

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Calling Planet Earth - Space Outreach To The General Public (4)

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SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS OF SPACE AND PUBLIC OPINION POLLING

Abstract

Public support for space exploration has not always tracked well with accomplishments in space exploration, and definitive strategies for public outreach remain elusive. Polls have yielded some insights into societal and individual expectations and attitudes about space. However, the questions and issues explored using polls have varied widely among pollsters and from year to year. This means that any given set of polling data may be historically incomplete. As a result, our understanding of societal and individual expectations and attitudes regarding space is often patchy and anecdotal, making space outreach a difficult challenge. However, the entire body of polling data does cover a wide spectrum of space-related concerns and topics in a number of very different situational contexts, permitting the development of a more broadly based and nuanced understanding of societal expectations of space.

This research involves an in-depth investigation of polling data from final results down through raw data, where available, for three reasons. First, this research is intended to inform renewed discussion of the societal expectations for space exploration. A comprehensive examination of polling data will bring to light interesting, but less widely discussed, data on societal expectations of and attitudes towards space. Second, a broader body of background information about historical and current space polling data will enable future pollsters to develop questions that give more pertinent insights into deeper feelings and expectation about space activity. Third, by examining a broad array of polling data, this research intends to work toward a better, empirically-based, holistic understanding of the narratives that drive public interaction with space. These three objectives, when taken together, will allow for more informed discussion of underlying societal expectations for space and permit development of more effective outreach strategies.