# Building Confidence in America's Nuclear Future

May 2026

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WHAT WE FOUND

# Proactive and comprehensive engagement is key to delivering on the promise of nuclear

1. Nuclear has momentum, but public understanding has not caught up
2. Waste remains a stumbling block
3. Information can materially shift support
4. Facts about waste management can reduce fear
5. Younger people may be an important base of support

WHY IT MATTERS

# Support depends on transparency, information, and credible messengers

## Barrier

- Nuclear cues danger
- Waste dominates concern
- Facts move opinion
- Younger audiences are more receptive

## Proof Point

- 50% say “dangerous”: 10% say “safe”
- 74% concerned about waste
  71% about contamination
- 66% more supportive after learning affordability and emissions benefits
- 55% of 18–34 positive vs. 39% of 55+

## Opportunity

- Reframe around safety, reliability, and innovation
- Address waste directly and early
- Lead with practical benefits and credible evidence
- Strengthen support among younger base

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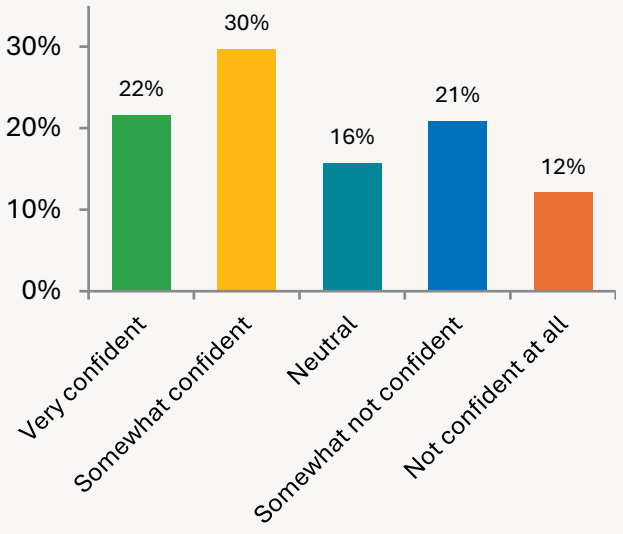
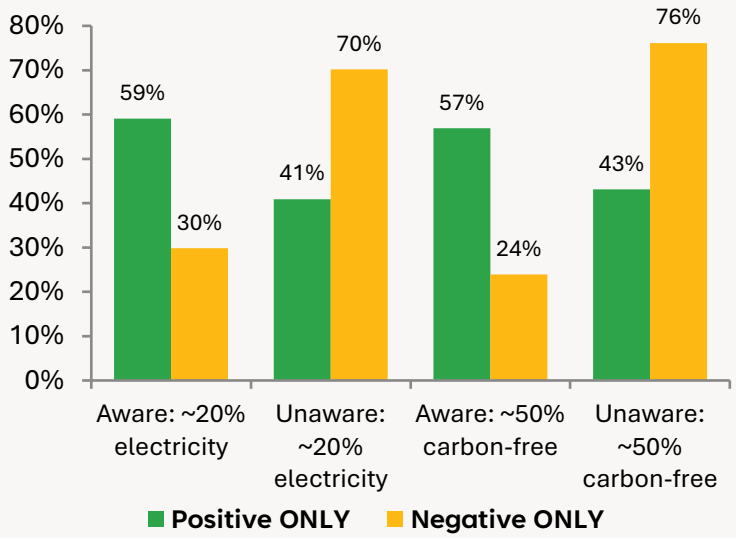
# Americans lack confidence in the future of energy affordability and reliability

People are largely unfamiliar with nuclear's role in America's energy infrastructure but **informing them that nuclear can lower electricity bills and carbon emissions results in increased support for nuclear.**

