

The Good Old Days?: Comparing Satisfaction at Graduation and Beyond

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Where Did This Come From?

Growing Interest in Alumni

- **At Tufts:**
 - T10 Strategic Plan
 - Upcoming capital campaign
 - Recent requests from Advancement
 - Graduates of the Last Decade
- **In the higher education community:**
 - Post-graduation outcomes (e.g., Pike, 1993; Pike, 1994)
 - Assessment & accountability (e.g., Volkwein, 2009; Borden, 2005; Ewell, 2005)
 - Link between satisfaction and giving
 - Survey response bias (e.g., Cabrera, Weerts, & Zulick, 2005; Delaney, 2004; Bowman, 2011)

What is a “Halo Effect?”



Arbitrary increase in satisfaction responding more to feelings of nostalgia than to the objective evaluation of an institution's impact on an alum's post-graduation life

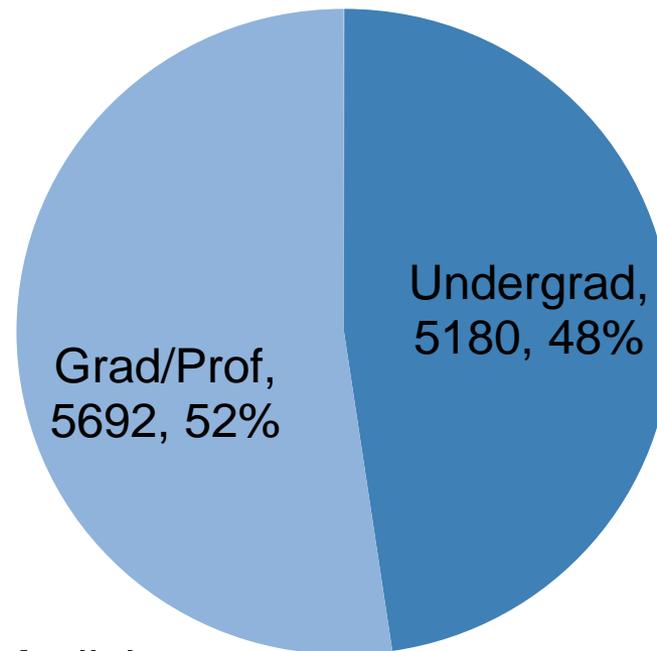
Questions

- Do the data support the assumption?
 - The literature is divided on the issue (Pike, 1993; Pike, 1994; Cabrera, Weerts, & Zulick, 2005)
- Is there a systematic difference in ratings of satisfaction at graduation and afterwards? If so, is this difference statistically significant?
- Does the nature of this difference, if any, vary between undergraduate and graduate/professional students?
- Does the nature of this difference, if any, vary over time?
- If a difference exists, what are the implications for Tufts and for the IR community more broadly?

Some Things to Know About Tufts

- Undergraduate
 - Arts & Sciences
 - Engineering
- Graduate
 - Arts & Sciences
 - Engineering
 - The Fletcher School
- Professional
 - School of Medicine
 - School of Dental Medicine
 - Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine
 - Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy
 - Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences

Enrollment



Undergraduate

Senior Survey

Survey Question

Overall, how satisfied are you with your undergraduate education?

4 = Very satisfied

3 = Generally satisfied

2 = Generally dissatisfied

1 = Very dissatisfied

General Alumni Surveys

2008 Young Alumni Survey

Please rate your overall experience as a Tufts student.

- 4 = Excellent
- 3 = Good
- 2 = Fair
- 1 = Poor

2014 Tufts Magazine Survey

In hindsight, how satisfied are you with your experience as a Tufts student?

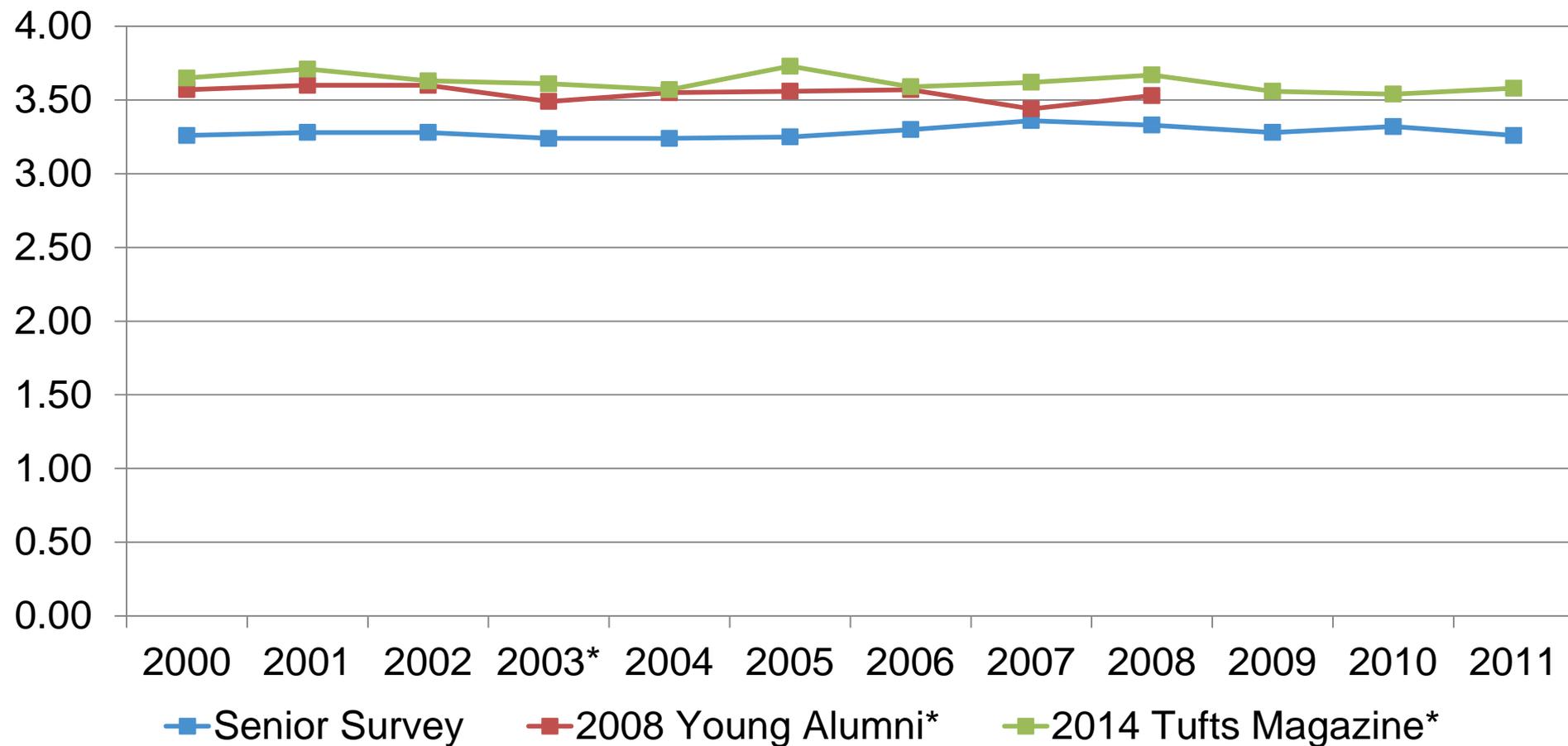
- 4 = Very satisfied
- 3 = Somewhat satisfied
- 2 = Somewhat dissatisfied
- 1 = Very dissatisfied

