The 2019 Canadian UFO Survey

Overview

Since 1989, Ufology Research (formerly Ufology Research of Manitoba) has solicited UFO case data from known and active investigators and researchers in Canada. The goal has been to provide data for use by researchers trying to understand this controversial phenomenon. Similar efforts exist in several other countries such as Sweden, where UFO report data is analysed by the Archives for UFO Research, and in Italy by Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici.

2019 marked the 31st year of collecting and analysing Canadian UFO report data by Ufology Research. With some gaps in data, tables of most Canadian UFO reports included in the annual surveys from 1989 to the present are available online at: http://survey.canadianuforeport.com

The 2019 Canadian UFO Survey: Summary of Results

- There were 849 UFO sightings reported in Canada in 2019.

- The number of UFO sightings reported in 2019 is the lowest on record since 2009, when 836 cases were filed. In fact, the trend had been that the number of UFO reports each year was well over 1,000. However, the 2019 number of cases is about a 10 percent fewer from last year, although the number may well recover in 2020 as report numbers vary considerably from year to year.

- In 2019, Quebec led all Canadian provinces with 35 per cent of all Canadian UFO reports, followed by Ontario (20 per cent) and BC (17 per cent).

- In 2019, about three per cent of all UFO reports were classified as unexplained.

- The typical UFO sighting lasted approximately 14 minutes in 2019.

The study found that about 40 per cent of all UFO sightings were of simple lights in the sky. Witnesses also reported point sources of light, spheres, and boomerangs.

Results of this study show that many people continue to report unusual objects in the sky, and some of these objects do not have obvious explanations. Many witnesses are pilots, police and other individuals with reasonably good observing capabilities and good judgement.

Numbers of reported UFO sightings remain high. Several theories for this can be suggested: more UFOs are present and physically observable by witnesses; more secret or classified military exercises and overflights are occurring over populated areas; more people are unaware of the nature of conventional or natural objects in the sky; more people are taking the time to observe their surroundings; more people are able to report their sightings with easier access to the Internet and portable technology; or even that the downturn in the economy is leading to an increased desire by some people to look skyward for assistance.

Although the largest percentage of reported UFOs is simply lights in the night sky, a small number are objects with definite shapes observed within the witnesses' frame of reference.

Popular opinion to the contrary, there is no incontrovertible evidence that some UFO cases involve extraterrestrial contact. The continued reporting of UFOs by the public and the yearly increase in numbers of UFO reports suggests a need for further examination of the phenomenon by social, medical and/or physical scientists.

For further information, contact:
Ufology Research via e-mail: canadianuforeport@hotmail.com
Twitter: @ufologyresearch

UFO Reports in Canada

The following table shows the number of reported UFOs per year since 1989, collected by Ufology Research.

Year	Number
1989	154
1990	254
1991	169
1992	223
1993	482
1994	189
1995	183
1996	258
1997	284
1998	195
1999	259
2000	263
2001	375
2002	483
2003	673
2004	882
2005	769
2006	738
2007	836
2008	1004
2009	831
2010	968
2011	986
2012	1982
2013	1180
2014	1021
2015	1268
2016	1131
2017	1101
2018	937
2019	849

The number of UFO reports per year has varied, although there has been a general trend towards a gradual increase in yearly UFO report numbers over the past 30 years, with spikes in some years such as 1993, 2008 and 2012, when there were almost 2,000 reports in one year. In fact, between 2012 and 2017, it appeared that the number of UFO reports had plateaued. The

15 per cent drop in 2018 is interesting, and the further decrease of about 10 per cent in 2019 is curious. One can only speculate as to the cause, and whether the number will rebound in 2020 or be lower as an effect of the pandemic.

Although there may be a perceived notion that UFOs are not being reported with as much frequency as in the past, this is not true. UFOs have not "gone away." This data clearly contradicts comments by those who would assert that UFOs are a 'passing fad' or that UFO sightings are decreasing. A total of 849 UFO reports in one country in a single year is still quite remarkable.

For this study, the working definition of a UFO is: "an object seen in the sky which its observer cannot identify."

Polls have shown that about ten per cent of the Canadian population believe they have seen UFOs. This means that about 3.7 million Canadians have seen UFOs. However, studies have also shown that only about ten per cent of all witnesses of UFOs report their experiences (although this percentage is thought to be much lower).

UFO witnesses range from farmhands to airline pilots and from teachers to police officers. Witnesses represent all age groups and racial origin. What is being observed? In most cases, only ordinary objects. However, this begs a question. If people are reporting things that can be explained, then the objects they observed were "really there." Were the objects we can't identify "really there" as well? If so, what were they?

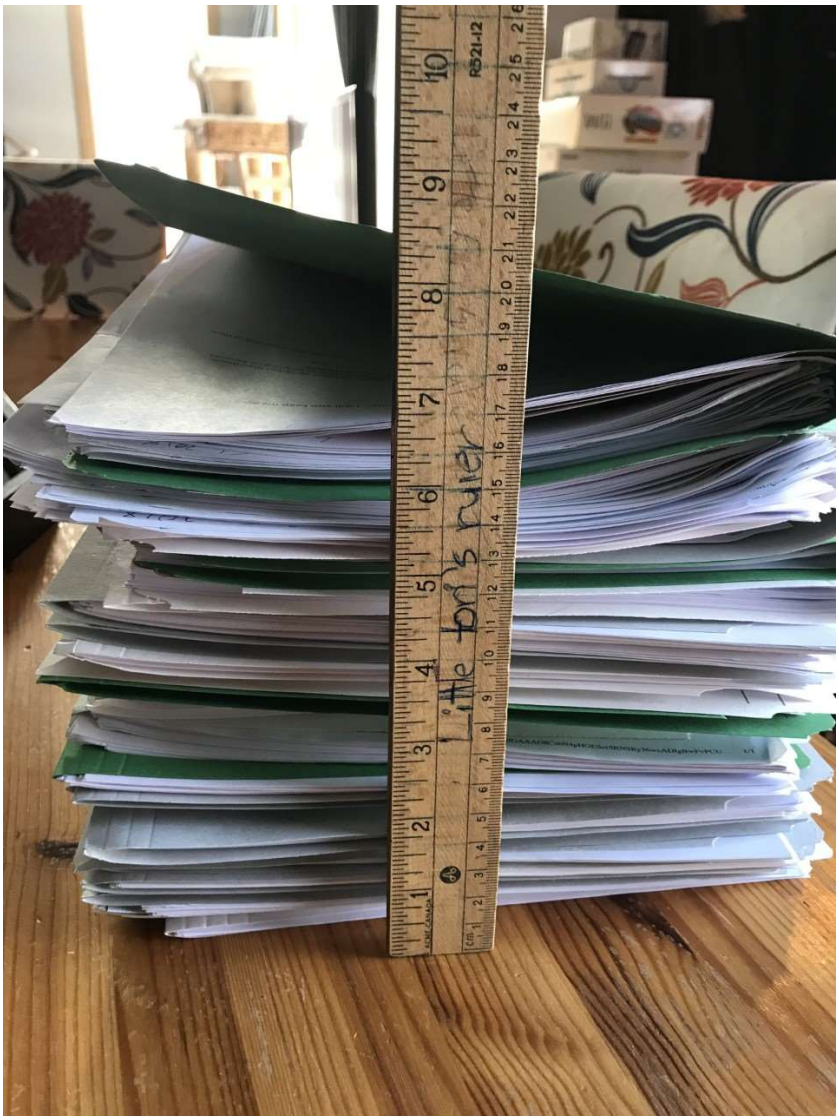
These are questions that only continued and rational research can answer, and only if researchers have the support and encouragement of both scientists and the public.

