



Mineral County Community Survey Results

Prepared For:
Mineral County
Board of County
Commissioners

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School Honor Society

Yucca Mountain Project
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Contents

Section	Page
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Methodology	1
1.3 Summary of Findings.....	1
2.0 SURVEY RESULTS	3
2.1 Community Survey Results	3
3.0 COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESULTS	8
Appendix A	10

Tables

Table No	Page
Table 2-1	3
Table 2-2	3
Table 2-3	4
Table 2-4	4
Table 2-5	5
Table 2-6	5
Table 2-7	6
Table 2-8	6
Table 2-9	6
Table 2-10	7
Table 2-11	7
Table 2-12	7
Table 3-1	9

Figures

Figure No.	
Figure 3-1	8

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

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. The 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 Mineral County residents with respect to the repository program. In 2003 Mineral County began an effort to track public opinion.

As part of its impact assessment and oversight program, Mineral County initiated a community survey to gauge 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. The 2009 Survey questions can be found in Appendix A. Several of the questions used in this year's survey were the same as those used by the Nuclear Energy Institute to gauge public opinion about nuclear waste and nuclear energy. One major difference this year was a direct question asking respondents whether they are in favor or opposed to Yucca Mountain.

1.2 Methodology

Mineral County High School students randomly selected 209 Mineral County residents in order to ascertain the views and knowledge of the repository program. This year the Mineral County survey focused on issues that have been the subject of national survey efforts related to Yucca Mountain. Mineral County reviewed several national survey efforts and selected questions relevant to Yucca Mountain. Mineral County High School Students completed survey interview questions in person and by phone.

When available the Mineral County survey responses for various years will be compared with responses from national survey efforts. Using similar questions allows for comparability with other survey results concerning the Yucca Mountain project. Such comparisons can be found in Section 3.0 of this report.

1.3 Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the responses from the 2009 Yucca Mountain community survey. Mineral County High School students completed a total of 209 surveys. Approximately 83 percent of the survey respondents were familiar with the Yucca Mountain Project and the federal government's efforts to store spent nuclear fuel in Nevada (Table 2-1).

Mineral County survey respondents were asked whether they are in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Nearly 60 percent of survey respondents were in favor of a repository (Table 2-2). Using this response as a base comparison, survey respondents were then told that increasing energy production requires a permanent geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. They were told a repository could also reduce the Nation's energy costs and dependence on foreign energy sources. Knowing this, would survey respondents be in favor or opposed to repository. Approximately 70 percent of Mineral County survey respondents would favor a repository at Yucca Mountain (Table 2-3). Clearly tying Yucca Mountain to energy production influences favorable opinions of the project.

Sixty-seven percent of the 2009 community survey respondents either strongly favored or somewhat favored nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States (Table 2-4). The percent of Mineral County survey respondents favoring nuclear energy as a means to provide electricity is similar to national survey results (Figure 3-1). In 2008, national surveys showed a surge in support for nuclear energy. Approximately 74 percent of the national survey respondents either strongly supported or somewhat supported nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity. It is not surprising to see a jump of 4 percent from 63 percent in 2008 to 67 percent in 2009 in support of nuclear power among Mineral County residents.

The vast majority of survey respondents believe that nuclear power and Yucca Mountain play a critical role in the Nation's energy future, they are equally convinced that radioactive waste can be transported safely to Yucca Mountain. Almost 68 percent of respondents were very confident or somewhat confident that waste could be transported safely (Table 2-5). This is an increase of 4 percent over the 2008 results.

Respondents were then told about the safety record of nuclear waste shipments in the United States over the last 35 years. After hearing the safety record, nearly 77 percent of survey respondent became more confident in the safety of nuclear waste shipments (Table 2-6). Confidence in the safety of waste shipments over the last two years has remained high.

Nearly 68 percent of the 2009 survey respondents strongly favored or somewhat favored building new nuclear power plants to reduce reliance on oil and coal (Table 2-7). Mineral County respondents viewed the construction of nuclear power plants more favorably as compared to the nation as a whole. There was little change in support for new nuclear power plants among Mineral County survey respondents from 2008 to 2009.

Mineral County survey respondents continue to support efforts to establish a benefits package for Nevada. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (96.7%) support a benefits package (Table 2-8).

2.0 SURVEY RESULTS

2.1 Community Survey Results

This section contains community survey results for Mineral County. A complete community survey can be found in Appendix A. Survey respondents were first asked whether or not they were familiar with the Yucca Mountain Project. About 80 percent of survey respondents indicated that they were familiar with the project. Frequency tabulations are shown for each survey question.

