

2009

# Community Survey Results

Yucca Mountain Project



## Introduction

The characterization of Yucca Mountain as a potential site for the first high-level nuclear repository is opposed by the State of Nevada. Responses to surveys conducted by the State of Nevada (most recently 2006) suggest that roughly 70 percent of Nevada residents would vote against a repository if they actually had a chance to vote on the project. State survey results primarily reflect the opinions of Clark County residents.

The State survey was intended to represent the views of the State in general, but provides little or no insight about the opinions and beliefs held by Nevada residents outside Clark County. The State survey results primarily reflect the opinions of Clark County residents with little or no insight of residents in other parts for the State

As part of their impact assessment and oversight programs, several counties initiated community surveys to gage opinions about the Yucca Mountain Project and nuclear power. Survey questions were directly related to the Yucca Mountain project and more generally related to nuclear energy, and transportation of nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain. Several years of community survey results are available for comparison and trend analysis. In 2006 Lander County began an effort to track public opinion about the Yucca Mountain project. Mineral County has tracked survey results for the last several years and Churchill County has two years of survey data.

Additionally, survey data collected in Nevada can be compared against survey responses to national survey efforts. The Nuclear Energy Institute has more than a decade of monitoring public perspectives on nuclear energy, storage of waste and waste transportation.

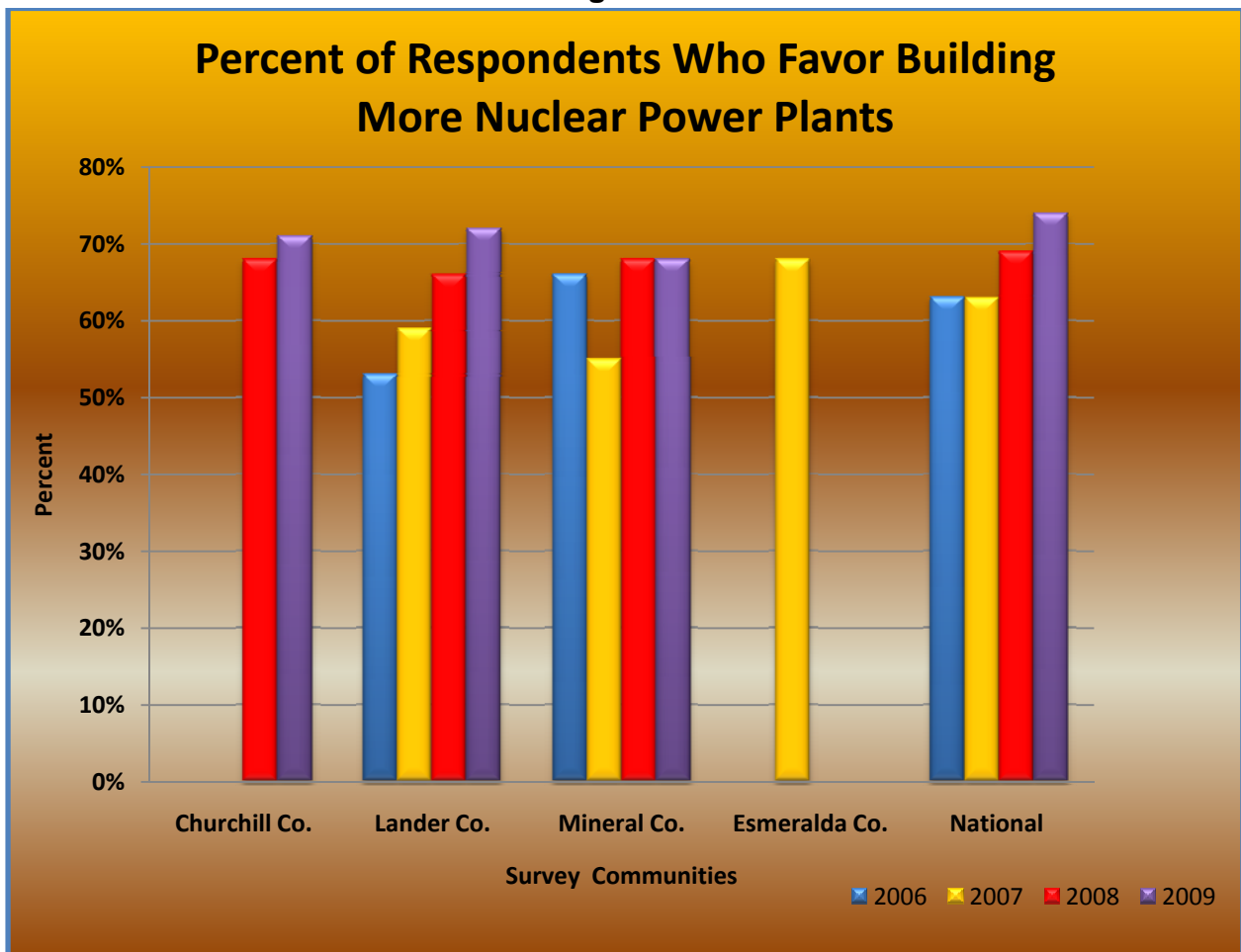
The comparison and trend analysis of survey responses are intended to achieve the following:

