

BAROMETER 2025

THE PERCEPTION OF RISKS IN FRANCE

English Summary



The French Authority for Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection (ASNR) oversees civil nuclear activities in France on behalf of the French State. It also carries out research, expert assessments, training, and public information in the fields of nuclear safety and radiation protection.

OBJECTIVES

The ASNR Barometer provides an annual picture of how the French public perceives risks, especially those related to nuclear safety and radiation protection. Its key objectives are to:

- contribute to enhancing public information;
- inform the reflections of the ASNR and stakeholders;
- support social science research in these fields;
- track evolving perceptions to identify and analyze emerging trends and relationships.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The **2025 ASNR Barometer** presents findings from an online survey conducted by Harris Interactive from **November 25 to 30, 2024**.

The survey gathered responses from **2,135 participants** aged 18 and older. The quota sampling (based on gender, age, and occupation) and the stratification (by region and size of urban area) ensure the representativeness of the sample.

The findings of this survey, along with all results dating back to 1990, are available on the ASNR Barometer website: <https://barometre-perceptiondesrisques.asnr.fr>.

AUTHOR

Hugo LUTUN

Risk Perception Researcher

Part 1

The current concerns of the French

In 2024, **purchasing power** remains the main concern for the French, with 24% of responses (-1 point compared to 2023). Climate change narrowly maintains the second position (14%, -4 points). This year, immigration and geopolitical instability share third place, with the latter re-entering the top three for the first time since 2022.

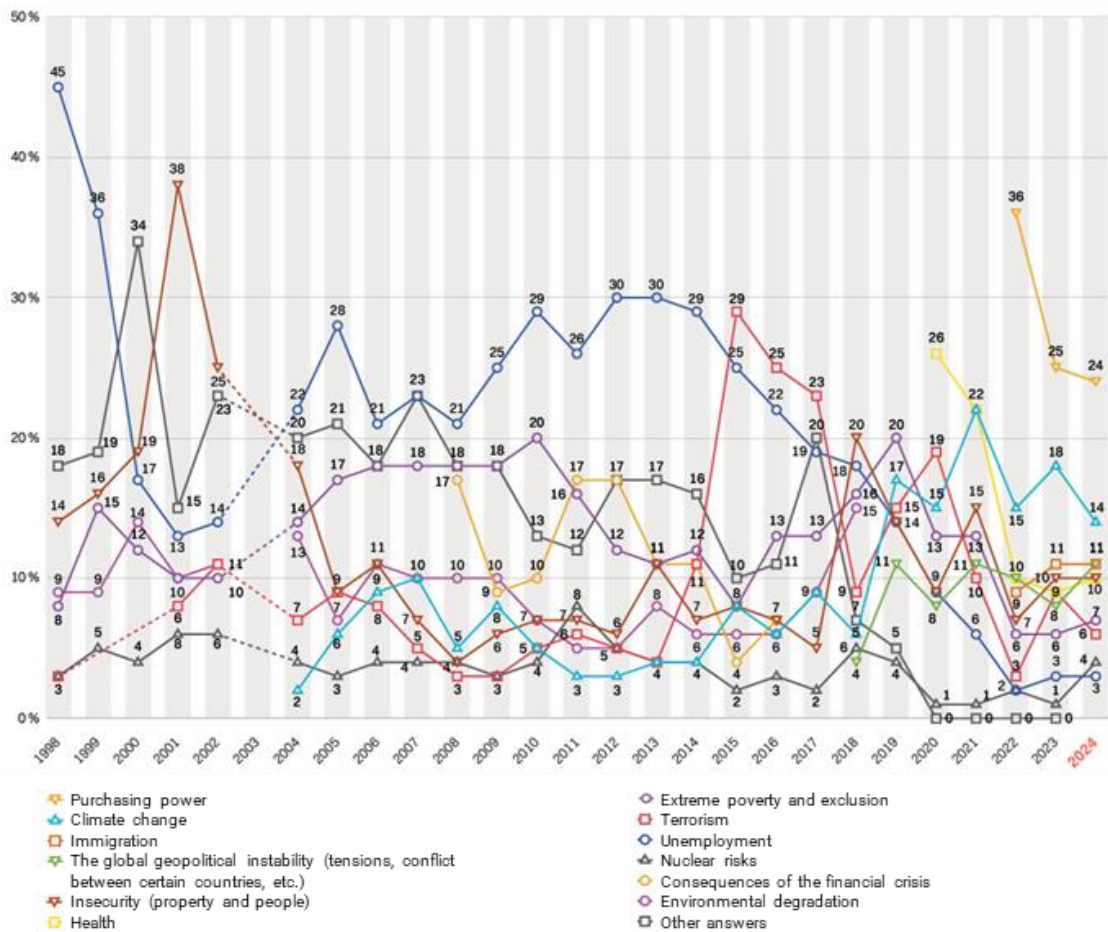
Among the main environmental concerns, climate change, despite a significant 7-point decrease, continues to lead well ahead of “damage from natural disasters” (17%) and water pollution (14%, +2 points).

