

PRESS RELEASE

4th edition of the Look Up x Le Point Quarterly Space Barometer

Nearly 17,000 active satellites now orbit the Earth: space is entering a new era of scale

Their number has increased by 29% in just one year. Starlink has surpassed 11,000 satellites, China is accelerating its deployment, and in-orbit manoeuvres are becoming increasingly common.

Key findings from the 4th edition of the Look Up x Le Point Space Barometer:

- **16,819 active satellites** are now orbiting the Earth, up from 13,005 a year ago, representing a 29% increase in twelve months;
- **4,737 satellites were launched** over the past twelve months, an average of nearly 13 per day;
- **Starlink now operates 11,041 active satellites**, accounting for nearly two-thirds of the global total;
- **China now operates 1,434 active satellites**, up 26% year-on-year;
- **1,412 objects were deorbited**, including 914 satellites, 507 of which were Starlink satellites, illustrating the constant renewal of the orbital environment.

In total, more than 34,000 objects are currently tracked in Earth orbit, including satellites, rocket stages and catalogued space debris.

Toulouse, France, 8 September 2026 - Ahead of the International Space Summit taking place in Paris on 9-10 September, Look Up, a European company specialising in space situational awareness, is publishing the fourth edition of its quarterly Look Up x Le Point Space Barometer, in partnership with French weekly Le Point.

Based on data collected and processed by Look Up's SYNAPSE digital platform, this new edition highlights a further acceleration in orbital activity and an increasingly dense, dynamic and complex space environment. In one year, the number of active satellites orbiting the Earth has risen from 13,005 to 16,819, an increase of 29%. More than 34,000 objects are now tracked in Earth orbit, including satellites, rocket stages and catalogued space debris.

Nearly 13 satellites launched every day

With 4,737 satellites launched over the past twelve months, the deployment of new orbital infrastructure continues at an unprecedented pace. Telecommunications, Earth observation, navigation, defence and connectivity: space has become an essential infrastructure underpinning modern economies and societies.

This increasing density is simultaneously creating growing challenges for space surveillance, safety, security, coordination and space traffic management.

Starlink surpasses 11,000 active satellites

With 11,041 active satellites, up from 8,267 a year ago (+34%), Starlink remains by far the world's largest satellite constellation and alone accounts for nearly two-thirds of all active satellites orbiting the Earth.

Around 640 of these satellites are specifically dedicated to Starlink's Direct to Cell service, operating at an altitude of approximately 360 km. This component of Starlink alone therefore represents a fleet almost equivalent in size to the entire European Eutelsat OneWeb constellation, which currently comprises 651 active satellites.

Starlink is also reorganising a significant part of its constellation towards lower orbits, further illustrating the constant evolution of the orbital environment.

China accelerates its space deployment

Against the backdrop of US dominance, China is rapidly expanding its orbital capabilities. It now operates 1,434 active satellites, compared with 1,136 a year ago, representing a 26% increase.

This growth is notably driven by the development of large low-Earth orbit constellations and is accompanied by increasingly advanced manoeuvring capabilities. The fourth flight of China's experimental spaceplane provides a recent illustration: after releasing an object weighing approximately 500 kg, the vehicle conducted several proximity operations with it in orbit.

Without speculating on the purpose of these operations, their sophistication highlights the rapid evolution of orbital capabilities and the growing need to detect, track and characterise the behaviour of objects in space.

An orbital environment in constant motion

The growing number of satellites is only one aspect of the transformation currently under way. Over the past twelve months, 1,412 objects have been deorbited, including 914 satellites. Of these, 507 were Starlink satellites, reflecting, in particular, the continuous renewal of the constellation.

Between launches, deorbiting, manoeuvres and fragmentation events, the orbital population is now evolving continuously.

In-orbit manoeuvring capabilities are also evolving rapidly. In July 2026, US company True Anomaly conducted a pursuit-and-evasion exercise involving two satellites, Jackal-4 and Puma, with some approaches performed autonomously using onboard sensors. This illustrates how rendezvous and proximity-operation capabilities, previously mainly associated with state actors, are becoming increasingly accessible to commercial operators.

In late August, the Chinese Yaogan 50-02 satellite, orbiting at an altitude of approximately 960 km, fragmented, generating 42 new pieces of catalogued debris on orbits ranging from 600 to 1,100 km.

"We are no longer simply facing an increase in the number of satellites, but a profound transformation of the orbital environment. Constellations are expanding, satellites are manoeuvring more frequently, and proximity operations are multiplying. In a space domain that has become strategic and contested, knowing precisely what is happening in orbit is now a prerequisite for sovereignty. For Europe, mastering space begins with mastering space domain awareness," said Michel Friedling, co-founder and CEO of Look Up and former Commander of French Space Command.

Through the quarterly Look Up x Le Point Space Barometer, Look Up and Le Point aim to provide public decision-makers, industry, the media and the wider public with a regular, objective snapshot of this transformation and the new balances emerging in space.

About Look Up

Founded in 2022 by Michel Friedling, former General in the French Air and Space Force and the first Commander of French Space Command, and Juan-Carlos Dolado Perez, former Head of Space Surveillance (SSA) at CNES, Look Up is a leading European company specialising in space surveillance and security.

Look Up develops an integrated solution combining ground-based detection capabilities, orbital data processing and fusion, and space surveillance and operations management services, providing institutional, defence and commercial customers with precise and independent knowledge of the orbital environment.

Its solution is built around two complementary proprietary technologies: SORASYS, a network of next-generation radars designed to detect and track objects in low-Earth orbit, and SYNAPSE, a digital platform for orbital data fusion and analysis.

Look Up's ambition is to contribute to the security, sovereignty and sustainability of space activities in Europe and worldwide.

For more information: www.lookupspace.com

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