- Identify trends in views of toward nuclear power, transportation and waste storage;
- Compare national survey results against community survey results in Mineral, Lander, Churchill and Esmeralda Counties; and,
- Determine the extent to which trends in the four communities are similar to those found in national survey results.

## Respondents' Views about Nuclear Power Generation

There are two survey questions used to gauge the support for nuclear power generation among survey respondents. The results from various survey efforts over the last 5 years are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The first survey questions asked whether survey respondents favored building more nuclear power plants.

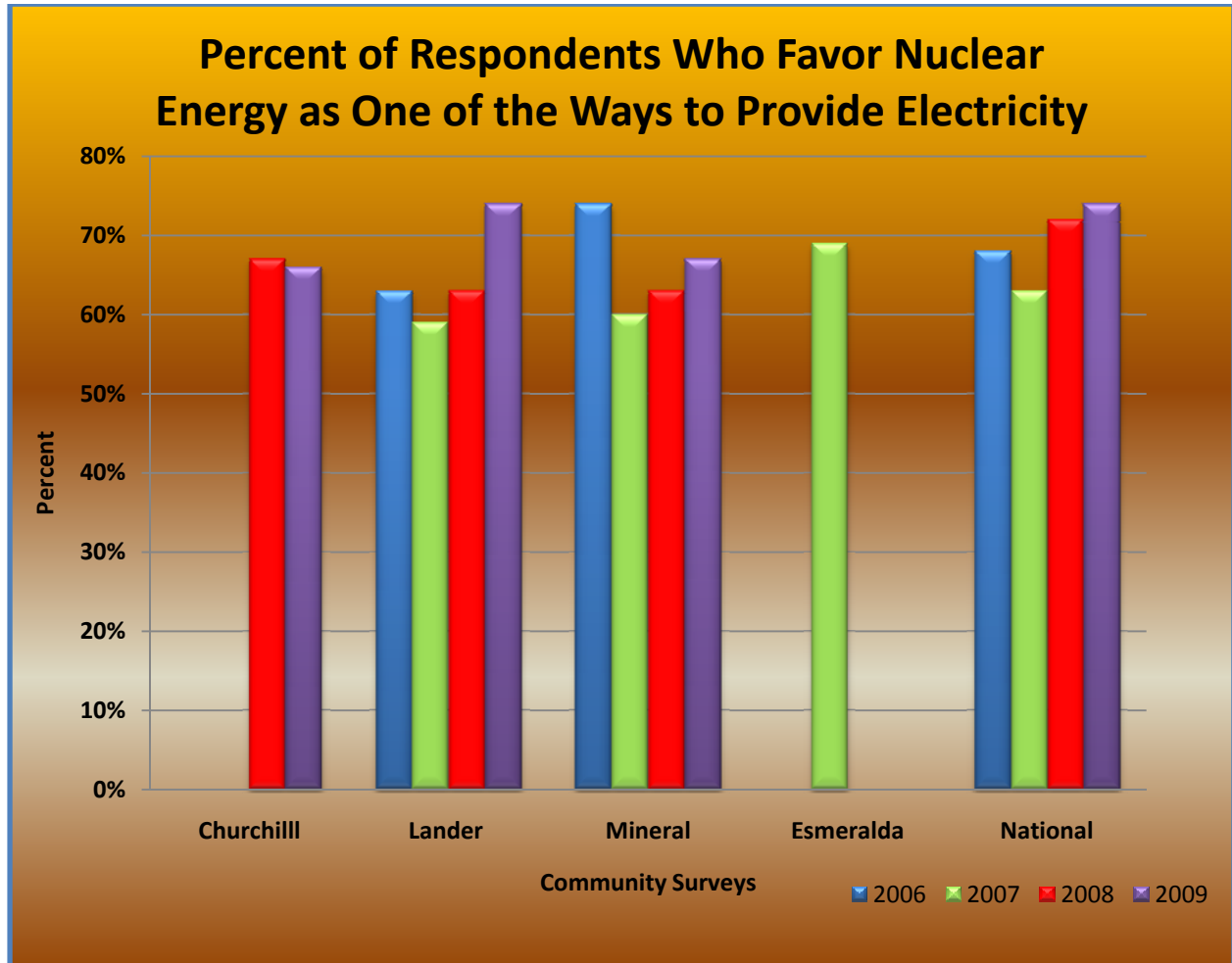
Figure 1



The national survey results were collected by the Nuclear Energy Institute and represent responses from across the United States. Esmeralda County conducted only one survey in 2007. By 2009 the percentage of survey respondents who favor building more nuclear power plants is generally above 70 percent.

Figure 2 shows survey results for another question regarding the support for nuclear power. Specifically, Figure 2 shows the percent of respondents who favor nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity.

**Figure 2**



The survey results in Figure 1 and Figure 2 demonstrates the following:

- There has been a general increase in support for nuclear power over the last several years in Nevada communities and across the nation.
- The support for nuclear power is similar among all communities being surveyed.
- Support for nuclear power generation and the construction of more power plants is generally above 70 percent.

