



Crowded Orbits

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Guess how many satellites are orbiting around the Earth right now? If you guessed 500, you're a bit low. 1,000? That would be kind of crowded—but again, you're not thinking big enough.

The Union of Concerned Scientists now lists 6,542 satellites roaming the near skies, including 1,655 that have been put up there by the SpaceX company and its Star Link web service. By comparison, the Chinese Ministry of National Defense has a mere 129, and the U.S. Air Force has just 87—which is 36 more than the European Space Agency.

You can see a full an animation of what that looks like in the crowded sky here: <https://www.geospatialworld.net/videos/check-out-how-many-satellites-are-there-in-space/>, and the image is actually kind of disturbing. This doesn't count another 23,000 pieces of space junk (technical term: 'orbital debris') that are tracked by the Department of Defense's global Space Surveillance Network, including cast-off parts of launch vehicles and fragments roughly the size of a softball. Another roughly 100 million pieces of debris are between the size of a marble and a millimeter in diameter.

Currently, there are no plans to clean up all this debris; nor does any technology exist to do so. Instead, the International Space Station and other space craft use the tracking data to maneuver away from the path of flotsam and jetsam that can reach speeds up to 17,500 miles per hour. Nor is there any international rule or law which would prevent many more satellites from being launched into orbit—which is another way of saying that the near-earth space is going to continue to grow increasingly crowded for the foreseeable future.

Source:

https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/news/orbital_debris.html

If you have any questions about this article or want to discuss your family finances, investment portfolio, or financial planning advice, please call on me anytime at my number [\(215\) 325-1595](tel:2153251595) or you can [click here to schedule a meeting](#).

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Jeffrey Broadhurst
MBA, CFA, CFP
Broadhurst Financial Advisors, Inc.



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Our physical and mail address:

1911 West Point Pike
P.O. Box 301
West Point, PA 19486-0301

Contact us:

Phone: (215) 325-1595
Email: jeff@broadhurstfinancial.com