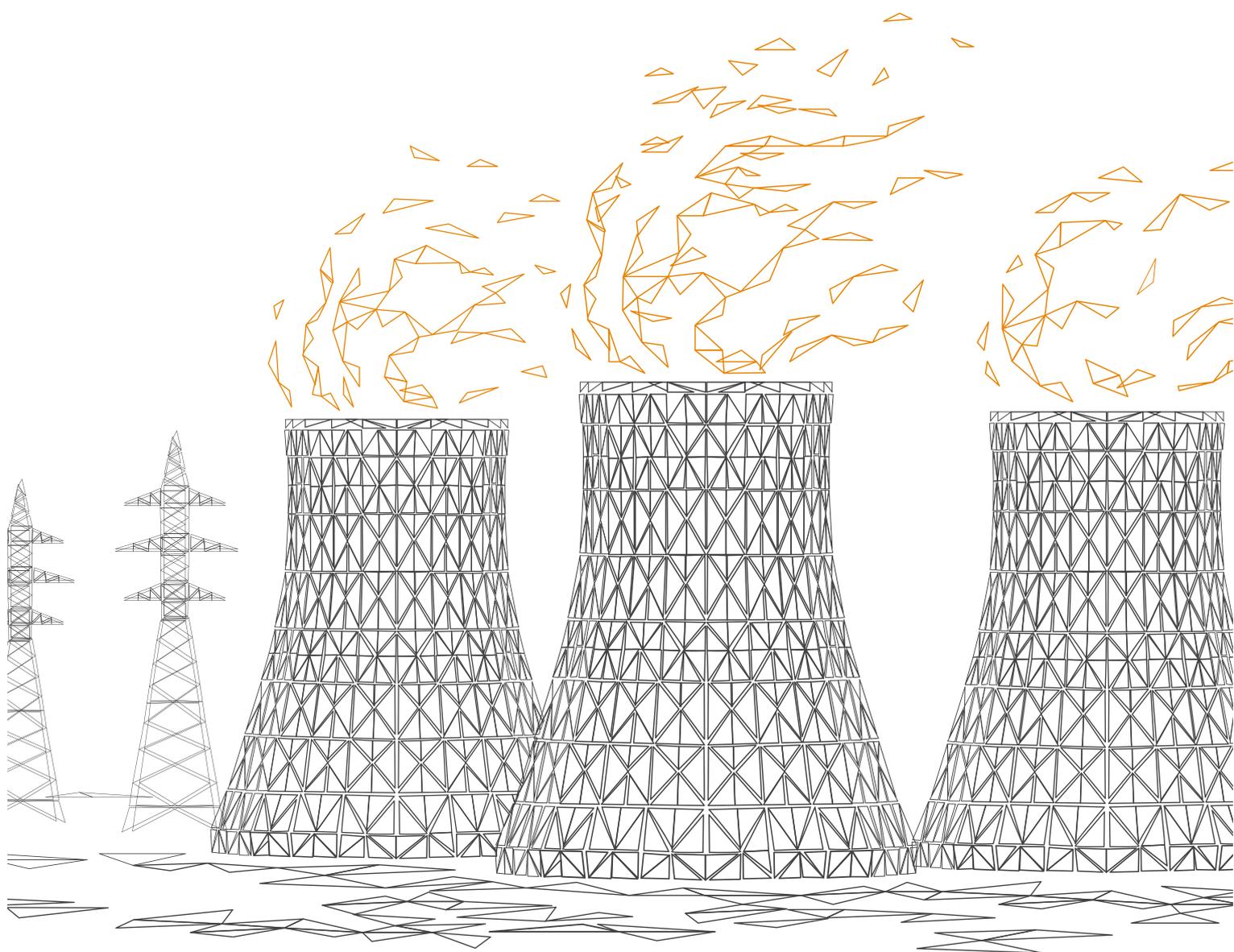


The gender divide on nuclear energy

December 2024



About this poll

Publication date: 4 December 2024

Methodology Statement

Research company: DemosAu

Client commissioning the research: Australian Conservation Foundation

Fieldwork dates: 2 July - 24 November 2024

Mode of data collection: Online via Random Device Engagement

Target population: Australian Residents 18+

Sample size: 6709

Effective sample size after weighting applied

Margin of error associated with effective sample size: +/- 1.8%

Variables used in weighting: Age x gender, education, income, state x region, housing tenure, partisan support.

