

21.6 Million Americans Shoot Archery

By ATA Staff

Archery participation in America climbed about 14 percent from 2012 to 2014, boosting the number of archers to 21.6 million, according to a new scientific study commissioned by the Archery Trade Association.

The nationwide survey, conducted in February and March of 2015 by the respected research firm Responsive Management of Harrisonburg, Virginia, scientifically sampled Americans 18 and older in the same way as a Gallup poll. The study followed up on a similar ATA-sponsored survey by Responsive Management in January and February of 2013 that found 18.9 million Americans shooting archery.

In other words, of the United States' 235 million citizens who are 18 and older, 9.2 percent participate in archery at some level. More specifically, of adult Americans:

- 4.1 percent shoot target archery only
- 2.2 percent bowhunt exclusively
- 2.9 percent shoot targets and bowhunt

This recent increase in archery/bowhunting participation mirrors a growth in federal excise taxes (FET) collected from the sales of bows and arrows between 2012 and 2014 through the Pittman-Robertson Act (Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act). Those FET totals rose from \$44.38 million in 2012 to \$55.13 million in 2014.

The ATA's 2015 study also found 78 percent of archery participants were male (16.85 million) and 22 percent were female (4.75 million). That means male participation increased while female participation dipped since 2012 (69 percent male, 31 percent female), with young males making up much of the increase. The study also found archery participants were:



Photo by ATA/Paul Sherar

Archery participation in America climbed about 14 percent from 2012 to 2014, boosting the number of archers to 21.6 million. The study also found that 11.9 million Americans did some bowhunting the previous year, which is up from the 8.4 million bowhunters reported in 2012.

- Typically younger than non-archers
- More often rural than urban
- Typically from homes with firearms
- Especially more common in the midwest

Of those 21.6 million American archers, about 45 percent shoot target archery only while 24 percent identified themselves as strictly bowhunters. The other 31 percent said they bowhunt and shoot target archery. Therefore, 55 percent of archers - 11.9 million Americans - did some bowhunting the previous year, which is up from the 8.4 million reported bowhunters in 2012.

Jay McAninch, the ATA's president and CEO, said the 2013 and 2015 studies are scientifically accurate and not estimates from data on annual sales of bows, arrows and hunting licenses.

"The bottom line is that we have about 11 to 12 million bowhunters in this country but they range from casual to fanatical in their interest, so they aren't all hunting in any given year," McAninch said. "But even if they don't buy a hunting license or purchase equipment each year, they still self-identify as bowhunters. It's much

the same with target archers. Even if people are casual about archery or bowhunting, they still have fun shooting their bows and they'll likely remain in our market."

The 2015 survey helped identify the varying participation levels between archers. For instance, among target-only archers:

- 34 percent participated no more than five days the previous year
- 24 percent shot 21 or more days
- 2 percent shot six to 20 days

Meanwhile, among the bowhunting-only crowd:

- 25 percent bowhunted no more than five days
- 42 percent bowhunted six to 20 days
- 22 percent bowhunted 21 or more days

In other words, even though overall archery participation is greater than ever, participation rates vary considerably by the individual. The National Shooting Sports Foundation documented a similar phenomenon in a 2009 study that found the pool of American hunters is roughly 50 percent larger than the number of licensed

hunters in any given year. Specifically, for every two hunters afield each year, one hunter stays home, with participants “churning” regularly in and out of the hunting population.

To gain further insight into archery activities in the United States, the ATA study zeroed in on the sports’ all-important “fun factors.” It found:

- 93 percent of all archery participants shoot casually or “just for the fun of it”
- 48 percent shoot in preparation to bowhunt
- 9 percent shoot in preparation to compete in leagues or tournaments

The survey also provided a snapshot of gear preferences for target archers and bowhunters, many of whom shoot more than one type of bow. Among target archers:

- 71 percent shoot compound bows
- 25 percent shoot recurves
- 15 percent shoot crossbows

Among bowhunters:

- 83 percent shoot compound bows
- 23 percent shoot crossbows
- 11 percent shoot recurves

“Those equipment preferences remind us that most people don’t take up archery or bowhunting to be advocates for a particular type of bow,” McAninch said. “They’re mainly in it for the fun. They just like shooting arrows. For all the concerns we used to hear about crossbows, compound bows and recurves are maintaining a strong, consistent presence with our customers.”

McAninch also said the survey provided many insights about the “true identity” of today’s archery consumers. “The more we dig into the survey’s data, the more we’ll learn about how people get started in archery, what keeps them shooting and even what causes them to stop,” he said. Here’s a look at some of those factors:

- The number one influence in getting people into archery is their family and its interest in the sport (39 percent), followed by the desire for fun (16 percent), friends/community (13 percent) and bowhunting (11 percent).
- Many archers and bowhunters own and shoot firearms. Of all U.S. target shooters, 19.6 percent shoot firearms

and bows and 9.4 percent shoot bows only. Of all U.S. hunters, 29.9 percent shoot firearms and bows and 5.8 percent bowhunt exclusively. And of all U.S. hunters and target shooters, 23.9 percent shoot firearms and bows and 9.9 percent shoot bows only.

McAninch is already looking forward to the ATA’s next study of the archery market, scheduled for early

2017. “As with any market, the more you learn and the more you study, the more you refine your knowledge of your customers,” he said. “Plus, research like this holds us accountable. Now, when people ask questions about the archery/bowhunting market, we can provide information that’s scientifically solid.”

Donation Benefits Indiana Archery

Jay McAninch, president and CEO of the Archery Trade Association (ATA), has accepted a donation from White Lodging, an Indiana-based hotel development and management company, to support archery programs in Indianapolis and Indiana.

Phil Ray, general manager of the JW Marriott Indianapolis, represented White Lodging, which pledged \$15,000 for 2016 and \$15,000 for 2017. “White Lodging is honored to support the ATA and its statewide network of partners to advance the great sport of archery, especially to kids who might be new to it,” Ray said.

Leonard Hoops, president/CEO of Visit Indy and Mark Reiter, director of the fish and wildlife division at the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also participated in the check presentation.

“Indianapolis is home to the ATA Trade Show for six of the next seven years and we’re eager to share the sport of archery with Hoosiers,” McAninch said. “We plan to develop programs with great partners in Indianapolis, including the Indiana DNR.”

McAninch also announced that the ATA will match White Lodging’s generous donation and work with its many Indianapolis partners contributing to the effort. “Getting Indiana kids into archery not only gives them a fun sport to learn but also enhances character-building traits like discipline, motivation, focus and sportsmanship,” McAninch said.

The ATA hopes to engage its Indianapolis-area business partners in this effort. “With our Trade Show now in Indy, we’d like those who benefit from our industry, including Visit Indy, the Indiana Convention Center and our many hotel and restaurant partners, to follow White Lodging’s example,” McAninch said.

The ATA will work throughout this year to develop and enhance archery programs for Indiana residents. It will announce details of next year’s program during its annual ATA Trade Show next year in Indianapolis. The three day show will be from January 10 through 12, 2017. Visit Indy estimates the ATA Trade Show, which attracts more than 9,000 attendees, generates \$9.8 million in visitor spending each year.



Jay McAninch, the ATA’s president and CEO, accepted a donation from Indiana-based hotel development and management company White Lodging. From left to right are Mark Reiter, director of the fish and wildlife division at the Indiana Department of Natural Resources; McAninch; Phil Ray, general manager of JW Marriott Indianapolis and Leonard Hoops, president/CEO of Visit Indy.

By Teresa Johnson, with photo by Visit Indy