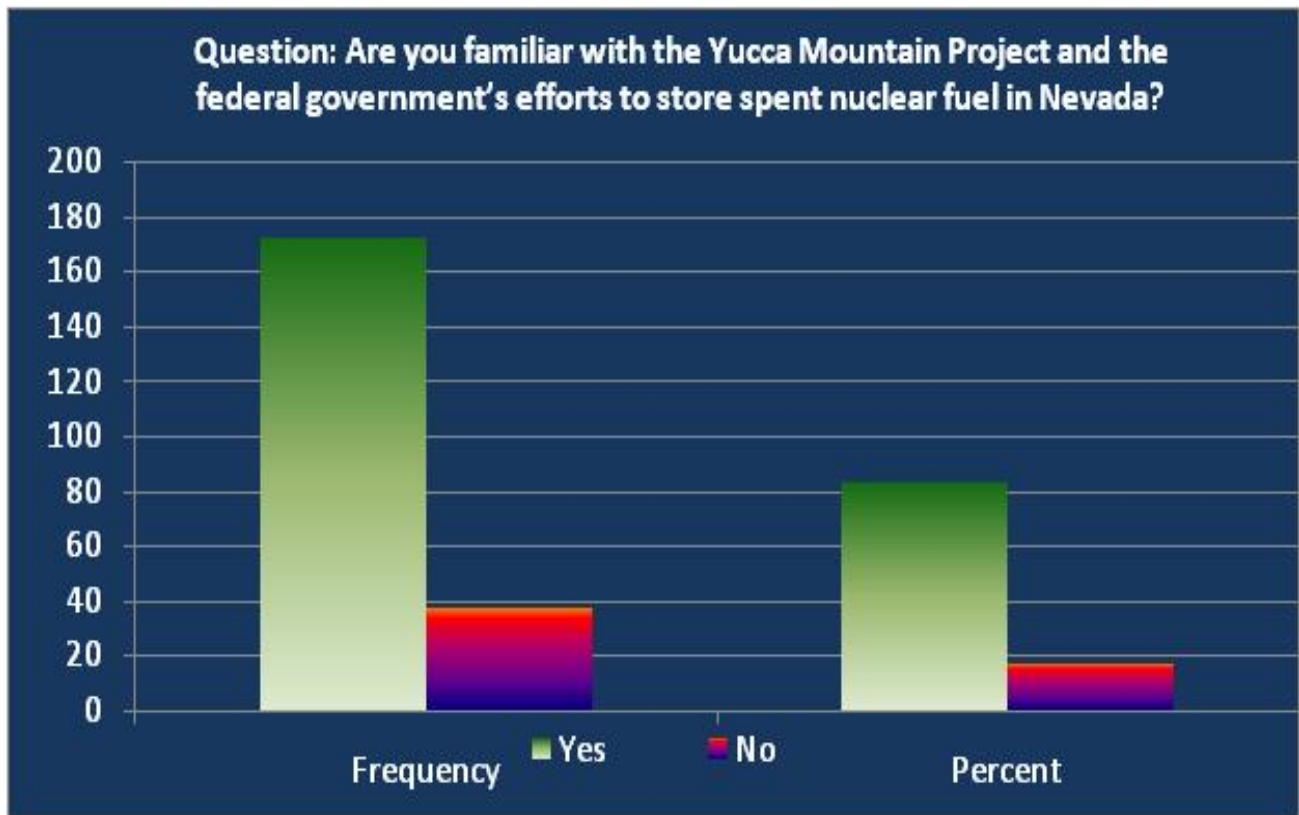


Table 2-1	Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	172	83.3
No	37	16.7

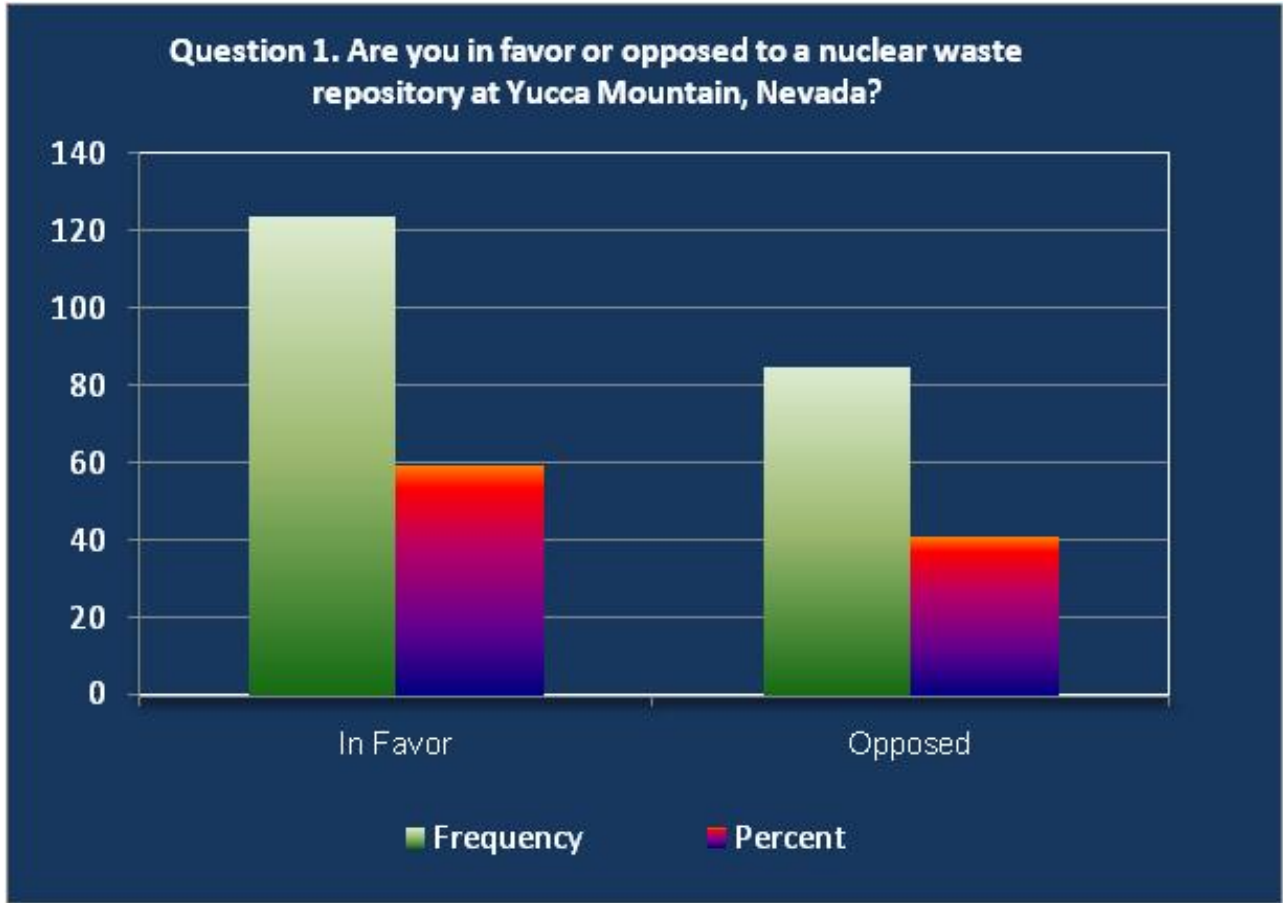


Table 2-2	Survey Respondent	
	Frequency	Percent
In Favor	124	59.3
Opposed	85	40.7

Question 2. Increasing energy production requires a permanent geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. It could also reduce the Nation's energy costs and dependence on foreign energy sources. Knowing this would you be in favor or opposed to a repository?

