

# Flat Earth

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## The Rising Popularity of Flat Earth Theory

A [YouGov](#) survey of more than 8,000 American adults suggested last year that as many as one in six Americans are not entirely certain the world is round, while a 2019 Datafolha Institute survey of more than 2,000 Brazilian adults indicated that 7% of people in that country reject that concept, according to local media.

Firstly, and most importantly -- "none of us believe that we're a flying pancake in space." The community merely believes that space does not exist, the world sits still and the moon landing was faked. The jury is out on gravity -- but as Davidson notes, no one has ever seen it.

Secondly -- no, you won't fall off the edge. While flat Earthers' views of the world vary, most believe the planet is a circular disk with Antarctica acting as an ice wall barrier around the edge.

And thirdly, modern flat Earthers have little in common with the Flat Earth Society, a group that has existed for decades and has more than 200,000 followers on Facebook.

That organization, some speakers told CNN, is a government-controlled body designed to pump out misinformation and make the flat-Earth cause sound far-fetched to curious minds. Davidson calls their theories "completely ridiculous."

The Flat Earth Society told CNN: "We are not a government-controlled body. We're an organization of Flat Earth theorists that long predates most of the FEIC newcomers to the scene."

"People, in essence, are just trying to understand the world," says Daniel Jolley, a senior lecturer in the psychology of conspiracy theories at the UK's Northumbria University. "And they're looking at the world in a gaze where they're biased in their thinking."

"They may have distrust towards powerful people or groups, which could be the government or NASA, and when they look towards evidence that makes sense to them ... this world view (is) endorsed," he says. "It's difficult to break out of that mindset."

Scientists have also noted that a social motive draws people to conspiracy theories -- the desire to "maintain a positive view of the self and the groups we belong to," as social psychologist Karen Douglas of the University of Kent says.

## Why Do People Believe in Flat Earth

Sourced from a [Pursuit](#) article: Once upon a time, it made sense for people to believe that the Earth was flat, says University of Melbourne cartographer Chandra Jayasuriya. Ships would sail off toward the horizon and often never return, and those people left behind didn't really have access to information outside of their communities.

“Their view was egocentric and geocentric. They lived in a village that was the centre of their existence,” she says. “The further away from the village they travelled, the more hostile the environment became.”

Greek philosophers established that the Earth was round as far back as the third century BC, but it wasn't until the 15th century that it became commonly accepted.

The first scientific estimates of the Earth's circumference were made by the Greek mathematician and geographer Eratosthenes in 240 BC. He noted that on the 21st of June that year, in a town called Syene (near modern day Aswan), the reflection of the sun could be seen in a deep well, meaning that it was directly overhead.

But in Alexandria, around 800 kilometres away and almost directly north of Syene, at noon on the same day, the angle of the sun was about seven degrees – or one-50th of a circle.

If the Earth was actually flat, the angle would be identical in both places.

many scientists throughout history continued to gather observations and evidence that the Earth is spherical including:

- That we see the top of a ship's mast coming into port and not the entire ship
- That all other planets and celestial objects are spheres
- That during a lunar eclipse, the Earth's shadow on the moon is curved

So, why do people believe? Well, in part, according to School of Culture and Communication lecturer Dr Jennifer Beckett, it's due to a general shift towards populism and a distrust in the views of experts and the mainstream media.

“It's really about the power of knowledge, and that increasing distrust in what we once considered to be the gatekeepers of knowledge – like academics, scientific agencies, or the government,” Dr Beckett says.

Dr Beckett also notes that the burgeoning movement speaks to how so-called social media “influencers” can now hold more sway than an expert in the field.

“That’s often because they tend to be better storytellers,” Dr Beckett says.

“And there’s an element of authenticity there – people naively think, ‘Oh, they’re a real person, so it must be true’.”

So, the question remains: why is this a theory that still persists in 2018 in the face of science, and even photographic evidence?

Well, it also comes back to thinking critically about information that’s out there. Particularly online.

“Look, flat earthers’ are actually employing Cartesian doubt; this a philosophical idea that the world outside the self is subject to uncertainty,” Dr Beckett says, referring to a method of sceptical thinking popularised by René Descartes, the French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist.

## The Role of YouTube

Sourced from [The Guardian](#): Researchers believe they have identified the prime driver for a startling rise in the number of people who think the Earth is flat: Google’s video-sharing site, YouTube.

Their suspicion was raised when they attended the world’s largest gatherings of Flat Earthers at the movement’s annual conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 2017, and then in Denver, Colorado, last year.

Interviews with 30 attendees revealed a pattern in the stories people told about how they came to be convinced that the Earth was not a large round rock spinning through space but a large flat disc doing much the same thing.

Of the 30, all but one said they had not considered the Earth to be flat two years ago but changed their minds after watching videos promoting conspiracy theories on [YouTube](#). “The only person who didn’t say this was there with his daughter and his son-in-law and they had

seen it on YouTube and told him about it,” said Asheley Landrum, who led the research at Texas Tech University.

The interviews revealed that most had been watching videos about other conspiracies, with alternative takes on 9/11, the Sandy Hook school shooting and whether Nasa really went to the moon, when YouTube offered up Flat Earth videos for them to watch next.

Some said they watched the videos only in order to debunk them but soon found themselves won over by the material.

Landrum said one of the most popular Flat Earth videos, [“200 proofs Earth is not a spinning ball”](#) appears to be effective because it offers arguments that appeal to so many mindsets, from biblical literalists and conspiracy theorists to those of a more scientific bent.

