



Public Outreach

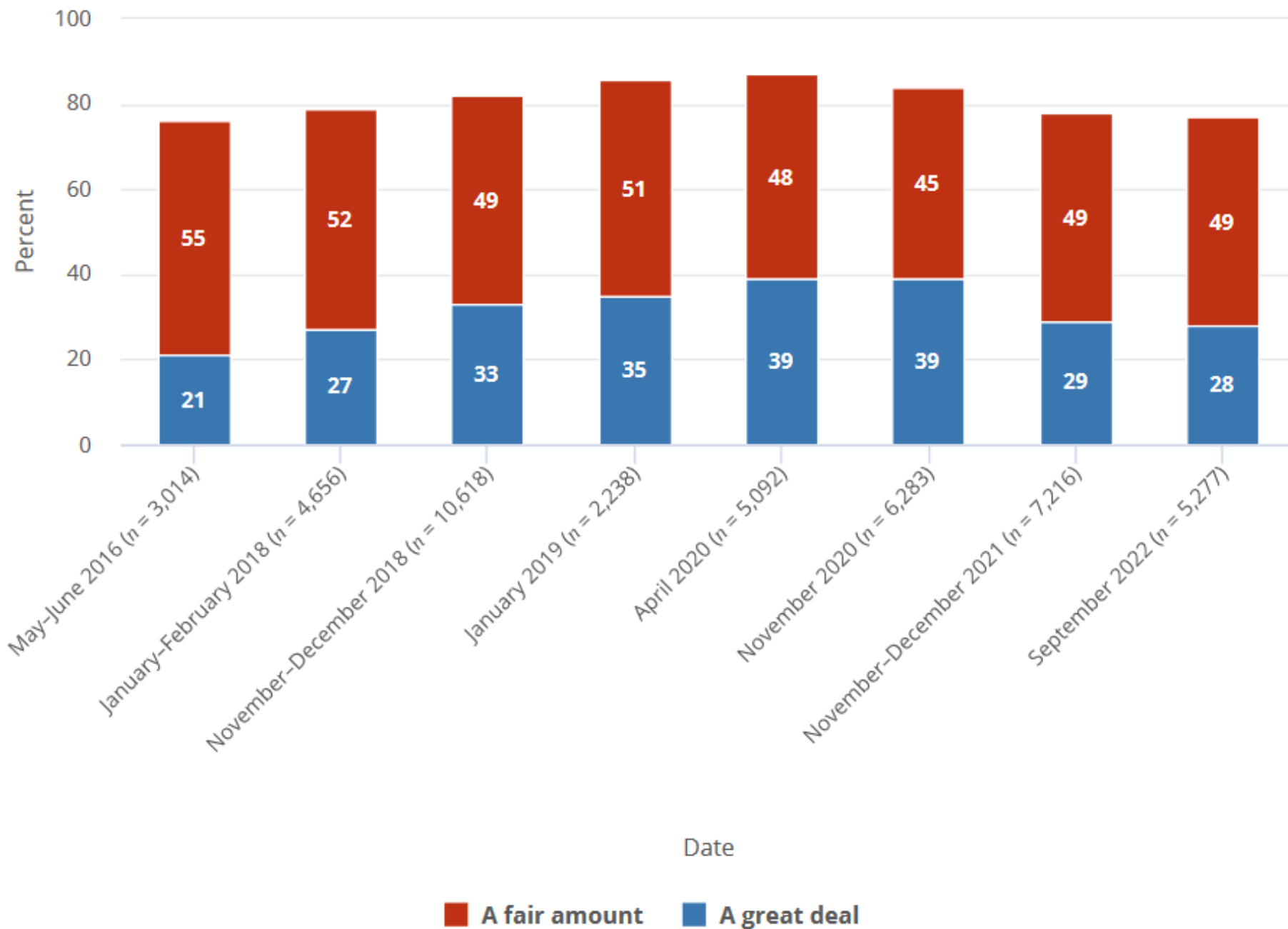
Chase Funkhouser

Why is outreach important?

