

# NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL

## SUMMARY OF PUBLIC OPINION

### TOPLINES

- ◆ Strong majorities from both major parties (80% of Democrats; 64% of Republicans) favor bipartisan cooperation to “reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world.”
- ◆ Support for nuclear arms reductions is solid across generations and income levels.
- ◆ Americans overwhelmingly agree that the US nuclear arsenal is only for deterrence. 92% of Democrats and 88% of Republicans hold this view.
- ◆ The proposition of adopting a No First Use policy is strengthened when paired with arguments about the pending price tag for nuclear “modernization.”
- ◆ A policy slate including No First Use, negotiated weapons reductions, and spending only what is required for deterrence is supported by 87% of Democrats and 54% of Republicans.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### 1. Americans agree that arms reduction treaties make the US more secure.

As we saw in prior focus groups and the earlier quantitative phase of research, most Americans want there to be fewer nuclear weapons in the world.

Across both parties, 74.9% of voters supported the following statement:

*“Negotiating international treaties to reduce the world’s nuclear arsenal makes the United States safer and more secure. As long as we can verify that no one is violating these treaties, it is in our national security interest to reduce the number of nuclear weapons and reduce the chances that they can be used.”*

Partisanship is definitely a factor in how people respond to the message about treaties. Democrats and D-leaningers support both versions at high levels—75 to 85%. But Republicans and R-leaningers are closely split.

Our prior quantitative research also found strong cross-partisan support for reductions. Two thirds of Republicans (65%), Independents (66%), and Democrats (67%) supported reducing nuclear weapons to the “lowest possible levels.”

#### 2. Strong majorities favor bipartisan cooperation on reductions.

Majorities in both parties support bipartisan cooperation to reduce the threat that nuclear weapons pose. Just as we saw in prior focus groups, voters love a message establishing that presidential administrations of both parties have gotten rid of nukes.

80% of Democrats and 64% of Republicans support the following statement:

*“Since the end of the Cold War, both Republican and Democratic administrations have worked to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world. Republican presidents have actually gotten rid of many more nuclear weapons than Democrats. Elected officials from both parties should get back on that track, put political partisanship behind them, and work together to reduce the threat that nuclear weapons pose to all Americans.”*

While Republicans are less supportive, majorities of every partisan group on a seven-point spectrum from “Strong Democrat” to “Strong Republican” support this message.

Americans want to reduce nuclear weapons in the world, and they are more supportive when they’re told that the US has a long record of doing just that. Voters, especially Republicans, are more likely to support reductions when we tell them that Republican administrations have reduced even more weapons than Democratic ones since the Cold War.

#### 3. Americans want the US to take the lead on nuclear arm reductions.

The public strongly supports the US leading global arms reductions. 66% of the public support the statement:

*“US policy should be to work with other countries to reduce the number of nuclear weapons to the smallest possible levels. When we work with another country, it should include an agreement and a process to check that each side is holding up its end of the bargain.”*

## AUDIENCE SUPPORT FOR ARMS CONTROL & REDUCTION

### Support for nuclear weapon reductions spans generations and income levels.

**Millennials** (63%); **Generation X** (65%); **Boomers** (70%); and the **Silent Generation** (65%) support nuclear weapons reductions to the lowest possible level.

Support for reductions gains support as income grows with reducing nuclear weapons to the lowest possible level supported by **those making under \$50k** (64%); **\$50k-99k** (67%); **\$100k+** (71%).

### Majorities in every demographic support negotiated reductions.

Overall, Americans agree that arms control and disarmament makes us safer.

Respondents assessed the following statement:

*Negotiating international treaties to reduce the world's nuclear arsenal makes the United States safer and more secure. As long as we can verify that no one is violating these treaties, it is in our national security interest to reduce the number of nuclear weapons and reduce the chances that they can be used.*

70% of **Black** voters agreed with the statement, as did 74% of **Latinx** voters, 83% of **Democrats**, and 53% of **Republicans**. **Democratic women** agreed by 84% and **Democratic men** agreed by 82%.

With the notable exception of Black voters (who may have resisted the claim that Republican Presidents have reduced the nuclear arsenal) the message below which asserts that nuclear arms reduction should be a bipartisan priority, also enjoyed strong support and significantly improved results with Republican voters.

*Since the end of the Cold War, both Republican and Democratic administrations have worked to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world. Republican presidents have actually gotten rid of many more nuclear weapons than Democrats. Elected officials from both parties should get back on that track, put political partisanship behind them, and work together to reduce the threat that nuclear weapons pose to all Americans.*

83% of **Democratic** voters supported this statement and 63% of **Republican** voters - a 10-point jump from the first message. 66% of Black voters supported this statement (a 4-point drop from the prior statement, along with 76% of **Latinx** voters, 83% of **Democratic women** and 83% of **Democratic men**.

### Americans support a platform of nuclear weapons policy change.

An arms control and disarmament policy slate that includes No First Use, amongst other issues, enjoys majority support from Republicans and Democrats alike, with very strong support among Democrats.

*Here are two simplified policy agendas. Which one makes more sense to you, even if neither is exactly right?*

*We should 1) Work together with other countries to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world through deals that make sure no one is cheating; 2) Lower the risk of a nuclear war by declaring that the US will not be the first to use nuclear weapons in a conflict; and 3) Spend only the amount of money we need to maintain a strong defense. D - 88%, I - 69% R - 54%*

*We should 1) Plan for our security alone and not put our faith in international agreements; 2) Keep our enemies guessing about when and where we'd be willing to use nuclear weapons; and 3) Spend whatever it takes to make sure that our nuclear arsenal is always the biggest and most modern. D - 12%, I - 31% R - 46%*

Among **Black** voters, 72% support this platform, as do 73% of **Latinx** voters. Among **Democratic women** and **Democratic men**, both express 88% support.