HISTORICAL ANALYSIS · 2006–2026

Deep-Space vs Orbital Launches

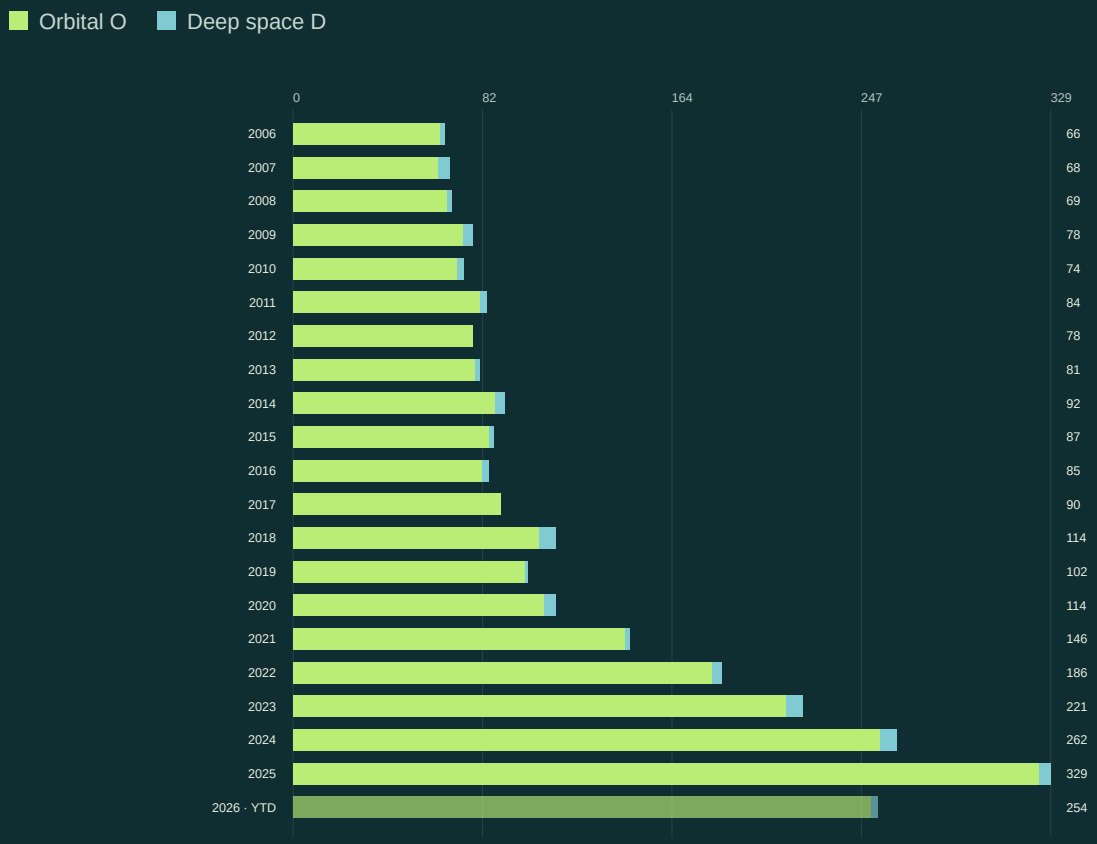
Orbital and deep-space launch activity side by side, using GCAT's original categories.

Source snapshot · 29 October 2026 GCAT / Jonathan McDowell Scope · O + D

RECORDED LAUNCHES	ORBITAL · O	DEEP SPACE · D	D SHARE
2,680	2,609	71	2.65%
O + D · includes incomplete latest year	Original GCAT category	Original GCAT category	D ÷ (O + D)

Annual O + D composition

Stacked counts; numbers at right show annual totals. Faded rows are incomplete.



Source: GCAT · Unique launch identifiers

Launch classifications, not a census of scientific missions

2026 is incomplete: 254 launches are recorded in this snapshot year. No annual growth comparison with the previous full year is made.

READING THE DATA

What the record shows

01

Two preserved categories

The snapshot contains 2,609 orbital-category launches and 71 deep-space-category launches, totaling 2,680.

02

Deep-space share

D-category launches represent 2.65% of the selected launch total. This is a classification share, not a measure of spending, payload mass or scientific value.

03

Highest complete-year D count

The highest D count among complete years is 7, recorded in 2018, 2023, 2024. The incomplete snapshot year is excluded from this comparison.

THE UNDERLYING NUMBERS

Orbital and deep-space totals

Deep-space share uses O + D as its denominator. N is outside the scope.

Deep-Space vs Orbital Launches · 2006–2026

YEAR	O	D	TOTAL	D SHARE	COVERAGE
2006	64	2	66	3.03%	Full year
2007	63	5	68	7.35%	Full year
2008	67	2	69	2.90%	Full year
2009	74	4	78	5.13%	Full year
2010	71	3	74	4.05%	Full year
2011	81	3	84	3.57%	Full year
2012	78	0	78	0.00%	Full year
2013	79	2	81	2.47%	Full year
2014	88	4	92	4.35%	Full year
2015	85	2	87	2.30%	Full year
2016	82	3	85	3.53%	Full year

YEAR	O	D	TOTAL	D SHARE	COVERAGE
2017	90	0	90	0.00%	Full year
2018	107	7	114	6.14%	Full year
2019	101	1	102	0.98%	Full year
2020	109	5	114	4.39%	Full year
2021	144	2	146	1.37%	Full year
2022	182	4	186	2.15%	Full year
2023	214	7	221	3.17%	Full year
2024	255	7	262	2.67%	Full year
2025	324	5	329	1.52%	Full year
2026	251	3	254	1.18%	Incomplete · YTD

TRANSPARENT BY DESIGN

Methodology & sources

Snapshot coverage

Data retrieved 29 October 2026. Latest recorded launch: 2026-10-27T07:25:23Z. The snapshot year remains incomplete regardless of when this report is generated.

O, D and N

O denotes orbital launches and D denotes deep-space launches in GCAT. Near-orbital category N is excluded. We retain GCAT classifications, including experimental-flight decisions, without inferring a destination from the mission name. A D launch is not necessarily a separate planetary mission.

Scope and limitations

Unique O (orbital) and D (deep-space) launches are included, including failures. N flights and events without liftoff are excluded. The source classification is retained. These results describe the snapshot; they do not establish causes or forecast future activity.

Attribution

Data from GCAT — Jonathan C. McDowell, CC BY 4.0. Compatisto aggregates and visualizes the records. · Field documentation.

Source SHA-256
ee70d1d8b7cb72a239f60a996c061cd1ddf4fed493686f2d8e8333a83a91d5c3