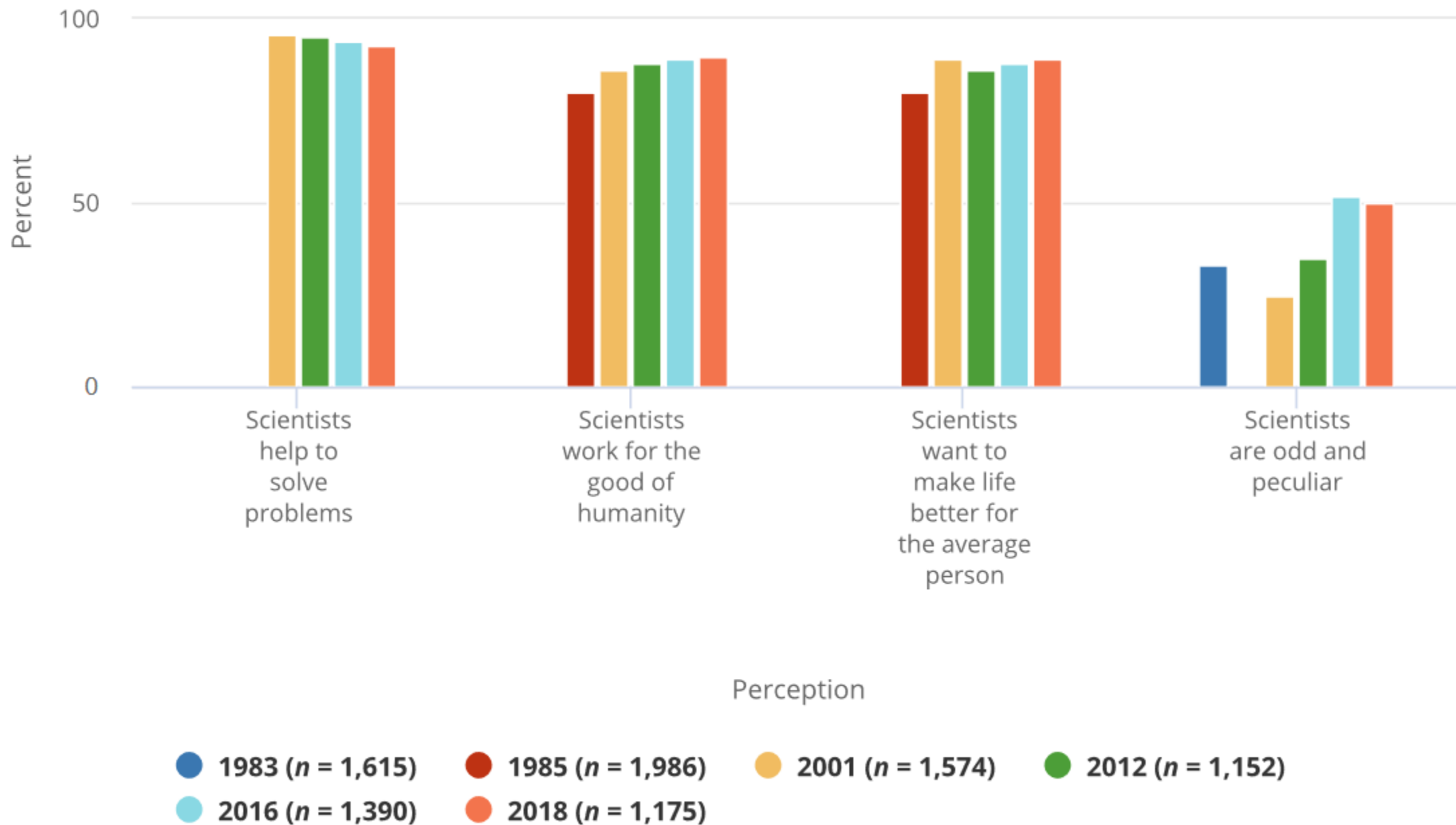
- Research is publicly funded
 - Pros: don't have to worry about profit, marketing, management
 - Cons: at the whim of the public for funding
- Science is meant to be shared
 - Astronomy is a collaborative human project throughout history
- Outreach is fun, both for the public and the volunteers
- Free food (DSBK)



