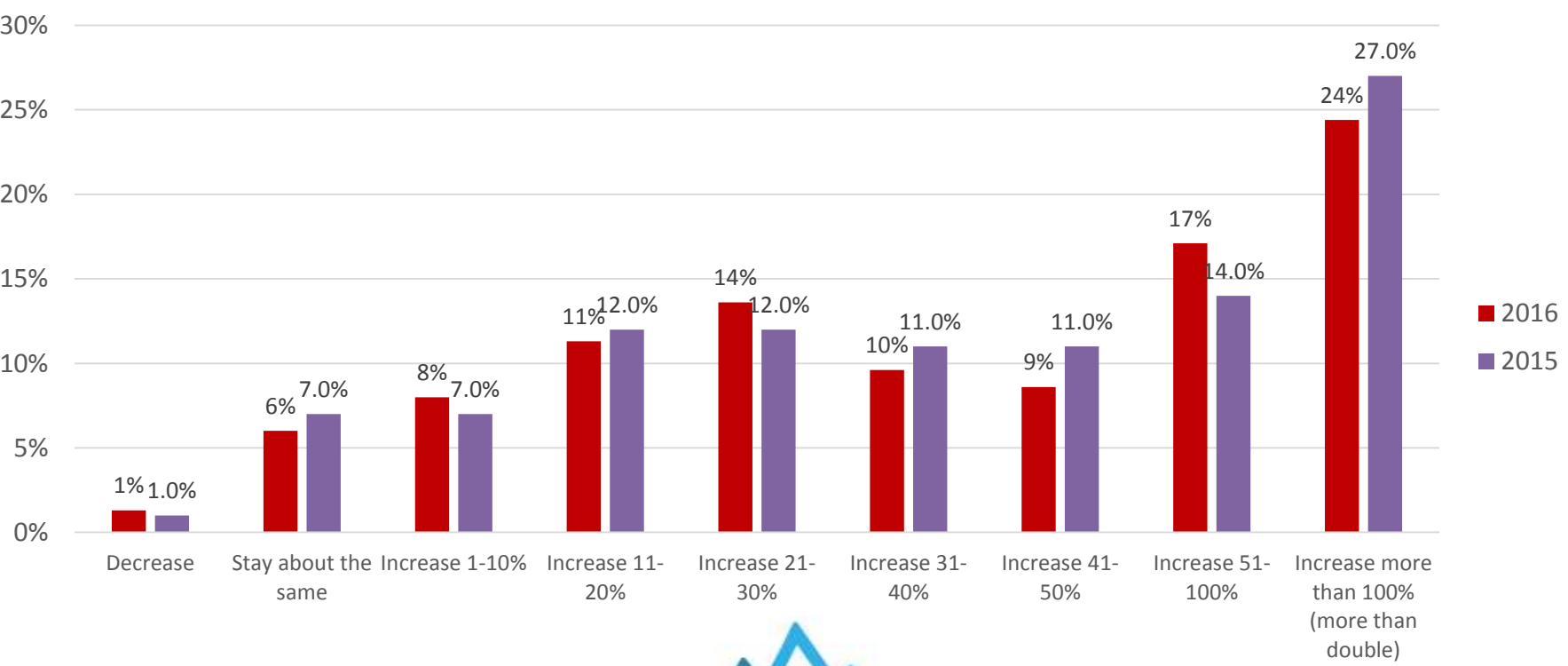


We need to manage applicants' career expectations

- In 2007, **consultants** represented 26% of MBA graduating classes and by 2013, that grew to 29%*
 - Little room left to grow; based on last downturn, total hires may fall
- **Finance** has faced greater long-term pressure
 - 43% of graduates from top MBA programs went into finance in 2007
 - By 2013, 29% of graduates from top MBA programs went into finance
 - Consistent with results at most top business schools
- **Technology** has grown consistently since 2007
 - 8% of graduates from top MBA programs went into technology in 2007, by 2013, 17% of graduates had entered technology

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

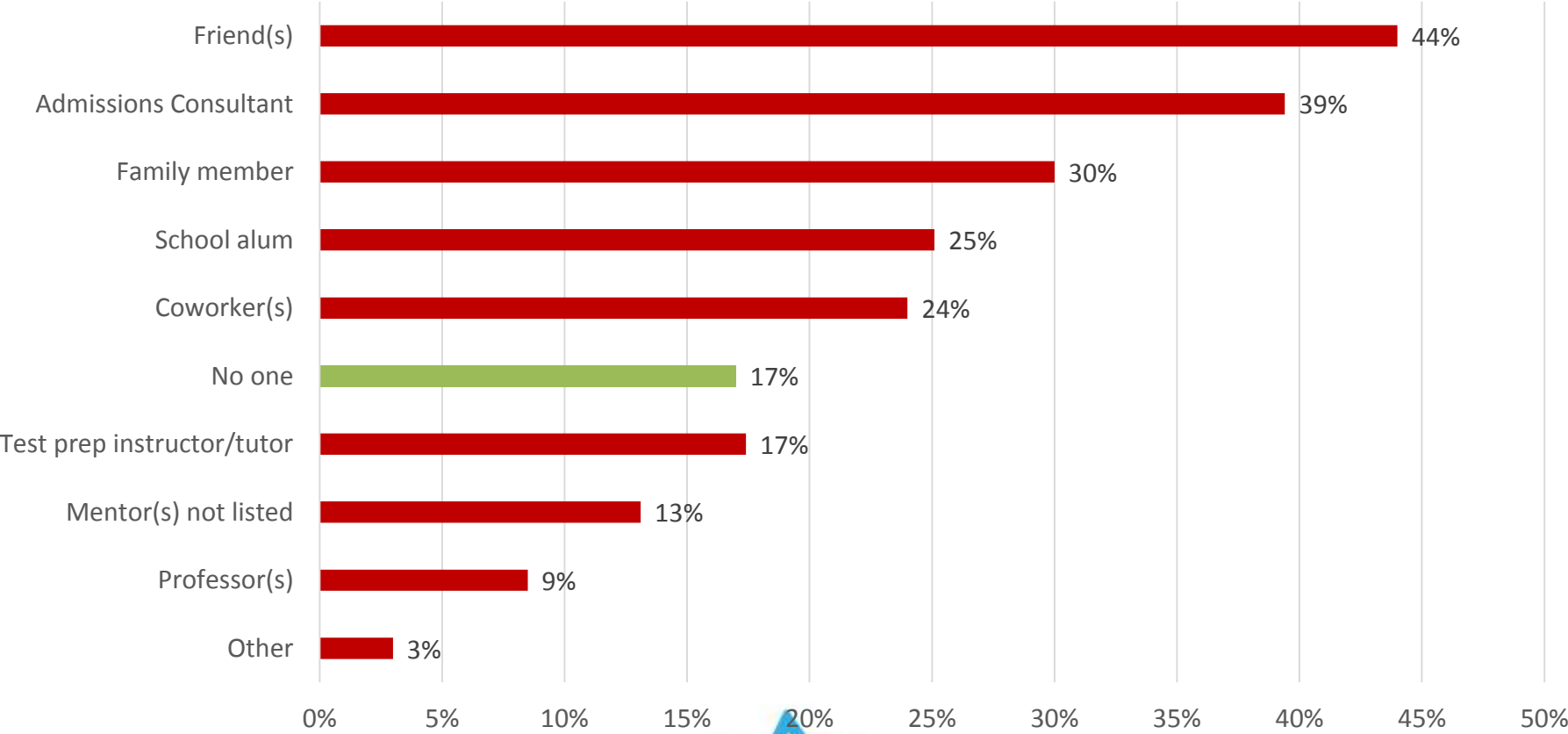
What effect do you expect completing an MBA to have on your earnings potential within the first six months of graduating?



