

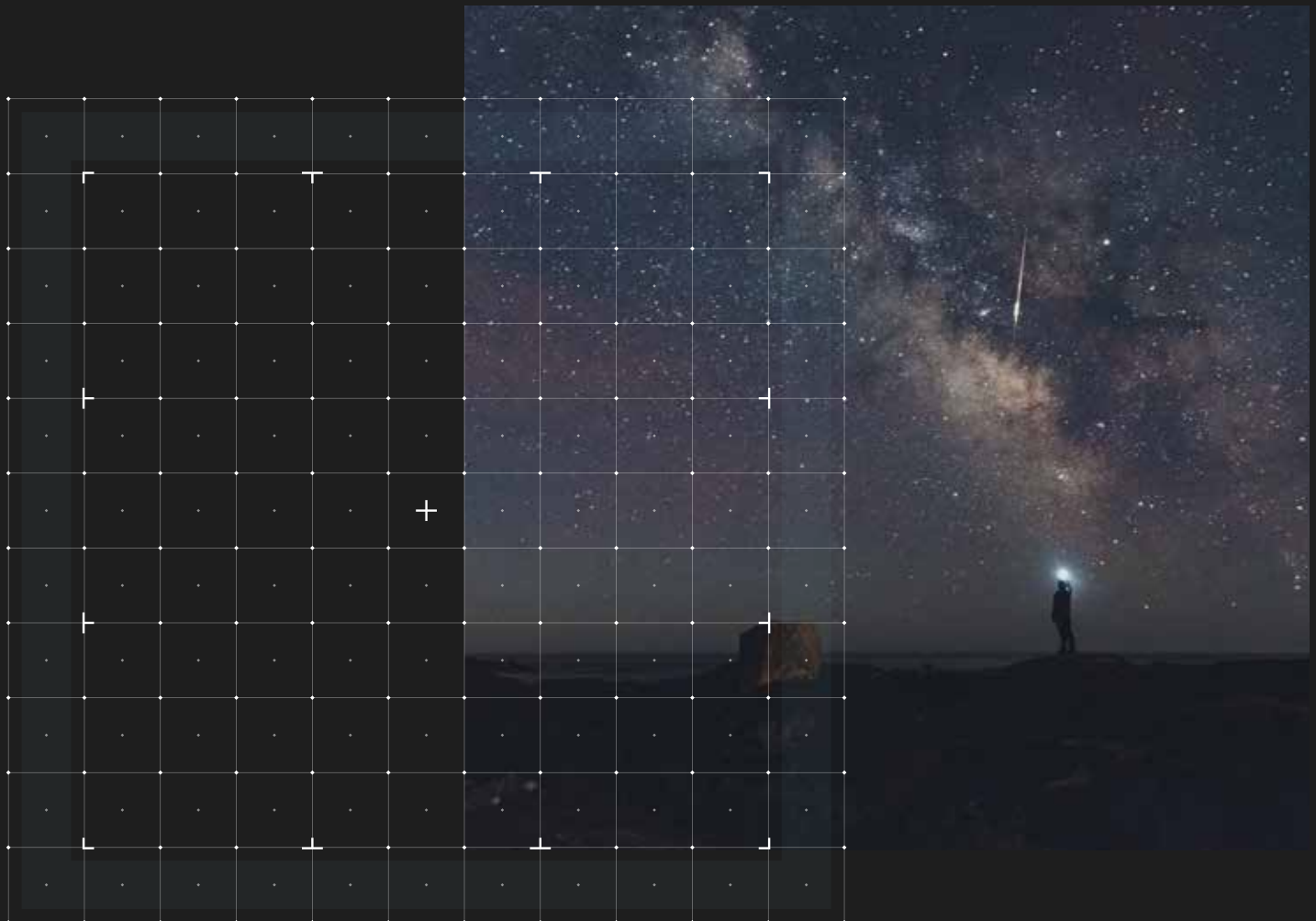


Management of Public Reporting of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena in Canada

A preview of the upcoming Sky Canada Report

From the Office of the Chief Science Advisor of Canada

January 2025



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Cette prépublication est aussi disponible en français
sous le titre : *Gestion des signalements publics de*
phénomènes aériens non identifiés au Canada

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A message from the Chief Science Advisor of Canada

Whether satellites, drones, planes or atmospheric events, no one would deny that there is more and more activity in the skies above us. Our ability to understand what we observe depends on a multitude of factors, such as time of day, cloud cover, distance and colour contrast. Rarely does anyone mistake a flock of geese flying in V formation for a fighter squadron flying at high altitudes. But sometimes what is being observed in the sky is not immediately clear, and a person may wonder if what they are seeing is a natural phenomenon, a new type of aircraft or something else altogether.

The world of aviation continues to grow and diversify, serving business, national defence, tourism and recreational needs. More than 100,000 commercial flights take place every day around the world. Engineers seek to improve the shape of aircraft and find lighter, stronger materials to make them faster and more efficient. To save energy and reduce the environmental impact of air travel, there are even plans to use airships and balloons of various types for passenger transportation and cargo. Meanwhile, drone technology is becoming increasingly affordable and ever more impressive, allowing virtually anyone to pilot devices as small as a bird or as large as a vehicle. Can we identify these devices at night as well as during the day? Can we accurately assess their distance and speed based solely on their navigation lights?

A light moving slowly across the night sky could be a drone 100 metres above the ground or a satellite at an altitude of 600 kilometres reflecting the sun. To the naked eye, a train of Starlink communication satellites appears as faint points of light moving in a straight line and in complete silence. If the observer fails to recognize the signs of that new technology, will there be someone nearby to offer the correct information? Or will the observer rely on social media to share what was seen and find some explanations?

Social media and the Internet have it all—from the good and the very good to the bad and the ugly. Which Canadian website can people visit to report sightings of unidentified aerial phenomena (UAPs)? To which official organization can they send photos, videos or detailed descriptions for help in understanding what they cannot explain on their own? It was with these questions in mind that we launched the Sky Canada Project.

