

Extra-Terrestrials and other Stranger Things: Four-in-Five Canadians believe

Massive gender divide puts men, women at odds over ghosts and other oddities

August 24, 2016 – “The truth is out there,” as the saying made famous by *The X-Files* goes. But what “truths” do we most “want to believe”?

A new public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute finds more than three-quarters of Canadians believe that certain things that happen on Earth cannot be explained by science – “[Stranger Things](#),” to borrow the title of this summer’s breakout Netflix hit about conspiracies and the supernatural.

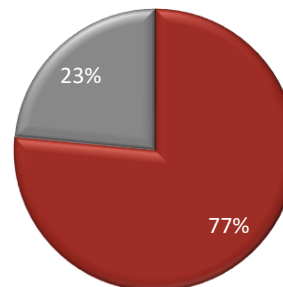
Four-in-five Canadians believe intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe, and almost half of all Canadians believe aliens have already visited this planet. Likewise, nearly half of Canadians – including majority of women – believe some people have psychic powers that enable them to predict future events.

However, while most are willing to consider the possibility of extra-terrestrial life, they’re less sold on other paranormal phenomena like ghosts and cryptids.

Key Findings:

- The vast majority of Canadians (79%) say it is either definitely (29%) or probably (50%) true that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe
- Belief in aliens doesn’t necessarily equate to belief in other unexplained beings, however. Canadians are particularly skeptical about the existence of “cryptids” – animals that have not been proven to exist, like the Sasquatch or the Oogoo. Three-quarters (74%) say these animals either probably or definitely don’t exist.
- When it comes to paranormal phenomena such as ghosts, communication with the dead, and psychic powers, women are about twice as likely as men to believe such things are possible

"There are things that happen on Earth that can't be explained by science"



■ Definitely/Probably true ■ Definitely/Probably not true

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from February 22 – 25, 2016, among a representative randomized sample of 1,515 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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Canadians say intelligent life exists elsewhere

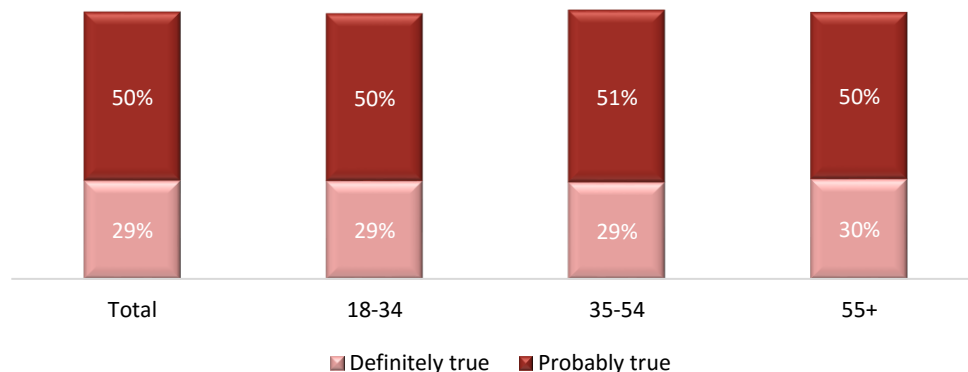
Are we alone in the universe? It's a big question that many of humanity's great minds have tried – and continue to endeavor – to solve.

And while most Canadians are likely not as well-versed on the topic as [Stephen Hawking](#) or [Neil Degrasse Tyson](#), that doesn't stop Canadians from weighing in based on stories, experiences and their own research. In fact, three-in-ten (29%) take a bold stance, saying it's "definitely true" that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe. Another 50 per cent say this is "probably" the case.

Canadians aren't alone in the opinion that we aren't alone. [YouGov](#) polled individuals in the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom, finding a similar trend. A majority in all three countries said they "believe there is extraterrestrial intelligent life".

