

# Ottawa Area Dressage Group

2023 Member and Equestrian Community Survey

Results

# Method



**Survey was distributed via email and social media posts**



**18 Content Questions + 5 demographic questions**



**Content Areas focused on the following topics:**

Dressage Shows

Yearend awards rules and banquet

Desired Dressage Activities

Communication Preferences

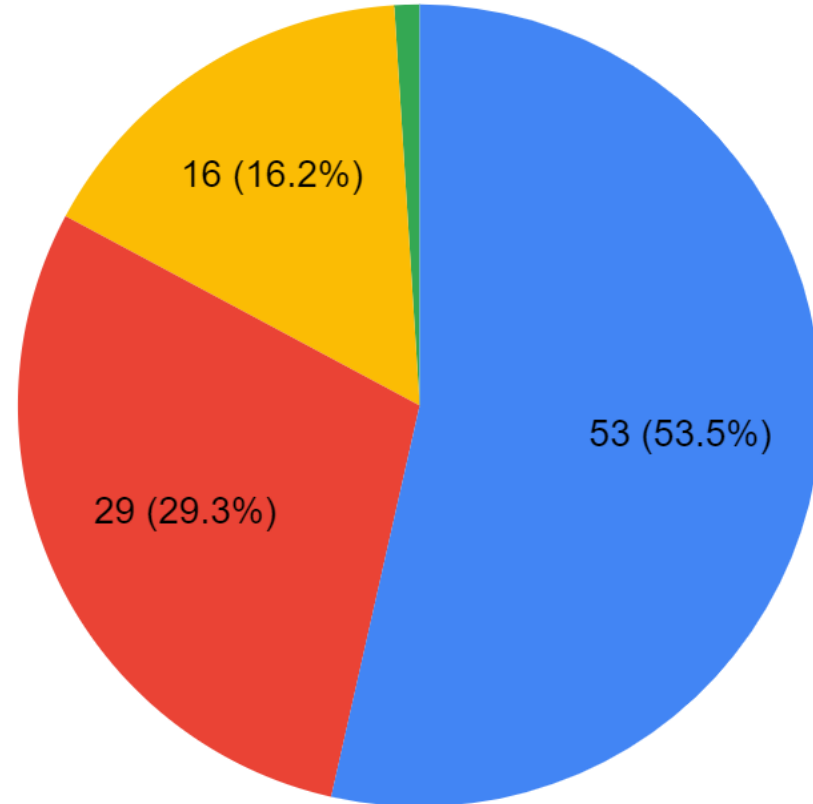
How to attract new members

# Main takeaway points

- People are concerned about money
- People want non-competition dressage event options
- People are interested in educational experiences such as clinics and educate your eye experiences
- People are interested in in person events
- People want wider qualification rules for awards

