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Russians' Fear of Chernobyl Repeat Hits Record Low, Poll Says

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Fewer Russians believe that a Chernobyl-like nuclear disaster could happen now than at any point in the past two decades, according to an independent Levada Center poll published Wednesday.

The April 1986 explosion at the Chernobyl power plant in Soviet Ukraine spread radioactive material across much of the Northern Hemisphere, affecting tens of thousands of people. Its depiction in premium cable network HBO's hit series "Chernobyl" has thrust the world's worst nuclear disaster to date back to the forefront of the public psyche this year.

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Only 30 percent of Russian respondents currently believe that a second Chernobyl could happen in the coming years, down from 69 percent in 2000, according to Levada's results.

The share of those who believe a nuclear accident is unlikely has grown from 21 percent nearly two decades ago to 64 percent this year.

“The generation that remembers the accident is disappearing,” Levada sociologist Karina Pipiya told the RBC news website.

The Chernobyl disaster “caused real fear in that generation, and the new one grew up on the glamorization of the tragedy — games, TV series, memes and others.”

Levada conducted the survey among 1,608 respondents in 50 Russian regions between June 27 and July 4.

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