**2016 MBA applicants are realistic about the
competitiveness of the process**

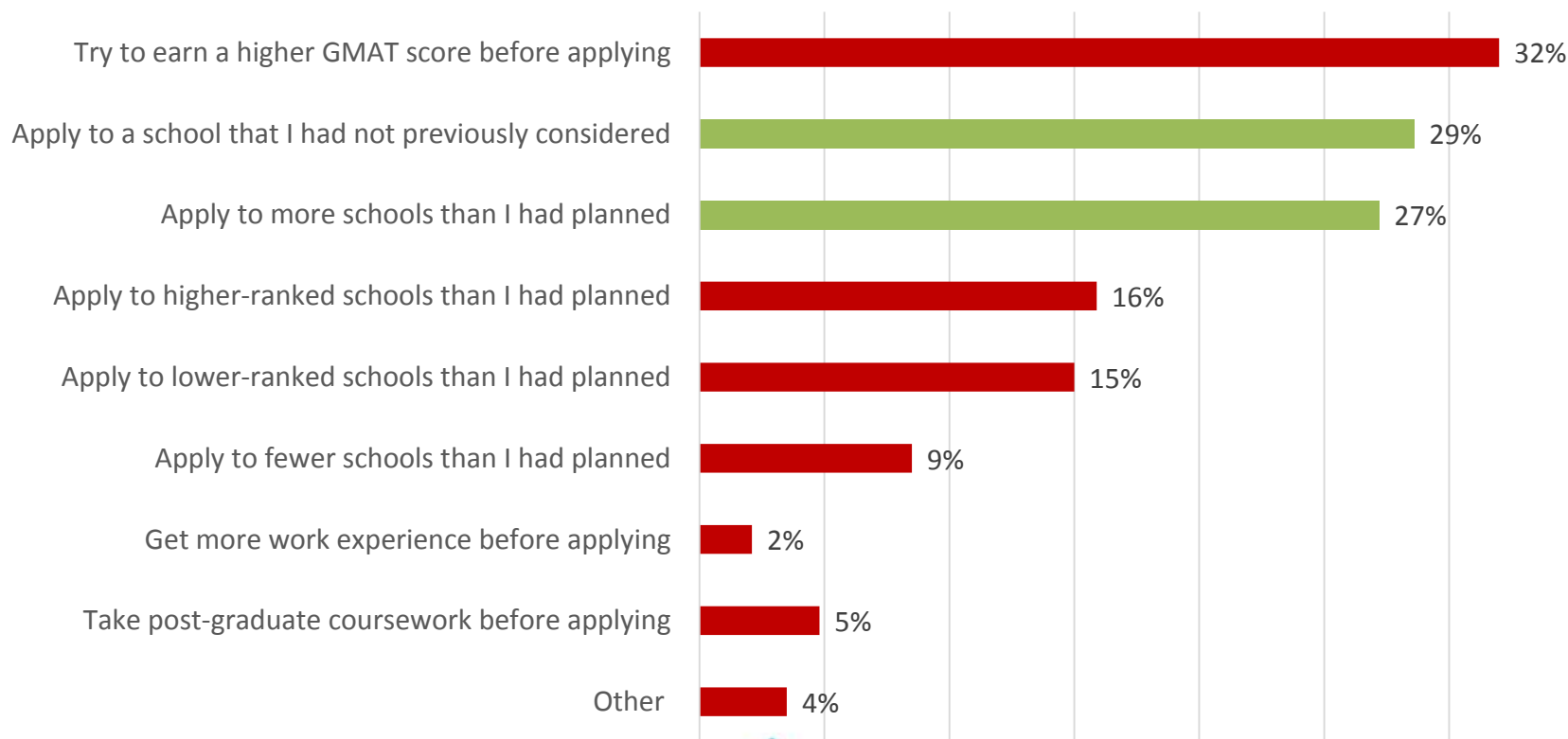
Many applicants seek out multiple sources of support, ~20% “go it alone”

Who helped you with the application process? (select all)