Our goal was to find the current resources and processes in place for handling and following up on UAP reports, to compare them with the best practices in other countries, and to make recommendations for potential improvements. Accordingly, this report focuses on the services available to the Canadian public for reporting UAPs, and not on the UAPs themselves; understanding this distinction is critical to reading the report. The Sky Canada Project is not about investigating what UAPs are. It is about science informing and serving everyone.

The preparation of this report has garnered more public anticipation than any project in the history of this office. Numerous individuals and organizations have stepped forward to offer their assistance, and we are grateful for their interest.

On behalf of the Sky Canada Project Team, I would like to thank the many contributors who agreed to answer our questions in support of our work: federal public servants, journalists, Canadian and foreign academics, subject matter experts and members of the public. Our study could not have been completed without their input.



Mona Nemer, C.M., C.Q., FRSC, FCIC

Chief Science Advisor of Canada

Executive summary

A. Introduction

The Sky Canada Project, led by the Office of the Chief Science Advisor of Canada (OCSA), was initiated to review current practices surrounding public reporting of unidentified aerial phenomena (UAPs) in Canada. The project was spurred by increased public interest and recent developments in other countries, particularly the United States, where formal procedures for addressing UAP sightings are in development. The study explores the current reporting landscape, identifies gaps, and provides recommendations to enhance transparency and scientific inquiry on UAP issues in Canada.

B. Methodology

The Sky Canada Team gathered information from federal departments and agencies, stakeholders, experts, and other organizations, on how UAP observations reported by the public are handled in Canada. The main organizations and individuals consulted are listed in Appendix A. We also examined publicly available records such as historical UAP data, as well as reports and investigations related to UAPs. This included examining historical practices and archives, as well as current procedures and challenges associated with collecting and analyzing reliable data. We reviewed the approaches taken by a few other countries, mostly G7 nations and members of the Five Eyes. In addition, we commissioned Earncliffe Strategies to conduct an online survey of Canadians to gauge public views on the topic of UAPs. The results of the survey are presented in Appendix B.

C. Key findings

a. The landscape of UAP reporting in Canada

Some public sources estimate that Canadians report somewhere between 600 and 1,000 UAP sightings annually. According to the survey commissioned for the Sky Canada Project, one in four respondents say they have personally witnessed a UAP in their lifetime. However, only 10 percent reported their sightings and 40 percent of respondents would not know who to contact for reporting. Interestingly, a majority of respondents support the establishment of a federal government service to gather UAP reports and make findings publicly available.

Consultations with many federal departments and agencies revealed that they do receive UAP sighting information and reports from their stakeholders and the public. However, few of these departments investigate these sightings unless they pertain to specific aspects of their respective mandates, such as national security, transportation safety or public safety. Most departments do not compile the reports they receive, making it difficult to provide information on the number of reports or the type of responses given to witnesses. Currently, UAP reports are scattered across multiple government and non government organizations.

Canada, like many other countries, has several citizen-driven organizations dedicated to receiving, investigating and discussing reports of UAPs. Nonetheless, their presence does not address the fragmented way that UAP sightings are handled by both the authorities and the scientific community.





b. Gaps identified in Canada

The Sky Canada Project has highlighted several gaps and areas for potential improvements with respect to UAP reporting in Canada. They include:

- **Lack of a cohesive and standardized system for reporting and follow-up:** UAP reports are received by various departments in different forms with little coordination or oversight, leading to inconsistent data collection that hinders scientific investigations.
- **Absence of public engagement:** There is no official, accessible platform for Canadians to report UAP sightings, obtain potential explanations or review reliable information about UAPs. This situation contributes to the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation.
- **Limited analysis of UAP reports:** Reports of UAP sightings are not further analyzed unless they are deemed to pose safety or security risks. Individuals reporting sightings rarely receive follow-ups.
- **Insufficient scientific involvement:** Efforts to study UAPs with scientific rigour and engage the Canadian scientific community have been limited in Canada.
- **Modest efforts to enhance science literacy, including around planetary sciences:** Combined with the lack of a transparent and cohesive system for UAP reporting and analysis, this exacerbates the impact of misinformation and disinformation.

c. International comparisons

The management of UAP reporting in several countries was also examined. While there is no single model or universally established operating standard, the processes in place in a few countries, notably the United States, France and Chile, provide interesting examples of coordinated, transparent and scientifically driven approaches to UAP reporting.

In the United States, the Department of Defense's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) established in 2022 has structured approaches for collecting and investigating data on UAP sightings, and for communicating findings. In addition, NASA released an independent study in September 2023 focused on how best to collect future UAP data to advance scientific study. NASA also created the position of Director of Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Research to further the study of UAPs and coordinate research efforts.

Similarly, France's GEIPAN (Groupe d'Études et d'Informations sur les Phénomènes Aérospatiaux Non identifiés / UAP Study and Information Group) operates under the French space agency CNES (Centre national d'études spatiales / National Space Study Centre) since 1977. Its mission is to collect, investigate and archive UAP reports, and make its findings available to the public.

In Chile, the SEFAA (Sección de Estudios de Fenómenos Aéreos Anómalos / Section for the Study of Anomalous Aerial Phenomena), serves as the official body responsible for collecting, analyzing and scientifically studying UAPs. It operates within the General Directorate of Civil Aeronautics.