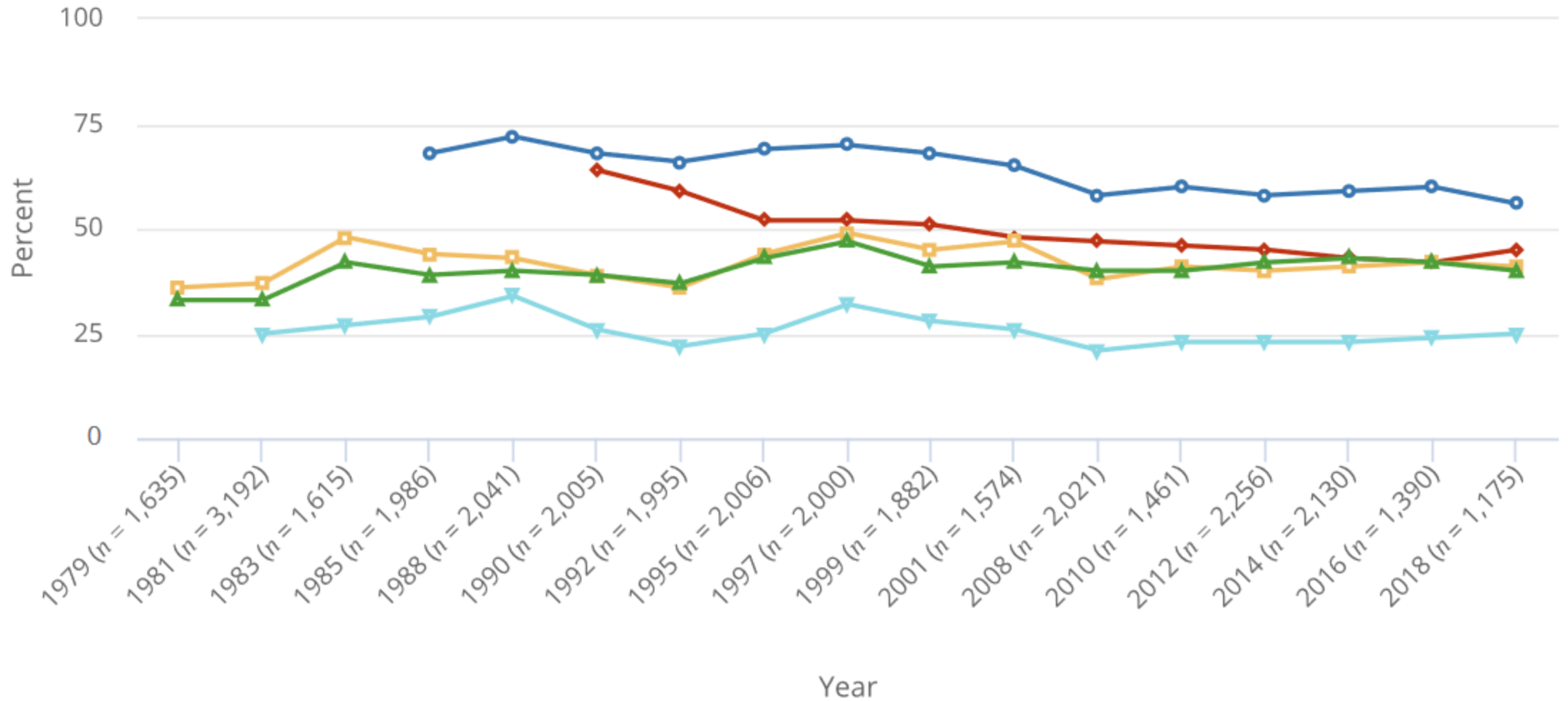
Confidence in scientists to act in the best interests of the public, by survey date: 2016–22



Public perception of scientists: Selected years, 1983–2018



Public interest in selected science-related issues: 1979–2018



—○— New medical discoveries
—□— New scientific discoveries
—▽— Space exploration

—◇— Environmental pollution
—▲— Use of new inventions and technologies

Imagine you seriously want to understand what quantum mechanics is about...you must learn arithmetic, Euclidian geometry, high school algebra, differential and integral calculus, ordinary and partial differential equations, vector calculus...roughly 15 years. Such a course of study does not actually involve learning any quantum mechanics, but merely establishing the mathematical framework required to approach it deeply.