## Membership Status

- Current Member
- Previous Member
- Non-Member
- Parent of Jr Member



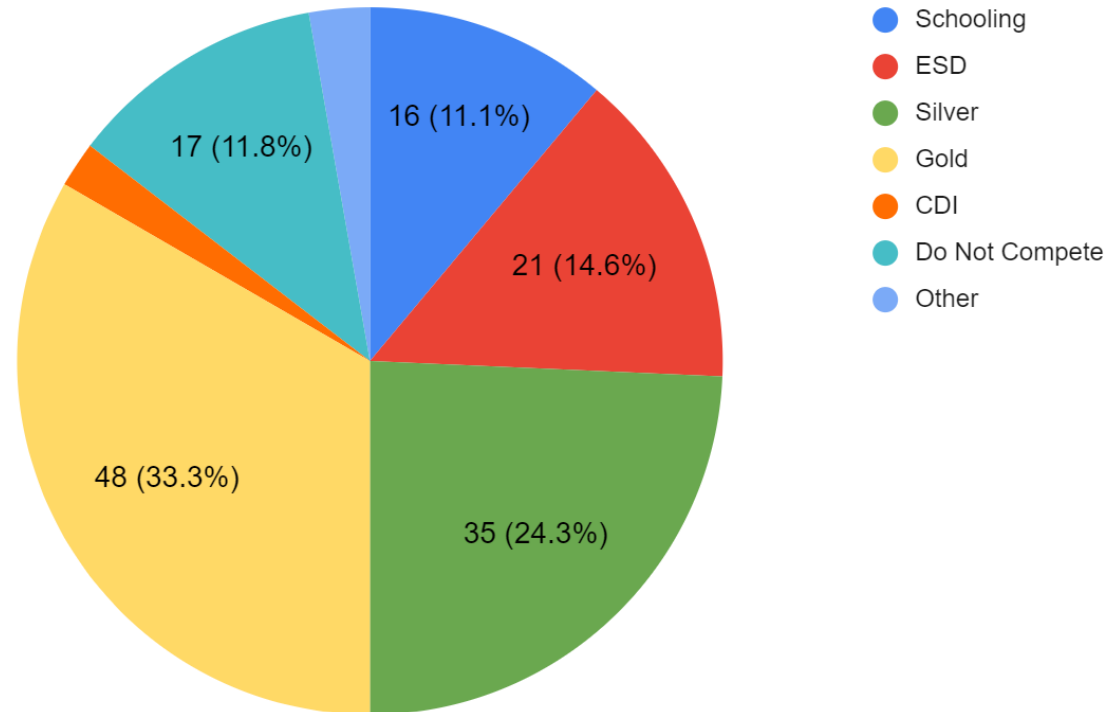
## Results

We had a nice split between current members and non-member / previous members

# What level of show do you normally attend?

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- We have representation from the full range of our show circuits with the only three CDI respondents.



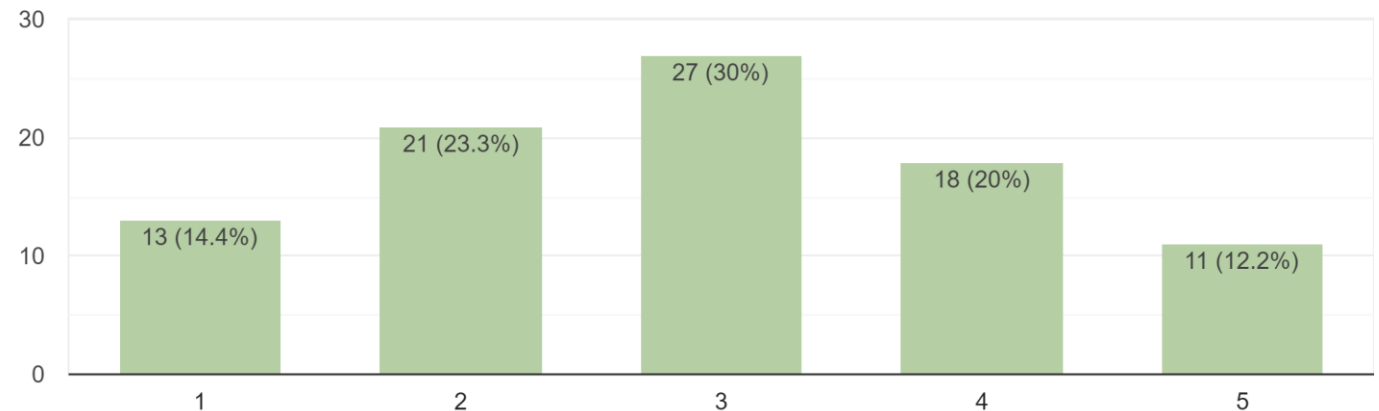
# Are people satisfied with the choice of shows?

1 = Too Few Options  
5 = Many Options

- There are a range of opinions with almost equal number at the positive and negative end of the spectrum

If you compete, do you find there are enough choices of shows at your level?

