

Results from the Everett Group's "Space Poll"

March 27-April 12, 2010

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Executive Summary

As Pres. Barack Obama vows continued commitment to space exploration, including increased funding to explore the solar system and the ultimate goal of landing astronauts on Mars, he finds support from many Americans.

Most Americans have a positive image of NASA, the country's space agency, and one-third say it's very important to them that the U.S. continue to explore the solar system (with one-third more saying it's somewhat important to them). Their reasons?

Protection of the planet, according to the national scientific survey's findings. Sixty-three percent of those who said exploring space was at least somewhat important cited protecting the Earth from collisions with comets and asteroids as a major reason for continuing that exploration. Fifty-seven percent said understanding climate change were important reasons for the U.S. to continue exploring space. Not on many people's list: Determining whether life exists beyond Earth, cited by only 18 percent.

Those are some of the findings from an independent "space poll," a landline and cell phone survey of 1,200 randomly-selected adults fielded nationwide between Mar. 27 and Apr. 12, just before Pres. Obama's Thursday speech on space policy. The Everett Group, an opinion and market research company headquartered near Washington, DC, found that, in the days before Obama's speech, many Americans were not familiar with the proposed changes in space policy. Two-thirds said they were either slightly or not at all familiar, while only one in 10 said they were very familiar with the issue.

Obama's Kennedy Space Center speech in Florida came on the heels of bipartisan concern about jobs and national status that would be lost if NASA's "Constellation" program were to be scrapped. Americans' main concerns about proposed changes in NASA's direction included job losses and threats to national security (both at 54 percent), but even more (63 percent) had major concern the changes would cause a loss of inspiration for America's youth to study science and math, according to the poll.



Obama's space policy counts on "commercial space entrepreneurs" to be able eventually to launch humans into Earth orbit – a feat one-third of Americans think already is being done today.

Government spending continues to be an issue for many. Americans are split on which should be a bigger priority for the government -- reducing the deficit or maintaining America's space leadership. Forty-five percent said cut spending on the space program to reduce the deficit, while 47 percent said increase the space budget to maintain U.S. leadership.

Detailed Findings and Analysis

Overall, Americans aren't really tuned in to the nation's space program. Slightly more than a quarter (28%) say they're very interested and 42% say they're only "somewhat" interested. Nearly a third (30%) say they're not too interested or not at all interested (11%). More than a quarter say they haven't heard anything recently about NASA, the nation's space agency.

However, NASA has a great currency with the American public: About two-thirds say they have a positive opinion of the agency, while fewer than one in 10 (9%) say they have a negative opinion of NASA.

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Decisions made prior to the Obama administration find NASA in a situation where the nation's astronauts will be hitching rides to the International Space Station on Russian spacecraft until other alternatives come online, such as launch systems developed by private companies in the U.S. capable of delivering astronauts to Low Earth Orbit, as Obama has suggested. Most Americans (53%) correctly believe there are no private companies today launching humans into Earth orbit – though one-third of Americans believe there are commercial entrepreneurs launching humans into orbit.

Despite American's lack of knowledge about the nation's space industry, its importance to them is strong: Only one in eight (12%) say it's not important for the U.S. to continue exploring the solar system, while two-thirds say it's somewhat important (33%) or very important (34%).

Why it is important? Among those who said it's at least somewhat important, the biggest reason is to protect the planet. Sixty-three percent said protecting the Earth from collisions with other space bodies was a major reason to continue exploring the solar system, and 57 percent cited understanding what drives climate change. Also mentioned -- bringing back samples from other places in the solar system (49%) and understanding how life originated on Earth (41%). Americans least frequently mention the search for evidence of extra-terrestrial life (18%) as a major reason to continue exploring the solar system.

The survey briefly described Obama's plans as they had been announced publicly prior to the Kennedy Space Center speech on April 15. The survey found that few Americans were familiar with the plan. Only one in 10 said they were very familiar with it (10%), while a plurality, 42%, said they were not familiar with it.