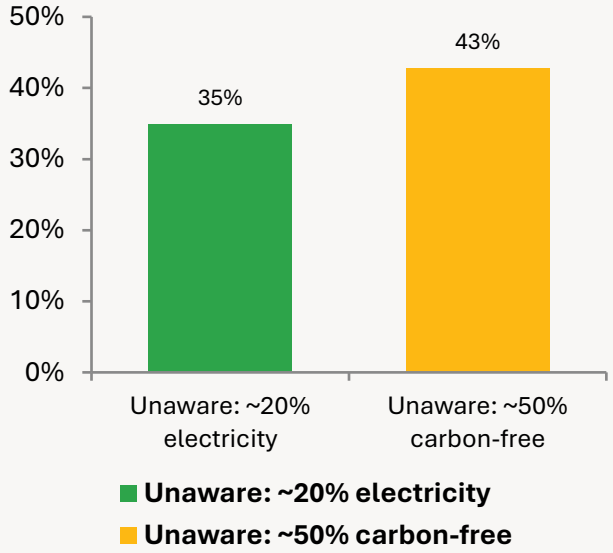
**How confident are you that electricity in the U.S. will be affordable and reliable in 10 years?**




**Those who were aware of nuclear's role in US energy tended to be more positive to it**



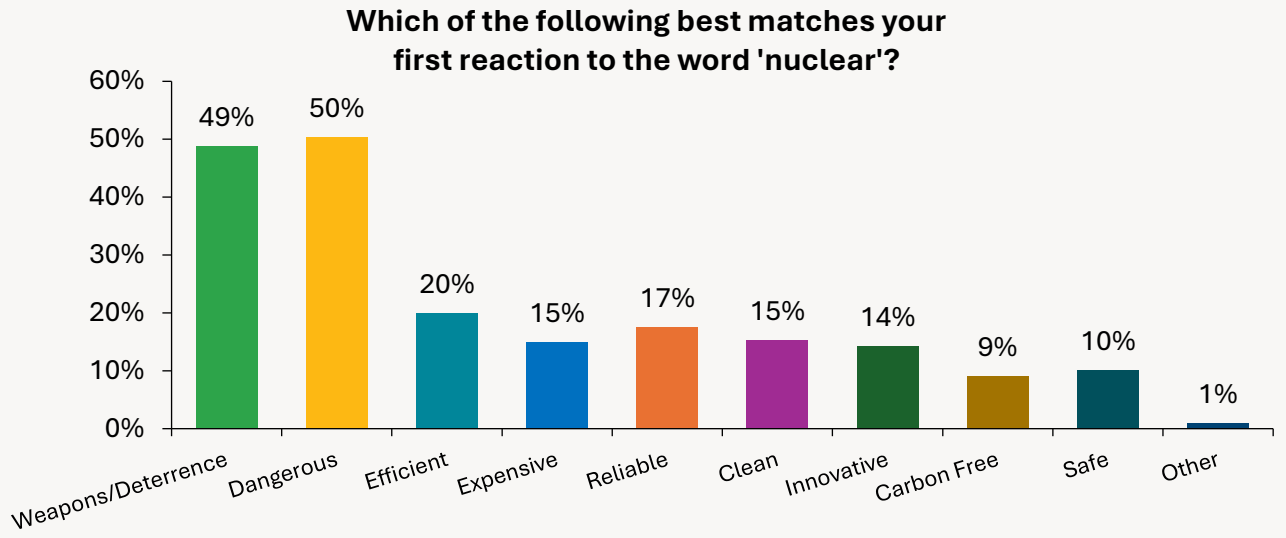

**After learning about nuclear's role in US energy, those unaware became more positive**




*Charts Based on Q1, Q2, and Q3 of Wave 1*

# Nuclear is having its moment but public support is not guaranteed

**Majority of Americans