90 responses

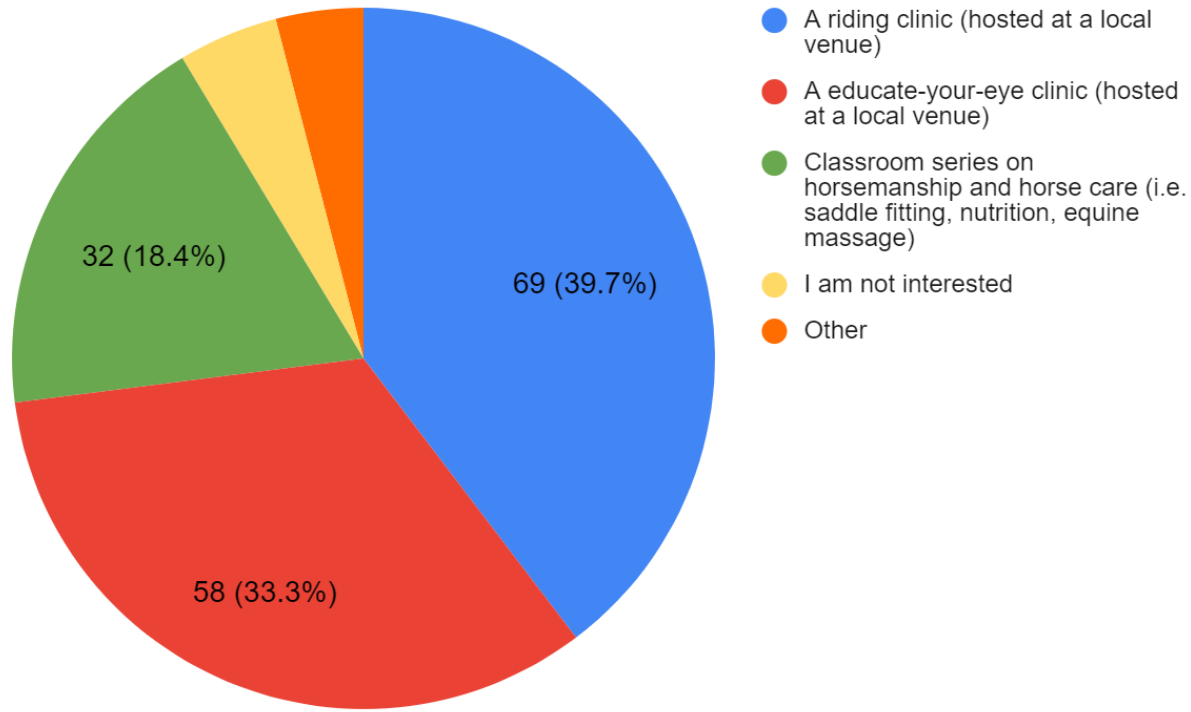


All	Schooling	ESD	Silver	Gold	CDI
2.9	2.9	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.6

# Changes to Local Dressage show Circuit

More Locations	Show level specific comments	Wesley Clover / ODF	Extend Show season	Communication	Judging	Class specific	Prizes / Awards	Infrastructure
15 comments	17 comments	5 comments	3 comments	3 comments	5 comments	3 comments	6 comments	3 comments
More venues	More gold	2 ODF	More April / May	Not aware until too late	More variety		More prizes	Better footing
More east end	More silver	Show with ESD, Silver and Gold later in the season.	More Sept / Oct	Watching shows is difficult- dry little information provided about what's going on and where it's happening	same judges over and over again which makes showing redundant.	in hand class or a flat class (dressage suitability)	Better Prizes	Stalls at shows
More west end	More schooling	Another show			local judges and stewards	more freestyle classes	Better year end awards	
Renfrew County	ESD on own day	More than Gold / Platinum		local dressage would benefit from more promotion of our sport on media, making shows accessible and appealing to more people -offering pony rides or a game for kids, for example so that families (moms) can come and watch	more gold shows with quality judges	Please leave Amateurs with Amateurs and Open with Open.	Fun Awards	1 format to submit entries
	1 more CDI						Remove multiple location rule	
	More 1 day shows						Option to compete at one location	
	Bronze							
	Virtual							
	Pony Cup							

# Non-Show Dressage Activities



- There was a positive response to the options listed in the question with the riding clinic getting the greatest number of votes
- Other suggestions include:
  - Community sharing, learning, and participation.
  - Developing freestyle tests and music
  - Online clinic
  - veterinarian input -- how to manage a horse that competes
  - Consent based training; education about pain signs and symptoms in horses
  - Groundwork. longing. rider fitness/ show fitness/bringing back into a regime,
  - classroom in Fall and winter once a month?



# Suggestions for clinics, other fun activities, and/or social events.

## **Parties**

- a pub night maybe, showing some freestyles from Florida.
- World Cup video parties. Fundraising events. Pot luck get togethers. Dressage dance party, door prizes, raffles.
- A social reception some evening during ODF
- Dressage parties! :) Spring, Fall... in between the winter weather and the show season.