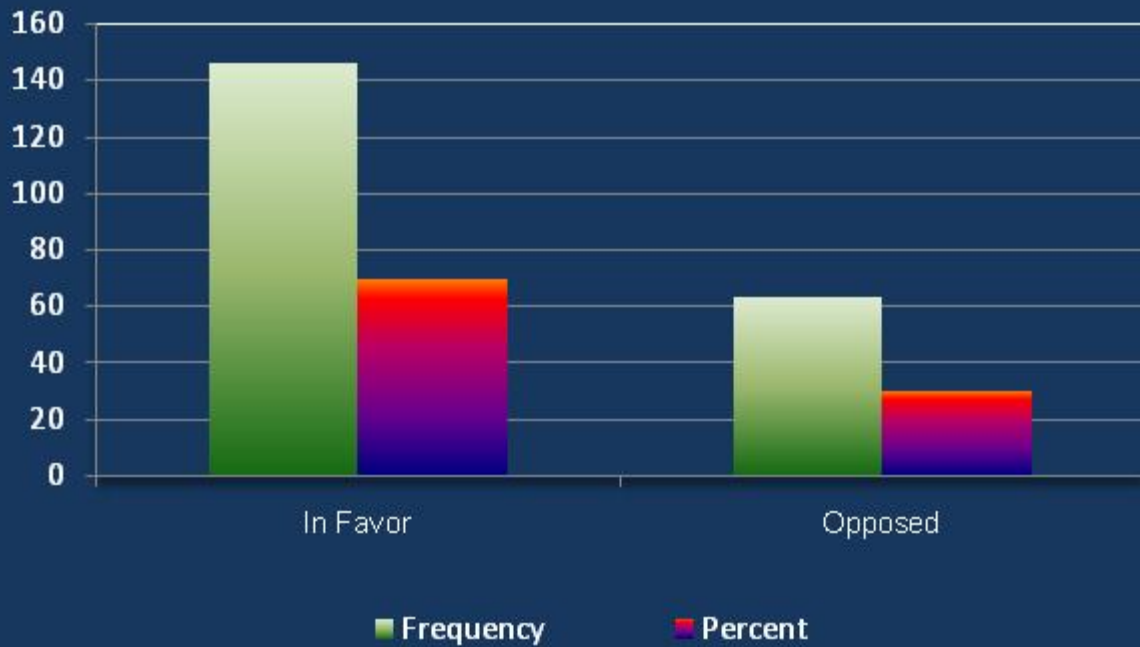


Table 2-3	Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent
In Favor	145	69.4
Opposed	64	30.6

Question 3. 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?

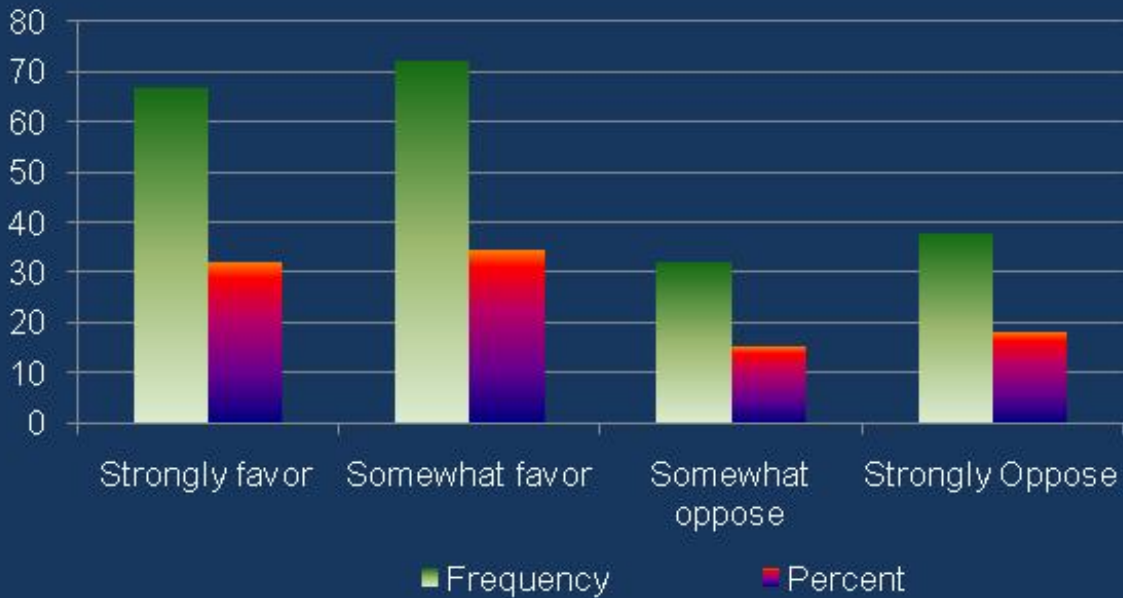


Table 2-4	Survey Respondent	
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Favor	67	32.1
Somewhat Favor	72	34.4
Somewhat Oppose	32	15.3
Strongly Oppose	38	18.2

Question 4. How confident are you that radioactive waste from America's nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the Yucca Mountain disposal site. Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not confident at all?

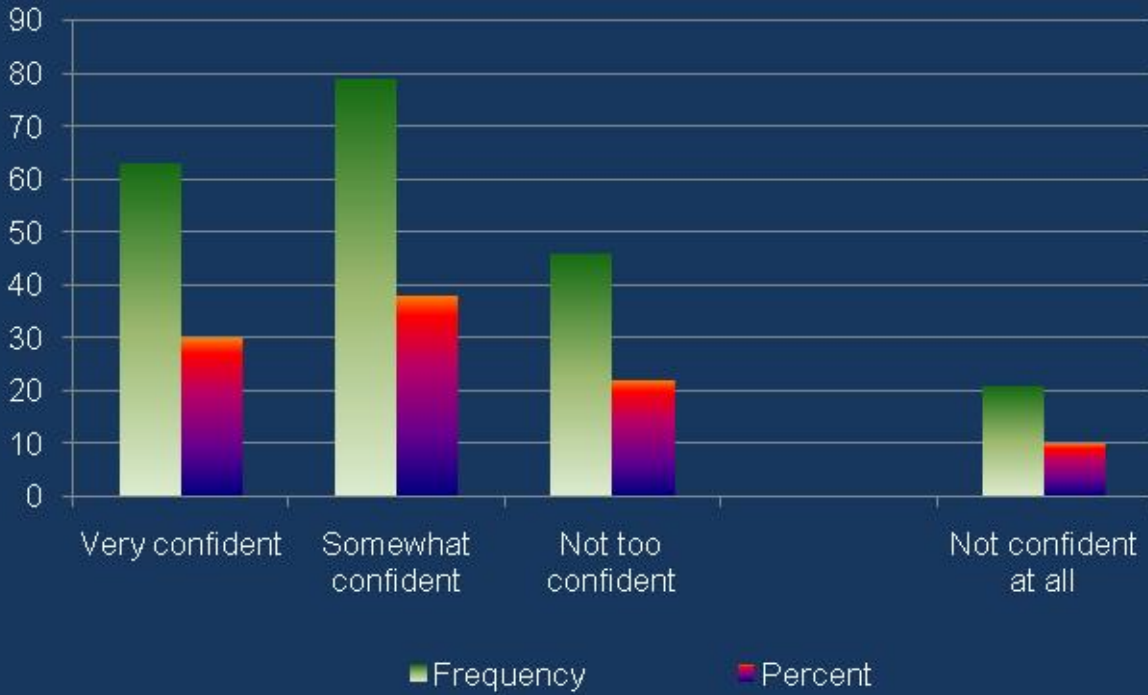


Table 2-5 Response	Survey Respondent	
	Frequency	Percent
Very Confident	63	30.1
Somewhat Confident	79	37.8
Not too confident	46	22.1
Not confident at all	21	10.0

Radioactive waste is transported in rugged vault-like containers, under strict regulations, using cautious procedures, and in collaboration with state agencies. In the past 35 years, there have been more than 3,000 shipments of this radioactive waste across a total of nearly 2 million miles, and no radiation leaks. After hearing this statement, how confident are you that the radioactive waste from America’s nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the proposed Yucca Mountain disposal site?