view the term "nuclear" with apprehension:** more than half associate nuclear with "dangerous."



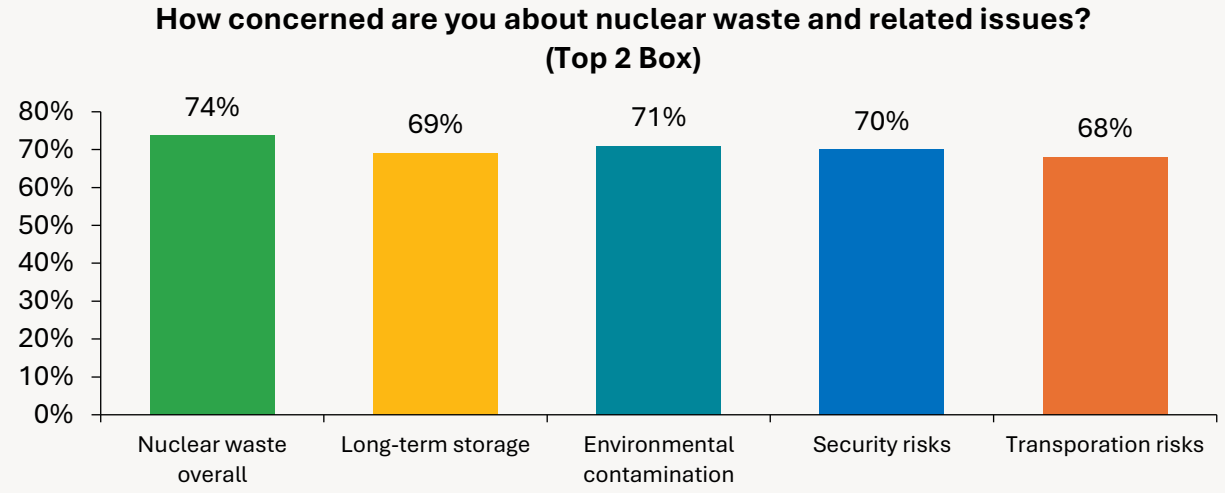




*Chart 1: Wave 1 & Wave 2 Combined, Q3 and Q11*
*Chart 2: Wave 1*

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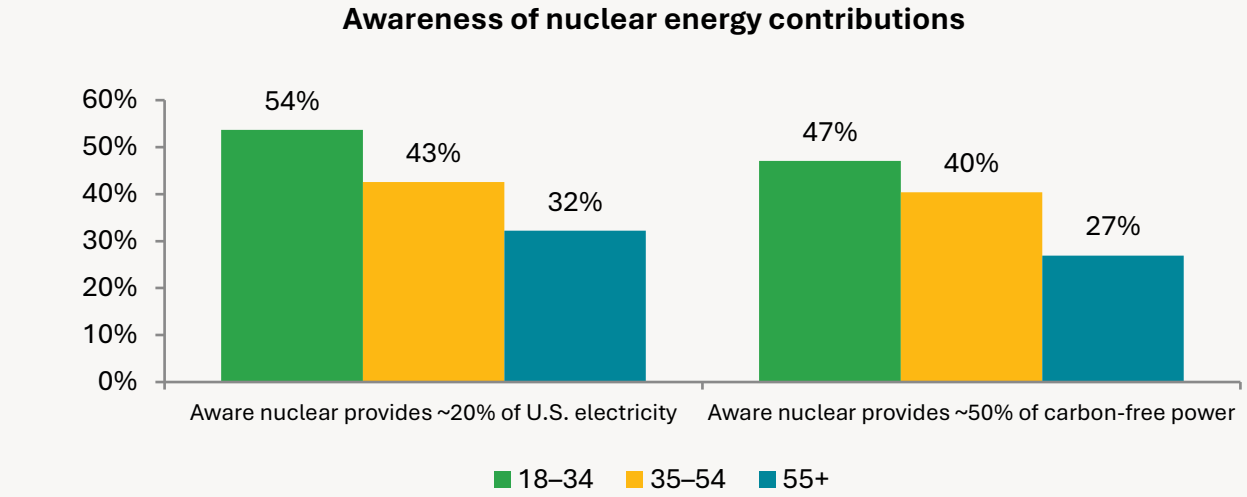
# Younger people are more familiar and comfortable with nuclear energy technologies

Younger people concerned about reprocessing, yet they are **more open to having a facility in their community**.



