



# Core Key Findings

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## Methodology

- In July 2009, the SCA Census 2010 Committee was formed by the Board of Directors to develop a census-level survey to help the SCA to move forward into the next decade; to identify, address and work on current issues; to gain a deeper understanding into what makes the SCA what it is today; and to delve into the reasons for joining, remaining in, and leaving the SCA.
- The survey was fielded via the internet-based Survey Monkey on August 1, 2010 and ran until December 1, 2010.
- Invitations to take the Census were sent out via social media (Facebook, Live Journal, Yahoo Groups, etc); email blasts via the SCA's Announcement elist; emails to the Known World Kingdom elists; and virally via word of mouth.
- Data coding, data cleaning, identity security edits and analysis were performed by the Census Committee and a broader set of volunteers on the 17,821 completed surveys in the 1st and 2nd Quarters of 2011.

## Characteristics of Respondents

- 17,821 respondents took the Census (of whom 17,578 completed usable surveys). Of these, 83.3% (14,652) are current participants and 16.7% (2,926) are past participants. That's not everybody who has ever been in the SCA, but it is a large sample.
- Keep in mind that based on SCA Corporate estimates, 50,000 people are currently involved in the SCA. Considering that this survey reached 14,652 current participants, this would mean we heard from 29% of those 50,000 folks – a very sizable sample population for a survey. Naturally, there is the potential of non-response bias in the sample, as those who are willing to respond to a survey may differ in some way from the general population.
- In the same manner, however, we can think of the Census respondents as folks who care enough to voice an opinion. They are our core participants and loyalists. 86% reside in the US, 7% in Canada and 4% in Australia-New Zealand.
- In the following sections, the word "participant" applies to anyone who answered yes to Q1, including both paid members and non-paid members. Also keep in mind not everyone answered each question therefore the number of respondents varies from question to question.

## Respondent Demographics

- Relatively balanced Male/Female split (45%/55%)
- 81% of whom are aged 25-54, with 35% of the population between the ages of 35-44
- Highly educated base relative to the national average, with 41% having Some College/Associate's Degree and 53% having a College Degree or higher compared to only 27% of the US general population having a Bachelor's degree or better.
- Income levels are higher than US average (SCAdians have slightly more disposable income). While 42% of the general US household population earns over \$60K a year, 48% of SCA households earn over \$60K a year.
- 75% of respondents are either married or in a committed relationship, with almost 2/3rds of them having met each other in the SCA. This may actually be a smaller percentage than the general US population, as the Census indicates that over 80% of the US



population aged 25-54 are either married or in a committed relationship. 59.8% of the US population are married,

- SCA census respondents are overwhelmingly Caucasian (95% of respondents are Caucasian, while only 72.4% of the US population is Caucasian). Our under-representation by minority communities naturally leads to questions regarding how we might better reach out to different ethnic communities.
- Respondents represent a relatively local and stable population, with 66% having lived in only one Kingdom. Pew Research reports only 57% of the US population in general have lived in only one state (as close a proxy to "Kingdom Moves" as we can find), and that the rate is higher for college educated adults, who are far more common in the SCA than in the general US population. We thus seem to be less likely to be migratory than the population at large.

## Children-related

- 61% of respondents no children under 18 and raised no children in the SCA. 33% have children under the age of 17, 6% have children 18+ but raised them in the SCA.
- Age distribution is mostly equal across each age of children 0-17. There are no age concentrations.
- Younger children (under 5) are less likely to be active (52% active), children ages 10-14 are more likely to be active (80% active), and 14-17 year olds are 69% active but have the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest "Not at all active" cell (31%).
- Children seem to get more active during the years when they can get involved (children's activities/youth combat), but that drops during the years in which SCA youth-oriented activities appear less attractive vis-à-vis competitive alternative activities for older teens. More teen-oriented activities, or a more blurred boundary between teen and adult activities, might improve the activity levels during these critical lifestyle-selection years.
- The factor that most affects children's activity levels are local folks being friendly/supportive of kids and having formal children's activities at events. Mentorship and formal programs are important.

## SCA Participation

- 83% of all survey respondents currently participate in the SCA, 17% do not currently participate but have in the past.
- When asked why they stopped participating, top responses were lack of time/money, bad experiences with people/local group, lack of appreciation, and wasn't fun/burnout.
- Past paid members seem a more attractive marketing target than prior non-paid participants. When comparing past paid members to past participants, past paid members are much more likely to return to the SCA (75%) than past participants (55%).
- Reasons given for potentially returning to the SCA were primarily event related (better/cheaper/closer); an invitation from the local group/society level; more active local group. There seems to be a marketing opportunity to increase past participant-return, as one of the major reasons given for returning to the SCA was an invitation from the local group/society level



