

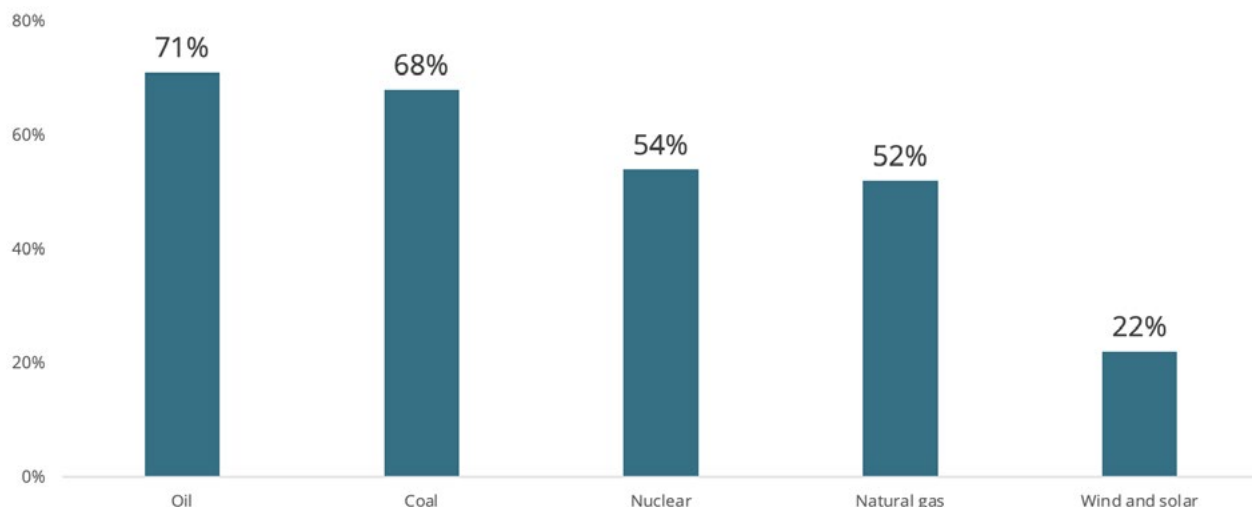
American Attitudes on Nuclear Energy in 2023

ecoAmerica's latest survey provides insights into American attitudes on energy sources, including nuclear power. Support for research and development in wind, solar, and next-generation nuclear technologies signals that Americans favor moving to a cleaner energy future. The findings reveal a nuanced understanding of energy source pollution, with a majority of Americans recognizing the harmful effects of traditional polluting sources like oil and coal. The results also indicate a notable decline in concerns related to nuclear energy. As the country navigates and accelerates progress on its energy future, this new research by ecoAmerica emphasizes the importance of continued education and awareness on energy and climate change.

The Majority of Americans Recognize Polluting Energy Sources

Most Americans see that oil and coal contribute to unhealthy air pollution and climate change. When asked which energy sources contribute to this pollution, 71% of Americans said oil, and 68% of Americans said coal. Just over half (52%) of Americans say that natural gas (which is made up largely of methane but often referred to as "natural gas") contributes, too. And, 54% of Americans incorrectly¹ believe that nuclear power contributes to air pollution, presenting an opportunity for education on energy sources, pollution, and climate change. While only 22% of Americans incorrectly say that wind and solar contribute to unhealthy air and climate change, this number has grown [since 2018](#).

The majority of Americans recognize oil and coal contribute to climate change. How much does each of these energy sources contribute to unhealthy air pollution and climate change? Showing total for "A lot" and "Some"¹, 1,000 national respondents. +/- 3% margin of error.



This chart shows that 71% of Americans say oil contributes "a lot" or "some" to unhealthy air pollution and climate change. 68% say coal, 54% say nuclear, 52% say natural gas, and 22% say that wind and solar contributes "a lot" or "some" to unhealthy air pollution and climate change.