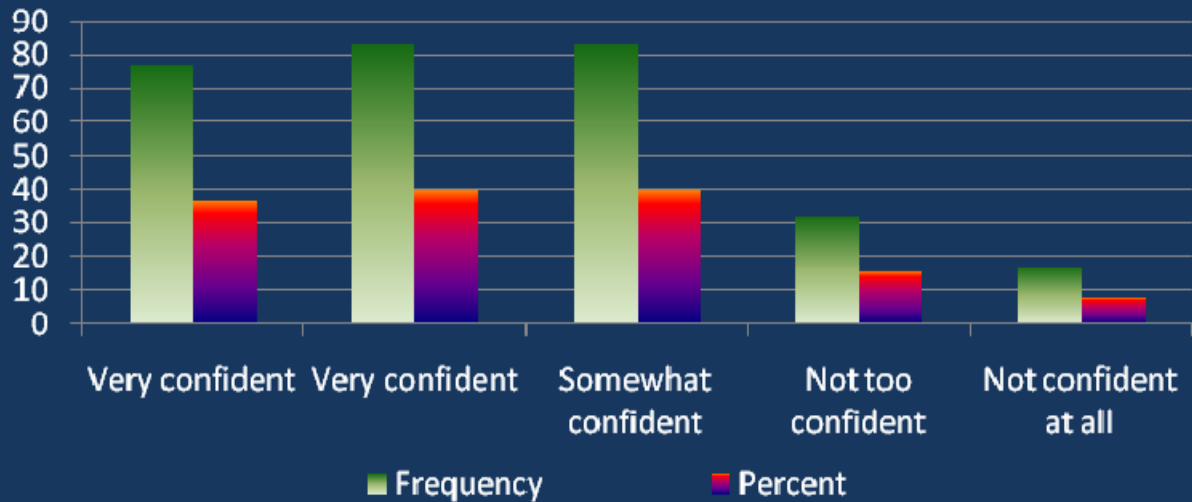


Table 2-6	Survey Respondent	
	Frequency	Percent
Very Confident	77	36.8
Somewhat Confident	83	39.8
Not too Confident	32	15.3
Not Confident at All	17	8.1

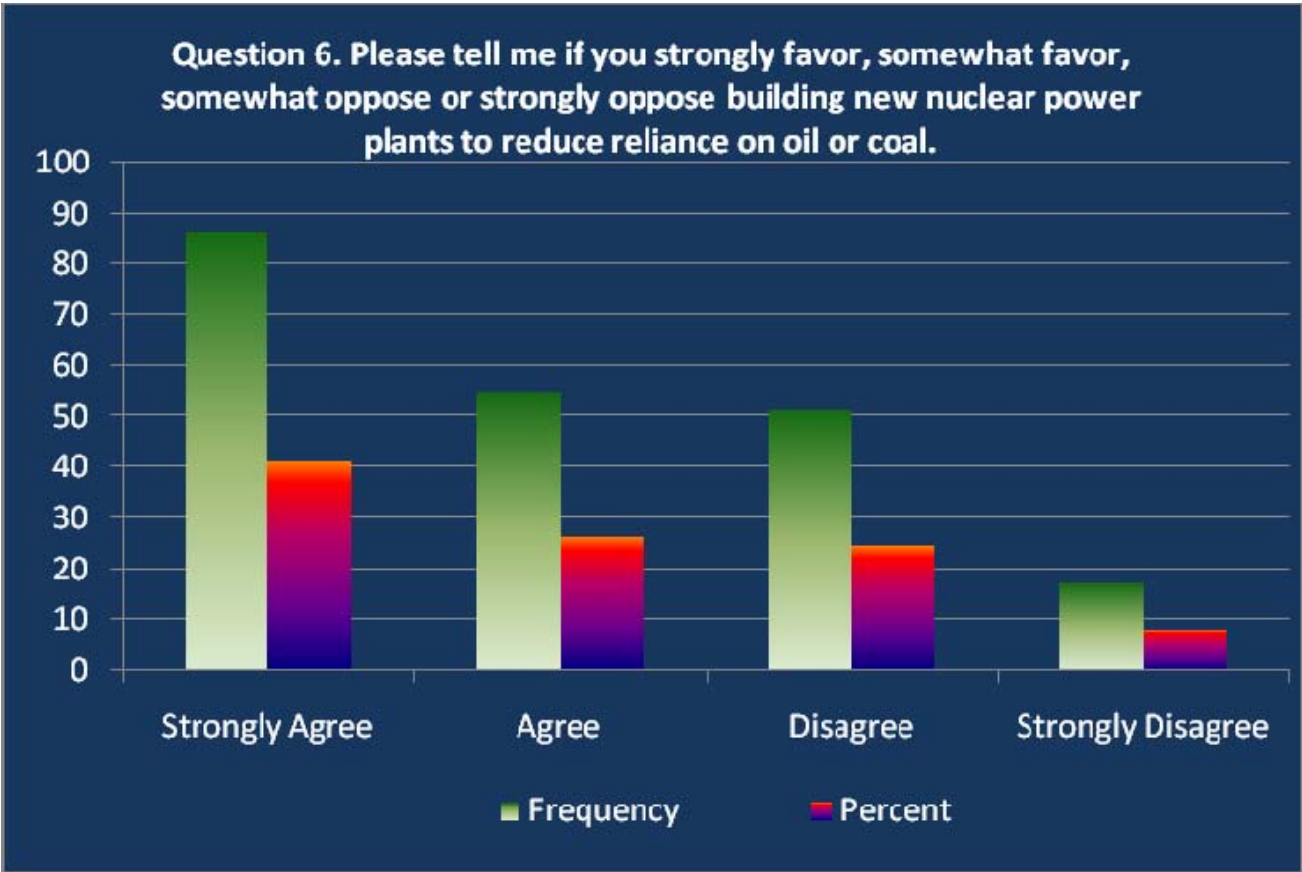


Table 2-7	Survey Respondent	
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	86	41.2
Agree	55	26.3
Disagree	51	24.4
Strongly Disagree	17	8.1

Question 7. Should Nevada receive a benefits package or compensation from the federal government, if the Yucca Mountain Project is built?