Admissions consultants helped applicants to evaluate choices

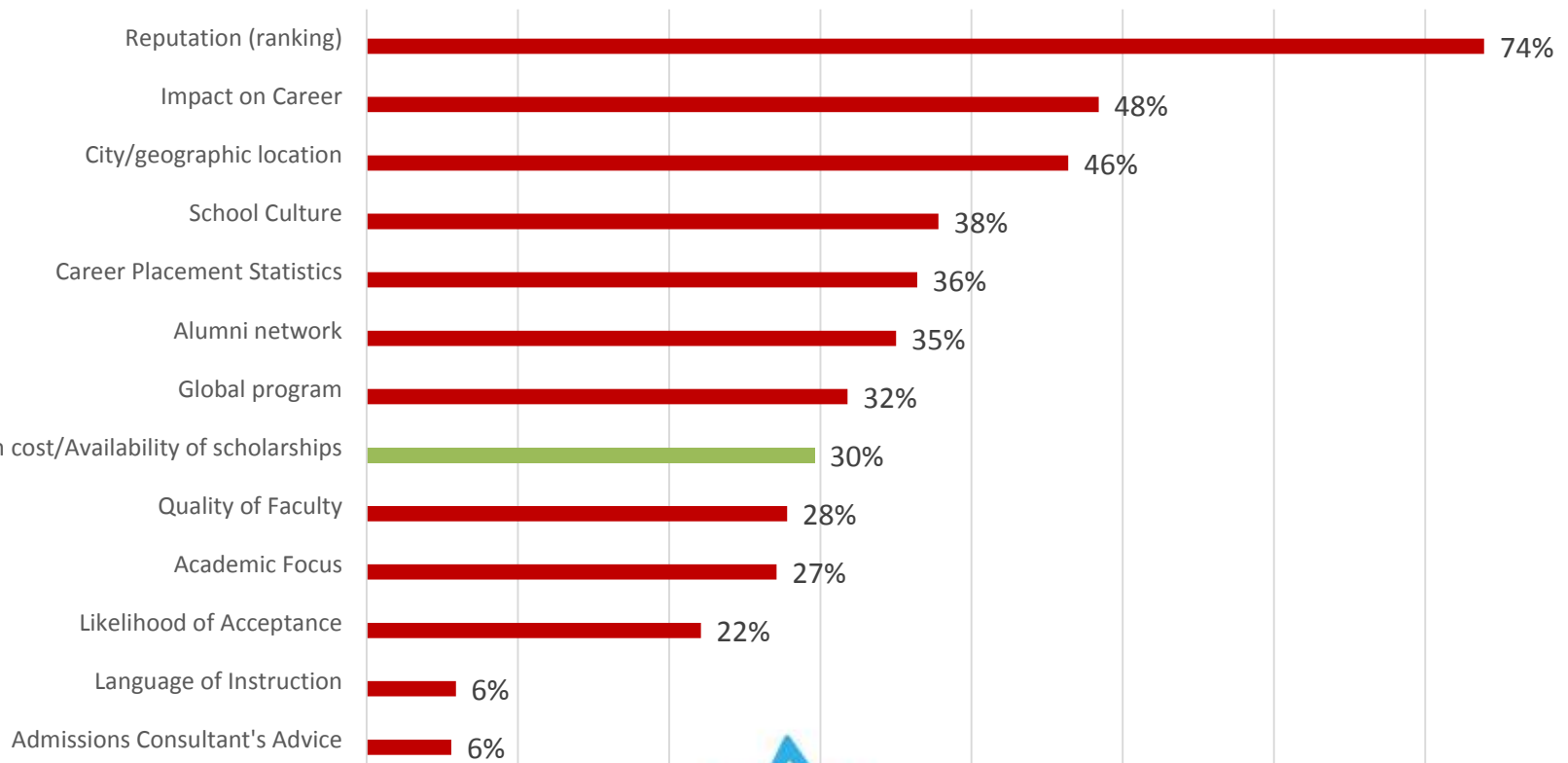
How did your admissions consultant influence school choice?



**Applicants are also
mindful of program costs**

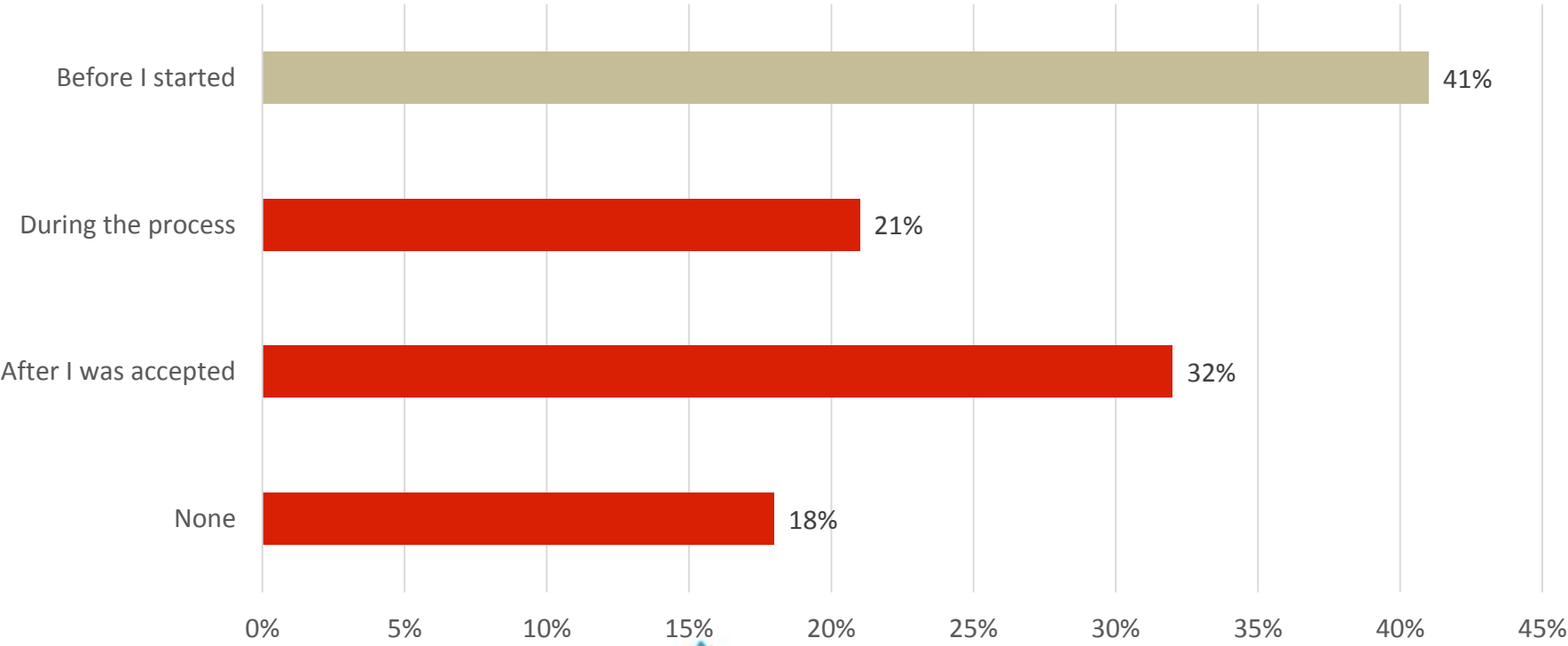
30% of applicants consider net cost when selecting programs