**5-point scales converted to 4-point by treating midpoint as missing.*

Analysis

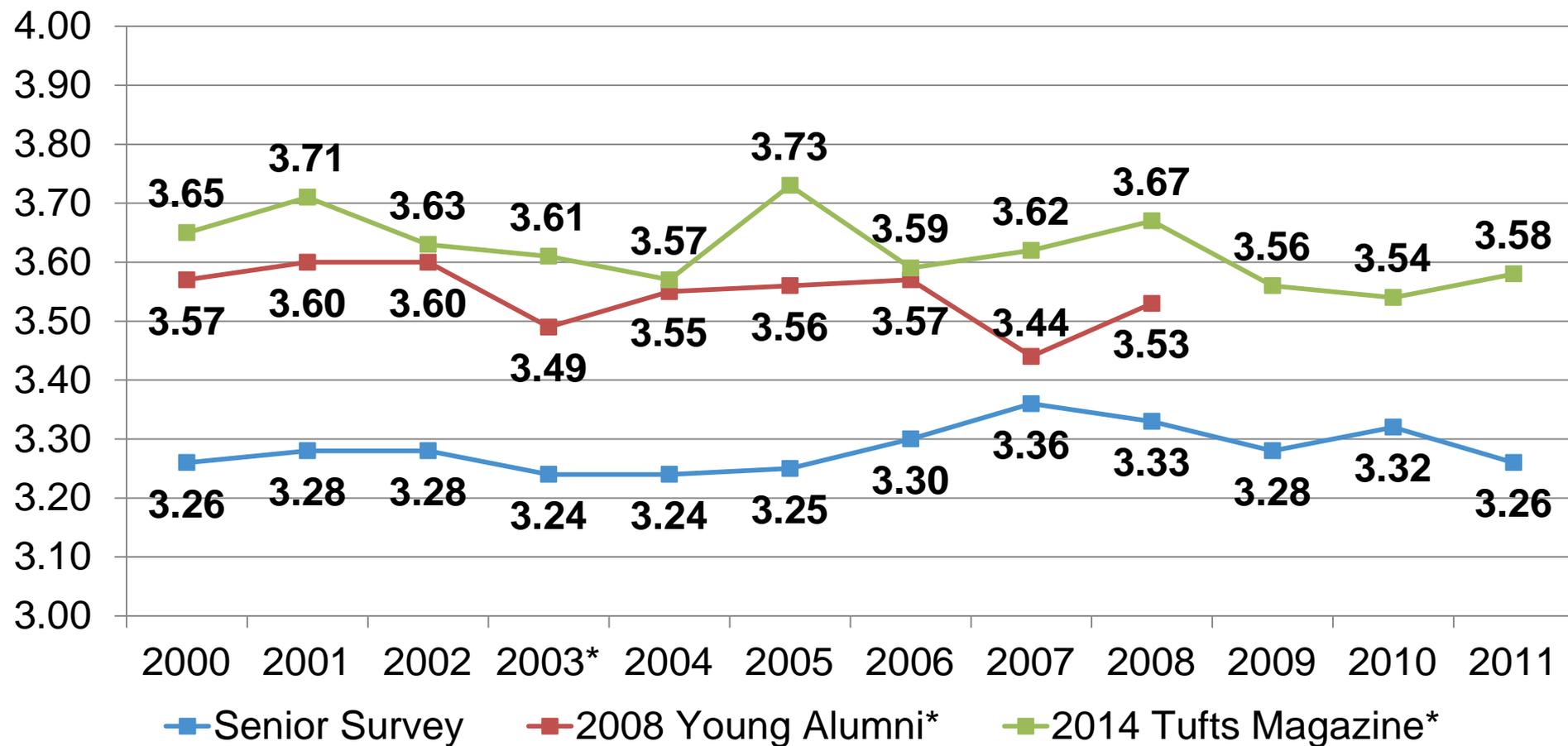
- Aggregate analysis—Classes of 2000-2011
 - Senior Survey—Classes of 2000-2011
 - 2008 Young Alumni—Classes of 2000-2008
 - 2014 *Tufts Magazine*—Classes of 2000-2011
- Matched cases analysis
 - Senior vs. 2008 Young Alumni—Classes of 2000, 2002-2004
 - Senior vs. 2014 *Tufts Magazine*—Classes of 2000-2004, 2008-2011

Undergrads: More Satisfied as Alumni



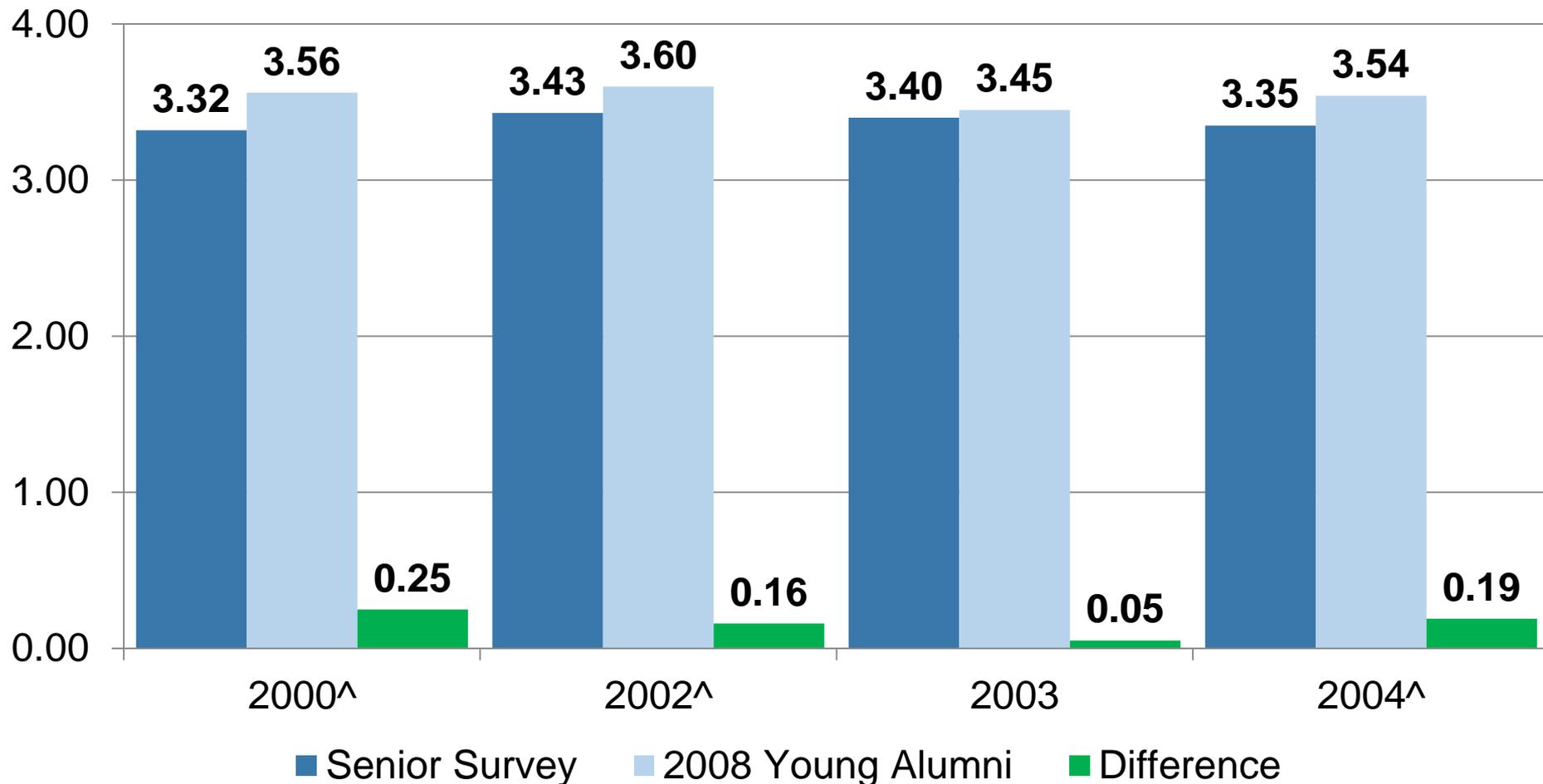
**5-point scales converted to 4-point by treating midpoint as missing.*