Based on their knowledge, however, a quarter (24%), said they supported the plan, 32 percent opposed the plan, while the plurality (42%) had neither supported nor opposed it. Opposition was strongest among political conservatives (40%), and older Americans (38%)

Americans' biggest concerns about the plan:

- Loss of inspiration for youth to study math and science (63%)
- Loss of current high-tech jobs in the space program (54%)
- Threats to national security by leaving human spaceflight capability to other countries (54%)
- Loss of scientific knowledge (51%)
- Increased risk of disaster in space if private companies were in charge (49%)
- Loss of status for the U.S. (45%)

Political conservatives were most likely to cite loss of inspiration to study math and science and threats to national security, while liberals were most likely to cite the study of math and science and loss of high-tech jobs.

For more information about this space poll or other Everett Group studies, contact Steve Everett at see@everettgroup.com or at 301-261-6448.



Topline Results of “Space Poll”

N %*

* Percentages may sum to more than 100% because of rounding

Now here are a few questions about the U.S. space program.

1. How would you describe your overall interest in the U.S. space program? Are you...
(READ LIST)

Very interested	338	28%
Somewhat interested	498	42
Not too interested	227	19
Not at all interested	133	11
No opinion	4	<1

2. In your own words, please tell me what you may have seen, read or heard recently about NASA.

(PROBE IF “DK:” Try to think of something you may have seen or heard on the news, or may have talked about with friends or family members. Anything?)

OPEN-END RESPONSE – RECORD _____

Nothing (after probing)	324	27%
Don't know/can't remember/No opinion	63	5

These responses are currently being analyzed.

3. Which of the following best describes your opinion of NASA?

Very positive opinion of NASA	344	29%
Somewhat positive	433	36
Neutral	313	26
Somewhat negative	70	6
Very negative opinion of NASA	32	3
No opinion	8	<1

N %

4. Which you think should be the bigger priority for the government ...
- | | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| CUTTING spending on the space program
to reduce the deficit, OR | 544 | 45% |
| INCREASING spending on the space program
to maintain U.S. leadership in space | 568 | 47 |
| No opinion | 88 | 8 |
5. So far as you know, are there private companies in the U.S. today launching humans into Earth orbit?
- | | | |
|---------------------|-----|-----|
| Yes | 416 | 35% |
| No | 639 | 53 |
| No opinion (ASK Q6) | 145 | 12 |
- (If Q5 = No opinion)
6. If you had to guess, which way would you lean?
- | | | |
|--|----|----|
| That there probably ARE private companies in the U.S.
today launching humans into orbit | 68 | 6% |
| That there probably ARE NOT any private companies today
launching humans into orbit | 57 | 5% |
| No opinion | 17 | 1 |
7. How important, if at all, is it to YOU, for the U.S. to continue exploring the solar system?
- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Very important (ASK Q8) | 410 | 34% |
| Somewhat important (ASK Q8) | 394 | 33 |
| Only slightly important (GO TO Q13) | 248 | 21 |
| Not at all important (GO TO Q13) | 143 | 12 |
| No opinion (GO TO Q13) | 5 | <1 |

N **%**

(IF Q7 = Somewhat or Very important)

People mention many different reasons why they think the U.S. should continue exploring the solar system. Speaking just for yourself, would you say that ____ is a major reason, a minor reason or not a reason at all for the U.S. to explore the solar system?

