

ANALYSING THE IRSN RISK PERCEPTION BAROMETER AFTER THE FUKUSHIMA NUCLEAR ACCIDENT

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The Fukushima accident has left its mark. Nuclear catastrophes - Chernobyl in its time and now Fukushima - exacerbate existing fears about nuclear energy.

Increasing anxiety concerning nuclear risks

Since 1998, economic and social subjects have been at the forefront of concerns of French people but, beginning in 2008, with the onset of the financial crisis and its direct impact on daily lives, these concerns have become even more apparent. Nuclear risks account for a level of anxiety never attained since 2000: 18 % chose nuclear risk in 2011 compared to only 8 % on average in other years.

Nuclear power plants are suffering head-on from the impact of the Fukushima accident, damaging their image of reliability

All of the indices linked to nuclear power plants vary, sometimes reaching historic levels. The French have never been so numerous in considering the risk of nuclear power plants as high (55 % this year) and also so few in expressing confidence in the authorities (24 %). The only index to avoid this drop off is confidence in the credibility of the information disseminated; as many persons interrogated as last year think that the truth is told on the dangers of nuclear power plants.

A major accident: the main obstacle against nuclear energy

In previous years, the IRSN Barometer showed quite a trivialised image of nuclear power plants compared to other industrial activities. But it also revealed that they are the most cited as capable of causing a serious accident or a catastrophe.

Also, it is no surprise that for 42 % of those interrogated "the Chernobyl and Fukushima accidents" are the main arguments against nuclear energy.

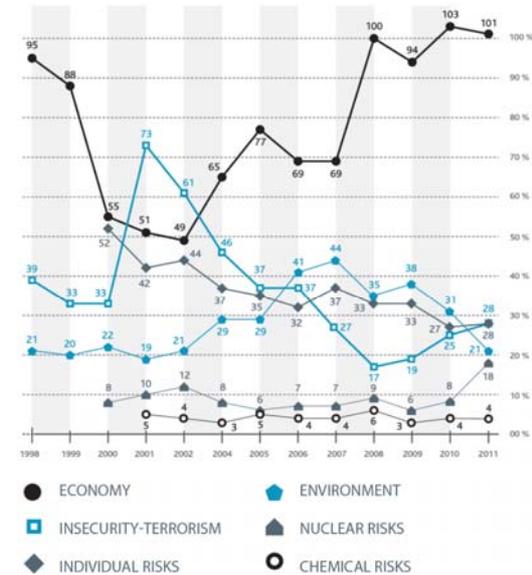
Following Fukushima, the French want to see the principles of transparency and pluralism applied

More than 60 % of those questions consider it important to inform the French public, in detail, as and when any crisis occurs. More than 80 % desire a pluralist evaluation of the safety of nuclear facilities, involving stakeholders and international experts.

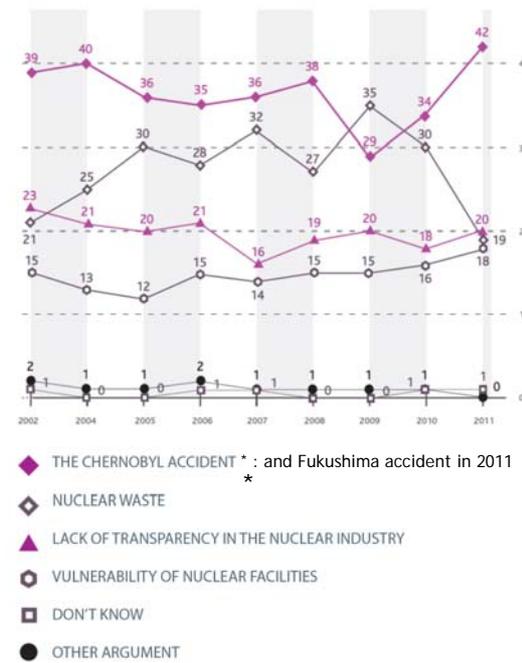
For several years, 89 % of French people have approved of structures for consultation and dialogue bringing together scientific experts, political decision makers, industrialists, associations and the general public to help in the evaluation of risks and their management.

90 % agree with the proposal "Those responsible for nuclear sites need to protect their facilities from all risks, even those considered improbable".

Total responses given to the question "In France, among the following current problems, which for you is of the most concern?"



Arguments against nuclear energy



67

% —
of the persons interrogated consider France's energy independence and the cost per kilowatt hour as the arguments in favour of nuclear energy.
A historic level.

90

% —
of French people agree in saying that, despite all the precautions, an accident that occurs in a nuclear power plant could have very serious consequences.

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MEASURES
get more than 95 % of responses:

- Improve the safety of facilities by taking the human factor and work organisation more into account.
- Increase the number of inspections of nuclear facilities by control bodies.
- Develop research to improve the safety of existing nuclear reactors.
- Improve France's capacity to manage a possible nuclear crisis.

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MEASURES
get between 80 % and 90 %:

- Reinforce means favouring public vigilance and participation.
- Conduct research to develop a new generation of nuclear reactors.

In 1988, IRSN created the Barometer of the perception of risks and safety, an annual opinion survey carried out on the general public by market research institutions. This tool, unique in France in terms of its amount of information and monitoring over time, allows IRSN to follow developments in public opinion towards risks and safety, most notably in areas of health, industry, food and the environment.