Undergrads: A Closer Look



Senior vs. 2008 Young Alumni

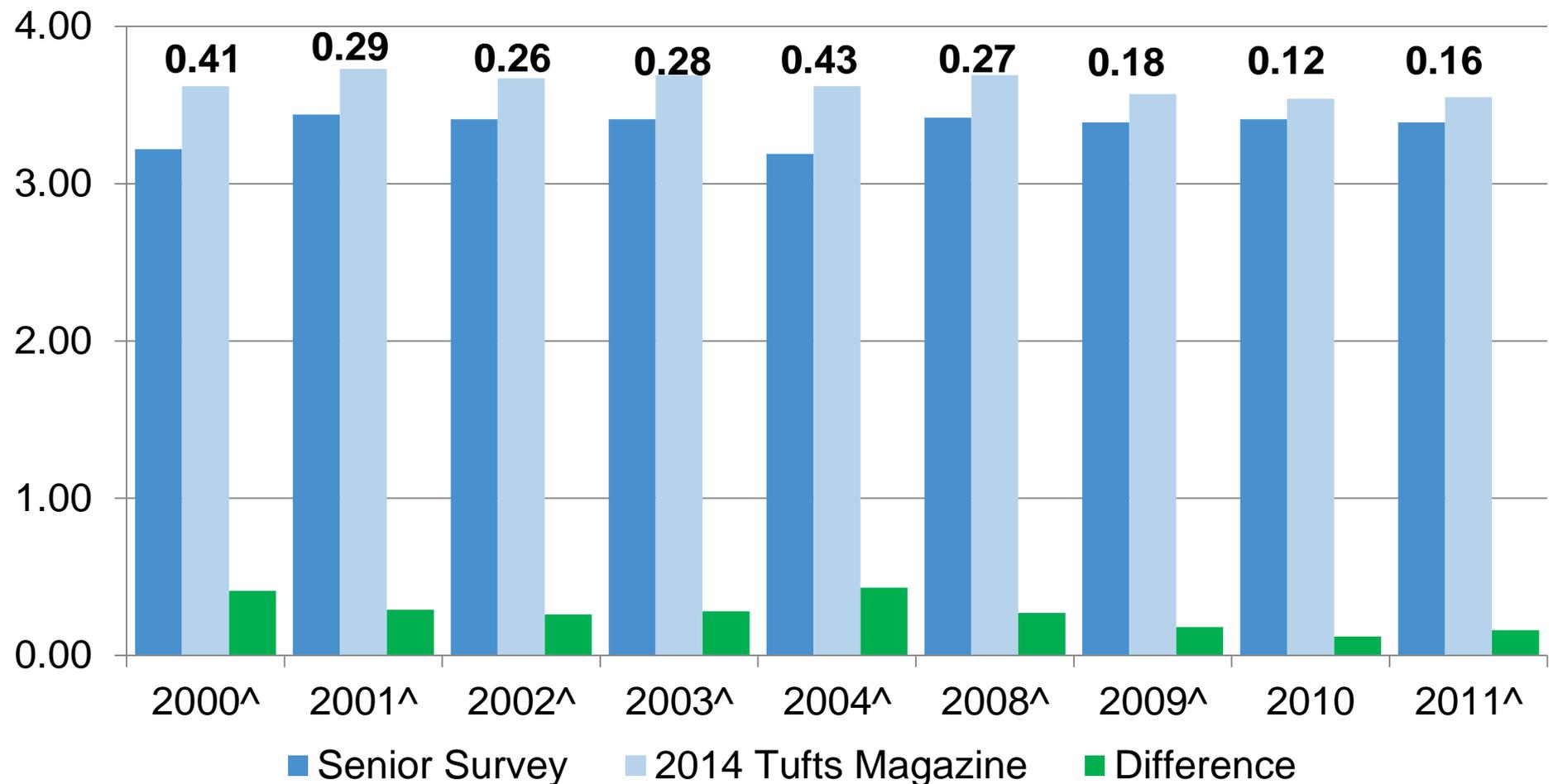
There was a large and significant difference in satisfaction at graduation and beyond for most cohorts.



[^]Difference is statistically significant, $p < .05$.

Senior vs. 2014 Tufts Magazine

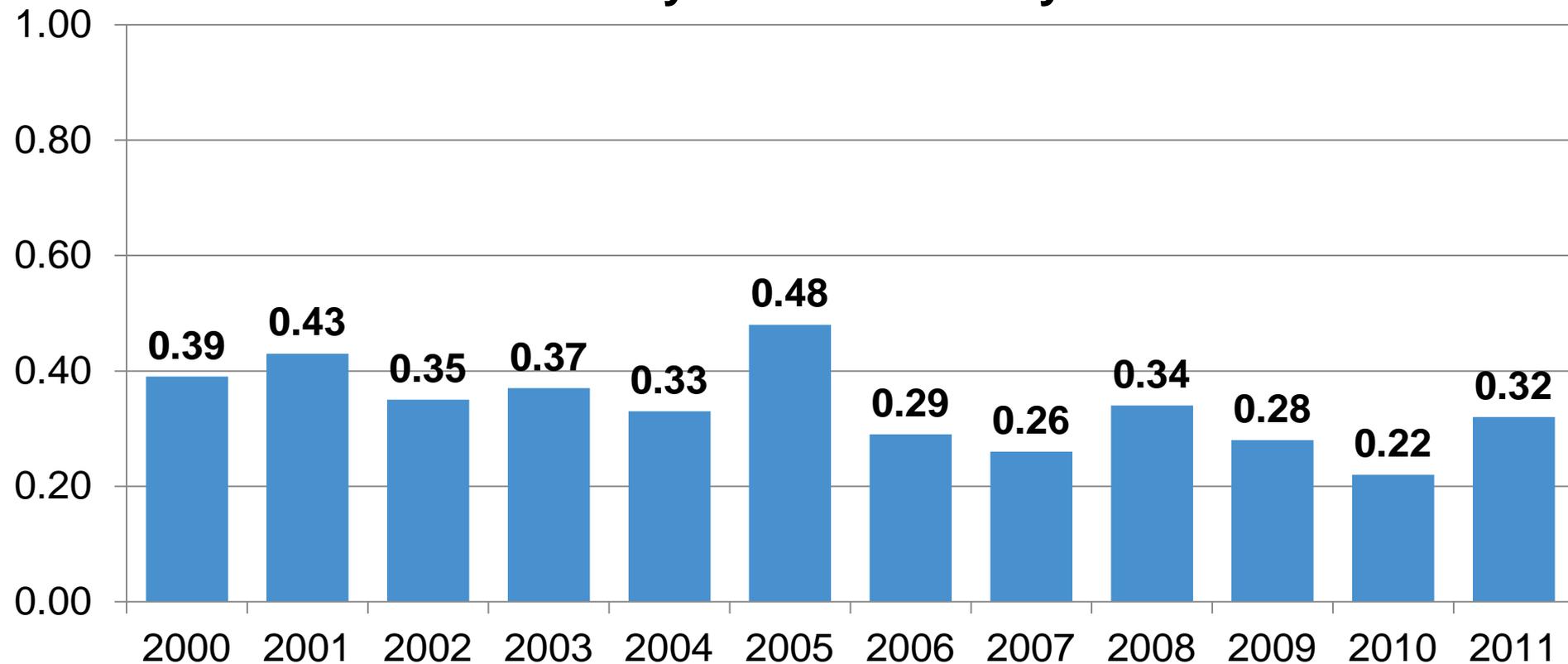
Looking at another survey further supports this finding.



[^]Difference is statistically significant, $p < .05$.

But, there is no evidence of a systematic trend in satisfaction by time out.

Mean Difference in Satisfaction: 2014 *Tufts Magazine* Survey – Senior Survey



A Further Analysis of One Undergraduate Program

Surveys

- Senior Survey
- Alumni Surveys—2, 5, & 10 Years
 - Identifying info self-reported

Survey Question

How satisfied are you with the [program] education you received at Tufts?

