

Number Crunch

Ridership Numbers on the Rise

BY RAY KEENER

How many bicyclists are there in America? A simple question, but until recently, there's been some confusion about the answer.

The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) has been the historical source for U.S. bicycle riding participation data for decades. Starting in 1999, the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) began generating its own participation data for cycling.

The problem: The NSGA and OIA numbers were tens of millions apart. For example, in 2004, NSGA reported 40.3 million riders while OIA said there were 85.7 million.

Differences in methodology accounted for much of the discrepancy. The OIA counted everyone who had ever ridden, while NSGA counted only those who had taken six or more rides

within the past year.

The temptation to cite the higher OIA numbers when talking to the media or outside investors was considerable and confusing.

Fortunately, the OIA has brought its methodology in line with the NSGA's, and the current numbers are now within a few percentage points.

And the numbers are encouraging. NSGA reported 44.7 million bicycle riders in 2008, an increase of 4.5 million, or 11 percent from 40.1 million in 2007.

"There's a wealth of information available below this top-line data," said Jay Townley of the Gluskin Townley Group. "Historical comparison and trend analysis can tell us a lot about where the industry has been and where it's going."

For more, visit nsga.org and click on Information Center and Research.

Cycling Participants

2006	35.6 Million
2007	40.1 Million
2008	44.7 Million

Source: NSGA