Method

Data for each UFO case was obtained by Ufology Research from participating researchers across Canada, through receipt of reports directly from witnesses, or through data mining of known websites devoted to UFO reports. This method has not changed significantly during the past 30 years.

The original intent of the Canadian UFO Survey was to understand exactly how many cases were being reported in a given year, and how they were distributed across the country. It was also deemed desirable to know other characteristics of the UFO reports, such as predominant colours, the durations of sightings, reported shapes, and which UFO types were most common.

The information available on each case was then coded by members of Ufology Research, entered into a database, and statistically analysed.



An example of the coding key is as follows:

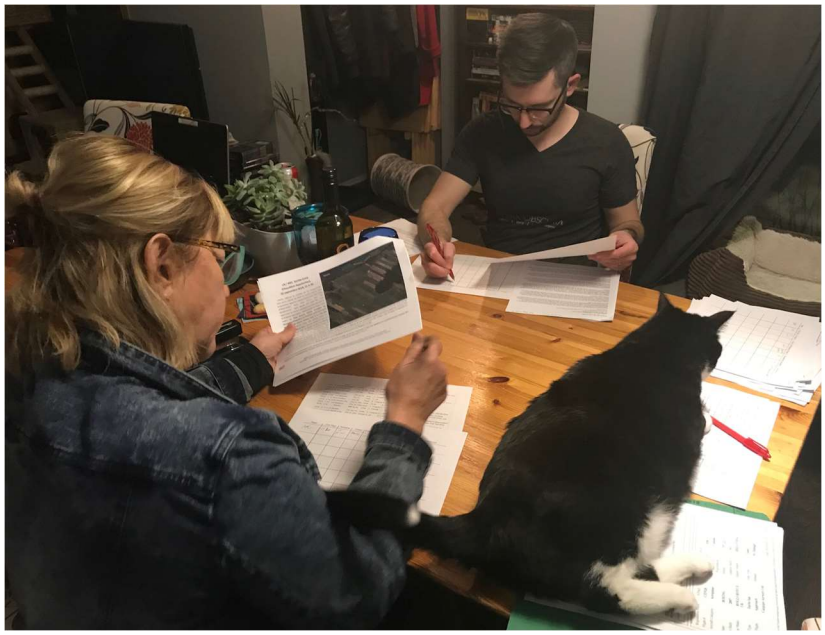
Example: 2019 01 09 1530 Vernon BC DD 900 silver 2 ps 6 5 UFOBC p 4 objs. seen

Field: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

Field 1 is a default YEAR for the report.
Field 2 is the MONTH of the incident.
Field 3 is the DATE of the sighting.
Field 4 is the local TIME, on the 24-hour clock.
Field 5 is the geographical LOCATION of the incident.
Field 6 is the PROVINCE where the sighting occurred.
Field 7 is the TYPE of report, using the Modified Hynek Classification System.
Field 8 is the DURATION of the sighting, in seconds (a value of 600 thus represents 10 minutes).

Field 9 is the primary COLOUR of the object(s) seen
Field 10 is the number of WITNESSES
Field 11 is the SHAPE of the object(s) seen
Field 12 is the STRANGENESS of the report.
Field 13 is the RELIABILITY of the report.
Field 14 is the SOURCE of the report.
Field 15 is the EVALUATION of the case.
Field 16 includes any COMMENTS noted about the case.

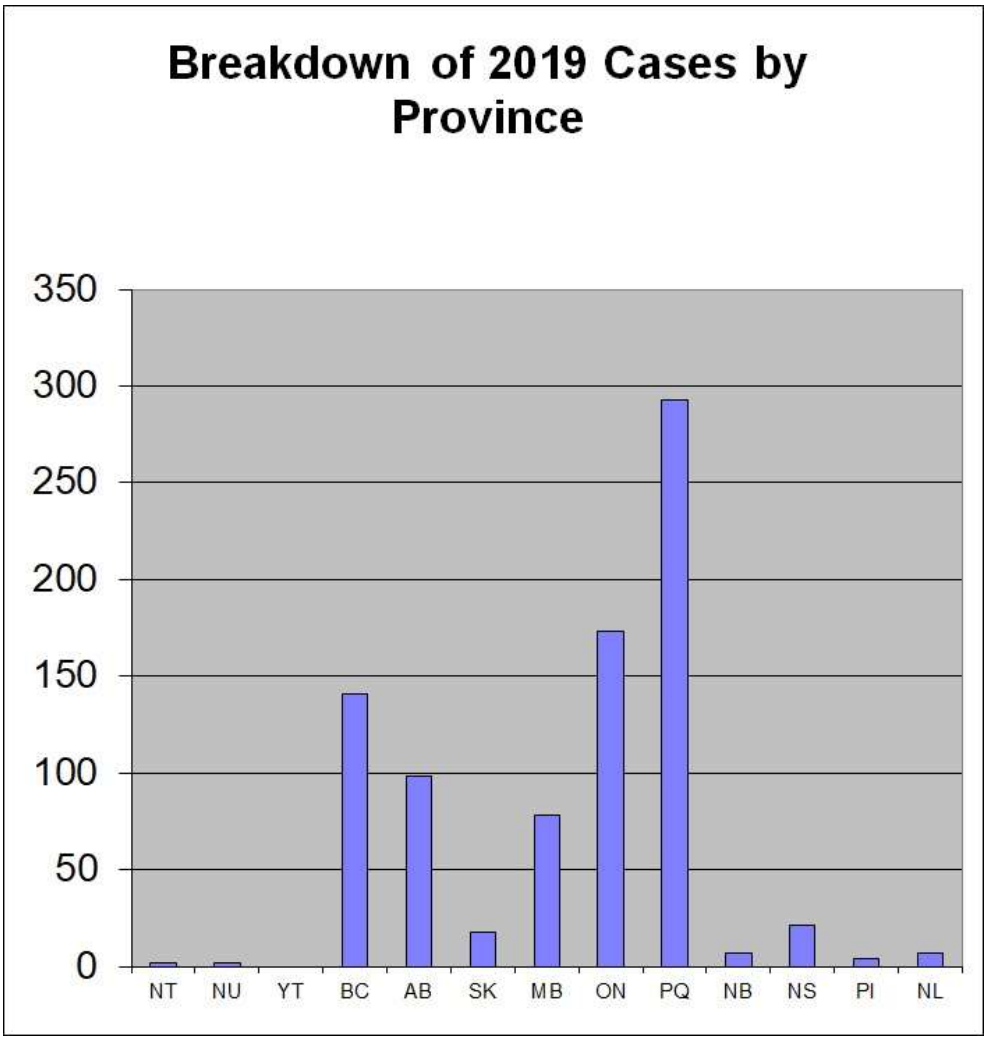
A detailed set of guidelines for coding the case information was provided to those working on the data.



