



# DU of WI Alumni Dinner Survey of Alumni Preferences

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for  
Delta Upsilon of WI Foundation



# Survey Background

## Situation

- Legacy: DU of WI Alumni Dinner has been held annually for 96 years, first in Milwaukee during the Fall
- Location Change: In 2013 the event moved to the UW-Madison campus during the Spring
- Average alumni registrations
  - 34 guys in Milwaukee (2002-2012)
  - 40 guys in Madison (2013 – 2023)
- Post-COVID Downward Trend: 2022 & 2023 alumni registrations were only 30 and 28 respectively
- Aging Population: Average age of 2023 alumni registrants was 65 with few guys <50 years old
- Average undergrad registrations: 44 in both Milwaukee and Madison (for comparison)

## Goal

Obtain actionable input from large cross-section of UW DU alums to evaluate changes, if any, to dinner format, location and/or seasonality that will increase alumni attendance for years to come.

# Survey Summary



- Conducted in September 2023
- Available to 407 DU Alumni (WI & Carthage) in current database
- Maximum of 18 questions with branching logic + open comments
- Feedback from a balanced cross-section of our Alumni population
- **Encouraging:** Excellent Response Rate and Engagement
  - 95 completed surveys (23% of emails sent & 36% of opened emails)
  - 45 guys (47% of completed surveys) agreed to answer additional questions
  - Only 1 'unsubscribe' from invitations
- **Discouraging:** ~25% may never be interested
  - Never attended a Madison dinner AND indicated future reluctance





# Important Conclusions & Recommendations

## Survey Findings

- Strong preference for legacy format
- Overwhelming support to:
  - Stay on campus in Madison
  - Nurture undergrad and alumni interaction
- Preference for Fall over Spring with strong support even from *Regular Attendees*
- Preference for Saturday over Friday, esp. among younger guys
- Some attendance obstacles we can address; some we cannot
- Age matters
  - *Regular Attendees* are in the older population
  - Growing attendance requires attracting younger guys
  - Younger guys prefer changes while older guys prefer status quo
- Cost is not an obstacle to attendance

## Recommendations

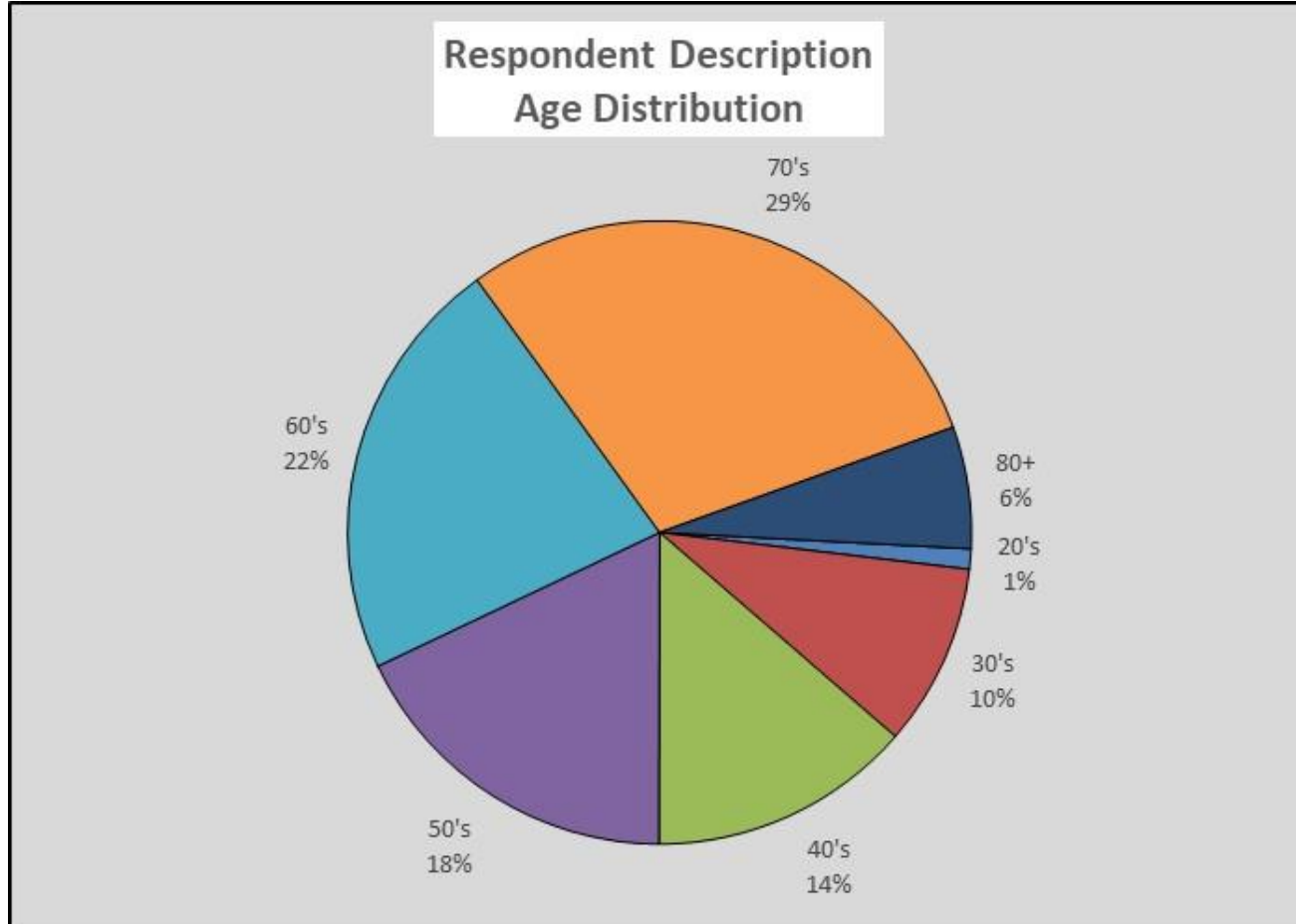
- Maintain our general format
- Stay in Madison on or near campus
- Move 2024 dinner to Fall (*Regular Attendees* indicate this is not a stupid thing to try)
- Move to Saturday evening to attract younger guys
- Create PR plan to entice younger group (guys in their 20's, 30's and 40's)
- Try a less formal buffet dinner