The initial *Pursuit* article, linked above, also states that Dr Beckett notes that the flat Earth community uses various social media platforms in distinct, overlapping ways in order to create a kind of ecosystem around their beliefs.

“Youtube becomes a content hub, Facebook becomes an administrative one-stop shop for that hub, and Twitter continually pushing out the messaging,” she says, likening Youtube to a sort of alternative documentary channel for flat earthers.

It’s a more powerful social media tool than Facebook or Twitter because it’s a “high context” platform, Dr Beckett says, where users can stream themselves with an immediacy and intimacy that’s lacking from text or image-based platforms.

And unlike TV, on Youtube you can go searching for videos by people who agree with your view of the world. Or in this case, the Earth.

# Some Evidence Given to Support Flat Earth, According to Flat Earthers

Original Source: [IFLScience](#)

1. The horizon is not curved. The spirit level never lies, according to some. Prominent flat-Earther and rapper B.o.B regularly cites the horizon's flatness as the main piece of evidence to plant doubt into the minds of the spherical-planet sheeple.
2. Nobody Has Crossed The Wall Of Antarctica. Ever. Some factions of flat-Earthers claim that Antarctica is a giant icy wall designed to keep us from falling off our disc-shaped world. Or, knowing what those sneaky NWO governments are like, to prevent us from finding out the hard truth that we don't live on a globe. To back up this theory, they claim that no one has ever crossed the whole continent.
3. The earth is stationary.
4. All Space Images Are Photoshopped. If you ever think that some of the awesome images taken from space look "a little off", that's because they are not always true-color photographs. Often, they are composite images or images taken using fancy imaging techniques. That isn't to say they are "fake", however. They are images composed using real data, often with color added to illustrate, enhance, or highlight certain features.
5. My Senses Tell Me So. The "Zetetic method" is a fundamental cornerstone of the flat-Earther mindset. In contrast to the usual scientific method, this belief system says that *your* senses rule supreme. All knowledge about reality should be reached directly through your own personal observation (as opposed to building upon someone else's observations), building a theory, then testing whether it's true or false. As per the Zetetic method, our personal experience on Earth tells us that it feels flat and looks flat, ergo it is flat.

6. You Can See Venus And Mercury At Night. You can, however, occasionally see these two planets during the twilight hours around sunrise and sunset because they are not always directly between the Sun and Earth. It's important to remember that the planets aren't perfectly lined up as you sometimes see in an elementary school diagram. Each planet is on a different orbital path at different speeds.
7. Sun Rays: Some flat-Earthers argue that crepuscular rays (image below) prove that the Sun isn't actually that distant. If the Sun really was 149.6 million kilometers (92.95 miles) away, they argue, then the Sun's beams should fall parallel onto Earth, not fan out at a jaunty angle.

## Some Evidence Given to Support a Spherical Earth

From a [Popular Science](#) article:

1. The moon: since the earth is rotating (see the "Foucault Pendulum" experiment for a definite proof, if you are doubtful), the consistent oval-shadow it produces in each and every lunar eclipse proves that the earth is not only round but spherical—absolutely, utterly, beyond a shadow of a doubt not flat.
2. Ships and the horizon: approaching ships do not just “appear” out of the horizon (like they should have if the world was flat), but rather seem to emerge from beneath the sea.
3. Varying star constellations: the farther you go from the equator, the farther the "known" constellations go towards the horizon, to be replaced by different stars. This would not have happened if the world was flat.
4. Shadows and sticks: If you stick a stick in the (sticky) ground, it will produce a shadow. The shadow moves as time passes (which is the principle for ancient [Shadow Clocks](#)). If the world had been flat, then two sticks in different locations would produce the same shadow.

5. Seeing farther from higher: even if you stood on a completely clear plateau with no obstacles between you and the horizon, you would see much farther from the greater height than you would on the ground. This phenomenon is caused by the curvature of the Earth.
6. Ride a plane: planes can travel in a relatively straight line for a very long time and not fall off any edges. They can also circle the Earth without stopping. If you look out the window on a trans-Atlantic flight, you can, most of the times, see the curvature of the Earth on the horizon.
7. Look at other planets: if so many planets that were created in different locations and under different circumstances show the same property, it's likely that our own planet has the same property as well. All of our observations show that other planets are spherical (and since we know how they're created, it's also obvious why they take this shape).
8. Time zones: this can only be explained if the world is round, and rotating around its own axis. At a certain point when the sun is shining on one part of the Earth, the opposite side is dark, and vice versa. That allows for time differences and time zones, specifically ones that are larger than 12 hours.
9. Gravity: since a sphere has a consistent shape, no matter where on it you stand, you have exactly the same amount of sphere under you. A sphere's center of mass is in the center of the sphere, which means gravity will pull anything on the surface of the sphere straight down toward the center of the sphere. This will occur no matter where on the surface the object is located.
10. Images from space



## Sample Interview Questions

- [Ten Questions You Always Wanted to Ask a Flat Earther](#)
- [Questions for flat earth believers.](#)
- [Questions for Flat Earthers – Pat Brittenden](#)
- How do you get by in a world that doesn't accept or [mocks your beliefs](#)?
- Who benefits from the “conspiracy” that the Earth is spherical?
- What kind of evidence would lead you to believe the Earth is round?

## Interesting Perspectives

[Former Flat Earthers and Why They Changed Their Mind](#)