

Perspective on Public Opinion

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Public Supports Central Management of Used Nuclear Fuel by 3 to 1 Margin

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Since the passage of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, public opinion surveys have found consistent national support for centralized disposal of used nuclear fuel. Although few Americans closely follow the progress of used fuel management, focus groups and surveys reveal that people like knowing there is a clear plan of action for disposal and that progress is being made.

Based on scientific information gathered from several sites, Congress in 1987 selected Yucca Mountain as the location for further study to determine if the desert ridge is a suitable location for a federally operated underground repository.

Following the conclusion of a multi-billion dollar study, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is expected to issue a site recommendation report. This report,

due in 2001, will be sent to the president by the secretary of energy, along with the comments of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and an independent scientific panel, the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board. The president will need to give his approval for the DOE to apply to the NRC for a license for the repository.

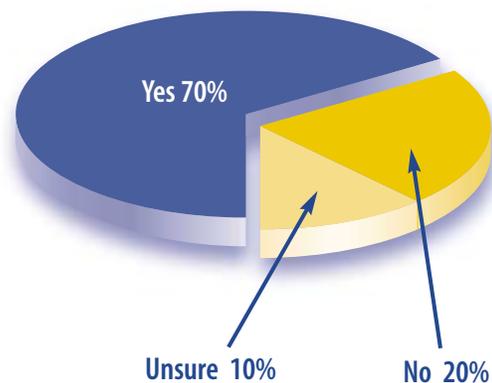
Key Findings

A November 2000 survey of 500 college graduates who are registered to vote asked about the U.S. Department of Energy's site characterization study at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. The survey found more than 3-to-1 support for presidential approval to move forward with a nuclear fuel disposal facility at Yucca Mountain, if the federal government's studies conclude that the site is geologically suitable. The margin of error for the sample size is plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

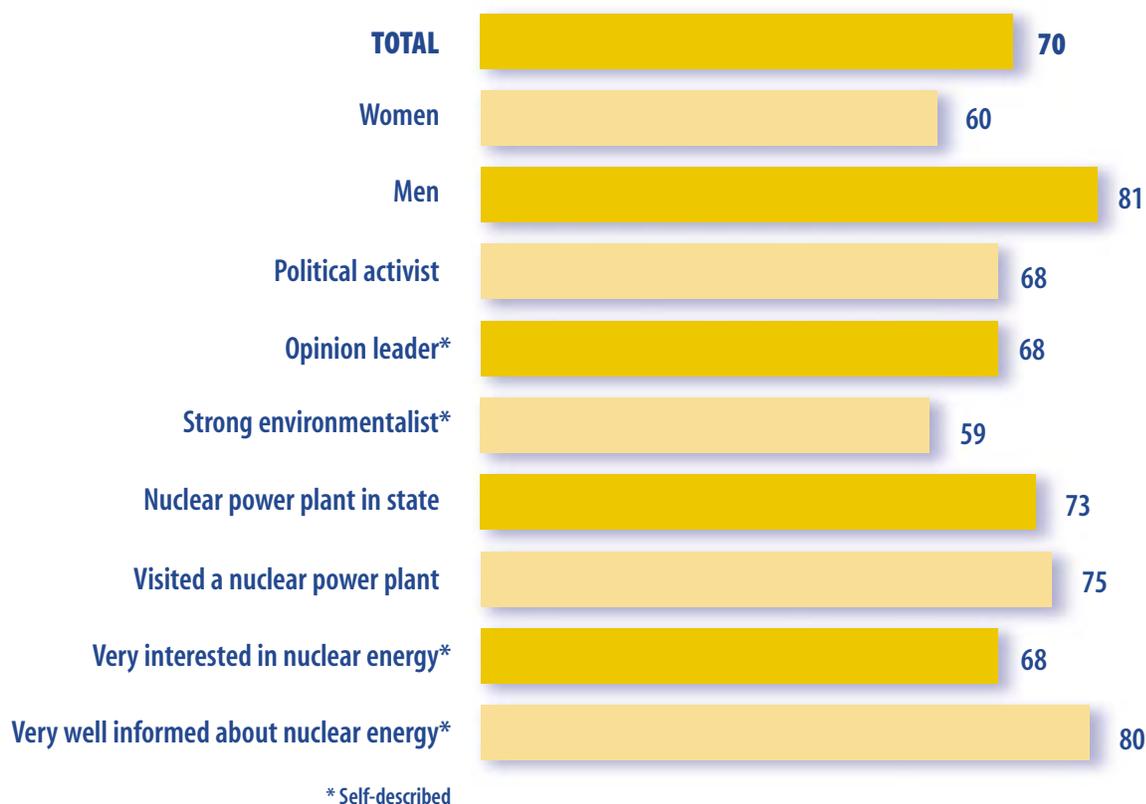
► **Question:** "The federal government is conducting scientific studies of a site 1,000 feet under the Nevada desert to determine if it is a geologically suitable place to build a disposal facility for radioactive waste from the nation's nuclear power plants. If the studies conclude that the site is suitable, the president will need to give his approval for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to proceed with a licensing review. If the studies conclude that the site is geologically suitable, is it your opinion that the president should let the project proceed or not?"