# Who Responded to Our Survey?

## 1 - Age



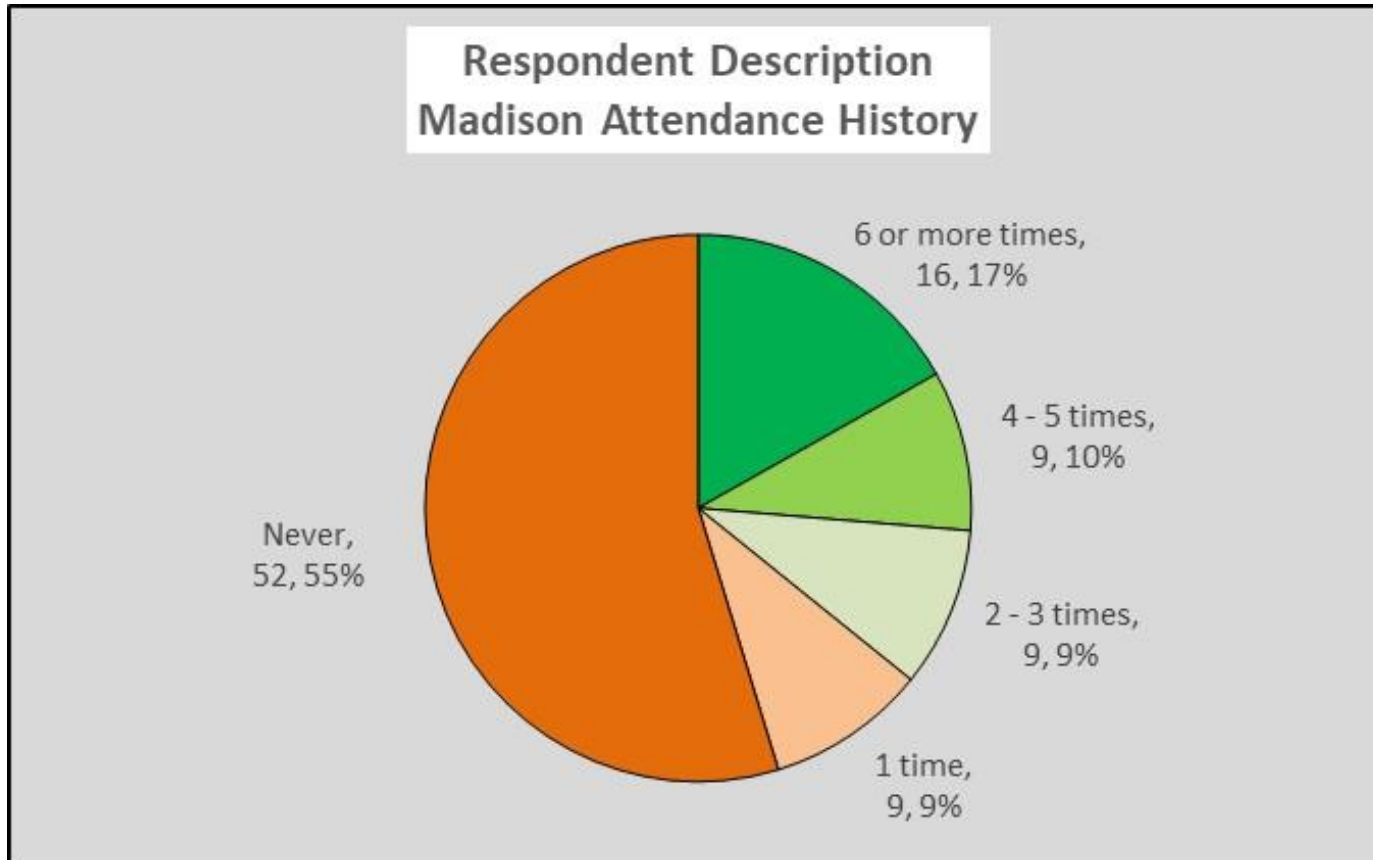
- Average Age: 61\*
- Median Age: 64\*
- Only 25% from guys less than 50 years old – vital to understand this small sample