D. Recommendations

The following actions are proposed for consideration by the Government of Canada in order to: 1) improve coordination and analysis of UAP reports in Canada, 2) promote public trust and mitigate disinformation, and 3) enhance scientific rigour and science literature surrounding UAPs:

1. Reporting and data oversight

- a. Identify a lead:** A federal department or agency responsible for managing public UAP data should be identified. The lead should be a trusted and recognized scientific organization, have the capacity to communicate with the public and an already established international scientific network. The Canadian Space Agency could be considered for such a role.
- b. Establish a dedicated service:** This service would collect testimonies, investigate cases and post its analyses publicly. It would proactively inform Canadians about UAPs. To achieve these goals, it could convene a network of government and academic partners and experts to conduct scientific analyses and follow up with observers.
- c. Enhance reporting capacity in civil aviation:** Transport Canada should encourage pilots, cabin crews and air traffic controllers to report UAP sightings without fear of stigmatization. In collaboration with NAV CANADA, they should analyze UAP reports to track trends and provide pilots with explanations, helping to reduce distractions during flights. These reports could be correlated and merged with those submitted by the public on similar sightings.

2. Communications

- a. Support public dialogue:** A proactive strategy to increase transparency and communication with the public regarding UAPs should be developed. Such a strategy could bring together trusted publicly facing organizations, including science centres and museums, as well as public libraries.
- b. Promote intra-governmental collaborations:** An internal directive to ensure collaboration among all federal agencies with relevant expertise or data would aid the lead organization in providing explanations to witnesses and correlating recent observations with previous reports. Additionally, since some departments would continue to receive reports under their mandates (for example, Transport Canada or the RCMP), they should be encouraged to forward their data as appropriate to the lead organization.
- c. Improve media relations:** The lead organization should play a significant role in mitigating misinformation and disinformation by responding to public and media inquiries related to UAPs, and by documenting and communicating common misinterpretations of observations. Examples of such approaches, including interactive digital tools, are found in other countries.
- d. Promote application of up-to-date evidence to effectively address misinformation and disinformation:** Among others, a multidisciplinary expert panel should be set up to advise the lead organization on effective approaches to countering misinformation and disinformation.





3. Research

- a. **Facilitate open access and open data:** Data related to UAPs should be made available to the public for transparency and to support research.
- b. **Conduct surveys:** Periodic surveys of Canadians should be carried out to gauge their perceptions of UAPs and assess the impact of the dedicated services.
- c. **Support citizen science:** Participatory science initiatives and programs should be developed to enable volunteer participation in the study of UAPs. Among other benefits, such activities tend to increase the likelihood of informed citizenry and enhance interest of youth in science and technology careers.
- d. **Provide tools for data collection:** The development and deployment of publicly accessible digital and portable tools should be supported, such as bilingual applications for smart phones and interactive platforms, to provide information, including for data collection and ongoing research programs.
- e. **Build on Canada's strength in astronomy and aerospace research:** Canada has a superb talent pool and physical research infrastructure, and is part of major international initiatives aimed at understanding our planet and the universe, and developing tools for space travel and exploration. The sector should be further supported and given opportunities to be part of the public dialogue.

4. International collaboration

- a. **Information sharing:** The lead organization should establish partnerships with international entities dedicated to UAPs, such as AARO and NASA (U.S.A.), GEIPAN (France), and SEFAA (Chile), to share data, methodologies and best practices in UAP research and investigation.
- b. **Cooperation in research and communication:** Canada should actively engage with international partners for research collaborations and public awareness efforts.

E. Conclusion

A more structured approach to the management of UAP reporting in Canada would be beneficial on many grounds. It would enhance transparency and combat disinformation; it would also demonstrate Canada's commitment to scientific rigour and inquiry. This will not only improve public trust but also position Canada alongside some of its allies as leaders in the global effort to elucidate the nature of UAPs.

Adopting a science-based, collaborative approach will help address public concerns, demystify UAPs, and potentially reveal valuable insights into aerial phenomena that are currently unexplained.

Appendix A: Main organizations and individuals consulted

(in alphabetical order)

Organizations

- Canadian Coast Guard
- Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
- Canadian Space Agency
- Department of National Defence (DND)
- Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC)
- GEIPAN (France)
- Library and Archives Canada (LAC)
- Meteorological Service of Canada (MSC) at ECCC
- MUFON Canada
- National Research Council of Canada (NRC)
- NAV CANADA
- Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
- Sûreté du Québec (SQ)
- Transport Canada

Individuals and experts

- Ballester Olmos, Vicente-Juan
- Belley, Michel
- Casault, Jean
- Dubé, Louis
- Kirkpatrick, Sean
- Lafleur, Claude
- Lamontagne, Robert
- Leduc, Marc
- Masson, Eric
- Mysyk, W. Kim
- Otis, Daniel
- Page, Christian
- Rutkowski, Chris
- Schwarcz, Joe
- Temos, Nicholas
- Vadnais, Yann
- Whiteley, Iya

Appendix B: Canadian survey of public views of UAPs

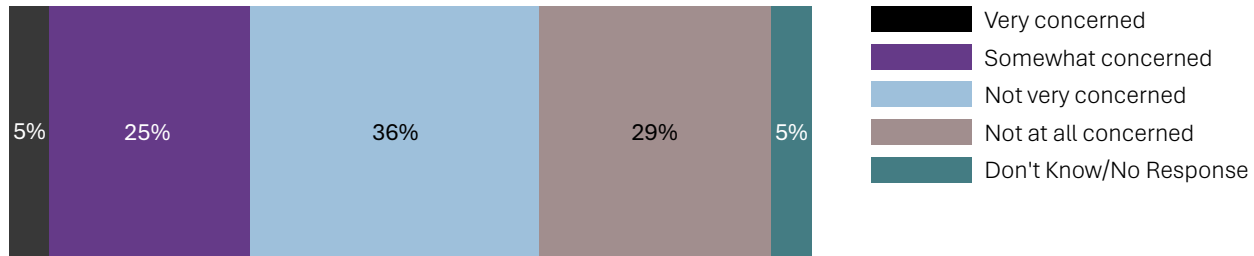
The Office of the Chief Science Advisor hired Earnscliffe Strategies to conduct an online survey of Canadians to gauge public views of UAPs. The survey, which was completed by 1,008 members of Leger's online panel between August 15 and 27, 2024, took approximately 8 minutes to complete.