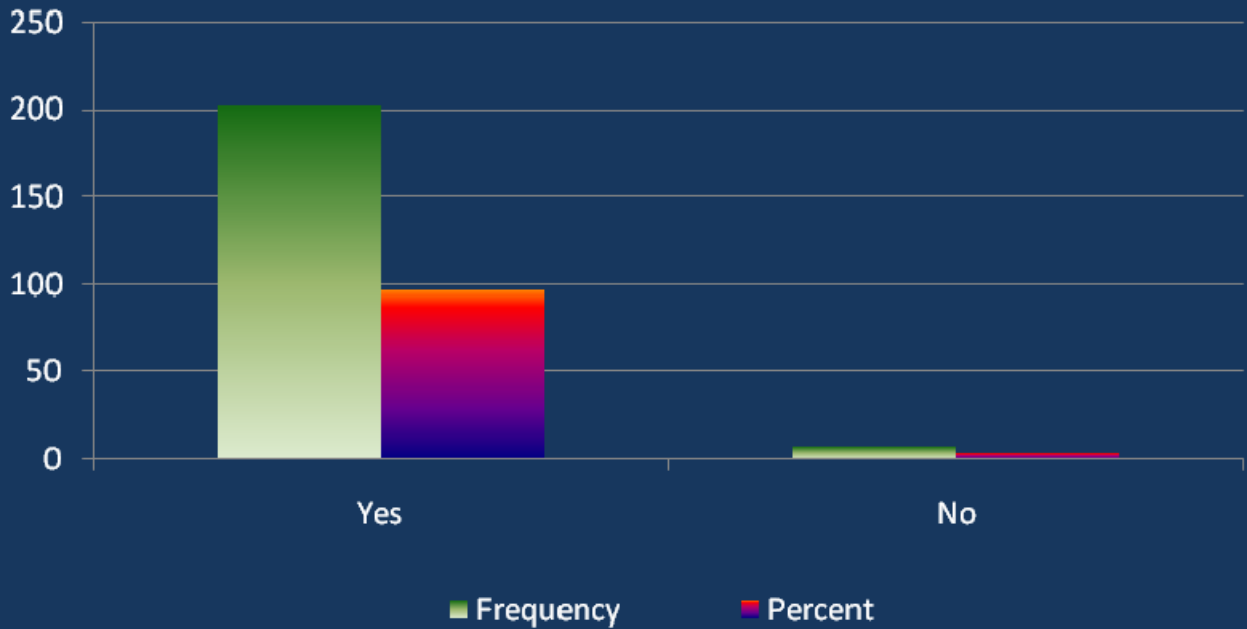


Table 2-8	Survey Respondent	
	Frequency	Percent
Response		
Yes	202	96.7
No	7	3.3

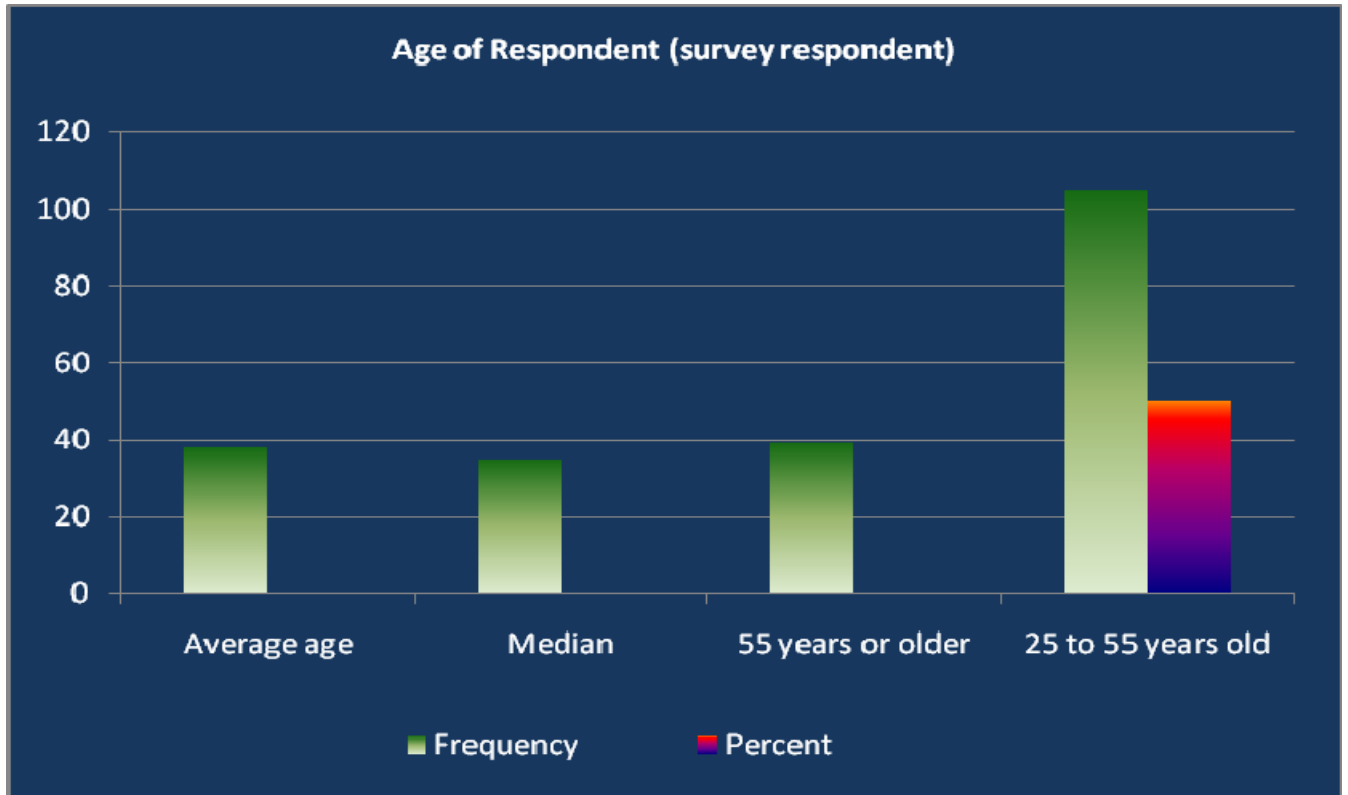


Table 2-9	Survey Respondents	
Response		
Average Age	38 yrs	
Median Age	35 yrs	
55 year or older	39	18.8
25 to 55 years old	105	50.2
Less than 25 years	64	30.6