\* Respondent age estimated based on year of initiation



# Who Responded to Our Survey?

## 2 - Past Dinner Attendance History\*



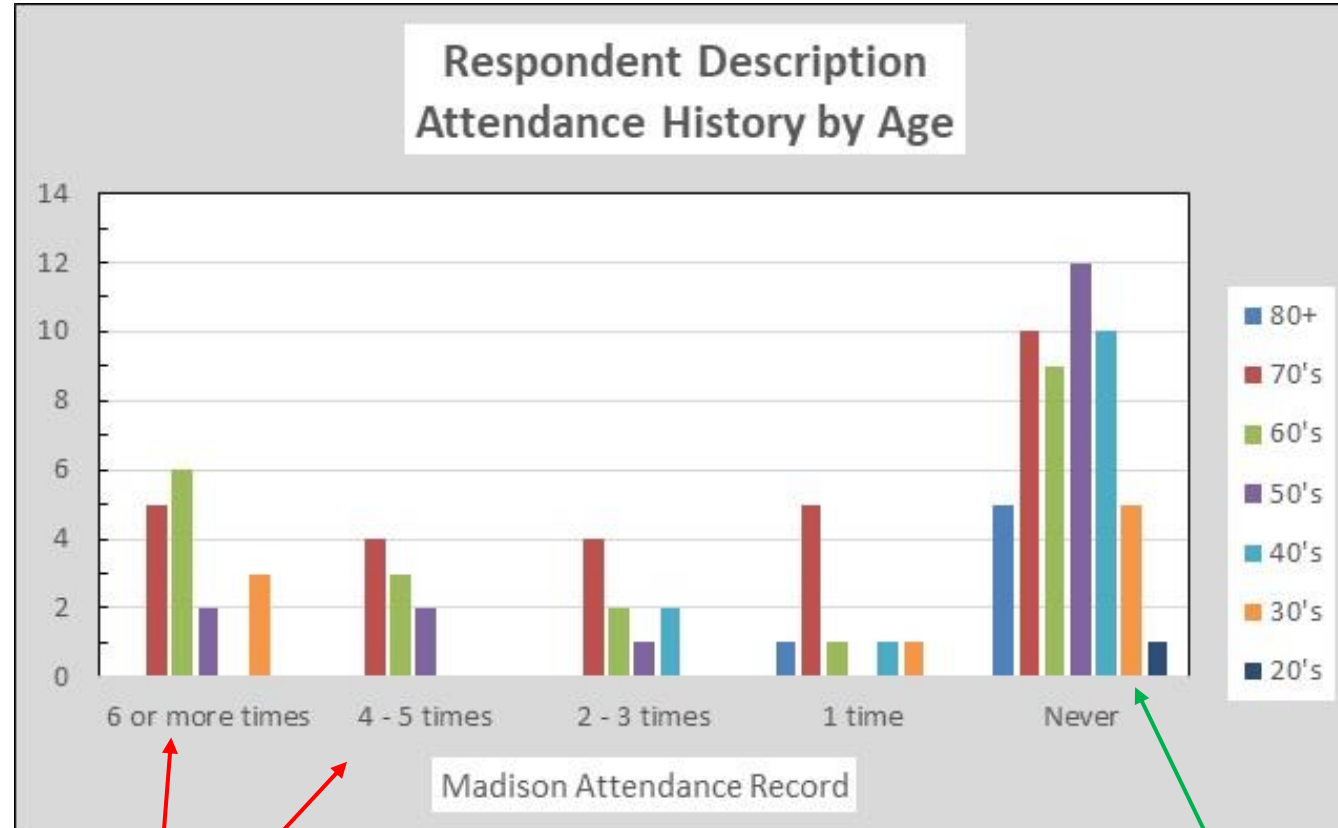
- *Never Attendees* (52): Critical to understand; can we entice them to attend for the first time?
- *Modest Attendees* (18): Attended 1-3 times; can we make them regulars?
- *Regular Attendees* (25): Attended  $\geq 4$  times; need their perspective to avoid a stupid change

\* Madison dinners only 2013 - 2023



# Who Responded to Our Survey?

## 3 - Age and Attendance History Matter



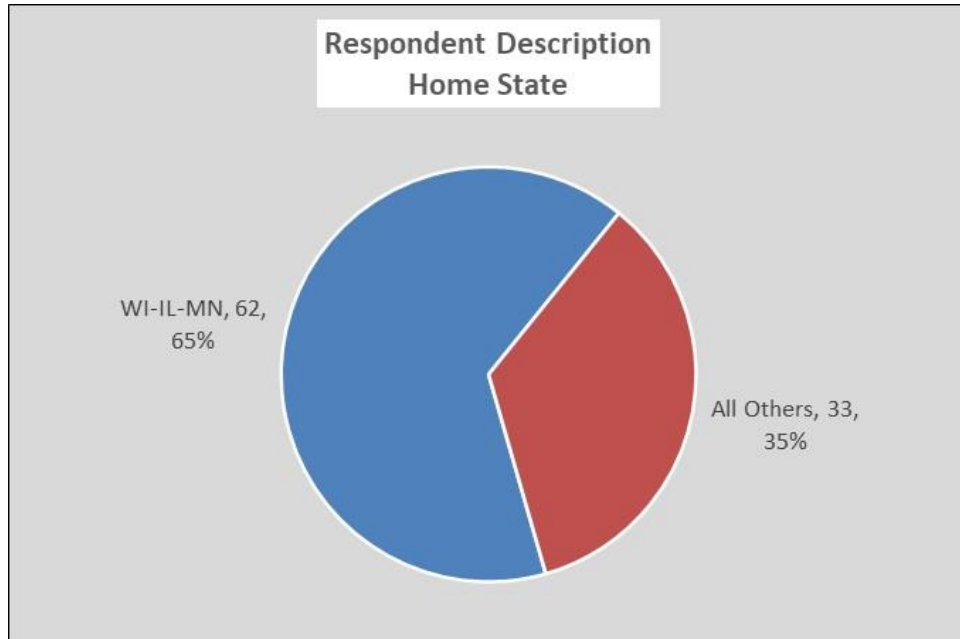
Vast majority of *Regular Attendees* are  $\geq 60$  years old

