

### [Japanese more opposed to nuclear power a year after tsunami](#)

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As Japanese authorities this week ponder whether to resume producing nuclear energy, a poll shows that opposition to nuclear power is strong and growing more than a year after the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear catastrophe that killed 20,000 and contaminated a broad swath of farmland.

Seventy percent of Japanese surveyed by the Washington-based Pew Research Center said they wanted nuclear power reduced or eliminated, while a year ago the nation was nearly evenly divided on the subject, with 44% urging a phaseout and 46% backing continued generation.

The telephone survey of 700 households also found broad dissatisfaction with how the Tokyo government and energy industry officials handled the aftermath of the March 2011 disaster. The poll found 80% of respondents critical of the government, and 78% said they were dissatisfied with the direction in which the country was headed. On the economy, 93% said it was in bad shape.

As the crisis swept through Japan last year, officials issued conflicting assessments of the amount of radiation released at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant after three tsunami-damaged reactors suffered meltdowns, and wide discrepancies continue to undermine public confidence in the reports of government and industry investigations.

The Tokyo Electric Power Co. recently estimated the amount of radioactive material released at Fukushima to be as much as 80% more than what the government's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency reported. It took authorities more than nine months to seal off the radioactive leakage, and to acknowledge that it had penetrated the food supply and left a 12-mile zone around the stricken plant off limits.

Only the Japanese Self-Defense Forces received high marks in the poll from a public still shaken by the tragedies 15 months ago. In the devastating aftermath, the military was rated as a positive force by 89% of respondents, many likely recalling how soldiers carried out the grim work of searching through debris for bodies and survivors and delivering food, fuel and blankets to the displaced.

All 50 of the country's reactors, which used to supply 30% of Japan's power needs, are idled for safety checks or repair of damage inflicted by last year's disaster.

The survey results were released on the eve of a meeting of the Japanese Cabinet at which ministers were expected to vote on whether to restart two reactors at the Ohi nuclear complex in western Japan. The government of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda has urged approval of the restarts, warning that Japanese households and industry will face crippling electricity shortages and skyrocketing energy prices this summer without some nuclear power production.

Nearly one-third of Japan's lawmakers have petitioned against resuming nuclear energy production, bowing to public concerns that environmental and safety precautions need further improvement. Satoshi Arai, a former national strategy minister, presented a petition to Noda on Monday urging that energy authorities "be all the more cautious about a decision to restart the reactors."

"It is clear from surveys that the majority of the people think that we can survive this summer by conserving energy and transferring electricity among regions," the petition states.

Some officials in Fukui prefecture, where the Ohi complex is located, have given the go-ahead to restart the reactors, while others have withheld their endorsement and urged greater efforts at conservation to get through the summer in densely populated cities such as Osaka and Kyoto.