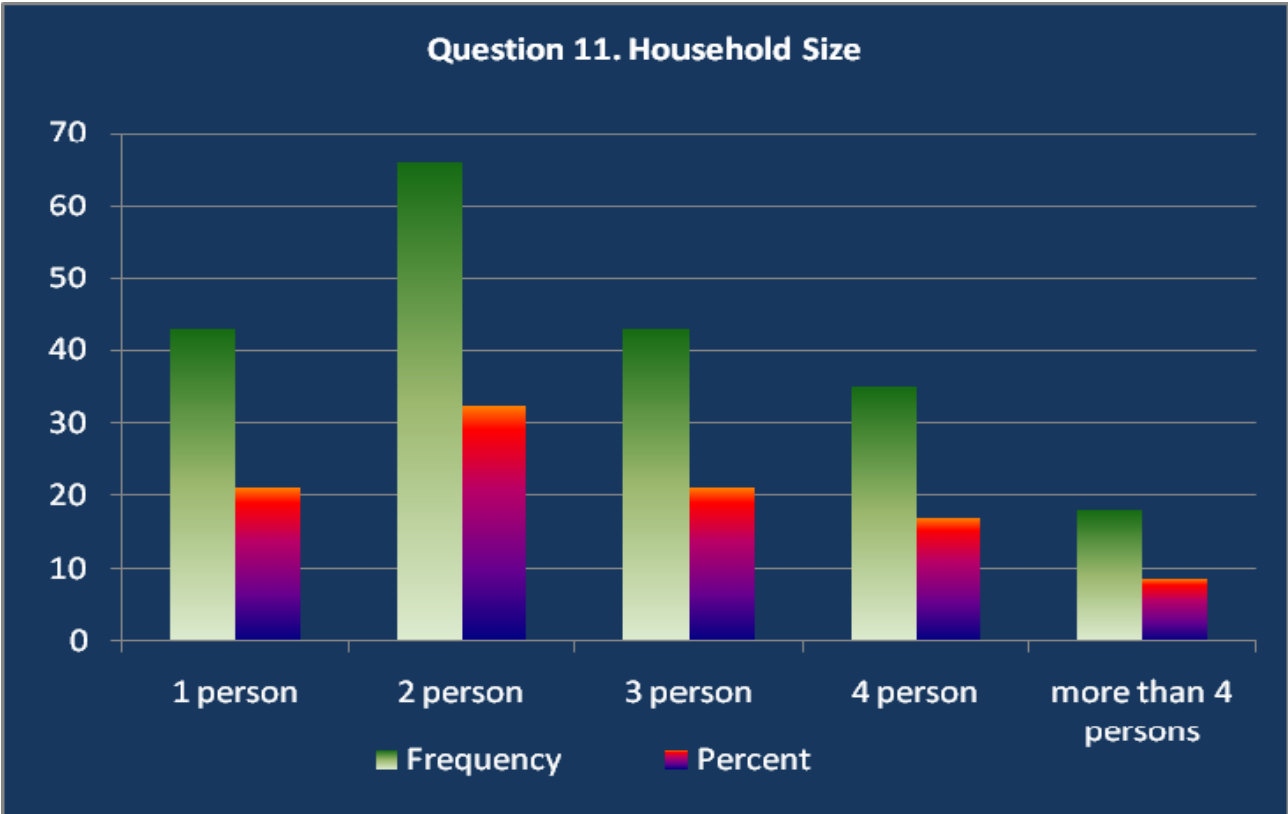


Table 2-10	Survey Respondent	
	Frequency	Percent
Response		
1 person	43	21.0
2 person	66	32.2
3 person	43	21.0
4 person	35	17.1
More than 4 persons	18	8.7

Question 12. Length of Residency in Mineral County

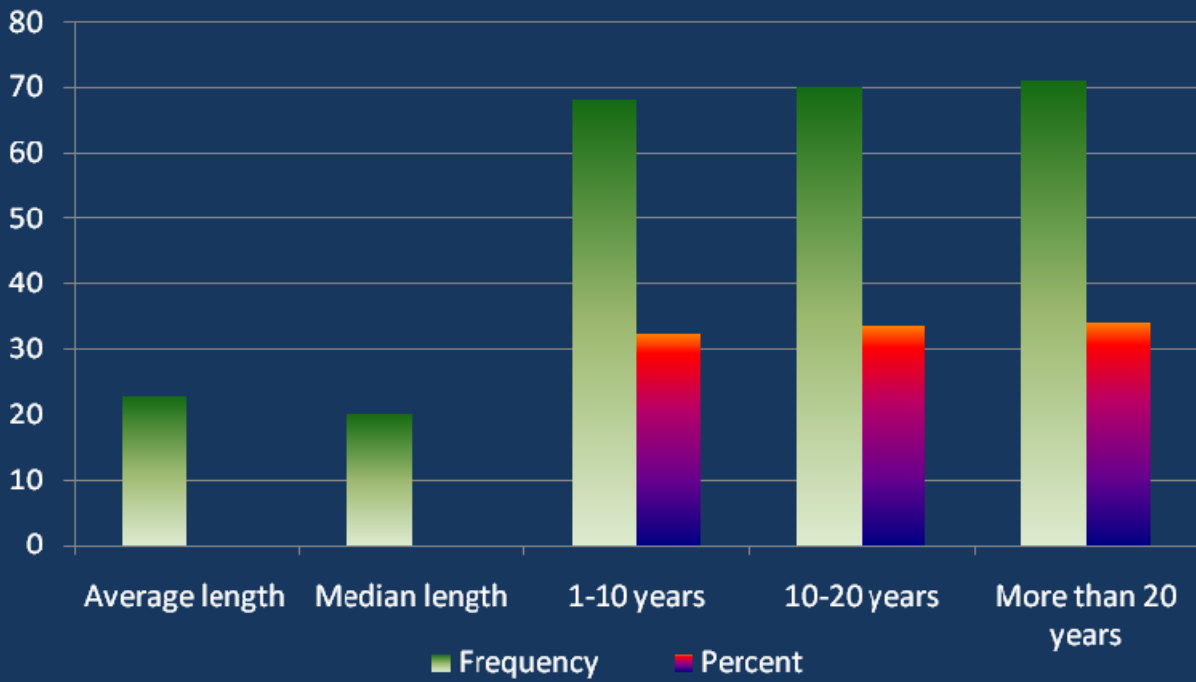


Table 2-11	Mineral County Survey Respondents	
Response		
Average Length	22.9 yrs	
Median Length	20 yrs	
1-10 years	68	32.5
10-20 years	70	33.5
More than 20 years	71	34.0