Guys  $\leq 59$  present huge opportunity

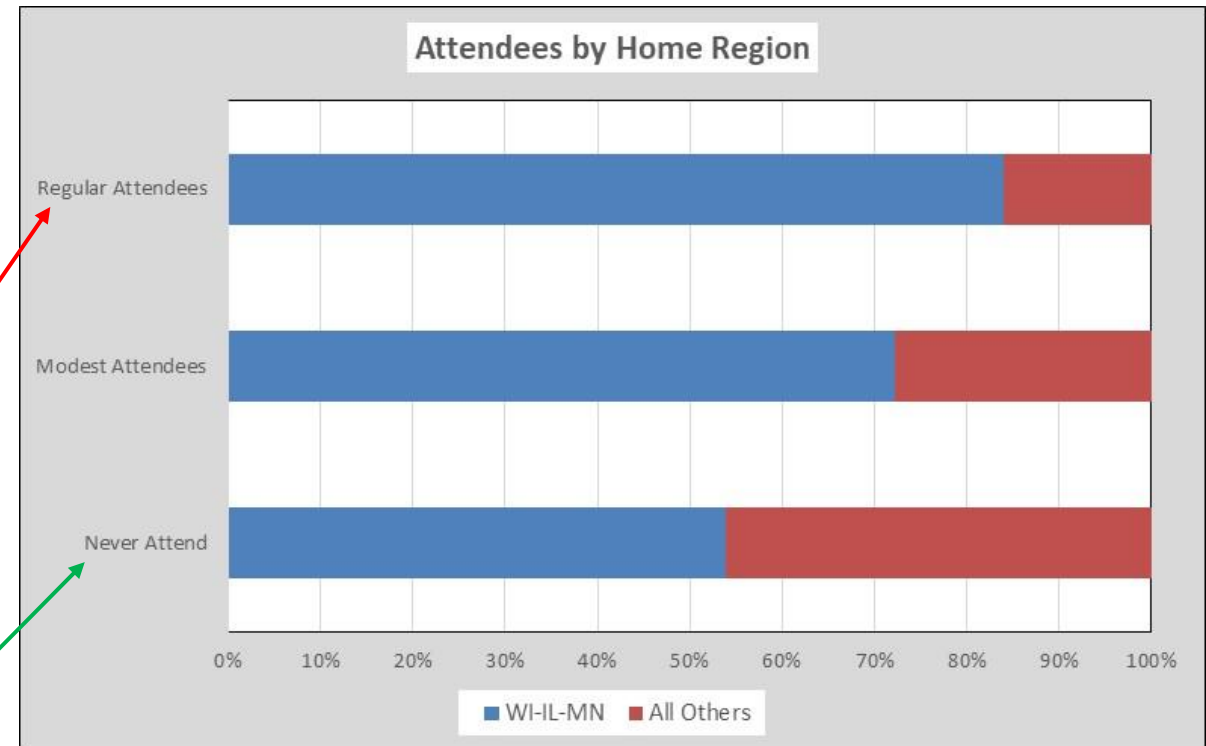


# Who Responded to Our Survey?

## 4 - Proximity to Madison



- Balanced feedback between guys geographically close to Madison and guys spread over the rest of USA
- Outside of WI-IL-MN, 17 other States represented



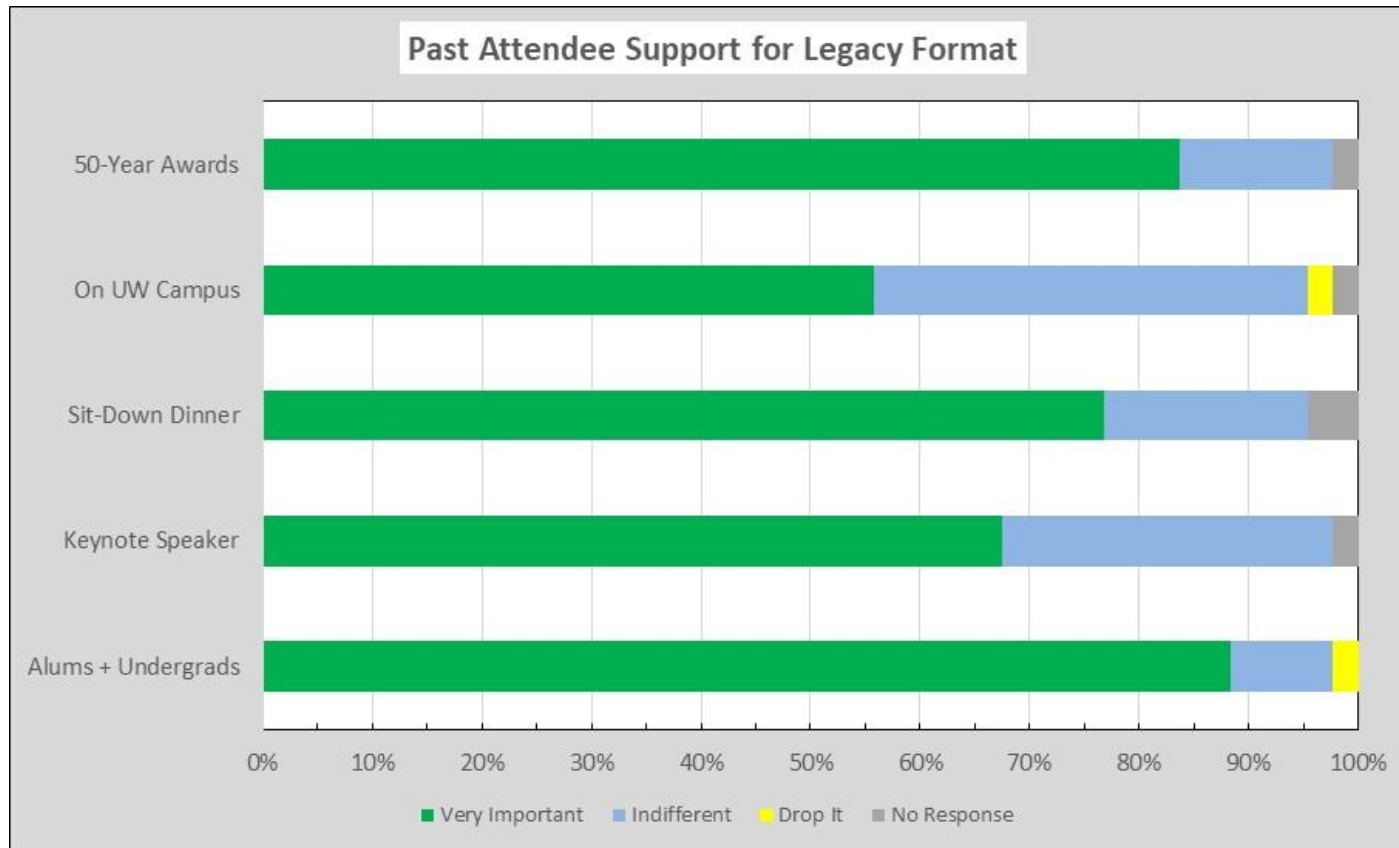
Not a surprise: most *Regular Attendees* live close