Should President Approve Moving Forward With Yucca Mountain, if the Site Is Geologically Suitable?

A large majority of all population groups said the president should give his approval of Yucca Mountain, if scientific studies determine it is a suitable location.



Percent Saying the President Should Give Approval



Perceived Need To Manage Used Nuclear Fuel

A September 2000 survey found a similar majority of respondents in favor of presidential approval of Yucca Mountain, if scientific studies determine it is a suitable location. Respondents were further asked the reasons for their opinion.

The main reason those surveyed felt that the president should approve building the repository, if the site is recommended, is the belief that we need to dispose of the used fuel. Some volunteered the comment that we need to take

care of our problems now instead of leaving them for future generations. Focus groups also supported this view.

Also, some thought it just makes sense to approve of building the facility, if the studies show the location is safe.

Reasons for saying the president should not approve of building the facility were scattered.

► *Question:* “What are the reasons for your opinion?”

Reasons for “Yes”

Reasons for “Yes”	%
Need to dispose of used nuclear fuel	27
If the studies show it is suitable/safe, why not?	17
Nevada is a good place, out West is good, desert is good	16
Need to take care of our problems/solve problems instead of leaving them for others	7
Nuclear energy is needed/good, I support it	5
Need to remove the fuel from the plants	4
Other reasons for yes	1

Reasons for “No”

	%
Too many uncertainties	5
Unfair to Nevada, Nevada doesn't want it	4
Don't trust the government	4
Underground disposal is not good	3
There are other solutions	2
We should keep the used fuel where it is	2
We should wait until there are better solutions	2
We should use/recycle the used fuel, not bury it	2
Transportation is dangerous	1
Nevada is not safe area	1
Other reasons for no	2

Reasons for “Not Sure”

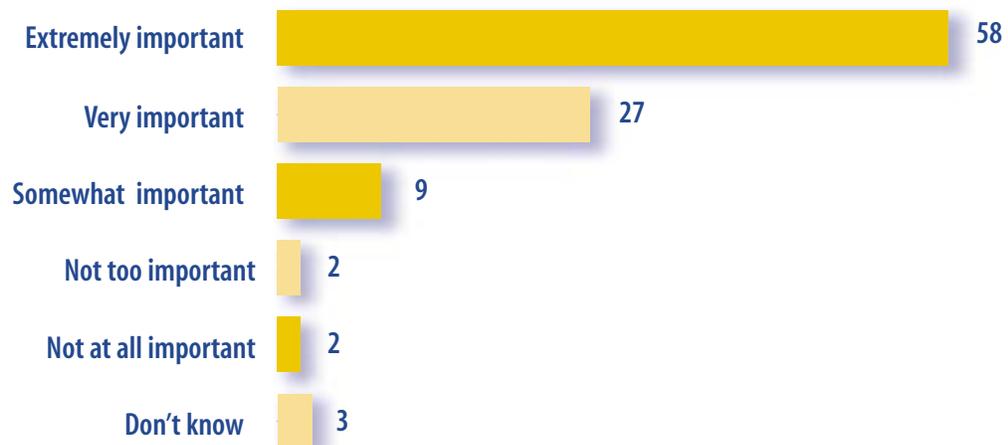
	%
Don't know enough, need more information	10
Other reasons for not sure	2

