Why is national average 55-70 flight hours for private pilot?

A quick Google search found a dozen different answers to the average flight hours. Normally you can find as low as 55 and as high as 70 for the national average. None of the sources seemed authoritative because the FAA doesn't seem to have a published number. The minimum flight hours you need are 35 hours for a Part 141 school. That's a 20 to 35 hour difference. There are two primary reasons students take this long:

1. Students don't take the training seriously with a plan to finish from the start. To finish in 35 hours requires that the student is focused and treats the private pilot course like they would any other college class. Every hour you spend flying requires at least an hour of study. If you do this and fly twice a week you can easily finish a college semester in about 40 hours.

2. There is no incentive on the part of instructors to finish in 40 hours. We have had a student transfer into Eagle with 70 hours towards private pilot and no solo time, another with 40 hrs of cross country time while in their private, etc. This leads us to believe that at some schools they are just building hours on the students dime and never finishing them. At Eagle our goal is to finish you as fast as possible with the highest quality training. We keep a close eye on instructors to make sure they are doing what is best for the student. That is the reason we employ a Student Advocate, to make sure the student is getting the best training possible for the best value.

So, now our "brag" moment! Eagle's stats:

- 92% pass rate on checkrides over the past 12 months
- OUR Average to finish Private Pilot is 45.6 Hrs and we are working to bring that down. The last 2 have finished with 36.7 and 35.2. Our Commercial students always finish at 120 Hrs and our Instrument Students are also right at 35 Hrs.
- 97% of our students have passed the written exams since Sep 2015.