Distribution of UFO Reports Across Canada

In 2019, Quebec had about 35 per cent of all UFO sightings reported in Canada down from previous years. Similarly, the percentage of UFO reports in Ontario dropped to 20 per cent in 2019 from 24 per cent in 2018. BC on the other hand, saw a slight gain in UFO report numbers. Other provincial report numbers varied significantly in 2019. Manitoba cases increased from about five percent to almost 10 per cent. The Maritime provinces had only 39 UFO reports in 2019, much less than the 75 cases in 2018.

In addition, geographical names of UFO sighting locations were examined for trends. Many cities were found to have multiple reports, as noted. (Large metropolitan areas include their suburbs.)

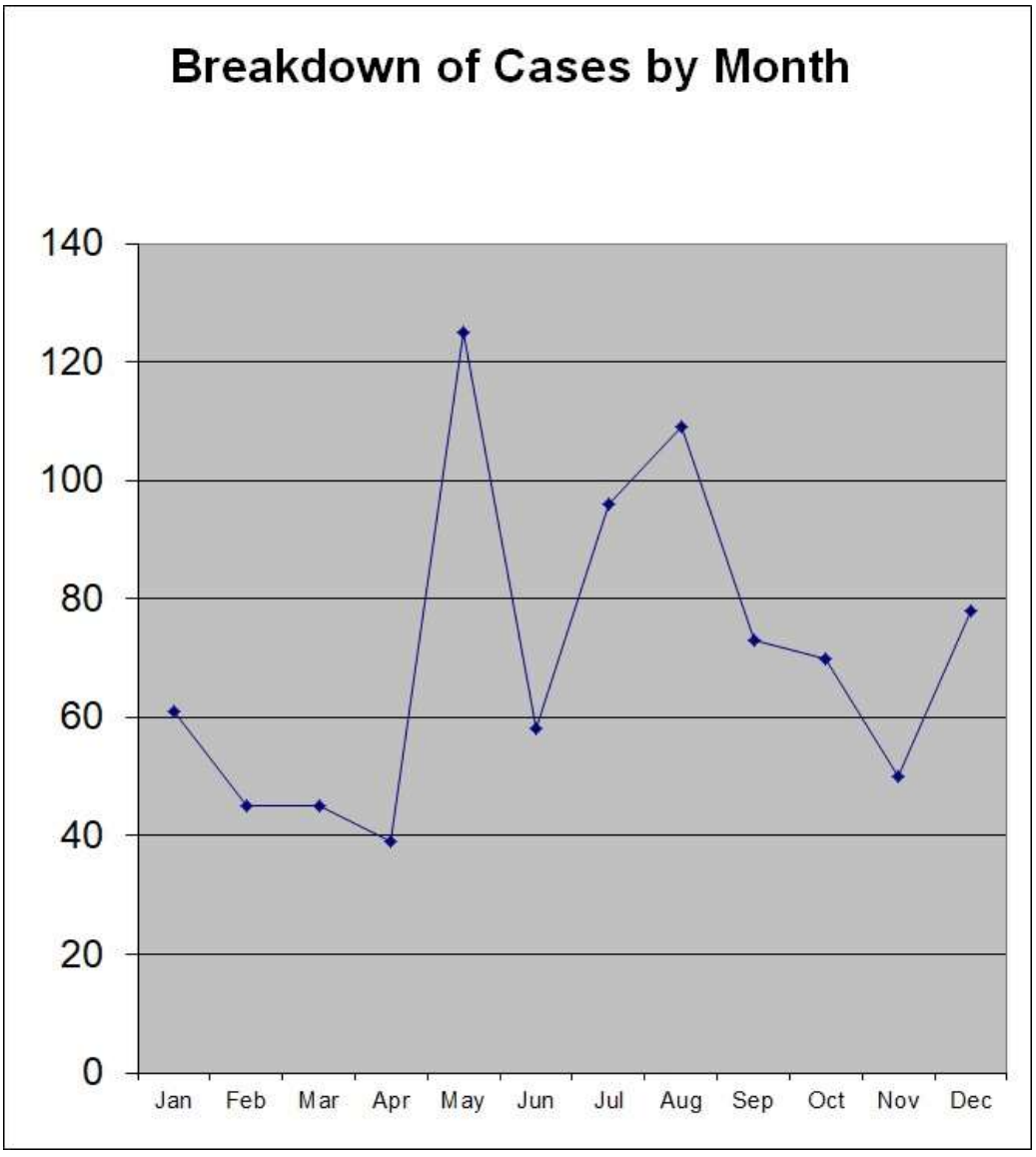


Number of UFO Reports in Metropolitan Areas in 2019

Montreal	46
Vancouver	39
Winnipeg	31
Toronto	29
Edmonton	21
Calgary	20
London	18
Quebec City	15
Hamilton	11
Ottawa	7