Respondents to the survey were selected from among individuals who have volunteered or registered to participate in online surveys. To enhance methodological rigour and ensure the sample resembled the broader population, the data were weighted by age, gender, and region to align with the Canadian population (18+), based on current Statistics Canada figures. The handling of this non-probability sample aligns with the Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research - Online Surveys. Note that the results of such self-selected participant surveys cannot be described as statistically projectable to the entire Canadian population.

The main survey results are presented in the charts below grouped in four categories.

1. Perceptions of UAPs

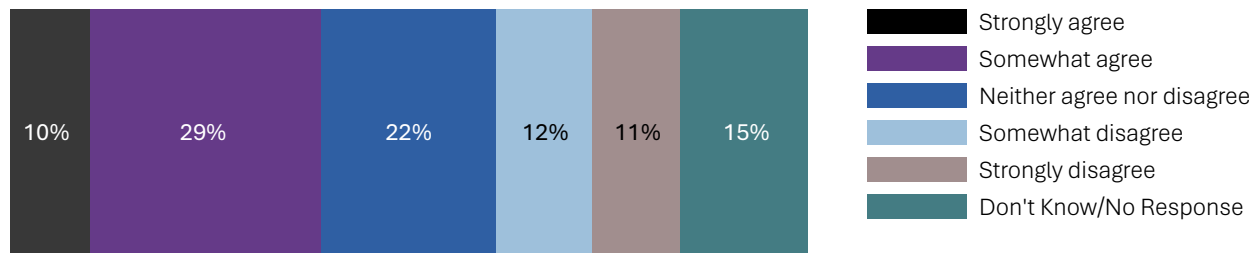
Chart 1: Overall, how concerned, if at all, would you say you are with UAPs observed over Canadian territory?



A minority (30%) of respondents are concerned with UAPs in Canada.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

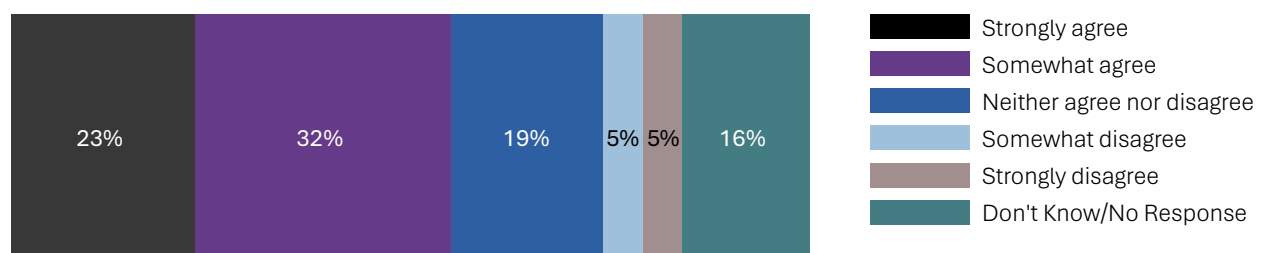
Chart 2: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statement: “UAPs represent an issue for flight safety in Canada”?



Nearly 40% of respondents consider that UAPs represent a flight safety issue.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

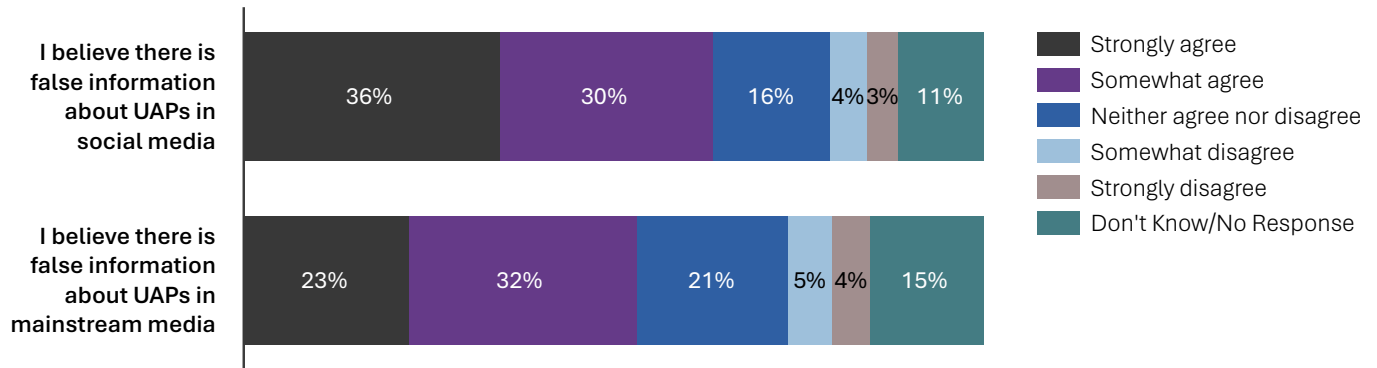
Chart 3: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statement: “The nature of some UAPs has not been confirmed”?



Over half (55%) of Canadian respondents agree that the nature of some UAPs has not been confirmed.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