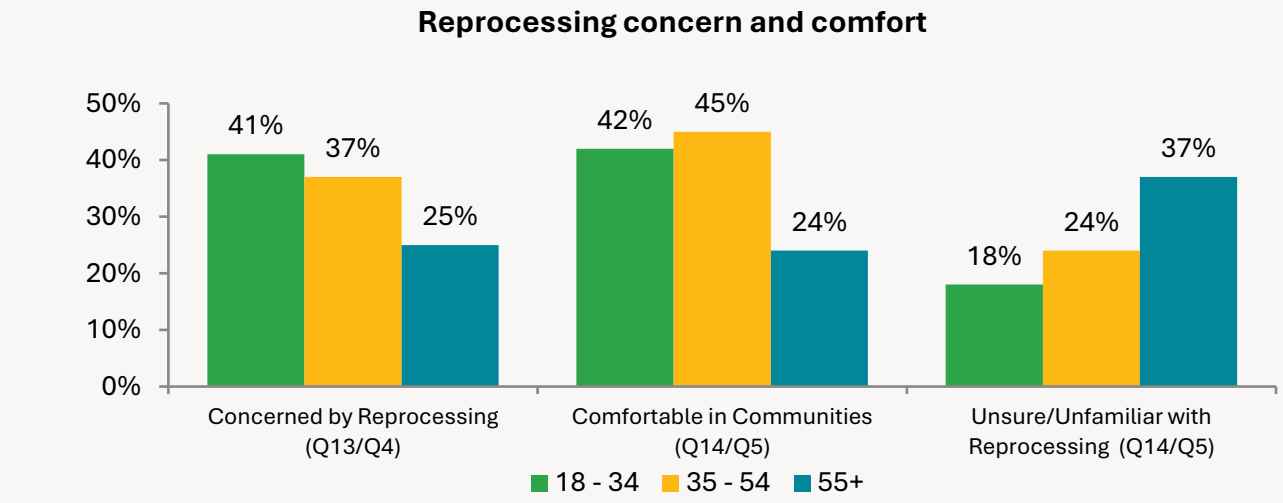




*Chart 1: Wave 1, Q9*
*Chart 2: Wave 1 and 2 Combined Q13 and Q14*

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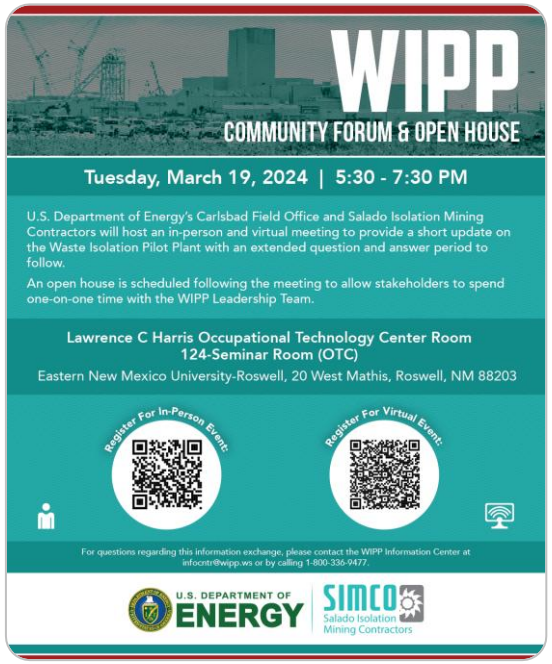
HOW TRUST IS BUILT

# Public engagement leads to trust and understanding

DOE Office of Environmental Management has proven that proactive, transparent and sustained relationship building efforts have solidified trust and support among DOE communities

### Early and Frequent Relationship-Building

### Plain-Language and Translated Materials




### Proactive and Transparent Communication

### Multi-Channel Engagement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# New technologies have a large persuadable contingent

Americans are **less familiar with SMRs, Microreactors, and Advanced reactors than with traditional nuclear power plants**, providing an opportunity to educate the moveable middle