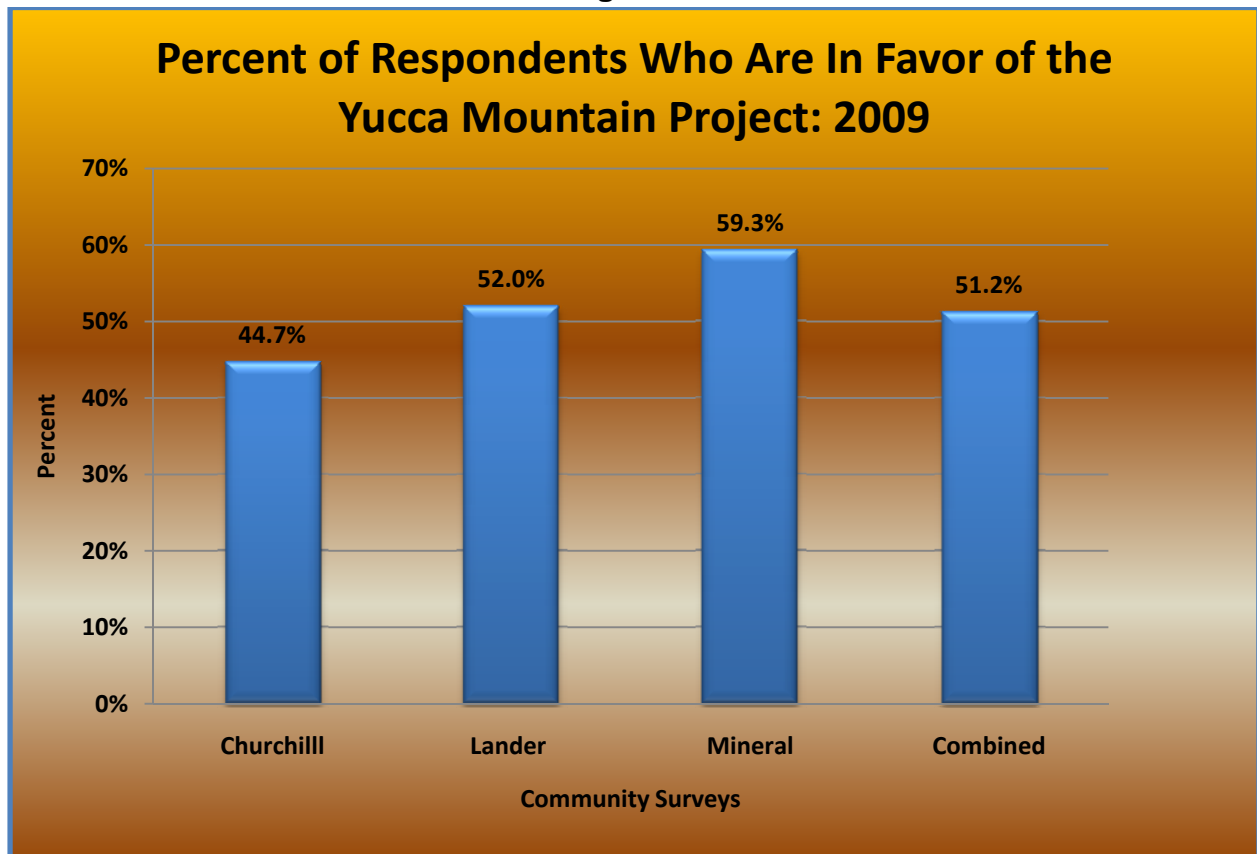
- Since 1998, support for nuclear power generation has generally grown from just over 60 percent to nearly 75 percent support nationwide in 2008.
- Nevada communities show similar levels of support for nuclear power generation as compared to national survey results.

There is no reason to believe that Nevada survey respondents have views toward nuclear power generation that are any different from those across the United States.