## **Junior Specific events**

- Meet and greets at local barns for junior and young riders
- More clinics and shows for under 18 kids

# Suggestions for clinics, other fun activities, and/or social events.

## **Riding Clinic**

- Ron King, Gina Smith, Joanne Bouwhuis
- Clinic series with top professionals: for example one per season to track progress
- Clinics with high level coaches that are not just at held at Queenswood and are actually open to outside riders
- advanced riding techniques and how to get there.
- In the longer term it would be great if we could bring in some big names for a masterclass but I think we would have to work up to it.
- A riding clinic (hosted at a local venue)
- Clinics! Regular or freestyle clinic might be fun. Try and affiliate OADG with clinics that are already happening in the Ottawa area to connect members with riding/viewing opportunities.

## **Freestyle +**

- Demonstrations of Freestyle rides for training to third level with commentary and detailed information available afterwards
- Clinics! Regular or freestyle clinic might be fun. Try and affiliate OADG with clinics that are already happening in the Ottawa area to connect members with riding/viewing opportunities.
- Judging clinic
- A scribing clinic - scribing is a good way to learn.

# Suggestions for clinics, other fun activities, and/or social events.

## Biomechanics

- The rider mechanic clinics
- Rider biomechanics
- Biomechanics,
- Events like Erin Graces Mind/body/soul clinic where there are various speakers come in to educate interested individuals on various horse care/management practices

## Judging Clinic

- I would love to see a dressage judging through the levels with live demo riders clinic like the USDF puts on. Even if it was just about levels training through 4<sup>th</sup>
- Ask a judge clinic. Explanations of what the judge is looking for at each level. This could be like an educate your eye but also a discussion of difference in frame, self carriage, impulsive as you move up the levels
- Judges as clinicians are very helpful, clinics explaining what is expected at difference levels and explanation of movements
- I think educate your eye clinics are a great idea ('from the Judge's eye' type)
- A educate-your-eye clinic (hosted at a local venue)
- An educate your eye get-together would be fun-if it took place with a live video stream of an international competition and attendees could use the judging app to score tests. Then, have a judge go over tests and scores and explain why marks were given/deducted. This could be done at any level but a big FEI competition would be more exciting.

# Suggestions for clinics, other fun activities, and/or social events.

## Other Ideas

- Years ago monthly OADG meetings were well attended and supported by the membership. Educational aspects of the sport were woven into the meetings. Broad subject matter.
- At clinics that don't require you to bring a horse, have designated networking/social time. Encourage folks to bring food - potluck?
- Educational events that combine riding (lessons, clinics, etc.) with off horse things (such as saddle fitting demo, talks on chiro/ wellness/ psychology, trade shows, etc. )
- Id like to see the OADG promote dressage enthusiast activities at local dressage venues, and promote its local dressage professionals.
- clinics, education weekends, bring in different people to the area,
- An organized group to go to ride a mechanical bull!
- would love to see some dates with a riding simulator that accesses our riding position, possibly a safe falls clinic
- classical dressage
- Equine body work
- horse first aid clinic
- Horse conformation, and alignment with type of riding
- A mock show to motivate those who have never shown.

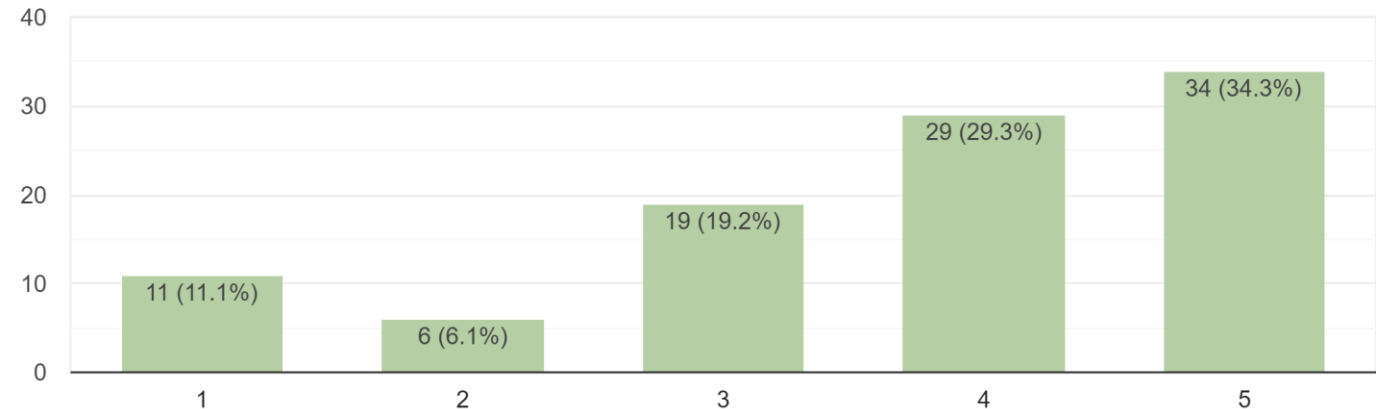
# Year-end award familiarity and satisfaction