Regarding the influence of climate change on the environment, 77% of respondents consider its impact to be strong, particularly in relation to floods (89%), droughts (89%), and heatwaves (87%). By contrast, the perceived links are weaker for hail (67%), soil pollution (65%), and earthquakes (60%).

QUESTION N°1

In France, which of the following current issues do you find most concerning?

Evolution of the results 1998-2024 (in %)



Part 2

The French perspective on science and expertise

This year, **the image of science and experts** remains stable: 64% of French people trust scientific institutions (+2 points), and 57 % have a positive opinion of scientific experts (-1 point). The qualities most expected from scientific experts continue, for the fifth consecutive year, to be honesty in the scientific approach (51%), technical competence (45%), and independence of judgment (41%).

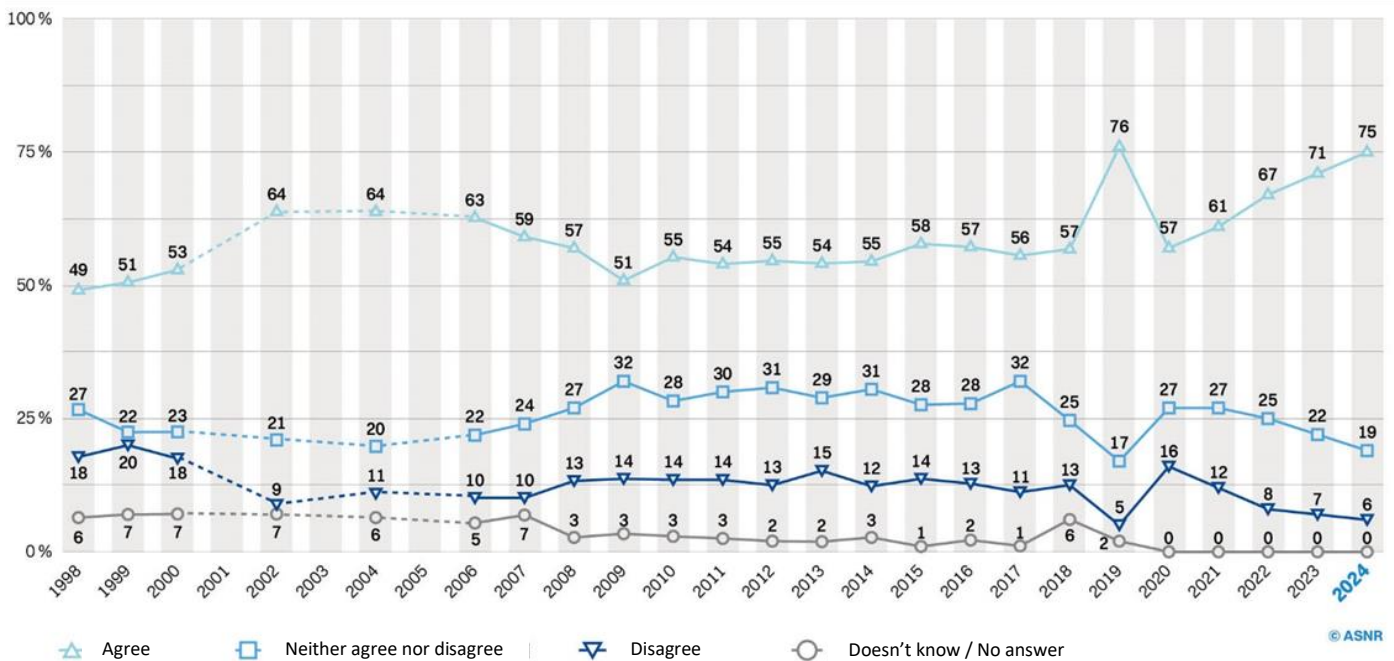
For the fourth consecutive year, the French reaffirm **their inclination towards having officials consult experts**. 75% of them consider that political decision-makers do not take enough into account the opinions of scientific experts (+4 points). Scientific experts are also perceived as **the most legitimate actors** when it comes to **oversight**. Accordingly, they are the most frequently cited (36%) to “monitor the impact of a facility posing risks to the environment and nearby populations,” ahead of “public regulatory authorities” (30%) and “associations and non-governmental organizations” (11%). Conversely, the operator of the facility is mentioned by only 8% of respondents, while the local citizens’ committee ranks last, with just 4% of responses.