Monthly Trends in UFO Reports

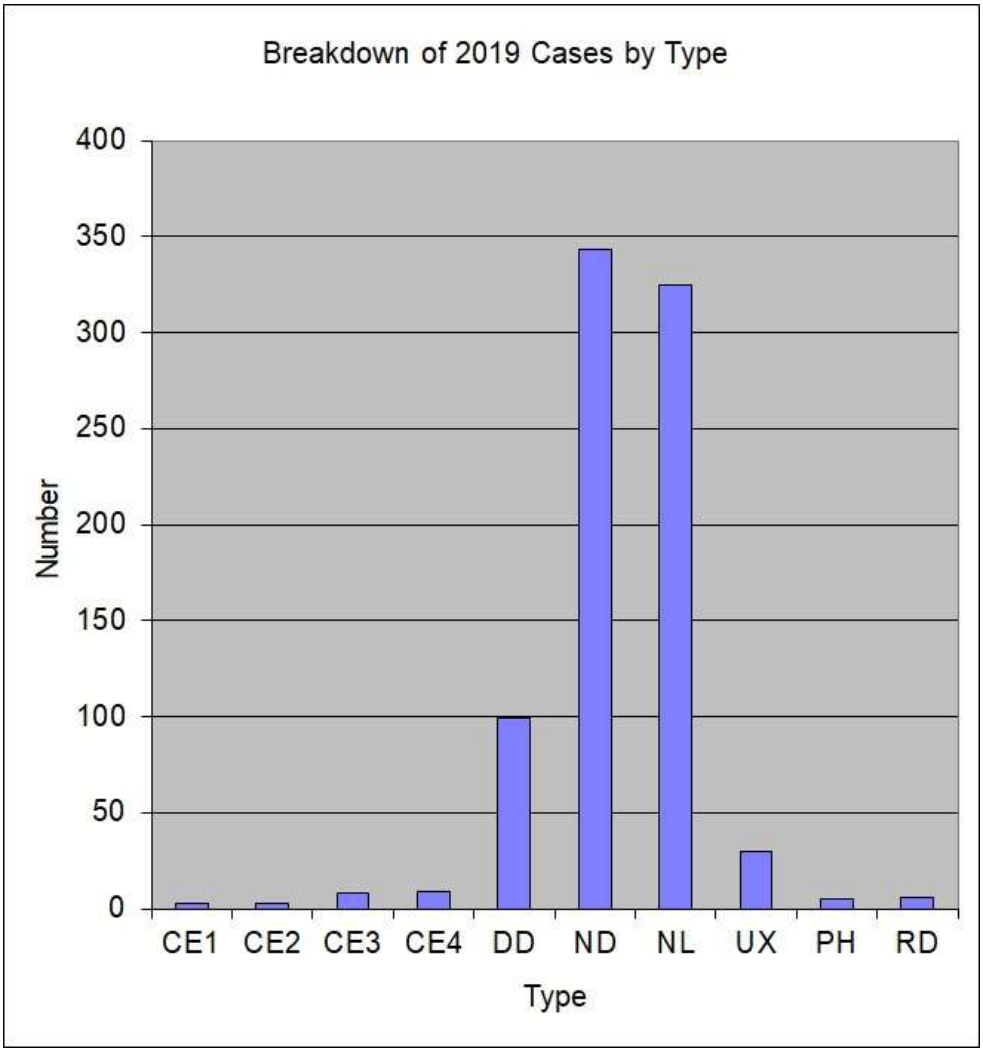
Monthly breakdowns of reports during each year tend to show slightly different patterns. UFO reports are generally thought to peak in summer and are at minimum in winter, presumably due to the more pleasant observing conditions during the summer months, when more witnesses are outside. In Canada in 2019, when summer numbers are usually high, June UFO reports were much lower than expected, but July and August numbers were high, but not as high as May, which saw an anomalous peak. In fact, June had fewer cases than January.



UFO Report Types

An analysis by report type shows a similar breakdown to that found in previous years. The percentage of cases of a particular type remains roughly constant from year to year, with some variations. Most cases were Nocturnal Lights and Nocturnal Discs, which comprised more than 80 per cent of cases.

Less than three per cent of all reported UFO cases in 2019 were Close Encounters, emphasizing the reality that very few UFO cases involve anything other than distant objects seen in the sky. This is an important statistic, because the current popular interest in abductions and sensational UFO encounters is based not on the vast majority of UFO cases but on the very tiny fraction of cases which fall into the category of close encounters. Speculation on what aliens may or may not be doing in our airspace seems almost completely unconnected to the question of what are actually being reported as UFOs.



For those unfamiliar with the classifications, a summary follows:

NL (Nocturnal Light) - light source in night sky
ND (Nocturnal Disc) - light source in night sky that appears to have a definite shape
DD (Daylight Disc) - unknown object observed during daytime hours
C1 (Close Encounter of the First Kind) - ND or DD occurring within 200 metres of a witness
C2 (Close Encounter of the Second Kind) - C1 where physical effects left or noted
C3 (Close Encounter of the Third Kind) - C1 where figures/entities are encountered
C4 (Close Encounter of the Fourth Kind) - an alleged "abduction" or "contact" experience

Note: The category of Nocturnal Disc was created in the 1980s by UFOROM originally for differentiation of cases within its own report files, and has been adopted by many other groups worldwide.

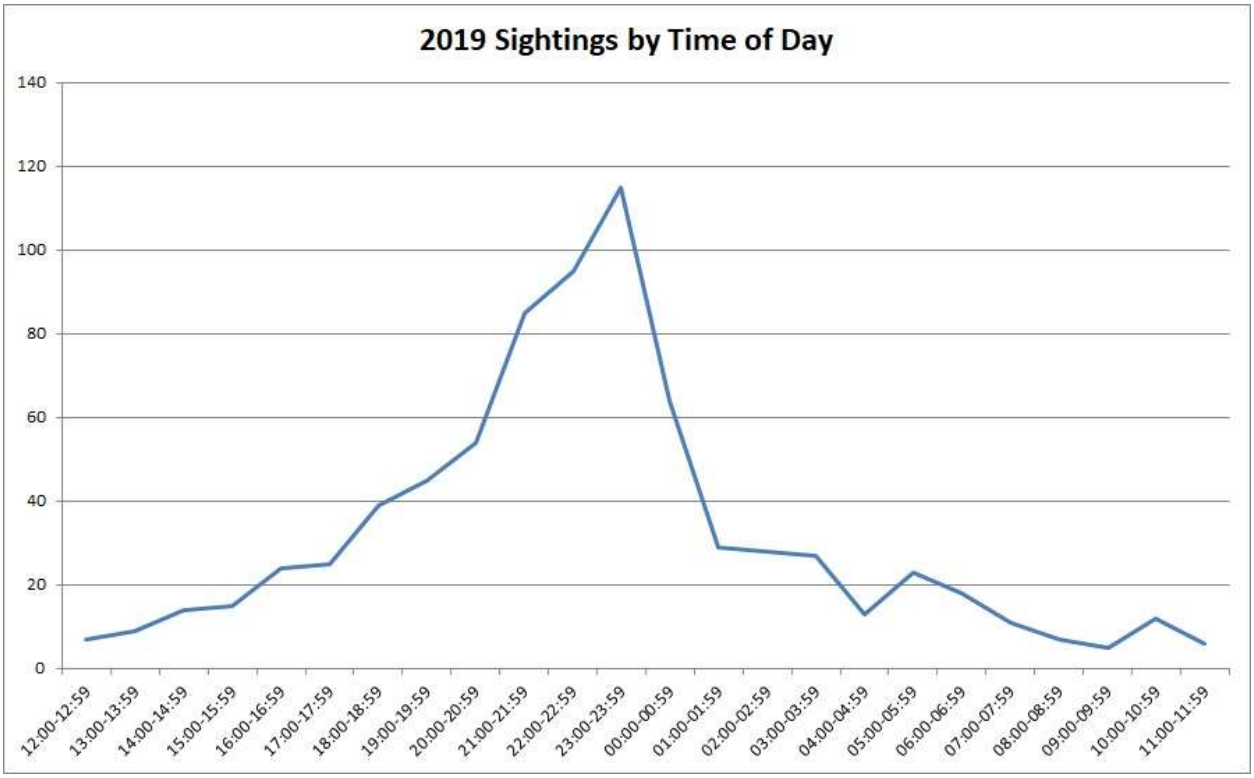
Other Report Types

The category of PH indicates the sighting was entirely photographic, without any actual object seen visually. Many reports listed as NL or ND or DD may also have associated photos or video, so this should not be considered exclusive. However, about 30 per cent of all UFO reports are accompanied by photographs or videos (usually from cell phone cameras). This is one rejoinder to the complaint to there are no photos of UFOs, considering the abundance of cameras. Of course, the problem is not that there are no photos or videos of UFOs, but that there are so few good, high-quality, and information-rich useful photos of UFOs.