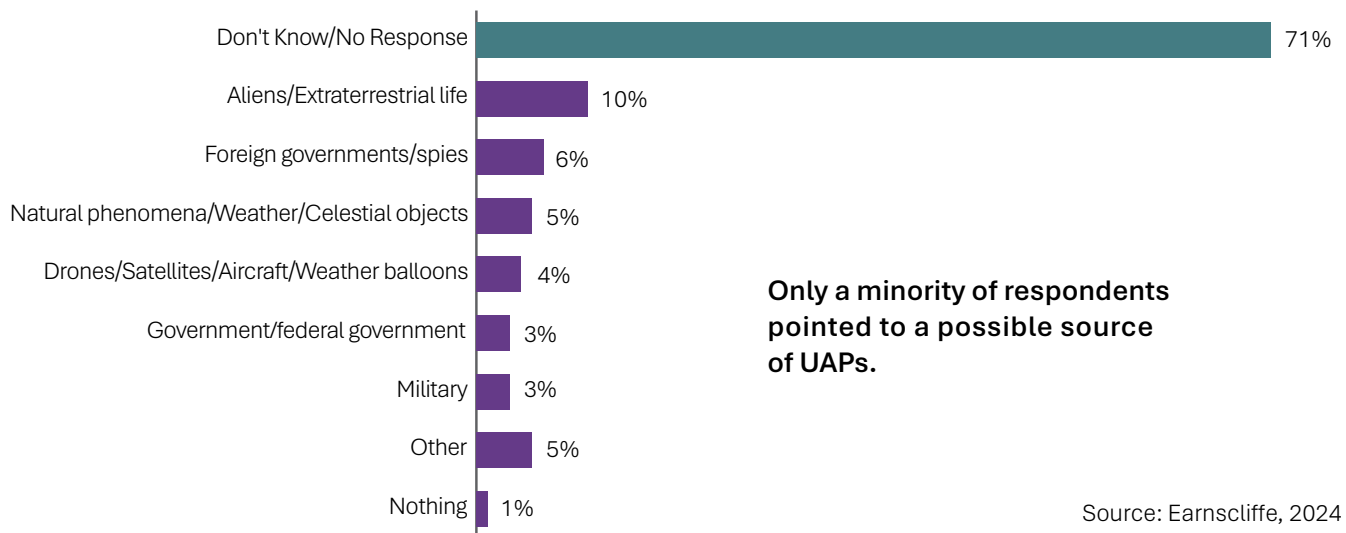
Chart 4: How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



The majority of respondents believe that there is false information about UAPs in social media and mainstream media.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

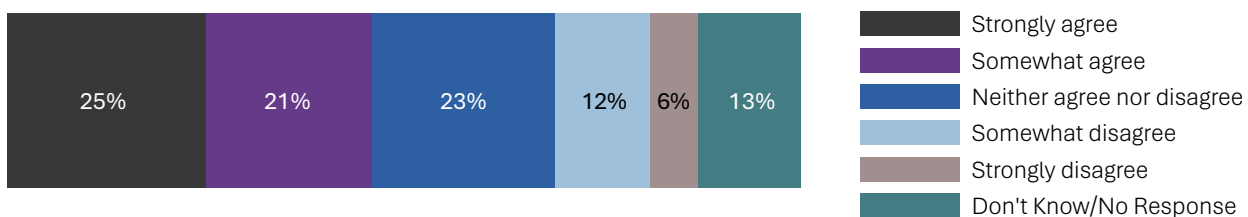
Chart 5: What do you think is behind, or the source, of UAPs?



Only a minority of respondents pointed to a possible source of UAPs.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

Chart 6: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statement: “At present, there is no proof of the existence of extraterrestrial civilizations”?

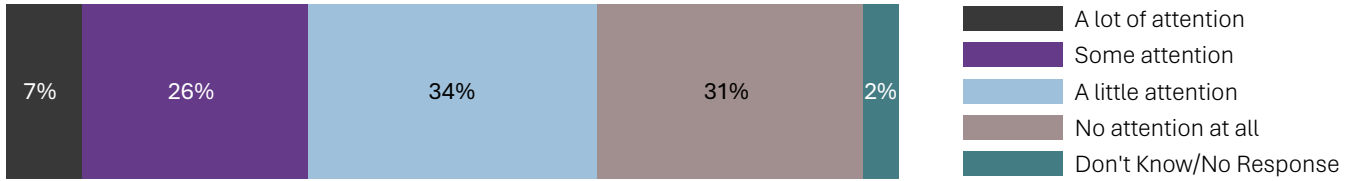


Only half of respondents agree that there is no proof of the existence of extraterrestrial civilizations.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

2. Interest in UAPs

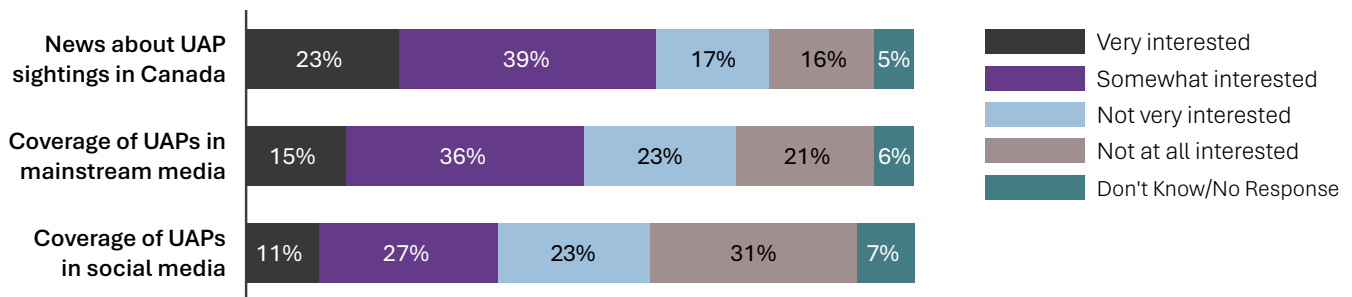
Chart 7: How much attention, if any, have you paid to stories about UAPs over the past two or three years?