Weighting method used: Rim weighting

Full question text, responses categories and randomisation: Noted throughout report. Answer direction rotated for Agree/Neutral/Disagree.

Proportion of landline/mobile completed interviews: Nil

Foreword

**By the Australian Conservation Foundation
Chief Executive Officer Kelly O'Shanassy**



The role of nuclear energy in Australia is a hotly contested issue ahead of the next Federal election.

The Federal Opposition has announced its intention to build seven nuclear energy sites across Australia, but has delayed releasing detail about cost, reactor type or radioactive waste management.

The Albanese government has rejected the proposal but has labelled the next election a 'referendum on nuclear energy'.

New DemosAU national polling, commissioned by the Australian Conservation Foundation, reveals a stark trend.

Support for nuclear energy is starkly divided along gender lines.

Of more than 6,000 Australians, just 26% of women think nuclear would be good for Australia compared to 51% of men.

The gender divide remains prevalent no matter the age of voters with young men and young women just as divided on nuclear energy as those in older generations.

While a bare majority of men support nuclear energy as a concept, the level of support plummets when men are probed about the realities and consequences associated with nuclear energy.

For example, more than half (55%) of men say they are concerned about the safety of nuclear technology and 44% of men say they would not be happy living near a nuclear site.

Additionally, 43% of men say transporting radioactive waste is not worth the risk and there's little faith among men (24%) that a nuclear plant will be built in Australia in the next few decades.

On the topic of cost, 47% of men accept that renewable sources will deliver cheaper energy than nuclear.

Women overwhelmingly see nuclear as a high risk energy choice that places an unacceptable radioactive waste burden on future generations.

63% of women say they don't want to live near a nuclear plant and more than half (57%) don't think transporting radioactive waste is worth the risk.

Safety is clearly a big concern, with almost two in three women (65%) expressing concerns around the safety of nuclear technology.

The Australian Conservation Foundation has teamed up with 1 Million Women to dig a little deeper into the gender divide over nuclear energy.

1 Million Women surveyed an additional 3,351 women and found 93% of its supporters are concerned about nuclear energy.

In 2022, the female vote was hugely significant in the outcome of the Federal election. Of the 10 independents elected to the House of Representatives in 2022, nine were women.

And, according to the Australian National University's [election study](#), the Liberal vote among women dropped 6 points from 38% in 2019 to 32% in 2022.

This new DemosAU national polling, supported by results from the 1 Million Women survey, reveals the Coalition is failing to win support from women with its major energy policy.

Australia does not need nuclear energy in the mix. The view is clear among women, and when men are faced with the reality and consequences of nuclear energy they too become unsupportive of nuclear energy.

The DemosAU polling also reveals high levels of undecided voters which indicates the major parties have a lot of convincing to do on their energy policies before we head to the ballot box.

Australians want climate action that is both meaningful and cost effective.

Climate damage is here now and already this disaster season we are seeing bushfires, floods and extreme storm fronts threatening the lives and homes of Australians and our native species.

Analysis from Australia's science agency, the CSIRO, consistently shows nuclear as the [slowest and most expensive](#) form of new electrical generation in Australia.

Our future is renewable, not radioactive.

1 Million Women

Analysis by founder Natalie Isaacs



Throughout October 2024, the Australian Conservation Foundation and 1 Million Women (1MW) collaborated on an additional survey of more than 3000 women to dig deeper into the gender divide over nuclear energy.

Women are long term thinkers on nuclear energy.

The 1 Million Women community voice is loud and clear – nuclear energy is a delay and distraction to meaningful climate solutions and women don't have the time or patience to entertain the Coalition's nuclear proposal.

More than 3000 respondents were quick to take part in the voluntary survey and a staggering 93% of those indicated concerns about nuclear energy.

1100 women said their number one concern with nuclear is its potential to derail the renewable energy rollout.

Women want to see a strong renewable future that is powered by Australia's abundance of sun and wind.

It's clear to me that women want the Federal government to remain on track with its renewable plan and believe any proposal to include nuclear in the mix is too costly, too slow and too risky.

