Q2 2026

Readovia Aerospace Report

READOVIA.COM

The Readovia Aerospace Report: Q2 2026

Commercial Space Enters a New Phase

Q2 2026 marked a milestone quarter for commercial space: SpaceX completed a record-breaking public debut, NASA returned astronauts to deep space for the first time in over fifty years aboard Artemis II, and satellite-to-phone connectivity took a meaningful step from concept toward reality. SpaceX also confirmed it expects Starship to begin commercial payload delivery in the second half of 2026, following the debut test flight of its upgraded Version 3 vehicle. Together, these developments point to an industry moving from experimental to industrial scale, with several of its biggest proof points still ahead this year.

Every quarter now seems to bring a milestone that would have been the story of the decade five years ago. Q2 2026 delivered several at once — a landmark IPO, a rocket moving closer to carrying paying customers' payloads."from test flights to paying customers, and a return to deep space that this generation of Americans had never witnessed firsthand. Here's what actually moved the needle, and what it means going into the second half of the year.

Industry By the Numbers

Metric	Latest Snapshot
Global space economy (2025)	$626B, up ~7.8% year over year
2026 projection	$670B, as Starship moves toward commercial service
Orbital launch attempts (2025)	329 worldwide — a record
U.S. commercial launches (2025)	206 — the highest annual total ever recorded
Satellites deployed (2025)	4,517 — 87% owned by commercial entities
Starlink actively serving satellites	9,543 in operational orbital shells as of Q2 2026

Sources: Novaspace, Space Foundation, Payload orbital launch data.

SpaceX Goes Public, with Starship’s Big Test Still Ahead

SpaceX's record-breaking public debut this quarter reshaped the commercial space conversation, giving public markets direct exposure to a company that has quietly become the backbone of the launch industry. The offering arrived alongside the debut test flight of Starship Version 3, the upgraded vehicle SpaceX is counting on to carry both Starlink's next-generation satellites and, eventually, NASA astronauts to the lunar surface.

In its own IPO filing, SpaceX said it expects Starship to begin commercial payload delivery — carrying paying customers' satellites and cargo, rather than test payloads — in the second half of 2026. That timeline makes the back half of the year real proving ground for the vehicle, and for the growth story SpaceX just sold to public investors.

NASA Returns to Deep Space

The Artemis II mission sent astronauts beyond low Earth orbit for the first time in more than five decades, a milestone that reframes NASA's role at a moment when commercial players are capturing most of the headlines. It's a reminder that the current boom in commercial launch and satellite deployment is happening alongside, not instead of, a renewed national push toward deep space and eventually the Moon.

Satellite Connectivity Edges Toward the Mainstream

A quieter but consequential story this quarter: new satellite technology is bringing direct-to-phone cell connectivity closer to mainstream reality, extending coverage to places traditional cell networks don't reach. It's an early sign of where the industry's next wave of growth is headed — not just launching more satellites, but making the connectivity they provide invisible and automatic for everyday smartphone users, no special equipment required.

Also on the Runway: Virgin Galactic's Next Spacecraft

Virgin Galactic said its new Delta-class spacecraft remains on track for a first flight later this year. If the timeline holds, it would mark the company's return to commercial spaceflight after a multi-year development effort, and it's one of the storylines worth watching as 2026 continues.

The Readovia Lens

Q2 2026 gave commercial space its long-awaited public debut, with SpaceX's IPO validating years of investor appetite. Two of the quarter's biggest storylines are still ahead: Starship's shift from test flights to paid commercial deliveries, which SpaceX expects in the second half of 2026, and Virgin Galactic's next-generation spacecraft, on track for its first flight later this year. Meanwhile, NASA's Artemis II moved deep-space exploration forward on a separate track, a reminder that government and commercial space are advancing side by side, not one replacing the other.

What to Watch in Q3

Q3 will test whether the momentum established during the first half of 2026 can translate into reliable execution. After the last-second abort of its July 16 launch attempt, SpaceX’s next Starship flight will be watched as both a technical milestone and an early test of the commercial plans presented to new public investors. Progress in direct-to-phone satellite service and Virgin Galactic’s Delta-class spacecraft program will provide additional evidence of whether the year’s biggest commercial-space ambitions are moving closer to dependable, real-world operations.

Continue Exploring (Related Articles)

- Could Your Next Cell Signal Come From Space? New Satellites Bring That Future Closer
- SpaceX Goes Public in Record-Breaking Debut, Opening a New Era for the Space Economy
- Virgin Galactic Says New Spacecraft Remains on Track for First Flight This Year
- NASA Sends Astronauts Back to Deep Space in Historic Artemis Moon Mission