Opportunity: many *Never Attendees* also live close





# Feedback on Our Traditional Format Input from Past Attendees\* Only



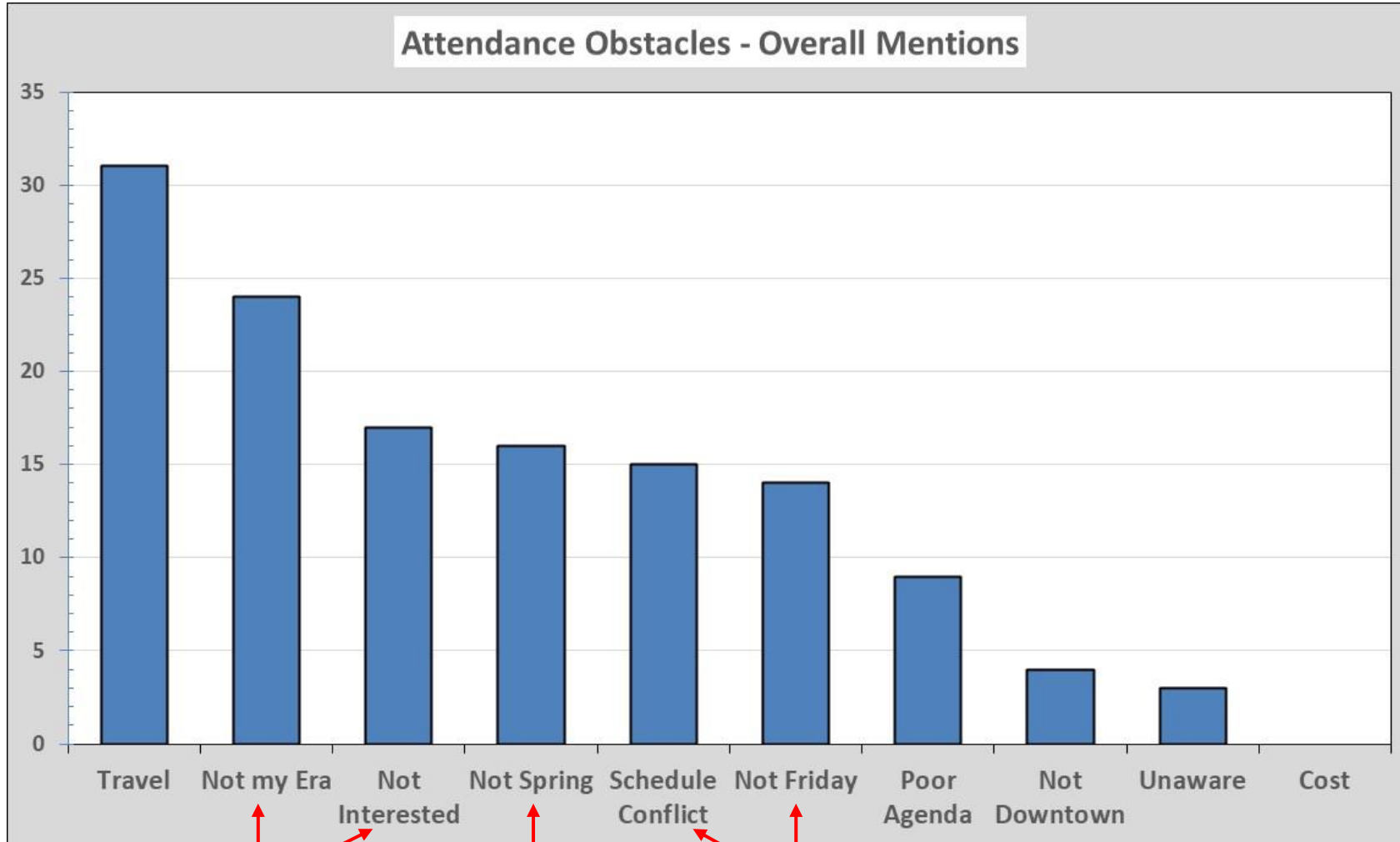
*\* Keep in mind that the average age of these respondents is ~65.*