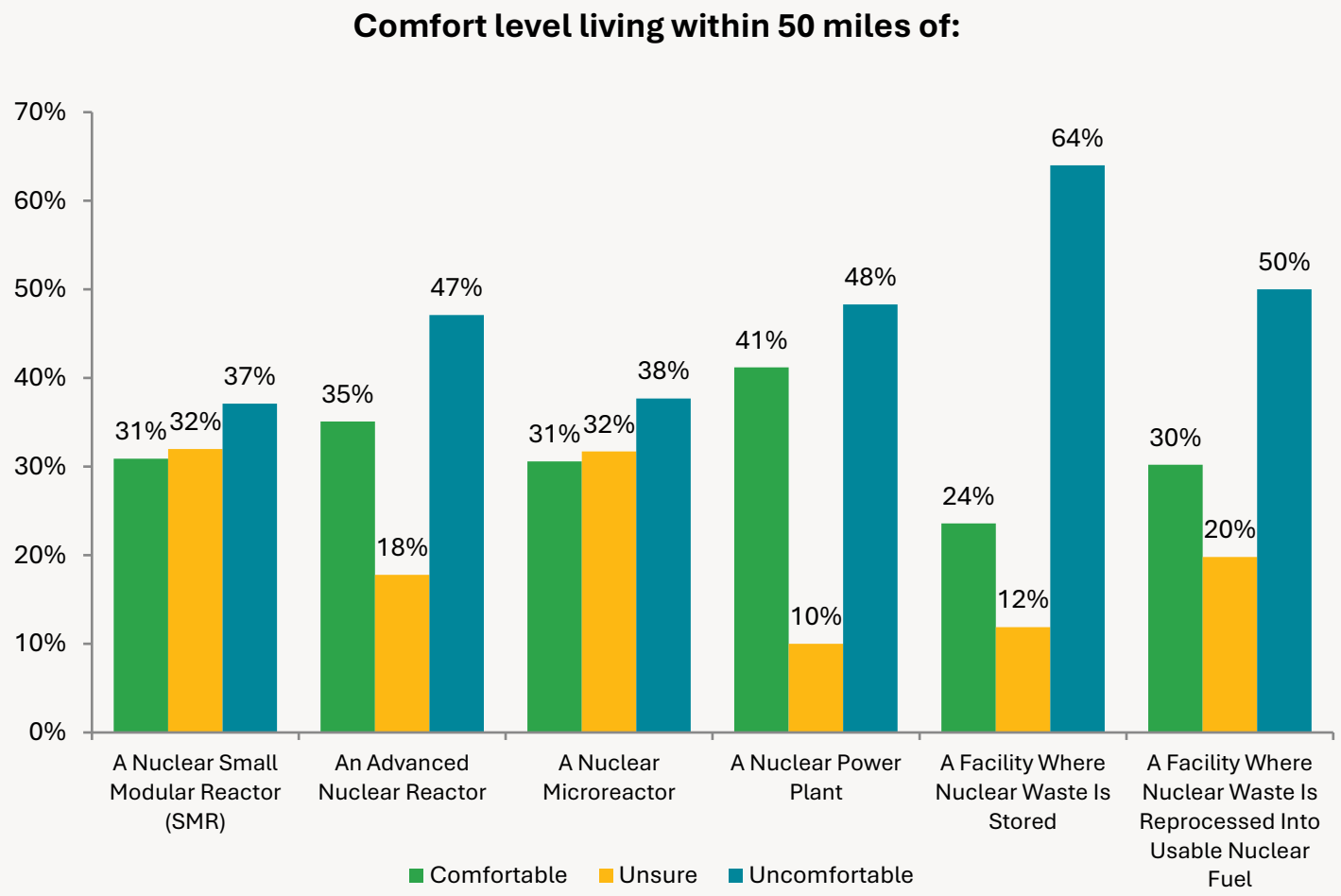


*Chart: Wave 2, Q2*

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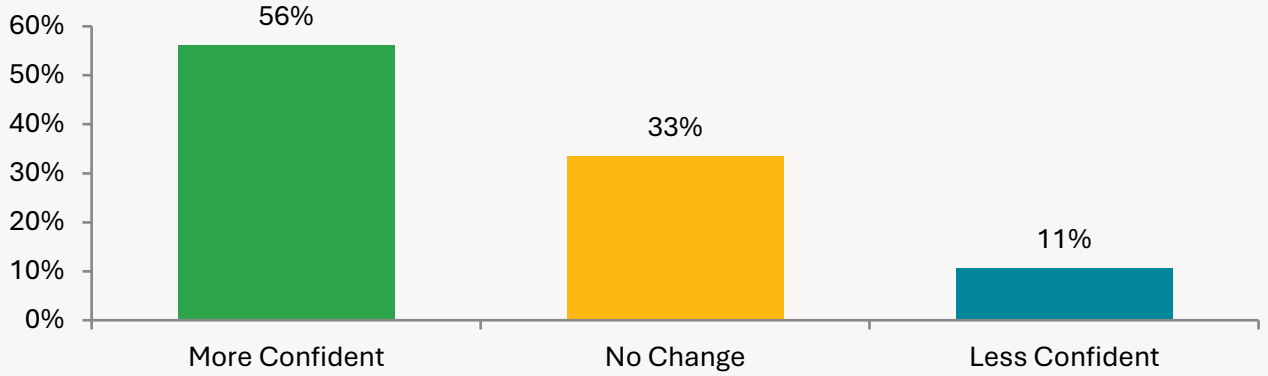
# Waste is a central vulnerability but education increases comfort.