Two-thirds of respondents have paid at least some attention to stories about UAPs.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

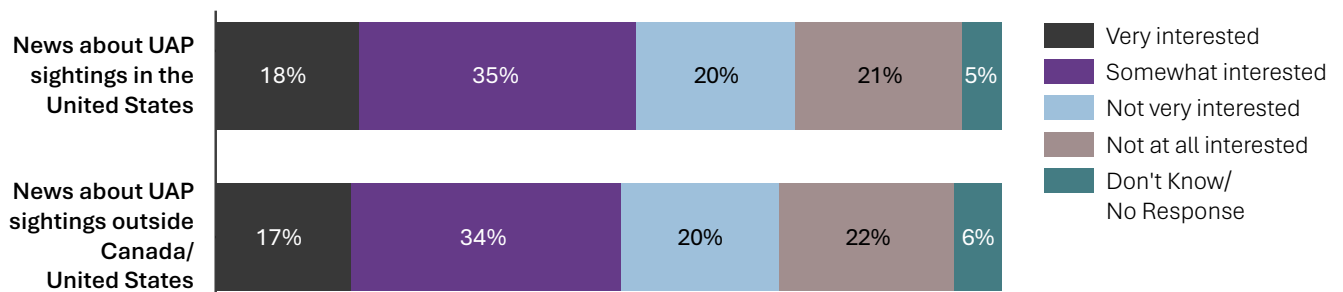
Chart 8: In general, how interested are you, if at all, in each of the following?



The majority of respondents are interested in news about UAP sightings in Canada and coverage of UAPs in mainstream media.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

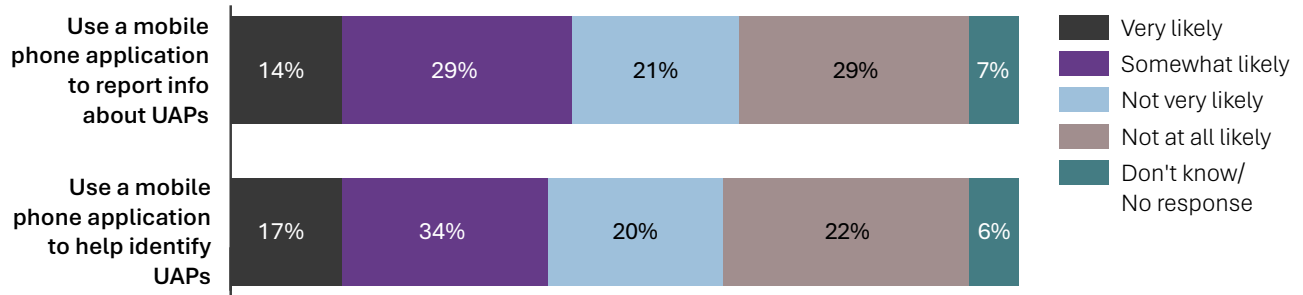
Chart 9: In general, how interested are you, if at all, in each of the following?



More than half of respondents are at least somewhat interested in news about UAPs outside Canada.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

Chart 10: How likely would you be to use a mobile phone application to report information about or help identify UAPs?

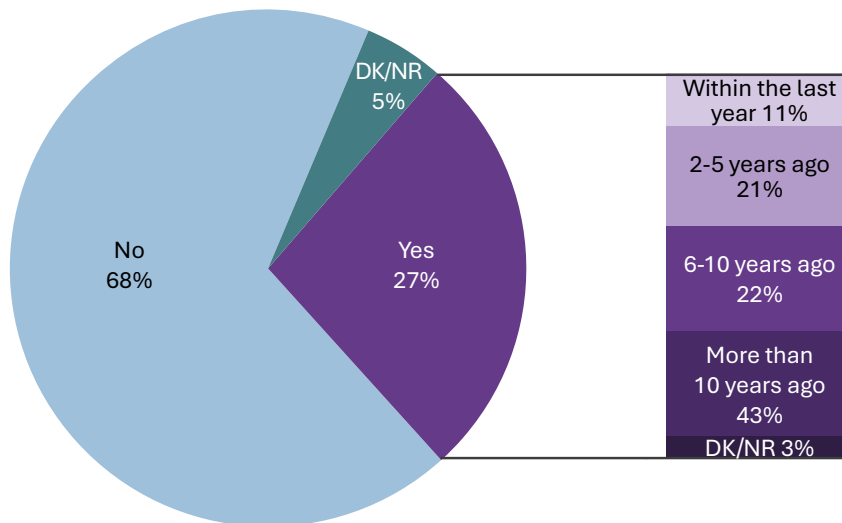


40% of respondents are likely to use a mobile phone application to document UAPs.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

3. UAP sightings and reporting

Chart 11: Over the course of your life, have you ever seen an object or phenomenon in the sky that you could not identify? If so, when did this occur?

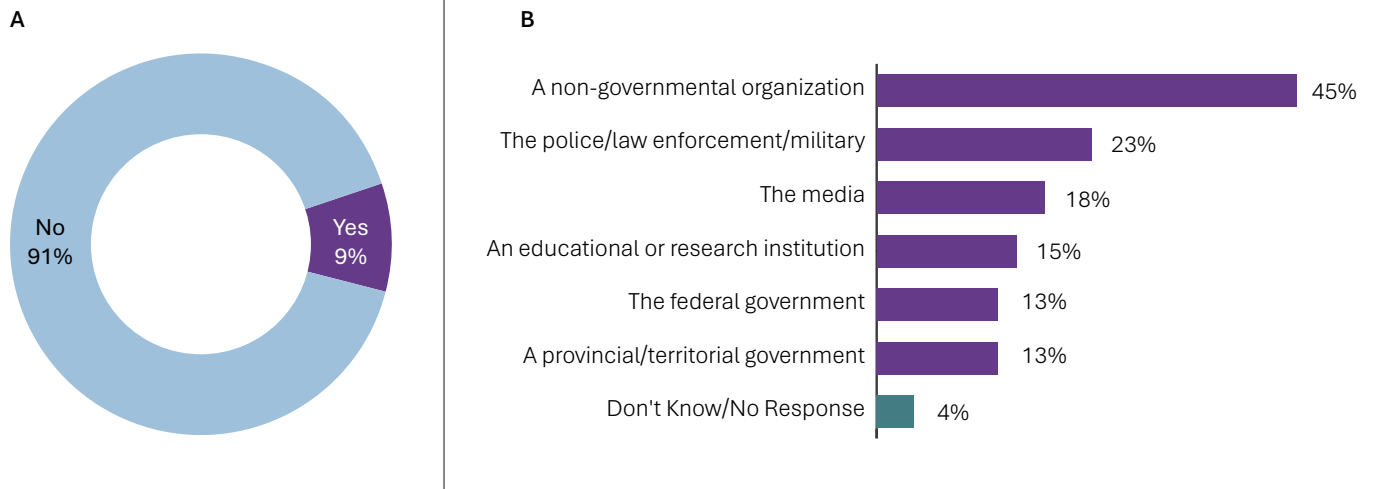


Over 1 in 4 respondents (27%) claim to have had a personal experience with a UAP over the course of their life.