4 = Very satisfied

3 = Generally satisfied

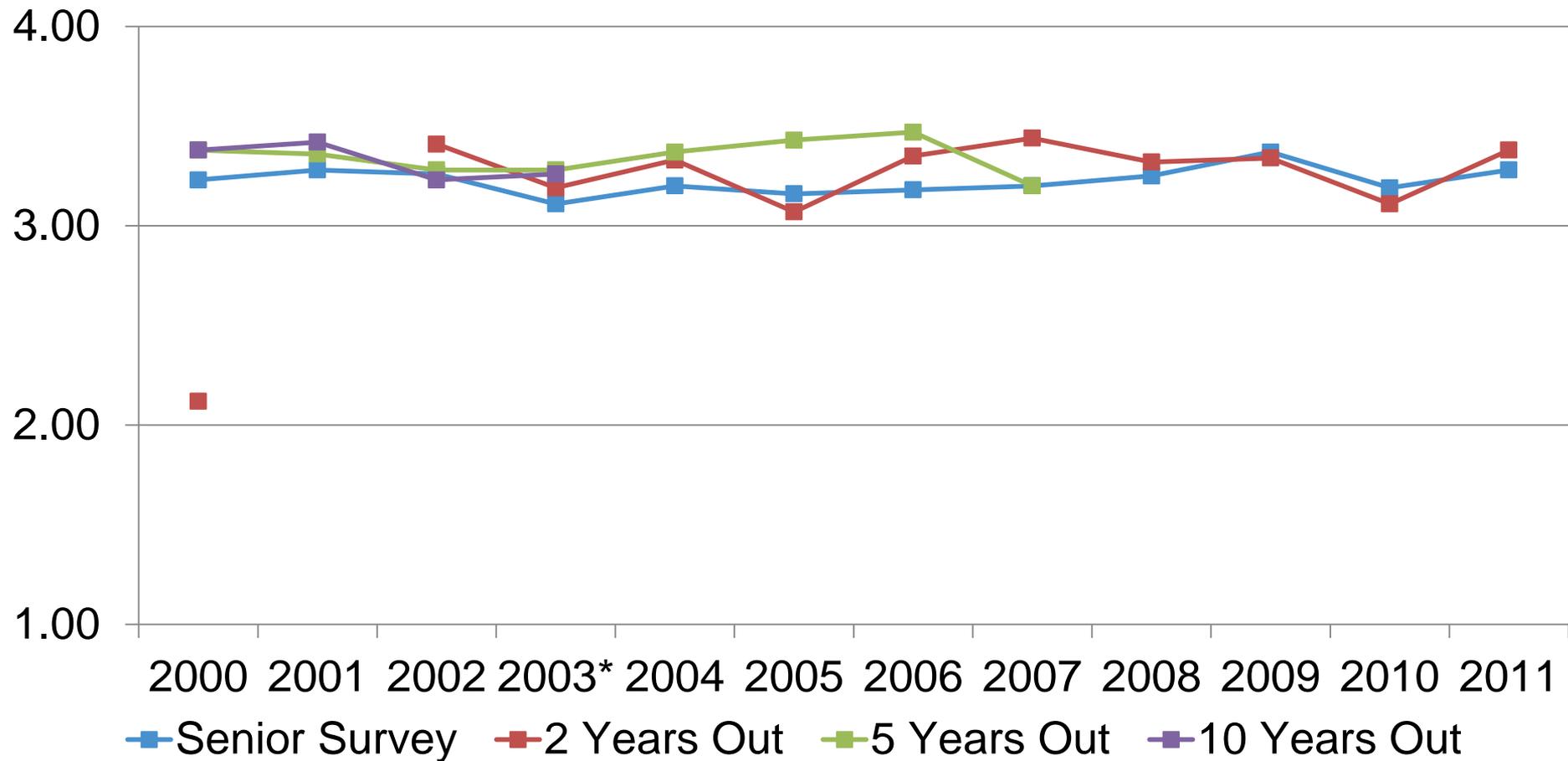
2 = Generally dissatisfied

1 = Very dissatisfied

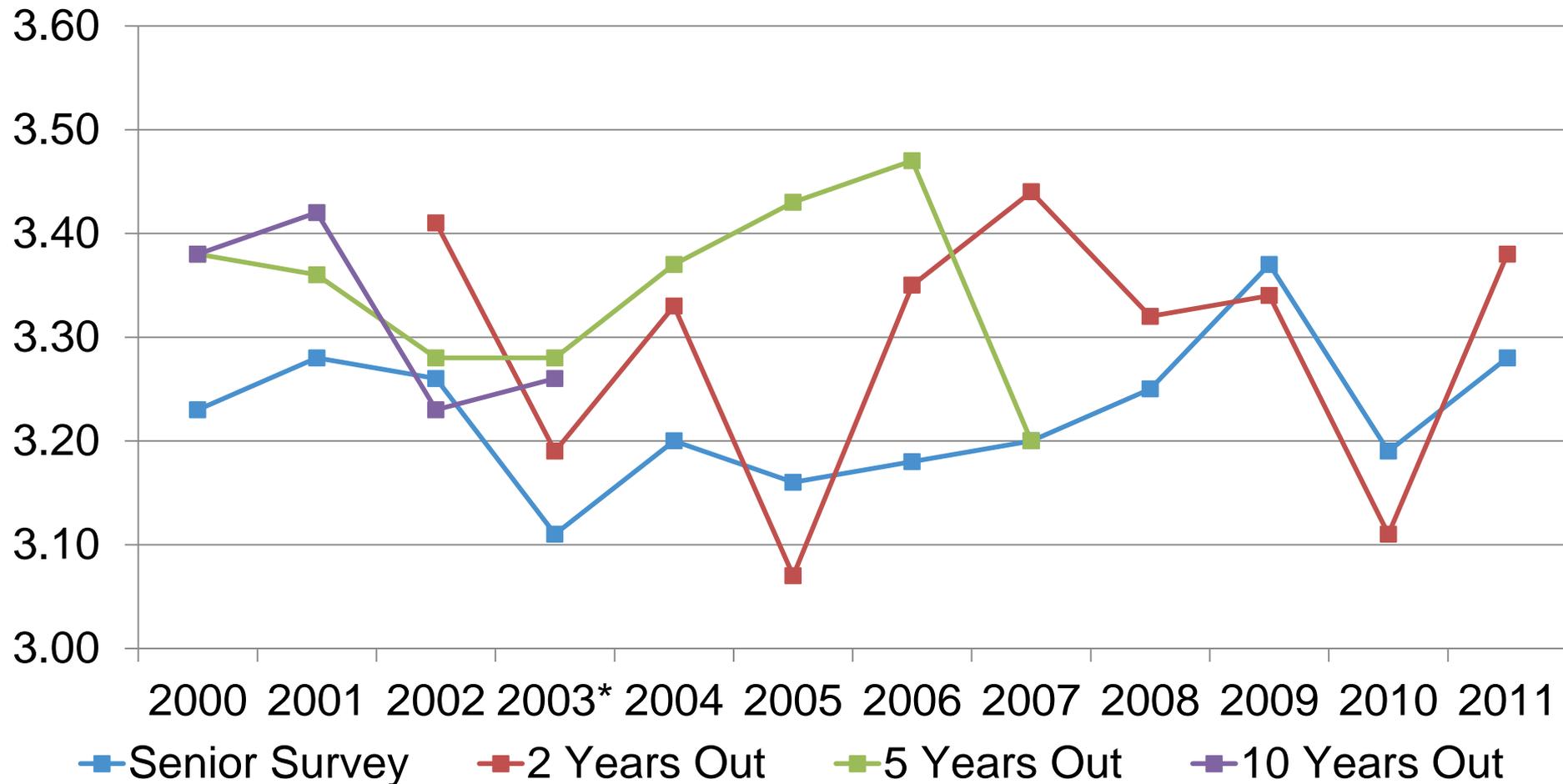
Analysis

- Aggregate analysis
 - Senior Survey—Classes of 2000-2011
 - 2 Years Out—Classes of 2000, 2002-2011
 - 5 Years Out—Classes of 2001-2008
 - 10 Years Out—Classes of 2000-2003
- Matched cases analysis
 - Senior vs. 2 Years Out—Classes of 2008-2011
 - Senior vs. 5 Years Out:
 - Class of 2008; others with caution
 - Senior vs. 10 Years Out
 - Classes of 2002 & 2003; others with caution