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- Respondents are very familiar with the rules. Average rating is 3.7
- Respondents are also satisfied with the rules with the average response being 3.7

Are you familiar with the Ottawa Area Dressage Group year end awards and rules?

99 responses



# Preferred changes for awards

## **Awards**

- Ribbons instead of plaques
- Year end Ribbons, Big ribbons with glitter and fake diamonds like the trillium does. Please Please Please!!!
- Big ribbons instead of plaques!

## **New Awards**

- An outstanding or “high performance” award at silver level
- Incorporate Pony Cup into awards
- Pony award!
- A separate award for senior adult amateur riders.
- It would be nice if a "Coach of the Year Award" could be created.
- there are lots as it is
- A lot of our awards aren't given out in a year - how can we improve that?

# Preferred changes for awards

## **Venue**

- New banquet format. New venue.
- Better meal, maybe some swag.

## **Different Winners**

- more people receiving them (different people = more competition)
- The awards are provided to OADG members only and there isn't enough draw for all riders in the region to be members therefore the same barns win and its not representative of actual results for the region.
- make it for everyone, not just a select few. Always the same peopel go. Advertise it more and invite everyone to join. it should be a fun time for fall!
- Criteria for the national shows is not suitable for many national level riders, especially those competing at the higher levels

# Preferred changes for awards

## Location Requirements

- I think the multiple location requirement limits who qualify for the awards. Trailering is a significant competition expense which limits people's ability to get out to shows across the region.
- Shows are getting so expensive to attend. I only go to the shows closest to me. Because I went to the same venue twice I didn't qualify for the award at my level. It was disappointing
- With less locations offering shows, it can be difficult to get to 2 different locations

## Scores

- Consider scores from CDI's and outside shows. Especially at the higher levels.
- a minimum score, awards to include CDI competitions,
- Higher minimum scores for eligibility. People shouldn't be able to win awards w average scores of 52%. IMHO it justifies and awards mediocracy and poor performance



# Preferred changes for awards

## **Other Comments**

- Plain language for non horse riders
- Keep the presentations going quickly (I've heard good comments about how our awards "move right along" compared to the hunter/jumper awards), but maybe slow it down for the top-level awards, so the higher-level competitors get more "time on stage"? Just a little -- not a lot!
- Riding opportunities
- More information online in one place about them

# Preferred changes for rules

- **Flexibility /Inclusivity:**
- Be a bit more flexible, like we did in the pandemic years. That might help the above point.
- It would be great if more nearby shows could be counted as "local" for the purposes of OADG awards - for example, the Beaulieu Dressage Classic in Sainte-Justine-de-Newton is closer to farms in the east end of the Ottawa area than Preston Rosedale in Perth, but doesn't count as a "local" show for awards purposes.
- Should be able to qualify for awards as long as you show in front of different judges. The venue shouldn't matter
- Awards criteria needs to be more inclusive. We all pay dues, why should we be denied an award if only rider in division and not achieve 60%. Not everyone has a fancy warmblood. No point in me joining club. If everyone in a division scores under 60% they still get Awards... not fair.
- I think that going to multiple shows is a good requirement. I think we should consider decreasing how many different locations people are required to attend.
- Remove the requirement to attend shows at different locations.
- allow more scores from outside region shows.
- Allow more outside scores
- CDI scores should count for gold awards to encourage our riders to participate in international competitions. CDI scores are also usually up to 5% lower therefore it adds an increased amount of difficulty to use them.