DK/NR = Don't know/No response

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

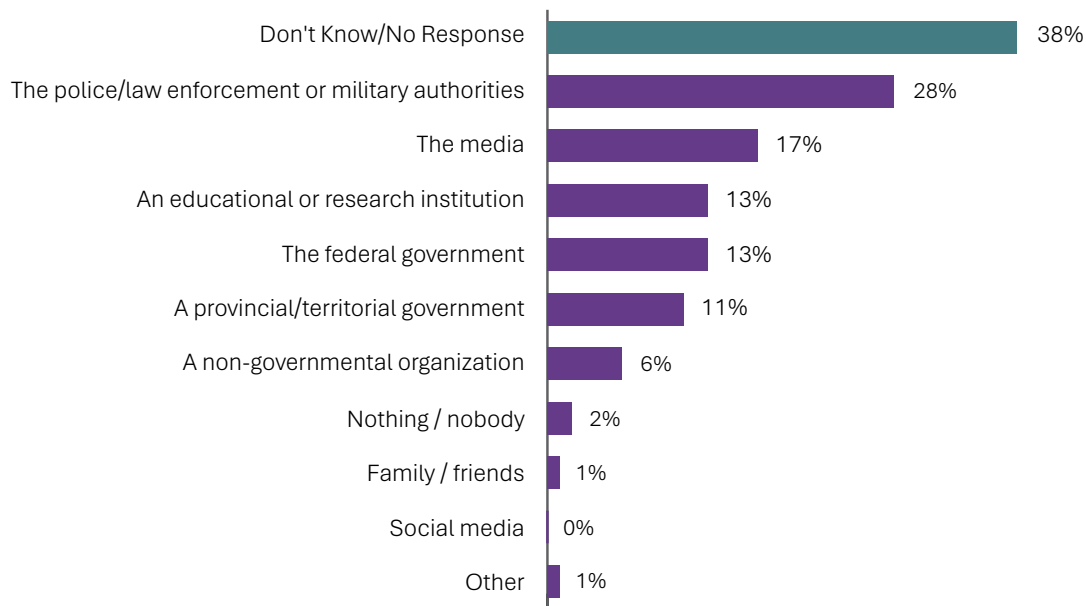
Chart 12: A) Did you report or attempt to report your observations? B) To whom did you formally report your observations?



Among the respondents who have seen a UAP, only 1 in 10 reported or tried to report their experience.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

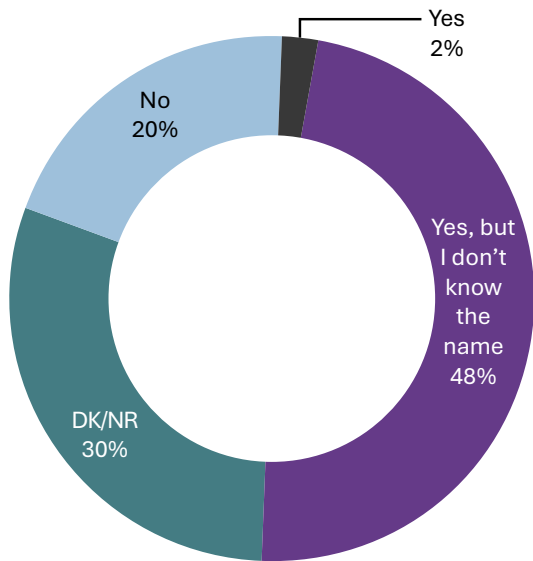
Chart 13: Who would you contact today if you wanted to report a UAP sighting?



Nearly 40% of respondents would not know who to contact to report a UAP sighting.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

Chart 14: To the best of your knowledge, are there any organizations or groups specifically investigating UAPs (or UFOs) in Canada?

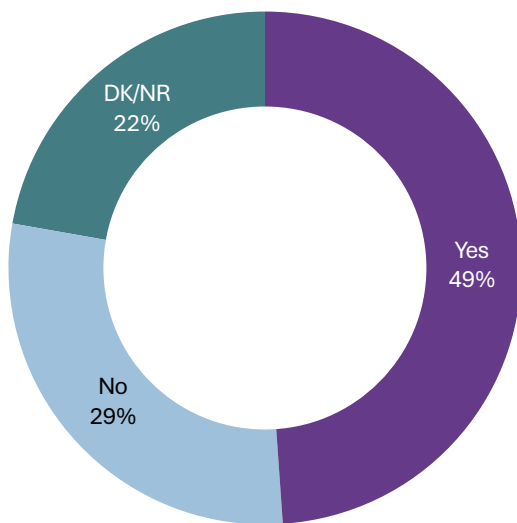


Half (50%) of respondents say there is an organization or group specifically investigating UAPs in Canada, but most can't name that organization.