### Survey Respondents In Favor or Opposed to Yucca Mountain

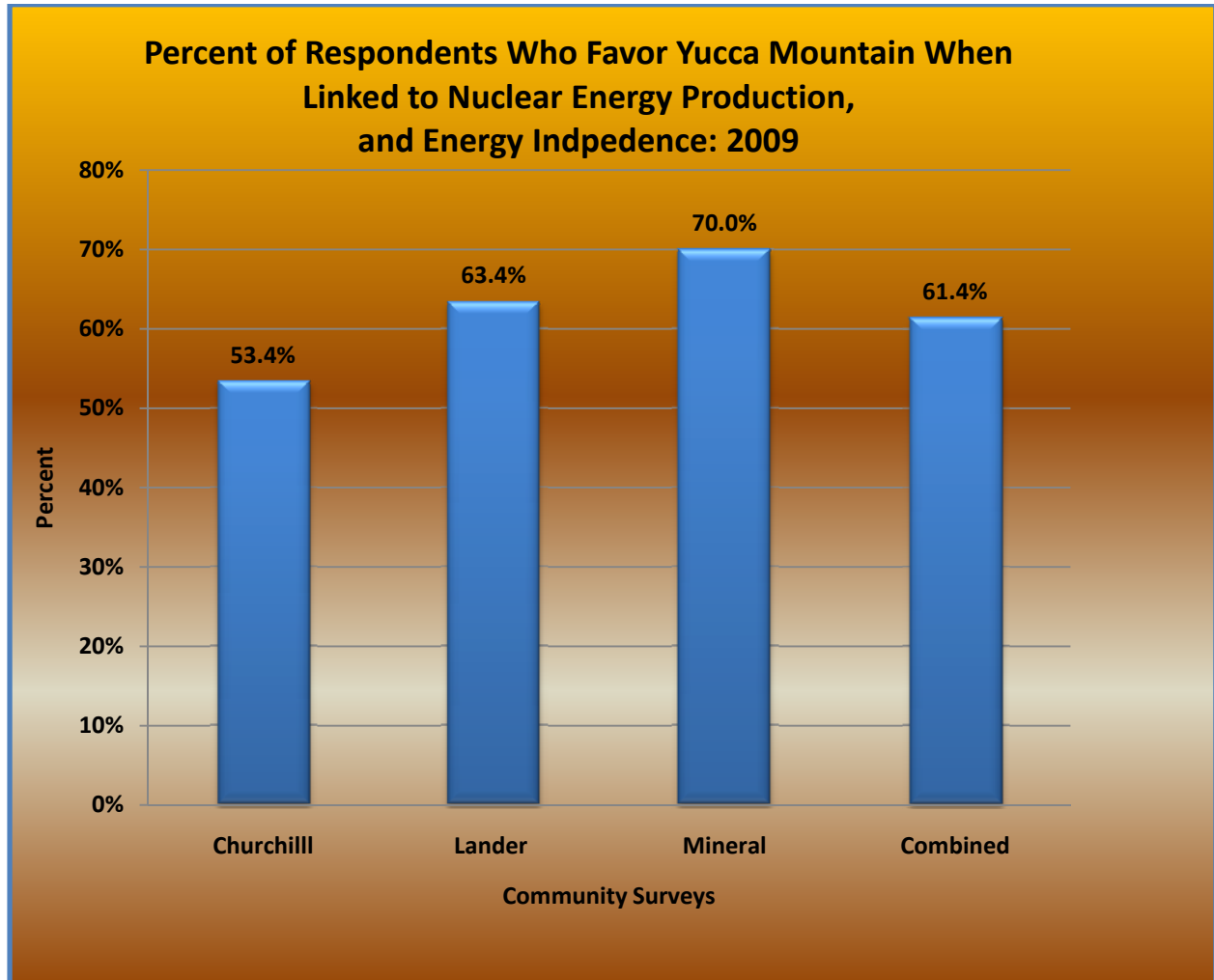
In 2009, the communities of Lander, Churchill and Mineral Counties asked survey respondents whether they were in favor or against Yucca Mountain. It was the first time community survey respondents were asked directly about their views toward Yucca Mountain. The results shown in Figure 3 show the combined total of all survey respondents who favored the Yucca Mountain Project in 2009.

Figure 3



When the Yucca Mountain is linked to Nuclear Power production and the energy independence, the opposition to the Yucca Mountain project declines among survey respondents. Support for the project surges an average of approximately 11 percent. Figure 4 shows the results when Yucca Mountain is linked or described as part of the energy production.

**Figure 4**



The results in Figure 3 and Figure 4 demonstrate the following:

- A slight majority of survey respondents favor the Yucca Mountain project when the results are aggregated. Just over 51 percent of 983 survey respondents favored the project in 2009.
- When linking Yucca Mountain to nuclear power production and energy independence, the percentage of respondents who support the project increased

