STUDENTS ATTITUDES TO ASTROBIOLOGY. ATTITUDES TOWARDS SCIENTIFIC SEARCH FOR EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL LIFE AMONG SWEDISH HIGH SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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\textbf{Introduction:} The paper presents results of a recent study looking into the attitudes towards the scientific search for extra-terrestrial life among high school and university students in Sweden. The analysis has revealed that (a) the great majority of students believe that extra-terrestrial life exists; (b) most students regard searching for extra-terrestrial life to be fairly important; (c) very few students think that searching for extra-terrestrial life is something we should actively avoid; (d) the most common motive for assigning a high priority to search for extra-terrestrial life, is that it is interesting; and the most common motive for assigning a low priority is the opinion that such knowledge would not be practically useful or that the money would be better spent elsewhere; (e) most students do not think they are very well informed regarding the search for extra-terrestrial life. At the same time, however, a higher percentage of the students who judge themselves to be well informed also believe that extra-terrestrial life exists.

We have also found some differences between sub-groups (men/women, high school students/university students and different fields of study), but the differences are with few exceptions small in comparison to the overall trends, and typically matters of degree rather than direction.