# Preferred changes for rules

## Other

- Greater recognition at the higher levels as it takes a long time to get there!
- EC Coaching rules are becoming an obstacle to showing as our coach has decided to move away from coaching into another equestrian related business.
- Amateurs can only compete against Amateurs. Open can only compete against Open.
- a minimum score, awards to include CDI competitions,
- No nose bands? Is this allowed already
- More jacket excusing on hot summer days; shows in July/August can be real scorches
- More transparency on standings to increase engagement (not only a spreadsheet that only those members read)

## Happy people

- n/a
- NA
- None
- they're good as is
- Nothing to suggest.
- No current concerns, not competing
- rules for awards? ok as they are

# Banquet

The current banquet ticket was rated 3 or higher by 79% of respondents (1 = unaffordable and 5 = affordable)

27% of respondents voted for Saturday night dinner

41% of respondents voted for Saturday or Sunday brunch or lunch option

14% voted to eliminate the food and host awards presentation.

17.5% Suggested an alternative option

# Banquet - Other

- Appetizers mid afternoon or after dinner to reduce full meal costs.
- Either continue as is or do a cocktail hour with snacks not a full meal
- Cocktails and appetizers rather than a full meal
- New banquet format. New venue.
- Potluck, informal venue. Daytime
- Fridays are often cheaper for weddings so maybe try that?
- Wine and cheese/appetizer type event
- I think Saturday night dinner is most likely to attract people. I haven't been to one for many years but I wonder if non-award winners have incentive to go. Making it fun for everyone is probably key to a good turn/out.
- Change the venue,
- change up the format to attract higher attendance. Entertainment, interesting location, combine with masterclass etc.
- The caterer did poorly last time. Were not replacing dishes at the table, if you were a late table to obtain your food the selection was poor.
- Host at a facility outside city for less \$
- No opinion

# Communication

- Average rating was a 4 indicating that people think it is easy to find OADG information.
- OADG Website and Email were the most preferred communication channels followed by Facebook, the Newsletter and Instagram in last place.

# Communication Suggestions

## Email

- Get every member to verify their email address when they renew! :) (This is Jane H., just pointing out that I get enough "bounce-back" emails that I wish the members would check that they are submitting the right email address and that they spelled it correctly! )
- I miss some things because I'm not active on social media. The website and e-blasts need to highlight upcoming events, particularly clinics.
- I think more frequent email communication for important activities would be good.
- Automatically be included in email list when sign up for membership

## Website

- Ensure links to show venues in calendar are available.
- The website is a bit 'dated' and not the easiest to navigate - perhaps an upgrade?
- The website to be a bit more user friendly, sometimes I need to dig for info
- Remove out of date resources and information on website.
- Difficult as a new member to figure out all of the memberships and entries. Maybe a new member guide of some sort?
- Prompt and accurate dates

# Communication Suggestions

## **Social Media**

- use Facebook and Instagram more to inform and entertain
- Post more on Facebook- info and links to the website, updates etc
- More of a presence on social media and at horse shows (horse trials) to let people know about it and enjoy membership

## **Sponsorship**

- I was interested in sponsoring but couldn't find any info on sponsor packages on the website and also never got an email back about sponsoring. It'd be helpful if you had sponsor info available for business's to readily see.



# Communication Suggestions

## Other

- Consistent and monthly. Take input from membership.
- Open communications to the general public.
- More OADG organized events
- You guys are good with communications! Would just like to see more show and results promotions, congratulating riders etc.
- Local dressage industry news, local dressage facility spotlights, local dressage professional spotlights, social events. Increase the use of photographic images. Too many obituaries - once a year (end of year).

## Happy People

- No
- n/a
- No concerns, not a current member. Email works well for me
- You guys are great! always answering my questions very quickly
- I think you're doing a great job!
- NA
- very good as is, appreciate the time put in to keep members informed
- None

# Instructor Feedback

## Cost

- Costs
- Cost
- it is usually the cost to show and that is getting worse as EC increases the barriers to showing for an average rider. Elitism seems to be the order of the day.
- I no longer teach/coach due to the increased requirements from EC
- Cannot afford EC coaching fee for shows. Clients don't want to go without a coach & can't afford to pay for additional fees.
- cost, entry date too close to competition,
- Fees
- Not a coach, but I note in my barn it is 100% related to rising costs and lack of venue options
- money and multiple memberships
- price
- #1 Money,
- Financials
- some [students] it will be with the additional costs involved, from the investment in clothing and equipment, to the trailering, coaching and entry fees for the shows.