- Carl Sagan

Goals of Outreach

- Inspire the next generation of scientists
- Carry on the human tradition of stargazing
- Improve the scientific literacy of the public



Outreach at UVA

- Dark Skies, Bright Kids
 - Volunteer program for local elementary schools
 - Host summer camps, planetarium shows, star parties and observing nights
 - Open to grads and undergrads



Outreach at UVA

- Girls Exploring the Universe
 - Summer camp for middle-schoolers, led by women astronomers
 - Solar observing, building models, and observations with the 40 in. at GBO



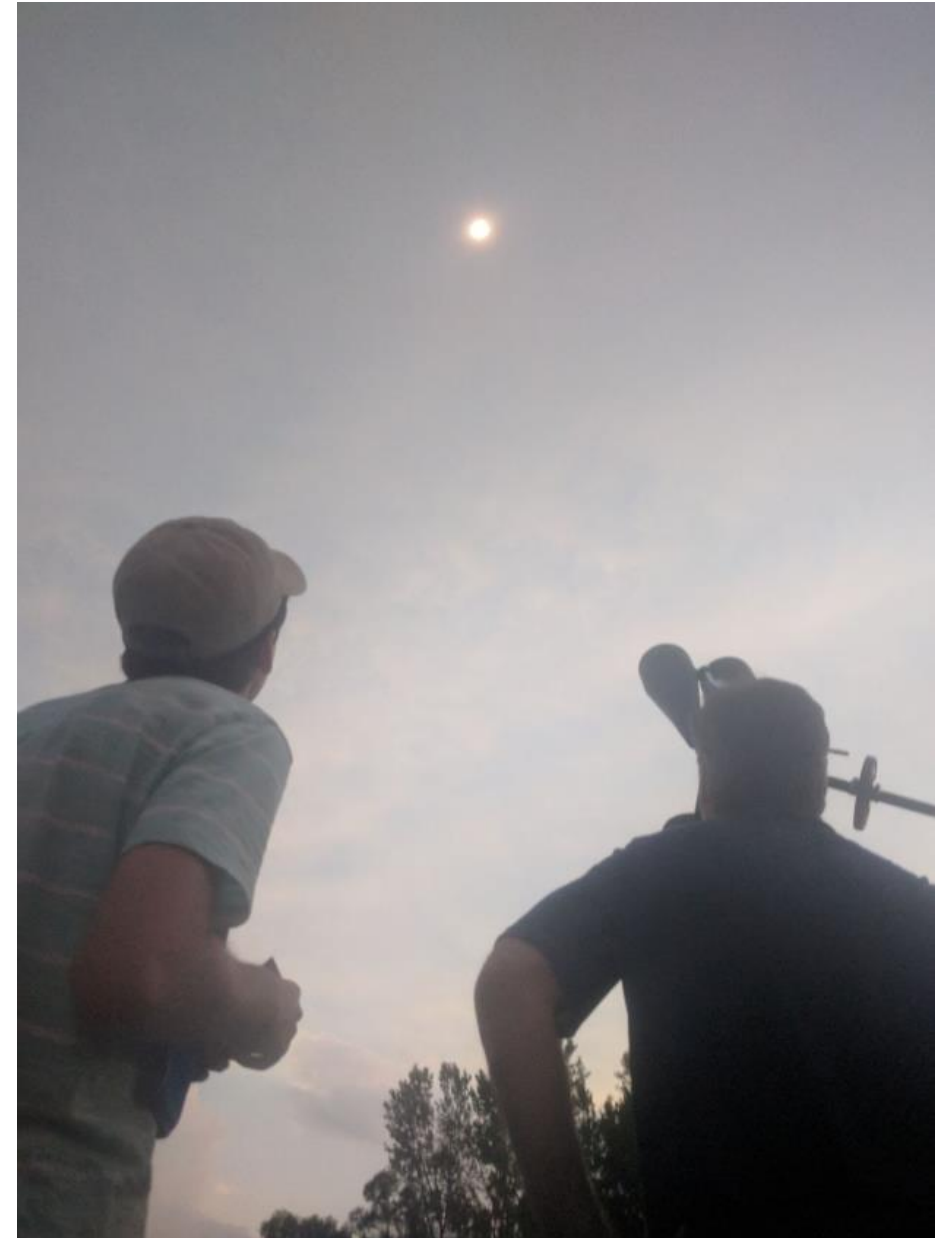
Outreach at UVA

- Leander McCormick Observatory Public Nights
 - Presentations from UVA faculty and grad students
 - Observatory museum (including meteorites!)
 - Observations with the 26 in. telescope and the 2 doghouse telescopes



Outreach Effectiveness

- Hard to even define a metric
- Instead, look at the individual level
 - My first astronomy outreach event: 2012 Venus transit
 - Before my undergrad: 2017 total solar eclipse
 - In undergrad: Volunteered at the local observatory
 - Now: Grad student at UVA (yay!)





Thank you!