Again, more satisfied as alumni

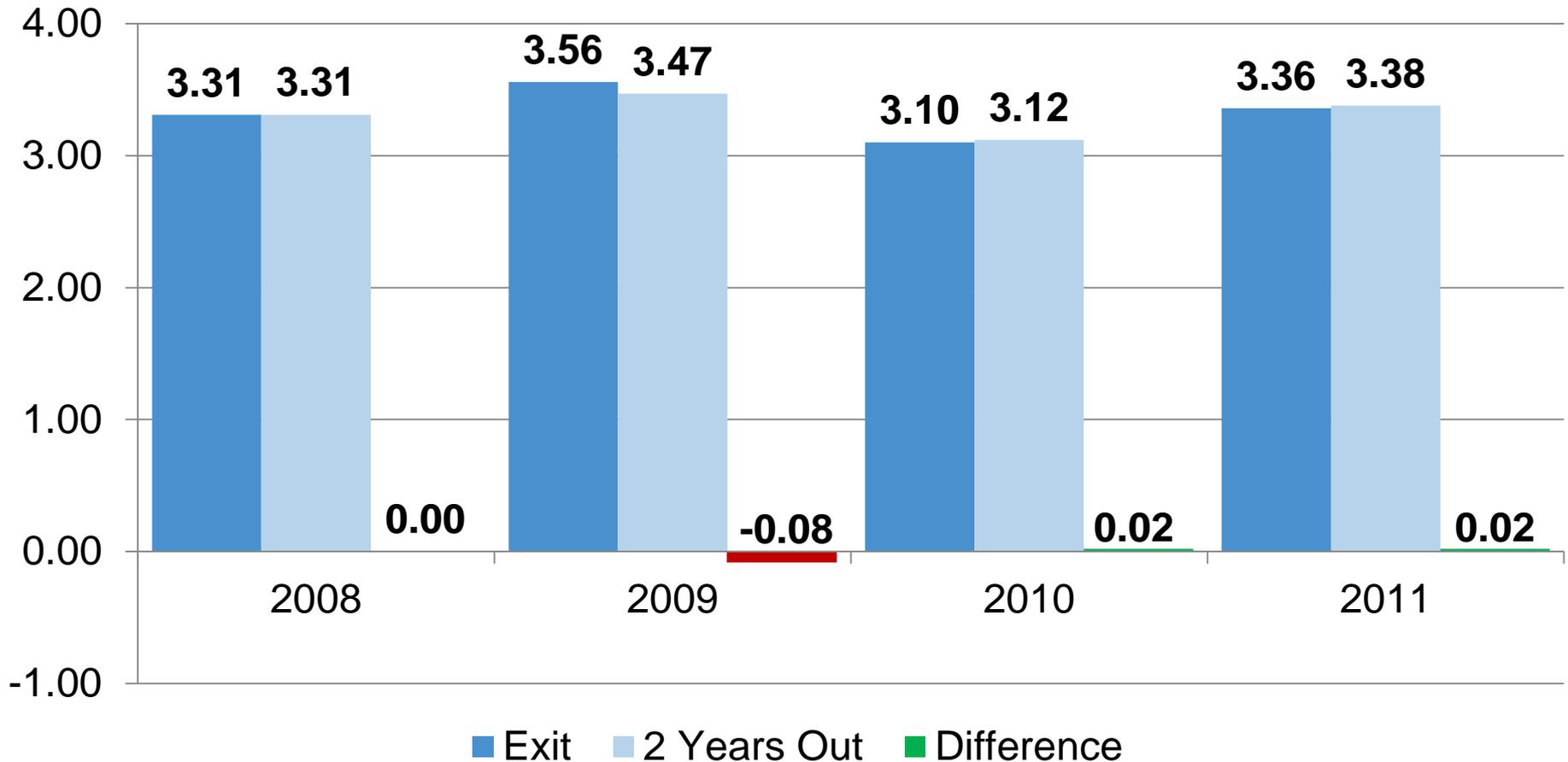


Close Up



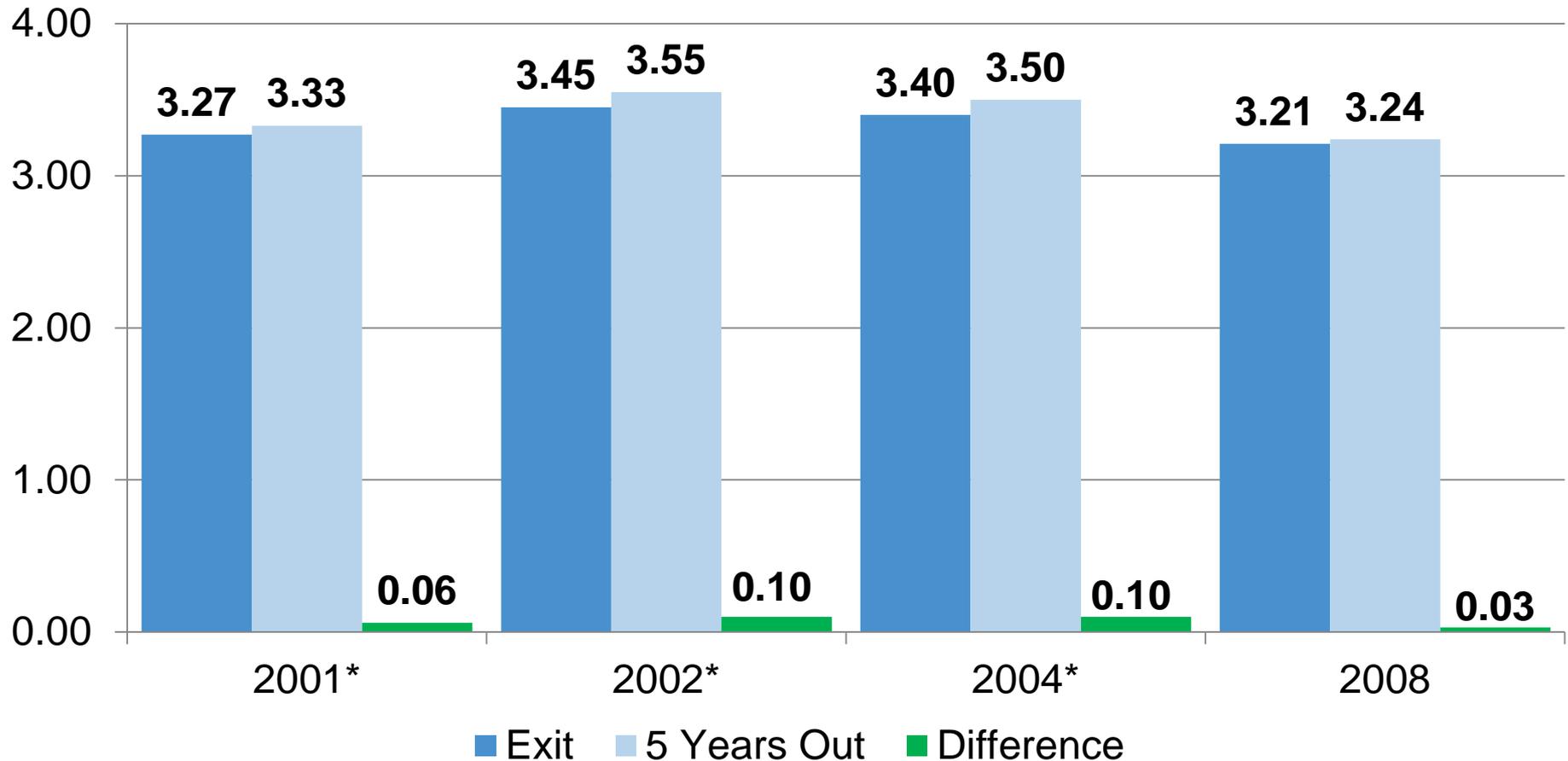
Senior Survey vs. 2 Years Later

There is minimal difference in satisfaction at graduation and two years out.



What About 5 Years Out?