The demand for **accessible, high-quality information** remains strong: 88% of the French population believe that clear and understandable information on installation risks should be made available to everyone, and 73% to consider that **making the reports of expert bodies public** is a priority. Nevertheless, 47 % of French (-5 points) don’t wish to participate to public meetings about at-risk facilities. The feeling that other people are more competent than them (25 %, -3 points) is the primary barrier to their engagement, while the feeling of being directly concerned by the subject (45 %) is the main motivator.

QUESTION N°4

“Political decision-makers do not take scientific experts’ opinions into account enough.”

Evolution of the results 1998-2024 (in %)



Part 3

The French and risk areas

Among **the 24 areas** featured in the Barometer in 2024, cancer remains, for the fourth consecutive year, the risk perceived as the highest, with 76 % of respondents classifying it as a “high risk”.

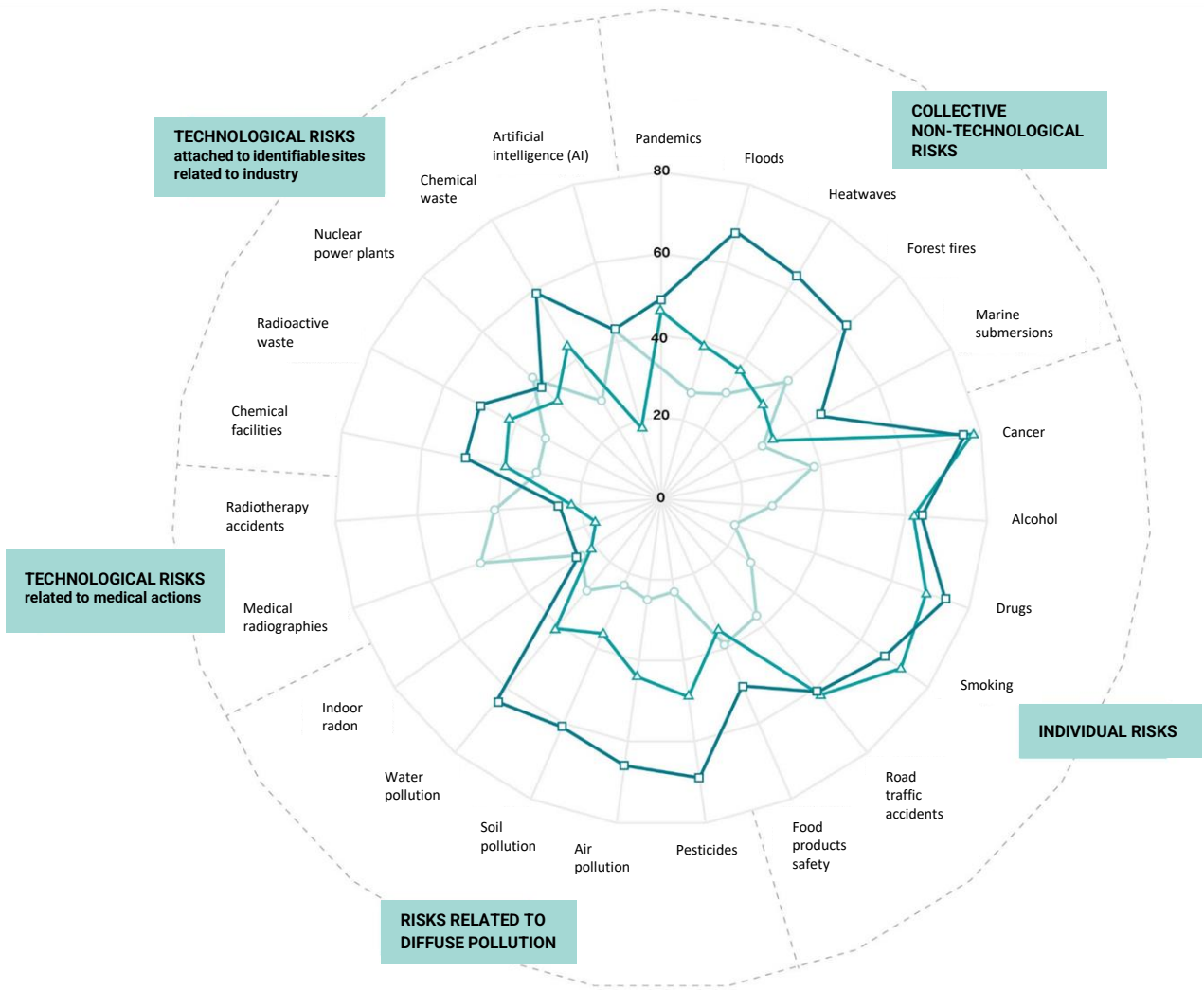
This year, the Barometer introduces a new approach to studying risk perception by asking the French about the risk of death they associate with these areas of risk. Cancer (78%) is also perceived as the most potentially fatal, ahead of tobacco use (72%) and drug consumption (69%). Conversely, radon exposure in homes (21%), artificial intelligence (18%), and medical X-rays (17%) are perceived as the least potentially deadly.