## Location

- Distance. Most of my clients are in the Upper Ottawa Valley - a long way to ship a horse to many of our shows.
- and location
- Not a coach, but I note in my barn it is 100% related to rising costs and lack of venue options
- Location
- Lack of variety of venues
- Not proper warm up areas not enough stabling

## Other

- Availability.
- Their own nerves, free time
- Same judges over and over again.
- Our students who wish to compete, do. I think for those who don't compete in dressage shows, I think many students find the hunter world more "alluring/exciting". I, personally, LOVE the dressage events. I find the atmosphere more welcoming and a better pace for the day. For those of our students who don't compete at all, much of that decision will come from simply not wishing to compete.
- Secondly getting folks to that first show.

If you are instructor or coach, what is the number one barrier to your clients' becoming members of the OADG?

## **Cost**

- OADG is an affordable membership!
- value
- Fees
- Cost
- The cost of all of the memberships is a barrier, and many don't know that the rider and the owner need to be members.
- If it were just an OADG Membership, they would be ok with that; it's the cost of all the other memberships needed as well.

## **Memory**

- They need to be reminded!
- Remembering

## **Value / Awareness**

- It is mostly making them aware of OADG, Cadora, EC, OE and the many other organizations that are looking for a portion of the riders' money
- It is only those who are competing in dressage who really know about OADG. For our dressage competitors this year, we have made it mandatory for anyone competing in ESD, Silver, and Gold to be
- Not showing enough to qualify for year end awards due to rising costs
- Seeing the benefit
- Lack of awareness of the organization.

# Can you share any other ideas on how can OADG support you in your dressage journey?

## Costs / Funding

- More events through the winter, more funding (in the form of grants and bursaries), and easier access to information/ year end awards
- Anything that you can do to reduce the cost of belonging. There are too many organizations looking for membership.
- Was excellent during my competing year, could \$1.00 per show per competitor be added to fees and funnelled towards year end banquet to help with costs?
- Affordable
- Helping to find show sponsors to bring costs down for riders
- I lease a horse and show said horse. What I super disagree with is that the owner of horse has to get a sports license and be a member of OADG. ME, the show rider already gets all of those memberships. The owner doesn't even show. I understand, me the show rider has to get all the membership, I'm ok with that but there's no need for the the owner to have to get the memberships as well. She's a member of Ontario equestrian, and that should be it. That's my opinion.
- It's already expensive to show let alone paying for memberships that are not needed.

## Education

- Educate members about the emerging wave of consent based training methodologies, hoof care and balancing protocols, and systems of conditioning horses so that they remain sound of body and mind for the long term.
- More clinics
- More clinics
- , more clinics, more availability of coaches and horses
- Hacking with a dressage horse is always tricky. How can we work on that?
- Short educational videos about specific required movements would be great. Ex: "lengthen vs extend" and "the shoulder in" etc.
- There aren't many clinics in Ottawa-funding or even combining forces to attend clinics w or w/out horses in Toronto area. This could be helpful whether you are a spectator or rider.
- A dressage coach/judge doing a free mock show day as prep for a real show to get people motivated.

# Can you share any other ideas on how can OADG support you in your dressage journey?

## In Person Activities

- I would like to see actives for people that don't show. Right now I don't see a reason for people who don't compete to join to club.
- Do less online. Find ways to connect personally. Invite local professionals to be part of the community building process. Bring people together providing opportunities for social interaction. Foster pride.
- More in person events - clinics, lectures, socializing.
- Maybe a social event, with demonstrations something to draw the community together
- Work with Diana Bayer to add another bus to her Royal trip (it happens on the Dressage day for the Royal, so that would be a nice day to do it)... OR... work with a travel agent to set up a 3-days/2-nights bus trip of our own (or a 2-days/1-night bus trip). Or, maybe even better, set up a 3-days/2-nights bus trip with knowledgeable "dressage tour guide" to attend a big dressage show in either Montreal or Toronto, where we bus in, stay in a hotel, watch the dressage classes with a knowledgeable person telling us (through headphones) what is going on in the ring... heck, maybe even make it a week-long "OADG Florida dressage tour" in January!!! hmmm... I like that idea the best!

