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6th Biennial Survey of U.S. Nuclear Power Plant Neighbors: Broad and Deep Support For Nuclear Energy and the Nearby Plant Continues

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Close neighbors of the nation's nuclear power plants continue to express broad and deep support for nuclear energy and the nearby plant. The sixth biennial survey of nuclear power plant neighbors sponsored by the Nuclear Energy Institute finds attitudes virtually unchanged over the past decade. Those living closest to the plants show an awareness and appreciation of nuclear energy that far exceeds that of the general public.

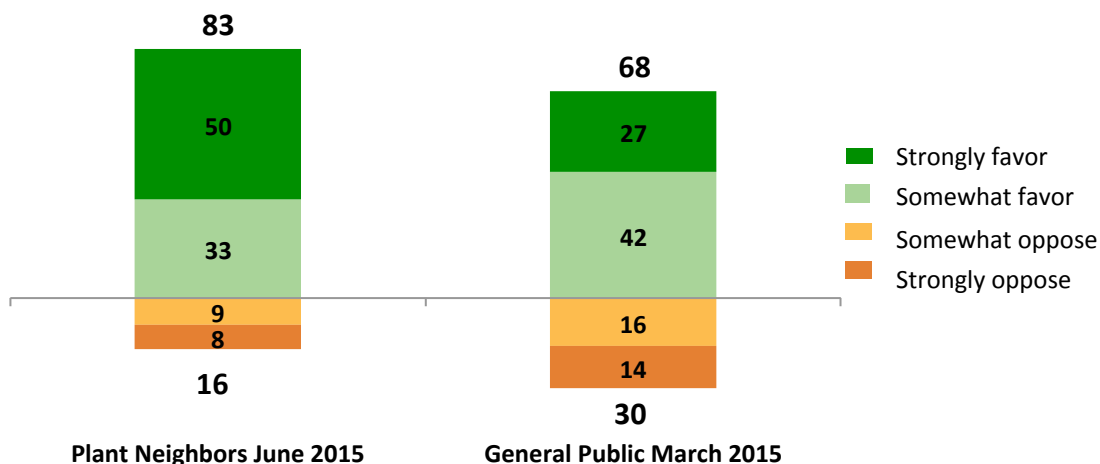
A total of 1,080 nuclear power plant neighbors age 18 and older were interviewed by telephone and cell phone from May 26 through June 13, 2015. The sample includes 18 persons selected at random from each of the 60 sites in the U.S. where nuclear power plants are located. Findings represent a national average; attitudes may vary in individual locations. The survey excluded households with anyone who works at a nuclear power plant. Bisconti Research, Inc. conducted the survey with Quest Global Research. Previous plant neighbor surveys were conducted in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2013.

Favorable Attitudes Toward Nuclear Energy

Familiarity makes a difference. Nuclear power plant neighbors' attitudes toward nuclear energy are more favorable than those of the general U.S. public: 83 percent of plant neighbors favor the use of nuclear energy, compared with 68 percent of the general public surveyed this February.¹ Compared with the general public, twice as many plant neighbors *strongly* favor nuclear energy—50 percent compared with 27 percent.

Favorability to Nuclear Energy

"Overall, do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the use of nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States?"



¹ NEI National public opinion survey in February 2015, by Bisconti Research, Inc. with Quest Global Research, telephone and cell phone interviews with 1,000 nationally representative U.S. adults.

Plant neighbors' broad and deep support for nuclear energy was measured throughout the 2015 survey, with no significant change from 2013:

- 90 percent believe that nuclear energy will be important in meeting the nation's electricity needs in the years ahead, and 60 percent believe nuclear energy will be very important.
- 91 percent agree with renewing the license of nuclear power plants that continue to meet federal safety standards, and 66 percent strongly agree.
- 82 percent agree with keeping the option to build more nuclear power plants in the future, and 51 percent strongly agree.
- 83 percent agree that electric utilities should prepare now so that new nuclear power plants could be built if needed in the next decade, and 51 percent strongly agree.
- 73 percent agree that we should definitely build more nuclear power plants in the future, and 42 percent strongly agree.