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



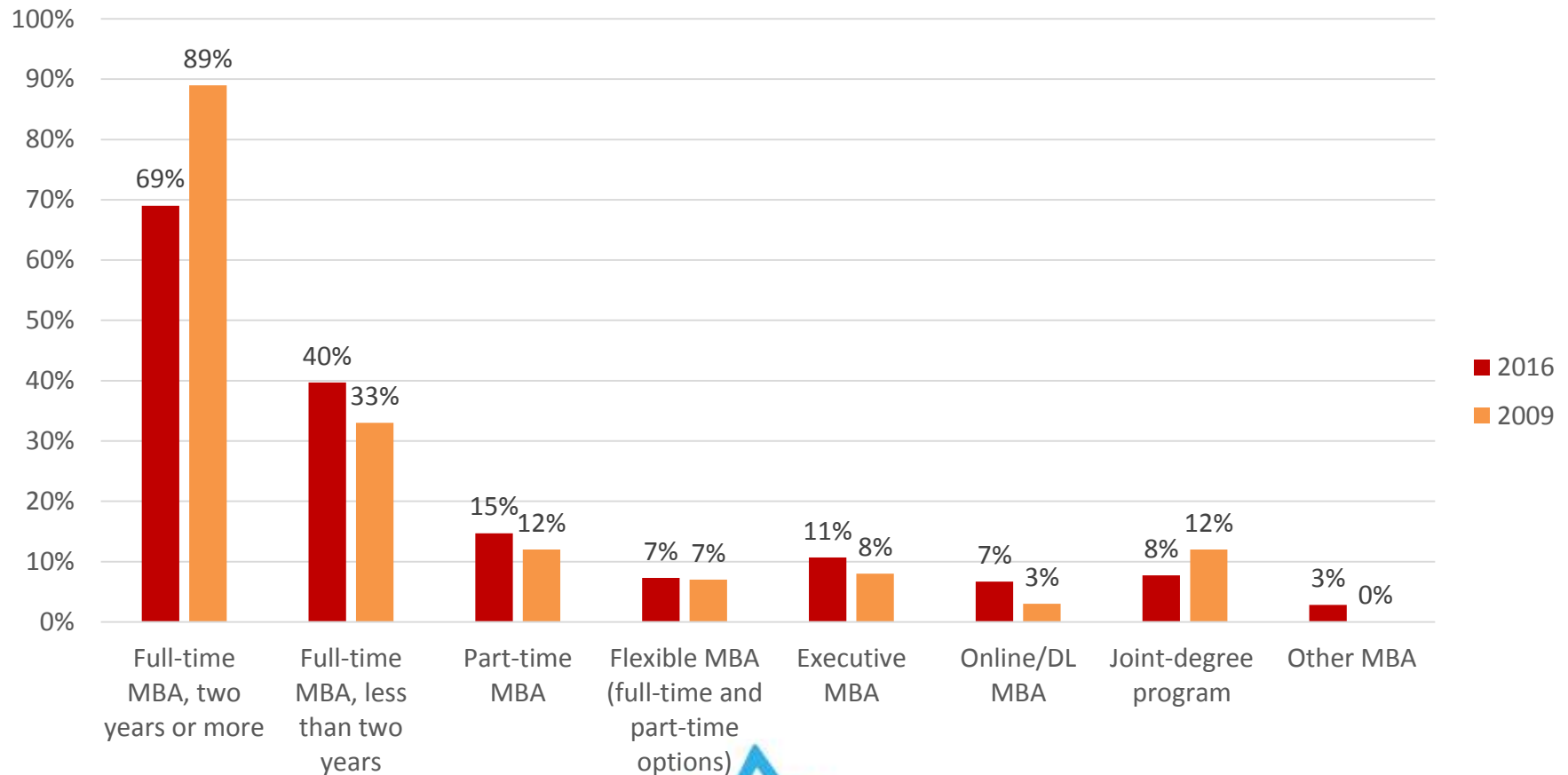
Affordability is a significant factor in school selection

When did you consider how to finance your degree?
(Select all that apply)



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

What types of MBA programs have you considered ? (select all)



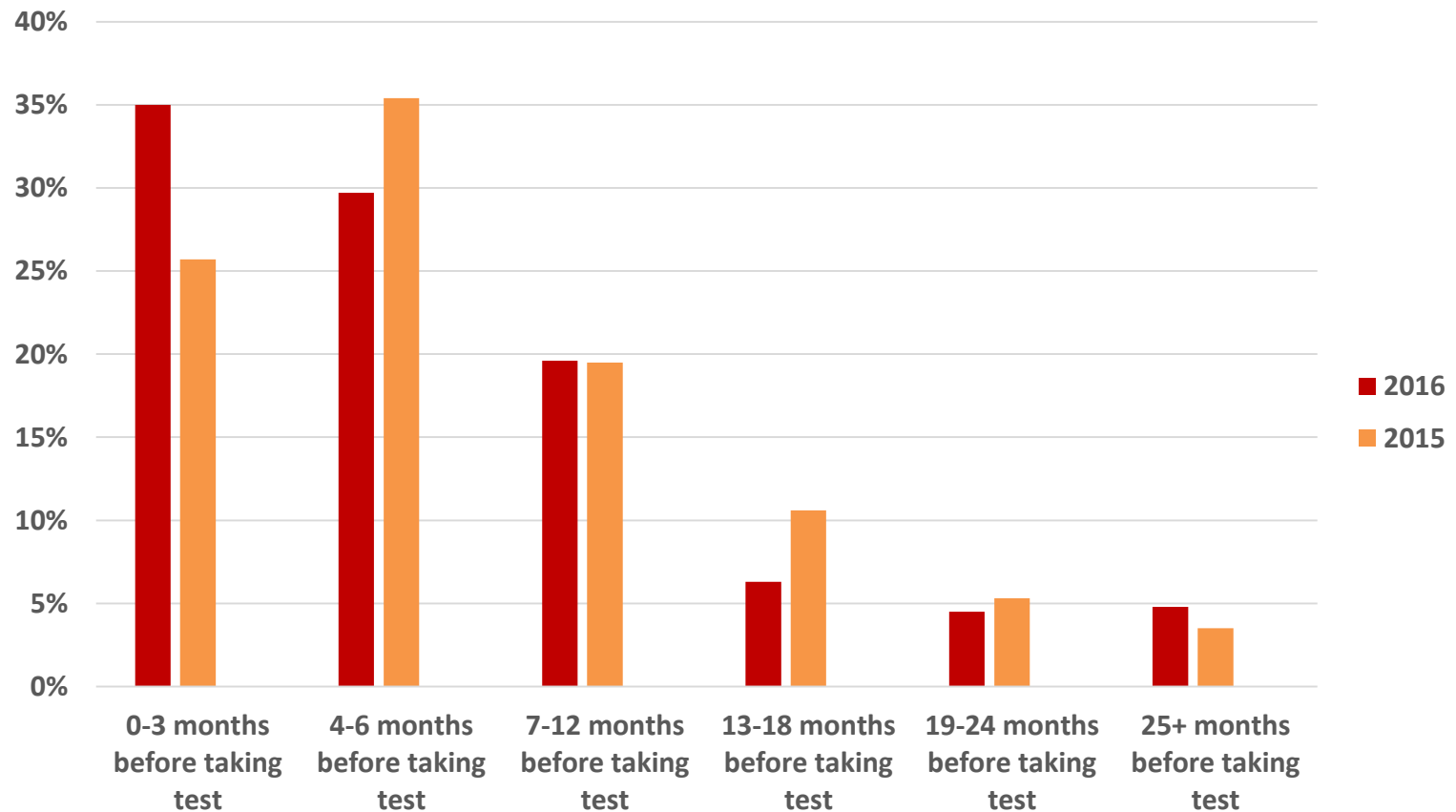
Applicants highlighted importance of financial aid in decision making