EV indicates a case in which physical evidence was observed (not necessarily related to any observed object) and RD is a case in which an object was detected with radar but not necessarily observed. UX cases are those in which anomalous phenomena are reported and believed by witnesses to be UFO-related, but no UFO was actually seen. These include reports of “odd sounds” and dreams.

Hourly Distribution

The hourly distribution of cases has usually followed a similar pattern every year, with a peak at 2200 hours local and a trough around 0900 hours local. Since most UFOs are nocturnal lights, most sightings will occur during the evening hours. Since the number of possible observers drops off sharply near midnight, we would expect the hourly rate of UFO reports would vary with two factors: potential observers and darkness.

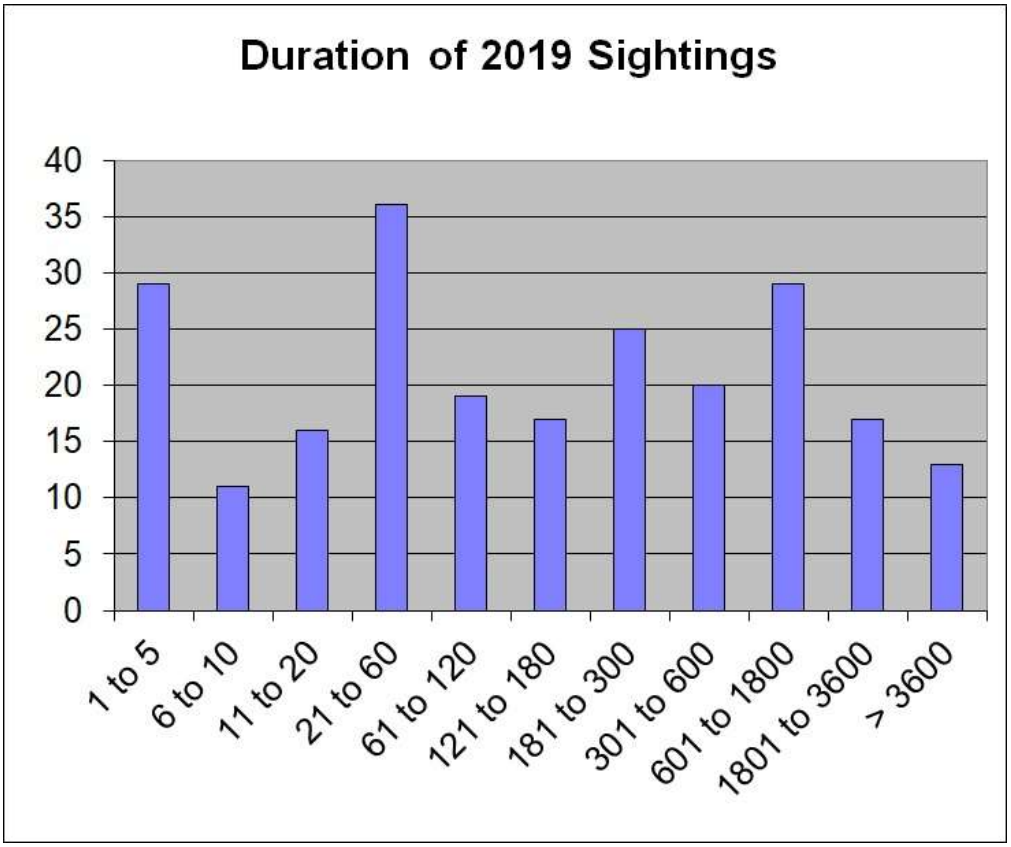


Duration

The category of Duration is interesting in that it represents the subjective length of time the UFO experience lasted. In other words, this is the length of time the sighting lasted *as estimated by the witness*. Naturally, these times are greatly suspect because it is known that most people tend to badly misjudge the flow of time.

Although a witness' estimate of "one hour" may be in error by several minutes, it is unlikely that the true duration would be, for example, one minute. Furthermore, there have been cases when a UFO was observed and clocked very accurately, so that we can be reasonably certain that UFO events can last considerable periods of time.

The average duration of UFO sightings in Canada in 2019 was about 14 minutes, similar to other years. These significant lengths of time suggest some simple explanations. In fact, the duration of a sighting is one of the biggest clues to its explanation. Experience in studying UFO reports has shown us that short duration events are usually fireballs or bolides, and long duration events of an hour or more are very probably astronomical objects moving slowly with Earth's rotation. Long-duration sightings tend to occur in the early morning hours, from about midnight until 6:00 a.m.