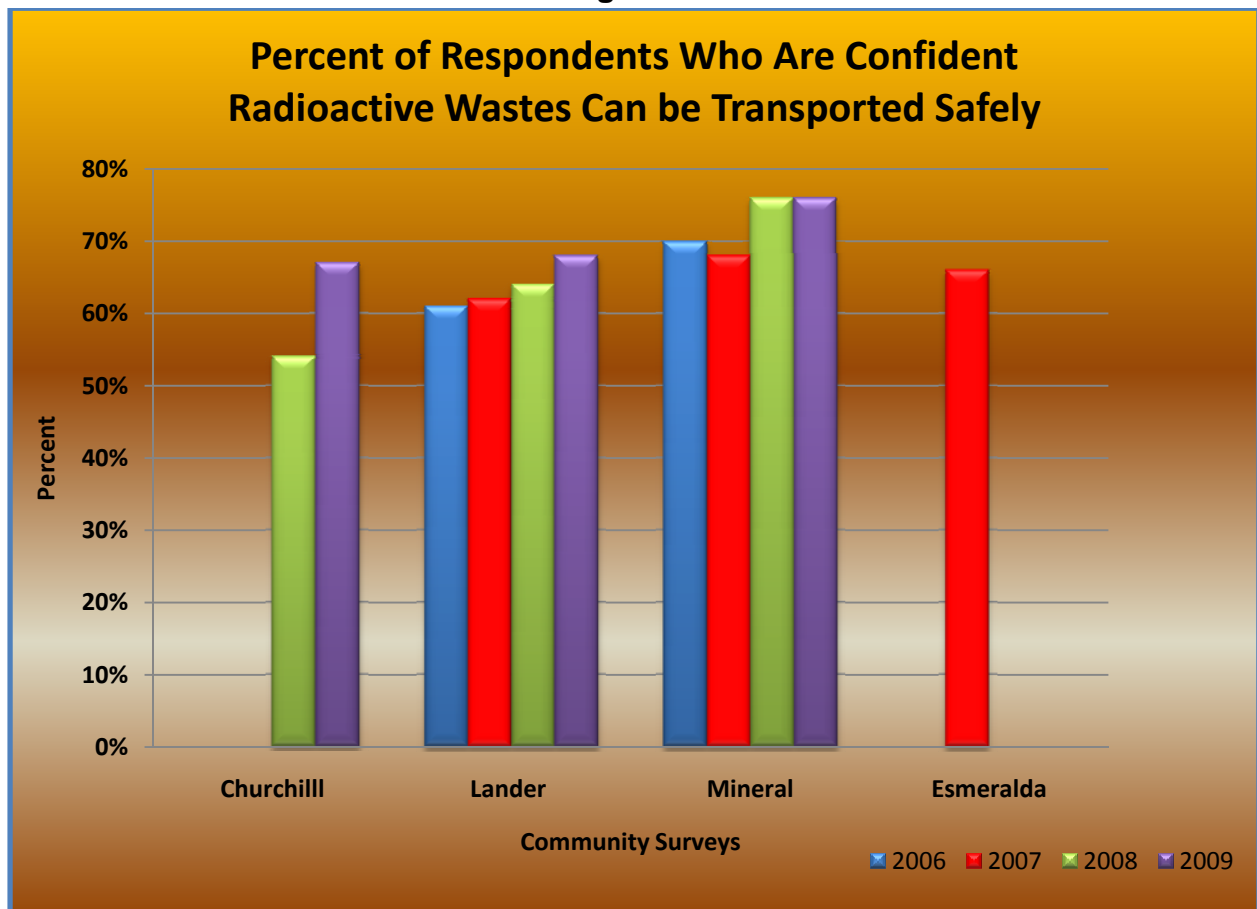
approximately 11 percent across all three survey communities. A full 61.4 percent of the combined survey respondents supported the Yucca Mountain Project.

It is important to note that a certain percentage of survey respondents are unlikely to ever change their opinion toward the Yucca Mountain project. As support for the project reaches 60 and 70 percent levels, there are probably a limited number of people likely to change their minds to the project in the future.

### Respondents' Views Concerning Nuclear Waste Transportation

Survey respondents have always been concerned about the risks associated with nuclear waste transportation. However, when informed about the historic safety record of nuclear waste shipments, the percentage of survey respondents who are confident radioactive wastes can be transported safely increased to nearly 70 percent in 2009 (Figure 5).

Figure 5



It is also interesting to see the correlation between the percentage of those who are confident that radioactive wastes can be transported safely and the percentage of respondents who have a favorable view of nuclear power. The trends for survey questions have moved in the same direction over the last several years.