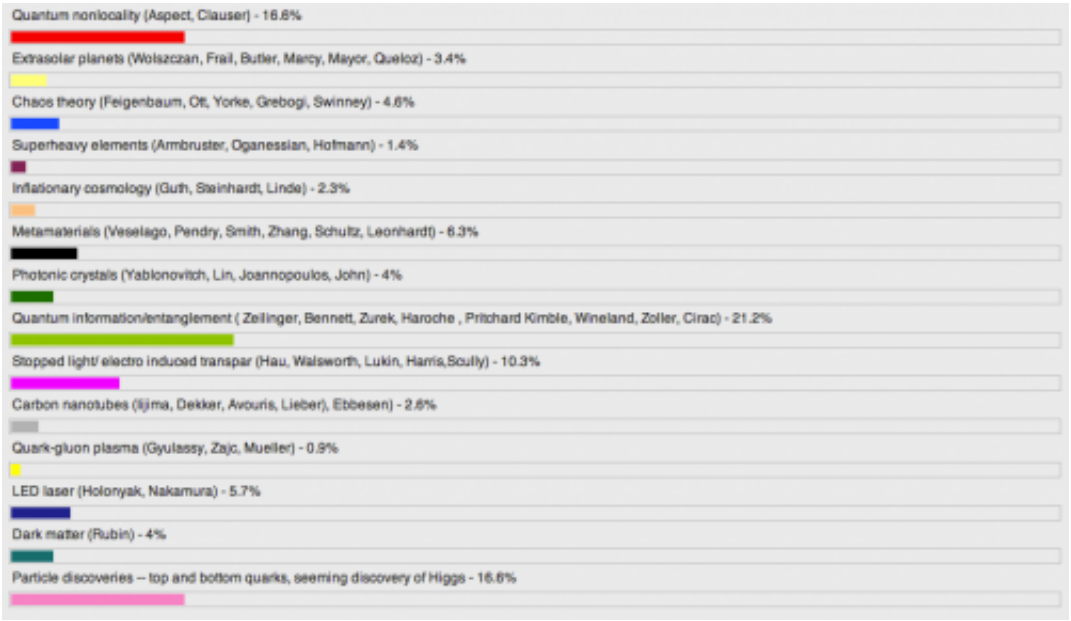
Physics Nobel Prize poll: Quantum experiments and particle discoveries are the top picks

October 2 2012



List of topics and their respective percentages of the vote.

For the past month the Joint Quantum Institute (JQI) has sponsored a website allowing visitors to vote for the topic they believe will capture this year's Nobel Prize for physics. The site offered 14 Nobel-worthy topics and some representative names to go with each topic. A total of 350 votes were cast in the JQI poll, and the results are enumerated below.

It is of course difficult to predict winners. Citations, excellence of research, lifetime efforts (although not officially a qualification), theory-vs-experimental, the nature of the past few Nobel awards, and the difficulty for large collaborative efforts (finding a new quark, for instance) in choosing no more than three deserving awardees are all factors taken into account by the Swedish Academy. In the end we'll only know for sure who won on October 9.

The top vote getter in the poll was the topic of quantum information, including work on such things as quantum bits (qubits), the processing of quantum information, and the teleportation of quantum states. Tied for second place were the discovery of elementary particles—-such as the top and bottom quarks and, more recently, the apparent discovery of the Higgs boson—-and demonstration (in the 1970s and 1980s) of quantum entanglement. The fourth place finisher was the subject of slowed and stopped light.

Provided by Joint Quantum Institute

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