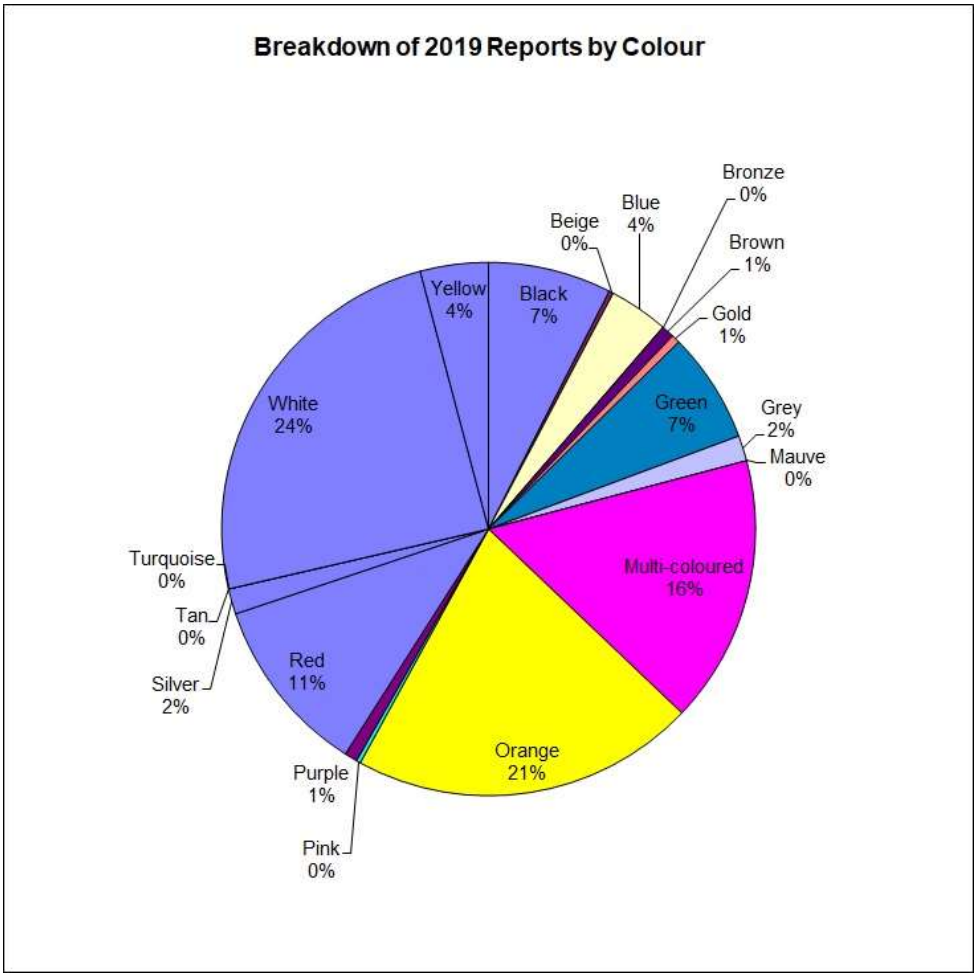


Colour

In cases where colours of an object were reported by witnesses, the most common colour in 2019 was white, at about 25 per cent of all cases where colour was mentioned by witnesses. The next most common colours were orange, multicoloured, and red. Since most UFOs are nocturnal starlike objects, the abundance of white objects is not surprising.

Colours such as red, orange, blue and green often are associated with bolides (fireballs). Orange is most often associated with the observation of a Chinese lanterns, the launching of which became popular during the past few years.

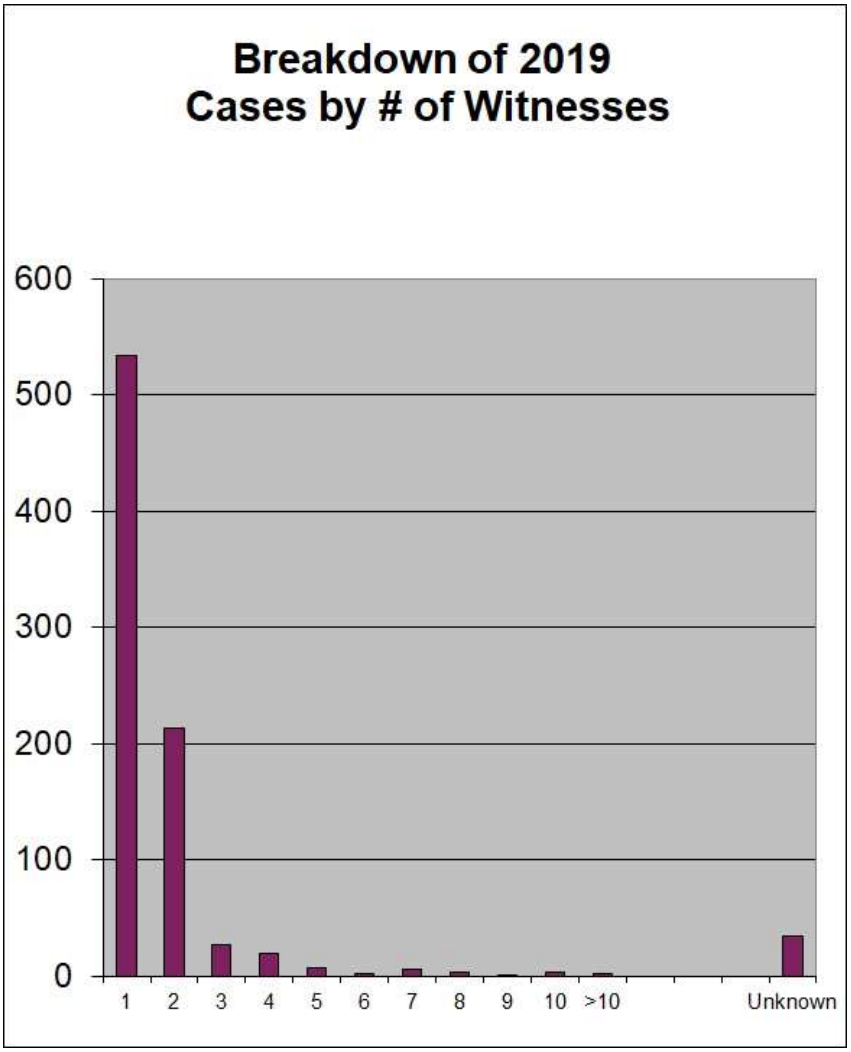
The 'multicoloured' designation is problematic in that it literally covers a wide range of possibilities. This label has been used, for example, when witnesses described their UFOs as having white, red and green lights. Many of these are certainly stars or planets, which flash a variety of colours when seen low on the horizon. Aircraft also frequently are described as having more than one colour of light, such as flashing coloured red and green wing lights. However, seen from a distance, aircraft can often be visible only as moving white lights.



Witnesses

The average number of witnesses per case in 2019 was approximately 1.6. This value has fluctuated between a high of 2.4 in 1996 to as low as 1.4 in 1990. This indicates that the typical UFO experience often has more than one witness, and supports the contention that UFO sightings represent observations of real, physical phenomena, since there is usually at least one corroborator present to support the sighting.

We can then extrapolate the number of Canadians who had seen UFOs in 2019. Given the number of cases in 2019 as 846, and using 1.6 as the number of witnesses per case, we get a value suggesting that about 1,354 people saw UFOs in 2019. Actually, the number is likely higher, as studies have shown that only about ten per cent of all UFO sightings are reported (most witnesses choose not to tell anyone, out of fear of ridicule or concern for their reputation). Multiplying by ten, this means it is probable that more than 13,000 Canadians saw UFOs in 2019.

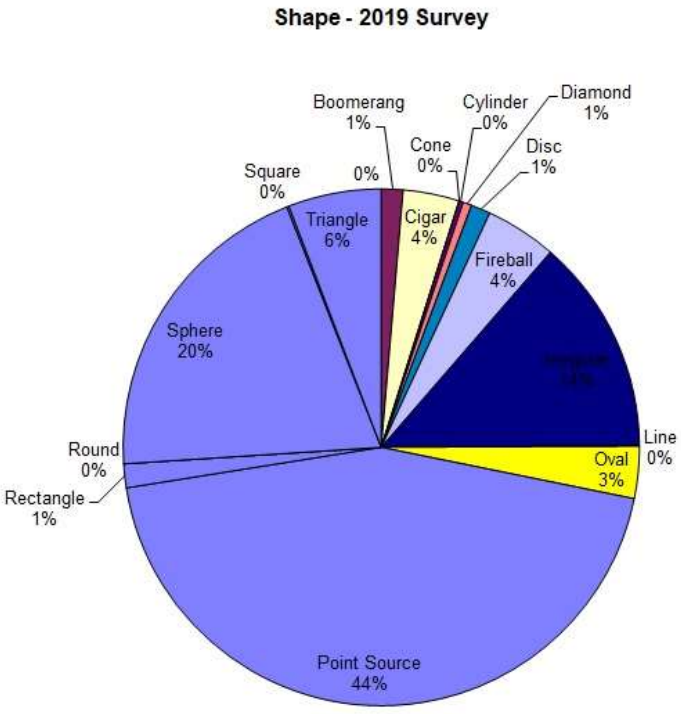


Shape

Witnesses' descriptions of the shapes of UFOs vary greatly. In 2019, like other years, most reported UFOs were simply "point sources"—that is, "starlike" objects or distant lights. The classic "flying saucer" or disc-shaped object was reported in only nine cases in 2019 (about one per cent), suggesting perhaps that the classic model is out of vogue. Even the "triangle" shape, which some ufologists suggested had supplanted the classic "saucer," was only reported in 43 cases (about six per cent) in 2019.

