

CROSSBOW REGULATIONS TODAY

Thirty years ago in North America only Arkansas, Ohio, and Ontario allowed hunters unrestricted use of crossbows during archery season. During the next ten years, Wyoming and the Canadian Provinces of British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut lifted their restrictions.

Since 2002, however, there has been significant growth in unrestricted crossbow use. Joining the states and provinces above, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana*, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland*, Pennsylvania**, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and the Province of Quebec have added crossbows to their entire archery season, portions of it, or in select areas of their state during archery season. More recently, Michigan*, New Jersey, and Texas have also added crossbows to their archery season.

Why the Recent Growth in Crossbow Use?

Whitetail deer populations have exploded from the middle of our continent eastward in the past twenty years. While 19 states show an increase in the number of hunters between 1995 and 2005, 31 states have lost hunters, creating a net loss for the country. Two of the big three hunting states, Michigan and Pennsylvania have lost 16% and 12% of their hunters respectively, more than the total number of hunters in North Dakota.

Fewer youngsters are taking up hunting, and existing hunters are opting out in historically larger numbers. To cause more concern, recent data from some popular bowhunting states shows that bowhunters start quitting the sport in their mid 40's, and this trend continues in a straight line downward through age 65+.

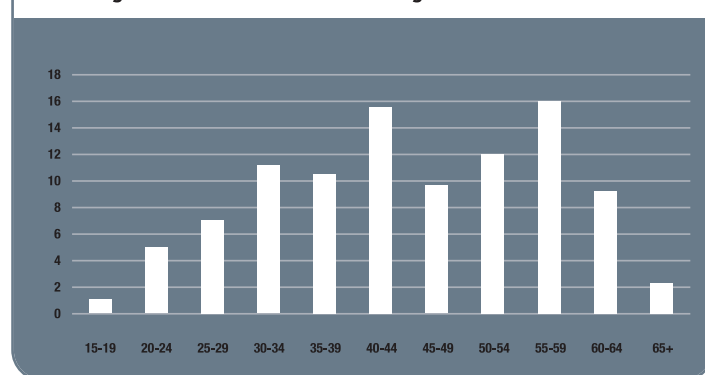
Wildlife experts believe this decline is caused primarily by time constraints. At the most demanding time in their careers and while raising families in a complex society, bowhunters find less time to devote to a sport that requires practice to maintain proficiency. Eventually, as bowhunters reach their later years, their physical limitations become the primary reason for leaving.

The age profile of crossbow hunters, on the other hand, shows a more encouraging trend. While time constraints cause a similar drop in participation around age 45, crossbow hunters recover their peak participation levels between ages 50 and 60, after their children are raised and their careers stabilize. Furthermore, the decline in crossbow participation after age 60 is significantly slower than that of the vertical bowhunter. Crossbows require less practice time and demand less physically from the hunter.

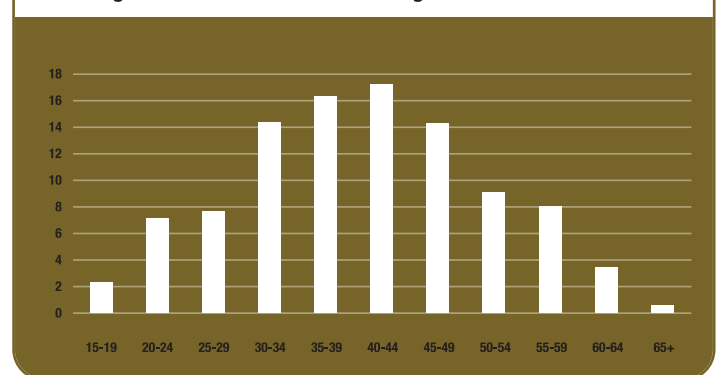


*Crossbows legal for part of the archery season
**Crossbows legal in Special Reg Urban Units

Age Structure of 2003-2004 Georgia Crossbow Hunters



Age Structure of 2003-2004 Georgia Vertical Bowhunters



The Georgia Data is similar to data available from a number of other popular bowhunting states.

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Wildlife Professionals Recognize the Simple Truth

Many state wildlife agencies face the same dilemma. With strained budgets from declining license sales and out-of-control deer populations, they need to find ways to harvest more deer, recruit new hunters, and retain the hunters they already have.

As data has become available from crossbow-friendly states, wildlife professionals have become better educated. Most now understand the ballistic similarities between crossbows and vertical bows and have seen how crossbows help manage the resource, improve bowhunter retention, bring retired bowhunters back into the fold, and recruit new hunters. Armed with this new data more of them are moving to incorporate the crossbow into their archery seasons as one way to solve their problems and grow the sport.