“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

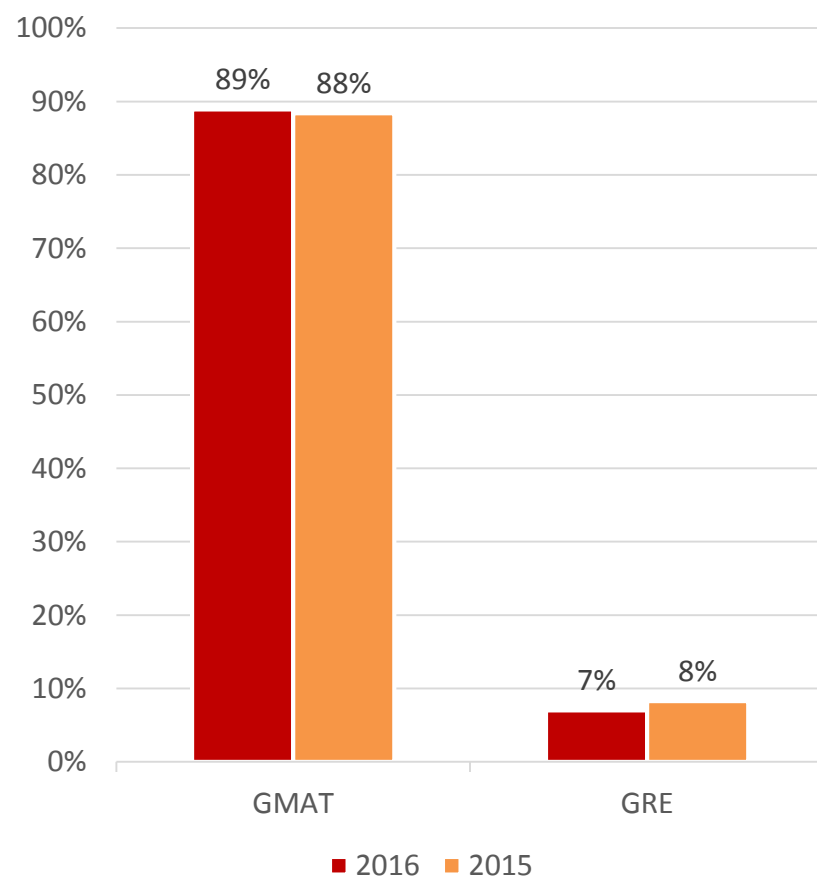
Test Prep

Respondents indicated beginning test prep later than in prior years

When did you start test preparation efforts?

