

Methodology



This longitudinal study draws on data collected through four surveys:

1. A survey of MBA alumni who graduated between 1981 and 1995 from 12 leading U.S. business schools that participated in the Catalyst study *Women and the MBA: Gateway to Opportunity*.
2. A follow-up (re-contact) survey in 2007 of alumni who participated in the Catalyst study *Women and the MBA: Gateway to Opportunity*.
3. A global survey of MBA alumni who graduated between 1996 and 2007 from 11 of the 12 U.S. business schools that originally participated in the Catalyst study *Women and the MBA: Gateway to Opportunity*, plus 15 other business schools in Asia, Canada, and Europe.
4. A follow-up pulse survey of a subset of the participants in the global survey.

Women and the MBA: Gateway to Opportunity

In 2000, Catalyst published *Women and the MBA: Gateway to Opportunity* based on research conducted in cooperation with the University of Michigan Business School and the Center for the Education of Women at the University of Michigan. The report examined career outcomes for women and men MBAs who graduated from 1981 to 1995. Aspects studied included: what industries and functional areas graduates were then working in, levels of leadership they had attained, their expectations for future advancement, barriers they had encountered, and their recommendations for business schools and for corporations interested in attracting and retaining high-potential women.

The survey was mailed to 4,064 women and men MBA graduates from 12 of the top U.S. business schools. A total of 1,684 recipients completed the survey for a response rate of 41%. Survey findings were supplemented with focus groups.

Re-Contact Survey of MBA Alumni from 1981 to 1995

In 2006, Catalyst sought and received permission from 11 of the 12 schools that participated in the *Women and the MBA: Gateway to Opportunity* survey to re-contact alumni who graduated from 1981 to 1995 and who had responded to the original survey.¹

¹ Dartmouth College was unable to participate in this re-contact survey.

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Invitations to participate in an online survey were sent under the signature of the dean or another highly ranked executive at each school by email or traditional mail to 1,219 alumni for whom updated contact information was available. Of those, 112 invitations were undeliverable, resulting in 1,107 invitations reaching the intended recipients. A total of 335 recipients completed the survey for a response rate of 30%.

Global Survey of MBA Alumni Who Graduated from 1996 to 2007

Again in 2006 and into 2007 Catalyst invited the 12 U.S. business schools that participated in the *Women and the MBA: Gateway to Opportunity* survey plus top business schools in Asia, Canada, and Europe to participate in a survey of MBA alumni who graduated from 1996 to 2007. The study was ultimately fielded at 26 business schools around the world: four Asian schools, seven Canadian schools, four European schools, and 11 U.S. schools.²

Each participating school fielded between Fall 2007 and Spring 2008. Schools were asked to invite all MBA alumni who graduated from 1996 through 2007 to participate in the online survey. In some cases, schools sent the invitation only to a random sample of their MBA alumni.

A total of 85,392 invitations to participate in the online survey were sent by email under the signature of the dean or another highly ranked executive at the school. In total, there were 9,927 survey respondents, resulting in a response rate of 12%. As most schools were unable to track email bouncebacks, this number is likely an underestimate of the true response rate.

Most reported findings draw from the 4,143 respondents who completed full-time MBAs and worked full-time in companies or firms at the time of the survey.

Pulse Survey of MBA Alumni from 1996 to 2007 Following Economic Downturn

Participants in the global survey of MBA alumni conducted from Fall 2007 through Spring 2008 were given an opportunity to provide an email address expressing interest in participating in future surveys. Of the 9,927 survey respondents, 2,762 (28%) provided email addresses.

In Spring 2009, these alumni received an email invitation to participate in a

² The University of Michigan was unable to participate in this new cohort survey.



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brief online follow-up survey of their career experiences, focusing on job changes and unemployment during the economic downturn that occurred since the 2007 and 2008 survey. A total of 1,317 respondents completed the survey yielding a response rate of 48%.

Findings from the pulse survey draw from the 873 respondents who completed full-time MBAs and worked full-time in companies or firms as of their initial survey participation date.