**Conclusion: Past attendees strongly support the legacy format of our dinner.**



# Obstacles\* Preventing Past Attendance

*\* This analysis merges "Other" write-in comments with pre-set choices*



Things we can control:

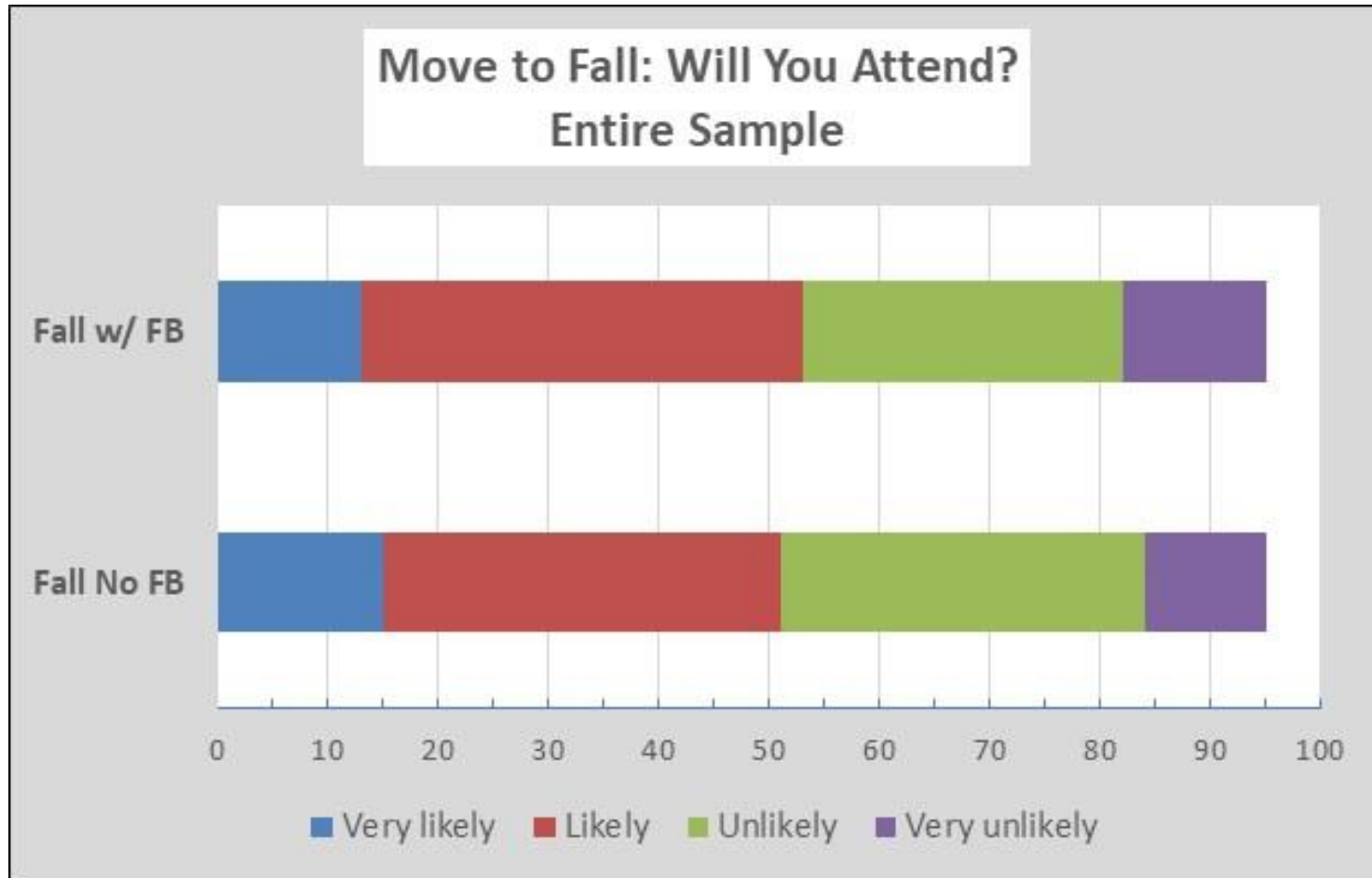
PR plan to promote to younger age groups

Move to Fall

Switch to Saturday



# Should We Move from Spring to Fall? Initial Impression



(Fall weekend with a home Badger football game)