Views on Used Fuel Are Consistent Over Time

In 1995, a national survey of the general public showed that 85 percent of Americans thought it extremely or very important for this nation to have a clear plan of action for managing used fuel and other high-level radioactive waste. (Bruskin/Goldring 1995, sample of 1,000)

► *Question:* “How important is it for this nation to have a clear plan of action for handling the high-level radioactive waste from America’s one hundred and nine* electricity-generating nuclear energy plants?”

How Important Is Having a Clear Plan of Action?



* Survey conducted in 1995. Currently there are 103 operating reactors in the U.S.

Opinion Leaders and General Public Agree

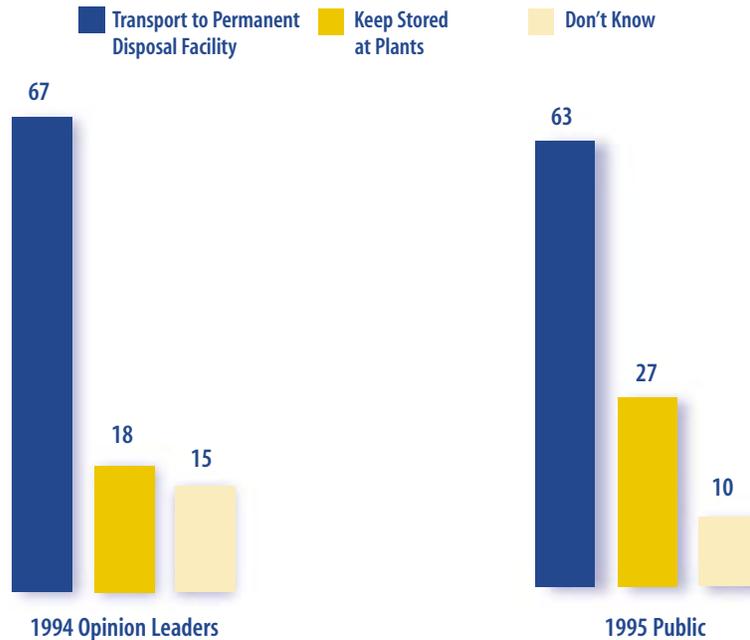
Surveys in 1994 and 1995 showed agreement between opinion leaders and the public that centralized disposal is a better solution than leaving the used fuel at the plant sites. The 1994 survey was by Cambridge Reports among 500 opinion leaders, 50 in each of 10 categories. The 1995 survey was by Bruskin/Goldring among a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults age 18 or over.

► *Question to opinion leaders:* “Which do you think is the

environmentally responsible thing to do—keep the nuclear waste at America’s 109 nuclear energy plants, or transport the waste to a permanent disposal facility?”

► *Question to the general public was similar but asked which opinion was preferable:* “Build additional storage facilities at the many electricity plant sites or build an interim storage facility in an unpopulated desert area and move the waste there?”

Which Is the Better Option for Used Nuclear Fuel Storage?



Percent by Opinion Leader Category

	Transport to Permanent Disposal Facility (%)	Keep Stored at Plants (%)	Don't Know (%)
Opinion leaders overall	67	18	15
Federal legislators	62	30	8
Federal officials	62	20	18
State legislators	70	19	11
State officials	74	12	14
Academics/policy experts	64	12	24
Business executives	75	13	12
Financial executives	78	12	10
Public interest	48	28	24
National media	62	14	24
Local media	72	20	8