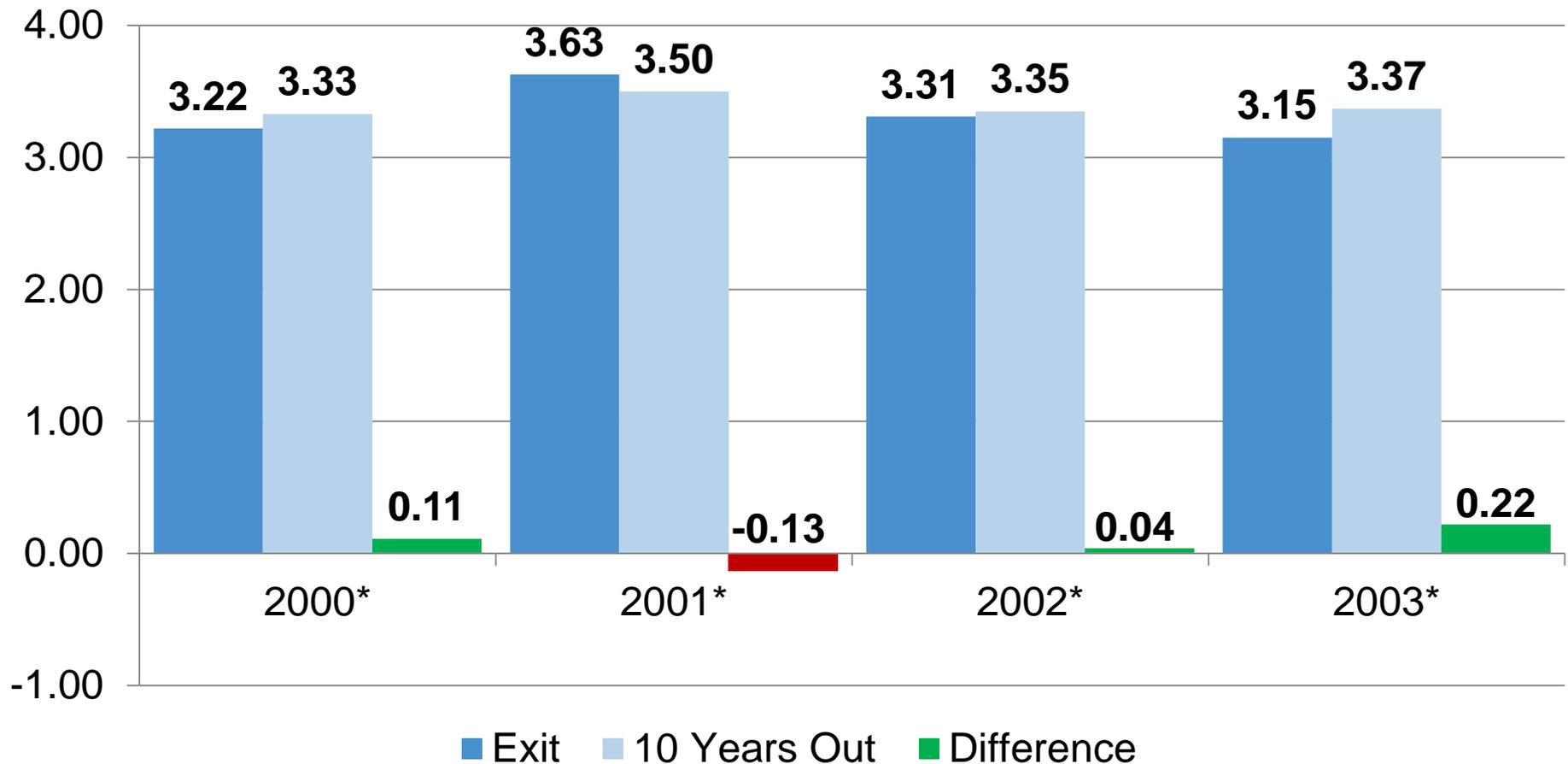
Although the difference in mean satisfaction five years out compared to mean satisfaction at graduation is greater than two years out compared to graduation, it is still generally less than 0.10.



*<30 cases.

And 10 Years?

Still no substantial difference . . . But we're getting there.



* < 30 cases.

Graduate School

Surveys

- Exit Survey
 - Identifying info self-reported
- Advancement Survey in 2013

Survey Question

Overall, how satisfied are you with your [graduate school] education?