Ohio – A Prominent Crossbow Success Story

While states like Georgia, Virginia, Maryland, and Tennessee have positive and credible data regarding the benefits of using crossbows, Ohio has the most expansive body of data.

Twenty-six years ago during its 1982-1983 season, Ohio eliminated crossbow restrictions during its entire four-month long archery season. At that time, the state had an estimated 82,000 vertical bowhunters and 11,000 crossbow hunters. By 2006, the number of vertical bowhunters grew 183% to 150,000 while the number of crossbow hunters exploded to 175,000, with 8% of all archers – roughly 25,000 – hunting with both weapons.



Ohio Archery Season Participation 1982-2006*

	1982	2006
Crossbow Hunters	11,000	175,000
Vertical Bow Hunters	82,000	150,000
Total Archers	93,000	325,000¹

* Estimates by survey

1. 8% of total used both weapons

Harvest numbers in Ohio, a mandatory deer check state, during the same years are equally impressive. In 1982, only 193 deer were harvested by crossbows while vertical bows accounted for 3,668. Twenty-four years later the total archery harvest leaped to 60,090 with crossbows accounting for 33,658 of that total. And, today in Ohio, there are more and bigger deer to hunt than ever.

One of the tired old claims levied against crossbows is that they will devastate the deer population and that they will decrease the chances of success for vertical bowhunters. The accompanying Archery Season Harvest and Permit-to-Harvest Ratio charts prove both claims wrong. While the number of archers increased 3 1/2 times during the 24 years in question, the harvest increased 15 1/2 times, so archers are proportionately harvesting far more deer now than they were when crossbows first became legal. Likewise the ratios between the total number of hunting permits issued and the total number of deer harvested profoundly illustrate that a hunter's chance of success today is far greater than it was in 1982. Back then only one deer was harvested for every 4.87 permits issued. In 2006 a deer was harvested for every 2.29 permits issued.

So, since crossbow restrictions have been lifted in Ohio's deer season, archers have come to play a meaningful role in managing the resource - much to the satisfaction of the Division of Wildlife - the number of vertical and crossbow hunters has grown dramatically, archers have more deer to hunt than ever, and the chances of success are greater than they were before crossbows joined the 1982 season.

Ohio Archery Season Harvest 1982-2006

	1982	2006
Crossbow Harvest	193	33,658
Vertical Bow Harvest	3,688	26,432
Total Archery Harvest	3,881	60,090

Ohio All Weapons Permits to Harvest Ratio 1982-2006

	1982	2006
Total Permits	257,504	543,614
Total Harvest	52,885	237,316
Ratio: Permits to Harvest	4.87 to 1	2.29 to 1

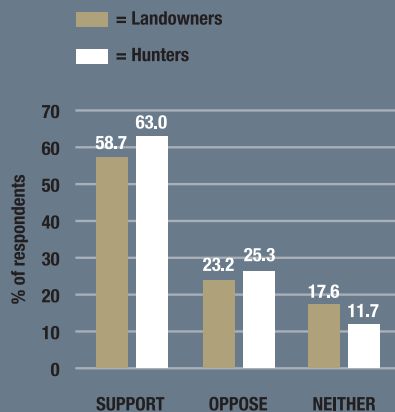
Who Wants Crossbows in Archery Seasons?

Within the archery industry, all of the crossbow opposition comes from a small but highly vocal minority of traditional bowhunters. They say they speak for all bowhunters but have never been able to provide any data to support that contention. In their determination to defeat crossbow initiatives they unwittingly oppose inclusion, recruitment, and retention; therefore, helping to make archery seasons irrelevant from a game management perspective. For the first time, this year, North Carolina proposed an all-weapons hunting season as a solution to its deer population problem. What would that have done for bowhunting?

The fact is, more hunters, including bowhunters, support crossbows in archery season than is commonly thought. Below are two charts excerpted from a Kentucky survey conducted by Cornell University in 2005 and a New Jersey Survey conducted by Carole Kandoth, NJ Principal Wildlife Biologist and Joseph Garriss, NJ Wildlife Technician in 2007 and published in 2008. Kentucky used its survey as the basis for liberalizing its crossbow regulations in 2006 and New Jersey is currently using its survey to support proposed liberalization of crossbow regulations for the 2009/2010 season.

Cornell University Kentucky Crossbow Survey

Support or Oppose Expansion of Crossbow Season



New Jersey Survey - Question #2: Would you support the introduction of crossbows for deer hunting in N.J.?