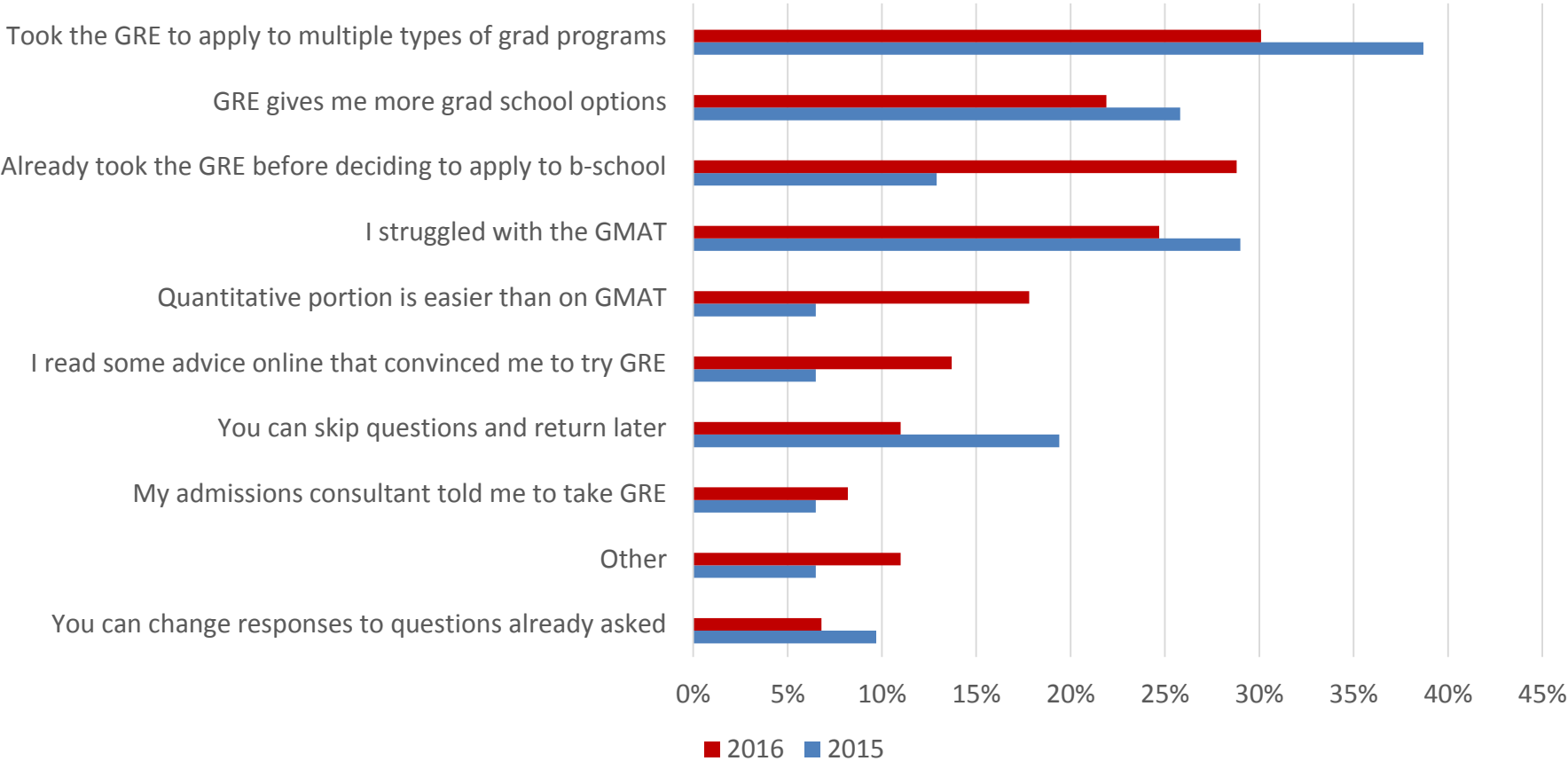


Survey respondents continue to favor GMAT vs. GRE



- 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

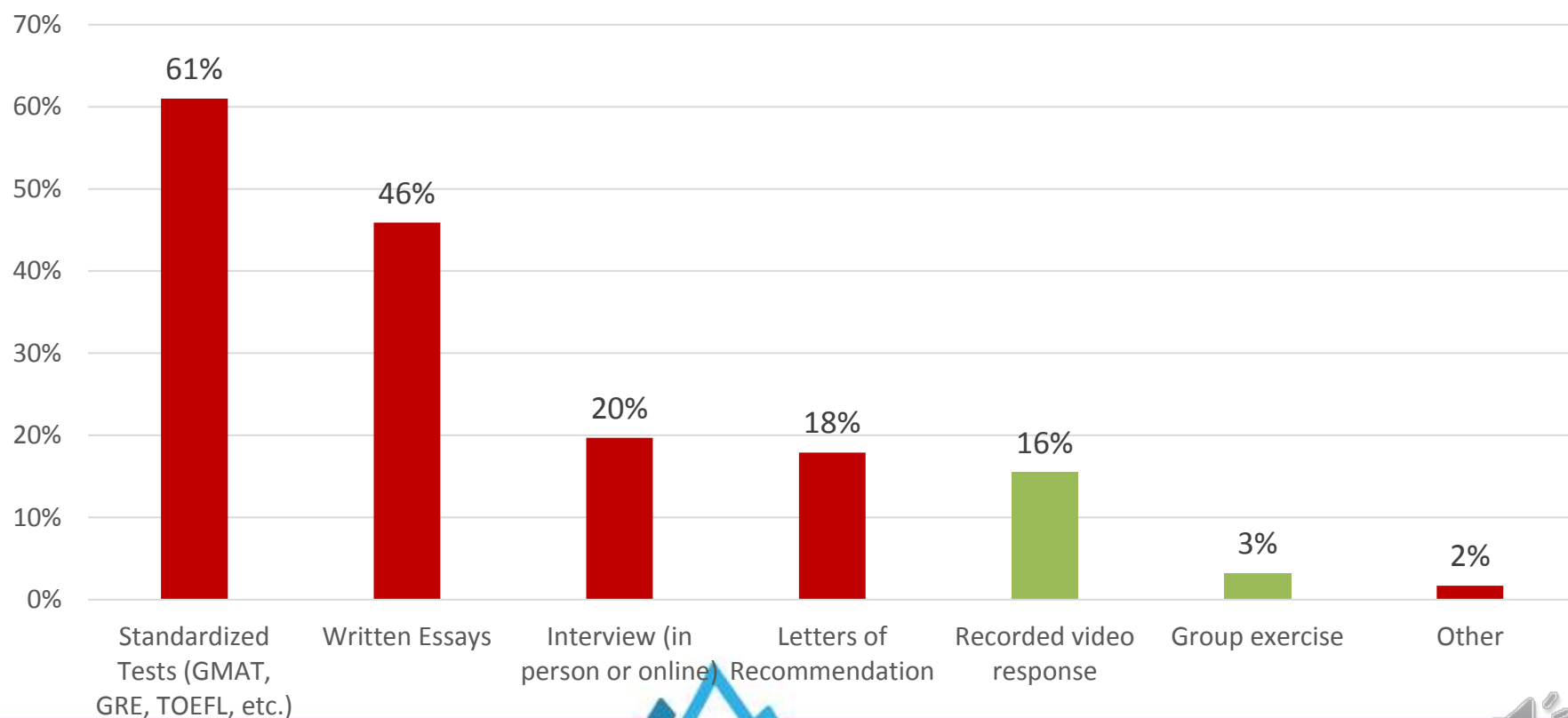
Why did you take GRE?