5 = Very satisfied

4 = Satisfied

3 = Neither/Neutral

2 = Dissatisfied

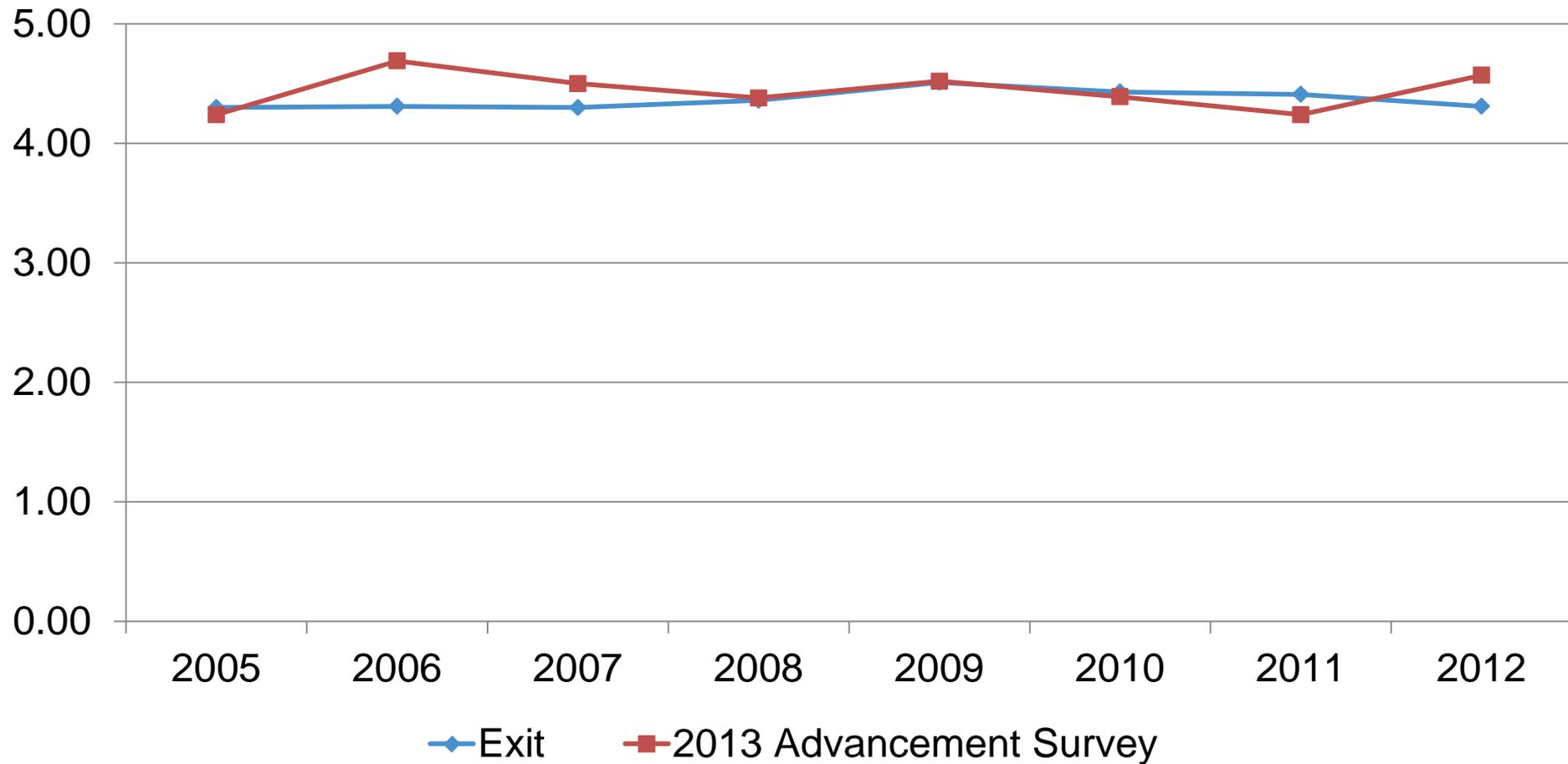
1 = Very dissatisfied

Analysis

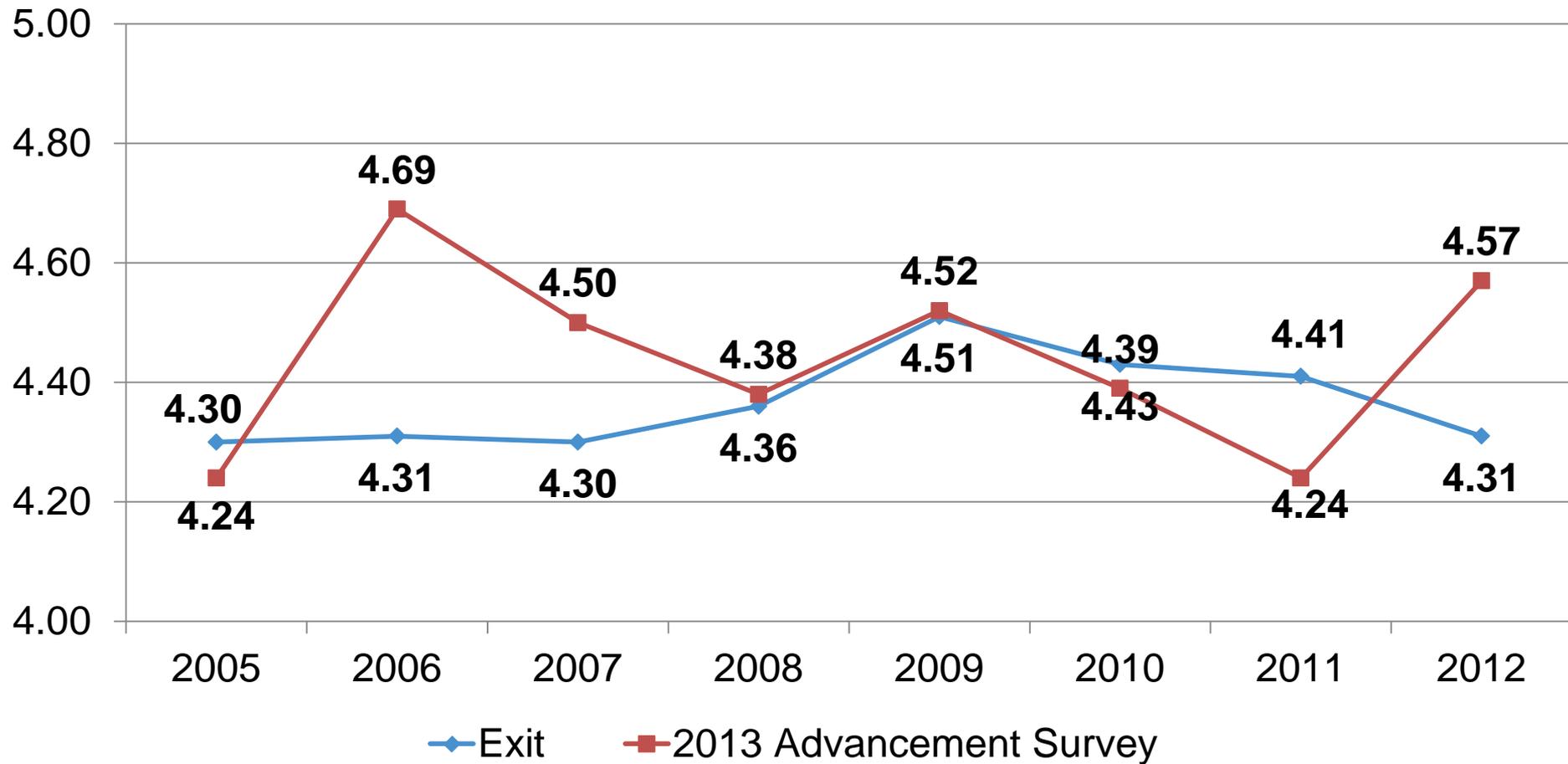
- Aggregate analysis
 - Classes of 2005-2012
- Limited matched cases analysis
 - Classes of 2008, 2011, 2012
 - All <20 cases

Survey	Mean N	Min N	Max N
Exit	100	86	121
Advancement	20	9	28

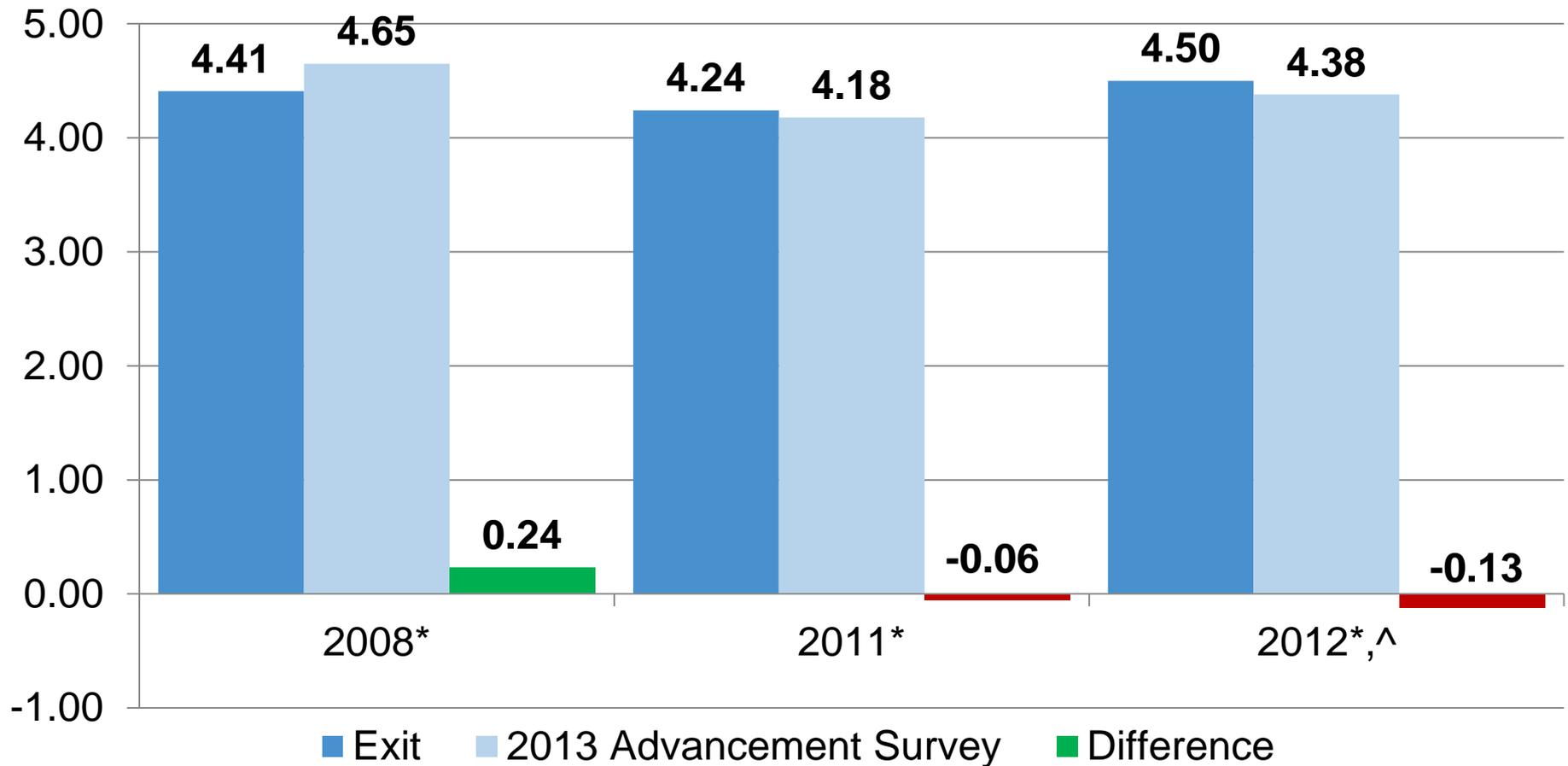
Graduate students: Slightly more satisfied as alumni



Graduate students: Slightly more satisfied as alumni



Matched cases analysis also found only small differences



*<20 cases.

^Difference is statistically significant, $p < .05$.

Professional School

Surveys

- Exit Survey
- Alumni Survey ~5 years out

Survey Question

If you had to do it over again, would you enroll at [this Tufts professional school]?