2 – Major reason 1 – Minor reason 0 – Not a reason 8 – DK (VOL) 9 – Refused (VOL)

(ROTATE F8-F12)

8. Determining whether life exists beyond Earth

Major	329	18%
Minor	324	40
Not a reason	143	41
No opinion	8	1

9. Understanding how life originated on Earth

Major	332	41%
Minor	291	36
Not a reason	173	22
No opinion	8	1

10. Understanding what drives climate change

Major	461	57%
Minor	235	29
Not a reason	103	13
No opinion	5	1

11. Protecting the Earth from asteroid and comet collisions

Major	507	63%
Minor	234	29
Not a reason	58	7
No opinion	5	1

12. Bringing back samples from other planets or bodies in our solar system

Major	398	49%
Minor	313	39
Not a reason	87	11
No opinion	6	1

The government recently announced plans to emphasize unmanned scientific space missions. It will cut funding for the Constellation rocket and capsule that NASA has spent several years developing as a replacement for the space shuttle when it is retired very soon. For the next few



years NASA astronauts will travel into space aboard Russian spacecraft until commercial companies in the U.S. develop other safe ways of launching astronauts into orbit. So far those companies have launched only unmanned satellites into orbit.

N %

13. Before I told you about these events just now, how familiar, if at all, were you with these recent changes in America's space program?

Very familiar	120	10%
Somewhat familiar	284	24
Slightly familiar	293	24
Not at all familiar	500	42
No opinion (VOL)	3	<1

14. Based on what you know, would you say you:

Strongly support the plan to have NASA focus on unmanned missions and rely on other countries or commercial companies to transport our astronauts into Earth orbit	98	8%
Somewhat support the plan	197	16
Have mixed feelings about the plan	501	42
Somewhat oppose the plan	170	14
Strongly oppose the plan	215	18
No opinion (VOL)	19	2

Some people have raised concerns about these planned changes at NASA. For each of the following, please tell me whether it would be a major concern for you, a minor concern or no concern at all.

(RANDOMIZE)

15. Loss of inspiration for America's young people to study science and math

Major	759	63%
Minor	310	26
No concern	125	10
No opinion	6	1

N %

16. Increased risk of disaster in space if private companies are used to transport NASA astronauts into orbit

Major	586	49%
Minor	416	35
No concern	184	15
No opinion	14	1

17. Threats to our national security by leaving human space flight to other countries

Major	652	54%
Minor	382	32
No concern	151	13
No opinion	15	1

18. Loss of high-tech jobs now held by people who were working on the Constellation program

Major	644	54%
Minor	407	34
No concern	134	11
No opinion	15	1

19. Loss of international standing for the U.S.

Major	534	45%
Minor	440	37
No concern	207	17
No opinion	19	1

20. Loss of scientific knowledge about our universe

Major	606	51%
Minor	414	35
No concern	169	14
No opinion	11	1

Detailed “Space Poll” Survey Methodology

Sample size:	1,200
Fieldwork dates:	March 28-April 12, 2010
Geography:	United States (all 50 states)
Population:	English speaking adults (18+) in landline/cell phone households
Precision:	Estimates based on the entire sample have a margin of sampling error of no greater than +/- 3.7 percentage points at a 95% confidence level; estimates based on smaller groups within the sample will have larger margins.
Weighting:	Iterative sampling balancing (raking) for household size, telephone service, region, age, education, gender, race, Hispanic ethnicity.
Sponsor:	The Everett Group, Crofton, MD
Interviewing:	OLC Global, Inc. at a central location in the U.S. Midwest
Sampling frame:	Dual-frame landline and cell telephones in the United States
Sample design:	Random-digit-dial stratified probability sampling from telephone numbers supplied through MSG's Genesys sampling system
Mode:	Telephone
Respondents:	Selected randomly from within households using the most-recent birthday method
Questionnaire:	The space questions came after a series of questions measuring perceptions of the nation's uniformed military services. The instrument averaged 18 minutes in length.
Outcome rates:	AAPOR RR3: 8%; COOP3: 44%
Comment:	These results conform to the Standards of Disclosure of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (www.AAPOR.org)

Final Disposition of phone numbers	Total
Complete	1,200
Partial interviews	0
Refusals	1,544
Other eligible, non-interviews	10,177
Unknown eligibility, non-interview	3,054
Ineligible	7,204
Total sampled numbers used	23,179
Cooperation Rate (AAPOR COOP3)	44%
Response Rate (AAPOR RR3)	8%