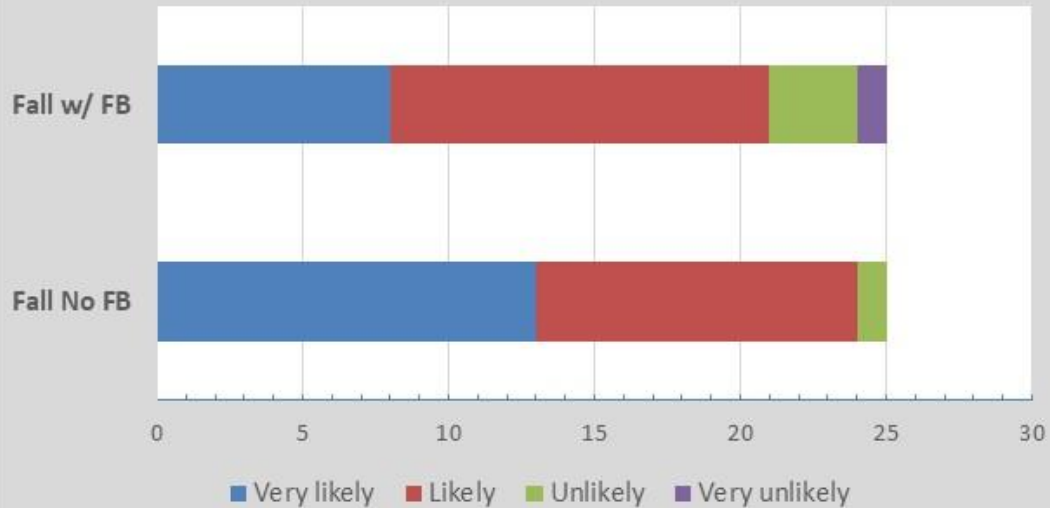
(Fall weekend without a home Badger football game)

Before refined analysis, we see slight majority preference for a Fall dinner.



# Should We Move from Spring to Fall? Digging into the Details - #1

Move to Fall: Will You Attend?  
Attitude of Regular Attendees



*Our Regular Attendees strongly support a move to Fall.*

Move to Fall: Will You Attend?  
Attitude of Modest Attendees



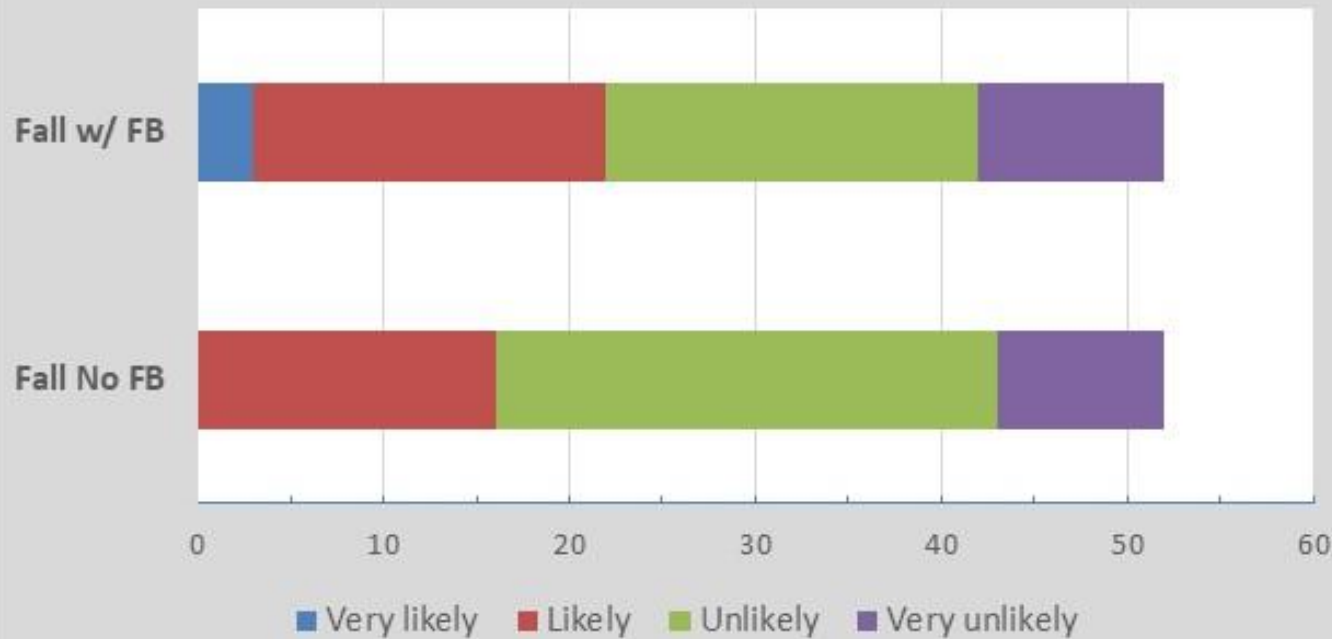
*Our Modest Attendees are split on a move to Fall  
but slightly lean toward it.*