- In terms of SCA participation, folks in 0-4 years are equal in size (4%). Participation decreases very slowly for folks 5-9 (3.6% per year), 10-15 years (3.4% per year), and 15-19 (3.2% per year). Given reasonable estimates of attrition, this suggests that we've recruited far fewer recently compared to 10-19 years ago. On the other hand, the fact that the numbers from 0-4 years are very similar suggests that either attrition is lower than one might expect or that recruitment continues to steadily decline.
- Respondents are more likely to be paid members in years 3-10 than after 11+ years, perhaps as their level of activity wanes or activity as officers diminishes. Delving into this difference may hold clues to retention. Marketing campaigns aimed at these "foundational" members to increase membership levels might be particularly effective.
- In years 11+ respondents are more likely to be SCA participants that they are likely to be paid members.
- Q36 points to the fact that our average participation lifespan is right around 10 years.
- Almost half of respondents attend a monthly business meeting, and 40% attend multiple fighter practices in a month (clearly a critical component of local activity). There are opportunities to expand attendance at A&S/guild meetings, however, as 33% of the respondents do not attend even one a year.
- The majority of the population attends fewer than one event every other month (58% attend 6 events or fewer per year). Only 23% attend 7-12 events a year, and only 11% attend 13 or more. There might be opportunities to increase local event attendance through rideshare boards, local carpool officers, and the like.
- Pennsic (26%), Gulf Wars (14%) and Estrella (10%) are the most attended interkingdom events. Only 2% have attended a Board meeting in the past year.
- Periods of inactivity are the norm and not the exception. 75% of all participants have gone through less-active participation periods. "Just come back" campaigns might help increase the return rate and diminish the inactivity periods by formalizing this reality as part of the culture while suggesting a rapid return.
- When asked why they became less active, top responses were lack of time/money, bad experiences with people/local group, relocation to a new group, lack of appreciation, wasn't fun/burnout.
- When asked what made them more active, reasons were missed SCA activities/friends; encouragement from friends; desire to return to a specific SCA activity or finding a new activity; relocation; encouragement; a more active local group

## Membership

- Of current SCA participants, 83% are paid members and 17% are not paid members.
- In fact, 70% of those who are not currently paid members were at one time paid members
- Top reasons given for not being a paid member were: haven't got around to it; not active enough/don't need one; costs too much; not enough benefits to membership. We might be able to significantly reduce the number of non-members by offering an Automatic Renewal option for membership with some associated benefit (free content or small discount).
- Top reasons for being a paid member were: that it's important to support the organization; if I participate, I should be a member; to get newsletters, to hold an office, to avoid the non-member surcharge; to participate in certain activities; retain status/advancement of group. There might be an internal marketing opportunity to



increase membership rates by communicating the responsibility to join if you appreciate the benefits of participation.

## How/Why People Got/Stay Involved with the SCA

- When asked how did you first hear about the SCA, 51% said from a friend; 7% from a family member or spouse. Word of mouth is very clearly our best marketing tool.
- The primary reason respondents gave for first starting in the SCA includes an interest in History/books/A&S with a Medieval or Renaissance focus; martial activities; A&S in general; the Dream of it; friends; and friendship.
- What is liked best about the SCA is friends/people/the SCA family, SCA culture/Dream, Fighting, A&S
- What kept folks involved their first year was friends, events, meeting folks with shared interests, fighting, A&S, service/helping out, regular activities like guild meetings, the Dream.
- What keeps folks involved now are: same items but extra emphasis on friends, events, A&S, service/helping out, mentorship. Interpersonal relationships are very clearly our best retention tool.
- The majority of SCA participants are involved in interpersonal relationships such as a Household, folks they event with, or are teachers or students . This is further backed up if you note that people who continue to play tend to break down into smaller group clusters (i.e. households, guilds, etc.).
- Top current SCA activities include A&S (doing and researching), service, and fighting.
- If only one primary SCA activity can be selected, armored combat (18%), crafts (12%), costuming (11%), and fencing (8%) lead the list.
- While armored combat was the single most popular item in terms of what participants engage in most, the range of A&S categories, its varied nature, the relative ease with which members can participate, and the cultural emphasis on involvement, mean that the vast majority of respondents are active in some form of A&S
- In terms of main non-SCA leisure activities, arts/crafts, fandom/cons, in-person gaming, on-line gaming are most popular. There are clearly marketing and recruiting opportunities by targeting fandom/cons, in-person gaming venues, and on-line gaming venues.
- SCAdians are highly electronically connected through the local branch e-list (80%), Facebook (74%), or other e-lists.

## Offices & Awards

- Of office holders, 74% have held a local job, 18% a regional, 18% a kingdom and 2% a society office
- Top offices held are Marshal, Seneschal, MoAS, Hospitaler, Herald, Chronicler (all the required offices)
- Local office holders have held an average of 2.6 different offices while regional or kingdom office holders have held an average of 1.5-1.6 different offices. Of the 14,652 active participants who responded to the survey, 3.4% (493) have been King/Queen
- 21% of all respondents have no SCA awards, 39% have an AoA level award as their highest award, 13% a Grant level award, 12% a Peerage, and 4% a Royal Peerage
- Of all respondents with awards, the average person has 2.8 different kinds of awards



- The most typical awards are Service (79%), A&S (52%), and Armored (21%). It is not clear, however, if these results might indicate a bias in respondents (e.g., more service-oriented people are more likely to respond) or actual award distributions. Queries to those who manage Kingdom Orders of Precedence in regards to percentage of awards by category could help clarify.
- Of folks with Peerages, 43% are for A&S, 48% Service and 26% Armored Combat
- The question must be asked, does the fact that so many respondents have service awards reflect the general population of the SCA, or is it an artifact of our response group – were service-oriented people more likely to respond? Another possibility is that that fighters become marshals and A&S people become A&S ministers, so they are led to service as well.