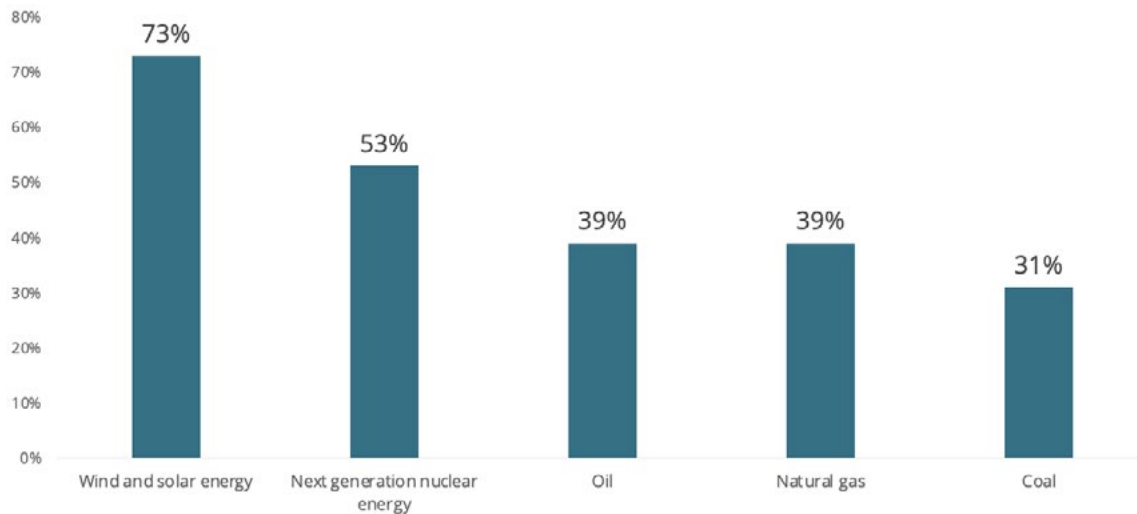
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¹In terms of safety and pollution, coal, oil, and natural gas are responsible for [significantly more deaths](#) due to air pollution and mining, transportation, and maintenance of the plants compared to nuclear, solar, or wind.

Americans Favor Wind, Solar, and Nuclear R&D Over Oil, Coal, or Methane

When asked which energy sources should receive research and development (R&D) funding from the United States over the next few years, most Americans select wind and solar (73%), and over half of Americans select next-generation nuclear (53%). Fewer Americans support spending on R&D for energy that burns fossil fuels, including oil, natural gas (methane), and coal. Only 39% of Americans support R&D spending on oil and gas and only 31% support R&D spending on coal.

Nearly three quarters of Americans support wind and solar R&D. In the next few years, should the United States be spending more or less on research and development of each of the following energy sources? Showing total “A lot more” and “somewhat more”. 1,000 national respondents. +/- 3% margin of error.



This chart shows that 73% of Americans say the United States should be spending “a lot more” or “somewhat more” on research and development of wind and solar energy. 53% of Americans say the US should be spending more on next generation energy research and development, 39% say more should be spent on oil and natural gas research and development and 31% say that more should be spent on coal research and development.

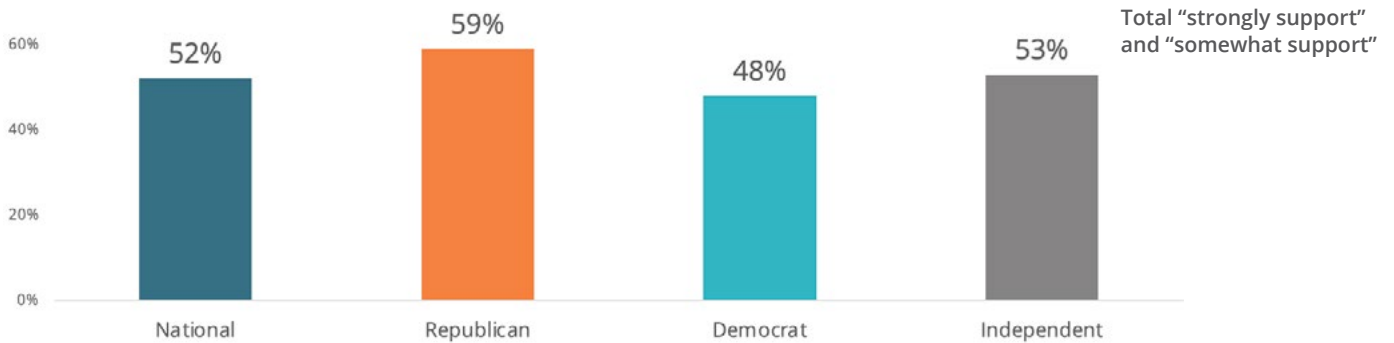
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Over Half of Americans Voice Support for Nuclear Power

America's traditional nuclear power plants produce around 20% of our electricity. ecoAmerica asked Americans if they support nuclear power and just over half (52%) said they either "strongly" or "somewhat support nuclear power". Looking more closely at findings by political affiliation reveals that Republicans lead the support for nuclear energy. Nearly 3 in 5 Republicans (59%) report their support for nuclear, compared to 53% of Independents and 48% of Democrats.