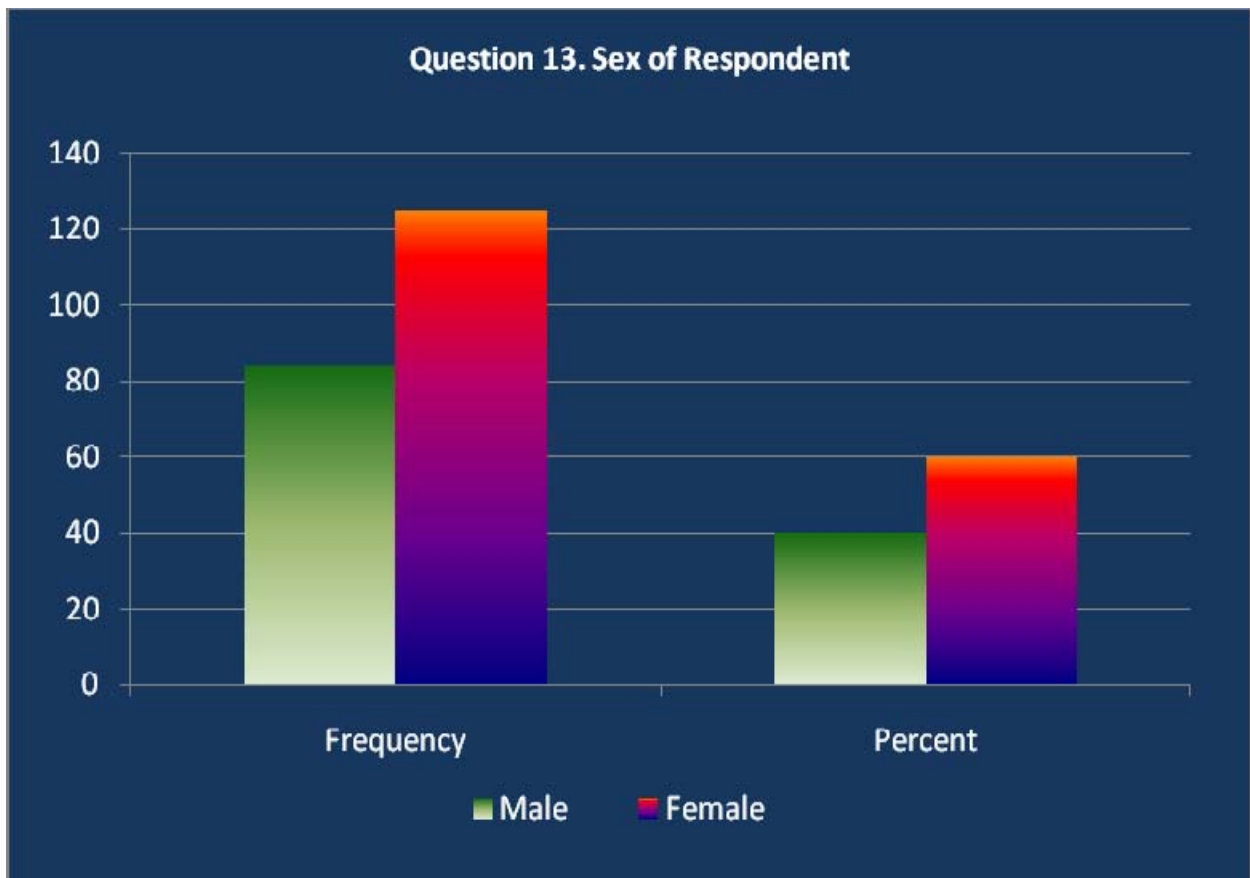


Table 2-12		Mineral County Survey Respondent	
Response	Frequency	Percent	
Male	84	40.2	
Female	125	59.8	

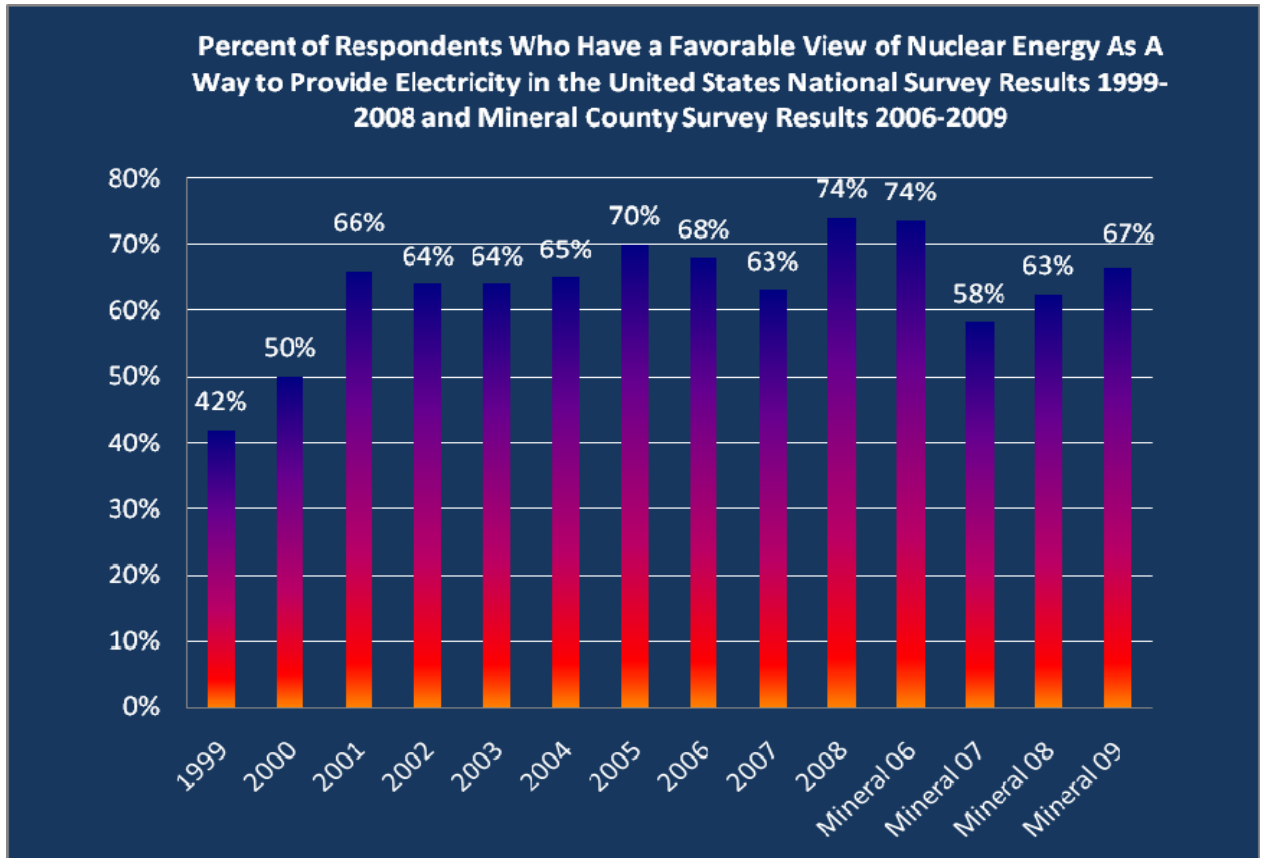
3.0 COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Section 3.0 compares the result of the 2009 Mineral County survey to national survey responses. The Nuclear Energy Institute conducted a number of survey efforts related to Yucca Mountain and nuclear energy use over the last several years. Among national and Mineral County survey respondents, support for nuclear power remains strong.

Question:

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?