While nearly **three quarters of people noted concerns about nuclear waste** overall, after learning of the industry's nuclear waste storage safety record, **a majority stated their confidence in nuclear increased**, even among those who initially indicated concern.

**If you learned U.S. nuclear waste has been stored for decades with no major leaks or health impacts, how would that affect your view?**




**Those who were concerned about nuclear waste became more confident after learning of the safety record**

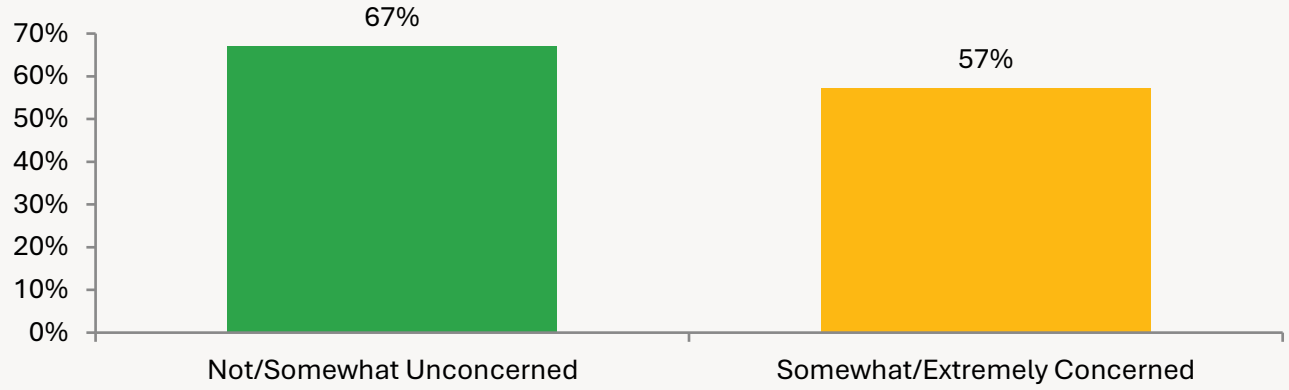



*Chart 1: Wave 1 Q12 & Wave 2 Q3 Combined*
*Chart 2: Wave 1 Q11*

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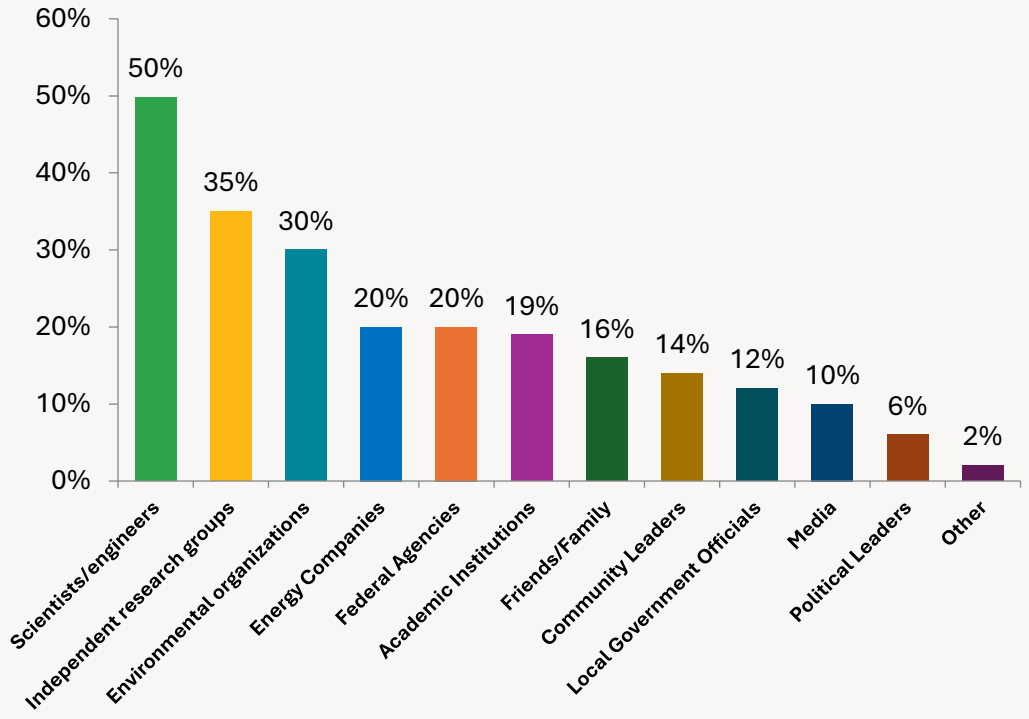
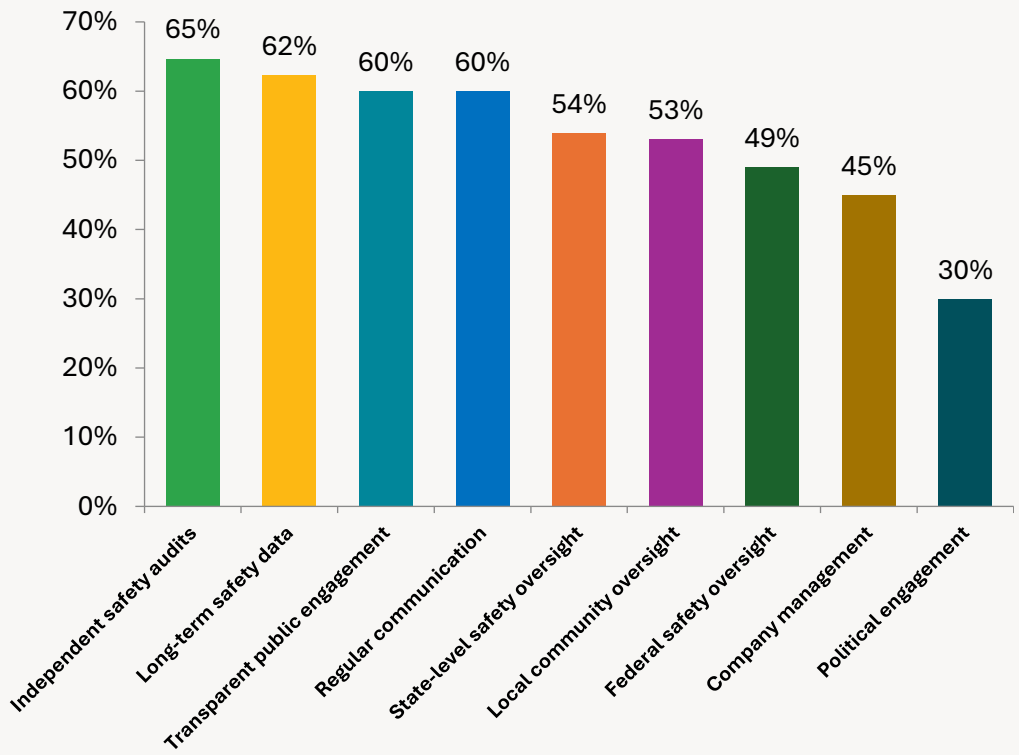
# Trusted messengers and safety messaging matter

Scientists/engineers, independent research groups, and environmental organizations are most trusted. Independent safety audits and long-term safety data are the top drivers of comfort.

**Trusted sources for nuclear safety information**




**Drivers of comfort near nuclear energy facilities**




*Charts: Wave 1, Q7 and Q6*

THE TAKEAWAY

# Nuclear Needs a Communications Strategy

Scaling nuclear is not just a technology challenge.

It is a public trust challenge.

The industry needs proactive education, credible messengers, transparent communication, and community engagement before fear fills the information gap

The nuclear waste issue cannot be separated from the overall nuclear innovation discussion

Nuclear support rises when the public is educated on nuclear's safety record and benefits

Engagement and education drive perception

Combining tangible benefits like energy cost savings with safety data and education on the processes can drive lasting and sustainable support

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# Our Methodology

**Ruder Finn ran two surveys of the general US population in April 2026 asking about their perceptions of nuclear energy technologies, nuclear waste, and nuclear waste processing.**