One woman who lives in the Central West of New South Wales said nuclear is "a distraction from the urgency of what we have to do now, and a disruption to what has already been achieved in the renewable energy space".

1 Million Women is dedicated to helping women and households electrify, get off gas and be ready for a renewable energy future.

We are calling on the next Federal government to support at least 1 million households to make electrification and energy efficiency improvements in the next term of government.

It's also abundantly clear from the survey results that women have First Nations communities and future generations at the forefront of their minds when considering Australia's energy mix.

Almost a thousand respondents said their top concern was around radioactive waste management on Country.

For decades, Indigenous peoples have been at the forefront of protecting land and waterways from the nuclear industry. The 1 Million Women community acknowledges the heavy and unfair burden this places on First Nations communities.

Women are also thinking about their children and grandchildren and the safety risk associated with nuclear energy in the unfortunate event of an accident.

Why introduce a risky energy source when we already have safe and reliable options with renewables?

Our survey results provide a powerful snapshot of what women think when it comes to powering Australia and it is abundantly clear that women oppose nuclear and want to build a renewable energy future that is safe and sustainable for future generations.



Analysis by Head of Research George Hasanakos

Mind the Gender Gap

These results make it clear that gender is the major cleavage point in the nuclear debate. In fact, this is the sharpest divide in attitudes between men and women that we have seen on any issue - with a gender gap of 25%.

Only 26% of women think nuclear power would be good for Australia. To put it in simple terms, most women aren't convinced nuclear is worth the risk.

Just over half of all men believe nuclear power would be good for Australia, compared to just over a quarter of all women.

This dynamic remains clear across all statements tested in this research: men were more inclined to view nuclear energy positively and less inclined to be concerned about safety risks. The opposite was true for women.

There was far less fluctuation when responses were broken down by other demographic factors, including age.

However, it should be noted that female respondents were more likely to answer "Neutral" compared with males on most questions. In fact, in response to the statement "Nuclear power would be good for Australia," 37% of women answered neutral compared to 26% of men.

This is a key risk and opportunity for campaigners on both sides of the issue, though pro-nuclear campaigners will need to contend with widely held safety concerns among women.

Statement:

Nuclear power would be good for Australia.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Male	51%	26%	23%
Female	26%	37%	37%

Males by age

Males, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	42%	36%	22%
25 - 34	47%	29%	24%
35 - 44	48%	30%	22%
45 - 54	49%	25%	26%
> 54	56%	23%	21%

Females by age

Females, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	20%	47%	33%
25 - 34	23%	40%	37%
35 - 44	24%	40%	36%
45 - 54	24%	36%	40%
> 54	30%	33%	37%

Statement:

I would be happy to have a nuclear power plant close to my city.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Male	38%	18%	44%
Female	18%	19%	63%

Males by age

Males, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	28%	24%	48%
25 - 34	36%	23%	41%
35 - 44	31%	28%	41%
45 - 54	35%	14%	51%
> 54	45%	12%	43%

Females by age

Females, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	12%	25%	63%
25 - 34	17%	21%	62%
35 - 44	17%	20%	63%
45 - 54	16%	18%	66%
> 54	20%	18%	62%

Statement:

Transporting and storing nuclear waste isn't worth the risk.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Male	43%	22%	35%
Female	57%	25%	18%

Males by age

Males, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	47%	29%	24%
25 - 34	42%	27%	31%
35 - 44	44%	30%	26%
45 - 54	51%	19%	30%
> 54	39%	15%	46%

Females by age

Females, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	54%	35%	11%
25 - 34	55%	30%	15%
35 - 44	58%	27%	15%
45 - 54	56%	25%	19%
> 54	58%	20%	22%

Statement:

Renewables will deliver cheaper energy than nuclear.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Male	47%	22%	31%
Female	47%	33%	20%

Males by age

Males, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	51%	26%	23%
25 - 34	51%	27%	22%
35 - 44	48%	31%	21%
45 - 54	50%	19%	31%
> 54	42%	16%	42%

Females by age

Females, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	50%	39%	11%
25 - 34	53%	36%	11%
35 - 44	49%	37%	14%
45 - 54	47%	31%	22%
> 54	44%	29%	27%

Statement:

The safety of nuclear power plants is a concern for me.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Male	55%	16%	29%
Female	65%	22%	13%