Republicans report higher support for nuclear compared to Democrats and Independents.

America's traditional nuclear power plants produce around 20% of our electricity. Which is closest to your opinion? Showing results for total "Strongly support nuclear power" and "Somewhat support nuclear power" 1,000 national respondents. +/- 3% margin of error.



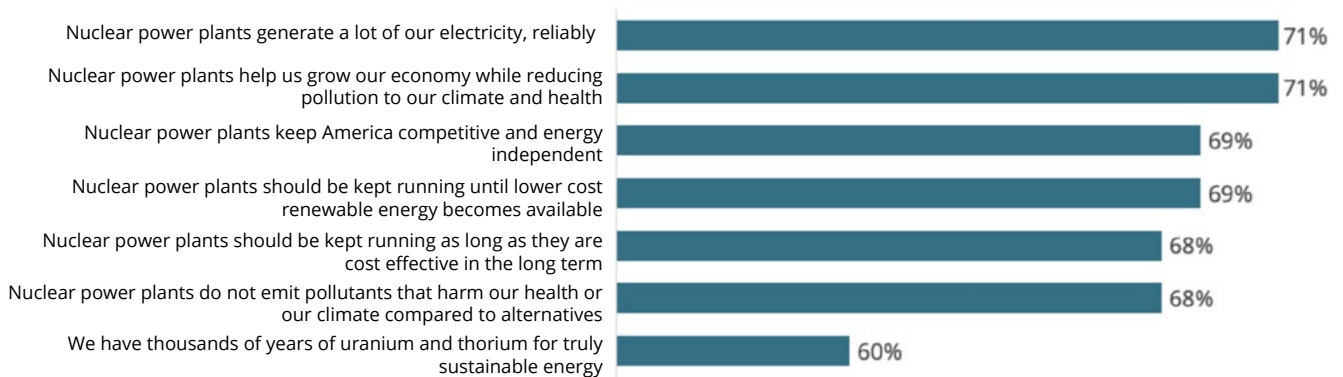
This chart shows that nationally, 52% of Americans say they "strongly" or "somewhat" support nuclear power. 59% of Republicans "strongly" or "somewhat" support nuclear power. 48% of Democrats "strongly" or "somewhat" support nuclear power. 53% of Independents "strongly" or "somewhat" support nuclear power.

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Americans Support Nuclear for Reliability, Economy, Climate, and Health

When asked what the most important reasons are for supporting nuclear was, the majority of Americans pointed to reliability and our economy, climate, and health (71%). Many Americans also say that nuclear power plants keep America competitive and energy-independent (69%), they should be kept running until lower-cost renewable energy becomes available (69%), or as long as they are cost-effective in the long term (68%), and that nuclear does not emit pollutants that harm our health or our climate compared to other alternatives (68%).

The majority of Americans support nuclear for reliability and economy, climate, and health. What are the most important reasons for supporting nuclear energy? Showing “Very important” and “Somewhat important” 1,000 national respondents. +/- 3% margin of error.



This chart shows that 71% of Americans say that it’s “very important” or “somewhat important” to support nuclear power because nuclear power plants generate a lot of our electricity, reliability.

71% of Americans say that it’s “very important” or “somewhat important” to support nuclear power because nuclear power helps us grow our economy while reducing pollution to our climate and health.

69% of Americans say that it’s “very important” or “somewhat important” to support nuclear power because nuclear power plans keep America competitive and energy independents.

69% of Americans say that it’s “very important” or “somewhat important” to support nuclear power because plants should be kept running until lower cost renewable energy becomes available.

68% of Americans say that it’s “very important” or “somewhat important” to support nuclear power because plants should be kept running as long as they are cost effective in the long term.

68% of Americans say that it’s “very important” or “somewhat important” to support nuclear power because the plants do not emit pollutants that harm our health or our climate compared to alternatives.