These views are generationally consistent. Regardless of age group, approximately eight-in-ten Canadians lean toward the possibility of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe:

Do you think each of the following statements is true or not true? There is intelligent life elsewhere in the universe:

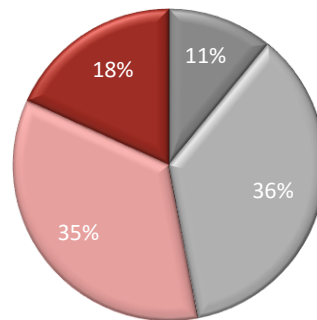


Debate on this issue has raged for ages, and a [paper published early in 2016](#) in the journal *Astrobiology* made waves in the sci-fi community. Co-author Adam Franks contests that intelligent beings and technologically advanced civilizations have "very likely" existed before humans evolved. But have they visited earth?

Canadians split on whether we've been visited by E.T.'s

Many Canadians lean strongly toward the possibility that intelligent life exists outside of the third rock from the sun. When asked whether those life-forms have visited Earth, however, they're more circumspect. While one-in-ten still say they believe this is definitely true, the majority swings toward disbelief:

Extraterrestrial beings have already visited the earth:

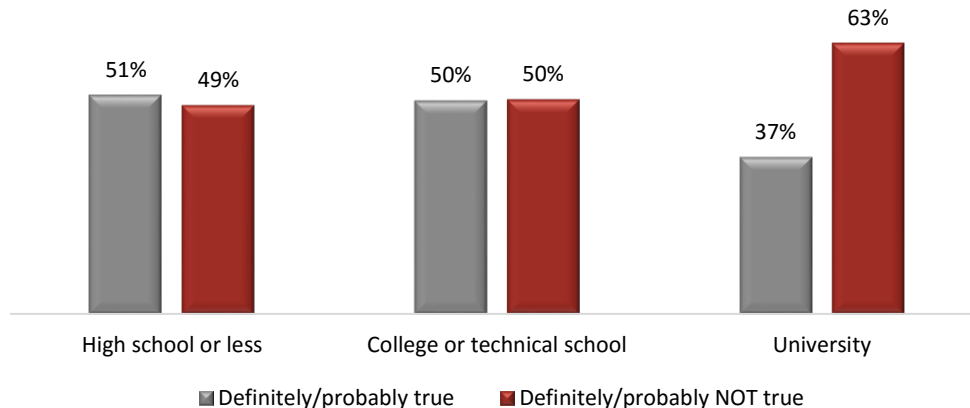


■ Definitely true ■ Probably true ■ Probably not true ■ Definitely not true

There is no shortage of folklore surrounding this issue. Perhaps the most famous alien conspiracy theory began after the reported [recovery of a flying saucer](#) in Roswell, New Mexico in 1947. And the mere existence of [Area 51](#) in Nevada has provided fodder for the paranormally inclined for decades. Documents released in 2013 by the CIA [officially acknowledged](#) the existence of the base, though they offered little in the way of alien visitation evidence for believers. Many Canadians would suggest this is by design. Asked whether government agencies in the United States have acted to cover up the existence and presence of ET's, just over four-in-ten (43%) Canadians agree, while a majority (57%) say this is not the case.

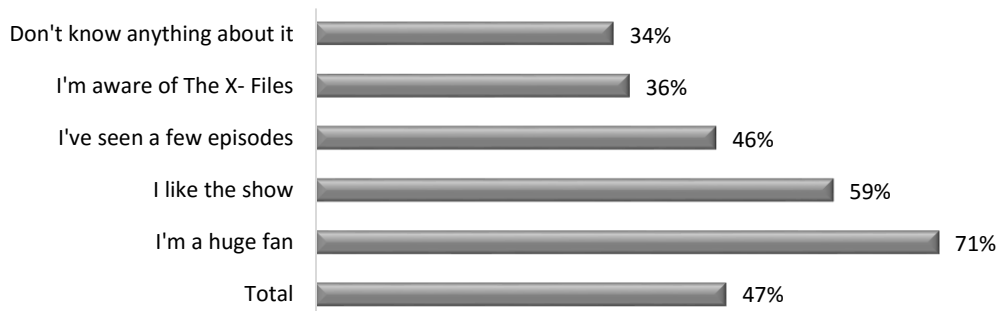
Men and women in Canada are equally as likely to take each side of the debate over extraterrestrial visitation ([see comprehensive tables](#)), though there is a wide difference based on education level. University educated Canadians are much more skeptical, with just 7 per cent saying earth has definitely been visited by ET's, and another one-in-three (30%) say probably:

