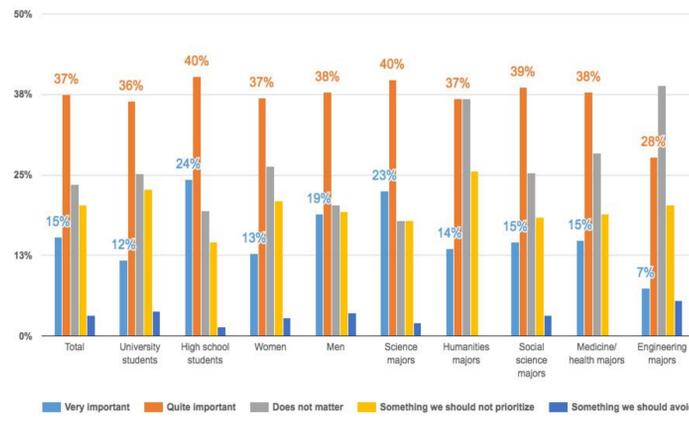


Erik Persson^{1,2}, Klara Anna Capova^{*3,4}, Yuan Li⁵

¹ Center of Theological Inquiry, Princeton, USA; ²The Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies, Lund University, Sweden; ³Department of Anthropology, Durham University, UK, k.a.capova@durham.ac.uk; ⁴The Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies, Lund University, Sweden; ⁵Department of Biology, Lund University, Sweden

(b) Is the search for extraterrestrial life important?



AIMS OF THE STUDY

1. Present an indication of the attitudes towards the scientific search for extraterrestrial life among high school and university students;
2. Bring insights into how students perceive the discipline, its research questions, importance, and subject area in general;
3. Understand how scientific enquiries shape public opinion and attitudes towards a given branch of knowledge;
4. Assess the level of interest in the discipline.

RESEARCH METHODS

Questionnaire was distributed to high schools (Europaskolan, Filbornaskolan) and universities (Lund, Linköping, Malmö, The Royal Institute of Technology, KTH, Stockholm) in Sweden.

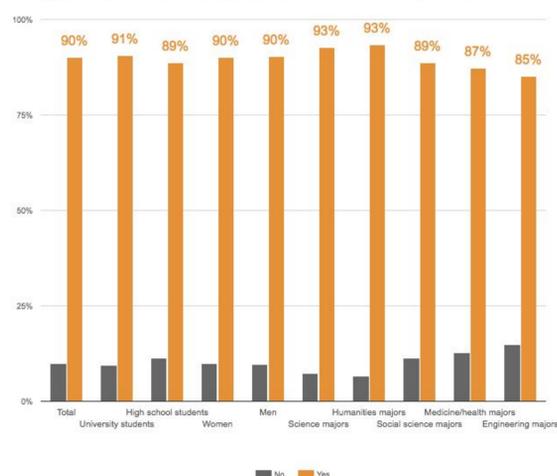
SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Total number of participants: 512. Gender distribution: 284 female and 222 male. Major area of study: 154 science majors, 125 humanities majors, 158 social science majors, 74 medicine/health majors, 55 engineering majors.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

- A better understanding of students' attitudes to astrobiology has **repercussions for astrobiology as well as other disciplines** (e.g. funding allocations, recruitment of future students).
- There is a **shortage of studies targeting students' attitudes towards astrobiology** (Hansson & Redfors, 2013). Most studies explore public attitudes to space research in general but not much work has been done regarding students' attitudes towards astrobiology.
- Astrobiology approaches some of the oldest and most **intriguing questions to the human mind** and hence the public understanding of, and social engagement with, astrobiology, are of high importance.

(a) Is there life outside our own planet?



CONCLUSIONS (a) 90% believe there is life outside our planet; **(b)** most students think that to search for life is quite important; **(c)** very few students think that search for extraterrestrial life is something we should avoid; **(d)** interest is the most common motive for assigning a high priority to search for life;

(e) the most common motive for assigning a low priority to search for life is the opinion that such knowledge would not be useful or that the money would be better spent elsewhere; **(f)** most students do not think they are very well informed regarding the scientific search for extraterrestrial life.

(f) How informed are you regarding the scientific search for extraterrestrial life?