Applicants seem to be adapting well to newer application components

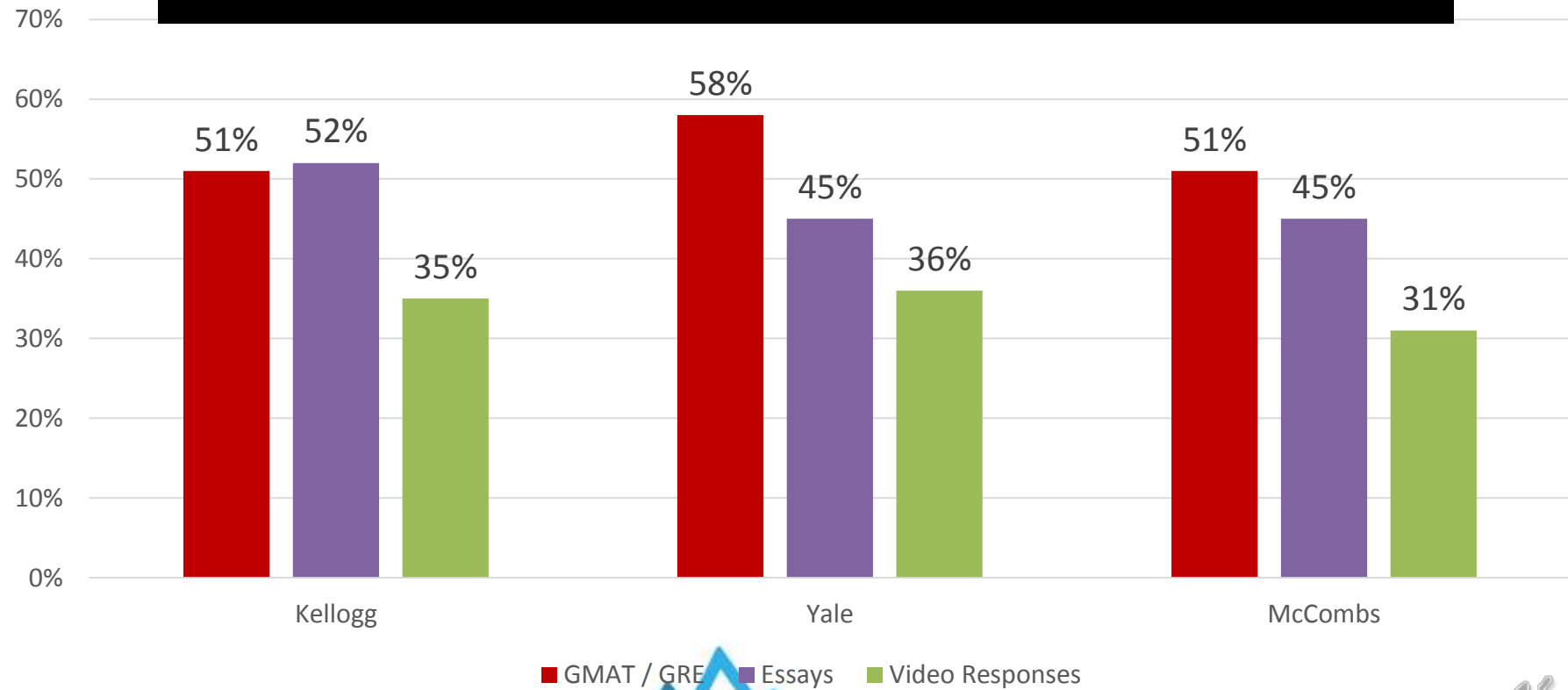
Applicants still find tests and essays to be the most challenging

Which application components did you find to be especially challenging?
(Select all)



Applicants rated video responses as less challenging than tests and essays

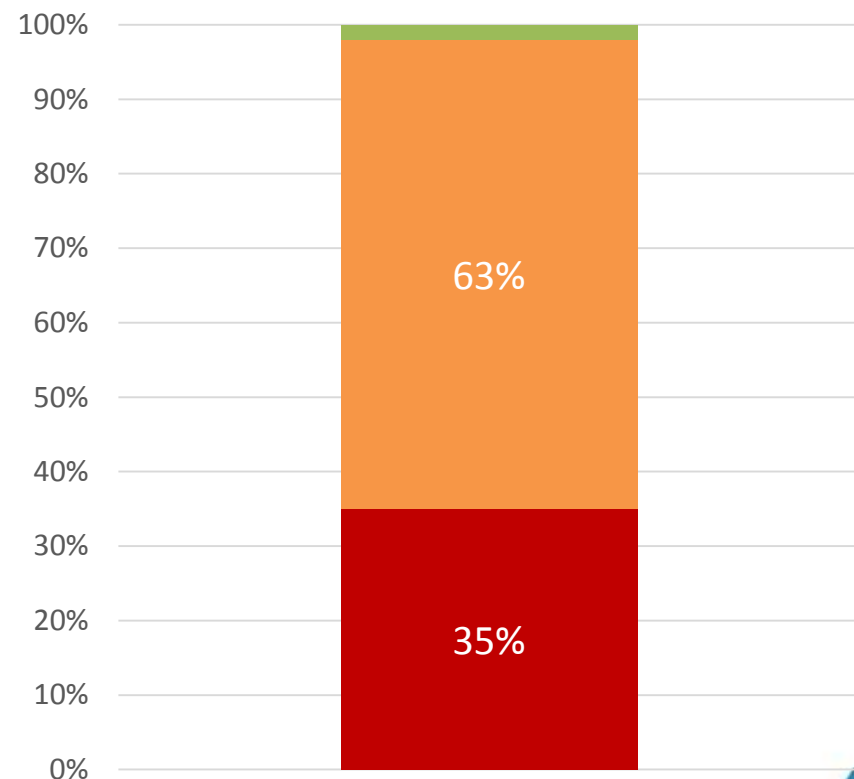
Which application components did you find to be especially challenging?
(Select all)



A tipping point in the percentage of applicants completing video responses

Did you complete one or more applications with a video essay component?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure



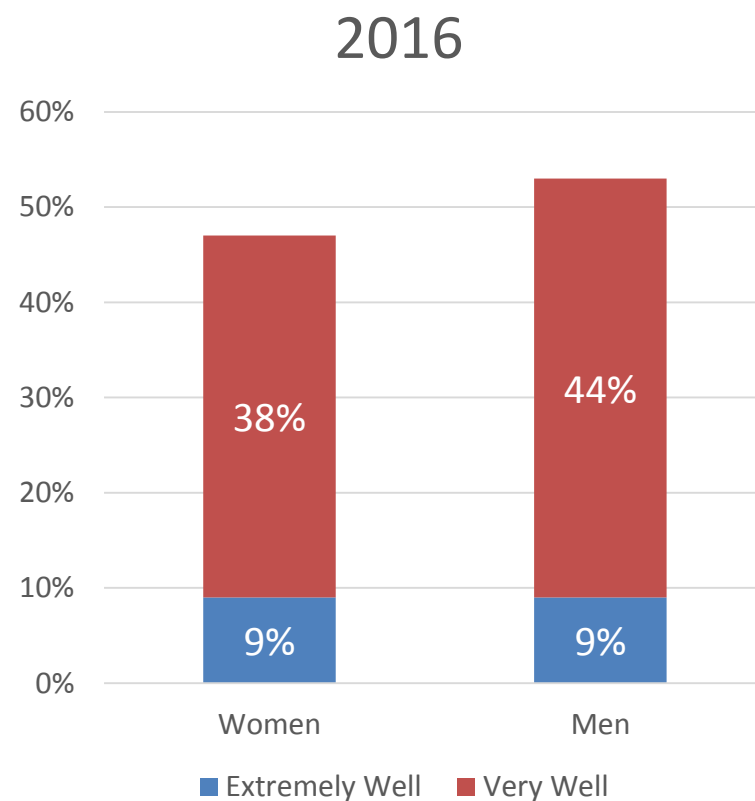
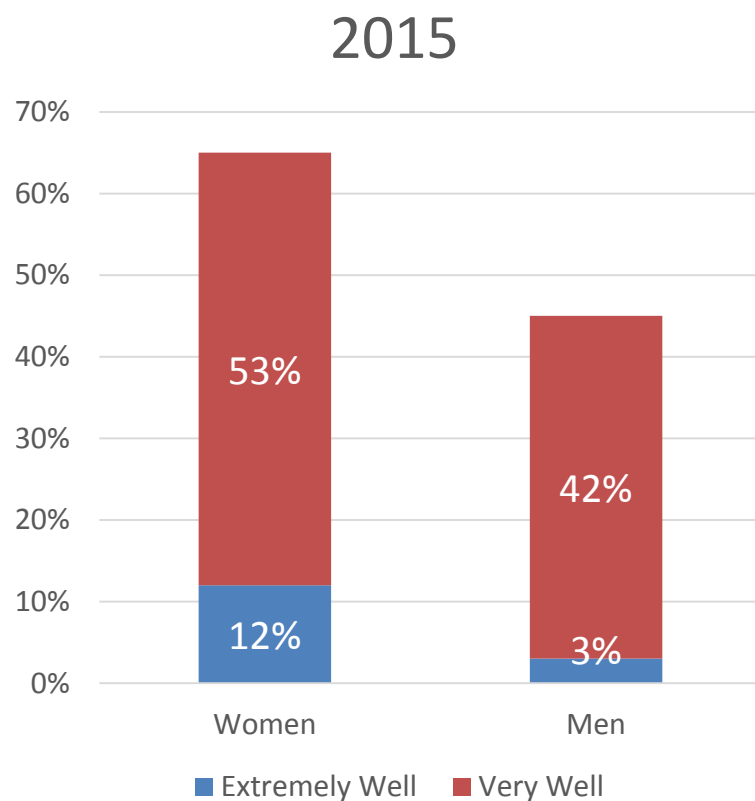
Many applicants liked video interviews