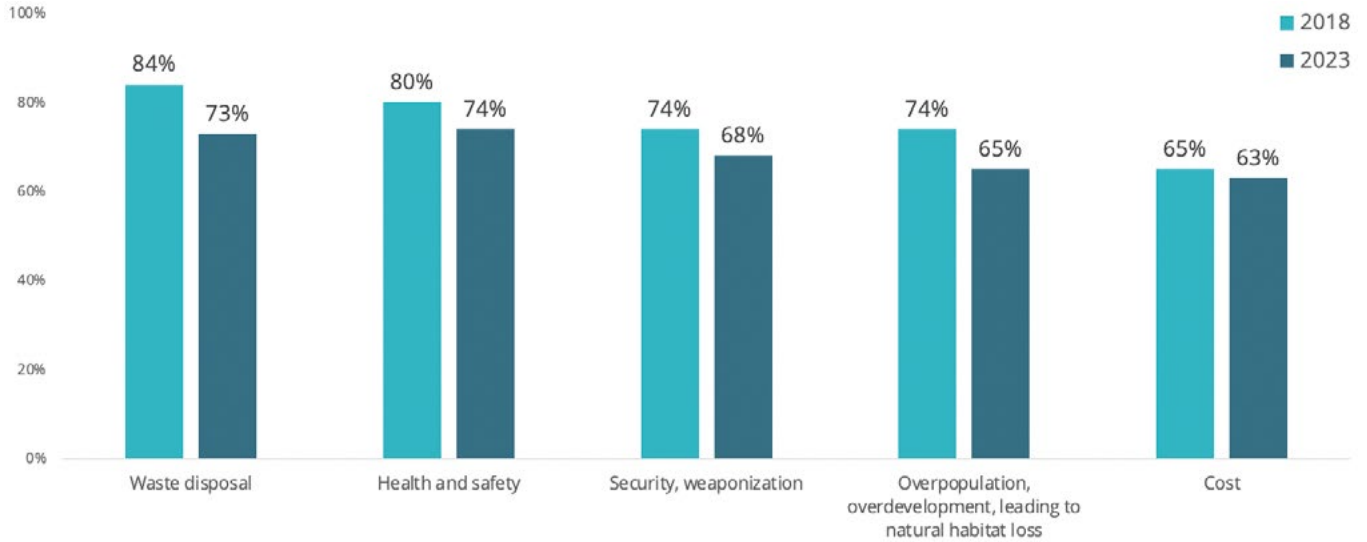
60% of Americans say that it’s “very” or “somewhat important” to support nuclear power because we have thousands of years of uranium and thorium for truly sustainable energy.

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Waste Disposal and Health and Safety Remain Concerns, but Nuclear Energy Concerns Wane Overall

Concerns about nuclear energy remain for the majority but have lessened over time among Americans. As seen below, fewer Americans reported concerns with nuclear energy health and safety, waste disposal, overpopulation, cost, security, and weaponization in the past 6 years from 2018 to 2023.

Concerns over upgrading nuclear energy lessen over time. People have concerns over upgrading nuclear energy. Which of the following make you concerned? 1,000 national respondents. +/- 3% margin of error.