Among the 24 areas featured in the Barometer, **tobacco (78%), alcohol (76, -1 point), and road traffic accidents (76%)**, remain those for which the French feel the best informed about the associated risks. On the other hand, chemical waste (25%, +1 point), chemical facilities (24%, -1 point), and indoor radon (21%, +3 points) are the areas about which the French feel the least informed.

The French’s **trust** in authorities to protect them from at risk situations remains low overall, with only **32% of respondents expressing confidence** on average. For the third consecutive year, **medical radiography (47%, +3 points)** inspires the highest level of trust regarding authorities’ protection, followed by **artificial intelligence** and **nuclear power plants**, both at **43%**. The French’s “distrust” is most pronounced for drugs (57% “no” responses, +4 points), pesticides (49%, -4 points), and soil pollution (46%, -3 points).

QUESTION N°1, 3, 4

Representation of 23 risk areas across three dimensions: perceived level of risk, perceived level of fatality risk, and level of trust.
 November 2024 (in %)



- Trust in the authorities
- △ Perceived level of risk of death ("high")
- Perceived overall level of risk ("high")

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Part 4

The French, nuclear energy, radiation protection, and safety

After a significant shift in 2022, French's opinion in favor of nuclear energy has stabilized since 2023. Nearly one of two French people (48 %, -1 point) is now **in favor of building new nuclear power plants**, while 25% are opposed (+3 points).

The main argument in favor of nuclear power continues to be **energy independence** (38%, -4 points), significantly ahead of the low cost of electricity (24%, +1 point). The **"production of nuclear waste"** remains the leading argument against nuclear power (31 %, -2 points), followed by the risk of accidents in second place (23%, -1 point). In 2024, nuclear and solar energy are tied for the first time across four evaluated qualities, each achieving an average score of 26%. For the French, **solar energy** is perceived as **"the most environmentally friendly"** (36 %, -3 points) and "the energy of the future" (32 %, +1 point). Meanwhile, **nuclear power**, is viewed as **"the most efficient energy"** (45 %, +1 point), and leads for the first-time regarding energy cost (26%, +1 point).

Concerning public perception of radioactivity, **most of the French population** (57%) **considers that such exposure primarily originates from artificial sources. Industrial and military nuclear facilities are cited most frequently** (31%), followed by medical nuclear activities (26%), radiation from natural elements in the soil (14%), solar and space radiation (12%), radon (11%), and the consumption of fish, crustaceans, and shellfish (6%).

Regarding **nuclear waste management**, most French people (64%, -4 points) continue to believe that the "most reasonable position" for resolving the problem of radioactive waste disposal is to **"decide and implement the solution as quickly as possible"**. Only 7 % (+2 points) favor "leaving the choice to future generations". Additionally, 35 % believe that it is "possible today to store nuclear waste safely", whereas 30 % disagree (-2 points).

Trust in safety measures has reached its highest point since the survey began in 2007: 64% (+1 point) of French people believe that "all precautions are taken to ensure a very high level of safety in French nuclear power plants." Nevertheless, expectations regarding safety remain high: 83% state that "operators of nuclear sites must protect their facilities from all risks, even those deemed highly unlikely". The majority (68%) remain convinced that **"the safety of nuclear power plants comes before energy production**, even if this may lead to power cuts in the country." In addition, 51% of respondents considering **nuclear power plants vulnerable to climate change**, compared with only 16% who believe they are not.

On the issue of **extending the operating life of nuclear power plants**, 52% (+1 point) of French people think it is a "good choice", while 27% (+1 point) think the opposite. However, 41% (+3 points) believe that "extending the operating life of nuclear power plants will lead to accidents", compared to 22% (-1 point) who disagree.

A new question introduced this year shows **strong confidence in small modular reactors (SMR)**, as **93% of French people say they are not concerned about their safety level:** 51% believe they will be as safe as current reactors, 42% think they will be safer, and only 7% consider them less safe.

In 2024, regarding the perception of disasters, **nuclear power plants** remain the facilities **most liable to provoke a serious accident** in France (24%) according to the French. They are followed by chemical waste (19%, +2 points), virus research laboratories (16%), and chemical facilities (15%, -3 points). **The**

Chernobyl accident is still the disaster perceived as **the most frightening** (46%, +7 points) followed by the Fukushima accident (18%), and the Covid-19 pandemic (15%, -4 points).

In 2024, 93% of French people (+1 point) do not completely entirely dismiss the possibility of a Fukushima-scale occurring in France, with only 7% who consider it “not at all likely.”. Furthermore, results from a new question added this year reveal that 81% of respondents believe that the French population is not sufficiently prepared in the event of a large-scale nuclear accident.