"I think the video components are a good way for schools to get a preliminary view into the applicant before inviting them to 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 is the logical utilization of the latest technology."
- 2016 Applicant

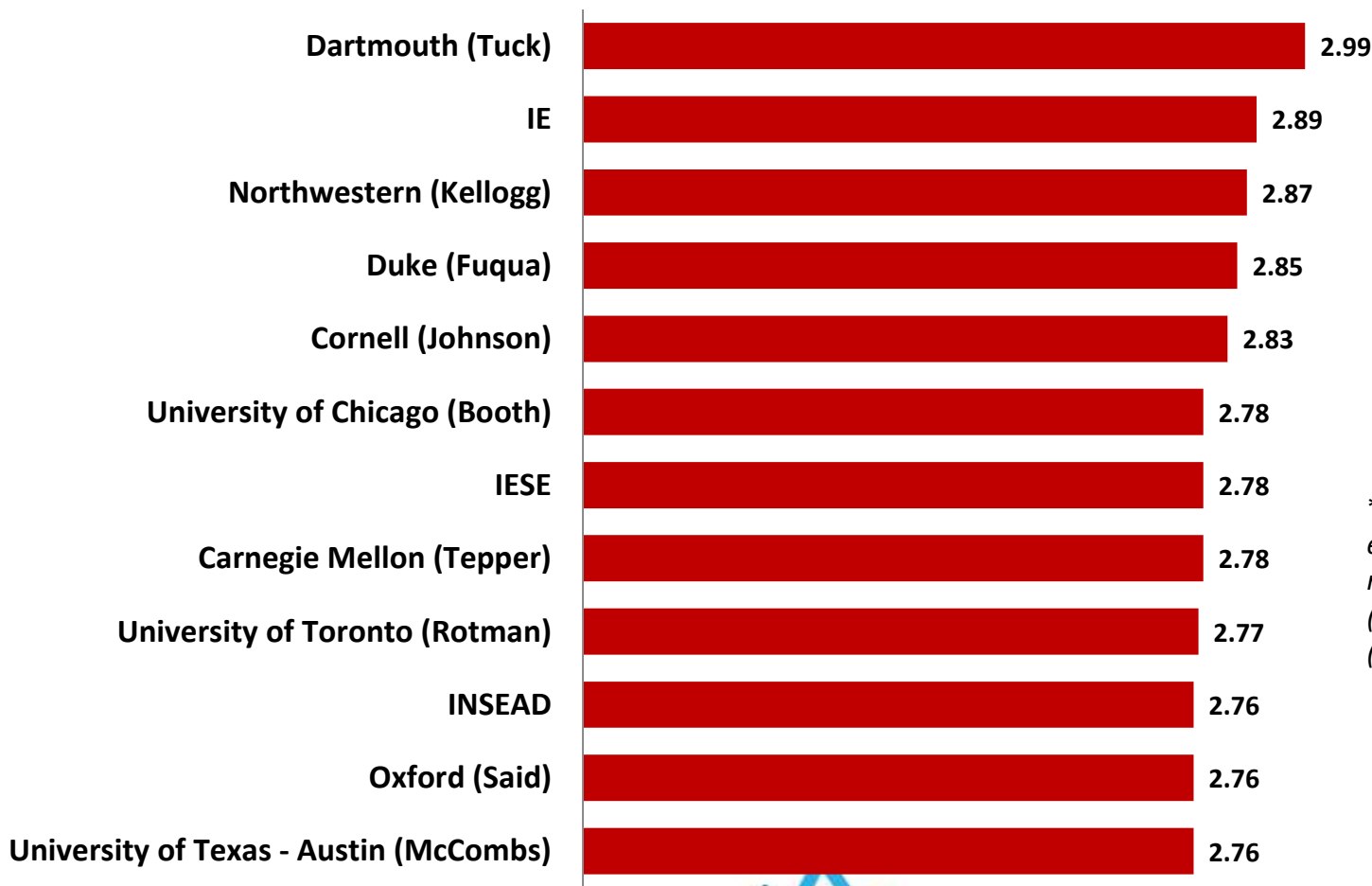
"Although it is a bit nerve wrecking, the video essays are a great way for candidates to show admissions committees their communication skills and to put a personal touch to the application. It was a very interesting exercise for me."
-- 2016 Applicant

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



Top 10 Schools Who Got to Know Applicants Well

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



*Means (weighted to equalize admissions rates) on a scale from 1 ("Not at all") to 4 ("Extremely well")

Candidates expect the schools to be interested in them

*“The **accessibility** of Admission Officers was key to my decision.”*

*“Additionally, schools that were very **responsive** with returning emails and linking me with current students were generally higher on my list than others.”*

*“Georgia Tech took the time to reach out to me during the whole admissions process. The **individual attention** from the beginning showed a commitment to me others schools lacked.”*