Extraterrestrial beings have already visited the earth:



As it turns out, another large indicator of a person’s propensity to believe earth has been visited is found when looking at their relationship with the iconic television show *The X-Files*. The correlation makes sense – believers may seek out a show that explores this issue, and non-believing viewers may be more inclined to ponder the question after watching. As seen in the following graph, seven-in-ten (71%) hardcore fans report that the belief that aliens have visited earth, roughly double the number among people who are unfamiliar with the show.

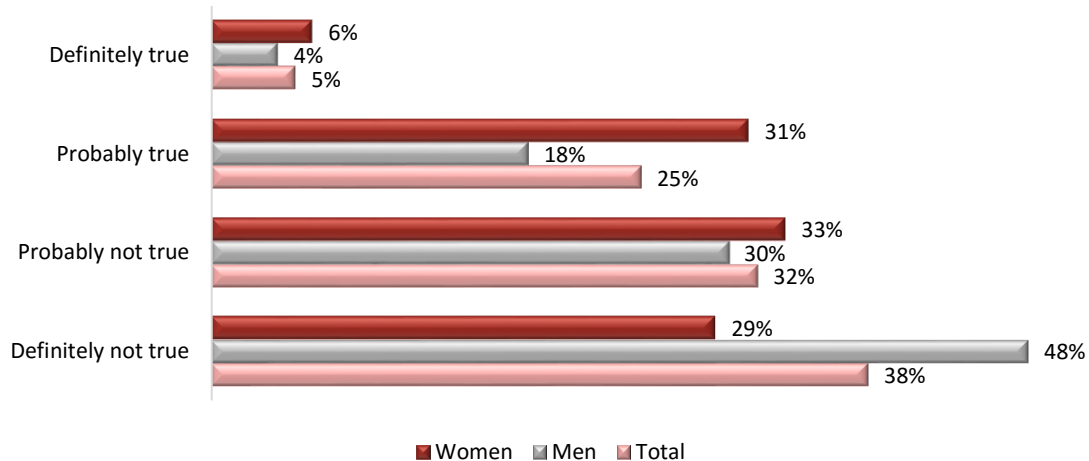
Extraterrestrial beings have already visited the Earth Percentage of Canadians who agree shown by X-Files Fandom



What about ghosts?

Belief in the unknown doesn’t stop with ponderings of aliens. While Canadians are confident of the presence of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe, and split over ET visitation on earth, they are less willing commit to the existence of ghosts. Just three-in-ten (30%) say people who die with unfinished business can remain on Earth as spirits. Women are much more open to this idea – just 29 per cent say this is definitely not true, compared to half of men (48%).

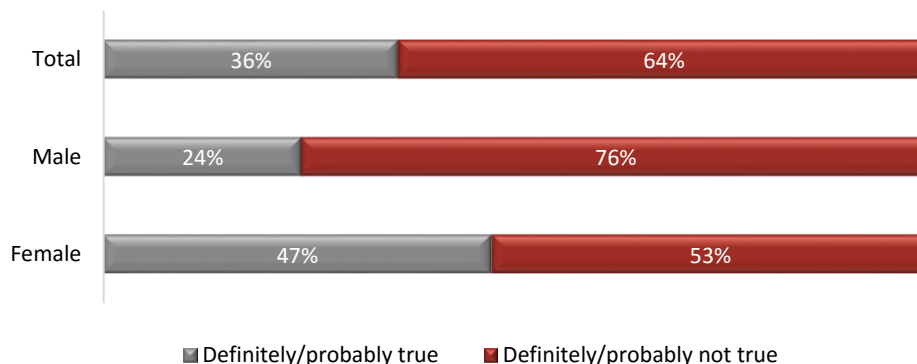
People who die with unfinished business sometimes become ghosts:



Notably, while they might not believe that ghosts are hanging around waiting to tie up some loose ends, Canadians are slightly more likely to say that the lines of communication with the dead may remain open. Nearly one-in-three (30%) say it's either "definitely" or "probably" possible to communicate with the dead, while one-third (33%) rule it out entirely.