Males by age

Males, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	56%	24%	20%
25 - 34	63%	23%	14%
35 - 44	58%	22%	20%
45 - 54	63%	12%	25%
> 54	47%	12%	41%

Females by age

Females, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	57%	32%	11%
25 - 34	65%	25%	10%
35 - 44	64%	25%	11%
45 - 54	67%	19%	14%
> 54	67%	17%	16%

Statement:

It is unlikely a nuclear power plant will be built in Australia in the next few decades.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Male	43%	33%	24%
Female	41%	41%	18%

Males by age

Males, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	42%	38%	20%
25 - 34	38%	40%	22%
35 - 44	42%	38%	20%
45 - 54	49%	31%	20%
> 54	43%	27%	30%

Females by age

Females, by Age	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
18 - 24	35%	47%	18%
25 - 34	43%	39%	18%
35 - 44	38%	44%	18%
45 - 54	37%	43%	20%
> 54	43%	40%	17%

1 Million Women survey

1 Million Women surveyed an additional 3,351 women in its database to provide more detail into why women oppose nuclear energy.

Key findings

93%

of those surveyed said they are concerned about the use of nuclear energy in Australia.

They were then asked to rank their **number one** concern about nuclear energy.

Results:

	Top ranked concern percentage	Top ranked concern number
Derailing the renewable energy rollout	36.1%	1,100 women
Radioactive waste management on First Nations Country	33.6%	982 women
Impact on future generations in the event of an accident	21.5%	629 women
Cost and time delays	5.7%	165 women
Intensive water use of nuclear plants	3%	88 women

The survey results indicate 1 Million Women supporters are most concerned the Coalition's nuclear proposal will hamper the rollout of renewable energy. Solar and wind technology is here now in Australia and we are on track to meet the 82% renewable energy target by 2030. Australia does not need nuclear in the mix. The clean energy grid will be backed by batteries and pumped hydro to ensure the lights stay on.

The second major concern for women is radioactive waste management on Country and the impact this would have on First Nations people. For decades, First Nations people have been at the forefront of protecting Country from the nuclear industry and this burden is not lost in the minds of women.

Karina Lester is a Yankunytjatjara-Anangu woman from northern South Australia whose family endured the 1953 Emu Field nuclear testing regime carried out by the British Government on Australian soil.

Karina explains the impact on her family:



“

My grandparents wore the scars on their skins and on their bodies. My father lost his sight and many of my great grandparents passed from radiation fallout. I continue to carry the pain from that lived experience. For my family, it is an intergenerational story of trauma. Still to this day, the Australian government has failed to adequately clean the land of radioactive fallout, there are still craters and we will never know if we're ever truly safe.

”

Additionally, more than 600 women said they are most concerned about the impact on future generations in the event of a nuclear accident, reflecting fears of long-term safety risks associated with nuclear energy. Some survey participants mentioned historical nuclear disasters like Chernobyl and Fukushima as reasons why they remain opposed to nuclear energy in Australia.

Cost and time delays and intensive water use were the least prioritised concerns among 1 Million Women supporters. But many women mentioned the high cost of nuclear energy in their long form answers.

1 Million Women Case Studies



“ Impractical - cost to build and cost of power and storage of waste are huge issues. ”

Suzanne Lees



“ Nuclear is a short sighted solution that will continue to destroy the world. ”

Jenny Polack



“ Nuclear is old technology. It's expensive to build with enormous risks attached. Battery technology will support renewables cheaply and easily. We don't need nuclear. ”

Suzanne Gulikers



“ The danger of the waste from the plant is of great concern, also the possibility of an accident. The cost of building too. ”

Lesley Lloyd



“ While nuclear energy might run clean, and a portion of it can be recycled, the hazardous waste materials created in its production and lifecycle will live on for centuries. We do not have a safe way to store uranium and other radioactive materials without disadvantaging other countries and societies. It is unintelligent to look at nuclear power without looking at all of its ramifications and realising that it is not safe to mine, process or store. Ask people who care about future generations and about a safe life for all what they think, not those who are selfish and have a vested interest in mining and money making. ”

Penelope Cilento



“ Australia is a sunny country. Why not take full advantage of this risk free energy source? ”

Beatrice Lucas

Nature needs us, now

Australian Conservation Foundation

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