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Newton beats Einstein in polls of scientists and the public

23 Nov 2005

Isaac Newton is considered to have had a greater impact on both science and humankind than Albert Einstein, according to the results of two Royal Society polls announced today (Wednesday 23 November).



The results of both polls are being announced on Wednesday 23 November at 6.30pm as part of the Einstein vs. Newton debate, a public lecture being held at the Royal Society in London, as part of the Einstein Year celebrations.

Members of the public and Royal Society scientists, both Fellows and Research Fellows, were asked to vote in two separate polls for who they thought had made the greater contribution out of Einstein and Newton. They were asked firstly to say who made the bigger overall contribution to science, taking into account the state of knowledge during his time, and secondly to say who they thought had made the bigger positive contribution to humankind.

[Einstein versus Newton - poll result](#)



Read the cases for Einstein and Newton, and then watch as the result is declared live at 1830GMT.

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A total of 1363 members of the public voted online and 345 Royal Society scientists responded to an email questionnaire.

The results showed Newton to be the winner on all counts, although opinion was much closer on the overall contribution to humankind. When asked who made the bigger overall contribution to science the public voted 61.8% for Newton and 38.2% for Einstein and the scientists voted 86.2% for Newton and 13.8% for Einstein.

When asked who made the bigger positive contribution to humankind the public voted extremely closely with 50.1% for Newton and 49.9% for Einstein and the scientists voted 60.9% for Newton and 39.1% for Einstein.

Lord May of Oxford, President of the Royal Society, said: "It is fascinating to see how peoples' opinions vary on these questions and the poll has certainly generated heated debate. Many would say that comparing Newton and Einstein is like comparing apples and oranges, but what really matters is that people are appreciating the huge amount that both these physicists achieved, and that their impact on the world stretched far beyond the laboratory and the equation."

Lord May continued: "The really important question now is where the Einsteins and Newtons of the future are going to come from? The problems in physics education highlighted earlier this week by the Smithers report make this question more pressing than ever."

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