

I.G.C. WORLD MEMBERSHIP REPORT - YEAR -2007 *Compiled by John Roake.*

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
ARGENTINA	268	253	242	252	264	186	174	182	230	249	223	300
AUSTRALIA	3240	3139	3089	2976	2785	2725	2673	2606	2637	2575	2444	2460
AUSTRIA	4028	3990	3965	3928	3817	3790	3692	3690	3687	3598	3481	3472
BELGIUM	1571	1557	1570	1591	1530	1520	1472	1916	1877	1850	1760	1743
CANADA	1257	1319	1321	1313	1290	1350	1297	1232	1134	1103	1101	1140
CHINA								120	117	50	48	67
COLUMBIA											30	38
CROATIA								270	272	149	150	161
CZECH REPBL	3531	3540	3591	3190	3142	3114	3206	3246	3249	3196	3121	3198
DENMARK	2005	1984	1927	1950	1892	1875	1841	1766	1756	1783	1738	1740
FINLAND	2442	2670	2474	2602	2814	2600	2548	2493	2442	2446	2329	2132
FRANCE	13256	12554	11813	11100	11510	12020	12155	13582	12829	12471	12375	12214
GERMANY	37624	36724	36768	36687	36414	35852	35650	35236	34642	33196	32229	31279
GREECE	50	49	49	51	52	53	60	60	83	82	85	85
HUNGARY	1881	1881	1664	1664	1628	1637	1643	1602	1450	1001	1063	1020
ICELAND	97	96	96	101	80	70	68	49	55	57	55	59
ISRAEL	193	189	190	190	183	184	175	180	176	170	175	175
IRELAND	78	79	81	85	94	98	111	118	111	119	112	116
ITALY	2105	2120	2135	2125	2110	2122	2129	2129	1749	1641	1742	1807
JAPAN	705	697	686	675	663	684	670	643	640	670	630	655
KENYA								7	9	8	13	23
KOREA								10	9	8	8	10
LUXEMBURG								49	35	35	38	46
LITHUANIA			471	469	472	494	510	526	532	540	527	510
NTHRLNDS	4090	4046	4125	4079	4065	4088	3816	3617	3952	3949	3857	3822
N. ZEALAND	1047	1017	987	889	867	901	917	919	893	875	861	871
NORWAY	1618	1701	1599	1574	1550	1578	1760	1760	1513	1528	1435	1411
PAKISTAN			23	25	28	29	28	27	25	24	27	22
POLAND	2697	2808	3062	2902	2892	3048	3058	3058	2996	2587	2362	2394
PORTUGAL								64	64	62	58	64
RUSSIA	369	369	326	326	326	357	360	360	349	350	333	331
SERBIA/MNTNGRO								143	130	127	120	115
SLOVAK REPL	945	925	846	774	736	699	729	675	652	680	624	662
SLOVENIA	898	885	874	861	872	924	949	949	598	579	624	593
STH AFRICA	651	641	688	728	579	597	613	635	598	628	590	596
SPAIN	478	490	493	498	496	435	436	560	561	550	526	520
SWEDEN	3088	3249	3013	3025	2700	2950	2700	2912	2776	2678	2567	2391

International Gliding Commission
WORLD MEMBERSHIP REPORT FOR 2007

COMMENTARY: After more than a decade, we have finally been able to establish factual figures on soaring pilots in the U.S.A. Thanks to Frank Whiteley and his tenacity, and with the aid of some FAA personnel, a factual basis has been established, so that we now know that we have a consistent source of pilot numbers. Unfortunately the factual figures obtained are only available from 2002 through 2007. I have applied the world averages to the years before 2002 and have replaced all USA figures in this chart. Frank provides an excellent overview of USA membership which will no doubt be available on the IGC web page.

From my point of view after 15 years, it is very satisfying to now have a contact that can be relied on to furnish data on the USA glider pilot population and I would like to thank Frank for accepting the responsibility for future annual information.

It should be noted that the Soaring Society of America, Glider Pilot numbers are about 40% of the total USA register.

I have been aware that there is a substantial glider pilot population in Chile but I have been unable up until now to establish a reliable connection. There are currently 269 glider pilots in Chile as at 2007, but until I get some former years information (which is coming), I have not included this single year's data in the report as published. Several years figures from Chile will be included in the 2008 year report.

The year 2007 is the first in 20 years to record an increase, albeit, a very small increase. Let us hope that this is the start of a new trend - so here's keeping fingers crossed. (?)

As always collecting the information as tabulated is a frustrating and time consuming job - more especially as delegates change from year to year with no advice as to who to contact for each country after the annual IGC meeting.

There needs to be a condition of membership that annual report information has to be provided. Our governing body should have information on clubs, winches, competition pilots, sailplane and tow aircraft numbers, average ages of existing, joining and departing members - just to mention a few necessary statistics.

How can we be governed effectively without this information?

