

Wisconsin Voters Have Higher Priorities than Nuclear Weapons

A majority prefer investments in clean water, jobs, health care, and infrastructure

The United States has begun replacing most of the nuclear weapons in its arsenal with new, enhanced bombs and the systems to deliver them (missiles, submarines, and bombers)—at an estimated cost to taxpayers of at least \$1.5 trillion over the next 30 years. In fiscal year 2020 alone, the United States allocated \$67.6 billion on its nuclear weapons systems (PSR-LA 2020).

Recent polling shows that voters in Wisconsin do not believe that spending \$1.5 trillion to replace the nation’s nuclear weapons should be a top priority of the federal government. Instead, they want their tax dollars spent on critical priorities including expanding access to quality health care, increasing job opportunities, cleaning up polluted drinking water supplies, and fixing roads, bridges, and other infrastructure.

A majority of Wisconsin voters oppose the plan to rebuild the nation’s entire nuclear arsenal, while only 17 percent have strong feelings of support. By significant margins, voters find the arguments against rebuilding the nuclear arsenal more

compelling than arguments supporting it. Voters in urban areas, younger voters, voters with college degrees, and non-White voters are most likely to oppose it. Similarly, a majority of Wisconsin voters oppose the Pentagon’s plan to spend more than \$100 billion just to replace the nation’s land-based nuclear missiles, while only 14 percent have strong feelings of support.

By significant margins, voters find the arguments against rebuilding the nuclear arsenal more compelling than the arguments supporting it.

FIGURE 1. Top Federal Spending Priorities

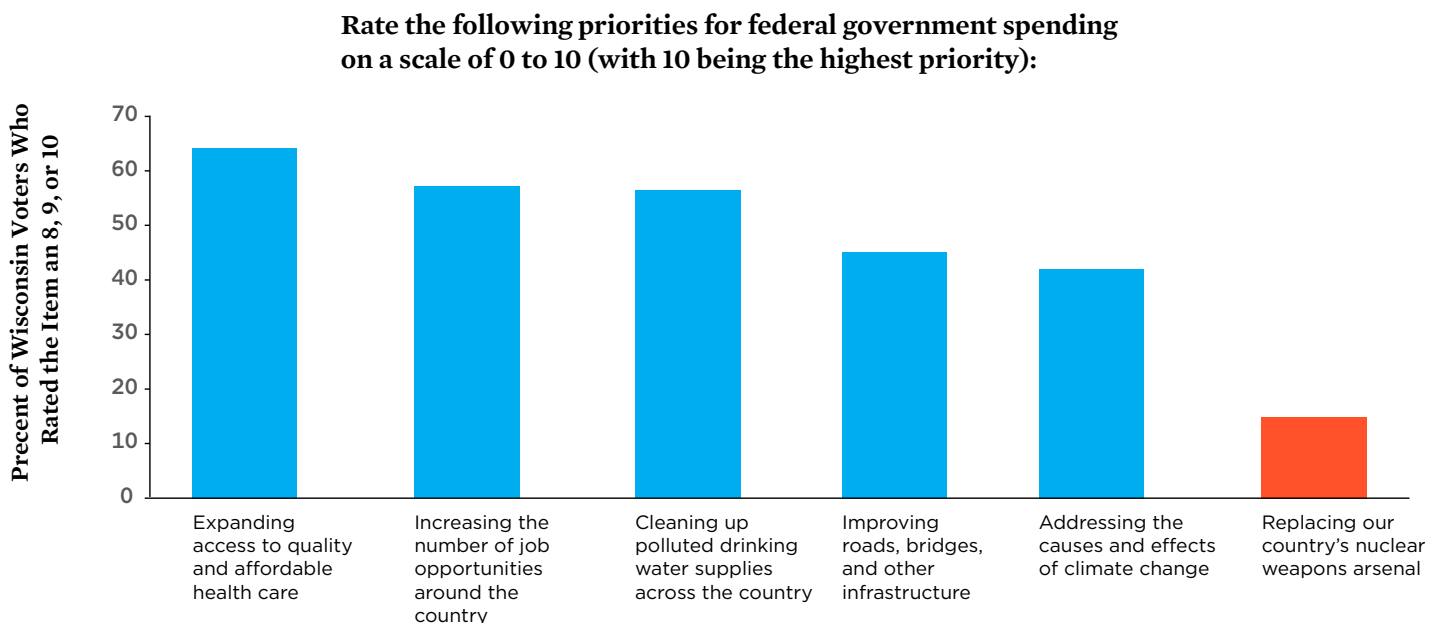
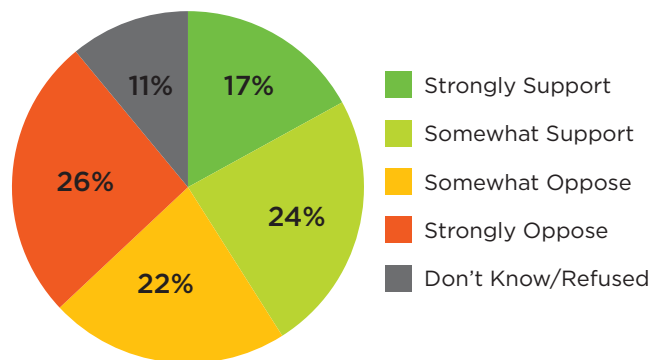


FIGURE 2. Spending \$1.5 Trillion to Replace Most of the US Nuclear Arsenal

Do you support or oppose the United States spending \$1.5 trillion to replace almost all of its nuclear weapons?



