

Iowa Residents Support No-First-Use of Nuclear Weapons

HIGHLIGHTS

A new Zogby Analytics poll shows that well over half of Iowa residents (57 percent) believe the United States should never use nuclear weapons first in a conflict. This view is shared by nearly half (44 percent) of self-described “conservatives.” Only 26 percent of those polled believe there are circumstances in which such use is acceptable.

The poll also shows that 82 percent of residents believe it is important for presidential candidates to give their views on nuclear weapons, and that the overwhelming majority of residents (64 percent) do not believe one person should be able to order a launch that would start a nuclear war.

The choice to use nuclear weapons is one of the most significant, impactful decisions that a leader or country could ever make. A single warhead or bomb could kill hundreds of thousands of people; the use of even a small number of weapons could cause dramatic and disastrous impacts. Currently, the United States reserves the right to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict, and the authority to launch nuclear weapons lies solely with the president. A recent Zogby Analytics poll highlights how Iowa residents feel about these policies. (Due to rounding, percentages may not add to 100%.)

Acceptability of Using Nuclear Weapons First

Over half of Iowans (57 percent) say the United States should not use nuclear weapons first in a conflict, with more than 30 percent responding that the United States should never use nuclear weapons. Only one in four Iowans (26 percent) think there are circumstances in which it would be acceptable for the United States to use nuclear weapons first, while 18 percent don't know or are unsure (Figure 1).

Importance of Presidential Candidates Discussing Views on Nuclear Weapons

According to the survey, 82 percent of Iowa residents think it is very (42 percent) or somewhat (40 percent) important for candidates in the upcoming 2020

FIGURE 1. Using Nuclear Weapons First

In your opinion, are there any acceptable circumstances for the United States to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict or should the United States only use them after a nuclear attack on the United States or one of our allies?

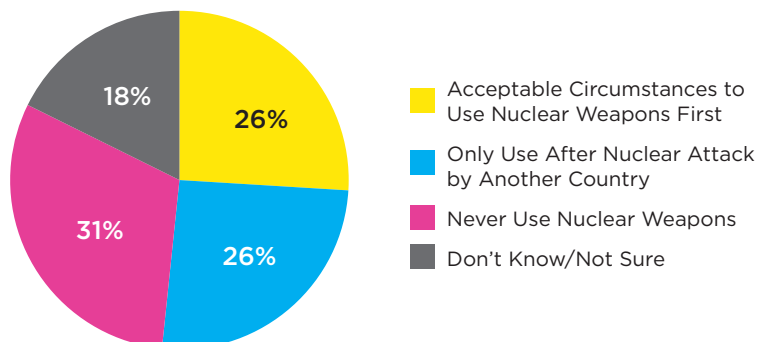
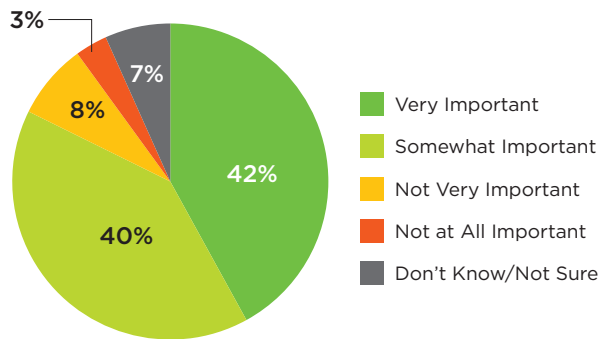


FIGURE 2. Views on Nuclear Weapons

How important is it to you for candidates in the upcoming 2020 presidential election to lay out their views regarding nuclear weapons?



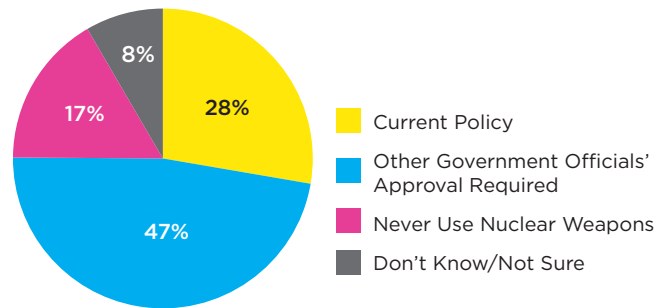
presidential election to lay out their views regarding nuclear weapons. Only 8 percent think it is not very important that they do so, 3 percent say it is not at all important, and 7 percent don't know or are unsure (Figure 2).

Single or Multiple Person Approval for Use of Nuclear Weapons

Respondents were asked whether they are comfortable with the current policy of sole authority—the president is the only person who can order the use of nuclear weapons, does not need to consult with anyone, and the decision cannot be overruled—or if they would prefer that one or two other government officials be required to approve the use of nuclear weapons. Nearly half (47 percent) would prefer that one or two other government officials

FIGURE 3. Sole Launch Authority

Currently, the president can order the use of nuclear weapons on his or her own and the decision cannot be overruled. Are you comfortable with this policy or would you prefer that one or two other senior government officials be required to approve the use of nuclear weapons?



be required to approve of the use of nuclear weapons; an additional 17 percent responded that the United States should never use nuclear weapons. Just over a quarter of Iowans (28 percent) say they are comfortable with the current policy, while 8 percent don't know or are unsure (Figure 3).

Methodology

All responses come from a poll conducted by Zogby Analytics. Out of thousands of randomly selected telephone numbers, 410 adults in Iowa were interviewed between March 11 and March 13, 2019. Weighting techniques were used to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. The sampling margin of error is +/- 4.8 percent.

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