## Fun

- Be more inclusive. You are a club for fun, not dressage canada.
- Still not great at fun

# Can you share any other ideas on how can OADG support you in your dressage journey?

## **Adult Amateur**

- 40+ Amateur show
- still have an AA division beyond 2nd level

## **Location**

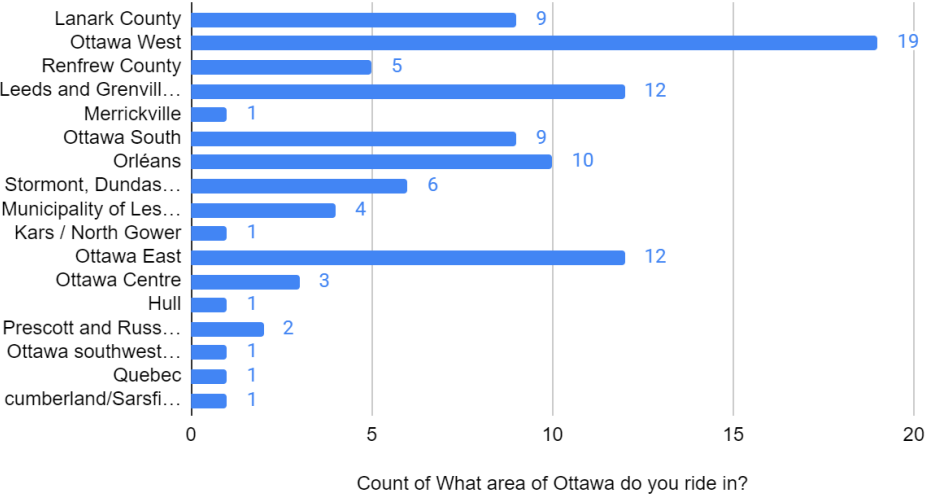
- More opportunities in Renfrew county that are connected to the group or shows
- More local low-level shows

## **Other**

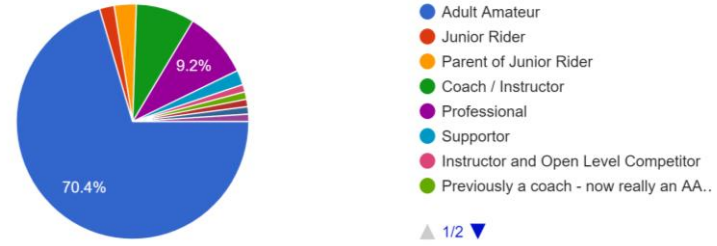
- It would be better to clearly understand what the goals are and what other regions are doing.
- Encourage newcomers!
- Thoroughbreds in dressage encouragement

# Demographics

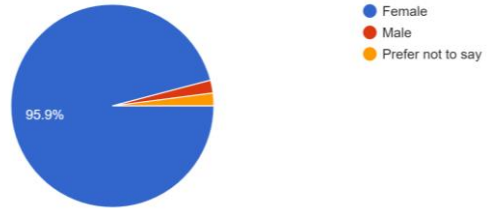
What area of Ottawa do you ride in?



What role do you identify with?  
98 responses

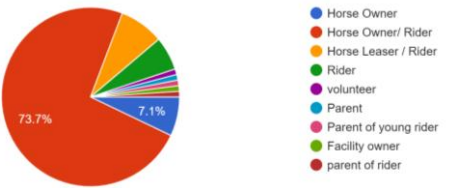


What is your gender?  
98 responses

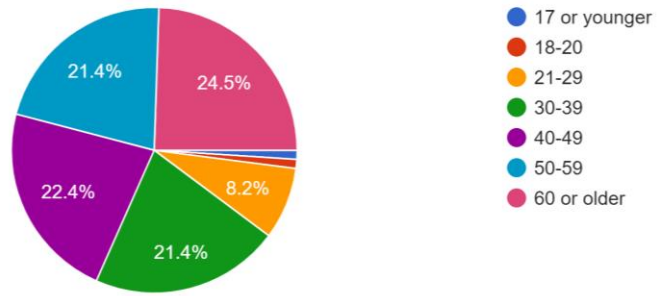


- Majority Women
- Majority Adult Amateurs
- Majority own their own horse
- Range of ages with most being 30 and up
- Diverse Geographic location

Please choose the statement below that best describes you  
99 responses



Which category below includes your age?  
98 responses



# Conclusions

We got a good number of respondents.  
N=99

They represent our sport population Female AA 30+

We didn't get much insight into the youth population / needs

Cost is a big point of concern

Desire for in person events that are fun, social and educational

Award exclusivity is a concern

Desire for local affordable shows

Stronger value proposition for non-competing members