Voters were presented the following neutral statement and were then asked to choose one of the given response options:

Under current US policy, the fundamental reason our country has nuclear weapons is to deter other countries from using nuclear weapons against us or our allies. Right now, the US has about 4,000 active nuclear weapons. Russia has about the same. China has approximately 300. Most US nuclear weapons today are up to 20 times more destructive than those that killed over 200,000 people in Japan at the end of World War II. Currently the United States plans to replace almost all of its nuclear weapons arsenal, which includes the bombs and the systems to deliver them (the missiles, submarines, and bombers). The cost to do this is estimated to be at least \$1.5 trillion dollars over the next 30 years. Based on what you know about this issue, would you say you support or oppose the United States spending \$1.5 trillion dollars to replace almost all of its nuclear weapons? And would you say you strongly or somewhat support/oppose?

Voters Agree with Arguments Opposing New Nuclear Weapons

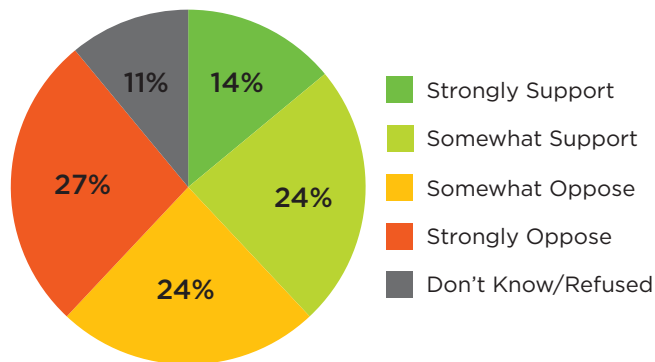
The survey presented voters with three arguments for why the United States should not spend \$1.5 trillion to replace its nuclear arsenal and were asked to rank each one on a scale of 0 to 10 (with 10 being the strongest reason):

- Independent experts say that the United States has far more nuclear weapons than needed for our security, and the country can maintain a reliable, safe deterrent for far less than \$1.5 trillion. (6.23 average out of 10; 38% rated it an 8, 9, or 10)
- Independent experts say that cancelling some of the more expensive and unnecessary proposed nuclear weapons would save hundreds of billions of dollars that could be invested in our communities to address more immediate and important priorities like ensuring clean water across Wisconsin. (6.47 average out of 10; 41% rated it an 8, 9, or 10)
- Independent experts say that the world has dramatically changed and nuclear weapons do not help us confront the most important threats we now face. Instead, we would be much safer if this money was used to deal with other pressing security concerns like cyber threats and global pandemics like COVID-19. (6.14 average out of 10; 39% rated it an 8, 9, or 10).

Wisconsin voters want their tax dollars spent on critical priorities including quality health care, increased job opportunities and cleaning polluted drinking water supplies.

FIGURE 3. Spending \$100 Billion to Replace Land-Based Nuclear Missiles

Do you support or oppose the United States spending nearly \$100 billion to replace most of its land-based nuclear missiles?



Voters were presented the following neutral statement and were then asked to choose one of the given response options:

One of the proposed new nuclear weapons is a land-based nuclear missile which would replace the 400 existing missiles currently sited in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, Wyoming, and Nebraska. Supporters of this new missile say that we need it because the existing missiles are aging and that land-based missiles are a critical part of our nuclear deterrent. Independent experts say that we no longer need any land-based nuclear missiles because the many hundreds of nuclear weapons already deployed on submarines and bombers are a more than adequate nuclear deterrent. They say that canceling the new program could save nearly \$100 billion dollars that could be invested in our communities instead. Based on what you have just heard about this issue, would you say you support or oppose the United States spending nearly \$100 billion dollars to replace most of its land-based nuclear missiles? And would you say you strongly or somewhat support/oppose?

\$1.175 billion

Wisconsin taxpayers' share of the \$67 billion allocated in fiscal year 2020 to nuclear weapons-related programs, including missile defense.

SOURCE: PSR-LA 2020.

Methodology

Lincoln Park Strategies (www.lpstrategies.com) conducted 842 interviews with registered Wisconsin voters, including an over-sampling of African American voters, online and via telephone from September 22–29, 2020, and weighted the results to ensure a proportional response. The margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level is ±3.38 points.

REFERENCES

PSR-LA (Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles). 2020. "PSR-LA's Nuclear Weapons Community Costs Program." Los Angeles, CA. <https://www.psr-la.org/nuclear-costs>

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