John Roake

Soaring Society of America Annual Report on Glider Pilot Population and Trends in the United States, 07 February 2008

The United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) provides estimated Airmen Certificate information and publicly releasable pilot data on www.faa.gov. Monthly downloads of the public releasable data files are available. I've recently been using these monthly distributions for some program development. Previously, I'd downloaded the occasional data file, so had the 12/2006 release in my archives for comparison with the annual report for 2006.

Querying the 12/2006 data file for glider ratings, the pilot count was 32,440. However, the 2006 FAA total report was 30,136, a difference of 2300. The 12/2007 release included 31,578 pilot names. The 01/2008 release, which is presumably the year end total, listed 31,523 pilot names. So the number clearly changes frequently. If we accept the 30,136 2006 report as a best estimate, then some adjustment to the 01/2008 data must be made.

On January 3rd, 2008, the FAA responded to an FOIA request by Rhonda Copeland from the SSA office with 37,842 pilots with active glider ratings. However, 7918 pilots holding US glider ratings are foreign nationals, with foreign addresses, according to the 01/2008 foreign releasable pilot information. The FAA releases both domestic and foreign US certificate holder and ratings data sets. Subtracting the foreign national total from the FAA total indicates a domestic glider pilot level at about 29,924, or about 1600 under the query of the current release. The foreign addressed glider pilots are likely to be counted on other national reports, so it would be inappropriate to count them here. 29,924 may be a bit high, but the annual FAA reports have not yet been posted. It's a good faith estimate for 31 December 2007.

Referring to the attached airmen_glidern.pdf report, the 2002 numbers are highly suspect (recall FAA was busy with post 9/11 actions at this point), The 2003 numbers are also a bit rough, probably because of records reviews and changes in policy as a result of Transportation Security Administration actions. Considering the attached airmen_ratings_trends.pdf table, the numbers since 2002 are fairly even, though much lower than the late 1990's. The slow decline in total numbers means we are clearly losing our senior glider pilots more quickly than we are adding new pilots. The senior pilot decline is not unexpected. I had originally assumed that new US glider pilot ratings were add-on's from the powered pilot pool, but it appears that the ratio of new glider only rated pilots to add-on rated pilots is about eight to one, compared to four and six to one from 1995-2001. Eight to one and higher was common from 1990-1994. I find this encouraging.

SSA members represent about 40 percent of the rated glider pilots. Of course, not all current SSA members hold a glider rating, and not all active glider pilots are SSA members. There are presently 121 SSA chapter clubs, where membership is compulsory. One soaring insurance broker has reported insuring approximately 160 glider clubs. There is a second underwriter that offers club insurance, but I have no figures from there. The SSA club committee gets occasional reports of 'clubs' or clusters of pilots and tow services in remote areas. Some are rather loose-knit and private. There are no solid numbers of SSA membership levels at commercial soaring operations. Locally, penetration is estimated at about fifty percent.

There is early development of some tools and methods to improve the granularity of our information of US soaring activity. Despite some contemporary issues and the slowing declining ratings, there are optimistic signs.

The price of avgas is driving up the cost of entry, where tow planes are used. A few clubs are adding winch and pulley launching to their capabilities and this is a trend that's expected to grow. There is interest from four or five commercial operators in adding winch launch capability. Five clubs in the Los Angeles area have been using ground launching to some extent in the past year.

A club in Oklahoma added a winch in April 2007 and has been using it regularly with the express purpose of growing soaring and their club by lowering the cost of entry. A New York club added winching in 2007. Some of these are on mixed use, public airports. A club in Colorado has rebuilt their winch and fitted it for Spectra use. Operations should start in April 2008. There are already some clubs using winches, part or full time.

A prospective new club is considering training in the new Special-Light Sport Aircraft (LSA) category and using this aircraft for glider towing, up to the 1300lb tow limit. While researching this, I discovered another glider club has added this type of training for their club members, though they are not yet using an LSA for towing. The grow of LSA flying in the US has been quite remarkable, indicating people wish to fly.

A new gliding club formed in Wyoming last year and may offer a camp for visiting pilots this year. A combined hang-gliding and glider park is under construction in Idaho, with a grand opening this year in September, after the turf is established. Both winch and aero tow are planned.

One commercial operation in Texas shut down at the end of 2007. If there have been other transitions, I'm not aware of them.

Two US based companies have built prototype hydrostatic winches that will be on display at the SSA Convention this year and available for sale by mid-year or sooner.

A training glider project is making progress and tooling has been moved and set up in a new industrial park. Once manufacturing certification has been achieved, there will be a new trainer available for the domestic and world market.

The SSA is moving beyond the internal problems. It is already a more pro-active, smarter organization. This will be critical to sustaining and growing soaring in the US.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Whiteley
Chair, SSA State Governors & Record Keepers Committee
SSA Clubs & Chapters Committee
SSA Governor, Colorado
Frank.Whiteley@coloradosoaring.org
US 970-330-2050

2 attachments:

1. airmen_glider.pdf (FAA Airmen Statistics Table 8 extracts)
2. airmen_ratings_trends.pdf (FAA Airmen Statistics Tables 17 & 18 extracts)