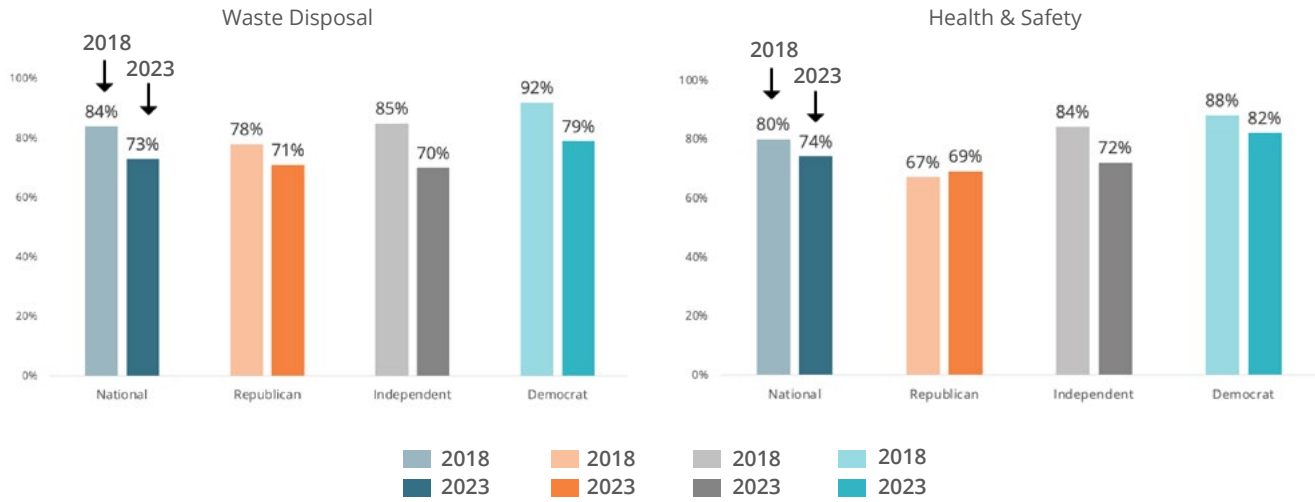
This chart shows concerns about nuclear energy in 2018 compared to concerns in 2023. In 2018, 84% of Americans were concerned about waste disposal compared to 73% in 2023. 80% of Americans were concerned about health and safety in 2018 compared to 74% in 2023. 74% of Americans were concerned about security and weaponization in 2018 compared to 68% in 2023. 74% of Americans were concerned about overpopulation, over development, leading to natural habitat loss in 2018 compared to 65% in 2023. 65% of Americans were concerned about cost in 2018 compared to 63% in 2023.

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While waste disposal and health and safety are top concerns when it comes to nuclear energy, results show that concern is lower for Americans today compared to 2018.

Waste disposal and health and safety remain top nuclear energy concerns, while dropping.

People have concerns over upgrading nuclear energy. Which of the following make you concerned? 1,000 national respondents. +/- 3% margin of error.



This chart compares concerns about nuclear energy in 2018 to concerns in 2023 among political parties. In 2018, 84% of Americans were concerned about waste disposal compared to 73% in 2023. 78% of Republicans were concerned in 2018 vs. 71% in 2023. 85% of Independents were concerned in 2018 vs. 70% in 2023. 92% of Democrats were concerned in 2018 vs. 79% in 2023.

80% of Americans were concerned about health and safety in 2018 compared to 74% in 2023. 67% of Republicans were concerned in 2018 vs. 69% in 2023. 84% of Independents were concerned in 2018 vs. 72% in 2023. 88% of Democrats were concerned in 2018 vs. 82% in 2023.

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Nationally, concern has dropped 11 points when it comes to nuclear waste disposal — from 84% in 2018 to 73% in 2023. Concern about nuclear waste disposal among Democrats and Independents has dropped more significantly from 92% to 79% and 85% to 70% respectively. Concern among Republicans dropped 7 points from 78% in 2018 to 71% in 2023.

National nuclear health and safety concerns have also dropped from 80% to 74% in this same time period. The majority of Democrats are still concerned about nuclear health and safety today, however, fewer are concerned than in 2018 (82% vs. 88%). The survey finds that concern among Independents dropped 12 points from 84% in 2018 to 72% in 2023. Republican concern remains lower than the other political parties at 69%.

Because addressing climate change requires a rapid transition away from fossil fuel energy, American attitudes on energy supply have received increasing attention. The good news is that support for wind and solar energy remains high, support for nuclear power is rising, and oil, coal, and methane continue to have the lowest levels of support from Americans. Still, there is a pressing opportunity to increase education in order to advance progress. We have the technological capability we need to move forward. We must work together to push for equitable climate solutions that protect our health and our planet.

Full data is available in the accompanying [toplines](#).

Methodology

ecoAmerica designed and administered this survey, which was conducted online on September 7-13, 2023 using Survey Monkey. The survey yielded a total of 1,000 complete adult responses and used the Census Bureau's American Community Survey to weigh the national general population and reflect the demographic composition of the US. The sample was drawn from an online panel and the respondents were screened to ensure that they were over the age of 18. The margin of error for the sample is +/-3%. In interpreting the survey results, it is important to note that all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error. Thus, the results of a survey may differ from the results that would be obtained if the entire population was interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of the responses to a particular question. For example, if 50% of the respondents in a sample of 1,000 respondents answered, "Yes" to a particular question, we can be 95% confident that the true percentage would fall within 3 points, or range from 47% to 53%.

Suggested Citation

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ecoAmerica does not hold a formal position on nuclear energy.

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