The shape of a perceived object depends on many factors such as the witness' own visual acuity, the angle of viewing, the distance of viewing and the witness' own biases and descriptive abilities. Nevertheless, in combination with other case data such as duration, shape can be a good clue towards a UFO's possible explanation.

One recurring problem is the description by a witness of a distant light as an "orb," implying a spherical shape. The term "orb" has also been adopted by many in ufology who infer that an orb is something mysterious and distinct from a simple light. Upon interviewing witnesses who describe orbs, however, it is clear they only observed a distant light, and their personal belief in alien visitation drove them to label it as something unexplainable.

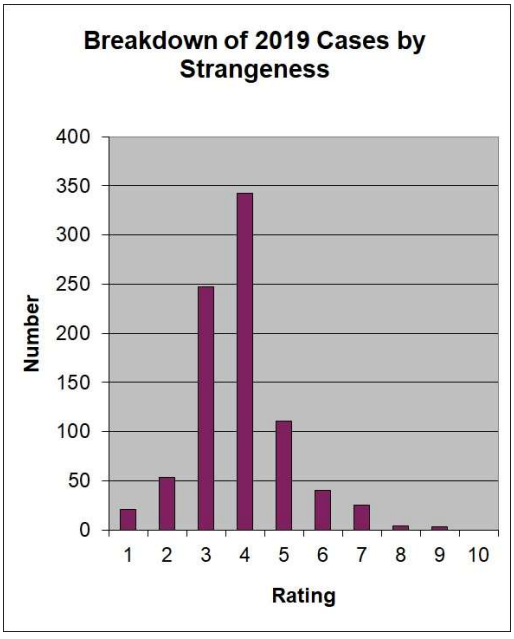


Strangeness

The assigning of a Strangeness rating to a UFO report is based on a classification adopted by researchers who noted that the inclusion of a subjective evaluation of the degree to which a particular case is in itself unusual might yield some insight into the data. For example, the observation of a single, stationary, starlike light in the sky, seen for several hours, is not particularly unusual and might likely have a prosaic explanation such as that of a star or planet. On the other hand, a detailed observation of a saucer-shaped object which glides slowly away from a witness after an encounter with grey-skinned aliens would be considered highly strange. A Strangeness rating is assigned during the data entry process, based on the given information about each case. It is subjective, but based on the general criteria noted above.

The numbers of UFO reports according to a strangeness rating show an inverse relationship such that the higher the strangeness rating, the fewer reports. The one exception to this relationship occurs in the case of very low strangeness cases, which are relatively few in number compared to those of moderate strangeness. It is suggested this is the case because in order for an observation to be considered a UFO, it must usually rise above an ad hoc level of strangeness, otherwise it would not be considered strange at all.

The average strangeness rating for UFO reports during 2019 was about 3.9, down from 4.4 in 2018. Where 1 is considered not strange at all and 9 is considered exceptionally unusual, 3.9 suggests that most UFO reports are not more than simple lights in the sky, and not spectacular. Most UFOs reported are of objects which do not greatly stretch the imagination. Hollywood-style flying saucers are, in reality, relatively uncommon in UFO reports. The overall Strangeness rating of Canadian UFO reports has been sliding slightly over time.

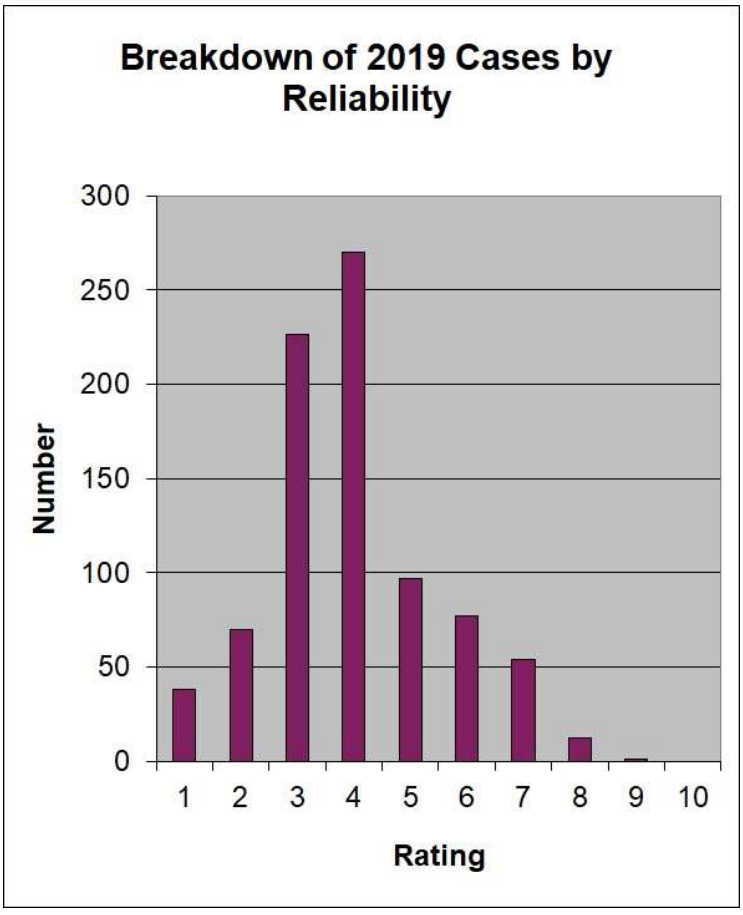


Reliability

The average Reliability rating of Canadian UFO reports in 2019 was about 4, meaning that most cases had relatively little investigation, likely only a report form filled out by a witness, and without extensive supporting documentation or investigation.

In most years, there are approximately the same number of higher quality cases as those of low quality. However, in 2019, most reports had less than average information on the witness, basic investigation, and sparse data or description of the object(s) observed. Higher reliability cases include actual interviews with witnesses, a detailed case investigation, multiple witnesses, supporting documentation and other evidence. Since data for many cases are taken from websites and second-hand postings, or in fact self-postings, there is usually no significant investigation of UFO sightings. Well-investigated cases seem to comprise only a small fraction of all UFO data, a fact that makes UFO case data have limited value.