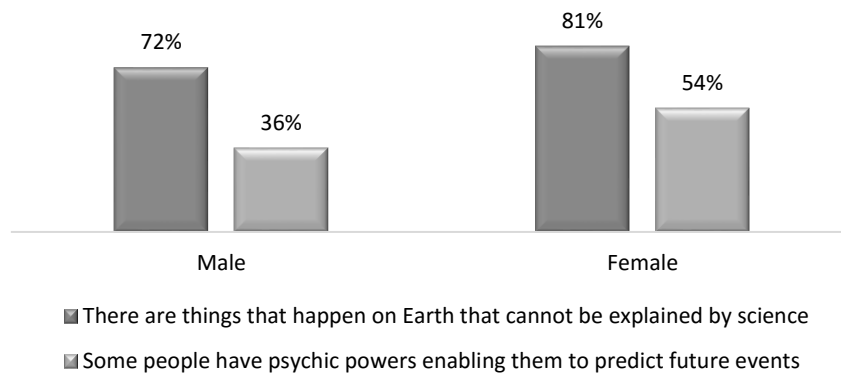
Again, women are significantly more open to the possibility of the supernatural. In this case, they are twice as likely to say it is either definitely or probably true that humans are able to communicate with those passed on.

It is possible to communicate with the dead



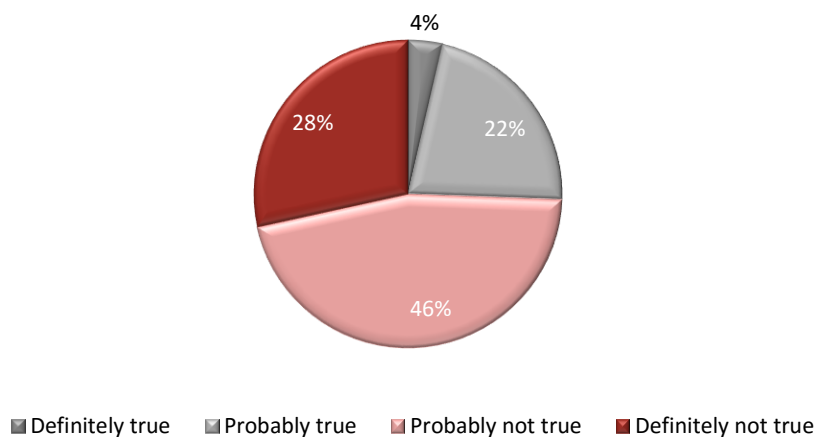
This passion for the paranormal among women extends further: they are also more likely than men to say that some people may possess psychic powers, allowing them to predict future events, and are also more likely to say that there are simply events that happen on earth that cannot be explained by science:

Percentage of Canadians who say the following statements are definitely or probably true



If there's a place you're unlikely to find many Canadians, it's out [squatching](#) in the Pacific Northwest with other Bigfoot hunters or scouring Okanagan Lake searching for Ogopogo. The belief in "cryptids" – animals that have not been proven to exist, like the aforementioned Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster – is shunned by most Canadians. Nearly half (46%) say these animals probably don't exist, while another three-in-ten (28%) say they definitely don't.

Certain "cryptids" - animals that have not been proven to exist, like Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster - are real:



*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and*

impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

Summary tables follow. For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

Do you think each of the following statement is true or not true?						
[Extraterrestrial beings have already visited the Earth]						
	Total (1515)	Level of X-Files Fandom				
		I'm a huge fan (154)	I like the show (327)	I've seen a few episodes (406)	I'm aware of The X- Files (435)	Don't know anything about it (194)
Definitely true	11%	25%	16%	9%	7%	4%
Probably true	36%	46%	44%	37%	29%	30%
Probably not true	35%	22%	30%	36%	41%	36%
Definitely not true	18%	7%	11%	18%	23%	30%