Figure 3-1



As compared to national survey results, the Mineral County 2007 survey respondents had a slightly less favorable view of nuclear energy as a source of electricity in the United States. Overall, there is an increasing favorable view of nuclear energy among national and Mineral County survey respondents for the 2008 and 2009 survey efforts.

Question Radioactive waste is transported in rugged vault-like containers under strict regulations using cautious procedures, and in collaboration with state agencies. In the past 35 years, there have been more than 3,000 shipments for this radioactive waste across a total of nearly 2 million miles, and no radiation leaks.

After hearing this statement how confident are you that the radioactive waste from America’s nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the proposed Yucca Mountain disposal site?

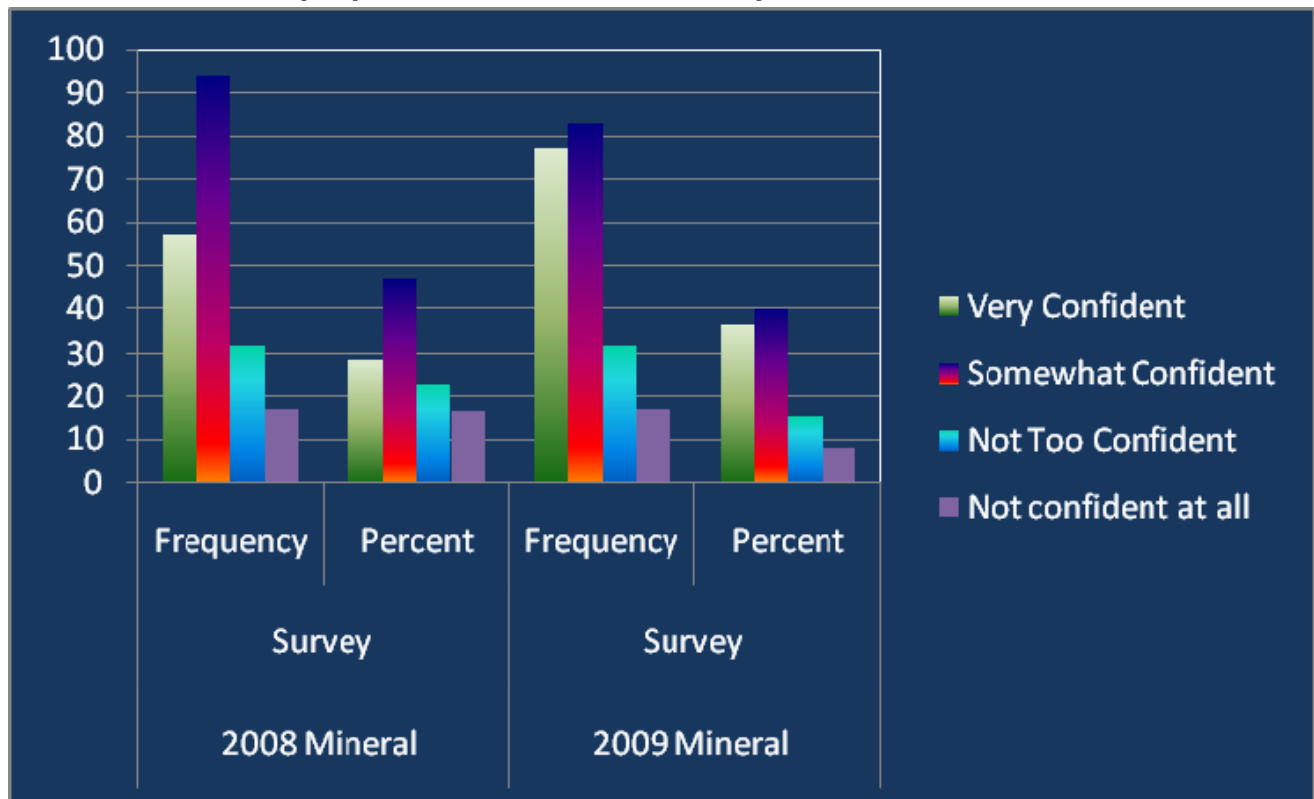


Table 3-1 Response	2008 Mineral Survey		2009 Mineral Survey	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Very Confident	57	28.5	77	36.8
Somewhat Confident	94	47.0	83	39.8
Not Too Confident	32	22.9	32	15.3
Not confident at all	17	16.6	17	8.1

Appendix A: Survey

Mineral County is conducting this survey as part of its oversight responsibilities of the Yucca Mountain project. Funding for the survey is provided by the Yucca Mountain Oversight Program. Mineral County High School students have volunteered to conduct this survey.

Survey # _____

I would like to begin by asking the following questions:

Are you familiar with the Yucca Mountain Project and the federal government's efforts to store spent nuclear fuel in Nevada?

Yes _____

No _____

Question 1

Are you in favor or opposed to a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada?

In Favor _____

Opposed _____

If you responded "In Favor" skip to Question 3

Question 2

Increasing nuclear energy production requires a permanent geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. It could also reduce the Nation's energy costs and dependence on foreign energy sources. Knowing this would you be in favor or opposed to a repository?

In Favor _____

Opposed _____

Question 3:

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. Strongly Favor _____
- 2. Somewhat Favor _____
- 3. Somewhat Oppose _____
- 4. Strongly Oppose _____

Question 4:

How confident are you that radioactive waste from America's nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the Yucca Mountain disposal site? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not confident at all?

- 1. Very Confident _____
- 2. Somewhat Confident _____
- 3. Not too Confident _____
- 4. Not Confident at All _____

Question 5:

Radioactive waste is transported in rugged vault-like containers, under strict regulations, using cautious procedures, and in collaboration with state agencies. In the past 35 years, there have been more than 3,000 shipments of this radioactive waste across a total of nearly 2 million miles, and no radiation leaks. Yucca Mountain shipments will have security escorts, tracking systems and operate under reduced speeds.

After hearing this statement, how confident are you that the radioactive waste from America's nuclear power plants will be transported safely to the proposed Yucca Mountain disposal site? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not confident at all?

- 1. Very Confident _____
- 2. Somewhat Confident _____
- 3. Not too Confident _____
- 4. Not Confident at all _____

Question 6:

Please tell me if you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose building new nuclear power plants to reduce reliance on oil and coal?

- 1. Strongly favor _____
- 2. Somewhat favor _____
- 3. Somewhat oppose _____
- 4. Strongly oppose _____

Question 7:

Should Nevada receive a benefits package or compensation from the federal government, if the Yucca Mountain Project is built?

- 1. Yes _____
- 2. No _____

I. Demographic Questions-Survey Respondents

- 1. Age of Respondent (Survey respondent)_____Years
- 2. Total number of persons living in your household_____.
- 3. Length of residency in Mineral County_____ years.
- 4. Male_____ Female_____