DK/NR = Don't know/No response
Source: Earncliffe, 2024

4. Role of the federal government

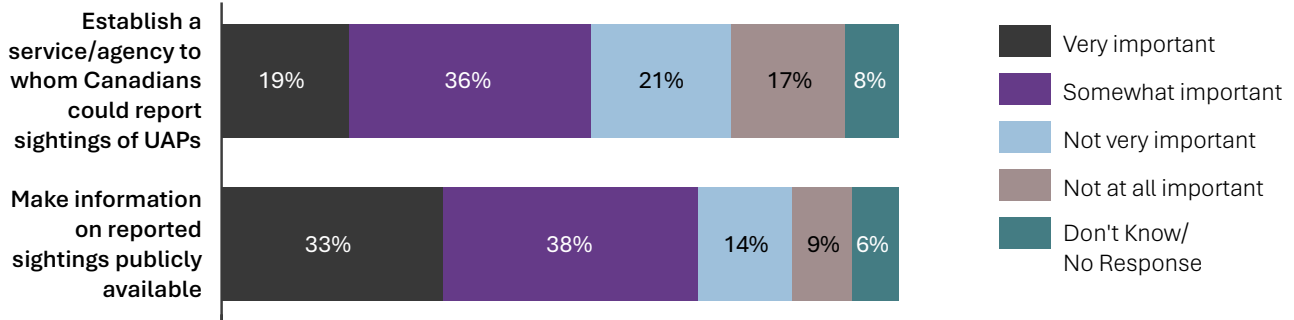
Chart 15: Do you think reports of UAP (UFO) sightings are something that the Government of Canada needs to do anything about?



Half of respondents feel that the Government of Canada should do something about UAP sightings.

DK/NR = Don't know/No response
Source: Earncliffe, 2024

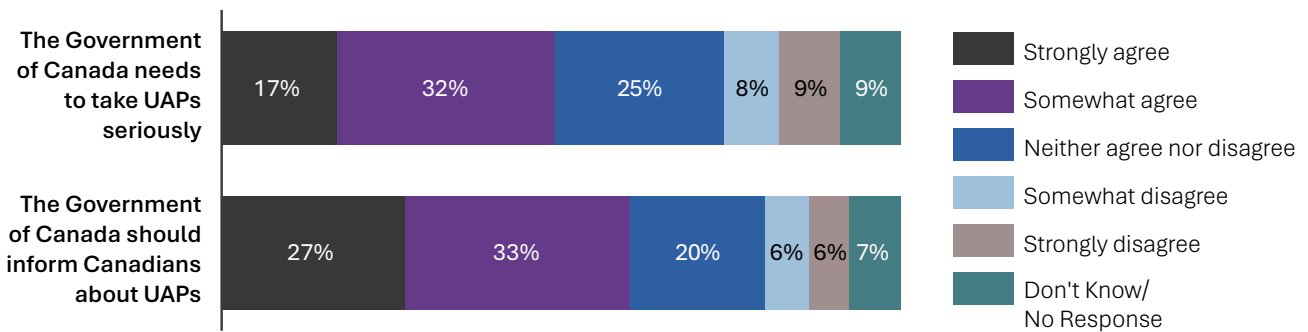
Chart 16: How important is it, if at all, that the Government of Canada do each of the following?



The majority (55%) of respondents feel it is important that a service/agency be established to whom Canadians could report UAP sightings, and 71% would like the Government to make information about sightings publicly available.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

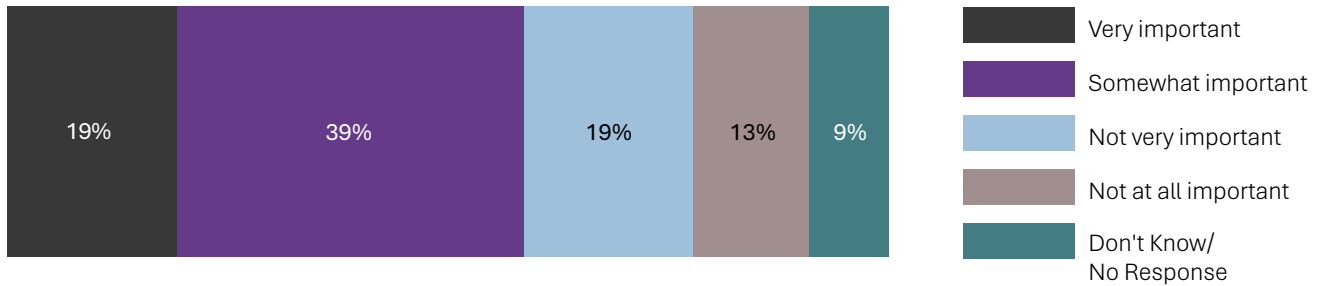
Chart 17: How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



About half (49%) of respondents agree that the Government of Canada needs to take UAPs seriously and 60% agree that the Government should keep Canadians informed.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

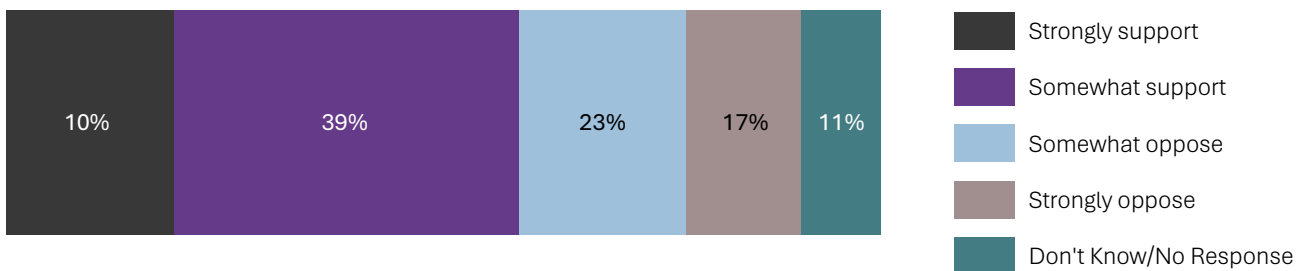
Chart 18: How important is it, if at all, that the Government of Canada support citizen science initiatives on UAPs?



Nearly 60% of respondents say that it is important for the Government of Canada to support citizen science initiatives on UAPs.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024

Chart 19: How strongly would you support or oppose the Government of Canada dedicating public funds to transparently investigate sightings reported by Canadians?



About half of respondents (49%) would support the Government of Canada dedicating public funds to investigate UAP sightings.

Source: Earncliffe, 2024