South Carolina Residents Support No-First-Use of Nuclear Weapons

HIGHLIGHTS

A new Zogby Analytics poll shows that well over half of South Carolina residents (62 percent) believe the United States should never use nuclear weapons first in a conflict. Only 24 percent of those polled believe there are circumstances in which such use is acceptable.

The poll also shows that 83 percent of residents believe it is important for presidential candidates to give their views on nuclear weapons, and that the majority of residents (67 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 South Carolina residents feel about these policies. (Due to rounding, percentages may not add to 100%.)

Acceptability of Using Nuclear Weapons First

Over half of South Carolinians (62 percent) say the United States should not use nuclear weapons first in a conflict, with 32% responding that the United States should never use nuclear weapons. About one in four South Carolinians (24 percent) think there are circumstances in which it would be acceptable for the United States to use nuclear weapons first, while 14 percent don't know or are unsure (Figure 1).

Importance of Presidential Candidates Discussing Views on Nuclear Weapons

According to the survey, 83 percent of South Carolina residents think it is very (54 percent) or somewhat (29 percent) important for candidates in the upcoming

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?
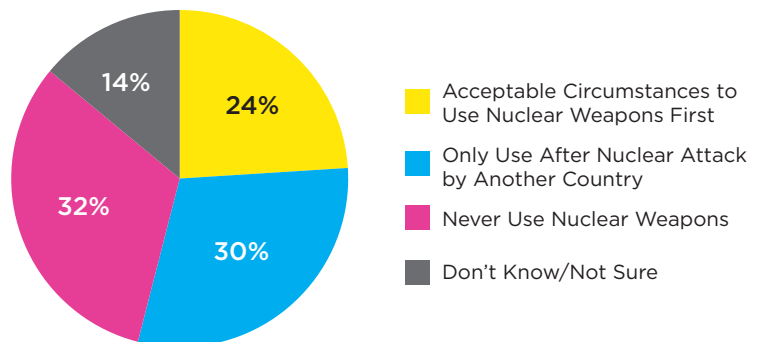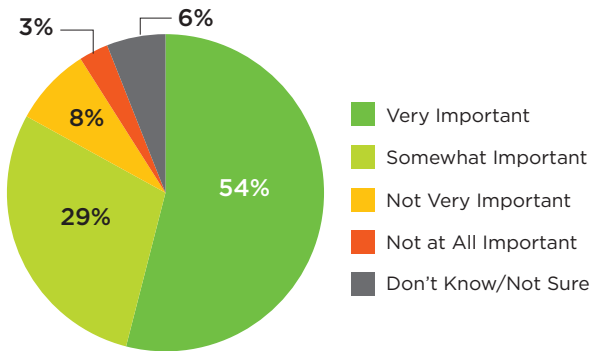

- 24% Acceptable Circumstances to Use Nuclear Weapons First
- 30% Only Use After Nuclear Attack by Another Country
- 32% Never Use Nuclear Weapons
- 14% Don't Know/Not Sure

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

- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Very Important
- Not at All Important
- Don't Know/Not Sure

FIGURE 3. Sole Launch Authority

Currently, the president can order the use of nuclear weapons on their 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?

- Current Policy
- Other Government Officials' Approval Required
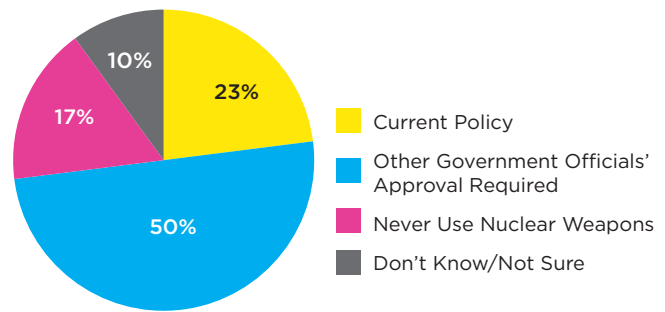- Never Use Nuclear Weapons
- Don't Know/Not Sure

2020 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 6 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. Half (50 percent) would prefer that one or two other government officials be required to approve of the use of nuclear weapons; an additional

17 percent responded that the United States should never use nuclear weapons. Less than a fourth of South Carolinians (23 percent) say they are comfortable with the current policy, while 10 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, 605 adults in South Carolina were interviewed between January 31 and February 1 2020. Weighting techniques were used to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. The sampling margin of error is +/- 4.0 percent.

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