Reliability and Strangeness ratings tend to vary in classic bell-shaped curves. In other words, there are very few cases which were both highly unusual and well-reported. Most cases are of medium strangeness and medium reliability. These are the “high-quality unknowns” which will be discussed later. However, there are also very few low-strangeness cases with low reliability. Low-strangeness cases, therefore, tend to be well-reported and probably have explanations.



Sources

UFO data used in this study were supplied by many different groups, organizations, official agencies and private individuals. Since this annual survey began in the late 1980s, more and more cases have been obtained and received via the Internet.

About 30 per cent of Canadian cases in 2019 (down from 41 per cent in 2018) were reported to the large organization known as the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), which has a good online reporting system. Another lion's share was through l'Association québécoise d'ufologie (AQU), from which came 26 per cent of the 2019 case data. About seven per cent of the total cases were obtained through the National UFO Reporting Center in the USA. Like MUFON, both AQU and NUFORC have a toll-free telephone number for reporting UFOs and a large sightings list created through voluntary submission of online report forms by witnesses. About 12 per cent of all UFO sightings reported in 2019 were sent directly to Ufology Research. About six per cent of all cases came as a result of information obtained through Transport Canada and the Department of National Defence.

It should be noted that the preparation of this Survey is becoming quite challenging. Few UFO investigators or researchers actually submit case directly data to UFOROM, despite requests, requiring considerable searching of online sources. And, although many sites post information about UFO sightings, very little actual UFO investigation is being conducted. In fact, it could be said that the science of good and thorough UFO investigation has nearly become extinct, if it existed at all. This does not bode well for an area of study that is under constant criticism by debunkers wishing to prove the unscientific nature of the subject.

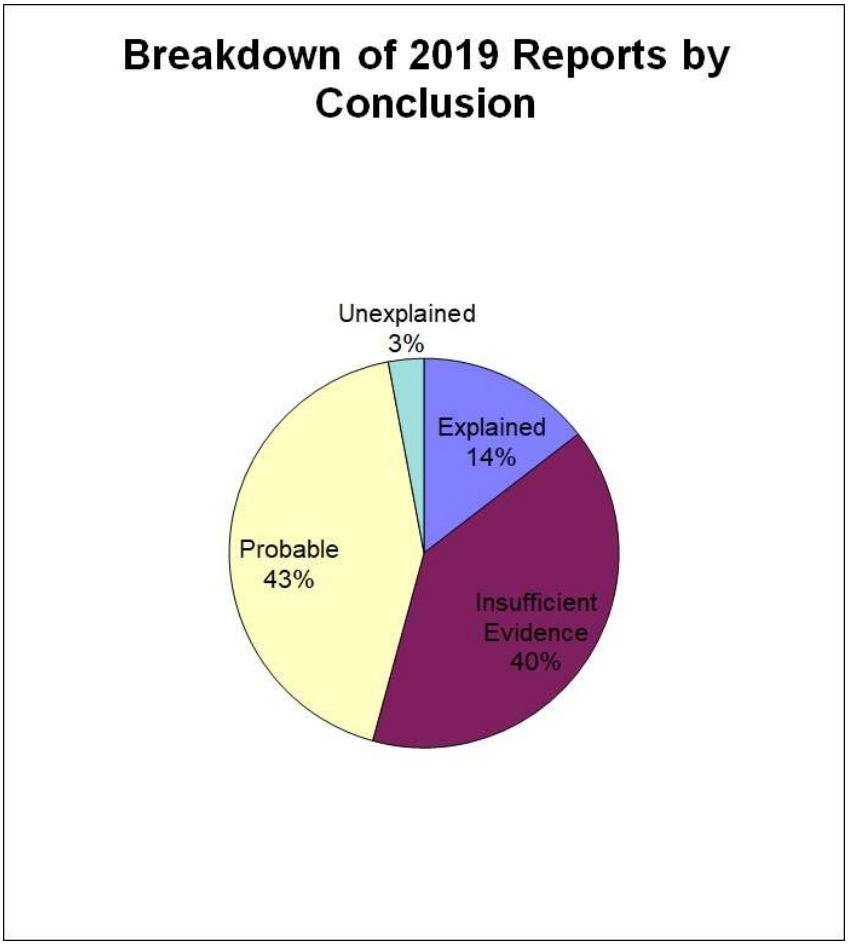
Conclusion/Evaluation

There were four operative categories in the Canadian UFO Survey: Explained, Insufficient Information, Possible or Probable Explanation, and Unknown (or Unexplained). It is important to note that a classification of Unknown does not imply that an alien spacecraft or mysterious natural phenomenon was observed; no such interpretation can be made with certainty, based solely on the given data.

The breakdown by Conclusion for 2019 cases was similar to results from previous years, with the percentage of unexplained cases at about three per cent of the total, down slightly from five per cent in 2018.

The most significant finding, however, is that the percentage of cases with definite explanations is about 14 per cent.

In 2019, the cases labelled as having Possible or Probable explanations were at 43 per cent, while the cases considered as having Insufficient Information for an explanation were at 40 per cent, with two out of every five cases reported were lacking sufficient information for proper evaluation.



Evaluating UFO reports has both subjective and quantitative components.

E (Explained) is used when it can be determined with certainty that the UFO seen was a known object, such as a Chinese Lantern, a photographic defect, re-entering satellite, or astronomical object.

I (Insufficient Information) is used if there is information lacking that could help identify the UFO. A lack of a definite date or location is insufficient information, for example.

P (Possible or Probable Explanation) is used if the description of the observed UFO fits well with a prosaic explanation or a conventional object.

U (Unknown or Unexplained) is used if a data points are available, if the description and behaviour of the UFO do not easily conform to that of a conventional object. If there is supporting documentation and there has been some investigation to rule out a prosaic explanation, this increases the likelihood of coding the case as an Unknown.

It is important to note that a classification of Unknown does not imply that an alien spacecraft or mysterious natural phenomenon was observed; no such interpretation can be made with certainty, based solely on the given data. Evaluation reflects a subjective evaluation by researchers who question whether a particular report has enough information to consider it as having a possible explanation or if there is simply not enough information to make that judgement. This situation has likely arisen because very few UFO sightings are ever fully investigated, as most are simply reported and published online, often without any follow-up or investigation possible. An Evaluation is made subjectively by either or both the contributing investigators and the compilers of this study. The category of Unknown is adopted if there is extensive information or data available and/or if the contributed data or case report contains enough information such that a conventional explanation cannot be satisfactorily proposed. This does not mean that the case will never be explained, but only that a viable explanation is not immediately obvious.

The level and quality of UFO report investigation varies because there are no explicit and rigorous standards for UFO investigation. Investigators who are “believers” might be inclined to consider most UFO sightings as mysterious, whereas those with more of a skeptical predisposition might tend to subconsciously (or consciously) reduce the Unknowns in their files.