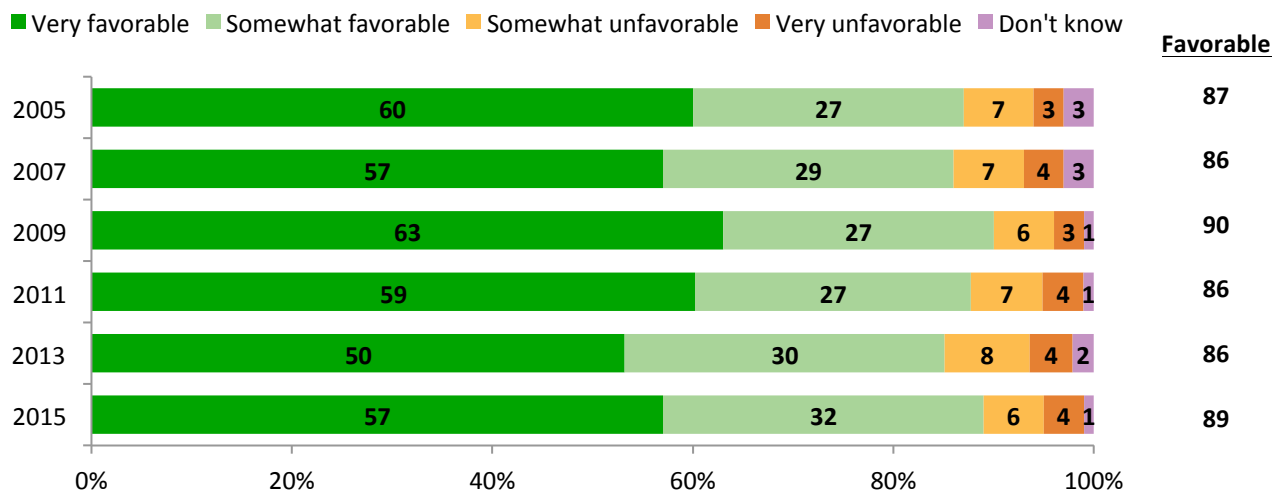
Plant neighbors see nuclear energy's attributes in a favorable light. Majorities associate nuclear energy "a lot" with reliable electricity (72 percent), efficiency (65 percent), job creation (60 percent), clean air (59 percent), energy security (57 percent), and affordable electricity (54 percent). Fewer (35 percent) associate nuclear energy "a lot" with being a climate change solution.

Favorable Impression of the Nearby Nuclear Plant

An overwhelming majority (89 percent) reported that they have a favorable impression of the nuclear power plant closest to where they live and the way it has operated recently. That breaks down as 57 percent very favorable, 32 percent somewhat favorable, 6 percent somewhat unfavorable, 4 percent very unfavorable, and 1 percent unsure.

Plant Neighbor's Favorable Impression of Nearby Nuclear Power Plant Continues

Percentages



Community support is widely recognized; 77 percent believe that the majority of people in their community have a favorable impression of the plant, 12 percent believe community opinion is unfavorable and 11 percent are unsure.

Safety is one of the reasons for this impression: 83 percent gave the plant a high rating for safety (5-7 on a 1-7 scale), while 8 percent gave a middling rating, and 9 percent rated the safety low (1-3). Two-thirds rated safety a 6 or 7.

Neighbors expressed confidence in the company that operates the plant regarding plant safety and environmental protection:

- 90 percent are confident in the ability of the company to operate the plant safely, and 58 percent are strongly confident.
- 82 percent are confident that the company has prepared the plant to withstand the most severe natural events that may occur in the region, and 50 percent are strongly confident.
- 83 percent believe that the company is doing a good job of protecting the environment, and 51 percent strongly agree.

Favorable perceptions of the plant's contribution to economy and jobs, as well as the company's community involvement, also help to explain the high level of support:

- 89 percent agree that the plant helps the local economy, 65 percent strongly agree.
- 89 percent agree that there are good jobs for local people at the plant and in businesses that support the plant, 61 percent strongly agree.
- 81 percent agree that the company is involved in the community, 49 percent strongly agree.

Reverse NIMBY

A not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) attitude does not apply, in most cases, to those who actually live close to existing plants. Not only do most plant neighbors view their existing plant with favor, 69 percent would find it acceptable to add a new reactor at the site of the nearest nuclear power plant, assuming more electricity were needed. That acceptability is lower in the Northeast (58 percent) than in the Midwest (73 percent), South (70 percent), and West (79 percent).

Move Used Nuclear Fuel Rods, Plant Neighbor Say

Plant neighbors have some confidence that used nuclear fuel rods are safely stored at the plant sites (66 percent), but more would like to see centralized storage:

- 82 percent agree that the United States should retool its program for managing used fuel rods from nuclear power plants to focus on consolidating the fuel rods at storage centers while the nation develops a permanent disposal facility.
- 89 percent agree that the federal government should develop a final disposal facility for used nuclear fuel rods, as long as it meets U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission regulations.

Eighty percent believe that used nuclear fuel rods can be transported safely, "as long as secure containment and proper procedures are used."

One More Validation

These findings, repeated in six national surveys, provide one more validation of the clear finding that most plant neighbors hold favorable attitudes toward their plant. They show once again that familiarity with nuclear energy leads to support. They also show that companies achieve favorable attitudes by operating the plants safely, tending to the environment, providing value to the community, and reaching out to neighbors.