# Should We Move from Spring to Fall?

## Digging into the Details - #2

Move to Fall: Will You Attend?  
Attitude of Never Attendees

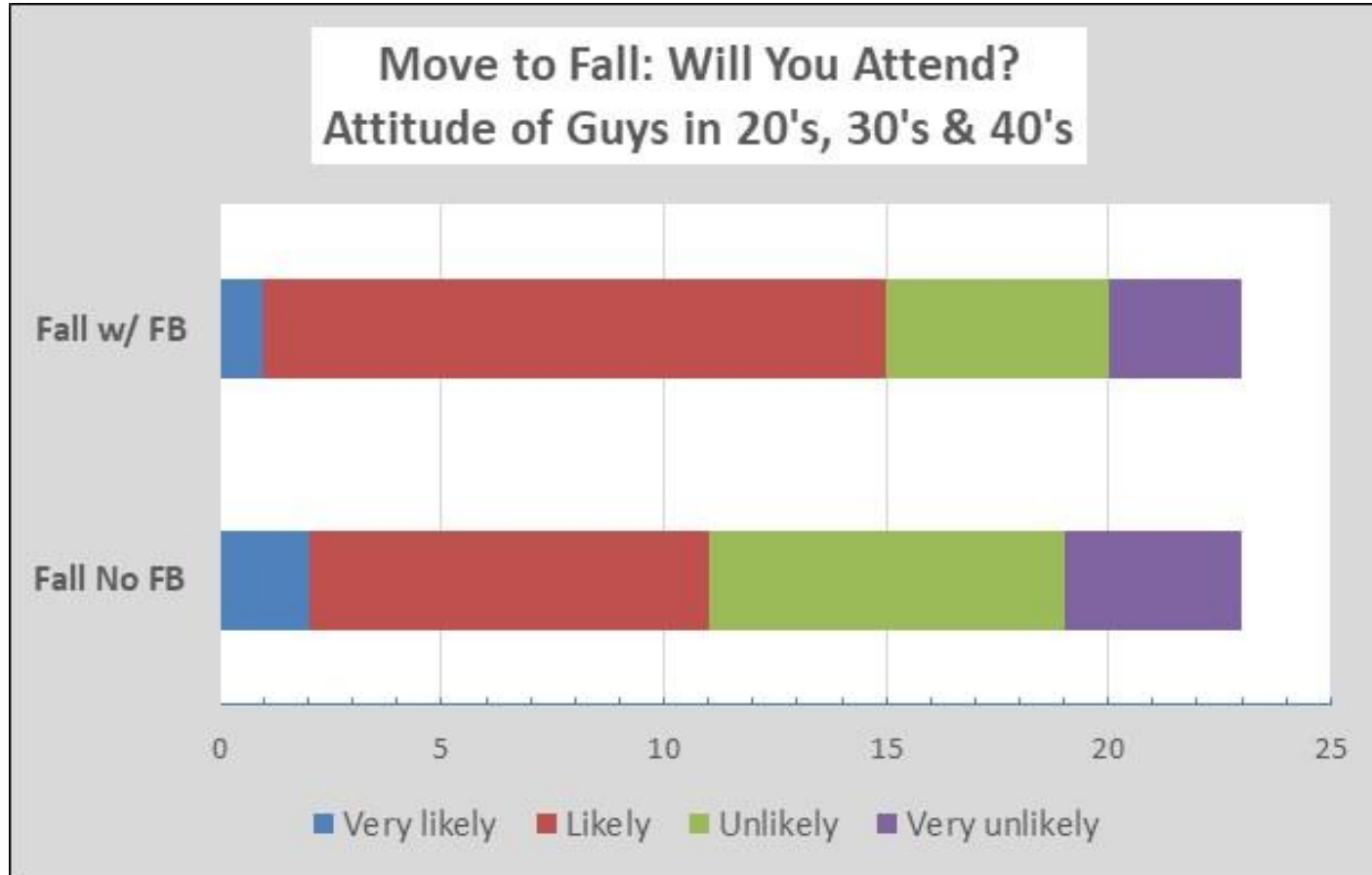


>30% of *Never Attendees* prefer a Fall event. It's not a majority but it may indicate we can draw some new folks in.



# Should We Move from Spring to Fall?

## Digging into the Details - #3



Younger guys prefer a Fall event on a football weekend with less support for a non-FB weekend.



# Summary of Additional Questions Based on Responses from 45 Willing\* Guys

- On-campus in Madison?: Overwhelming support (>3-to-1)
- Lower Cost?: Overwhelming “Not Necessary” (>20-to-1)
- Spouses to Attend?: Overwhelming “NO” (5-to-1)
- Alumni Only?: Near unanimous “NO”
- Fall or Spring?: Overwhelming support for Fall (2.5-to-1)
- Revamp Agenda?: Top vote-getter is “No Preference” followed by “NO”
- **Friday or Saturday?: Modest preference for Friday**
- **Sit-Down Dinner or Less Formal?: Even split**

**Need to understand preferences  
from our younger population**

*\*Assume guys willing to answer the extra questions  
might be more committed to attend a dinner.*



# Summary of Additional Questions Tie-Breakers on Key Questions

- Friday or **Saturday**?
  - Average age of guys who prefer Saturday: 54 (70% of respondents <60)
  - Average age of guys who prefer Friday: 65 (only 1 less than 50)
- Sit-Down Dinner or **Informal Buffet**?
  - Average age of guys who prefer informal buffet: 60 (50% less than 60)
  - Average age of guys who prefer sit-down dinner: 64 (70% greater than 60)

*Guys in their 30's, 40's and 50's prefer a less formal dinner on Saturday evening.*





# Sampling of Comments

“Best for me would be fall with no Badger home game and a home Packer game”

“Scheduling the dinner on a football weekend would be most interesting to me”

“Aligning to a football weekend is a great idea”

“I believe a Fall non-football Saturday will increase attendance”

“Things are not so formal anymore and a sit-down restricts networking...”

“Less formal is preferable... we have enough Formal stuff in our work and family lives”

“Winter in AZ Nov thru April”

“In Spring I am in Florida”

“In Arizona November through April”

“Expanding on Friday. Very hard for people to get away from work in Chicago...A Saturday dinner would allow for more attendees...”

“couldn’t get away from work”

“Busy with work and family”

“Conflict with work travel”

“I’d attend if I knew brothers I knew were going to be in attendance, so an open list of attendees...”

“...it would be nice to get people there from every era.”

“advance notice of attendees so I can see if familiar names are attending”

“I moved away from Madison... lived overseas.. So, while I have had some contact with a number of DU brothers, I’ve focused on many other interests”

“Respect for religious diversity”

“will not come to hear some paid national fraternity bozo speak about fund raising and alcohol abuse”



*Thank you!*

Thanks to all for taking our survey.  
Your feedback is a gift to DU!