GALLUP POLL

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More Than 5 Million Americans Claim to Have Seen 'Flying Saucers'

By George Gallup

More than five million Americans claim to have seen something they believed to be a "flying saucer". And, about 10 times as many people — or nearly half of the U.S. adult civilian population — believe that these frequently reported flying objects, while not necessarily "saucers", are real and not just a figment of the imagination.

These are the principal findings in a nationwide Gallup survey of the American people on this subject, when survey percentages are translated into numbers of people.

Since late in the 1940's, scientists and military officials have been investigating hundreds of reported sightings of unidentified flying objects. A recent rash of sightings prompted a Congressional hearing last month and also this special survey.

How do typical Americans feel about flying saucers? How many people have seen them? Are they real or imaginary? Do people believe there is life, as we know it, on other planets?

More than 150 Gallup Poll interviewers have been out questioning typical Americans — men and women, people of all ages in all educational levels and in every region of the nation. Tabulation of their statements and views reveals the following:

First, almost everyone (96 per cent) has at least heard or read something about flying saucers. For something so highly publicized as these objects, this finding may, at first, not seem unusual. However, in terms of the history of the public's awareness of other incidents or events, this figure is extraordinarily high. In fact, this awareness score is one of the highest in the 30-year history of the Gallup Poll.

Are flying saucers a hoax? Philip Easter of Baltimore, Md., told one of our interviewers this story: "It was dark and I had just come out of a building. I looked up and saw this object hovering in the dark sky above me. It was very bright and stayed in about the same position for several minutes. At first I thought it was a planet, but I knew it couldn't be because of the way it moved."

Harold Stoops tells of the time last June when he was driving through Topeka, Kansas:

"It was very late — about 2:30 in the morning. I saw this round-shaped object in the sky ahead of me. It was extremely bright and I could notice a greenish hue. By the time I stopped the car and got out, it had disappeared."

A New Jersey housewife was startled during the night recently:

"It was about three in the morning," she relates, "I was suddenly awakened by a very bright light outside. I got up and looked out the window. The whole area seemed to be lit up like a phosphorous fire. I could hear strange sounds, like the ringing of bells. I know it sounds strange, but the next day several people about 20 miles away reported a similar experience and at almost exactly the same time."

Further analysis of these data show that flying saucer sightings are not necessarily a phenomenon of certain population groups. Similar proportions of college educated persons, and those who have not gone beyond grade school claim to have seen them.

Real or Imaginary?

Are flying saucers real or imaginary? We asked this question, with surprising results. Although the Air Force claims that nearly all of the reported "saucer" sightings are easily explained, as meteors, weather balloons, swamp gasses, planets, etc., more Americans think they are "real" than believe they are "imaginary." Forty-six per cent (or about half of the U.S. adult population) hold this opinion, while 29 per cent describe them as "a figment of the imagination." The rest cannot make up their minds .

This represents quite a change in public attitudes toward the credibility of "flying saucers" since a Gallup survey conducted almost 20 years ago. At that time — shortly after the flying saucers were first noted — four out of every ten called the saucers either a hoax or the product of some overheated imagination. In 1950, another Gallup survey showed that attitudes had begun to change. More persons that year held the view that the saucers were a reality.

In weighing what evidence there is about the credibility of flying saucers it is important to note that while most of the reported sightings have been explained, according to Air Force reports, there are still many sightings without explanation. Persons with college training are more likely to believe in the reality of flying saucers than are persons with a high school background, or less.

Among those persons who believe flying saucers have an explanation, (that is, those who think they are "real"), here is how they describe them:

1) **Experimental projects, Air Force tests**
2) **Actual vehicles from outer space**
3) **Burning gas, "swamp gas"**
4) **Meteors, shooting stars**
5) **Weather balloons**
6) **Supernatural revelations**

Those who believe they are from outer space account for 6 per cent.

Life on Other Planets?

Do people who are living in the space age believe there is life, as we know it, on other planets?

Many scientific authorities believe that intelligent life must exist elsewhere in the universe, because the statistical odds are large that there are millions of planets in the universe enough like our own to support life, as we know it.

One person in every three (34 per cent) who participated in this survey said they believe life does exist on other planets.

Again, persons with the most education are most inclined to believe in the existence of intelligent life on other planets.

THE FINDINGS OF THIS SURVEY

"Have you ever heard or read about 'flying saucers'?"

	Yes	No
	%	%
National Totals	96	4
Sex		
Men	96	4
Women	95	5

*"Have you, yourself, ever seen anything you thought was a 'flying saucer'?"**

	Yes	No
	%	%
National Totals	5	95
Sex		
Men	4	96
Women	6	94
Education		
College	6	94
High School	4	96
Grade School	6	94
Region		
East	5	95
Midwest	6	94
South	5	95
West	3	97

*"In your opinion, are they something real, or just people's imagination."**

	Real	Imagination
	%	%
National Totals	46	29
Sex		
Men	41	34
Women	50	25
Education		
College	51	26
High School	51	27
Grade School	33	36

"Do you think there are people somewhat like ourselves living on other planets in the universe?"

	Yes	No
	%	%
National Totals	34	46
Sex		
Men	35	42
Women	33	48
Education		
College	37	44
High School	38	44
Grade School	25	46

**based on persons who heard or read about flying saucers.*

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