**Wave 1**

- N = 1,000
- 15 Questions
- Covered general perceptions and comfort levels

**Wave 2**

- N = 1,000
- 5 Questions
- Follow-up focused on new forms of advanced reactors

**Results were then broken out by:**

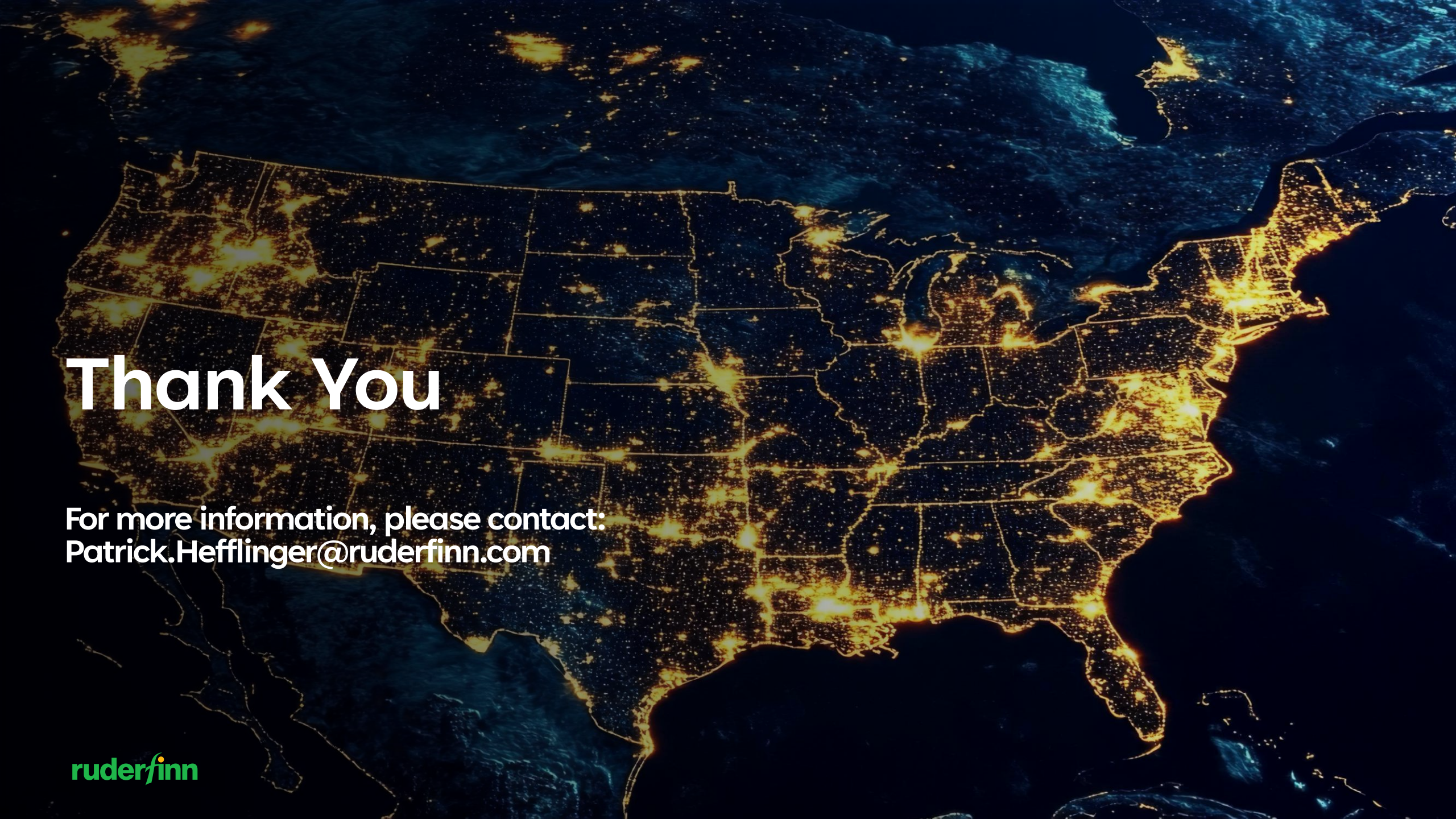
**Positive and Negative Perceptions:** Wave 1 Q3/ Wave 2 Q1 Responses

- **Positive** = Only selecting any of the following: Clean, Carbon Free, Safe, Efficient, Reliable
- **Negative** = Only selecting any of the following: Dangerous, Weapons / Deterrence, Expensive

**Age:** 18 – 34, 35 – 54, 55+

**Income:** <$50k, $50k – $99k, $100k - $149k, $150k+

**Education:** High school or less, Some College, Bachelor's Degree, Graduate Degree and Higher


Thank You
For more information, please contact:
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