4 = Definitely would

3 = Probably would

2 = Probably would not

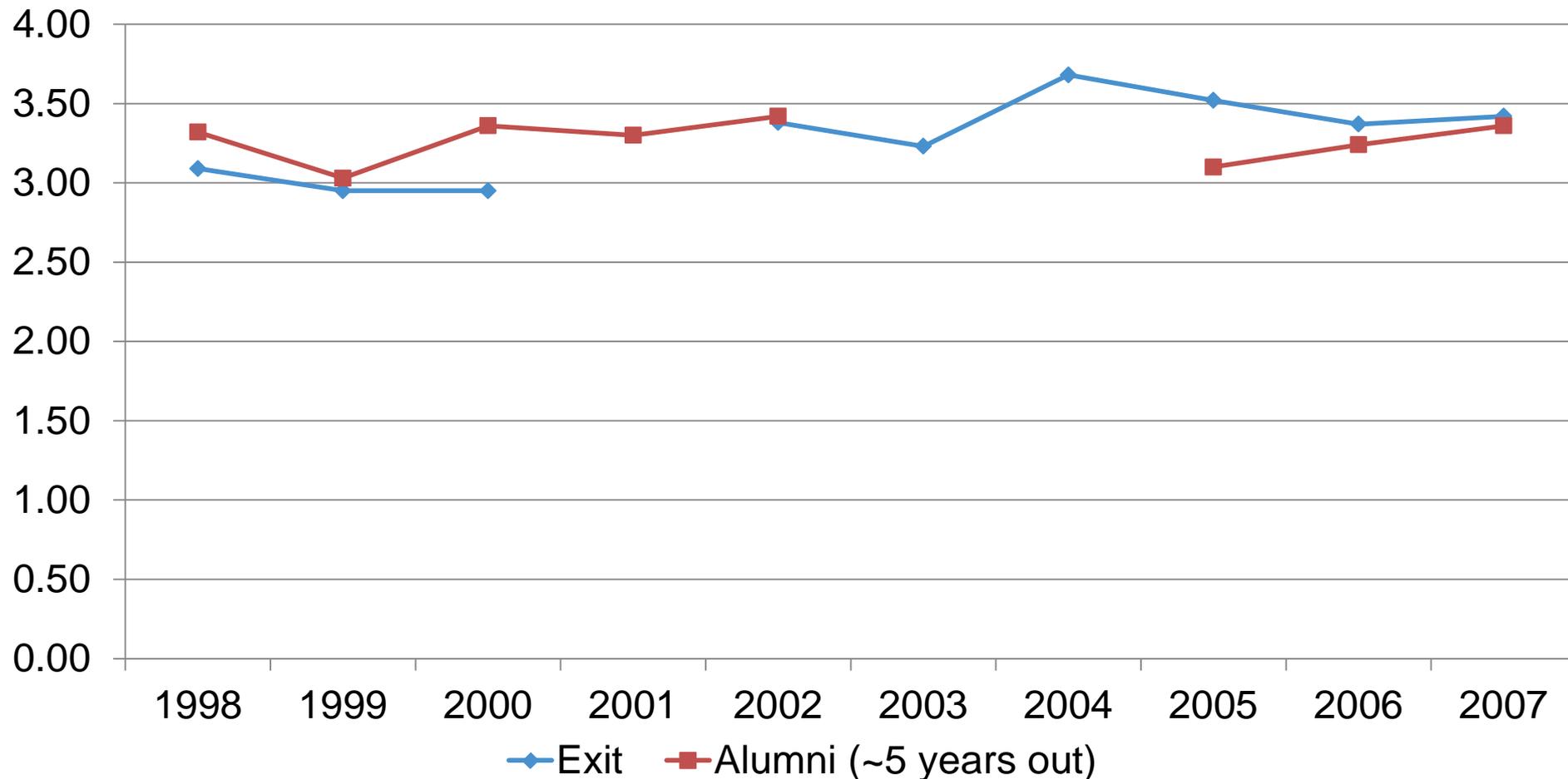
1 = Definitely would not

Analysis

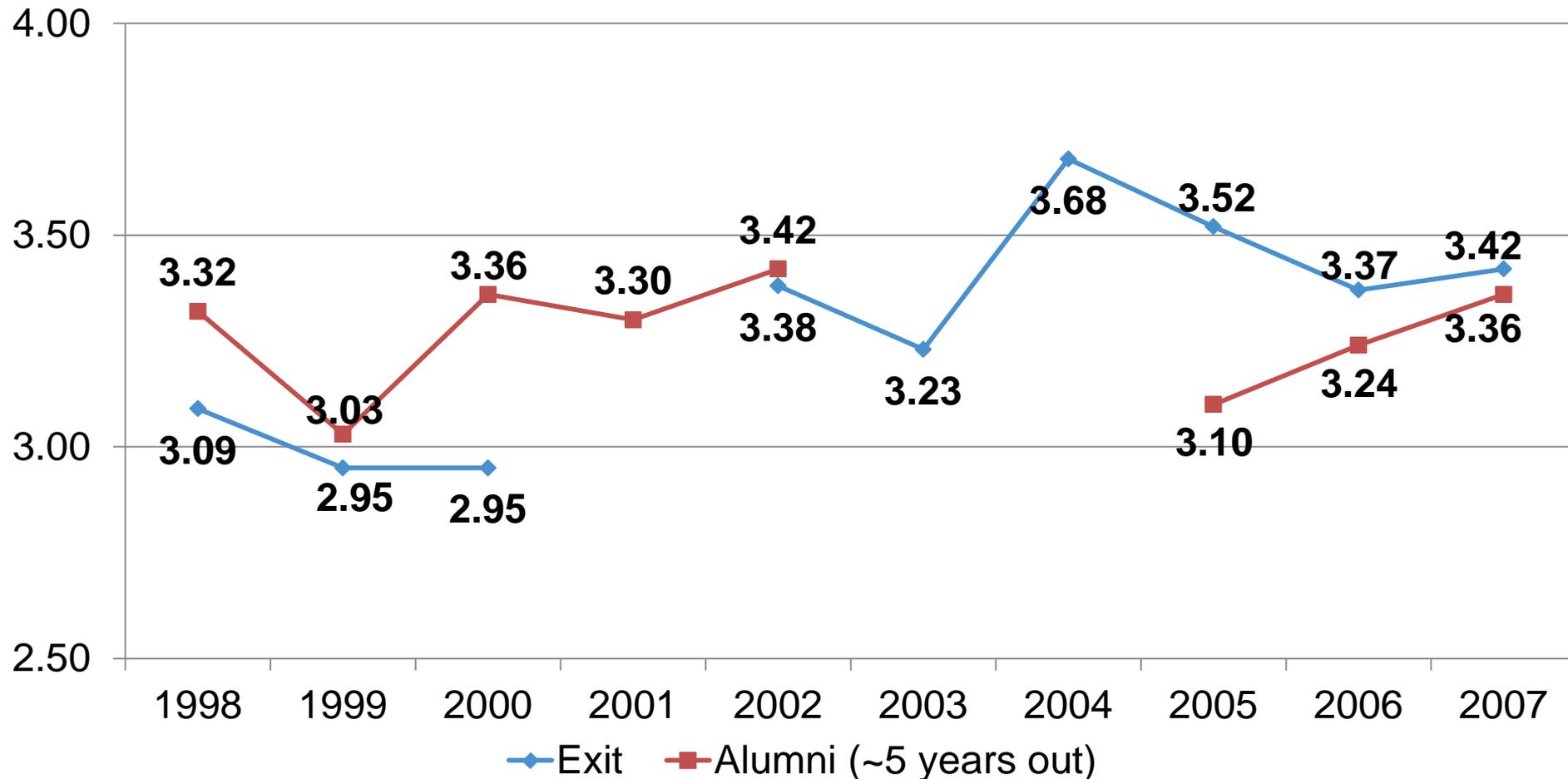
- Both surveys anonymous
- Aggregate analysis only
- Classes of 1998 through 2007

Survey	Mean N	Min N	Max N
Exit	65	58	75
Alumni	24	19	30

Satisfaction ~5 years out: Sometimes greater, sometimes not



Satisfaction ~5 years out: Sometimes greater, sometimes not



So, is there a halo effect?

Maybe.

Evidence

- For a halo effect:
 - Overall undergraduate
 - Statistically significant differences for most matched pairs
 - Graduate school analysis (in the aggregate)
 - Some professional school cohorts (in the aggregate)
- Against a halo effect:
 - Undergraduate program—no clear aggregate trends or statistically significant differences
 - Best data quality
 - Graduate school—no statistically significant differences
 - Purpose of survey
 - Some professional school cohorts (in the aggregate)

**Is there evidence that time
out influences satisfaction?**

No.

Implications

- For Tufts:
 - The “halo effect” might not be as pronounced as assumed
 - Not much change in satisfaction over time
 - Undergraduate, graduate, and professional alumni behave similarly
- For IR:
 - Work with what you have (*Cautiously!*)
 - Satisfaction metric in the outcomes conversation
 - Consider potential longitudinal implications of a survey

Challenges

- Student ID numbers
- Working within the constraints of available data:
 - Inconsistent scales
 - Varying questions
 - Data not available for every school
 - Relatively recent alumni
 - Sometimes only aggregate data available
- Survey attrition
- Only able to look at young alumni (approx. 2000-2011)

Questions, Comments?

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